The Theory of Moral Sentiments

ADAM SMITH

The Theory of Moral Sentiments

The 1790 text

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The Theory of Moral Sentiments · Adam Smith

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INTRODUCTION

Seventeen years before *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith, then a professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow, published *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). He kept revising it, and the sixth edition, which appeared in 1790 shortly before his death, rewrote much of Part III and added a whole new Part on the character of virtue. This is that final text.

Smith starts from a simple fact: we cannot feel what another person feels, but we can imagine ourselves in their place. From this "sympathy" he builds an account of how we judge others and, by imagining how they see us, ourselves. Conscience becomes "the man within the breast," an impartial spectator whose verdict we cannot easily escape. Along the way Smith explains why we admire the rich, why luck colors our judgment of actions, and how ambition, a useful deception, drives people to work for the good of others without intending it—the first appearance of his "invisible hand."

The book closes with a survey of moral philosophy from Plato and the Stoics to Hobbes, Mandeville and Hutcheson. The left column is Smith's 1790 English, with his own footnotes after the paragraphs that cite them; the right is a lightly modernized version.

Part I: Of the Propriety of Action

Sympathy: how we enter into the feelings of others, judge their propriety, and why we admire the rich and great.

ADVERTISEMENT

Smith explains what is new in this sixth edition and why the promised work on jurisprudence remains unwritten.

Advert.1 *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* was first published as long ago as the beginning of 1759. Since then a number of corrections have occurred to me, along with a good many illustrations of the doctrines it contains. But the various occupations in which the different chances of my life necessarily involved me have until now kept me from revising this work with the care and attention I always intended. The reader will find the main changes I have made in this new edition in the last chapter of the third section of Part One, and in the first four chapters of Part Three. Part Six, as it stands in this new edition, is entirely new. In Part Seven I have brought together most of the passages on the Stoic philosophy, which in earlier editions were scattered through different parts of the work. I have also tried to explain more fully, and to examine more distinctly, some of the doctrines of that famous school. In the fourth and last section of the same Part, I have put together a few additional observations on the duty and principle of truthfulness. There are, besides, a few other changes and corrections of no great importance in other parts of the work.

Advert.2 In the last paragraph of the first edition of this work, I said that in another discourse I would try to give an account of the general principles of law and government, and of the different revolutions they have undergone in the different ages and

periods of society. That account would cover not only justice but also public administration, revenue, and defense, and whatever else is the object of law. In the *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* I have partly kept this promise, at least as far as public administration, revenue, and defense are concerned.[1] What remains is the theory of jurisprudence, which I have long planned. I have so far been prevented from carrying it out by the same occupations that until now kept me from revising the present work. My very advanced age leaves me, I admit, very little hope of ever completing this great work to my own satisfaction. Yet I have not entirely abandoned the plan, and I wish still to remain under the obligation of doing what I can. So I have let the paragraph stand as it was published more than thirty years ago, when I had no doubt that I could carry out everything it announced.[2]

SECTION I: OF THE SENSE OF PROPRIETY — CHAPTER I: OF SYMPATHY

We cannot feel what others feel, but by imagining ourselves in their place we come to share their passions.

I.i.1.1 However selfish man may be supposed to be, there are evidently some principles in his nature which interest him in the fortune of others and make their happiness necessary to him, though he gets nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Pity or compassion is of this kind. It is the emotion we feel for the misery of others when we either see it or are made to imagine it very vividly. That we often feel sorrow at the sorrow of others is a fact too obvious to need any examples to prove it. This sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane,

1 Smith's words are "police, revenue, and arms." In his day "police" meant public administration and regulation generally. *The Wealth of Nations* was published in 1776.

2 Smith died in July 1790, a few months after this edition appeared. Shortly before his death he had most of his unfinished manuscripts burned, and the jurisprudence was never published in his lifetime.

though they may perhaps feel it with the keenest sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not entirely without it.

I.i.1.2 We have no immediate experience of what other people feel. So we can form no idea of how they are affected except by imagining what we ourselves would feel in a similar situation. Though our brother is on the rack, as long as we ourselves are at ease, our senses will never tell us what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is only by the imagination that we can form any conception of his sensations. Nor can that faculty help us with this in any other way than by representing to us what our own sensations would be if we were in his place. Our imaginations copy only the impressions of our own senses, not those of his. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation and conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments. We enter, as it were, into his body and become in some measure the same person as he is. From this we form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. When his agonies are brought home to us in this way, when we have adopted them and made them our own, they at last begin to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. For just as being in pain or distress of any kind arouses the most excessive sorrow, so conceiving or imagining that we are in it arouses some degree of the same emotion, in proportion to how vivid or dull the conception is.

I.i.1.3 This is the source of our fellow-feeling for the misery of others: it is by changing places in fancy with the sufferer that we come either to conceive what he feels or to be affected by it. If this is not thought evident enough in itself, it can be demonstrated by many obvious observations. When we see a blow aimed and just about to fall on another person's leg or arm, we naturally shrink and pull back our own leg or arm. And when it does fall, we feel it in some measure and are hurt by it as well as the sufferer. When the crowd watches a dancer on the slack rope, they naturally writhe and twist and balance their own

bodies as they see him do, and as they feel they would have to do themselves in his position. People of delicate nerves and a weak bodily constitution complain that when they look at the sores and ulcers that beggars display in the streets, they tend to feel an itching or uneasy sensation in the corresponding part of their own bodies. The horror they feel at the misery of those wretches affects that particular part of themselves more than any other. This is because the horror arises from imagining what they themselves would suffer if they really were the wretches they are looking at, and if that particular part of themselves were actually affected in the same miserable way. In their feeble frames, the mere force of this conception is enough to produce the itching or uneasy sensation they complain of. Men of the most robust build observe that when they look at sore eyes they often feel a very noticeable soreness in their own. This comes from the same cause: that organ is more delicate in the strongest man than any other part of the body is in the weakest.

I.i.1.4 Nor is it only circumstances that cause pain or sorrow that call forth our fellow-feeling. Whatever passion some object arouses in the person principally concerned, an analogous emotion springs up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator. Our joy at the rescue of those heroes of tragedy or romance who interest us is as sincere as our grief at their distress, and our fellow-feeling with their misery is no more real than our fellow-feeling with their happiness. We enter into their gratitude toward the faithful friends who did not desert them in their difficulties. And we heartily go along with their resentment against the treacherous traitors who injured, abandoned, or deceived them. Whatever the passion of which the human mind is capable, the bystander brings the case home to himself and imagines what the sufferer's sentiments must be. His own emotions always correspond to that.

I.i.1.5 Pity and compassion are the words set aside to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy may originally have meant the same thing. Now, however, it may be used

without much impropriety to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever.

I.i.1.6 On some occasions sympathy may seem to arise merely from seeing a certain emotion in another person. The passions may sometimes seem to pass from one person to another instantly, before we know anything of what aroused them in the person principally concerned. Grief and joy, for example, when strongly expressed in someone's looks and gestures, at once affect the spectator with some degree of a similar painful or pleasant emotion. A smiling face is a cheerful sight to everyone who sees it, just as a sorrowful face is a melancholy one.

I.i.1.7 This, however, does not hold universally, or for every passion. There are some passions whose expressions arouse no sympathy at all. Instead, until we know what gave rise to them, these expressions serve rather to disgust us and set us against the passions they express. The furious behavior of an angry man is more likely to exasperate us against him than against his enemies. Since we do not know what provoked him, we cannot bring his case home to ourselves, or conceive anything like the passions it arouses. But we clearly see the situation of the people he is angry with, and the violence they may be exposed to from so enraged an adversary. So we readily sympathize with their fear or resentment, and are immediately inclined to take sides against the man who seems to put them in such danger.

I.i.1.8 The mere outward signs of grief and joy inspire us with some degree of similar emotions. This is because they suggest to us the general idea of some good or bad fortune that has befallen the person in whom we see them, and with these passions that is enough to have some slight influence on us. The effects of grief and joy end in the person who feels those emotions. Their expressions do not, as the expressions of resentment do, suggest to us the idea of some other person we are concerned for, whose interests are opposed to his. The general idea of good or bad fortune, therefore, creates some concern for the person who has met with it. But the general idea of provocation arouses no sympathy with the anger of the man who has

received it. Nature, it seems, teaches us to be more reluctant to enter into this passion. Until we are told its cause, it teaches us to be inclined rather to take sides against it.

I.i.1.9 Even our sympathy with another person's grief or joy is always extremely imperfect before we are told the cause of either. General lamentations, which express nothing but the sufferer's anguish, do not create any actual sympathy that is very noticeable. They create rather a curiosity to inquire into his situation, along with some inclination to sympathize with him. The first question we ask is, What has happened to you? Until this is answered, we are uneasy, both from the vague idea of his misfortune and still more from torturing ourselves with guesses about what it might be. Yet our fellow-feeling is not very considerable.

I.i.1.10 Sympathy, therefore, arises not so much from seeing the passion as from seeing the situation that arouses it. We sometimes feel on another person's behalf a passion of which he himself seems entirely incapable. When we put ourselves in his place, that passion arises in our breast from the imagination, though it does not arise in his from the reality. We blush for another person's impudence and rudeness, though he himself seems to have no sense of the impropriety of his own behavior. We cannot help feeling how covered with confusion we ourselves would be if we had behaved so absurdly.

I.i.1.11 Of all the calamities to which our mortal condition exposes mankind, the loss of reason appears by far the most dreadful to anyone with the least spark of humanity. People look on that last stage of human wretchedness with deeper pity than on any other. But the poor wretch who is in it perhaps laughs and sings, and is entirely unaware of his own misery. The anguish our humanity feels at the sight of such a person, therefore, cannot be a reflection of any sentiment of the sufferer. The spectator's compassion must arise entirely from imagining what he himself would feel if he were reduced to the same unhappy situation and, what is perhaps impossible, could at the same time regard it with his present reason and judgment.

I.i.1.12 What are a mother's pangs when she hears the moans of her infant, who in the agony of illness cannot express what it feels? In her idea of what it suffers, she joins to its real helplessness her own awareness of that helplessness, and her own terrors about the unknown consequences of its illness. Out of all these she forms, for her own sorrow, the most complete image of misery and distress. The infant, however, feels only the discomfort of the present moment, which can never be great. As for the future, it is perfectly secure. In its thoughtlessness and lack of foresight it has an antidote against fear and anxiety, the great tormentors of the human breast. When it grows up to be a man, reason and philosophy will try in vain to defend it against them.

I.i.1.13 We sympathize even with the dead. Overlooking what is really important in their situation, the awe-inspiring future that awaits them, we are chiefly affected by circumstances that strike our senses but can have no influence on their happiness. It is miserable, we think, to be deprived of the light of the sun; to be shut out from life and conversation; to be laid in the cold grave, a prey to decay and to the reptiles of the earth; to be no longer thought of in this world, but to be erased in a short time from the affections, and almost from the memory, of their dearest friends and relations. Surely, we imagine, we can never feel too much for those who have suffered so dreadful a calamity. The tribute of our fellow-feeling seems doubly owed to them now, when they are in danger of being forgotten by everybody. By the empty honors we pay to their memory, we try, to our own misery, to keep our melancholy remembrance of their misfortune artificially alive. That our sympathy can give them no consolation seems to add to their calamity; and to think that all we can do is useless, and that what relieves every other distress (the regret, the love, and the lamentations of their friends) can bring them no comfort, only sharpens our sense of their misery. The happiness of the dead, however, is most certainly affected by none of these circumstances. Nor can the thought of these things ever disturb the deep security of their rest. The idea of

that dreary and endless melancholy which our imagination naturally ascribes to their condition arises entirely from our joining our own consciousness of the change that has been produced in them to the change itself. It comes from our putting ourselves in their situation, and from our lodging, if I may put it that way, our own living souls in their lifeless bodies, and then conceiving what our emotions would be in that case. It is from this very illusion of the imagination that the foresight of our own dissolution is so terrible to us. It is the same illusion that makes the idea of these circumstances, which undoubtedly can give us no pain when we are dead, make us miserable while we are alive. And from this arises one of the most important principles in human nature, the dread of death. It is the great poison to the happiness of mankind, but the great restraint on its injustice, and while it afflicts and mortifies the individual, it guards and protects society.

CHAPTER II: OF THE PLEASURE OF MUTUAL SYMPATHY

Nothing pleases us more than others' fellow-feeling with our emotions, and this pleasure is not mere self-love.

I.i.2.1 But whatever the cause of sympathy may be, or however it may be aroused, nothing pleases us more than to see in other people a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast. Nothing shocks us so much as the appearance of the opposite. Those who like to derive all our sentiments from certain refinements of self-love think they have no trouble accounting for both this pleasure and this pain on their own principles.[3] Man, they say, is conscious of his own weakness and of his need for the help of others. He rejoices whenever he sees that they adopt his own passions, because he is then assured of that help. He grieves whenever he sees the opposite, because he is then assured of their opposition. But both the pleasure and the pain are always felt so instantly, and often on such trivial occasions,

3 Smith has in view writers such as Hobbes and Mandeville, who traced moral feeling back to self-love.

that it seems evident neither can be derived from any such self-interested consideration. A man is mortified when, after trying to amuse the company, he looks around and sees that nobody laughs at his jokes but himself. The mirth of the company, on the other hand, is highly agreeable to him, and he regards this correspondence of their sentiments with his own as the greatest applause.

I.i.2.2 Nor does his pleasure seem to arise entirely from the added liveliness his mirth may gain from sympathy with theirs. Nor does his pain seem to arise entirely from the disappointment of missing this pleasure, though both no doubt play some part. When we have read a book or poem so often that we can no longer find any amusement in reading it by ourselves, we can still take pleasure in reading it to a companion. To him it has all the charms of novelty. We enter into the surprise and admiration it naturally arouses in him, though it can no longer arouse them in us. We consider all the ideas it presents in the light in which they appear to him rather than the light in which they appear to us, and we are amused by sympathy with his amusement, which thus enlivens our own. On the other hand, we would be annoyed if he did not seem to be entertained by it, and we could no longer take any pleasure in reading it to him. The case here is the same. The mirth of the company no doubt enlivens our own mirth, and their silence no doubt disappoints us. This may contribute both to the pleasure we get from the one and to the pain we feel from the other, but it is by no means the only cause of either. This correspondence of other people's sentiments with our own appears to be a cause of pleasure, and the lack of it a cause of pain, in a way that cannot be explained like this. The sympathy my friends express with my joy might indeed give me pleasure by enlivening that joy. But the sympathy they express with my grief could give me none if it served only to enliven that grief. Sympathy, however, enlivens joy and alleviates grief. It enlivens joy by offering another source of satisfaction. It alleviates grief by slipping into the heart almost the only agreeable sensation the heart can receive at that time.

I.i.2.3 Accordingly, we may observe that we are even more anxious to communicate our disagreeable passions to our friends than our agreeable ones. We get even more satisfaction from their sympathy with the former than with the latter, and we are even more shocked by its absence.

I.i.2.4 How relieved the unfortunate are when they have found someone to whom they can tell the cause of their sorrow! Through his sympathy they seem to unburden themselves of part of their distress, and it is quite fair to say that he shares it with them. He not only feels a sorrow of the same kind as theirs. It is as if he had drawn part of it onto himself, so that what he feels seems to lighten the weight of what they feel. Yet by relating their misfortunes they renew their grief to some extent. They awaken in their memory the circumstances that cause their affliction. Their tears accordingly flow faster than before, and they tend to give themselves up to all the weakness of sorrow. Yet they take pleasure in all this and are evidently and noticeably relieved by it. The sweetness of his sympathy more than makes up for the bitterness of the sorrow, which they had enlivened and renewed in order to arouse that sympathy. The cruelest insult that can be offered to the unfortunate, on the other hand, is to appear to make light of their calamities. To seem unaffected by our companions' joy is merely a lack of politeness. But not to put on a serious face when they tell us their afflictions is real and gross inhumanity.

I.i.2.5 Love is an agreeable passion and resentment a disagreeable one. Accordingly, we are not half so anxious that our friends should adopt our friendships as that they should enter into our resentments. We can forgive them if they seem little affected by the favors we may have received, but we lose all patience if they seem indifferent to the injuries that may have been done to us. Nor are we half so angry with them for not entering into our gratitude as for not sympathizing with our resentment. They can easily avoid being friends to our friends, but they can hardly avoid being enemies to those we are at odds with. We seldom resent their being on bad terms with our

friends, though we may sometimes pretend to pick an awkward quarrel with them over it. But we quarrel with them in earnest if they stay on friendly terms with our enemies. The agreeable passions of love and joy can satisfy and sustain the heart without any additional pleasure. The bitter and painful emotions of grief and resentment more strongly require the healing consolation of sympathy.

I.i.2.6 The person principally concerned in any event is pleased by our sympathy and hurt by its absence. In the same way, we too seem to be pleased when we are able to sympathize with him and hurt when we cannot. We hurry not only to congratulate the successful but to console the afflicted. The pleasure we find in the conversation of someone with whom we can entirely sympathize, in all the passions of his heart, seems to more than make up for the painful sorrow that the sight of his situation causes us. On the other hand, it is always disagreeable to feel that we cannot sympathize with him. Instead of being pleased at this exemption from sympathetic pain, we are hurt to find that we cannot share his distress. Suppose we hear someone loudly lamenting his misfortunes, though we feel, on bringing the case home to ourselves, that they could produce no such violent effect on us. Then we are shocked by his grief, and because we cannot enter into it, we call it faintheartedness and weakness. It irritates us, on the other hand, to see another person too happy, or too elated, as we say, over some small piece of good luck. We are offended even by his joy, and because we cannot go along with it, we call it frivolity and folly. We are even put in a bad mood if our companion laughs louder or longer at a joke than we think it deserves, that is, louder or longer than we feel we ourselves could laugh at it.

CHAPTER III: OF THE MANNER IN WHICH WE JUDGE OF THE PROPRIETY OR IMPROPRIETY OF THE AFFECTIONS OF OTHER MEN, BY THEIR CONCORD OR DISSONANCE WITH OUR OWN

To approve another's feelings as proper is simply to find that we sympathize with them entirely.

I.i.3.1 When the original passions of the person principally concerned are in perfect harmony with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to the spectator just and proper, and suited to their objects; and, on the contrary, when he brings the case home to himself and finds that they do not coincide with what he feels, they necessarily appear to him unjust and improper, and unsuited to the causes that arouse them. To approve of another's passions as suited to their objects, therefore, is the same thing as to observe that we entirely sympathize with them. And not to approve of them as such is the same thing as to observe that we do not entirely sympathize with them. The man who resents the injuries done to me, and sees that I resent them exactly as he does, necessarily approves of my resentment. The man whose sympathy keeps time with my grief cannot help admitting the reasonableness of my sorrow. He who admires the same poem or the same picture, and admires them exactly as I do, must surely grant that my admiration is just. He who laughs at the same joke, and laughs along with me, can hardly deny the propriety of my laughter. On the other hand, consider the person who, on these various occasions, either feels no such emotion as I feel or feels none in any proportion to mine. He cannot avoid disapproving of my sentiments because of their dissonance with his own. If my animosity goes beyond what my friend's indignation can match; if my grief exceeds what his most tender compassion can go along with; if my admiration is either too high or too low to tally with his own; if I laugh loudly and heartily when he only smiles, or, conversely, only smile when he laughs loudly and heartily; in all these cases, as soon as he turns from considering the object to

observing how I am affected by it, I must incur a greater or lesser degree of his disapproval. How much depends on how much disproportion there is between his sentiments and mine. On every occasion his own sentiments are the standards and measures by which he judges mine.

I.i.3.2 To approve of another man's opinions is to adopt those opinions, and to adopt them is to approve of them. If the same arguments that convince you convince me too, I necessarily approve of your conviction. If they do not, I necessarily disapprove of it, and I cannot possibly conceive of doing the one without the other. Everybody acknowledges, therefore, that to approve or disapprove of the opinions of others means no more than to observe their agreement or disagreement with our own. But this is equally the case with our approbation or disapprobation of the sentiments or passions of others.

I.i.3.3 There are, indeed, some cases in which we seem to approve without any sympathy or correspondence of sentiments. In these cases, consequently, the sentiment of approbation would seem to be different from the perception of this coincidence. A little attention, however, will convince us that even in these cases our approbation is ultimately founded on a sympathy or correspondence of this kind. I shall give an example from very trivial matters, because in them people's judgments are less liable to be distorted by wrong systems. We may often approve of a joke, and think the laughter of the company quite just and proper, though we do not laugh ourselves. Perhaps we are in a serious mood, or our attention happens to be taken up by other things. We have learned from experience, however, what sort of humor can make us laugh on most occasions, and we see that this joke is of that kind. We therefore approve of the laughter of the company and feel that it is natural and suited to its object. In our present mood we cannot easily enter into it, but we are aware that on most occasions we would join in it very heartily.

I.i.3.4 The same thing often happens with all the other passions. A stranger passes us in the street with every mark of the deepest

affliction, and we are immediately told that he has just received news of his father's death. In this case it is impossible that we should not approve of his grief. Yet it may often happen, without any lack of humanity on our part, that we are far from entering into the violence of his sorrow. We may scarcely feel even the first stirrings of concern on his account. Perhaps both he and his father are entirely unknown to us. Or perhaps we happen to be busy with other things and do not take the time to picture in our imagination the various distressing circumstances that must occur to him. We have learned from experience, however, that such a misfortune naturally arouses this degree of sorrow. We know that if we took the time to consider his situation fully and in all its parts, we would without doubt sympathize with him most sincerely. Our approbation of his sorrow is founded on our awareness of this conditional sympathy, even in cases where that sympathy does not actually occur. Our past experience has taught us what our sentiments would commonly correspond to, and from it we derive general rules. On this as on many other occasions, these rules correct the impropriety of our present emotions.

I.i.3.5 The sentiment or affection of the heart from which any action proceeds, and on which its whole virtue or vice must ultimately depend, can be considered under two different aspects, or in two different relations. First, it can be considered in relation to the cause that excites it, or the motive that gives rise to it. Second, it can be considered in relation to the end it aims at, or the effect it tends to produce.

I.i.3.6 The propriety or impropriety, the decency or ungracefulness, of the resulting action consists in the suitableness or unsuitableness, the proportion or disproportion, that the affection seems to bear to the cause or object that excites it.

I.i.3.7 The merit or demerit of the action consists in the beneficial or harmful nature of the effects that the affection aims at or tends to produce. Merit and demerit are the qualities by which an action is entitled to reward or deserves punishment.

I.i.3.8 In recent years philosophers have mainly considered the tendency of the affections, and have paid little attention to their relation to the cause that excites them. In ordinary life, however, when we judge a person's conduct and the sentiments that directed it, we constantly consider them under both aspects. When we blame another man for excesses of love, of grief, or of resentment, we consider not only the ruinous effects they tend to produce but also how little occasion was given for them. The merit of the one he loves, we say, is not so great, his misfortune is not so dreadful, his provocation is not so extraordinary, as to justify so violent a passion. We would have indulged the violence of his emotion, we say, and perhaps even approved of it, if the cause had been in any way proportioned to it.

I.i.3.9 When we judge an affection in this way, as proportioned or disproportioned to the cause that excites it, we can scarcely use any rule or standard other than the corresponding affection in ourselves. If we bring the case home to our own breast and find that the sentiments it gives rise to coincide and tally with our own, we necessarily approve of them as proportioned and suitable to their objects. If not, we necessarily disapprove of them as extravagant and out of proportion.

I.i.3.10 Every faculty in one man is the measure by which he judges the same faculty in another. I judge your sight by my sight, your ear by my ear, your reason by my reason, your resentment by my resentment, your love by my love. I neither have, nor can have, any other way of judging them.

CHAPTER IV: THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

The sufferer lowers his passion and the spectator imagines his situation, until their feelings come into concord.

I.i.4.1 We may judge the propriety or impropriety of another person's sentiments by their agreement or disagreement with our own on two different kinds of occasion. The first is when the objects that excite them are considered without any particular relation either to ourselves or to the person whose sentiments

we are judging. The second is when they are considered as particularly affecting one or the other of us.

I.i.4.2 1. Take first the objects considered without any particular relation either to ourselves or to the person whose sentiments we are judging. Wherever his sentiments entirely correspond with our own, we credit him with the qualities of taste and good judgment. The beauty of a plain, the grandeur of a mountain, the ornaments of a building, the expression of a painting, the composition of a discourse, the conduct of a third person, the proportions of different quantities and numbers, the various appearances that the great machine of the universe is perpetually displaying, together with the secret wheels and springs that produce them—all the general subjects of science and taste are things that we and our companions regard as having no particular relation to either of us. We both look at them from the same point of view. To produce the most perfect harmony of sentiments and affections about them, we have no need of sympathy, or of the imaginary change of situations from which it arises. If we are nevertheless often affected differently, this has one of two causes. It may come from the different degrees of attention that our different habits of life make it easy for us to give to the various parts of these complex objects. Or it may come from the different degrees of natural acuteness in the faculty of the mind to which they are addressed.

I.i.4.3 Sometimes our companion's sentiments coincide with our own in things of this kind that are obvious and easy, and on which perhaps we have never found a single person who differed from us. We must no doubt approve of his sentiments then, yet he seems to deserve no praise or admiration for them. But sometimes his sentiments not only coincide with our own but lead and direct our own. In forming them he seems to have attended to many things that we had overlooked, and to have adjusted them to all the various circumstances of their objects. Then we not only approve of them but are struck with wonder and surprise at their uncommon and unexpected acuteness and comprehensiveness, and he seems to deserve a very high degree

of admiration and applause. For approbation heightened by wonder and surprise is the sentiment properly called admiration, and applause is its natural expression. A man may judge that exquisite beauty is preferable to the grossest deformity, or that twice two equals four. Everyone must certainly approve of his decision, but surely no one will much admire it. What excites our admiration and seems to deserve our applause is something else. It is the sharp and delicate discernment of the man of taste, who distinguishes the minute and scarcely perceptible differences of beauty and deformity. It is the comprehensive accuracy of the experienced mathematician, who untangles with ease the most intricate and perplexing proportions. It is the great leader in science and taste, the man who directs and conducts our own sentiments, the range and superior justness of whose talents astonish us with wonder and surprise. On this foundation rests the greater part of the praise given to what are called the intellectual virtues.

I.i.4.4 It may be thought that the utility of these qualities is what first recommends them to us. No doubt, when we come to attend to their utility, the thought of it gives them a new value. Originally, however, we approve of another man's judgment not as something useful but as right, as accurate, as in agreement with truth and reality. It is evident that we attribute these qualities to it for no other reason than that we find it agrees with our own. In the same way, taste is originally approved of not as useful but as just, as delicate, and as precisely suited to its object. The idea of the utility of all qualities of this kind is plainly an afterthought. It is not what first recommends them to our approbation.

I.i.4.5 2. Now take the objects that particularly affect either ourselves or the person whose sentiments we are judging. With these it is both more difficult to preserve this harmony and correspondence and, at the same time, vastly more important. My companion does not naturally look at the misfortune that has happened to me, or the injury that has been done to me, from the same point of view from which I consider them. They affect

me much more closely. We do not view them from the same position, as we do a picture, a poem, or a system of philosophy, and we are therefore apt to be affected by them very differently. Some objects are unimportant and concern neither me nor my companion. I can overlook a lack of correspondence in our sentiments about these much more easily than about something that interests me as much as the misfortune that has happened to me, or the injury that has been done to me. You may despise the picture, the poem, or even the system of philosophy that I admire, but there is little danger that we will quarrel over it. Neither of us can reasonably care much about such things. They ought all to be matters of great indifference to us both. So although our opinions may be opposite, our affections may still be very nearly the same. But it is quite different with the objects by which either you or I am particularly affected. Your judgments in matters of speculation, and your sentiments in matters of taste, may be quite opposite to mine, and still I can easily overlook this opposition; and if I have any evenness of temper, I may still find some enjoyment in your conversation, even on those very subjects. But suppose you have no fellow-feeling for the misfortunes I have met with, or none that bears any proportion to the grief that distracts me. Or suppose you have no indignation at the injuries I have suffered, or none that bears any proportion to the resentment that carries me away. Then we can no longer talk about these subjects. We become intolerable to one another. I cannot bear your company, nor you mine. You are bewildered by my violence and passion, and I am enraged at your cold insensibility and lack of feeling.

I.i.4.6 In all such cases there must be some correspondence of sentiments between the spectator and the person principally concerned. For this, the spectator must first of all try, as far as he can, to put himself in the other's situation, and to bring home to himself every little circumstance of distress that could possibly occur to the sufferer. He must take on his companion's whole case, with all its smallest details, and strive to make as

perfect as possible the imaginary change of situation on which his sympathy is founded.

I.i.4.7 After all this, however, the spectator's emotions will still be very apt to fall short of the violence of what the sufferer feels. People are naturally sympathetic, but they never conceive, for what has happened to another, the degree of passion that naturally animates the person principally concerned. The imaginary change of situation on which their sympathy is founded is only momentary. The thought of their own safety, the thought that they themselves are not really the sufferers, continually intrudes on them. It does not prevent them from conceiving a passion somewhat like what the sufferer feels. But it does prevent them from conceiving anything that approaches the same degree of violence. The person principally concerned is aware of this, and at the same time he passionately desires a more complete sympathy. He longs for the relief that nothing can give him except the entire concord of the spectators' affections with his own. In the violent and disagreeable passions, his only consolation is to see the emotions of their hearts beat time with his own in every respect. But he can hope to obtain this only by lowering his passion to the pitch at which the spectators are able to go along with him. He must flatten, if I may put it that way, the sharpness of its natural tone, in order to bring it into harmony and concord with the emotions of those around him. What they feel will indeed always differ in some respects from what he feels, and compassion can never be exactly the same as original sorrow; because the sympathetic sentiment arises from a change of situations, and we are secretly aware that this change is only imaginary. That awareness not only lowers the sentiment in degree but also, to some extent, alters it in kind, and gives it a quite different modification. It is evident, however, that these two sentiments can correspond closely enough for the harmony of society. They will never be unisons, but they may be concords, and this is all that is wanted or required.[4]

4 Musical terms: a unison is two voices sounding the same pitch; a concord is two different pitches that sound harmoniously together.

I.i.4.8 Nature teaches the spectators to take on the circumstances of the person principally concerned. To produce this concord, she also teaches him, to some extent, to take on theirs. The spectators are continually placing themselves in his situation, and so conceiving emotions similar to what he feels. In the same way he is constantly placing himself in theirs, and so conceiving some degree of the coolness about his own lot with which he knows they will view it. They are constantly considering what they themselves would feel if they actually were the sufferers. In the same way he is constantly led to imagine how he would be affected if he were only one of the spectators of his own situation. Their sympathy makes them look at his situation, to some extent, with his eyes, and his sympathy makes him look at it, to some extent, with theirs. This is especially so when he is in their presence and acting under their observation. The reflected passion he conceives in this way is much weaker than the original one. It therefore necessarily abates the violence of what he felt before he came into their presence, before he began to recall how they would be affected by his situation, and to view it in this candid and impartial light.

I.i.4.9 The mind, then, is rarely so disturbed that the company of a friend will not restore it to some degree of tranquility and calm. The breast is to some extent calmed and composed the moment we come into his presence. We are immediately reminded of the light in which he will view our situation, and we begin to view it ourselves in the same light, for the effect of sympathy is instantaneous. We expect less sympathy from an ordinary acquaintance than from a friend. We cannot open up to the first all those little circumstances that we can unfold to the second. So we put on more tranquility before him, and try to fix our thoughts on the general outlines of our situation that he is willing to consider. We expect still less sympathy from a gathering of strangers. So we put on still more tranquility before them, and always try to bring our passion down to the pitch that the particular company we are in can be expected to go along with. Nor is this merely an appearance we put on. If we are at all mas-

ters of ourselves, the presence of a mere acquaintance will really compose us, even more than that of a friend. The presence of a gathering of strangers will compose us more still than that of an acquaintance.

I.i.4.10 Society and conversation, therefore, are the most powerful remedies for restoring the mind to its tranquility if it has at any time unfortunately lost it. They are also the best preservatives of that even and happy temper which is so necessary to satisfaction with ourselves and to enjoyment. Some men live in retirement and give themselves to speculation, and they are apt to sit brooding at home over grief or resentment. They may often have more humanity, more generosity, and a finer sense of honor than men of the world. Yet they seldom possess that evenness of temper which is so common among men of the world.

CHAPTER V: OF THE AMIABLE AND RESPECTABLE VIRTUES

The gentle virtues grow from the spectator's effort to feel with others; the respectable ones from self-command.

I.i.5.1 Two different sets of virtues are founded on two different efforts. One is the effort of the spectator to enter into the sentiments of the person principally concerned. The other is the effort of the person principally concerned to bring his emotions down to what the spectator can go along with. The soft, the gentle, the amiable virtues, the virtues of kindly condescension and indulgent humanity, are founded on the first. The great, the awe-inspiring and respectable virtues take their origin from the second. These are the virtues of self-denial, of self-government, of that command of the passions which subjects all the movements of our nature to what our own dignity and honor, and the propriety of our own conduct, require.[5]

I.i.5.2 How amiable he seems whose sympathetic heart seems to echo all the sentiments of those he talks with, who grieves for their calamities, resents their injuries, and rejoices at their good

5 "Condescension" in Smith's sense is a gracious readiness to meet others on their own level, without the modern sense of talking down to them.

fortune! When we bring home to ourselves the situation of his companions, we enter into their gratitude, and feel what consolation they must draw from the tender sympathy of so affectionate a friend. And for the opposite reason, how disagreeable he seems whose hard and stubborn heart feels only for himself, and is entirely insensible to the happiness or misery of others! In this case too we enter into the pain his presence must give to every person he deals with. We feel it especially for those we are most apt to sympathize with, the unfortunate and the injured.

I.i.5.3 On the other hand, what noble propriety and grace we feel in the conduct of those who exert composure and self-command in their own case! These qualities constitute the dignity of every passion, and bring it down to what others can enter into. We are disgusted by clamorous grief that, without any delicacy, demands our compassion with sighs and tears and insistent lamentations. But we revere a reserved, silent, and majestic sorrow. Such sorrow shows itself only in the swelling of the eyes, in the quivering of the lips and cheeks, and in the distant but affecting coldness of the whole behavior. It imposes a like silence on us. We regard it with respectful attention, and watch anxiously over our whole behavior. We fear that some impropriety on our part might disturb that studied tranquility, which takes so great an effort to maintain.

I.i.5.4 In the same way, the insolence and brutality of anger, when we indulge its fury without check or restraint, is of all objects the most detestable. But we admire a noble and generous resentment that pursues even the greatest injuries in a governed way. It is governed not by the rage those injuries are apt to arouse in the breast of the sufferer, but by the indignation they naturally call forth in the breast of the impartial spectator. It allows no word, no gesture, to escape it beyond what this more equitable sentiment would dictate. It never, even in thought, attempts any greater vengeance, or wishes to inflict any greater punishment, than any impartial person would rejoice to see carried out.

I.i.5.5 And hence it is that to feel much for others and little for ourselves, to restrain our selfish affections and to indulge our benevolent ones, constitutes the perfection of human nature. This alone can produce among mankind that harmony of sentiments and passions in which their whole grace and propriety consist. To love our neighbor as we love ourselves is the great law of Christianity. In the same way, it is the great precept of nature to love ourselves only as we love our neighbor—or, what comes to the same thing, as our neighbor is capable of loving us.

I.i.5.6 Taste and good judgment are sometimes considered as qualities that deserve praise and admiration. In that sense they are supposed to imply a delicacy of feeling and a sharpness of understanding not commonly met with. In the same way, the virtues of sensibility and self-command are understood to consist not in the ordinary but in the uncommon degrees of those qualities. The amiable virtue of humanity surely requires a sensibility far beyond what the crude common run of mankind possess. The great and exalted virtue of magnanimity undoubtedly demands much more than the degree of self-command that the weakest of mortals is capable of exerting. Just as there is no real ability in the common degree of the intellectual qualities, so there is no virtue in the common degree of the moral ones. Virtue is excellence, something uncommonly great and beautiful, which rises far above what is common and ordinary. The amiable virtues consist in a degree of sensibility that surprises us by its exquisite and unexpected delicacy and tenderness. The awe-inspiring and respectable virtues consist in a degree of self-command that astonishes us by its amazing mastery over the most ungovernable passions of human nature.

I.i.5.7 In this respect there is a considerable difference between virtue and mere propriety. Some qualities and actions deserve to be admired and celebrated, and others deserve simply to be approved of. On many occasions, acting with the most perfect propriety requires no more than the common and ordinary degree of sensibility or self-command that the most worthless of mankind possess. Sometimes not even that degree is needed.

Thus, to give a very low example, to eat when we are hungry is certainly, on ordinary occasions, perfectly right and proper, and everybody is bound to approve of it as such. Nothing, however, could be more absurd than to call it virtuous.

I.i.5.8 On the contrary, there may often be a considerable degree of virtue in actions that fall short of the most perfect propriety. On occasions when perfection was extremely hard to attain, such actions may still come nearer to it than could reasonably be expected; and this is very often the case on those occasions that demand the greatest exertions of self-command. Some situations bear so hard on human nature that even the greatest self-government possible to so imperfect a creature as man is not enough. It cannot stifle the voice of human weakness altogether. Nor can it reduce the violence of the passions to that pitch of moderation at which the impartial spectator can entirely enter into them. In those cases, therefore, the behavior of the sufferer may fall short of the most perfect propriety and still deserve some applause. It may even, in a certain sense, be called virtuous. It may still show an effort of generosity and magnanimity of which most men are incapable. It falls short of absolute perfection, but on such trying occasions it may come much closer to perfection than what is commonly found or expected.

I.i.5.9 In cases of this kind, when we are deciding how much blame or applause an action deserves, we very often use two different standards. The first is the idea of complete propriety and perfection. In those difficult situations no human conduct ever has reached that standard or ever can. Compared with it, the actions of all men must forever appear blameworthy and imperfect. The second is the idea of how near to or far from this complete perfection the actions of most men commonly come. Whatever goes beyond this degree seems to deserve applause, however far it may be from absolute perfection. Whatever falls short of it seems to deserve blame.

I.i.5.10 We judge the productions of all the arts that address themselves to the imagination in the same way. When a critic examines the work of one of the great masters of poetry or

painting, he may sometimes measure it against an idea of perfection in his own mind. Neither that work nor any other human work will ever reach this idea. As long as he compares the work with this standard, he can see nothing in it but faults and imperfections. But when he comes to consider the rank the work ought to hold among other works of the same kind, he necessarily compares it with a very different standard. That standard is the common degree of excellence usually attained in this particular art. When he judges the work by this new measure, it may often appear to deserve the highest applause. It may do so because it comes much nearer to perfection than most of the works that can be set in competition with it.

SECTION II: OF THE DEGREES OF THE DIFFERENT PASSIONS WHICH ARE CONSISTENT WITH PROPRIETY — INTRODUCTION

Each passion has its own point of propriety, depending on how readily spectators can sympathize with it.

I.ii.intro.1 Some passions are aroused by objects peculiarly related to ourselves. Their propriety, the pitch the spectator can go along with, must evidently lie in a certain middle degree. If the passion is too high, or too low, he cannot enter into it. Grief and resentment at private misfortunes and injuries, for example, can easily be too high, and in most people they are. They can also be too low, though this happens more rarely. We call the excess weakness and fury, and we call the deficiency stupidity, insensibility, and lack of spirit. We can enter into neither, and we are astonished and bewildered to see them.

I.ii.intro.2 This middle degree in which the point of propriety lies differs, however, from passion to passion. It is high in some and low in others. Some passions it is indecent to express very strongly, even when it is admitted that we cannot help feeling them in the highest degree. With others, the strongest expressions are on many occasions extremely graceful, even though the passions themselves perhaps do not arise so necessarily. With the first kind of passion there is, for certain reasons, little

or no sympathy. With the second there is, for other reasons, the greatest sympathy. And if we consider all the different passions of human nature, we shall find that they are regarded as decent or indecent exactly in proportion as mankind are more or less disposed to sympathize with them.

CHAPTER I: OF THE PASSIONS WHICH TAKE THEIR ORIGIN FROM THE BODY

Hunger, desire and bodily pain win little sympathy, so their strong expression is indecent.

I.ii.1.1 1. It is indecent to express any strong degree of the passions that arise from a certain situation or disposition of the body. The company is not in the same disposition, and so cannot be expected to sympathize with them. Violent hunger, for example, is on many occasions not only natural but unavoidable, yet it is always indecent, and eating voraciously is universally regarded as bad manners. There is, however, some degree of sympathy even with hunger. It is pleasant to see our companions eat with a good appetite, and all expressions of loathing are offensive. The bodily disposition habitual to a man in good health makes his stomach easily keep time—if I may be allowed so coarse an expression—with the one and not with the other. We can sympathize with the distress that excessive hunger causes when we read a description of it in the journal of a siege or of a sea voyage. We imagine ourselves in the situation of the sufferers, and from there we readily conceive the grief, the fear and dismay that must necessarily distract them. We feel some degree of those passions ourselves, and therefore sympathize with them. But we do not grow hungry by reading the description, so we cannot properly be said, even in this case, to sympathize with their hunger.

I.ii.1.2 It is the same with the passion by which Nature unites the two sexes. It is naturally the most furious of all the passions. Yet all strong expressions of it are indecent on every occasion, even between persons for whom all laws, human and divine, acknowledge its most complete indulgence to be perfectly inno-

cent. There seems, however, to be some degree of sympathy even with this passion. To talk to a woman as we would to a man is improper. It is expected that women's company should inspire us with more gaiety, more playfulness, and more attentiveness. A complete insensibility to the fair sex makes a man somewhat contemptible even to other men.

I.ii.1.3 Such is our aversion to all the appetites that originate in the body: all strong expressions of them are loathsome and disagreeable. According to some ancient philosophers, these are the passions we share with the brutes. Having no connection with the characteristic qualities of human nature, they are for that reason beneath its dignity. But there are many other passions we share with the brutes, such as resentment, natural affection, even gratitude, and these do not seem so brutish for that reason. The true cause of the peculiar disgust we feel for the appetites of the body when we see them in other men is that we cannot enter into them. Consider the person himself who feels them. As soon as they are gratified, the object that aroused them ceases to be agreeable to him, and even its presence often becomes offensive to him. He looks around in vain for the charm that transported him a moment before. He can now enter into his own passion as little as another person can. When we have dined, we have the dishes cleared away. We would treat the objects of the most ardent and passionate desires in the same way if no passions were aimed at them except those that originate in the body.

I.ii.1.4 The virtue properly called temperance consists in the command of these appetites of the body. To keep them within the bounds that regard for health and wealth prescribes is the part of prudence. But to confine them within the limits that grace, propriety, delicacy, and modesty require is the office of temperance.

I.ii.1.5 2. It is for the same reason that crying out with bodily pain, however intolerable, always seems unmanly and unbecoming. Even with bodily pain, however, there is a good deal of sympathy. If, as has already been observed, I see a blow aimed

and just about to fall on another person's leg or arm, I naturally shrink and draw back my own leg or my own arm; and when it does fall, I feel it to some extent, and am hurt by it as well as the sufferer. My hurt, however, is no doubt extremely slight. For that reason, if he makes any violent outcry, I cannot go along with him, and I never fail to despise him. And this is the case with all the passions that take their origin from the body: they excite either no sympathy at all, or a degree of it altogether out of proportion to the violence of what the sufferer feels.

I.ii.1.6 It is quite otherwise with the passions that take their origin from the imagination. The frame of my body can be only slightly affected by changes brought about in my companion's. But my imagination is more pliable, and more readily takes on, if I may put it so, the shape and configuration of the imaginations of those I am familiar with. For this reason a disappointment in love or ambition will call forth more sympathy than the greatest bodily evil. Those passions arise entirely from the imagination. A person who has lost his whole fortune, if he is in good health, feels nothing in his body. What he suffers comes from the imagination alone, which pictures to him the loss of his dignity, neglect from his friends, contempt from his enemies, dependence, want, and misery coming fast upon him. And we sympathize with him more strongly on this account, because our imaginations can more readily mold themselves on his imagination than our bodies can mold themselves on his body.

I.ii.1.7 The loss of a leg may generally be regarded as a more real calamity than the loss of a sweetheart. Yet a tragedy whose catastrophe turned on a loss of that kind would be ridiculous. A misfortune of the other kind, however trivial it may seem, has given occasion to many a fine one.[6]

I.ii.1.8 Nothing is forgotten so quickly as pain. The moment it is gone, its whole agony is over, and the thought of it can no longer disturb us in any way. We ourselves cannot then enter into the anxiety and anguish we had felt before. An unguarded word

6 Smith wrote "mistress," in the older sense of a woman courted or loved.

from a friend will cause a more lasting unease. The agony this creates is by no means over with the word. What disturbs us at first is not the object of the senses but the idea of the imagination. Since it is an idea, then, that causes our unease, the imagination goes on fretting and rankling within at the thought of it, until time and other accidents have to some extent erased it from our memory.

I.ii.1.9 Pain never calls forth any very lively sympathy unless it is accompanied by danger. We sympathize with the sufferer's fear, though not with his agony. Fear, however, is a passion derived entirely from the imagination. It represents not what we really feel but what we may possibly suffer later, and it does so with an uncertainty and fluctuation that increase our anxiety. Gout or toothache, though exquisitely painful, excites very little sympathy. More dangerous diseases, though accompanied by very little pain, excite the greatest.

I.ii.1.10 Some people faint and grow sick at the sight of a surgical operation, and in them the bodily pain caused by tearing the flesh seems to excite the most excessive sympathy. We conceive pain that comes from an external cause in a much more lively and distinct way than pain that arises from an internal disorder. I can scarcely form an idea of my neighbor's agonies when he is tortured with gout or the stone. But I have the clearest conception of what he must suffer from an incision, a wound, or a fracture. The chief reason, however, why such sights have such violent effects on us is their novelty.[7] Someone who has witnessed a dozen dissections and as many amputations will ever afterward watch all operations of this kind with great indifference, and often with complete insensibility. Yet though we may have read, or seen performed, more than five hundred tragedies, we shall seldom find our sensibility to the objects they represent to us so completely dulled.

I.ii.1.11 In some of the Greek tragedies there is an attempt to excite compassion by representing the agonies of bodily pain. Philoctetes cries out and faints from the extremity of his suffer-

7 "The stone": a stone in the bladder or kidney.

ings. Hippolytus and Hercules are both brought on stage dying under the severest tortures—tortures which, it seems, even the fortitude of Hercules could not bear. In all these cases,[8] however, it is not the pain that interests us but some other circumstance. It is not the sore foot but the solitude of Philoctetes that affects us. That solitude spreads over that charming tragedy the romantic wildness that is so agreeable to the imagination. The agonies of Hercules and Hippolytus interest us only because we foresee that death is to follow. If those heroes were to recover, we would think the representation of their sufferings perfectly ridiculous. What a tragedy that would be, in which the distress consisted of colic! Yet no pain is more exquisite. These attempts to excite compassion by representing bodily pain may be regarded as among the greatest breaches of decorum for which the Greek theater set the example.

I.ii.1.12 The little sympathy we feel with bodily pain is the foundation of the propriety of constancy and patience in enduring it. Consider the man who, under the severest tortures, lets no weakness escape him, utters no groan, and gives way to no passion that we do not entirely enter into. He commands our highest admiration. His firmness lets him keep time with our indifference and insensibility. We admire, and entirely go along with, the magnanimous effort he makes for this purpose. We approve of his behavior. And from our experience of the common weakness of human nature, we are surprised, and wonder how he can manage to act so as to deserve approbation. Approbation mixed with and enlivened by wonder and surprise makes up the sentiment properly called admiration, whose natural expression, as has already been observed, is applause.

8 Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, Euripides' *Hippolytus*, and Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, in which Hercules dies.

CHAPTER II: OF THOSE PASSIONS WHICH TAKE THEIR ORIGIN FROM A PARTICULAR TURN OR HABIT OF THE IMAGINATION

Passions bred by a particular habit of imagination, above all romantic love, strike others as somewhat ridiculous.

I.ii.2.1 Even among the passions derived from the imagination, those that take their origin from a peculiar turn or habit it has acquired are little sympathized with, though they may be acknowledged to be perfectly natural. The imaginations of mankind, not having acquired that particular turn, cannot enter into them; and such passions, though they may be allowed to be almost unavoidable at some stage of life, are always somewhat ridiculous. This is the case with the strong attachment that naturally grows up between two persons of different sexes who have long fixed their thoughts on one another. Since our imagination has not run in the same channel as the lover's, we cannot enter into the eagerness of his emotions. If our friend has been injured, we readily sympathize with his resentment and grow angry with the very person he is angry with. If he has received a benefit, we readily enter into his gratitude and have a very high sense of his benefactor's merit. But suppose he is in love. We may think his passion just as reasonable as any of its kind. Yet we never think ourselves bound to conceive a passion of the same kind, and for the same person for whom he has conceived it. To everybody but the man who feels it, the passion seems entirely out of proportion to the value of its object. Love is pardoned at a certain age, because we know it is natural; but it is always laughed at, because we cannot enter into it. All serious and strong expressions of it seem ridiculous to a third person. A lover may be good company for his beloved, but he is good company for nobody else. He himself is aware of this, and as long as he stays in his sober senses he tries to treat his own passion with banter and ridicule. It is the only style in which we care to hear about it, because it is the only style in which we ourselves are inclined to talk about it. We grow weary of the grave, pedantic,

long-winded love of Cowley and Petrarch, who never stop exaggerating the violence of their attachments. But the gaiety of Ovid and the gallantry of Horace are always agreeable.[9]

I.ii.2.2 We feel no proper sympathy with an attachment of this kind, and we never come close, even in imagination, to conceiving a passion for that particular person. Yet we either have conceived passions of the same kind or may be inclined to conceive them. So we readily enter into the high hopes of happiness expected from its gratification, as well as into the exquisite distress feared from its disappointment. It interests us not as a passion but as a situation that gives rise to other passions which do interest us: to hope, to fear, and to distress of every kind. In the same way, in a description of a sea voyage, it is not the hunger that interests us but the distress the hunger causes. Though we do not properly enter into the lover's attachment, we readily go along with the expectations of romantic happiness he derives from it. We feel how natural it is for the mind, in a certain situation—relaxed with idleness and fatigued with the violence of desire—to long for serenity and quiet. We feel how natural it is for it to hope to find them in the gratification of the passion that distracts it, and to picture for itself the life of pastoral tranquility and retirement which the elegant, tender, and passionate Tibullus takes such pleasure in describing. It is a life like the one the poets describe in the Fortunate Islands, a life of friendship, liberty, and repose, free from labor and from care, and from all the turbulent passions that attend them.[10] Even scenes of this kind interest us most when they are painted as something hoped for rather than something enjoyed. The grossness of the passion that mixes with love, and is perhaps its foundation, disappears when its gratification is far off and at a distance. But it makes the whole offensive when described as something immediately possessed. For this reason the happy passion interests us

9 Abraham Cowley (1618–1667), English poet of the love cycle *The Mistress*; Petrarch (1304–1374), Italian poet of the sonnets to Laura.

10 Tibullus (c. 55–19 BC), Roman love elegist; the Fortunate Islands (Isles of the Blessed) were the legendary western home of the blessed.

much less than the fearful and the melancholy one. We tremble at whatever may disappoint such natural and agreeable hopes, and so we enter into all the anxiety, concern, and distress of the lover.

I.ii.2.3 This is why, in some modern tragedies and romances, this passion seems so wonderfully interesting. In *The Orphan*, it is not so much the love of Castalio and Monimia that holds us as the distress that love causes. An author who brought on two lovers in a scene of perfect security, expressing their mutual fondness for one another,[11] would excite laughter, not sympathy. If a scene of this kind is ever admitted into a tragedy, it is always somewhat improper. It is tolerated not out of any sympathy with the passion expressed in it but out of concern for the dangers and difficulties that the audience foresees are likely to attend its gratification.

I.ii.2.4 The reserve that the laws of society impose on women with regard to this weakness makes it especially distressing in them, and for that very reason more deeply interesting. We are charmed with the love of Phaedra as it is expressed in the French tragedy of that name, in spite of all the extravagance and guilt that attend it. That very extravagance and guilt may be said, to some extent, to recommend it to us. They make her fear, her shame, her remorse, her horror, and her despair more natural and interesting.[12] All the secondary passions, if I may call them that, which arise from the situation of love necessarily become more furious and violent. And it is only with these secondary passions that we can properly be said to sympathize.

I.ii.2.5 Of all the passions so extravagantly out of proportion to the value of their objects, however, love is the only one that seems, even to the weakest minds, to have anything graceful or agreeable in it. In itself, first of all, it may be ridiculous, but it is not naturally odious. Its consequences are often fatal and dreadful, but its intentions are seldom harmful. And then, though there is little propriety in the passion itself, there is a good deal

11 Thomas Otway's tragedy *The Orphan* (1680).
12 Jean Racine's *Phèdre* (1677).

in some of the passions that always accompany it. There is in love a strong mixture of humanity, generosity, kindness, friendship, and esteem. These are the passions which, for reasons to be explained shortly, we have the greatest tendency of all to sympathize with, even though we are aware that they are somewhat excessive. The sympathy we feel with them makes the passion they accompany less disagreeable, and sustains it in our imagination despite all the vices that commonly go along with it. In one sex it necessarily leads to final ruin and infamy. In the other, where it is thought least fatal, it is almost always attended by an incapacity for work, a neglect of duty, and a contempt for fame and even for ordinary reputation. In spite of all this, the degree of sensibility and generosity it is supposed to carry with it makes it, for many, an object of vanity; and they like to appear capable of feeling what would do them no honor if they had really felt it.

I.ii.2.6 It is for a reason of the same kind that a certain reserve is necessary when we talk about our own friends, our own studies, our own professions. None of these are things we can expect to interest our companions as much as they interest us. And it is for lack of this reserve that one half of mankind make bad company for the other. A philosopher is company only for a philosopher; the member of a club, only for his own little knot of companions.

CHAPTER III: OF THE UNSOCIAL PASSIONS

Hatred and resentment divide our sympathy between the angry man and his target, so they need strong restraint.

I.ii.3.1 There is another set of passions which, though derived from the imagination, must always be brought down to a pitch much lower than undisciplined nature would raise them to before we can enter into them, or regard them as graceful or becoming. These are hatred and resentment, with all their different modifications. With all such passions, our sympathy is divided between the person who feels them and the person who is their

object. The interests of these two are directly opposed. What our sympathy with the person who feels them would prompt us to wish for, our fellow-feeling with the other would lead us to fear. As they are both men, we are concerned for both, and our fear for what the one may suffer dampens our resentment for what the other has suffered. Our sympathy with the man who has received the provocation therefore necessarily falls short of the passion that naturally animates him. This is partly because of those general causes that make all sympathetic passions weaker than the original ones. It is also because of a particular cause peculiar to this case: our opposite sympathy with another person. Before resentment can become graceful and agreeable, therefore, it must be humbled more than almost any other passion, and brought further down below the pitch it would naturally rise to.

I.ii.3.2 At the same time, mankind have a very strong sense of the injuries done to another. The villain in a tragedy or romance is as much the object of our indignation as the hero is the object of our sympathy and affection. We detest Iago as much as we esteem Othello, and we delight as much in the punishment of the one as we grieve at the distress of the other. But though mankind have so strong a fellow-feeling with the injuries done to their brethren, they do not always resent them more, the more the sufferer appears to resent them.[13] On most occasions, the greater his patience, his mildness, his humanity, the higher their resentment against the person who injured him. This holds provided it does not appear that he lacks spirit, or that fear was the motive of his forbearance. The amiableness of his character sharpens their sense of how atrocious the injury was.

I.ii.3.3 These passions, however, are regarded as necessary parts of the character of human nature. A person who tamely sits still and submits to insults, without trying either to repel or to revenge them, becomes contemptible. We cannot enter into his indifference and insensibility. We call his behavior mean-spir-

13 Iago and Othello: the villain and the hero of Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* (1604).

itedness, and are as truly provoked by it as by the insolence of his adversary. Even the mob are enraged to see any man submit patiently to affronts and ill treatment. They want to see this insolence resented, and resented by the person who suffers from it. They cry out to him furiously to defend or revenge himself. If his indignation is roused at last, they heartily applaud it and sympathize with it. It enlivens their own indignation against his enemy, whom they rejoice to see him attack in turn. They are as truly gratified by his revenge, provided it is not immoderate, as if the injury had been done to themselves.

I.ii.3.4 The utility of these passions to the individual is acknowledged: they make it dangerous to insult or injure him. Their utility to the public, as the guardians of justice and of equality in its administration, is no less considerable, as will be shown later. Yet there is still something disagreeable in the passions themselves, which makes their appearance in other people the natural object of our aversion. An expression of anger toward anyone present, if it goes beyond a bare hint that we are aware of his ill treatment of us, is regarded not only as an insult to that particular person but as a rudeness to the whole company. Respect for them ought to have kept us from giving way to so boisterous and offensive an emotion. It is the remote effects of these passions that are agreeable. Their immediate effects are harm to the person they are directed against. But it is the immediate effects of things, not the remote ones, that make them agreeable or disagreeable to the imagination. A prison is certainly more useful to the public than a palace, and the person who founds the one is generally guided by a much juster spirit of patriotism than the one who builds the other. But the immediate effects of a prison—the confinement of the wretches shut up in it—are disagreeable. The imagination either does not take the time to trace out the remote effects, or sees them at too great a distance to be much affected by them. A prison, therefore, will always be a disagreeable object, and the better suited it is to its intended purpose, the more disagreeable it will be. A palace, on the contrary, will always be agreeable, though its remote effects

may often be harmful to the public. It may serve to promote luxury and set an example of loose morals. Its immediate effects, however—the convenience, the pleasure, and the gaiety of the people who live in it—are all agreeable, and they suggest a thousand agreeable ideas to the imagination. That faculty generally rests on them, and seldom goes further in tracing the palace's more distant consequences. Trophies of musical or agricultural instruments, imitated in painting or in stucco, are a common and agreeable ornament of our halls and dining rooms. A trophy of the same kind made up of surgical instruments would be absurd and shocking: dissecting and amputation knives, saws for cutting bones, trepanning instruments, and so on.[14] Surgical instruments, however, are always more finely polished than agricultural ones, and generally more precisely adapted to their intended purposes. Their remote effect, the health of the patient, is agreeable too. Yet since their immediate effect is pain and suffering, the sight of them always displeases us. Instruments of war are agreeable, though their immediate effect may seem, in the same way, to be pain and suffering. But then it is the pain and suffering of our enemies, with whom we have no sympathy. For us, these instruments are immediately connected with the agreeable ideas of courage, victory, and honor. They are therefore thought to make one of the noblest parts of dress themselves, and imitations of them one of the finest ornaments of architecture. It is the same with the qualities of the mind. The ancient Stoics held that the world was governed by the all-ruling providence of a wise, powerful, and good God. Every single event, therefore, ought to be regarded as a necessary part of the plan of the universe, and as tending to promote the general order and happiness of the whole. The vices and follies of mankind were thus as necessary a part of this plan as their wisdom or their virtue. By that eternal art which draws good out of evil, they were made to tend equally to the prosperity and perfection of the great system of nature. No speculation of this kind, how-

14 A "trophy" here is a decorative arrangement of grouped objects. Trepanning is boring a hole in the skull.

ever, could lessen our natural abhorrence of vice, however deeply it might be rooted in the mind. The immediate effects of vice are so destructive, and its remote ones too distant for the imagination to trace.

I.ii.3.5 It is the same with the passions we have just been considering. Their immediate effects are so disagreeable that even when they are most justly provoked, there is still something about them that disgusts us. These, therefore, as I observed earlier, are the only passions whose expressions do not dispose and prepare us to sympathize with them before we are told what excites them. The plaintive voice of misery, heard at a distance, will not let us be indifferent to the person it comes from. As soon as it strikes our ear, it interests us in his fortune, and if it goes on, it forces us almost involuntarily to rush to his aid. In the same way, the sight of a smiling face lifts even a pensive person into that gay and airy mood which disposes him to sympathize with, and share, the joy it expresses; and he feels his heart, which thought and care had shrunk and depressed before, instantly expand and lift. But it is quite otherwise with the expressions of hatred and resentment. The hoarse, boisterous, and discordant voice of anger, heard at a distance, fills us with either fear or aversion. We do not rush toward it, as we would toward someone crying out in pain and agony. Women, and men of weak nerves, tremble and are overcome with fear, though they know that they themselves are not the objects of the anger. They conceive fear, however, by putting themselves in the situation of the person who is its object. Even those with stouter hearts are disturbed. It is not enough to make them afraid, but it is enough to make them angry, for anger is the passion they would feel in the other person's situation. It is the same with hatred. Mere expressions of spite inspire hatred against nobody but the man who uses them. Both these passions are by nature the objects of our aversion. Their disagreeable and boisterous appearance never excites our sympathy, never prepares it, and often disturbs it. Grief engages us powerfully and draws us toward the person in whom we see it. These passions, while we

do not know their cause, disgust us and detach us from him just as powerfully. It was, it seems, Nature's intention that those rougher and more unamiable emotions, which drive men apart, should be communicated less easily and more rarely.

I.ii.3.6 When music imitates the modulations of grief or joy, it either actually inspires those passions in us, or at least puts us in the mood that disposes us to conceive them. But when it imitates the notes of anger, it inspires us with fear. Joy, grief, love, admiration, and devotion are all passions that are naturally musical. Their natural tones are all soft, clear, and melodious. They naturally express themselves in phrases marked by regular pauses, which for that reason are easily fitted to the regular returns of the corresponding airs of a tune. The voice of anger, on the contrary, and of all the passions akin to it, is harsh and discordant. Its phrases too are all irregular, sometimes very long and sometimes very short, and marked by no regular pauses. It is therefore only with difficulty that music can imitate any of those passions, and the music that does imitate them is not the most agreeable. A whole entertainment may consist, without any impropriety, of imitations of the social and agreeable passions. It would be a strange entertainment that consisted entirely of imitations of hatred and resentment.

I.ii.3.7 If those passions are disagreeable to the spectator, they are no less so to the person who feels them. Hatred and anger are the greatest poison to the happiness of a good mind. There is something harsh, jarring, and convulsive in the very feeling of those passions, something that tears and distracts the breast. It altogether destroys that composure and tranquility of mind which is so necessary to happiness, and which is best promoted by the contrary passions of gratitude and love. The generous and humane are not most apt to regret the value of what they lose through the treachery and ingratitude of those they live with. Whatever they may have lost, they can generally be very happy without it. What disturbs them most is the idea of treachery and ingratitude practiced on themselves. The discordant

and disagreeable passions this arouses make up, in their own opinion, the chief part of the injury they suffer.

I.ii.3.8 How many things are required to make the gratification of resentment completely agreeable, and to make the spectator sympathize thoroughly with our revenge? First of all, the provocation must be such that we would become contemptible, and be exposed to perpetual insults, if we did not resent it to some degree. Smaller offenses are always better ignored. Nothing is more despicable than that perverse and captious temper which takes fire at every slight occasion for a quarrel. We should resent more from a sense of the propriety of resentment, from a sense that mankind expect and require it of us, than because we feel in ourselves the furies of that disagreeable passion. Of all the passions the human mind is capable of, there is none whose justness we ought to doubt so much. With none ought we so carefully to consult our natural sense of propriety before we indulge it, or so diligently to consider what the sentiments of the cool and impartial spectator will be. Magnanimity, or a concern to maintain our own rank and dignity in society, is the only motive that can ennoble the expressions of this disagreeable passion. This motive must mark our whole style and bearing. These must be plain, open, and direct; resolute without being dogmatic, and lofty without insolence. They must be not only free of petulance and low abuse, but generous, candid, and full of every proper consideration, even for the person who has offended us. In short, our whole manner must show, without our laboring to express it in an affected way, that passion has not extinguished our humanity. It must show that if we yield to the dictates of revenge, we do so reluctantly, out of necessity, and in consequence of great and repeated provocations. When resentment is guarded and qualified in this way, it may even be admitted to be generous and noble.

CHAPTER IV: OF THE SOCIAL PASSIONS

Generosity, kindness and the other benevolent affections win a redoubled sympathy and please almost everyone.

I.ii.4.1 A divided sympathy makes the whole set of passions just mentioned ungraceful and disagreeable on most occasions. In the same way, there is an opposite set that a redoubled sympathy makes almost always especially agreeable and becoming. Generosity, humanity, kindness, compassion, mutual friendship and esteem—all the social and benevolent affections—please the impartial spectator on almost every occasion when they show in someone's face or behavior, even toward people who have no special connection with ourselves. His sympathy with the person who feels these passions coincides exactly with his concern for the person who is their object. As a man, he is bound to take an interest in the happiness of the second person. That interest enlivens his fellow-feeling with the sentiments of the first, whose emotions are directed at the same object. So we always have the strongest disposition to sympathize with the benevolent affections. They seem agreeable to us in every respect. We enter into the satisfaction both of the person who feels them and of the person who is their object. Being the object of hatred and indignation gives more pain than all the harm a brave man can fear from his enemies. In the same way, there is a satisfaction in knowing that one is loved which, to a person of delicacy and sensibility, matters more to happiness than all the advantage he can expect to get from it. What character is as detestable as that of someone who takes pleasure in sowing dissension among friends and turning their tenderest love into mortal hatred? Yet what does the atrocity of this much-abhorred injury consist in? Is it in depriving them of the trivial favors they might have expected from each other if their friendship had continued? It is in depriving them of that friendship itself, in robbing them of each other's affection, from which both drew so much satisfaction. It is in disturbing the harmony of their hearts and putting

an end to the happy companionship that had existed between them. These affections, that harmony, this companionship matter more to happiness than all the little services that could be expected to flow from them. This is felt not only by the tender and the delicate but by the coarsest of common people.

I.ii.4.2 The sentiment of love is agreeable in itself to the person who feels it. It soothes and calms the heart, seems to aid the vital functions, and seems to promote the health of the human constitution. It is made still more delightful by the awareness of the gratitude and satisfaction it must arouse in the person who is its object. Their mutual regard makes them happy in each other, and sympathy with this mutual regard makes them agreeable to everyone else. With what pleasure do we look at a family in which mutual love and esteem reign throughout? In such a family the parents and children are companions to one another, with no difference between them except what respectful affection makes on the one side and kind indulgence on the other. Freedom and fondness, mutual teasing and mutual kindness, show that no conflict of interest divides the brothers and no rivalry for favor sets the sisters at odds. Everything there gives us the idea of peace, cheerfulness, harmony, and contentment. On the other hand, how uneasy does it make us to go into a house where jarring strife sets one half of those who live in it against the other? There, amid a show of smoothness and politeness, suspicious looks and sudden flashes of passion betray the mutual jealousies burning within them. At every moment those jealousies are ready to burst out through all the restraints that the presence of company imposes.

I.ii.4.3 These amiable passions are never regarded with aversion, even when they are admitted to be excessive. There is something agreeable even in the weakness of friendship and humanity. Because of the softness of their natures, the too tender mother, the too indulgent father, and the too generous and affectionate friend may perhaps sometimes be looked on with a kind of pity, though even that pity has some love mixed into it. But they can never be regarded with hatred and aversion,

or even with contempt, except by the most brutal and worthless of mankind. When we blame them for the extravagance of their attachment, we always do so with concern, with sympathy and kindness. There is a helplessness in the character of extreme humanity that engages our pity more than anything else. Nothing in it makes it either ungraceful or disagreeable in itself. We only regret that it is unfit for the world. The world is unworthy of it, and it must leave the person who has it open as prey to the treachery and ingratitude of smooth-tongued falsehood. It exposes him to a thousand pains and uneasinesses that he, of all men, least deserves to feel, and that he, of all men, is generally least able to bear. It is quite otherwise with hatred and resentment. Too violent a tendency to those detestable passions makes a person the object of universal dread and abhorrence. Such a person, we think, ought to be hunted out of all civil society, like a wild beast.

CHAPTER V: OF THE SELFISH PASSIONS

Grief and joy over our own fortunes hold a middle place; we favor small joys and great sorrows.

I.ii.5.1 Besides those two opposite sets of passions, the social and the unsocial, there is another set that holds a sort of middle place between them. It is never as graceful as the first set sometimes is, and never as odious as the second sometimes is. Grief and joy, when felt over our own private good or bad fortune, make up this third set of passions. Even when excessive, they are never as disagreeable as excessive resentment, because no opposing sympathy can ever turn us against them. And even when they are most suited to their objects, they are never as agreeable as impartial humanity and just benevolence, because no double sympathy can ever engage us on their behalf. There is, however, this difference between grief and joy: we are generally most disposed to sympathize with small joys and great sorrows. Suppose a man is lifted all at once, by some sudden turn of fortune, into a condition of life far above the one he had lived in

before. He may be sure that the congratulations of his best friends are not all perfectly sincere. An upstart, even one of the greatest merit, is generally disagreeable, and a sentiment of envy commonly keeps us from sympathizing heartily with his joy. If he has any judgment, he is aware of this. Instead of appearing elated by his good fortune, he tries as hard as he can to smother his joy and to keep down the elevation of mind that his new circumstances naturally inspire in him. He puts on the same plainness of dress and the same modesty of behavior that suited him in his former station. He redoubles his attention to his old friends and tries harder than ever to be humble, attentive, and obliging. And this is the behavior we most approve of in his situation, because, it seems, we expect him to have more sympathy with our envy and our aversion to his happiness than we have with his happiness. Even with all this he seldom succeeds. We suspect that his humility is not sincere, and he grows weary of the constraint. So before long he generally leaves all his old friends behind, except perhaps some of the humblest of them, who may condescend to become his dependents. Nor does he always gain any new friends. His new acquaintances are as offended in their pride at finding him their equal as his old ones were at his becoming their superior. It takes the most stubborn and persevering modesty to make up to either group for this mortification. He generally grows weary too soon. The sullen and suspicious pride of the old friends and the saucy contempt of the new ones provoke him to treat the first with neglect and the second with petulance. In the end he becomes habitually insolent and loses the esteem of everyone. If the chief part of human happiness comes from knowing that one is loved, as I believe it does, then these sudden changes of fortune seldom add much to happiness. The happiest man is the one who advances to greatness more gradually. The public marks him out for each step of his promotion long before he reaches it, so that when it comes it can arouse no extravagant joy in him. Nor can it reasonably create any jealousy in those he overtakes, or any envy in those he leaves behind.

I.ii.5.2 Mankind, however, sympathize more readily with the smaller joys that flow from less important causes. It is decent to be humble amid great prosperity. But we can scarcely express too much satisfaction in all the little occurrences of everyday life: in the company we spent last evening with, in the meal that was set before us, in what was said and what was done, in all the little incidents of the present conversation, and in all those trivial nothings that fill up the void of human life. Nothing is more graceful than habitual cheerfulness, which always rests on a particular relish for all the little pleasures that ordinary occurrences offer. We readily sympathize with it. It inspires us with the same joy and makes every trifle appear to us in the same agreeable light in which it presents itself to the person who has this happy disposition. This is why youth, the season of gaiety, wins our affections so easily. The tendency to joy seems even to animate the bloom of youth and beauty and to sparkle from its eyes. Even when it is seen in a person of the same sex, it lifts the old into a more joyful mood than usual. For a time they forget their infirmities and give themselves up to agreeable ideas and emotions they have long been strangers to. When the presence of so much happiness calls these back into their hearts, they take their place there like old acquaintances. The old are sorry ever to have been parted from them, and embrace them all the more heartily because of the long separation.

I.ii.5.3 It is quite otherwise with grief. Small annoyances arouse no sympathy, but deep affliction calls forth the greatest. Think of the man who is made uneasy by every little disagreeable incident. He is hurt if the cook or the butler has failed in the smallest detail of their duty. He notices every lapse in the most elaborate ceremonial of politeness, whether it is shown to himself or to anyone else. He takes it amiss that his close friend did not wish him good morning when they met before noon, and that his brother hummed a tune the whole time he himself was telling a story. He is put out of humor by bad weather when he is in the country, by bad roads when he is on a journey, and by the lack of company and the dullness of all public amusements

when he is in town. Such a person, I say, will seldom meet with much sympathy, even if he has some reason for his complaints. Joy is a pleasant emotion, and we gladly give ourselves up to it on the slightest occasion. So whenever envy does not prejudice us, we readily sympathize with joy in others. But grief is painful, and the mind naturally resists it and recoils from it, even when the misfortune is our own. We would try either not to feel it at all, or to shake it off as soon as we have felt it. Our aversion to grief does not, it is true, always keep us from feeling it in our own case on very trivial occasions. But it constantly keeps us from sympathizing with it in others when it is aroused by similarly frivolous causes, for our sympathetic passions are always less irresistible than our original ones. There is, besides, a malice in mankind that not only prevents any sympathy with little uneasinesses but makes them, to some extent, amusing. This is why we all delight in teasing, and in the small annoyance we see in our companion when he is pushed, pressed, and teased from all sides. Men of even the most ordinary good manners hide the pain that any little incident may give them. Those who are more thoroughly formed for society turn all such incidents into a joke of their own accord, knowing that their companions will do so for them. A man who lives in the world acquires the habit of considering how everything that concerns him will appear to others. This habit makes those trivial calamities appear to him in the same ridiculous light in which he knows the others are sure to see them.

I.ii.5.4 Our sympathy with deep distress, on the other hand, is very strong and very sincere. There is no need to give an example. We weep even at the feigned performance of a tragedy. So if you are suffering under some great calamity, if some extraordinary misfortune has brought you into poverty, disease, disgrace, and disappointment, you may generally count on the sincerest sympathy of all your friends. This holds even if your own fault was partly to blame. And as far as their interests and honor allow, you may count on their kindest help too. But suppose your misfortune is not of this dreadful kind. Perhaps you

have only been a little thwarted in your ambition, or only been jilted by your sweetheart, or are only henpecked by your wife. Then you can expect to be teased by all your acquaintances.

SECTION III: OF THE EFFECTS OF PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY UPON THE JUDGMENT OF MANKIND WITH REGARD TO THE PROPRIETY OF ACTION; AND WHY IT IS MORE EASY TO OBTAIN THEIR APPROBATION IN THE ONE STATE THAN IN THE OTHER — CHAPTER I: THAT THOUGH OUR SYMPATHY WITH SORROW IS GENERALLY A MORE LIVELY SENSATION THAN OUR SYMPATHY WITH JOY, IT COMMONLY FALLS MUCH MORE SHORT OF THE VIOLENCE OF WHAT IS NATURALLY FELT BY THE PERSON PRINCIPALLY CONCERNED

Our sympathy with sorrow is sharper but falls further short of the sufferer's feeling than sympathy with joy.

I.iii.1.1 Our sympathy with sorrow has been noticed more than our sympathy with joy, though it is not more real. In its most proper and original meaning, the word sympathy denotes our fellow-feeling with the sufferings of others, not with their enjoyments. An ingenious and subtle philosopher, now dead, thought it necessary to prove by arguments that we have a real sympathy with joy, and that congratulation is a principle of human nature. Nobody, I believe, ever thought it necessary to prove that compassion is one.[15]

I.iii.1.2 First, our sympathy with sorrow is, in a sense, more universal than our sympathy with joy. Even when sorrow is excessive, we may still have some fellow-feeling with it. What we feel in this case does not, it is true, amount to complete sympathy, to that perfect harmony and correspondence of sentiments which constitutes approbation. We do not weep, cry out, and lament along with the sufferer. On the contrary, we are aware of his weakness and of the extravagance of his passion, and yet we often feel real concern on his account. But if we do not entirely

15 Probably David Hume (died 1776), though the exact passage Smith means is uncertain.

enter into and go along with another person's joy, we have no regard or fellow-feeling for it whatever. The man who skips and dances about with an intemperate and senseless joy that we cannot share is the object of our contempt and indignation.

I.iii.1.3 Besides, pain, whether of mind or body, is a sharper sensation than pleasure. Our sympathy with pain falls far short of what the sufferer naturally feels, but it is generally a more lively and distinct perception than our sympathy with pleasure. This holds even though the latter, as I shall show shortly, often comes closer to the natural vividness of the original passion.

I.iii.1.4 On top of all this, we often struggle to keep down our sympathy with the sorrow of others. Whenever the sufferer is not watching us, we try, for our own sake, to suppress it as much as we can, and we do not always succeed. The resistance we put up against it, and the reluctance with which we give in to it, necessarily make us take more particular notice of it. But we never have occasion to resist our sympathy with joy in this way. If there is any envy involved, we never feel the slightest inclination toward it; and if there is none, we give way to it without any reluctance. On the contrary, since we are always ashamed of our own envy, we often pretend to sympathize with the joy of others, and sometimes really wish we could, when that disagreeable sentiment prevents us from doing so. We say we are glad at our neighbor's good fortune, when in our hearts we may really be sorry. We often feel sympathy with sorrow when we would like to be rid of it; and we often fail to feel it with joy when we would be glad to have it. So the obvious conclusion we naturally tend to draw is that our propensity to sympathize with sorrow must be very strong, and our inclination to sympathize with joy very weak.

I.iii.1.5 Despite this prejudice, however, I will venture to assert two things. Where there is no envy involved, our propensity to sympathize with joy is much stronger than our propensity to sympathize with sorrow. And our fellow-feeling with the agreeable emotion comes much closer to the vividness of what the

persons principally concerned naturally feel than the fellow-feeling we form with the painful one.

I.iii.1.6 We have some indulgence for excessive grief that we cannot entirely go along with. We know what an enormous effort it takes for the sufferer to bring his emotions down into complete harmony and agreement with those of the spectator. So when he fails, we readily forgive him. But we have no such indulgence for intemperate joy; because we are not aware that any such vast effort is needed to bring it down to what we can entirely enter into. The man who can command his sorrow under the greatest calamities seems worthy of the highest admiration. But the man who can master his joy in the same way, in the fullness of prosperity, seems hardly to deserve any praise. We sense that the gap between what the person principally concerned naturally feels and what the spectator can entirely go along with is much wider in the one case than in the other.

I.iii.1.7 What can be added to the happiness of a man who is in good health, out of debt, and has a clear conscience? For someone in this situation, any increase of fortune may properly be called superfluous; and if he is greatly elated by it, that must come from the most frivolous levity. Yet this situation may well be called the natural and ordinary state of mankind. Despite the present misery and depravity of the world, so justly lamented, this really is the condition of most people. Most people, therefore, can have no great difficulty in raising themselves to all the joy that any addition to this situation is likely to excite in a companion.

I.iii.1.8 But though little can be added to this state, much can be taken away from it. The gap between this condition and the highest peak of human prosperity is a mere trifle, but the distance between it and the lowest depth of misery is immense and enormous. For this reason adversity necessarily pushes the sufferer's mind much further below its natural state than prosperity can lift it above. The spectator must therefore find it much harder to sympathize entirely with someone's sorrow, and keep perfect time with it, than to enter thoroughly into his joy. In the

first case he must depart much further from his own natural and ordinary temper of mind than in the second. This is why our sympathy with sorrow always falls much further short of the violence of what the person principally concerned naturally feels, though it is often a sharper sensation than our sympathy with joy.

I.iii.1.9 It is agreeable to sympathize with joy; and wherever envy does not stand in the way, our heart gives itself up with satisfaction to the highest raptures of that delightful sentiment. But it is painful to go along with grief, and we always enter into it reluctantly[16].

I.iii.1.10 When we watch a tragedy performed, we struggle as long as we can against the sympathetic sorrow the entertainment inspires. We give way to it only at last, when we can no longer avoid it, and even then we try to hide our feeling from the people around us. If we shed any tears, we carefully conceal them, afraid that the other spectators, not entering into this excessive tenderness, will regard it as effeminacy and weakness. The wretched person whose misfortunes call for our compassion feels how reluctantly we are likely to enter into his sorrow, and so he presents his grief to us with fear and hesitation. He even smothers half of it. Because of this hard-heartedness of mankind, he is ashamed to give vent to the full extent of his affliction. It is otherwise with the man who revels in joy and success. Wherever envy does not turn us against him, he expects our most complete sympathy. So he is not afraid to announce

16 SMITH'S NOTE. It has been objected to me that, since I base the sentiment of approbation, which is always agreeable, on sympathy, it is inconsistent with my system to admit any disagreeable sympathy. My answer is that in the sentiment of approbation there are two things to notice: first, the sympathetic passion of the spectator; and second, the emotion that arises when he observes the perfect coincidence between this sympathetic passion in himself and the original passion in the person principally concerned. This second emotion, in which the sentiment of approbation properly consists, is always agreeable and delightful. The first may be either agreeable or disagreeable, depending on the nature of the original passion, whose features it must always retain to some degree.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. The objection came from David Hume, in a letter to Smith of July 1759.

himself with shouts of exultation, fully confident that we are heartily disposed to go along with him.

I.iii.1.11 Why should we be more ashamed to weep in company than to laugh? We may often have as real a reason for the one as for the other. But we always feel that the spectators are more likely to go along with us in the agreeable emotion than in the painful one. Complaining always looks miserable, even when we are crushed by the most dreadful calamities. But the triumph of victory is not always ungraceful. Prudence, it is true, would often advise us to bear our prosperity with more moderation, because prudence would teach us to avoid the envy that this very triumph is more apt than anything else to excite.

I.iii.1.12 How hearty are the cheers of the crowd, who never envy their superiors, at a triumph or a public entry! And how sedate and moderate their grief usually is at an execution! Our sorrow at a funeral generally amounts to no more than a put-on gravity. But our mirth at a christening or a wedding always comes from the heart, without any affectation. On these and all such joyful occasions, our satisfaction, though not as lasting, is often as lively as that of the persons principally concerned.[17] Whenever we cordially congratulate our friends (which, to the disgrace of human nature, we do only rarely), their joy literally becomes our joy. For the moment we are as happy as they are. Our heart swells and overflows with real pleasure. Joy and satisfaction sparkle in our eyes and animate every feature of our face and every gesture of our body.

I.iii.1.13 But when, on the other hand, we commiserate with our friends in their afflictions, how little we feel compared with what they feel! We sit down beside them and look at them, and while they tell us the circumstances of their misfortune, we listen with gravity and attention. But their story is interrupted at every moment by those natural bursts of passion that often seem almost to choke them in the middle of it; and how far the languid emotions of our hearts are from keeping time with the

17 A "public entry" was the ceremonial arrival of a monarch or other dignitary into a city.

raptures of theirs! At the same time, we may be aware that their passion is natural, and no greater than what we ourselves might feel on a similar occasion. We may even inwardly reproach ourselves for our lack of sensibility, and perhaps, for that reason, work ourselves up into an artificial sympathy. Yet once it is raised, this sympathy is always the slightest and most fleeting imaginable. Generally, as soon as we have left the room, it vanishes and is gone forever. Nature, it seems, when she loaded us with our own sorrows, thought they were enough. So she did not command us to take any further share in the sorrows of others than was necessary to prompt us to relieve them.

I.iii.1.14 It is because of this dull sensibility to the afflictions of others that magnanimity amid great distress always appears so divinely graceful. The man who can stay cheerful amid a number of trivial mishaps behaves in a polished and agreeable way. But the man who can bear the most dreadful calamities in the same way seems more than mortal. We feel what an immense effort is required to silence the violent emotions that naturally agitate and distract people in his situation. We are amazed to find that he can command himself so entirely. At the same time, his firmness coincides perfectly with our insensibility. He makes no demand on us for that more exquisite degree of sensibility which we find, and are mortified to find, that we do not possess. There is the most perfect correspondence between his sentiments and ours, and therefore the most perfect propriety in his behavior. It is a propriety, moreover, that our experience of the usual weakness of human nature would not have led us to expect him to be able to maintain. We marvel with surprise and astonishment at the strength of mind capable of so noble and generous an effort. The sentiment of complete sympathy and approbation, mixed with and enlivened by wonder and surprise, constitutes what is properly called admiration, as has already been noted more than once. Cato was surrounded on all sides by his enemies, unable to resist them and disdaining to submit to them, and the proud maxims of that age left him no choice but

to kill himself;[18] yet he never shrank from his misfortunes. He never begged, in the pitiful voice of wretchedness, for those miserable sympathetic tears we are always so unwilling to give. Instead he armed himself with manly fortitude, and the moment before carrying out his fatal resolution he gave, with his usual calm, all the orders necessary for the safety of his friends. To Seneca, that great preacher of insensibility, this Cato appears as a spectacle that even the gods themselves might watch with pleasure and admiration.[19]

I.iii.1.15 Whenever we meet with examples of such heroic magnanimity in ordinary life, we are always deeply moved. We are more apt to weep and shed tears for people who in this way seem to feel nothing for themselves than for those who give way to all the weakness of sorrow. In this particular case the sympathetic grief of the spectator appears to go beyond the original passion in the person principally concerned. The friends of Socrates all wept when he drank the last draught, while he himself showed the gayest and most cheerful tranquility. On all such occasions the spectator makes no effort to conquer his sympathetic sorrow, and has no need to make any. He has no fear that it will carry him into anything extravagant or improper. Rather, he is pleased with the sensibility of his own heart, and gives way to it with satisfaction and self-approbation. So he gladly dwells on the most melancholy views that can naturally occur to him about his friend's calamity. For that friend he perhaps never before felt the tender and tearful passion of love so exquisitely. But it is quite otherwise with the person principally concerned. He is obliged, as far as possible, to turn his eyes away from whatever is naturally terrible or disagreeable in his situation. He fears that too serious an attention to those circumstances might make so violent an impression on him that he could no longer keep within the bounds of moderation, or make himself

18 Cato the Younger (95–46 BC), Roman statesman and Stoic, who took his own life at Utica rather than submit to Julius Caesar.

19 Seneca (c. 4 BC–AD 65), Roman Stoic philosopher; the passage is in his essay *On Providence* (*De Providentia*), chapter 2.

the object of the complete sympathy and approbation of the spectators. He therefore fixes his thoughts only on the agreeable circumstances: the applause and admiration he is about to deserve by the heroic magnanimity of his behavior. He feels that he is capable of so noble and generous an effort, and that in this dreadful situation he can still act as he would wish to act. This enlivens him and carries him away with joy. It enables him to keep up that triumphant gaiety which seems to exult in the victory he thus wins over his misfortunes.

I.iii.1.16 By contrast, a person who sinks into sorrow and dejection over some misfortune of his own always appears somewhat low and contemptible. We cannot bring ourselves to feel for him what he feels for himself, and what we perhaps would feel for ourselves in his situation. So we despise him; unjustly, perhaps, if any sentiment can be regarded as unjust when nature irresistibly drives us to it. The weakness of sorrow never appears agreeable in any respect, except when it arises more from what we feel for others than from what we feel for ourselves. A son, on the death of an indulgent and respected father, may give way to it without much blame. His sorrow is founded chiefly on a sort of sympathy with his departed parent, and we readily enter into this humane emotion. But if he indulged the same weakness over some misfortune that affected only himself, he would no longer meet with any such indulgence. Suppose he were reduced to beggary and ruin, or exposed to the most dreadful dangers, or even led out to a public execution. If he shed one single tear on the scaffold, he would disgrace himself forever in the opinion of all the gallant and generous part of mankind. Their compassion for him would, it is true, be very strong and very sincere. But since it would still fall short of this excessive weakness, they would have no pardon for a man who could expose himself like this in the eyes of the world. His behavior would affect them with shame rather than with sorrow, and the dishonor he had brought on himself would seem to them the most lamentable circumstance of his misfortune. How it disgraced the memory of the intrepid Duke of Biron, who had so

often braved death on the battlefield, that he wept on the scaffold when he saw the state into which he had fallen, and remembered the favor and the glory from which his own rashness had so unfortunately thrown him![20]

CHAPTER II: OF THE ORIGIN OF AMBITION, AND OF THE DISTINCTION OF RANKS

Because people sympathize more readily with joy, we pursue wealth and rank to win attention and approval.

I.iii.2.1 Because mankind are disposed to sympathize more fully with our joy than with our sorrow, we make a parade of our riches and conceal our poverty. Nothing is so humiliating as to be obliged to expose our distress to public view, and to feel that, though our situation lies open to the eyes of all mankind, no one conceives half of what we suffer. Indeed, it is chiefly from this regard to the sentiments of mankind that we pursue riches and avoid poverty. For what is the purpose of all the toil and bustle of this world? What is the end of avarice and ambition, of the pursuit of wealth, of power, and of preeminence? Is it to supply the necessities of nature? The wages of the humblest laborer can supply them. We see that they provide him with food and clothing, and with the comfort of a house and of a family. If we examined his household management strictly, we would find that he spends a great part of them on conveniences that may be regarded as luxuries. We would also find that on special occasions he can even give something to vanity and distinction. What, then, is the cause of our aversion to his situation? Why should those who have been brought up in the higher ranks of life regard it as worse than death to be reduced to living on the same simple fare as he does, even without labor, to dwell under the same lowly roof, and to be clothed in the same humble attire? Do they imagine that their stomachs are better, or their sleep sounder, in a palace than in a cottage? The contrary has

20 Charles de Gontaut, duc de Biron (1562–1602), marshal of France, executed for conspiring against Henry IV.

been observed so often that nobody is ignorant of it. Indeed, it would be obvious even if it had never been observed. Where, then, does that emulation come from which runs through all the different ranks of men? And what advantages do we aim at by that great purpose of human life which we call bettering our condition? To be observed, to be attended to, to be noticed with sympathy, satisfaction, and approbation: these are all the advantages we can hope to derive from it. It is the vanity, not the ease or the pleasure, that interests us. But vanity is always founded on the belief that we are the object of attention and approbation. The rich man glories in his riches because he feels that they naturally draw the attention of the world to him. He feels, too, that mankind are disposed to go along with him in all the agreeable emotions that the advantages of his situation so readily inspire in him. At the thought of this his heart seems to swell and expand within him, and he is fonder of his wealth on this account than for all the other advantages it brings him. The poor man, by contrast, is ashamed of his poverty. He feels that it either puts him out of the sight of mankind, or that, if they do take any notice of him, they still have scarcely any fellow-feeling with the misery and distress he suffers. He is mortified on both counts; for though being overlooked and being disapproved of are entirely different things, obscurity shuts us off from the daylight of honor and approbation. So to feel that no one notices us necessarily dampens the most agreeable hope, and disappoints the most ardent desire, of human nature. The poor man goes out and comes in unheeded, and in the midst of a crowd he is as obscure as if he were shut up in his own hovel. The humble cares and painful efforts that occupy people in his situation offer no amusement to the pleasure-seeking and the fashionable. They turn their eyes away from him. If the extremity of his distress forces them to look at him, it is only to drive so disagreeable an object out of their company. The fortunate and the proud wonder at the insolence of human wretchedness. How dare it present itself before them, and presume to disturb the serenity of their happiness with the loathsome sight of its

misery? The man of rank and distinction, by contrast, is observed by all the world. Everybody is eager to look at him, and to conceive, at least by sympathy, the joy and exultation that his circumstances naturally inspire in him. His actions are objects of public concern. Scarcely a word, scarcely a gesture, can fall from him that goes entirely unnoticed. In a great assembly he is the person on whom everyone fixes their eyes; it is on him that all their passions seem to wait in expectation, ready to receive whatever movement and direction he will impress on them. If his behavior is not altogether absurd, he has at every moment an opportunity to interest mankind, and to make himself the object of the observation and fellow-feeling of everybody around him. It is this which makes greatness the object of envy, despite the restraint it imposes and the loss of liberty that comes with it. In the opinion of mankind, this compensates for all the toil, all the anxiety, all the humiliations that must be undergone in pursuing greatness. What matters still more, it compensates for all the leisure, all the ease, all the carefree security that are forfeited forever by gaining it.

I.iii.2.2 When we consider the condition of the great in those deceptive colors in which the imagination tends to paint it, it seems almost the abstract idea of a perfect and happy state. It is the very state that, in all our waking dreams and idle reveries, we had sketched out for ourselves as the final object of all our desires. We therefore feel a special sympathy with the satisfaction of those who are in it. We favor all their inclinations and further all their wishes. What a pity, we think, that anything should spoil and corrupt so agreeable a situation! We could even wish them immortal, and it seems hard to us that death should at last put an end to such perfect enjoyment. It is cruel of Nature, we think, to force them from their exalted stations to that humble but hospitable home which she has provided for all her children. "Great King, live forever!" is the compliment we would readily pay them, in the manner of Eastern flattery, if experience did not teach us how absurd it is. Every calamity that befalls them, every injury done to them, excites ten times

more compassion and resentment in the breast of the spectator than he would have felt had the same things happened to other men.[21] Only the misfortunes of kings provide proper subjects for tragedy. In this respect they resemble the misfortunes of lovers. Those two situations are the chief ones that interest us in the theater, because, in spite of all that reason and experience can tell us to the contrary, the prejudices of the imagination attach to these two states a happiness superior to any other. To disturb or to end such perfect enjoyment seems the most atrocious of all injuries. The traitor who conspires against the life of his monarch is thought a greater monster than any other murderer. All the innocent blood shed in the civil wars provoked less indignation than the death of Charles I.[22] Imagine a stranger to human nature who saw how indifferent men are to the misery of their inferiors, and what regret and indignation they feel at the misfortunes and sufferings of those above them. He would be apt to imagine that pain must be more agonizing, and the convulsions of death more terrible, to people of higher rank than to those of humbler stations.

I.iii.2.3 The distinction of ranks and the order of society are founded on this disposition of mankind to go along with all the passions of the rich and the powerful. Our obsequiousness to our superiors more often arises from our admiration for the advantages of their situation than from any private hope of benefit from their good will. Their benefits can reach only a few, but their fortunes interest almost everybody. We are eager to help them complete a system of happiness that comes so near to perfection. We desire to serve them for their own sake, with no other reward than the vanity or the honor of obliging them. Nor is our deference to their inclinations founded chiefly, or entirely, on regard for the utility of such submission, or for the order of society, which such submission best supports. Even when the order of society seems to require that we oppose them,

21 Echoes the courtiers' address to the king in the Book of Daniel: "O king, live for ever" (e.g., Daniel 2:4).

22 Charles I of England, beheaded in 1649 after the English Civil Wars.

we can hardly bring ourselves to do it. That kings are the servants of the people, to be obeyed, resisted, deposed, or punished as the public convenience may require, is the doctrine of reason and philosophy. But it is not the doctrine of Nature. Nature would teach us to submit to them for their own sake, and to tremble and bow down before their exalted station. It would teach us to regard their smile as a reward sufficient to make up for any services, and to dread their displeasure as the severest of all humiliations, even if no other harm were to follow from it. To treat them in any respect as men, to reason and argue with them on ordinary occasions, requires such resolution that few men have the greatness of mind to sustain them in it, unless familiarity and acquaintance also help them. The strongest motives, the most furious passions—fear, hatred, and resentment—are scarcely enough to outweigh this natural disposition to respect them. Their conduct must have excited the highest degree of all those passions, whether justly or unjustly, before the bulk of the people can be brought to oppose them with violence, or to want to see them punished or deposed. Even when the people have been brought this far, they are apt to relent at every moment. They easily slip back into their habitual deference toward those they have been accustomed to regard as their natural superiors. They cannot bear the humiliation of their monarch. Compassion soon takes the place of resentment. They forget all past provocations, their old principles of loyalty revive, and they rush to re-establish the ruined authority of their old masters with the same violence with which they had opposed it. The death of Charles I brought about the Restoration of the royal family. When James II was seized by the populace as he tried to escape by ship, compassion for him almost prevented the Revolution, and made it proceed more heavily than before.[23]

I.iii.2.4 Do the great seem unaware of how cheaply they can buy the public's admiration? Or do they seem to imagine that for them, as for other men, it must be bought with sweat or with

23 The Restoration of Charles II came in 1660. James II was captured at Faversham in December 1688 while fleeing to France during the Glorious Revolution.

blood? What important accomplishments is the young nobleman taught, so that he can uphold the dignity of his rank and make himself worthy of the superiority over his fellow citizens to which his ancestors' virtue had raised them? Is it knowledge, industry, patience, self-denial, or virtue of any kind? Since all his words and all his movements are watched, he learns to pay habitual attention to every detail of ordinary behavior, and he works to perform all those small duties with the most exact propriety. He knows how closely he is observed, and how inclined people are to indulge all his wishes. So even on the most unimportant occasions he acts with the ease and loftiness that this thought naturally inspires. His air, his manner, his bearing all express that elegant and graceful sense of his own superiority which those born to lower stations can hardly ever attain. These are the arts by which he means to make people submit more easily to his authority, and to govern their inclinations as he pleases—and in this he is seldom disappointed. These arts, backed by rank and preeminence, are enough on ordinary occasions to govern the world. For most of his reign Louis XIV was regarded, not only in France but all over Europe, as the most perfect model of a great prince. But what were the talents and virtues that earned him this great reputation? Was it the scrupulous and unbending justice of all his undertakings, the immense dangers and difficulties that attended them, or the tireless and relentless dedication with which he pursued them? Was it his wide knowledge, his exquisite judgment, or his heroic courage? It was none of these qualities. But he was, first of all, the most powerful prince in Europe, and so held the highest rank among kings; and then, as his historian says, "he surpassed all his courtiers in the gracefulness of his figure and the majestic beauty of his features. The sound of his voice, noble and moving, won the hearts that his presence intimidated.[24] He had a walk and a bearing that could suit only him and his rank, and that would have been ridiculous in anyone else. The embarrassment he caused in those who spoke to him flattered the secret

24 The historian is Voltaire, in *The Age of Louis XIV* (1751).

satisfaction with which he felt his own superiority. The old officer who grew flustered and faltered while asking him a favor, and who, unable to finish what he was saying, told him, 'Sire, I hope Your Majesty will believe that I do not tremble like this before your enemies,' had no difficulty getting what he asked for." These frivolous accomplishments, backed by his rank—and no doubt also by some measure of other talents and virtues, though these seem not to have risen much above mediocrity—established this prince in the esteem of his own age, and have won a good deal of respect for his memory even from posterity. Beside these, in his own times and in his own presence, no other virtue, it seems, appeared to have any merit. Knowledge, industry, courage, and beneficence trembled, were abashed, and lost all their dignity before them.

I.iii.2.5 But it is not by accomplishments of this kind that a man of lower rank can hope to distinguish himself. Politeness is so much the virtue of the great that it will do little credit to anyone but them. The fop who imitates their manner, and tries to stand out through the superior propriety of his ordinary behavior, is rewarded with a double share of contempt for his folly and presumption. Why should a man whom nobody thinks worth looking at be very anxious about how he holds up his head, or what he does with his arms, as he walks across a room? He is surely taken up with a very superfluous attention—and with an attention, too, that shows a sense of his own importance which no other mortal can go along with. The most perfect modesty and plainness, joined to as much casualness as is consistent with the respect due to the company, ought to be the chief marks of a private man's behavior. If he ever hopes to distinguish himself, it must be by more important virtues. He must acquire dependents to balance the dependents of the great, and he has no other fund to pay them from than the labor of his body and the activity of his mind. So he must cultivate these. He must gain superior knowledge in his profession, and show superior industry in practicing it. He must be patient in labor, resolute in danger, and firm in distress. He must bring these talents into public view

through the difficulty, the importance, and at the same time the good judgment of his undertakings, and through the severe and relentless dedication with which he pursues them. Honesty and prudence, generosity and frankness, must mark his behavior on all ordinary occasions. At the same time he must be eager to enter all those situations in which acting with propriety requires the greatest talents and virtues, but in which the greatest applause is to be won by those who can acquit themselves with honor. With what impatience does the man of spirit and ambition, held down by his situation, look around for some great opportunity to distinguish himself? No circumstances that can offer this seem undesirable to him. He even looks forward with satisfaction to the prospect of foreign war or civil strife. With secret rapture and delight he sees, through all the confusion and bloodshed that come with them, the likelihood that those longed-for occasions will arise in which he may draw upon himself the attention and admiration of mankind. The man of rank and distinction, by contrast, is unwilling to entangle himself in anything that may bring difficulty or distress. His whole glory consists in the propriety of his ordinary behavior; he is content with the humble renown this can give him, and he has no talents for gaining any other. To cut a figure at a ball is his great triumph, and to succeed in a love affair his highest exploit. He has an aversion to all public disturbances. This is not from love of mankind, for the great never look on their inferiors as their fellow creatures; nor is it from lack of courage, for in that he is seldom deficient. It is from an awareness that he has none of the virtues such situations call for, and that public attention will certainly be drawn away from him by others. He may be willing to expose himself to some small danger, and to serve in a campaign when it happens to be the fashion. But he shudders with horror at the thought of any situation that demands the continual and long exercise of patience, industry, fortitude, and concentrated thought. These virtues are hardly ever found in men born to those high stations. Accordingly, in all governments, even in monarchies, the highest

offices are generally held, and the whole detail of administration carried on, by men who were brought up in the middle and lower ranks of life. They have been carried forward by their own industry and abilities, though burdened with the jealousy and opposed by the resentment of all those born above them. And the great, after first regarding them with contempt and then with envy, are at last content to fawn on them with the same abject servility with which they wish the rest of mankind to behave toward themselves.

I.iii.2.6 It is the loss of this easy dominion over people's affections that makes the fall from greatness so unbearable. When the family of the king of Macedon was led in triumph by Paulus Aemilius, their misfortunes, it is said, made them share the Roman people's attention with their conqueror. The sight of the royal children, whose tender age left them unaware of their situation, struck the spectators, amid all the public rejoicing and prosperity, with the tenderest sorrow and compassion. The king came next in the procession. He seemed like a man bewildered and stunned, robbed of all feeling by the greatness of his calamities. His friends and ministers followed behind him.[25] As they moved along, they kept casting their eyes on their fallen sovereign, and always burst into tears at the sight. Their whole behavior showed that they were not thinking of their own misfortunes, but were wholly taken up with his, which were so much greater. The high-minded Romans, on the other hand, looked on him with disdain and indignation, and regarded as unworthy of any compassion a man who could be so mean-spirited as to bear to live under such calamities. Yet what did those calamities amount to? According to most historians, he was to spend the rest of his days under the protection of a powerful and humane people, in a condition that in itself should seem worth envying—a condition of plenty, ease, leisure, and security, from which he could not fall even through his own folly. But he was no longer

25 Perseus, last king of Macedon, was defeated by Lucius Aemilius Paulus at Pydna in 168 BC and led in his Roman triumph the next year; the story is told in Plutarch's *Life of Aemilius Paulus*.

to be surrounded by that admiring mob of fools, flatterers, and dependents who used to wait on his every movement. He was no longer to be gazed at by multitudes, or to have it in his power to make himself the object of their respect, their gratitude, their love, their admiration. The passions of nations were no longer to shape themselves to his inclinations. This was the unbearable calamity that robbed the king of all feeling, that made his friends forget their own misfortunes, and that the magnanimous Romans could scarcely conceive how any man could be so mean-spirited as to bear to survive.

I.iii.2.7 "Love," says Lord Rochefoucauld, "is commonly followed by ambition; but ambition is hardly ever followed by love." That passion, once it has taken full possession of the heart, will admit neither a rival nor a successor. To those who have grown used to having public admiration, or even to hoping for it, all other pleasures sicken and fade. Of all the discarded statesmen who, for their own peace of mind, have tried to master their ambition and to despise the honors they could no longer reach, how few have managed it?[26] Most of them have spent their time in the most listless and dreary idleness. They were vexed at the thought of their own insignificance and incapable of taking an interest in the occupations of private life. They had no enjoyment except when they talked of their former greatness, and no satisfaction except when they were busy with some vain scheme to regain it. Are you seriously resolved never to trade your liberty for the lordly servitude of a court, but to live free, fearless, and independent? There seems to be one way to keep to that virtuous resolution—and perhaps only one. Never enter the place from which so few have been able to return. Never come within the circle of ambition, and never set yourself in comparison with those masters of the earth who have already monopolized the attention of half mankind before you.

I.iii.2.8 Of such enormous importance does it seem, in people's imaginations, to stand in the situation that places them most in view of general sympathy and attention. And so place—that

26 François de La Rochefoucauld (1613–1680), *Maxims*, no. 490.

great object which sets aldermen's wives at odds—is the end of half the labors of human life;[27] and it is the cause of all the tumult and bustle, all the plunder and injustice, that avarice and ambition have brought into this world. Sensible people, it is said, do indeed despise place. That is, they despise sitting at the head of the table, and do not care who is singled out to the company by that trivial circumstance, which the smallest advantage can outweigh. But rank, distinction, and preeminence no man despises, unless he is either raised very far above or sunk very far below the ordinary standard of human nature. Either he is so confirmed in wisdom and real philosophy that he is satisfied that, as long as the propriety of his conduct makes him the just object of approbation, it matters little whether he is noticed or approved of; or he is so used to the idea of his own lowliness, so sunk in lazy and stupefied indifference, that he has entirely forgotten the desire, and almost the very wish, for superiority.

I.iii.2.9 Becoming the natural object of mankind's joyful congratulations and sympathetic attentions is, in this way, what gives prosperity all its dazzling splendor; and in the same way nothing deepens the gloom of adversity so much as feeling that our misfortunes are the object not of the fellow-feeling but of the contempt and aversion of our fellow men. That is why the most dreadful calamities are not always the hardest to bear. It is often more mortifying to appear in public under small mishaps than under great misfortunes. The first excite no sympathy. The second, though they may excite none that comes near the sufferer's anguish, do call forth a very lively compassion. In this latter case the sentiments of the spectators are less far from those of the sufferer, and their imperfect fellow-feeling gives him some help in bearing his misery. Before a cheerful gathering, a gentleman would be more mortified to appear covered in filth and rags than in blood and wounds. The latter situation would engage their pity; the other would provoke their laughter. A judge who orders a criminal to be set in the pillory dishonors

27 "Place" here means precedence or social rank; the quarrels of aldermen's wives over who goes first at civic occasions were a stock joke.

him more than if he had condemned him to the scaffold. The great prince who some years ago caned a general officer at the head of his army disgraced him beyond recovery. The punishment would have been much lighter had he shot him through the body.[28] By the laws of honor, striking with a cane dishonors and striking with a sword does not, for an obvious reason. Those lighter punishments, when inflicted on a gentleman, to whom dishonor is the greatest of all evils, come to be regarded among a humane and generous people as the most dreadful of all. In the case of persons of that rank, therefore, they are everywhere set aside; and the law, while it takes their lives on many occasions, respects their honor on almost all. To flog a person of quality, or to set him in the pillory, for any crime whatever, is a brutality of which no European government except that of Russia is capable.

I.iii.2.10 A brave man is not made contemptible by being brought to the scaffold. He is made contemptible by being set in the pillory. His behavior in the one situation may win him universal esteem and admiration. No behavior in the other can make him agreeable. In the one case the sympathy of the spectators supports him. It saves him from shame, from the awareness that his misery is felt by himself alone, which is of all sentiments the most unbearable. In the other there is no sympathy; or, if there is any, it is not with his pain, which is a trifle, but with his awareness that no sympathy accompanies this pain. It is with his shame, not with his sorrow. Those who pity him blush and hang their heads for him. He droops in the same way, and feels himself irrecoverably degraded by the punishment, though not by the crime. The man who dies with resolution, by contrast, is naturally regarded with the upright look of esteem and approbation, and so he himself wears the same undaunted expression. If the crime does not deprive him of the respect of others, the punishment never will. He has no suspicion that his situation is an object of contempt or derision to anybody, and he can, with pro-

28 The pillory was a wooden frame locking an offender's head and hands, in which he was exposed to public ridicule.

priety, take on the air not only of perfect serenity but of triumph and exultation.

I.iii.2.11 "Great dangers," says the Cardinal de Retz, "have their charms, because there is some glory to be won even when we fail. But moderate dangers have nothing but what is horrible, because loss of reputation always follows lack of success." His maxim rests on the same foundation as what we have just been observing about punishments.[29]

I.iii.2.12 Human virtue is superior to pain, to poverty, to danger, and to death. It does not even need its utmost efforts to despise them. But it may have its misery exposed to insult and derision, be led in triumph, and be set up for the hand of scorn to point at. In that situation its constancy is far more likely to fail. Compared with the contempt of mankind, all other external evils are easily borne.

CHAPTER III: OF THE CORRUPTION OF OUR MORAL SENTIMENTS, WHICH IS OCCASIONED BY THIS DISPOSITION TO ADMIRE THE RICH AND THE GREAT, AND TO DESPISE OR NEGLECT PERSONS OF POOR AND MEAN CONDITION

Admiring the rich and despising the poor upholds social rank but chiefly corrupts our moral sentiments.

I.iii.3.1 This disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise, or at least to neglect, people of poor and humble condition is necessary both to establish and to maintain the distinction of ranks and the order of society. Yet it is at the same time the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments. Moralists in every age have complained that wealth and greatness are often regarded with the respect and admiration due only to wisdom and virtue. They have complained, too, that the contempt whose only proper

29 Jean-François Paul de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz (1613–1679), French churchman and a leader of the Fronde. The remark comes from his Memoirs.

objects are vice and folly is often most unjustly bestowed on poverty and weakness.

I.iii.3.2 We desire both to be respectable and to be respected. We dread both to be contemptible and to be held in contempt. But on coming into the world we soon find that wisdom and virtue are by no means the only objects of respect, and that vice and folly are not the only objects of contempt. We often see the respectful attentions of the world directed more strongly toward the rich and the great than toward the wise and the virtuous. We often see the vices and follies of the powerful much less despised than the poverty and weakness of the innocent. To deserve, to acquire, and to enjoy the respect and admiration of mankind are the great objects of ambition and emulation. Two different roads are open to us, each leading equally to this much-desired goal. One runs through the study of wisdom and the practice of virtue. The other runs through the acquisition of wealth and greatness. Two different characters are set before us to emulate. One is of proud ambition and ostentatious greed. The other is of humble modesty and fair-minded justice. Two different models, two different pictures, are held out to us, by which we may shape our own character and behavior. The one is more gaudy and glittering in its coloring. The other is more correct and more exquisitely beautiful in its outline. The one forces itself on the notice of every wandering eye; the other draws the attention of scarcely anyone but the most studious and careful observer. It is chiefly the wise and the virtuous who are the real and steady admirers of wisdom and virtue, and they are a select party, though I am afraid only a small one. The great mob of mankind are the admirers and worshippers of wealth and greatness. What may seem more extraordinary, they are most often its disinterested admirers and worshippers.

I.iii.3.3 The respect we feel for wisdom and virtue is no doubt different from the respect we conceive for wealth and greatness, and it takes no very fine discernment to tell the difference. But despite this difference, those sentiments bear a very considerable resemblance to each other. In some particular features they

no doubt differ. In the general look of the face, however, they seem so nearly the same that inattentive observers are very apt to mistake the one for the other.

I.iii.3.4 Where merit is equal, there is scarcely anyone who does not respect the rich and the great more than the poor and the humble. Most people admire the presumption and vanity of the former far more than the real and solid merit of the latter. It is hardly consistent with good morals, or perhaps even with good language, to say that mere wealth and greatness, apart from merit and virtue, deserve our respect. We must admit, however, that they almost always obtain it, and that they may therefore be considered, in some respects, its natural objects. Those exalted stations may no doubt be completely degraded by vice and folly. But the vice and folly must be very great before they can bring about this complete degradation. The profligacy of a man of fashion is looked on with much less contempt and aversion than that of a man of humbler condition. In the man of humbler condition, a single breach of the rules of temperance and propriety is commonly more resented than the constant and open contempt of them ever is in the man of fashion.

I.iii.3.5 In the middling and lower stations of life, the road to virtue and the road to fortune are, happily, in most cases very nearly the same. By fortune I mean, at least, such fortune as people in those stations can reasonably expect to acquire. In all the middling and lower professions, real and solid professional ability, joined to prudent, just, firm, and temperate conduct, can very seldom fail to succeed. Ability will sometimes prevail even where the conduct is far from correct. Yet habitual imprudence, injustice, weakness, or profligacy will always cloud the most brilliant professional abilities, and sometimes bring them down altogether. Besides, people in the lower and middling stations of life can never be great enough to be above the law. The law must generally awe them into some sort of respect for at least the more important rules of justice. The success of such people, too, almost always depends on the favor and good opinion of their neighbors and equals; and these can very seldom be won

without reasonably regular conduct. In such situations, therefore, the good old proverb that honesty is the best policy almost always holds perfectly true. In such situations we may therefore generally expect a considerable degree of virtue. Fortunately for the good morals of society, these are the situations of by far the greater part of mankind.

I.iii.3.6 In the higher stations of life the case is, unhappily, not always the same. Consider the courts of princes and the drawing rooms of the great. There, success and advancement depend not on the esteem of intelligent and well-informed equals but on the whimsical and foolish favor of ignorant, presumptuous, and proud superiors. In those places flattery and falsehood too often prevail over merit and ability. In such societies the ability to please is more regarded than the ability to serve. In quiet and peaceful times, when the storm is far off, the prince or great man wishes only to be amused. He is even apt to imagine that he has scarcely any need of anyone's service, or that those who amuse him are quite able to serve him. The outward graces and frivolous accomplishments of that impertinent and foolish thing called a man of fashion are commonly more admired than the solid and masculine virtues of a warrior, a statesman, a philosopher, or a legislator. All the great and awe-inspiring virtues, all the virtues that can fit a man for the council, the senate, or the field, are held in the utmost contempt and derision by the insolent and insignificant flatterers who usually cut the greatest figure in such corrupted societies. The Duke of Sully was once called on by Louis XIII to give his advice in some great emergency. He noticed the favorites and courtiers whispering to one another and smiling at his unfashionable appearance. "Whenever your Majesty's father," said the old warrior and statesman, "did me the honor of consulting me, he ordered the court buffoons to withdraw into the antechamber."[30]

I.iii.3.7 Because we are disposed to admire, and therefore to imitate, the rich and the great, they are able to set, or to lead,

30 Maximilien de Béthune, Duke of Sully (1560–1641), chief minister of Henry IV of France, the father of Louis XIII.

what is called the fashion. Their dress is the fashionable dress. The language of their conversation is the fashionable style, and their air and bearing are the fashionable behavior. Even their vices and follies are fashionable. Most people are proud to imitate and resemble them in the very qualities that dishonor and degrade them. Vain men often give themselves airs of a fashionable profligacy which in their hearts they do not approve of, and of which they are perhaps not really guilty. They want to be praised for what they themselves do not think praiseworthy. They are ashamed of unfashionable virtues which they sometimes practice in secret, and for which they secretly feel some degree of real veneration. There are hypocrites of wealth and greatness as well as hypocrites of religion and virtue; and a vain man is as apt to pretend to be what he is not in the one way as a cunning man is in the other. He takes on the carriages, servants, and splendid way of living of his superiors. He does not consider that whatever may be praiseworthy in any of these draws all its merit and propriety from its suitability to a particular situation and fortune, one that both requires the expense and can easily bear it.[31] Many a poor man places his glory in being thought rich. He does not consider what that reputation imposes on him. Its duties (if one may call such follies by so venerable a name) must soon reduce him to beggary. They will also make his situation even more unlike that of the people he admires and imitates than it was to begin with.

I.iii.3.8 To reach this envied situation, the candidates for fortune too often abandon the paths of virtue. Unhappily, the road that leads to the one and the road that leads to the other sometimes lie in very opposite directions. But the ambitious man flatters himself about the splendid situation he is advancing toward. There, he tells himself, he will have so many means of commanding the respect and admiration of mankind, and will be able to act with such superior propriety and grace, that the luster of his future conduct will entirely cover or erase the foulness of the steps by which he reached that height. In many gov-

31 "Equipage" (Smith's word) means a carriage with its horses and attendants.

ernments the candidates for the highest stations are above the law. If they can attain the object of their ambition, they have no fear of being called to account for the means by which they acquired it. So they often try to supplant and destroy those who oppose them or stand in the way of their greatness. They do this not only by fraud and falsehood, the ordinary and vulgar arts of intrigue and faction. They sometimes do it by committing the most enormous crimes, by murder and assassination, by rebellion and civil war. They fail more often than they succeed. Commonly they gain nothing but the disgraceful punishment their crimes deserve. But even if they should be lucky enough to attain the greatness they wished for, they are always most miserably disappointed in the happiness they expect to enjoy in it. What the ambitious man really pursues is not ease or pleasure. It is always honor of one kind or another, though often an honor very badly understood. Yet the honor of his exalted station appears polluted and defiled by the baseness of the means by which he rose to it, both in his own eyes and in other people's. He may try to erase what he has done from his own memory and from other people's. He may lavish money on every liberal expense, or indulge excessively in every profligate pleasure, which is the wretched but usual resource of ruined characters. He may throw himself into the rush of public business, or into the prouder and more dazzling tumult of war. Yet the memory never fails to pursue him. He calls in vain on the dark and dismal powers of forgetfulness and oblivion. He himself remembers what he has done, and that memory tells him that other people must remember it too. He may be surrounded by all the gaudy pomp of the most ostentatious greatness, by the venal and vile flattery of the great and of the learned, and by the more innocent, though more foolish, cheers of the common people. He may enjoy all the pride of conquest and the triumph of successful war. Amid all this, he is still secretly pursued by the avenging furies of shame and remorse. While glory seems to surround him on every side, he himself, in his own imagination, sees black and foul infamy close on his heels, ready at every

moment to overtake him from behind. Even the great Caesar, though he had the magnanimity to dismiss his guards, could not dismiss his suspicions. The memory of Pharsalia still haunted and pursued him.[32] At the request of the senate, he had the generosity to pardon Marcellus. On that occasion he told the assembly that he was not unaware of the plots being carried on against his life;[33] but he said that he had lived long enough both for nature and for glory, and so he was content to die and despised all conspiracies. He had perhaps lived long enough for nature. But he felt himself the object of such deadly resentment from the people whose favor he wished to win, and whom he still wished to regard as his friends. Such a man had certainly lived too long for real glory, or for all the happiness he could ever hope to enjoy in the love and esteem of his equals.

32 At Pharsalus in Thessaly (48 BC) Caesar defeated Pompey and the senatorial party in the civil war, a victory over fellow Romans.

33 Marcus Claudius Marcellus, a supporter of Pompey, was pardoned by Caesar in 46 BC. Cicero's speech *Pro Marcello* reports Caesar's remark.

Part II: Of Merit and Demerit; or, of the Objects of Reward and Punishment

Gratitude and resentment, justice and beneficence, and the strange influence of fortune on how we judge actions.

SECTION I: OF THE SENSE OF MERIT AND DEMERIT — INTRODUCTION

Merit and demerit, the qualities of deserving reward and punishment, are distinct from propriety.

II.i.intro.1 There is another set of qualities attributed to the actions and conduct of human beings. They are distinct from the propriety or impropriety of those actions, from their decency or ungracefulness, and they are the objects of a distinct kind of approbation and disapprobation. These are Merit and Demerit: the qualities of deserving reward and of deserving punishment.

II.i.intro.2 It has already been observed that the sentiment or affection of the heart from which any action proceeds, and on which its whole virtue or vice depends, may be considered under two different aspects, or in two different relations: first, in relation to the cause or object that excites it; and second, in relation to the end it aims at, or the effect it tends to produce; that the propriety or impropriety, the decency or ungracefulness, of the action that follows depends on the suitableness or unsuitableness, the proportion or disproportion, which the affection seems to bear to the cause or object that excites it; and that the merit or demerit, the good or ill desert, of the action it gives rise to depends on the beneficial or harmful effects which the affection aims at or tends to produce. What our sense of the propriety

or impropriety of actions consists in has been explained in the first part of this discourse. We now come to consider what our sense of their good or ill desert consists in.

CHAPTER I: THAT WHATEVER APPEARS TO BE THE PROPER OBJECT OF GRATITUDE, APPEARS TO DESERVE REWARD; AND THAT, IN THE SAME MANNER, WHATEVER APPEARS TO BE THE PROPER OBJECT OF RESENTMENT APPEARS TO DESERVE PUNISHMENT

An action deserves reward if it is the proper object of gratitude, and punishment if of resentment.

II.i.1.1 To us, then, an action must seem to deserve reward when it seems to be the proper and approved object of the sentiment that most immediately and directly prompts us to reward another, or to do him good. In the same way, an action must seem to deserve punishment when it seems to be the proper and approved object of the sentiment that most immediately and directly prompts us to punish another, or to do him harm.

II.i.1.2 The sentiment that most immediately and directly prompts us to reward is gratitude; the one that most immediately and directly prompts us to punish is resentment.

II.i.1.3 To us, therefore, an action must seem to deserve reward when it seems to be the proper and approved object of gratitude; just as, on the other hand, an action must seem to deserve punishment when it seems to be the proper and approved object of resentment.

II.i.1.4 To reward is to recompense, to repay, to return good for good received. To punish is also to recompense, to repay, though in a different way: it is to return evil for evil that has been done.

II.i.1.5 There are some other passions besides gratitude and resentment that interest us in the happiness or misery of others; but none of them so directly moves us to be the instruments of either. The love and esteem that grow out of acquaintance and habitual approval necessarily lead us to be pleased at the good fortune of the man who is the object of such agreeable emotions, and so to be willing to lend a hand in promoting it. Our love,

however, is fully satisfied even if his good fortune comes about without our help. All this passion desires is to see him happy, regardless of who brought about his prosperity. But gratitude cannot be satisfied in this way. If the person to whom we owe many obligations is made happy without our help, this pleases our love but does not content our gratitude. Until we have repaid him, until we ourselves have had a hand in promoting his happiness, we feel still burdened with the debt that his past services have laid on us.

II.i.1.6 In the same way, the hatred and dislike that grow out of habitual disapproval would often lead us to take a malicious pleasure in the misfortune of the man whose conduct and character excite so painful a passion. But although dislike and hatred harden us against all sympathy, and sometimes even dispose us to rejoice at another's distress, still, if there is no resentment in the case—if neither we nor our friends have received any great personal provocation—these passions would not naturally lead us to want to be instrumental in bringing that distress about. Even if we had no punishment to fear for having had some hand in it, we would rather it happened by other means. To someone in the grip of violent hatred it might perhaps be agreeable to hear that the person he abhorred and detested had been killed in some accident. But if he had the least spark of justice—and he might still have it, though this passion is not very favorable to virtue—it would hurt him terribly to have been himself, even unintentionally, the cause of this misfortune. Still more would the very thought of deliberately contributing to it shock him beyond all measure. He would reject with horror even the idea of so execrable a plan; and if he could imagine himself capable of such an enormity, he would begin to regard himself in the same odious light in which he had regarded the person he disliked. But it is quite otherwise with resentment. If the person who had done us some great injury—who had murdered our father or our brother, for example—were to die of a fever soon afterward, or even be brought to the scaffold for some other crime, this might soothe our hatred, but it would not fully grat-

ify our resentment. Resentment would make us want not only that he should be punished, but that he should be punished by our means, and for the particular injury he had done to us. Resentment cannot be fully gratified unless the offender is made not merely to grieve in his turn, but to grieve for the particular wrong we have suffered from him. He must be made to repent and be sorry for this very action, so that others, through fear of a like punishment, may be frightened away from committing a like offense. The natural gratification of this passion tends, of its own accord, to produce all the political ends of punishment: the correction of the criminal, and an example to the public.

II.i.1.7 Gratitude and resentment, therefore, are the sentiments that most immediately and directly prompt us to reward and to punish. To us, therefore, a person must seem to deserve reward when he seems to be the proper and approved object of gratitude; and to deserve punishment when he seems to be the proper and approved object of resentment.

CHAPTER II: OF THE PROPER OBJECTS OF GRATITUDE AND RESENTMENT

Gratitude and resentment are proper when the impartial spectator fully sympathizes with them.

II.i.2.1 To be the proper and approved object of either gratitude or resentment can mean nothing other than to be the object of the gratitude, and of the resentment, that naturally seems proper and is approved of.

II.i.2.2 But these passions, like all the other passions of human nature, seem proper and are approved of when the heart of every impartial spectator entirely sympathizes with them—when every disinterested bystander entirely enters into them and goes along with them.

II.i.2.3 A person, therefore, seems to deserve reward when he is, to some person or persons, the natural object of a gratitude that every human heart is disposed to beat time to, and so to applaud. And on the other hand, a person seems to deserve punishment when he is, in the same way, to some person or per-

sons, the natural object of a resentment that the breast of every reasonable man is ready to adopt and sympathize with. To us, surely, an action must seem to deserve reward when everybody who knows of it would wish to reward it, and therefore is delighted to see it rewarded. And just as surely, an action must seem to deserve punishment when everybody who hears of it is angry at it, and for that reason rejoices to see it punished.

II.i.2.4 1. Just as we sympathize with the joy of our companions when they prosper, so we join them in the complacency and satisfaction with which they naturally regard whatever is the cause of their good fortune. We enter into the love and affection they conceive for it, and begin to love it too. We would be sorry for their sakes if it were destroyed, or even if it were placed too far away from them, out of reach of their care and protection—though they would lose nothing by its absence except the pleasure of seeing it. This is all the more the case if it is a man who has been the fortunate instrument of the happiness of his fellows. When we see one man helped, protected, or relieved by another, our sympathy with the joy of the person who receives the benefit serves only to quicken our fellow-feeling with his gratitude toward the one who bestows it. When we look at the person who is the cause of his pleasure with the eyes with which we imagine he must look at him, his benefactor seems to stand before us in the most engaging and amiable light. So we readily sympathize with the grateful affection he conceives for a person to whom he is so much obliged, and consequently we applaud the returns he is disposed to make for the kindnesses done to him. Since we entirely enter into the affection from which these returns proceed, they necessarily seem in every way proper and suited to their object.

II.i.2.5 2. In the same way, just as we sympathize with the sorrow of our fellow-creature whenever we see his distress, so we also enter into his abhorrence of and aversion to whatever has caused it. Our heart, as it adopts and beats time to his grief, is likewise animated by the spirit with which he tries to drive away or destroy its cause. The idle and passive fellow-feeling with

which we accompany him in his sufferings readily gives way to that more vigorous and active sentiment with which we go along with him in the effort he makes, either to repel them or to gratify his aversion to whatever caused them. This is all the more the case when it is a man who has caused them. When we see one man oppressed or injured by another, the sympathy we feel with the sufferer's distress seems to serve only to quicken our fellow-feeling with his resentment against the offender. We are delighted to see him attack his adversary in turn, and we are eager and ready to help him whenever he exerts himself in defense, or even, up to a certain point, in vengeance. If the injured man should die in the quarrel, we sympathize not only with the real resentment of his friends and relations, but with the imaginary resentment that in our fancy we lend to the dead man, who is no longer capable of feeling that or any other human sentiment. But as we put ourselves in his situation—as we enter, so to speak, into his body, and in our imaginations, to some extent, bring back to life the disfigured and mangled corpse of the slain—when we bring his case home to our own hearts in this way, we feel, on this as on many other occasions, an emotion that the person principally concerned is incapable of feeling, and which we nevertheless feel through an illusory sympathy with him. The sympathetic tears we shed for the immense and irretrievable loss he seems in our fancy to have suffered seem to be only a small part of the duty we owe him. The injury he has suffered, we think, demands the main part of our attention. We feel the resentment we imagine he ought to feel, and which he would feel if any awareness of what happens on earth remained in his cold and lifeless body. His blood, we think, calls aloud for vengeance. The very ashes of the dead seem disturbed at the thought that his injuries are to go unrevenged. The horrors that are supposed to haunt the murderer's bed, and the ghosts that superstition imagines rising from their graves to demand vengeance on those who brought them to an untimely end, all have their origin in this natural sympathy with the imaginary resentment of the slain. And so, at least with

regard to this most dreadful of all crimes, Nature—prior to any reflection on the utility of punishment—has stamped upon the human heart, in the strongest and most indelible characters, an immediate and instinctive approbation of the sacred and necessary law of retaliation.

CHAPTER III: THAT WHERE THERE IS NO APPROBATION OF THE CONDUCT OF THE PERSON WHO CONFERS THE BENEFIT, THERE IS LITTLE SYMPATHY WITH THE GRATITUDE OF HIM WHO RECEIVES IT: AND THAT, ON THE CONTRARY, WHERE THERE IS NO DISAPPROBATION OF THE MOTIVES OF THE PERSON WHO DOES THE MISCHIEF, THERE IS NO SORT OF SYMPATHY WITH THE RESENTMENT OF HIM WHO SUFFERS IT

We share gratitude only if we approve the benefactor's motives, and resentment only if we condemn the offender's.

II.i.3.1 It should be observed, however, that no matter how beneficial on the one hand, or how harmful on the other, the actions or intentions of the person who acts may have been to the person who is, if I may put it so, acted upon, still: if in the first case there seems to have been no propriety in the agent's motives—if we cannot enter into the affections that influenced his conduct—we have little sympathy with the gratitude of the person who receives the benefit; or if in the second case there seems to have been no impropriety in the agent's motives—if, on the contrary, the affections that influenced his conduct are such as we must necessarily enter into—we can have no sympathy whatever with the resentment of the person who suffers. Little gratitude seems due in the first case, and any kind of resentment seems unjust in the second. The one action seems to merit little reward, the other to deserve no punishment.

II.i.3.2 1. First, I say that wherever we cannot sympathize with the affections of the agent, wherever there seems to be no propriety in the motives that influenced his conduct, we are less disposed to enter into the gratitude of the person who received the benefit of his actions. Very little return seems due to that

foolish and lavish generosity which confers the greatest benefits from the most trivial motives, and gives an estate to a man merely because his first name and surname happen to be the same as the giver's. Such services do not seem to call for any proportionate recompense. Our contempt for the agent's folly keeps us from fully entering into the gratitude of the person who has received the kindness. His benefactor seems unworthy of it. When we place ourselves in the situation of the person obliged, we feel that we could conceive no great reverence for such a benefactor; so we readily excuse him from much of the submissive veneration and esteem we would think due to a more respectable character. And provided he always treats his weak friend with kindness and humanity, we are willing to excuse him from many attentions and marks of regard that we would require toward a worthier patron. Those princes who have heaped wealth, power, and honors on their favorites with the greatest lavishness have seldom inspired the degree of attachment to their persons that has often been felt for princes more sparing with their favors. The good-natured but injudicious extravagance of James the First of Great Britain seems to have attached nobody to him; and that prince, for all his sociable and harmless disposition, appears to have lived and died without a friend. Yet the whole gentry and nobility of England risked their lives and fortunes in the cause of his more frugal and discriminating son, despite the coldness and distant severity of his usual manner.[1]

II.i.3.3 2. Secondly, I say that wherever the agent's conduct appears to have been entirely directed by motives and affections that we thoroughly enter into and approve of, we can have no sympathy at all with the resentment of the sufferer, however great the harm that may have been done to him. When two people quarrel, if we take the side of one of them and entirely adopt his resentment, we cannot possibly enter into the other's.

1 James VI of Scotland and I of England (reigned 1603–1625) was notorious for showering gifts on favorites such as the Duke of Buckingham. His son Charles I drew the Royalist nobility and gentry to his side in the Civil War (1642–1651).

Our sympathy with the person whose motives we go along with, and whom we therefore regard as in the right, cannot help hardening us against all fellow-feeling with the other, whom we necessarily regard as in the wrong. Whatever the latter may have suffered, then, it can neither displease nor provoke us, so long as it is no more than we ourselves would have wished him to suffer—no more than our own sympathetic indignation would have prompted us to inflict on him. When an inhuman murderer is brought to the scaffold, we have some compassion for his misery. But we can have no fellow-feeling at all with his resentment, if he should be so absurd as to express any against either his prosecutor or his judge. The natural tendency of their just indignation against so vile a criminal is indeed the most fatal and ruinous possible for him. But we cannot possibly be displeased with the tendency of a sentiment that, when we bring the case home to ourselves, we feel we cannot avoid adopting.

CHAPTER IV: RECAPITULATION OF THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS

Smith restates the conditions: proper motives in the agent, and sympathy with the receiver's gratitude or resentment.

II.i.4.1 1. We do not, therefore, thoroughly and heartily sympathize with one man's gratitude toward another merely because this other has been the cause of his good fortune, unless he caused it from motives that we entirely go along with. Our heart must adopt the agent's principles, and go along with all the affections that influenced his conduct, before it can entirely sympathize with—and beat time to—the gratitude of the person who has benefited from his actions. If there appears to have been no propriety in the benefactor's conduct, then however beneficial its effects, it does not seem to demand, or necessarily to require, any proportionate recompense.

II.i.4.2 But suppose the propriety of the affection from which the action proceeds is joined to its beneficent tendency, so that we entirely sympathize and go along with the agent's motives. Then

the love we conceive for him on his own account heightens and enlivens our fellow-feeling with the gratitude of those who owe their prosperity to his good conduct. His actions then seem to demand, and, if I may put it this way, to call aloud for, a proportionate recompense. We then entirely enter into the gratitude that prompts people to bestow it. The benefactor then seems to be the proper object of reward, when we thus entirely sympathize with, and approve of, the sentiment that prompts people to reward him. When we approve of, and go along with, the affection from which the action proceeds, we must necessarily approve of the action, and regard the person toward whom it is directed as its proper and suitable object.

II.i.4.3 2. In the same way, we cannot sympathize at all with one man's resentment against another merely because this other has been the cause of his misfortune, unless he caused it from motives that we cannot enter into. Before we can adopt the sufferer's resentment, we must disapprove of the agent's motives, and feel that our heart renounces all sympathy with the affections that influenced his conduct. If there appears to have been no impropriety in these, then however fatal the tendency of the resulting action to those against whom it is directed, it does not seem to deserve any punishment, or to be the proper object of any resentment.

II.i.4.4 But suppose the impropriety of the affection from which the action proceeds is joined to its hurtfulness, so that our heart rejects with abhorrence all fellow-feeling with the agent's motives. Then we heartily and entirely sympathize with the sufferer's resentment. Such actions then seem to deserve, and, if I may put it this way, to call aloud for, a proportionate punishment. We entirely enter into, and thereby approve of, the resentment that prompts people to inflict it. The offender then necessarily seems to be the proper object of punishment, when we thus entirely sympathize with, and thereby approve of, the sentiment that prompts people to punish. In this case too, when we approve of, and go along with, the affection from which the action proceeds, we must necessarily approve of the action, and

regard the person against whom it is directed as its proper and suitable object.

CHAPTER V: THE ANALYSIS OF THE SENSE OF MERIT AND DEMERIT

The sense of merit combines direct sympathy with the agent and indirect sympathy with those he affects.

II.i.5.1 1. Our sense of the propriety of conduct, then, arises from what I shall call a direct sympathy with the affections and motives of the person who acts. In the same way, our sense of its merit arises from what I shall call an indirect sympathy with the gratitude of the person who is, if I may put it this way, acted upon.

II.i.5.2 We cannot, in fact, thoroughly enter into the gratitude of the person who receives the benefit unless we have first approved of the benefactor's motives. For this reason the sense of merit seems to be a compound sentiment, made up of two distinct emotions: a direct sympathy with the sentiments of the agent, and an indirect sympathy with the gratitude of those who receive the benefit of his actions.

II.i.5.3 On many different occasions we can plainly distinguish these two different emotions combining and uniting in our sense of the good desert of a particular character or action. When we read in history of actions of proper and beneficent greatness of mind, how eagerly we enter into such designs! How animated we are by the high-spirited generosity that directs them! How keen we are for their success! How grieved at their failure! In imagination we become the very person whose actions are set before us. We transport ourselves in fancy to the scenes of those distant and forgotten adventures, and imagine ourselves playing the part of a Scipio or a Camillus, a Timoleon or an Aristides.[2] So far, our sentiments are founded on the direct

2 Heroes of ancient history: Scipio Africanus, who defeated Hannibal; Camillus, savior of early Rome; Timoleon, who freed Syracuse from tyranny; and Aristides "the Just" of Athens.

sympathy with the person who acts. But the indirect sympathy with those who receive the benefit of such actions is felt no less keenly. Whenever we put ourselves in their situation, with what warm and affectionate fellow-feeling we enter into their gratitude toward those who served them so essentially! We embrace, as it were, their benefactor along with them. Our heart readily sympathizes with the highest raptures of their grateful affection. No honors, no rewards, we think, can be too great for them to bestow on him. When they make this proper return for his services, we heartily applaud them and go along with them. But we are shocked beyond all measure if their conduct suggests that they have little sense of the obligations conferred on them. In short, our whole sense of the merit and good desert of such actions—of the propriety and fitness of recompensing them, and of making the person who performed them rejoice in his turn—arises from the sympathetic emotions of gratitude and love. When we bring home to our own breast the situation of those principally concerned, we feel ourselves naturally carried by these emotions toward the man who could act with such proper and noble beneficence.

II.i.5.4 2. Our sense of the impropriety of conduct arises from a lack of sympathy, or from a direct antipathy, with the affections and motives of the agent. In the same way, our sense of its demerit arises from what I shall here too call an indirect sympathy with the resentment of the sufferer.

II.i.5.5 We cannot, in fact, enter into the sufferer's resentment unless our heart has first disapproved of the agent's motives and renounced all fellow-feeling with them. For this reason the sense of demerit, like that of merit, seems to be a compound sentiment, made up of two distinct emotions: a direct antipathy to the sentiments of the agent, and an indirect sympathy with the resentment of the sufferer.

II.i.5.6 Here too, on many different occasions, we can plainly distinguish these two different emotions combining and uniting in our sense of the ill desert of a particular character or action. When we read in history of the treachery and cruelty of a Borgia

or a Nero, our heart rises up against the detestable sentiments that influenced their conduct, and renounces with horror and loathing all fellow-feeling with such execrable motives. So far, our sentiments are founded on the direct antipathy to the affections of the agent. And the indirect sympathy with the resentment of the sufferers is felt still more keenly.[3] When we bring home to ourselves the situation of the people whom those scourges of mankind insulted, murdered, or betrayed, what indignation we feel against such insolent and inhuman oppressors of the earth! Our sympathy with the unavoidable distress of the innocent sufferers is no more real and no more lively than our fellow-feeling with their just and natural resentment. The former sentiment only heightens the latter, and the idea of their distress serves only to inflame and fan our animosity against those who caused it. When we think of the anguish of the sufferers, we take their side against their oppressors more earnestly. We enter more eagerly into all their schemes of vengeance, and feel ourselves at every moment wreaking in imagination, on such violators of the laws of society, the punishment that our sympathetic indignation tells us is due to their crimes. Our sense of the horror and dreadful atrocity of such conduct; the delight we take in hearing that it was properly punished; the indignation we feel when it escapes this due retaliation—in short, our whole sense and feeling of its ill desert, of the propriety and fitness of inflicting evil on the person guilty of it, and of making him grieve in his turn—arises from the sympathetic indignation that naturally boils up in the spectator's breast

3 Cesare Borgia (1475–1507), the ruthless Italian prince held up by Machiavelli; Nero, Roman emperor AD 54–68, notorious for his cruelty.

whenever he thoroughly brings home to himself the case of the

sufferer.[4]

SECTION II: OF JUSTICE AND BENEFICENCE — CHAPTER I: COMPARISON OF THOSE TWO VIRTUES

Beneficence is free and cannot be forced; justice may be enforced, and its violation deserves punishment.

II.ii.1.1 Actions of a beneficent tendency that proceed from proper motives seem alone to require reward. This is because they alone are the approved objects of gratitude, or excite the sympathetic gratitude of the spectator.

II.ii.1.2 Actions of a hurtful tendency that proceed from improper motives seem alone to deserve punishment. This is because they alone are the approved objects of resentment, or excite the sympathetic resentment of the spectator.

II.ii.1.3 Beneficence is always free. It cannot be extorted by force, and the mere lack of it exposes no one to punishment, because the mere lack of beneficence tends to do no real, positive evil. It may disappoint us of the good that might reasonably have been expected, and for that reason it may justly excite dislike and disapproval: it cannot, however, provoke any resentment that mankind will go along with. Take the man who does not repay his benefactor when he has the power to, and when his benefactor needs his help. He is no doubt guilty of the blackest ingratitude. The heart of every impartial spectator refuses all fellow-feeling with the selfishness of his motives, and he is the proper object of the strongest disapproval. But still he does no positive hurt to anybody. He only fails to do the good that, in propriety, he ought to have done. He is the object of hatred, a passion naturally excited by impropriety of sentiment and behavior. He is not the object of resentment, a passion that is never properly called forth except by actions that tend to do real and positive hurt to particular persons. His lack of gratitude, therefore, cannot be punished. To force him to do what gratitude requires of him, and what every impartial spectator would approve of his doing, would be, if anything, still more improper

than his neglecting to do it. His benefactor would disgrace himself if he tried to compel him to gratitude by violence. And it

would be impertinent for any third person who was not the superior of either to interfere. Still, of all the duties of benefi-

cence, those that gratitude recommends to us come nearest to what is called a perfect and complete obligation. What friend-

ship, what generosity, what charity would prompt us to do, with universal approval, is still freer than the duties of gratitude, and

can be extorted by force still less. We speak of the debt of gratitude. We do not speak of a debt of charity or generosity, or even

that way, but a matter of fact. We are not now examining on what principles a perfect being would approve of the punishment of bad actions. We are examining on what principles so weak and imperfect a creature as man actually, in fact, approves of it. The principles I have just mentioned clearly have a very great effect on his sentiments, and it seems wisely arranged that they should. The very existence of society requires that unmerited and unprovoked malice be restrained by proper punishments. It follows that inflicting those punishments must be regarded as a proper and praiseworthy action. Man is naturally endowed with a desire for the welfare and preservation of society. Even so, the Author of nature has not left it to his reason to discover that a certain application of punishments is the proper means of reaching this end. Instead, he has given him an immediate and instinctive approval of the very application that is best suited to reach it. In this respect the order of nature is exactly of a piece with what it is on many other occasions. There are certain ends which, because of their special importance, may be regarded—if the expression is allowed—as nature's favorite ends. With regard to all of these, she has consistently done the same thing. She has given mankind not only an appetite for the end she proposes, but also an appetite for the means by which alone that end can be brought about. And this second appetite is for those means for their own sake, independent of their tendency to produce the end. Thus self-preservation and the propagation of the species are the great ends that Nature seems to have proposed in forming all animals. Mankind are endowed with a desire for those ends and an aversion to their contraries. They have a love of life and a dread of death. They have a desire for the continuance and perpetuity of the species, and an aversion to the thought of its complete extinction. But though we have so strong a desire for those ends, finding the proper means of bringing them about has not been entrusted to the slow and uncertain decisions of our reason. Nature has directed us to most of these means by original and immediate instincts. Hunger, thirst, the passion that unites the two sexes, the love of pleasure, and the dread of pain prompt us to use those means for their own sake. We do so without any thought of their tendency toward the beneficent ends that the great Director of nature intended to produce by them. Before I close this note, I must point out a difference between the approbation of propriety and the approbation of merit or beneficence. Before we approve of anyone's sentiments as proper and suited to their objects, it is not enough that we are affected in the same way as he is. We must also perceive this harmony and correspondence of sentiments between him and ourselves. Suppose I hear of a misfortune that has befallen my friend, and I feel exactly the degree of concern that he gives way to. Still, until I am told how he behaves, and until I perceive the harmony between his emotions and mine, I cannot be said to approve of the sentiments that govern his behavior. The approbation of propriety, therefore, requires that we sympathize entirely with the person who acts. It also requires that we perceive this perfect agreement between his sentiments and our own. It is the opposite when I hear of a benefit that has been bestowed on another person. Let the person who received it be affected however he pleases. If, by bringing his case home to myself, I feel gratitude arise in my own breast, I necessarily approve of his benefactor's conduct, and I regard it as meritorious and the proper object of reward. Whether the person who received the benefit feels gratitude or not plainly cannot alter in any degree our sentiments about the merit of the one who bestowed it. Here, therefore, no actual correspondence of sentiments is required. It is enough that they would correspond if he were grateful. Our sense of merit is often founded on one of those illusory sympathies by which, when we bring another's case home to ourselves, we are often affected in a way in which the person chiefly concerned is incapable of being affected. There is a similar difference between our disapprobation of demerit and our disapprobation of impropriety.

of friendship, when friendship is mere esteem and has not been

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. "The inspired writers": the authors of the Bible.

heightened and mixed with gratitude for good turns done.

II.ii.1.4 Resentment seems to have been given us by nature for defense, and for defense only. It is the safeguard of justice and the security of innocence. It prompts us to fend off the harm that someone attempts to do us, and to retaliate for harm already done. In this way the offender may be made to repent of his injustice, and others may be frightened by fear of the same punishment from committing the same offense. Resentment must therefore be kept for these purposes, and the spectator can never go along with it when it is exercised for any other. But the mere lack of the beneficent virtues may disappoint us of the good that might reasonably be expected. Even so, it neither does nor attempts any harm that we could need to defend ourselves against.

II.ii.1.5 There is, however, another virtue whose observance is not left to our own free will. It may be extorted by force, and its violation exposes us to resentment, and consequently to punishment. This virtue is justice. The violation of justice is injury. It does real and positive hurt to particular persons, from motives that are naturally disapproved of. It is therefore the proper object of resentment, and of punishment, which is the natural consequence of resentment. Mankind go along with, and approve of, the violence used to avenge the hurt done by injustice. Much more do they go along with, and approve of, the force used to prevent and fend off the injury, and to restrain the offender from hurting his neighbors. The very person who is planning an injustice is aware of this. He feels that force may be used with the utmost propriety, both by the person he is about to injure and by others, either to prevent him from carrying out his crime or to punish him once he has carried it out. On this is founded the remarkable distinction between justice and all the other social virtues, which an author of very great and original genius has lately stressed in particular. We feel ourselves under a stricter obligation to act according to justice than according to friendship, charity, or generosity. The practice of these last virtues seems to be left in some measure to our own choice. But

somehow or other we feel ourselves tied, bound, and obliged in a special way to observe justice.[5] We feel, that is to say, that force may be used with the utmost propriety, and with the approval of all mankind, to make us observe the rules of justice, but not to make us follow the precepts of the other virtues.

II.ii.1.6 We must always, however, carefully distinguish what is only blamable, the proper object of disapproval, from what force may be used either to punish or to prevent. What seems blamable is whatever falls short of the ordinary degree of proper beneficence that experience teaches us to expect of everybody. On the other hand, what seems praiseworthy is whatever goes beyond it. The ordinary degree itself seems neither blamable nor praiseworthy. A father, a son, or a brother who behaves toward the corresponding relative neither better nor worse than most men commonly do seems to deserve, strictly, neither praise nor blame. Some people surprise us by kindness that is extraordinary and unexpected, though still proper and suitable. Others surprise us by unkindness that is extraordinary and unexpected, and also unsuitable. The first seem praiseworthy, and the second blamable.

II.ii.1.7 Even the most ordinary degree of kindness or beneficence, however, cannot be extorted by force among equals. Among equals, each individual is naturally regarded, before the institution of civil government, as having a right both to defend himself from injuries and to exact a certain degree of punishment for those done to him. When he does this, every generous spectator not only approves of his conduct but enters so far into his sentiments as often to be willing to help him. When one man attacks, robs, or tries to murder another, all the neighbors take alarm. They think they do right when they run either to avenge the person who has been injured or to defend the one who is in danger of it. But there are other cases. A father may fall short of the ordinary degree of parental affection toward a son. A son may seem to lack the filial reverence that might be expected

5 The author is usually identified as Henry Home, Lord Kames, in his *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (1751).

toward his father. Brothers may be without the usual degree of brotherly affection. A man may close his heart against compassion, and refuse to relieve the misery of his fellow-creatures when he could do so with the greatest ease. In all these cases everybody blames the conduct. Yet nobody imagines that those who might perhaps have reason to expect more kindness have any right to extort it by force. The sufferer can only complain, and the spectator can interfere in no other way than by advice and persuasion. On all such occasions, for equals to use force against one another would be thought the height of insolence and presumption.

II.ii.1.8 A superior may indeed sometimes, with universal approval, oblige those under his jurisdiction to behave toward one another with a certain degree of propriety in this respect. The laws of all civilized nations oblige parents to maintain their children, and children to maintain their parents, and they impose on men many other duties of beneficence. The civil magistrate is entrusted with the power of preserving the public peace by restraining injustice. He also has the power of promoting the prosperity of the commonwealth by establishing good discipline and by discouraging every sort of vice and impropriety. He may therefore prescribe rules that not only prohibit mutual injuries among fellow-citizens but also command mutual good offices to a certain degree.[6] When the sovereign commands something that is a matter of indifference, which could have been left undone without any blame before he ordered it, disobeying him becomes not only blamable but punishable. So when he commands something that, even before any such order, could not have been left undone without the greatest blame, failing to obey surely becomes much more punishable. Of all a lawgiver's duties, however, this is perhaps the one that requires the greatest delicacy and restraint to carry out with propriety and judgment. To neglect it altogether exposes the commonwealth to many gross disorders and shocking outrages.

6 "Civil magistrate": the civil authority or government generally, not a particular judicial officer.

To push it too far is destructive of all liberty, security, and justice.

II.ii.1.9 Though the mere lack of beneficence seems to merit no punishment from equals, the greater exertions of that virtue appear to deserve the highest reward. Because they produce the greatest good, they are the natural and approved objects of the liveliest gratitude. The breach of justice, on the contrary, exposes a person to punishment, yet the observance of the rules of that virtue seems scarcely to deserve any reward. There is, no doubt, a propriety in the practice of justice, and on that account it merits all the approbation that is due to propriety. But since it does no real positive good, it is entitled to very little gratitude. Mere justice is, on most occasions, only a negative virtue: it merely keeps us from hurting our neighbor. The man who simply refrains from violating his neighbors' person, property, or reputation surely has very little positive merit. He fulfills, however, all the rules of what is specifically called justice, and does everything that his equals can with propriety force him to do, or can punish him for not doing. We may often fulfill all the rules of justice by sitting still and doing nothing.

II.ii.1.10 As every man does, so shall it be done to him; retaliation seems to be the great law that Nature dictates to us. We think beneficence and generosity are due to the generous and beneficent. Those whose hearts never open to the feelings of humanity should, we think, be shut out in the same way from the affections of all their fellow creatures, and be left to live in the midst of society as if in a great desert, where there is nobody to care for them or to ask after them.[7] The violator of the laws of justice ought to be made to feel for himself the evil he has done to another; and since no regard for the sufferings of his brothers can restrain him, he ought to be overawed by the fear of his own. The man who is merely innocent—who only observes the laws of justice toward others and simply refrains from hurting his neighbors—can merit only that his neighbors in turn should

7 "As every man doth, so shall it be done to him" echoes the biblical law of retaliation (Leviticus 24:19).

respect his innocence, and that the same laws should be religiously observed toward him.

CHAPTER II: OF THE SENSE OF JUSTICE, OF REMORSE, AND OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF MERIT

Each may pursue his own interest but never by injuring another; violating justice brings remorse.

II.ii.2.1 There can be no proper motive for hurting our neighbor, no incitement to do evil to another that mankind will go along with, except just indignation at evil that the other has done to us. To disturb his happiness merely because it stands in the way of our own; to take from him what is of real use to him merely because it may be of equal or greater use to us; or to indulge in this way, at other people's expense, the natural preference every man has for his own happiness over theirs—this is something no impartial spectator can go along with. Every man is, no doubt, by nature first and principally commended to his own care; and since he is better fitted to take care of himself than of anyone else, it is fit and right that it should be so. Every man, therefore, is much more deeply interested in whatever immediately concerns himself than in what concerns anyone else. To hear, perhaps, of the death of another person with whom we have no particular connection will trouble us less—will spoil our appetite or disturb our sleep much less—than a very trivial misfortune that has happened to ourselves. But though our neighbor's ruin may affect us much less than a very small misfortune of our own, we must not ruin him to prevent that small misfortune, nor even to prevent our own ruin. Here, as in all other cases, we must view ourselves not so much in the light in which we may naturally appear to ourselves as in the light in which we naturally appear to others. Though every man may, as the proverb says, be the whole world to himself, to the rest of mankind he is a most insignificant part of it. Though his own happiness may matter more to him than that of all the rest of the world, to every other person it is of no more consequence than that of any other man. So though it may be true that every individual, in his own

breast, naturally prefers himself to all mankind, he does not dare look mankind in the face and admit that he acts on this principle. He feels that in this preference they can never go along with him, and that however natural it may be to him, it must always appear excessive and extravagant to them. When he views himself in the light in which he knows others will view him, he sees that to them he is only one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it. If he wants to act so that the impartial spectator can enter into the principles of his conduct—which is what he most desires of all things—he must, on this as on all other occasions, humble the arrogance of his self-love and bring it down to something other men can go along with. They will indulge it so far as to allow him to be more anxious about his own happiness than about anyone else's, and to pursue it with more earnest diligence. Thus far, whenever they put themselves in his situation, they will readily go along with him. In the race for wealth, honors, and promotions, he may run as hard as he can, and strain every nerve and every muscle, to outstrip all his competitors. But if he should jostle or throw down any of them, the spectators' indulgence is entirely at an end. It is a violation of fair play, which they cannot allow. To them this other man is in every respect as good as he is. They do not enter into the self-love by which he prefers himself so much to the other, and cannot go along with the motive from which he hurt him. They readily, therefore, sympathize with the natural resentment of the injured man, and the offender becomes the object of their hatred and indignation. He is aware that he becomes so, and feels that those sentiments are ready to burst out against him from all sides.

II.ii.2.2 The greater and more irreparable the evil done, the higher the sufferer's resentment naturally runs; and so, likewise, does the spectator's sympathetic indignation, as well as the agent's sense of guilt. Death is the greatest evil one man can inflict on another, and it arouses the highest degree of resentment in those immediately connected with the person killed. Murder, therefore, is the most atrocious of all crimes that affect

individuals only, both in the eyes of mankind and in those of the person who has committed it. To be deprived of what we possess is a greater evil than to be disappointed of what we only expect. Breaches of property, therefore—theft and robbery, which take from us what we possess—are greater crimes than breach of contract, which only disappoints us of what we expected. The most sacred laws of justice, then, those whose violation seems to call loudest for vengeance and punishment, are the laws that guard our neighbor's life and person; next come those that guard his property and possessions; and last of all come those that guard what are called his personal rights, or what is owed to him by the promises of others.

II.ii.2.3 The violator of the more sacred laws of justice can never reflect on the sentiments that mankind must have toward him without feeling all the agonies of shame, horror, and dismay. When his passion has been satisfied and he begins to reflect coolly on his past conduct, he can enter into none of the motives that influenced it. They now appear as detestable to him as they always did to other people. By sympathizing with the hatred and abhorrence other men must feel for him, he becomes in some measure the object of his own hatred and abhorrence. The situation of the person who suffered by his injustice now calls out his pity. He is grieved at the thought of it; he regrets the unhappy effects of his own conduct, and feels at the same time that they have made him the proper object of mankind's resentment and indignation, and of what naturally follows from resentment—vengeance and punishment. The thought of this haunts him constantly, and fills him with terror and bewilderment. He no longer dares look society in the face, but imagines himself, as it were, rejected and cast out from the affections of all mankind. He cannot hope for the consolation of sympathy in this, his greatest and most dreadful distress. The memory of his crimes has shut out all fellow-feeling for him from the hearts of his fellow creatures. The sentiments they have toward him are the very thing he fears most. Everything seems hostile, and he would gladly flee to some inhospitable desert where he might

never again see the face of a human being, nor read in the faces of mankind the condemnation of his crimes. But solitude is still more dreadful than society. His own thoughts can show him nothing but what is black, unfortunate, and disastrous—gloomy forebodings of incomprehensible misery and ruin. The horror of solitude drives him back into society, and he comes again into the presence of mankind—stunned to find himself before them, weighed down with shame and distracted with fear—to beg some small protection from the favor of the very judges who, he knows, have already unanimously condemned him. Such is the nature of the sentiment properly called remorse: of all the sentiments that can enter the human breast, the most dreadful. It is made up of shame, from the sense of the impropriety of past conduct; of grief for its effects; of pity for those who suffer by it; and of the dread and terror of punishment, from the consciousness of the justly provoked resentment of all rational creatures.

II.ii.2.4 The opposite behavior naturally inspires the opposite sentiment. The man who has performed a generous action, not from frivolous whim but from proper motives, feels, when he looks forward to those he has served, that he is the natural object of their love and gratitude, and, by sympathy with them, of the esteem and approbation of all mankind. And when he looks back to the motive from which he acted, and surveys it in the light in which the impartial spectator will survey it, he still continues to enter into it, and applauds himself by sympathy with the approbation of this supposed impartial judge. From both these points of view his own conduct appears to him agreeable in every way. At the thought of it his mind is filled with cheerfulness, serenity, and composure. He is in friendship and harmony with all mankind, and looks on his fellow creatures with confidence and benevolent satisfaction, secure in the knowledge that he has made himself worthy of their most favorable regard. The consciousness of merit, or of deserved reward, consists in the combination of all these sentiments.

CHAPTER III: OF THE UTILITY OF THIS CONSTITUTION OF NATURE

Beneficence adorns society, but justice is the main pillar that holds it up, so nature enforces it.

II.ii.3.1 It is in this way that man, who can subsist only in society, was fitted by nature to the situation for which he was made. All the members of human society need one another's help, and are likewise exposed to injuries from one another. Where the necessary help is given reciprocally from love, gratitude, friendship, and esteem, society flourishes and is happy. All its different members are bound together by the agreeable bonds of love and affection, and are, as it were, drawn to one common center of mutual good offices.

II.ii.3.2 But even if the necessary help should not be given from such generous and disinterested motives—even if there should be no mutual love and affection among the different members of society—the society, though less happy and agreeable, will not necessarily be dissolved. Society may subsist among different men, as among different merchants, from a sense of its utility, without any mutual love or affection; and though no one in it should owe any obligation or be bound in gratitude to anyone else, it may still be held together by a mercenary exchange of good offices according to an agreed valuation.

II.ii.3.3 Society, however, cannot subsist among those who are always ready to hurt and injure one another. The moment injury begins, the moment mutual resentment and animosity take hold, all its bonds are broken apart, and the different members it consisted of are, as it were, dispersed and scattered abroad by the violence and clash of their discordant affections. If there is any society among robbers and murderers, they must at least, as the hackneyed observation goes, refrain from robbing and murdering one another. Beneficence, therefore, is less essential to the existence of society than justice. Society may subsist without beneficence, though not in the most comfortable state; but the prevalence of injustice must utterly destroy it.

II.ii.3.4 Though Nature, therefore, urges mankind to acts of beneficence by the pleasing consciousness of deserved reward, she has not thought it necessary to guard and enforce its practice by the terrors of merited punishment in case it should be neglected. It is the ornament that embellishes the building, not the foundation that supports it; so it was enough to recommend it, and by no means necessary to impose it. Justice, on the contrary, is the main pillar that holds up the whole edifice. If it is removed, the great, the immense fabric of human society—that fabric whose raising and support seems in this world, if I may say so, to have been the special and darling care of Nature—must in a moment crumble into atoms. In order to enforce the observance of justice, therefore, Nature has implanted in the human breast that consciousness of ill-desert, those terrors of merited punishment that attend its violation, as the great safeguards of human association: to protect the weak, to curb the violent, and to chastise the guilty. Men, though naturally sympathetic, feel so little for another with whom they have no particular connection, compared with what they feel for themselves; the misery of someone who is merely their fellow creature matters so little to them compared even with a small convenience of their own; they have it so much in their power to hurt him, and may have so many temptations to do so, that if this principle did not stand up within them in his defense, and overawe them into respecting his innocence, they would, like wild beasts, be always ready to fly at him; and a man would enter an assembly of men as he enters a den of lions.

II.ii.3.5 In every part of the universe we observe means adjusted with the most precise skill to the ends they are meant to produce. In the mechanism of a plant or an animal body, we admire how everything is designed to advance the two great purposes of nature: the support of the individual and the propagation of the species. But in these, and in all such objects, we still distinguish the efficient cause of their various motions and structures from their final cause. The digestion of food, the circulation of the blood, and the secretion of the various fluids drawn from it

are all operations necessary for the great purposes of animal life.[8] Yet we never try to explain them by those purposes, as if the purposes were their efficient causes. Nor do we imagine that the blood circulates, or the food digests, of its own accord, with a view or intention to the purposes of circulation or digestion. The wheels of a watch are all admirably adjusted to the end for which it was made, which is pointing out the hour. All their various motions work together in the most precise way to produce this effect. If they were endowed with a desire and intention to produce it, they could not do it better. Yet we never ascribe any such desire or intention to them. We ascribe it to the watchmaker, and we know that the wheels are set in motion by a spring, which intends the effect it produces as little as they do. But though in explaining the operations of bodies we never fail to distinguish the efficient from the final cause in this way, in explaining the operations of the mind we are very apt to confuse these two different things with each other. When natural principles lead us to advance the ends that a refined and enlightened reason would recommend to us, we are very apt to attribute to that reason, as their efficient cause, the sentiments and actions by which we advance those ends. We are apt to imagine that to be the wisdom of man which is in reality the wisdom of God. On a superficial view, this cause seems sufficient to produce the effects ascribed to it, and the system of human nature seems simpler and more pleasing when all its different operations are derived in this way from a single principle.

II.ii.3.6 Society cannot survive unless the laws of justice are reasonably well observed, and no social interaction can take place among people who do not generally refrain from injuring one another. It has therefore been thought that the consideration of this necessity was the ground on which we approved of enforcing the laws of justice by punishing those who violated them. Man, it has been said, has a natural love of society, and desires that the union of mankind be preserved for its own sake, even if

8 "Efficient cause" is what produces an effect; "final cause" is the end or purpose it serves. The terms come from Aristotle.

he himself were to derive no benefit from it. The orderly and flourishing state of society pleases him, and he takes delight in contemplating it. Its disorder and confusion, on the contrary, are the object of his aversion, and he is vexed by whatever tends to produce them. He is aware, too, that his own interest is connected with the prosperity of society, and that his happiness, perhaps even the preservation of his existence, depends on its preservation. On every account, therefore, he abhors whatever may tend to destroy society, and is willing to use every means that can prevent so hated and so dreadful an event. Injustice necessarily tends to destroy it. Every appearance of injustice, therefore, alarms him, and he runs, if I may put it so, to stop the progress of something that, if allowed to go on, would quickly put an end to everything dear to him. If he cannot restrain it by gentle and fair means, he must bear it down by force and violence, and at all events must stop it from going any further. This is why, they say, he often approves of enforcing the laws of justice even by the capital punishment of those who violate them. In this way the disturber of the public peace is removed from the world, and others are frightened by his fate out of following his example.

II.ii.3.7 Such is the account commonly given of our approbation of the punishment of injustice. And this account is undoubtedly true to this extent: we frequently have occasion to confirm our natural sense of the propriety and fitness of punishment by reflecting on how necessary it is for preserving the order of society. Consider the guilty man who is about to suffer the just retaliation that the natural indignation of mankind tells them is due to his crimes. The insolence of his injustice is broken and humbled by the terror of his approaching punishment, and he ceases to be an object of fear. At that point, with the generous and humane, he begins to be an object of pity. The thought of what he is about to suffer extinguishes their resentment for the sufferings he has caused others. They are inclined to pardon and forgive him, and to save him from the punishment that, in all their cool hours, they had considered the retribution due to

such crimes. Here, therefore, they have occasion to call to their aid the consideration of the general interest of society. They counterbalance the impulse of this weak and partial humanity by the dictates of a humanity that is more generous and comprehensive. They reflect that mercy to the guilty is cruelty to the innocent, and they set against the compassion they feel for a particular person a broader compassion that they feel for mankind.

II.ii.3.8 Sometimes, too, we have occasion to defend the propriety of observing the general rules of justice by pointing to their necessity for the support of society. We frequently hear the young and the dissolute ridiculing the most sacred rules of morality and professing the most abominable maxims of conduct, sometimes from the corruption of their hearts but more often from their vanity. Our indignation is roused, and we are eager to refute and expose such detestable principles. It is their intrinsic hatefulness and detestableness that originally inflames us against them. Yet we are unwilling to give this as the sole reason we condemn them, or to claim that we do so merely because we ourselves hate and detest them. That reason, we think, would not appear conclusive. Yet why should it not, if we hate and detest them because they are the natural and proper objects of hatred and detestation? But when we are asked why we should not act in this or that way, the very question seems to assume that, to those who ask it, this way of acting does not appear, for its own sake, to be the natural and proper object of those sentiments. We must therefore show them that it ought to be so for the sake of something else. For this reason we generally look around for other arguments. The consideration that first occurs to us is the disorder and confusion of society that would result if such practices became universal. So we seldom fail to dwell on this topic.

II.ii.3.9 It usually takes no great discernment to see how destructive all dissolute practices are to the welfare of society. Yet it is seldom this consideration that first rouses us against them. All men, even the most stupid and unthinking, abhor

fraud, treachery, and injustice, and delight to see them punished. But few men have reflected on the necessity of justice to the existence of society, however obvious that necessity may appear.

II.ii.3.10 Many obvious considerations demonstrate that it is not a concern for the preservation of society that originally interests us in the punishment of crimes committed against individuals. The concern we take in the fortune and happiness of individuals does not, in ordinary cases, arise from the concern we take in the fortune and happiness of society. We are no more concerned for the destruction or loss of a single man because he is a member or part of society, and because we would be concerned at the destruction of society, than we are concerned for the loss of a single guinea because it is part of a thousand guineas, and because we would be concerned at the loss of the whole sum. In neither case does our regard for the individuals arise from our regard for the multitude. In both cases our regard for the multitude is compounded and made up of the particular regards we feel for the different individuals of which it is composed.[9] When a small sum is unjustly taken from us, we pursue the injury not so much out of regard for preserving our whole fortune as out of regard for the particular sum we have lost; in the same way, when a single man is injured or killed, we demand the punishment of the wrong done to him not so much from concern for the general interest of society as from concern for that very individual who has been injured. It should be noted, however, that this concern does not necessarily include any degree of those exquisite sentiments that are commonly called love, esteem, and affection, by which we distinguish our particular friends and acquaintances. The concern required for this is no more than the general fellow-feeling we have with every man merely because he is our fellow-creature. We enter into the resentment even of an odious person when he is injured by those to whom he has given no provocation. In this case our disapproval of his ordinary character and conduct does not alto-

9 The guinea was a British gold coin, worth twenty-one shillings in Smith's day.

gether prevent our fellow-feeling with his natural indignation. Still, it is very apt to dampen it in those who are not extremely fair-minded, or who have not been accustomed to correct and regulate their natural sentiments by general rules.

II.ii.3.11 On some occasions, indeed, we both punish and approve of punishment purely with a view to the general interest of society, which we imagine cannot otherwise be secured. Of this kind are all the punishments inflicted for breaches of what is called either civil police or military discipline. Such crimes do not immediately or directly hurt any particular person;[10] but their remote consequences, it is supposed, do produce, or might produce, either considerable inconvenience or great disorder in society. A sentinel, for example, who falls asleep on watch suffers death by the laws of war, because such carelessness might endanger the whole army. This severity may on many occasions appear necessary, and for that reason just and proper. When the preservation of an individual is inconsistent with the safety of a multitude, nothing can be more just than that the many should be preferred to the one. Yet this punishment, however necessary, always appears excessively severe. The natural atrocity of the crime seems so small, and the punishment so great, that our heart can reconcile itself to it only with great difficulty. Such carelessness appears very blameworthy. Yet the thought of this crime does not naturally excite any resentment strong enough to prompt us to take such dreadful revenge. A man of humanity must collect himself, make an effort, and summon all his firmness and resolution before he can bring himself either to inflict it or to go along with it when others inflict it. It is not in this way, however, that he looks on the just punishment of an ungrateful murderer or a parricide. In that case his heart applauds with ardor, and even with rapture, the just retaliation that seems due to such detestable crimes. If by some accident they should happen to escape it, he would be highly enraged and disappointed. The very different sentiments

10 "Civil police" here means public administration and the regulations of civil order, not a police force.

with which the spectator views these different punishments prove that his approbation of the one is far from being founded on the same principles as his approbation of the other. He looks on the sentinel as an unfortunate victim who must indeed, and ought to, be sacrificed to the safety of the many, but whom in his heart he would still be glad to save; he is only sorry that the interest of the many should stand against it. But if the murderer were to escape punishment, it would excite his highest indignation, and he would call on God to avenge in another world the crime that the injustice of mankind had neglected to punish on earth.

II.ii.3.12 It well deserves notice that we are far from imagining that injustice ought to be punished in this life merely for the sake of the order of society, which cannot otherwise be maintained. On the contrary, Nature teaches us to hope, and religion, we suppose, authorizes us to expect, that it will be punished even in a life to come. Our sense of its ill desert pursues it, if I may say so, even beyond the grave. Yet the example of its punishment there cannot serve to deter the rest of mankind from being guilty of similar practices here, since they neither see it nor know of it. The justice of God, however, we think, still requires that he should hereafter avenge the injuries of the widow and the fatherless, who are so often insulted here with impunity. Accordingly, in every religion and in every superstition the world has ever seen, there has been a Tartarus as well as an Elysium: a place provided for the punishment of the wicked as well as one for the reward of the just.[11]

11 In Greek mythology, Tartarus is the place of punishment in the underworld and Elysium the abode of the blessed.

SECTION III: OF THE INFLUENCE OF FORTUNE UPON THE SENTIMENTS OF MANKIND, WITH REGARD TO THE MERIT OR DEMERIT OF ACTIONS

Praise or blame should depend on intentions alone, yet actual consequences sway our judgment.

II.iii.intro.1 Whatever praise or blame can be due to any action must belong to one of three things. It must belong, first, to the intention or affection of the heart from which the action proceeds; or, second, to the external action or movement of the body that this affection gives rise to; or, finally, to the good or bad consequences that actually, in fact, follow from it. These three different things make up the whole nature and circumstances of the action, and must be the foundation of whatever quality can belong to it.

II.iii.intro.2 That the last two of these three circumstances cannot be the foundation of any praise or blame is abundantly evident, and nobody has ever asserted the contrary. The external action or movement of the body is often the same in the most innocent and in the most blameworthy actions. He who shoots a bird and he who shoots a man both perform the same external movement: each pulls the trigger of a gun. The consequences that actually, in fact, happen to follow from any action are, if possible, even more irrelevant to praise or blame than the external movement of the body. Since they depend not on the agent but on fortune, they cannot be the proper foundation for any sentiment whose objects are his character and conduct.

II.iii.intro.3 The only consequences he can be held answerable for, or for which he can deserve approbation or disapprobation of any kind, are those that were in some way or other intended, or those that at least show some agreeable or disagreeable quality in the intention of the heart from which he acted. All praise or blame, then, all approbation or disapprobation of any kind that can justly be given to any action, must ultimately belong to the intention or affection of the heart: to the propriety or impropriety, to the beneficence or hurtfulness, of the design.

II.iii.intro.4 When this maxim is put forward in this way, in abstract and general terms, there is nobody who does not agree with it. All the world acknowledges its self-evident justice, and there is not one dissenting voice among all mankind. Everybody grants that the accidental, unintended and unforeseen consequences of different actions may differ greatly. Even so, if the intentions or affections they arose from were, on the one hand, equally proper and equally beneficent, or, on the other, equally improper and equally malevolent, the merit or demerit of the actions is still the same, and the agent is equally the suitable object of either gratitude or resentment.

II.iii.intro.5 But however firmly we may seem convinced of the truth of this fair maxim when we consider it in the abstract like this, things change when we come to particular cases. There the actual consequences that happen to follow from an action have a very great effect on our sentiments about its merit or demerit, and they almost always either heighten or lessen our sense of both. Perhaps in scarcely a single instance will our sentiments, once examined, be found to be entirely governed by this rule, which we all acknowledge ought to govern them entirely.

II.iii.intro.6 This irregularity of sentiment—which everybody feels, which scarcely anybody is sufficiently aware of, and which nobody is willing to acknowledge—I now go on to explain. I shall consider, first, the cause that gives rise to it, or the mechanism by which nature produces it; second, the extent of its influence; and last of all, the end it serves, or the purpose that the Author of nature seems to have intended by it.

CHAPTER I: OF THE CAUSES OF THIS INFLUENCE OF FORTUNE

Gratitude and resentment respond to whatever causes pleasure or pain, so outcomes shape our sense of merit.

II.iii.1.1 The causes of pain and pleasure, whatever they are and however they operate, seem to be the objects that, in all animals, immediately excite those two passions of gratitude and resentment. These passions are excited by inanimate as well as

by animate objects. For a moment we are angry even at the stone that hurts us. A child beats it, a dog barks at it, a hot-tempered man is apt to curse it. The least reflection, it is true, corrects this sentiment, and we soon realize that what has no feeling is a very improper object of revenge. When the harm is very great, however, the object that caused it remains disagreeable to us ever after, and we take pleasure in burning or destroying it. We would treat in this way the instrument that had accidentally caused the death of a friend. We would often think ourselves guilty of a kind of inhumanity if we failed to vent this absurd sort of vengeance on it.

II.iii.1.2 In the same way, we conceive a sort of gratitude toward those inanimate objects that have been the causes of great or frequent pleasure to us. A sailor who, as soon as he got ashore, fed his fire with the plank on which he had just escaped from a shipwreck would seem to be guilty of an unnatural action. We would expect him rather to keep it with care and affection, as a memorial that was in some measure dear to him. A man grows fond of a snuffbox, a penknife or a walking stick that he has used for a long time, and conceives something like a real love and affection for them. If he breaks or loses them, he is upset out of all proportion to the value of the loss. The house we have long lived in, and the tree whose green leaves and shade we have long enjoyed, are both looked on with a sort of respect that seems due to such benefactors. The decay of the one, or the destruction of the other, affects us with a kind of melancholy, even though we would suffer no loss by it. The Dryads and the Lares of the ancients, a sort of spirits of trees and houses, were probably first suggested by this kind of affection. The authors of those superstitions felt it for such objects, and it seemed unreasonable if there was nothing alive in them.[12]

II.iii.1.3 But before anything can be the proper object of gratitude or resentment, it must not only be the cause of pleasure or pain; it must also be capable of feeling them. Without this fur-

12 Dryads were the tree nymphs of Greek myth; the Lares were the Roman gods of the household.

ther quality, those passions cannot vent themselves on it with any sort of satisfaction. They are excited by the causes of pleasure and pain, and so their gratification consists in paying those sensations back to whatever gave rise to them. It is pointless to attempt this on something that has no capacity for feeling. Animals, therefore, are less improper objects of gratitude and resentment than inanimate objects. The dog that bites and the ox that gores are both punished. If they have caused anyone's death, neither the public nor the relatives of the dead can be satisfied unless the animals are put to death in their turn. Nor is this merely for the security of the living; it is also, in some measure, to avenge the injury done to the dead. On the other hand, animals that have been remarkably useful to their masters become the objects of a very lively gratitude. We are shocked at the brutality of the officer mentioned in the *Turkish Spy* who stabbed the horse that had carried him across an arm of the sea, so that the animal could never afterward distinguish some other person by a similar exploit.[13]

II.iii.1.4 But although animals are not only the causes of pleasure and pain but are also capable of feeling those sensations, they are still far from being complete and perfect objects of either gratitude or resentment. Those passions still feel that something is missing from their full gratification. What gratitude chiefly desires is not only to make the benefactor feel pleasure in his turn. It also wants to make him aware that he receives this reward because of his past conduct, to make him pleased with that conduct, and to assure him that the person he did his kindnesses for was not unworthy of them. What charms us most of all in our benefactor is the agreement between his sentiments and our own on something that concerns us as closely as the worth of our own character and the esteem due to us. We are delighted to find a person who values us as we value ourselves, and who singles us out from the rest of mankind with an attention not unlike that with which we single out ourselves. To keep

13 *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* (1687–94), a popular collection of fictional letters begun by Giovanni Paolo Marana.

up these agreeable and flattering sentiments in him is one of the chief aims of the returns we are inclined to make him. A generous mind often disdains the self-interested thought of extracting new favors from its benefactor by what might be called the importunities of its gratitude. But to preserve and increase his esteem is an interest that even the greatest mind does not think unworthy of its attention. This is the basis of what I observed earlier. When we cannot enter into the motives of our benefactor, and his conduct and character seem unworthy of our approbation, our gratitude is always noticeably diminished, however great his services may have been. We are less flattered by being singled out, and to preserve the esteem of so weak or so worthless a patron does not seem worth pursuing for its own sake.

II.iii.1.5 What resentment is chiefly intent on, by contrast, is not so much to make our enemy feel pain in his turn. It is to make him aware that he feels it because of his past conduct, to make him repent of that conduct, and to make him realize that the person he injured did not deserve to be treated that way. What chiefly enrages us against the man who injures or insults us is how little he seems to think of us, the unreasonable preference he gives himself over us, and that absurd self-love by which he seems to imagine that other people may be sacrificed at any time to his convenience or his whim. The glaring impropriety of this conduct, and the gross insolence and injustice it seems to involve, often shock and exasperate us more than all the harm we have suffered. To bring him back to a juster sense of what is due to other people, and to make him aware of what he owes us and of the wrong he has done us, is often the principal aim of our revenge. Our revenge is always imperfect when it cannot achieve this. Sometimes our enemy appears to have done us no injury. We are aware that he acted quite properly, that in his situation we would have done the same thing, and that we deserved from him all the harm we received. In that case, if we have the least spark of fairness or justice, we can feel no resentment of any kind.

II.iii.1.6 Before anything can be the complete and proper object of either gratitude or resentment, therefore, it must have three different qualifications. First, it must be the cause of pleasure in the one case and of pain in the other. Second, it must be capable of feeling those sensations. And third, it must not only have produced those sensations but have produced them by design, and by a design that is approved of in the one case and disapproved of in the other. It is by the first qualification that an object is capable of exciting those passions, and by the second that it is in any way capable of gratifying them. The third qualification is not only necessary for their complete satisfaction. It also gives a pleasure or pain that is both exquisite and of a special kind, and so it is an additional exciting cause of those passions.

II.iii.1.7 What gives pleasure or pain, in one way or another, is therefore the sole exciting cause of gratitude and resentment. A person's intentions may be as proper and beneficent as you like on the one hand, or as improper and malevolent as you like on the other. Yet if he has failed to produce the good or the evil he intended, one of the exciting causes is missing in both cases, and so less gratitude seems due to him in the one, and less resentment in the other. And on the other hand, a person's intentions may have had no praiseworthy degree of benevolence on the one hand, or no blameworthy degree of malice on the other. Yet if his actions should produce either great good or great evil, one of the exciting causes is present in both cases, and so some gratitude is apt to arise toward him in the one, and some resentment in the other. A shadow of merit seems to fall on him in the first, a shadow of demerit in the second. And since the consequences of actions are entirely under the rule of Fortune, this is where her influence on the sentiments of mankind with regard to merit and demerit comes from.

CHAPTER II: OF THE EXTENT OF THIS INFLUENCE OF FORTUNE

Failed good intentions earn less credit, failed crimes less blame, and unlucky negligence more.

II.iii.2.1 The effect of this influence of fortune is twofold. First, when actions that arose from the most praiseworthy or blameworthy intentions fail to produce their intended effects, it diminishes our sense of their merit or demerit. Second, when actions happen by accident to give rise to extraordinary pleasure or pain, it increases our sense of their merit or demerit beyond what is due to the motives or affections they came from.

II.iii.2.2 1. First, I say, a person's intentions may be as proper and beneficent as you like on the one hand, or as improper and malevolent as you like on the other. Yet if they fail to produce their effects, his merit seems imperfect in the one case, and his demerit incomplete in the other. Nor is this irregularity of sentiment felt only by those who are directly affected by the consequences of an action. It is felt in some measure even by the impartial spectator. The man who applies for an office on another's behalf without obtaining it is regarded as his friend, and seems to deserve his love and affection. But the man who not only applies for it but obtains it is regarded more particularly as his patron and benefactor, and is entitled to his respect and gratitude. We are inclined to think that the person who has been obliged may, with some justice, consider himself on a level with the first; but we cannot enter into his sentiments if he does not feel himself inferior to the second. It is common, to be sure, to say that we are just as obliged to the man who has tried to serve us as to the one who actually did. It is the speech we always make after every unsuccessful attempt of this kind; but, like all other fine speeches, it must be taken with a grain of salt. The sentiments a generous man has for the friend who fails may often, indeed, be nearly the same as those he feels for the one who succeeds. The more generous he is, the more nearly those sentiments will approach an exact level. For the truly generous,

to be loved and esteemed by those whom they themselves think worthy of esteem gives more pleasure, and so excites more gratitude, than all the advantages they could ever expect from those sentiments. When they lose those advantages, therefore, they seem to lose only a trifle that is scarcely worth considering. Still, they do lose something. Their pleasure, therefore, and consequently their gratitude, is not perfectly complete. Accordingly, if all other circumstances are equal between the friend who fails and the friend who succeeds, there will be some slight difference of affection in favor of the one who succeeds, even in the noblest and best mind. Indeed, mankind are so unjust in this respect that even when the intended benefit is obtained, if it was not obtained through one particular benefactor, they are apt to think less gratitude is due to the man who, with the best intentions in the world, could do no more than help it along a little. Since their gratitude in this case is divided among the different persons who contributed to their pleasure, a smaller share of it seems due to any one of them. We commonly hear people say: "Such a person no doubt meant to serve us, and we truly believe he exerted himself to the utmost of his abilities for that purpose. We are not, however, obliged to him for this benefit, since without the help of others, all he could have done would never have brought it about." This consideration, they imagine, ought to diminish the debt they owe him, even in the eyes of the impartial spectator. The person himself who has tried and failed to confer a benefit has by no means the same reliance on the gratitude of the man he meant to oblige, nor the same sense of his own merit toward him, as he would have had if he had succeeded.

II.iii.2.3 Even the merit of talents and abilities that some accident has kept from producing their effects seems in some measure incomplete. This holds even for those who are fully convinced that they could have produced them. A general whom the envy of ministers has kept from winning some great advantage over his country's enemies regrets the lost opportunity ever afterward. Nor does he regret it only for the public's sake. He

laments that he was prevented from performing an action that would have added new luster to his character, in his own eyes as well as in everyone else's. It satisfies neither him nor anyone else to reflect that the plan or design was all that depended on him. No greater ability was needed to carry it out than was needed to devise it. Everyone granted that he was fully capable of carrying it out, and had he been allowed to go on, success was certain. He still did not carry it out; and though he might deserve all the approbation that is due to a great and magnanimous design, he still lacked the actual merit of having performed a great action. To take the management of any public affair away from the man who has almost brought it to a conclusion is regarded as the most odious kind of injustice. Since he had done so much, he should, we think, have been allowed to earn the complete merit of finishing it. It was held against Pompey that he came in on the victories of Lucullus and gathered the laurels that were due to another man's luck and courage. The glory of Lucullus, it seems,[14] was less complete, even in the opinion of his own friends, when he was not allowed to finish a conquest that his leadership and courage had made it possible for almost any man to finish. It mortifies an architect when his plans are not carried out at all, or when they are altered so much that the effect of the building is spoiled. The plan, however, is all that depends on the architect. To good judges, the whole of his genius is revealed in it as completely as in the actual construction. But a plan does not give even the most knowledgeable the same pleasure as a noble and magnificent building. They may find as much taste and genius in the one as in the other. But their effects are still vastly different, and the amusement we draw from the first never comes near the wonder and admiration that the second sometimes arouses. We may believe of many men that their talents are greater than those of Caesar and Alexander, and that in the same situations they would perform still greater actions. Meanwhile, however, we do not look on

14 Lucullus commanded the Roman war against Mithridates of Pontus until 66 BC, when Pompey was given the command and finished the war.

them with the astonishment and admiration with which those two heroes have been regarded in all ages and nations. The calm judgments of the mind may approve of them more. But they lack the splendor of great actions, which dazzles the mind and carries it away. Even those who acknowledge a superiority of virtues and talents are not affected by it in the same way as by a superiority of achievements.

II.iii.2.4 In the eyes of ungrateful mankind, then, the merit of an unsuccessful attempt to do good seems to be diminished by its failure. In the same way, the demerit of an unsuccessful attempt to do evil is diminished too. The design to commit a crime, however clearly it may be proved, is scarcely ever punished as severely as actually committing it. Treason is perhaps the only exception. That crime directly affects the very existence of the government, so the government is naturally more jealous of it than of any other. In punishing treason, the sovereign resents injuries done directly to himself. In punishing other crimes, he resents those done to other men. In the one case it is his own resentment that he indulges. In the other it is the resentment of his subjects, which he enters into by sympathy. In the first case, therefore, since he is judging in his own cause, he is very apt to be more violent and bloodthirsty in his punishments than the impartial spectator can approve of. Here, too, his resentment rises on smaller occasions, and it does not always wait, as it does in other cases, for the crime to be carried out, or even attempted. In many countries a treasonable plot is punished in the same way as actually committing treason, even if nothing has been done or even attempted as a result. So, indeed, is a treasonable conversation. With all other crimes, the mere design, if no attempt has followed, is seldom punished at all, and never severely. It may indeed be said that a criminal design and a criminal action do not necessarily imply the same degree of depravity, and so ought not to receive the same punishment. We are capable, it may be said, of resolving on many things, and even of taking steps to carry them out, which, when it comes to the point, we find ourselves wholly unable to carry out. But this

reason cannot apply when the design has been carried as far as the final attempt. Yet scarcely any country's laws punish with death the man who fires a pistol at his enemy and misses him. Under the old law of Scotland, even if he wounds him, the assassin is not liable to the ultimate punishment unless death follows within a certain time. Mankind's resentment against this crime, however, runs so high, and their terror of the man who shows himself capable of committing it is so great, that the mere attempt ought in all countries to be a capital offense. The attempt to commit smaller crimes is almost always punished very lightly, and sometimes not at all. Suppose a thief's hand is caught in his neighbor's pocket before he has taken anything out of it. He is punished only with public disgrace. If he had had time to take a handkerchief, he would have been put to death. The housebreaker found setting a ladder to his neighbor's window, who has not yet got in, is not liable to capital punishment. Attempted rape is not punished as rape. The attempt to seduce a married woman is not punished at all, though seduction is punished severely. Our resentment against someone who only attempted to do harm is seldom strong enough to justify us in inflicting on him the same punishment we would have thought due if he had actually done it. In the one case, the joy of our escape softens our sense of how atrocious his conduct was; in the other, our grief at our misfortune increases it. His real demerit, however, is undoubtedly the same in both cases, since his intentions were equally criminal. In this respect, therefore, there is an irregularity in the sentiments of all men. A relaxation of discipline follows from it in the laws of, I believe, all nations, the most civilized as well as the most barbarous. The humanity of a civilized people inclines them either to waive punishments or to lighten them, wherever their natural indignation is not spurred on by the consequences of the crime. Peoples in less developed societies, on the other hand, are not apt to be very delicate or inquiring about the motives of an action when it has had no actual consequence.

II.iii.2.5 Consider a person who, from passion or from the influence of bad company, has resolved on some crime, and perhaps taken steps to commit it, but has luckily been prevented by an accident that put it out of his power. If he has any conscience left, he is sure to regard this event for the rest of his life as a great and remarkable deliverance. He can never think of it without giving thanks to Heaven. Heaven graciously saved him from the guilt he was just about to plunge into, and kept him from making the rest of his life a scene of horror, remorse, and repentance. But though his hands are innocent, he knows that his heart is as guilty as if he had actually done what he had so firmly resolved on. It greatly eases his conscience, however, to consider that the crime was not carried out, though he knows that its failure owed nothing to any virtue in him. He still regards himself as less deserving of punishment and resentment, and this good fortune either lessens or takes away altogether all sense of guilt. Remembering how firmly he was resolved on it has no other effect than to make his escape seem all the greater and more miraculous. For he still imagines that he has escaped. He looks back on the danger his peace of mind was exposed to with a kind of terror. Someone now safe may feel the same terror when he remembers how close he came to falling over a precipice, and shudders with horror at the thought.

II.iii.2.6 2. The second effect of this influence of fortune concerns actions that happen to give rise to extraordinary pleasure or pain. In such cases fortune increases our sense of their merit or demerit beyond what is due to the motives or affection they come from. The agreeable or disagreeable effects of an action often cast a shadow of merit or demerit on the agent, though in his intention there was nothing that deserved either praise or blame, or at least nothing that deserved them to the degree we are apt to give them. Thus even the bearer of bad news is disagreeable to us. On the contrary, we feel a sort of gratitude toward the man who brings us good tidings. For a moment we look on them both as the authors, the one of our good fortune, the other of our bad. We regard them to some extent as if they

had actually brought about the events they only report. The first author of our joy is naturally the object of a passing gratitude. We embrace him warmly and affectionately, and in the moment of our prosperity we would gladly reward him as if for some remarkable service. By the custom of all courts, the officer who brings the news of a victory is entitled to considerable promotion, and the general always chooses one of his chief favorites to go on so pleasant an errand. The first author of our sorrow, on the contrary, is just as naturally the object of a passing resentment. We can scarcely help looking at him with vexation and unease, and rough and brutal people are apt to vent on him the ill temper his news provokes. Tigranes, king of Armenia, cut off the head of the man who brought him the first report that a formidable enemy was approaching. To punish the bearer of bad news in this way seems barbarous and inhuman. Yet rewarding the messenger of good news does not displease us—we think it suits the generosity of kings.[15] But why do we make this difference? If there is no fault in the one, there is no merit in the other either. It is because any sort of reason seems enough to authorize the exercise of the social and benevolent affections. But it takes the most solid and substantial reasons to make us enter into the exercise of the unsocial and malevolent ones.

II.iii.2.7 In general we are reluctant to enter into the unsocial and malevolent affections. We lay it down as a rule that we ought never to approve of their gratification, except so far as the malicious and unjust intention of the person they are directed against makes him their proper object. Yet on some occasions we relax this severity. When one man's negligence has caused some unintended damage to another, we generally enter so far into the sufferer's resentment that we approve of his punishing the offender far beyond what the offense would have seemed to deserve, had no such unlucky consequence followed from it.

II.iii.2.8 There is a degree of negligence that would seem to deserve some punishment even if it caused no damage to any-

15 Tigranes II of Armenia (1st century BC); the story, told of the approach of Lucullus, is in Plutarch's *Life of Lucullus*.

body. Thus, if a person were to throw a large stone over a wall into a public street without warning those who might be passing by, and without regard to where it was likely to fall, he would undoubtedly deserve some punishment. A very exact public administration would punish so absurd an action even if it had done no harm. The person guilty of it shows an insolent contempt for the happiness and safety of others. There is real injustice in his conduct. He recklessly exposes his neighbor to what no man in his senses would choose to expose himself to, and he clearly lacks that sense of what is due to his fellow-creatures which is the basis of justice and of society. In the law, therefore, gross negligence is said to be almost equal to malicious design.[16] When some unlucky consequences follow from such carelessness, the person guilty of it is often punished as if he had really intended them. His conduct was only thoughtless and insolent, and deserved some punishment. Yet it is now regarded as atrocious, and as liable to the severest punishment. Thus if, by the imprudent action mentioned above, he were accidentally to kill a man, the laws of many countries, particularly the old law of Scotland, make him liable to the ultimate punishment. This is no doubt excessively severe, but it is not altogether inconsistent with our natural sentiments. Our just indignation at the folly and inhumanity of his conduct is heightened by our sympathy with the unfortunate sufferer. Nothing, however, would seem more shocking to our natural sense of fairness than to send a man to the scaffold merely for having thrown a stone carelessly into the street without hurting anybody. The folly and inhumanity of his conduct would be the same in this case, and yet our sentiments would be very different. Considering this difference may convince us how much the indignation even of the spectator tends to be roused by the actual consequences of an action. In cases of this kind, if I am not mistaken, a great degree of severity will be found in the laws of almost all nations. In

16 SMITH'S NOTE. *Lata culpa prope dolum est.*

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Latin: "Gross fault is close to deliberate wrong." A maxim of Roman law.

cases of the opposite kind, as I have already observed, there was a very general relaxation of discipline.

II.iii.2.9 There is another degree of negligence that involves no injustice of any kind. The person guilty of it treats his neighbor as he treats himself. He means no harm to anybody, and he is far from harboring any insolent contempt for the safety and happiness of others. He is not, however, as careful and cautious in his conduct as he ought to be. On this account he deserves some degree of blame and censure, but no punishment of any kind. Yet if, by negligence[17] of this kind, he should cause some damage to another person, he is obliged by the laws of, I believe, all countries to compensate for it. This is no doubt a real punishment, and one that no mortal would have thought of inflicting on him had it not been for the unlucky accident his conduct gave rise to. Yet this decision of the law is approved by the natural sentiments of all mankind. Nothing, we think, can be more just than that one man should not suffer through the carelessness of another, and that damage caused by blamable negligence should be made good by the person guilty of it.

II.iii.2.10 There is another kind of negligence,[18] which consists merely in a lack of the most anxious timidity and caution regarding all the possible consequences of our actions. When no bad consequences follow, the lack of this painful attention is so far from being regarded as blamable that the opposite quality is regarded as blamable instead. The timid caution that is afraid of everything is never regarded as a virtue. It is seen as a quality that, more than any other, unfits a person for action and business. Yet when a person happens to cause some damage to another for lack of this excessive care, he is often obliged by the law to compensate for it. Thus, by the Aquilian law, a man who cannot manage a horse that has happened to take fright, and

17 SMITH'S NOTE. *Culpa levis.*

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Latin: "slight fault," the Roman-law term for ordinary negligence.

18 SMITH'S NOTE. *Culpa levissima.*

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Latin: "the slightest fault."

who rides down his neighbor's slave, is obliged to compensate for the damage. When an accident of this kind happens, we are apt to think that he ought not to have ridden such a horse, and to regard his attempting it as unpardonable recklessness. Yet without this accident we would not only have made no such reflection, but would have regarded his refusing to ride it as the effect of timid weakness. We would have put it down to anxiety about merely possible events, which there is no point in being mindful of.[19] Even the person who has involuntarily hurt another by an accident of this kind seems to have some sense of his own ill desert toward him. He naturally runs up to the sufferer to express his concern for what has happened, and to make every acknowledgment in his power. If he has any sensibility, he necessarily wishes to compensate for the damage, and to do everything he can to appease that animal resentment which he knows is likely to arise in the sufferer's breast. To make no apology and offer no atonement is regarded as the height of brutality. Yet why should he make an apology any more than any other person? He was just as innocent as any other bystander, so why should he be singled out in this way from all mankind to make up for another's bad luck? This task would surely never be imposed on him if even the impartial spectator did not feel some indulgence for what may be regarded as the unjust resentment of that other person.

CHAPTER III: OF THE FINAL CAUSE OF THIS IRREGULARITY OF SENTIMENTS

This irregularity is useful: it confines punishment to actions and spurs men to achieve good, not merely wish it.

II.iii.3.1 Such is the effect of the good or bad consequences of actions on the sentiments both of the person who performs them and of others. And thus Fortune, which governs the world, has some influence where we would be least willing to allow her

19 The Lex Aquilia, a Roman statute of about 287 BC, governed compensation for wrongful damage to property, including slaves and animals.

any. In some measure she directs the sentiments of mankind regarding the character and conduct both of themselves and of others. That the world judges by the outcome and not by the design has been the complaint of every age, and it is the great discouragement of virtue. Everybody agrees with the general maxim that, since the outcome does not depend on the agent, it ought to have no influence on our sentiments regarding the merit or propriety of his conduct. But when we come to particular cases, we find that our sentiments scarcely ever conform exactly to what this fair maxim would prescribe. The happy or unsuccessful outcome of any action tends to give us a good or bad opinion of the prudence with which it was carried out. It almost always also stirs up our gratitude or resentment, our sense of the merit or demerit of the design.

II.iii.3.2 Nature, however, when she planted the seeds of this irregularity in the human breast, seems to have intended the happiness and perfection of the species, as she does on all other occasions. Suppose the hurtfulness of the design and the malevolence of the affection were the only causes that excited our resentment. We would then feel all the fury of that passion against anyone in whose breast we suspected or believed such designs or affections were harbored, even if they had never broken out into any action. Sentiments, thoughts and intentions would become objects of punishment. The indignation of mankind might run as high against them as against actions. The baseness of a thought that had given birth to no action might seem, in the eyes of the world, to cry out for vengeance as loudly as the baseness of an action. If so, every court of law would become a real inquisition. Even the most innocent and cautious conduct would not be safe. Bad wishes, bad views and bad designs might still be suspected. As long as these excited the same indignation as bad conduct, and bad intentions were resented as much as bad actions, they would expose a person equally to punishment and resentment. The Author of nature has therefore made actions the only proper and approved objects of human punishment and resentment: actions that

either produce actual evil or attempt to produce it, and so put us in immediate fear of it. According to cool reason, it is from sentiments, designs and affections that human actions derive all their merit or demerit. Yet the great Judge of hearts has placed these beyond the limits of every human jurisdiction, and reserved them for the judgment of his own unerring tribunal. It is a necessary rule of justice that men in this life are liable to punishment only for their actions, not for their designs and intentions. That rule is therefore founded on this salutary and useful irregularity in human sentiments concerning merit or demerit, which at first sight seems so absurd and inexplicable. But every part of nature, when carefully examined, equally demonstrates the providential care of its Author. We may admire the wisdom and goodness of God even in the weakness and folly of men.

II.iii.3.3 Consider the irregularity of sentiments by which an unsuccessful attempt to do a service seems to have only incomplete merit, and mere good inclinations and kind wishes even less. That irregularity is not altogether without its utility either. Man was made for action. By exerting his faculties, he is to bring about such changes in the external circumstances of both himself and others as may seem most favorable to the happiness of all. He must not be content with idle benevolence. Nor must he imagine himself the friend of mankind because in his heart he wishes the world to prosper. It is the purpose of his existence to advance those ends. So that he may call forth the whole vigor of his soul and strain every nerve to bring them about, Nature has taught him that neither he nor mankind can be fully satisfied with his conduct, or give it the full measure of applause, unless he has actually brought them about. He is made to understand that the praise of good intentions, without the merit of good deeds, will do little to excite either the loudest acclaim of the world or even the highest degree of self-applause. Take a man who has performed no single action of importance, but whose whole conversation and conduct express the most just, noble and generous sentiments. He can claim no very high reward,

even if his uselessness is due to nothing but the lack of an opportunity to serve. We can still refuse it to him without blame. We can still ask him: What have you done? What actual service can you show that entitles you to so great a reward? We esteem you and love you, but we owe you nothing. It is true that a hidden virtue may have been useless only for lack of an opportunity to serve. To reward it, and to bestow on it honors and promotions that it may in some measure be said to deserve but could not with propriety have insisted on, is the effect of the most godlike benevolence. To punish for the affections of the heart alone, on the contrary, where no crime has been committed, is the most insolent and barbarous tyranny. The benevolent affections seem to deserve most praise when they do not wait until it becomes almost a crime for them not to exert themselves. The malevolent affections, on the contrary, can scarcely be too tardy, too slow, or too deliberate.

II.iii.3.4 It is even of considerable importance that evil done without design should be regarded as a misfortune to the doer as well as to the sufferer. Man is thereby taught to revere the happiness of his fellow men, and to tremble lest he should, even unknowingly, do anything that might hurt them. He is taught to dread that animal resentment which, he feels, is ready to burst out against him if he should, without design, be the unhappy instrument of their calamity. In the ancient pagan religion, holy ground that had been consecrated to some god was not to be trodden on except on solemn and necessary occasions. A man who had violated it, even unknowingly, became piacular from that moment, and until proper atonement was made he incurred the vengeance of the powerful and invisible being to whom it had been set apart;[20] in the same way, by the wisdom of Nature, the happiness of every innocent man is made holy, consecrated, and fenced off against the approach of every other man. It is not to be recklessly trodden on. It is not even to be violated in any respect, unknowingly and involuntarily, without

20 "Piacular": in need of expiation; polluted by an offense that demands atonement, whether or not there was any guilty intent.

requiring some expiation, some atonement in proportion to the greatness of the unintended violation. Consider a man of humanity who, by accident and without the smallest degree of blamable negligence, has caused the death of another man. He feels himself piacular, though not guilty. For the rest of his life he regards this accident as one of the greatest misfortunes that could have befallen him. If the family of the dead man is poor and he himself is reasonably well off, he immediately takes them under his protection. Though they have no other merit, he thinks them entitled to every degree of favor and kindness. If they are better off, he tries to atone for what has happened by every act of submission, every expression of sorrow, and every good service he can devise or they will accept. He tries as far as possible to soothe their resentment for the great, though involuntary, offense he has given them, a resentment that is perhaps natural, though no doubt most unjust.

II.iii.3.5 Sometimes an innocent person is led by some accident to do something that would justly have exposed him to the deepest reproach if he had done it knowingly and by design. The distress he feels has given rise to some of the finest and most moving scenes of both ancient and modern drama. It is this false sense of guilt, if I may call it that, which makes up the whole distress of Oedipus and Jocasta on the Greek stage, and of Monimia and Isabella on the English. All of them are piacular in the highest degree, though not one of them is guilty in the smallest degree.[21]

II.iii.3.6 Yet despite all these apparent irregularities of sentiment, a man may unfortunately cause evils he did not intend, or fail to produce the good he intended. Nature has not then left his innocence entirely without consolation, nor his virtue entirely without reward. He calls to his aid that just and fair maxim, That events which did not depend on our conduct ought not to lessen the esteem that is due to us. He summons up all his magnanimity and firmness of soul. He tries to see himself not in the light

21 Oedipus and Jocasta: Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. Monimia: Thomas Otway's *The Orphan* (1680). Isabella: Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage* (1694).

in which he appears at present, but in the light in which he ought to appear. That is the light in which he would have appeared had his generous designs been crowned with success. He would still appear in it, despite their failure, if the sentiments of mankind were either entirely fair-minded and equitable or even perfectly consistent with themselves. The more fair-minded and humane part of mankind fully go along with the efforts he makes in this way to uphold himself in his own opinion. They exert all their generosity and greatness of mind to correct this irregularity of human nature in themselves. Had his magnanimity succeeded, they would naturally have been disposed to regard it in a certain light, without any such generous effort. They try to regard his unfortunate magnanimity in that same light.

Part III: Of the Foundation of our Judgments concerning our own Sentiments and Conduct, and of the Sense of Duty

The impartial spectator, the man within the breast, self-deceit, and the general rules of morality.

CHAPTER I: OF THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-APPROBATION AND OF SELF-DISAPPROBATION

We judge our own conduct by imagining how an impartial spectator would see it; society is our mirror.

III.1.1 In the two previous parts of this discourse, I have mainly considered the origin and foundation of our judgments about the sentiments and conduct of others. I now come to consider more particularly the origin of our judgments about our own. The principle by which we naturally approve or disapprove of our own conduct seems to be exactly the same as the one by which we make similar judgments about the conduct of other people. We approve or disapprove of another man's conduct according to whether we feel that, when we bring his case home to ourselves, we can or cannot entirely sympathize with the sentiments and motives that directed it. In the same way, we approve or disapprove of our own conduct according to whether we feel that, when we place ourselves in another man's situation and view it, as it were, with his eyes and from his position, we can or cannot entirely enter into and sympathize with the sentiments and motives that influenced it. We can never survey our own sentiments and motives, and can never form any judgment

about them, unless we remove ourselves, as it were, from our own natural position and try to view them as if at a certain distance from us. But the only way we can do this is by trying to view them with the eyes of other people, or as other people are likely to view them. Accordingly, whatever judgment we can form about them must always bear some secret reference to the judgment of others: to what it actually is, or to what it would be on a certain condition, or to what we imagine it ought to be. We try to examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it. If, when we place ourselves in his situation, we thoroughly enter into all the passions and motives that influenced it, we approve of it, through sympathy with the approbation of this supposed fair-minded judge. If not, we enter into his disapprobation and condemn it.

III.1.2 If it were possible for a human creature to grow up to adulthood in some solitary place, without any communication with his own species, he could no more think about his own character, about the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, or about the beauty or ugliness of his own mind, than about the beauty or ugliness of his own face. All these are things he cannot easily see and naturally does not look at, and he has no mirror that can present them to his view. Bring him into society, and he is immediately provided with the mirror he lacked before. This mirror lies in the faces and behavior of the people he lives with, which always show when they enter into his sentiments and when they disapprove of them; and it is here that he first sees the propriety and impropriety of his own passions, the beauty and ugliness of his own mind. To a man who had been a stranger to society from birth, the objects of his passions—the external bodies that either pleased or hurt him—would occupy his whole attention. The passions themselves—the desires or aversions, the joys or sorrows that those objects aroused—though of all things the most immediately present to him, could scarcely ever be the objects of his thoughts. The idea of them could never interest him enough to call for his attentive consideration. Considering his joy could arouse no new joy in

him, nor considering his sorrow any new sorrow, though considering the causes of those passions might often arouse both. Bring him into society, and all his own passions will immediately become the causes of new passions. He will observe that mankind approve of some of them and are disgusted by others. He will be elevated in the one case and cast down in the other. His desires and aversions, his joys and sorrows, will now often become the causes of new desires and new aversions, new joys and new sorrows. They will now, therefore, interest him deeply, and will often call for his most attentive consideration.

III.1.3 Our first ideas of personal beauty and ugliness are drawn from the shape and appearance of others, not from our own. We soon become aware, however, that others pass the same kind of judgment on us. We are pleased when they approve of our figure, and offended when they seem disgusted by it. We become anxious to know how far our appearance deserves their blame or their approval. We examine our bodies limb by limb, and by placing ourselves in front of a mirror, or by some similar device, try as far as possible to view ourselves at the distance, and with the eyes, of other people. If, after this examination, we are satisfied with our own appearance, we can more easily bear the most unfavorable judgments of others. If, on the contrary, we are aware that we are natural objects of distaste, every sign of their disapproval mortifies us beyond all measure. A man who is reasonably handsome will let you laugh at any little irregularity in his person; but all such jokes are usually unbearable to someone who is really disfigured. It is evident, however, that we are anxious about our own beauty or ugliness only because of its effect on others. If we had no connection with society, we would be completely indifferent to both.

III.1.4 In the same way, our first moral criticisms are directed at the characters and conduct of other people, and we are all very quick to notice how each of these affects us. But we soon learn that other people are just as frank about our own. We become anxious to know how far we deserve their censure or applause, and whether we must necessarily appear to them the agreeable

or disagreeable creatures they make us out to be. For this reason we begin to examine our own passions and conduct. We consider how these must appear to them by considering how they would appear to us if we were in their situation. We suppose ourselves to be the spectators of our own behavior, and try to imagine what effect it would have on us, seen in this light. This is the only mirror by which we can, to some extent, scrutinize the propriety of our own conduct with the eyes of other people. If in this view it pleases us, we are reasonably satisfied. We can be more indifferent to the applause of the world, and to some extent despise its censure, secure in the knowledge that, however misunderstood or misrepresented we may be, we are the natural and proper objects of approbation. If, on the contrary, we are doubtful about it, we are often, for that very reason, more anxious to gain their approval. And provided we have not already, as they say, shaken hands with infamy, we are utterly distraught at the thought of their censure, which then strikes us with double severity.

III.1.5 When I try to examine my own conduct, when I try to pass sentence on it and either approve or condemn it, it is evident that in all such cases I divide myself, as it were, into two persons. I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined and judged. The first is the spectator. I try to enter into his sentiments about my own conduct by placing myself in his situation and considering how it would appear to me when seen from that particular point of view. The second is the agent, the person I properly call myself, about whose conduct I was trying, in the character of a spectator, to form some opinion. The first is the judge; the second, the person judged. But that the judge should be in every respect the same as the person judged is as impossible as that the cause should be in every respect the same as the effect.

III.1.6 To be amiable and to be meritorious—that is, to deserve love and to deserve reward—are the great characteristics of virtue; and to be odious and punishable are those of vice. But all

these characteristics refer directly to the sentiments of others. Virtue is not said to be amiable or meritorious because it is the object of its own love or its own gratitude, but because it arouses those sentiments in other people. The awareness that it is the object of such favorable regard is the source of the inner tranquility and self-satisfaction that naturally accompany it, just as the suspicion of the contrary gives rise to the torments of vice. What happiness is as great as to be loved, and to know that we deserve to be loved? What misery is as great as to be hated, and to know that we deserve to be hated?

CHAPTER II: OF THE LOVE OF PRAISE, AND OF THAT OF PRAISE-WORTHINESS; AND OF THE DREAD OF BLAME, AND OF THAT OF BLAME-WORTHINESS

Man desires not only praise but to deserve it; the man within the breast judges by desert.

III.2.1 Man naturally desires, not only to be loved, but to be lovely; that is, to be the thing that is the natural and proper object of love. He naturally dreads, not only to be hated, but to be hateful; that is, to be the thing that is the natural and proper object of hatred. He desires, not only praise, but praise-worthiness; that is, to be the thing that, even if nobody should praise it, is nevertheless the natural and proper object of praise. He dreads, not only blame, but blame-worthiness; that is, to be the thing that, even if nobody should blame it, is nevertheless the natural and proper object of blame.

III.2.2 The love of praise-worthiness is by no means derived entirely from the love of praise. These two principles resemble each other, and they are connected and often blended together. Yet they are in many respects distinct and independent of each other.

III.2.3 The love and admiration that we naturally feel for those whose character and conduct we approve of necessarily dispose us to want to become, ourselves, the objects of the same agreeable sentiments, and to be as amiable and as admirable as those we love and admire most. Emulation—the anxious desire that

we ourselves should excel—is originally founded on our admiration of the excellence of others. Nor can we be satisfied with merely being admired for the things other people are admired for. We must at least believe ourselves to be admirable for the things that make them admirable. But to attain this satisfaction, we must become the impartial spectators of our own character and conduct. We must try to view them with the eyes of other people, or as other people are likely to view them. If, seen in this light, they appear to us as we wish, we are happy and content. But this happiness and contentment are greatly confirmed when we find that other people see them in exactly the same light in which we ourselves had seen them. They view them with the very eyes with which we were trying, only in imagination, to view them. Their approbation necessarily confirms our own self-approbation. Their praise necessarily strengthens our own sense of our own praise-worthiness. In this case, the love of praise-worthiness is so far from being derived entirely from the love of praise that the love of praise seems, at least to a great extent, to be derived from the love of praise-worthiness.

III.2.4 The most sincere praise can give little pleasure when it cannot be regarded as some kind of proof of praise-worthiness. It is by no means enough that esteem and admiration should somehow be bestowed on us through ignorance or mistake. If we are aware that we do not deserve to be thought of so favorably, and that, if the truth were known, we would be regarded with very different sentiments, our satisfaction is far from complete. The man who applauds us either for actions we did not perform, or for motives that had no influence at all on our conduct, applauds not us but another person. We can get no satisfaction of any kind from his praise. To us his praise should be more mortifying than any censure. It should constantly bring to our minds the most humbling of all reflections: the reflection on what we ought to be but are not. A woman who paints her face, one would imagine, could get little vanity from the compliments paid to her complexion. These, we would expect, ought rather to remind her of the sentiments her real complexion would arouse,

and mortify her all the more by the contrast. To be pleased with such groundless applause is proof of the most superficial frivolity and weakness. This is what is properly called vanity, and it is the foundation of the most ridiculous and contemptible vices, the vices of affectation and common lying. If experience did not teach us how common these follies are, one would imagine that the least spark of common sense would save us from them. The foolish liar tries to win the admiration of the company by telling of adventures that never happened. The self-important fop puts on airs of rank and distinction to which he knows perfectly well he has no rightful claim. Both, no doubt, are pleased with the applause they imagine they receive. But their vanity arises from so gross an illusion of the imagination that it is hard to conceive how any rational creature could be taken in by it. When they place themselves in the situation of those they imagine they have deceived, they are struck with the highest admiration for themselves. They regard themselves not in the light in which they know they ought to appear to their companions, but in the light in which they believe their companions actually see them. Their superficial weakness and trivial folly prevent them from ever turning their eyes inward, or from seeing themselves from that contemptible point of view from which, as their own consciences must tell them, they would appear to everybody if the real truth should ever come to be known.

III.2.5 Ignorant and groundless praise can give no solid joy, no satisfaction that will survive any serious examination. On the other hand, it often gives real comfort to reflect that, although no praise has actually been given to us, our conduct has still been such as to deserve it. It has in every respect matched the standards and rules by which praise and approbation are naturally and commonly given. We are pleased not only with praise but with having done what is praise-worthy. We are pleased to think that we have made ourselves the natural objects of approbation, even if no approbation is ever actually given to us. And we are mortified to reflect that we have justly deserved the

blame of those we live with, even if that sentiment is never actually directed against us. The man who knows in himself that he has exactly observed the standards of conduct that experience tells him are generally agreeable reflects with satisfaction on the propriety of his own behavior. When he views it in the light in which the impartial spectator would view it, he fully enters into all the motives that influenced it. He looks back on every part of it with pleasure and approval. Even if mankind should never learn what he has done, he regards himself not so much in the light in which they actually regard him as in the light in which they would regard him if they were better informed. He anticipates the applause and admiration that would in that case be given to him. He applauds and admires himself by sympathy with sentiments that do not, indeed, actually occur, but that only the ignorance of the public prevents from occurring. He knows these sentiments are the natural and ordinary effects of such conduct; his imagination strongly connects them with it; and he has acquired the habit of conceiving them as something that naturally and properly ought to follow from it. Men have voluntarily thrown away their lives to win after death a renown they could no longer enjoy. Their imagination, meanwhile, anticipated the fame that was to be given to them in future times. The applause they were never to hear rang in their ears. The thought of the admiration whose effects they were never to feel played about their hearts, banished from their breasts the strongest of all natural fears, and carried them on to perform actions that seem almost beyond the reach of human nature. But in reality there is surely no great difference between two kinds of approbation. One is not to be given until we can no longer enjoy it. The other, indeed, is never to be given, but would be given if the world were ever brought to understand properly the real circumstances of our behavior. If the first often produces such powerful effects, we cannot be surprised that the second should always be highly valued.

III.2.6 Nature, when she formed man for society, endowed him with an original desire to please his fellows and an original aver-

sion to offending them. She taught him to feel pleasure when they regarded him favorably and pain when they regarded him unfavorably. She made their approbation most flattering and most agreeable to him for its own sake, and their disapprobation most mortifying and most offensive.

III.2.7 But this desire for the approbation of his fellows, and this aversion to their disapprobation, would not alone have made him fit for the society for which he was made. Nature, accordingly, has endowed him not only with a desire to be approved of, but with a desire to be what ought to be approved of—that is, to be what he himself approves of in other men. The first desire could only have made him wish to appear fit for society. The second was necessary to make him anxious to be really fit. The first could only have prompted him to put on a show of virtue and to conceal vice. The second was necessary to inspire him with a real love of virtue and a real abhorrence of vice. In every well-formed mind this second desire seems to be the stronger of the two. Only the weakest and most superficial of mankind can be much delighted with praise that they themselves know to be entirely undeserved. A weak man may sometimes be pleased with it, but a wise man rejects it on every occasion. But though a wise man feels little pleasure from praise where he knows there is no praise-worthiness, he often feels the greatest pleasure in doing what he knows to be praise-worthy, though he knows equally well that no praise will ever be given for it. To obtain the approbation of mankind where no approbation is due can never be an object of any importance to him. To obtain that approbation where it really is due may sometimes be an object of no great importance to him. But to be the kind of person who deserves approbation must always be an object of the very highest importance.

III.2.8 To desire praise, or even to accept it, where no praise is due can only be the effect of the most contemptible vanity. To desire it where it really is due is to desire no more than that a most essential act of justice should be done to us. The love of just fame, of true glory, even for its own sake and apart from any

advantage he can draw from it, is not unworthy even of a wise man. Sometimes, however, he neglects it and even despises it; and he is never more apt to do so than when he is most fully assured of the perfect propriety of every part of his own conduct. In that case his self-approbation needs no confirmation from the approbation of other men. It is sufficient by itself, and he is content with it. This self-approbation is, if not the only object, at least the principal object he can or ought to be anxious about. The love of it is the love of virtue.

III.2.9 The love and admiration we naturally feel for some characters dispose us to wish to become ourselves the proper objects of such agreeable sentiments. In the same way, the hatred and contempt we just as naturally feel for others dispose us, perhaps even more strongly, to dread the very thought of resembling them in any respect. Here too, it is not so much the thought of being hated and despised that we fear as the thought of being hateful and despicable. We dread the thought of doing anything that could make us the just and proper objects of the hatred and contempt of our fellow creatures, even if we were perfectly secure that those sentiments would never actually be directed against us. Take the man who has broken through all the standards of conduct that alone can make him agreeable to mankind. Even if he is perfectly assured that what he has done will be hidden forever from every human eye, it is all to no purpose. When he looks back on it and views it in the light in which the impartial spectator would view it, he finds that he can enter into none of the motives that influenced it. He is abashed and confounded at the thought of it, and necessarily feels a very high degree of the shame he would be exposed to if his actions ever became generally known. Here too his imagination anticipates the contempt and ridicule from which nothing saves him but the ignorance of those he lives with. He still feels that he is the natural object of these sentiments, and he still trembles at the thought of what he would suffer if they were ever actually directed against him. But suppose what he had been guilty of was not merely one of those improprieties that are the objects of simple

disapprobation, but one of those enormous crimes that provoke detestation and resentment. Then, as long as he had any sensibility left, he could never think of it without feeling all the agony of horror and remorse. Even if he could be assured that no one would ever know of it, and could even bring himself to believe that there was no God to avenge it, he would still feel enough of both these sentiments to embitter his whole life. He would still regard himself as the natural object of the hatred and indignation of all his fellow creatures. And unless his heart had grown callous through the habit of crime, he could not think without terror and astonishment even of how mankind would look at him—of what the expression of their faces and of their eyes would be—if the dreadful truth should ever come to be known. These natural pangs of a frightened conscience are the demons, the avenging furies, that haunt the guilty in this life. They allow them neither quiet nor rest; they often drive them to despair and madness. No assurance of secrecy can protect them from these pangs, and no principles of irreligion can entirely deliver them. Nothing can free them but the vilest and most abject of all states: a complete insensibility to honor and infamy, to vice and virtue. Men of the most detestable characters, who in carrying out the most dreadful crimes had laid their plans so coolly as to escape even the suspicion of guilt, have sometimes been driven by the horror of their situation to reveal, of their own accord, what no human shrewdness could ever have uncovered. They acknowledged their guilt and submitted themselves to the resentment of their offended fellow citizens, and so satisfied the vengeance whose proper objects they felt they had become. By their death they hoped to reconcile themselves, at least in their own imagination, to the natural sentiments of mankind. They hoped to be able to think of themselves as less deserving of hatred and resentment, to atone in some measure for their crimes, and, by thus becoming objects of compassion rather than of horror, if possible to die in peace and with the forgiveness of all their fellow creatures. Compared with what they felt

before the discovery, even the thought of this, it seems, was happiness.

III.2.10 In such cases the horror of blame-worthiness seems completely to conquer the dread of blame, even in people who cannot be suspected of any extraordinary delicacy or sensibility of character. To soothe that horror, to quiet in some degree the remorse of their own consciences, they voluntarily submitted themselves both to the reproach and to the punishment they knew were due to their crimes, but which they could at the same time easily have avoided.

III.2.11 Only the most frivolous and superficial of mankind can be much delighted with praise they themselves know to be entirely undeserved. Undeserved reproach, however, is often capable of mortifying very severely even men of more than ordinary steadiness. Men of quite ordinary steadiness, it is true, easily learn to despise the foolish stories that so often circulate in society, which, from their own absurdity and falsehood, never fail to die away in the course of a few weeks or a few days. But an innocent man, even one of more than ordinary steadiness, is often not only shocked but most severely mortified by the serious, though false, accusation of a crime—especially when that accusation happens, unfortunately, to be supported by some circumstances that give it an air of probability. He is humbled to find that anyone should think so poorly of his character as to suppose him capable of being guilty of it. Though he is perfectly conscious of his own innocence, the mere accusation often seems, even in his own imagination, to throw a shadow of disgrace and dishonor over his character. His just indignation, too, at so very gross an injury—which it may often be improper, and sometimes even impossible, to avenge—is itself a very painful feeling. There is no greater tormentor of the human breast than violent resentment that cannot be satisfied. An innocent man brought to the scaffold by the false accusation of an infamous or odious crime suffers the cruelest misfortune that innocence can possibly suffer. The agony of his mind in this case may often be greater than that of those who suffer for sim-

ilar crimes of which they really are guilty. Hardened criminals, such as common thieves and highwaymen, often have little sense of the baseness of their own conduct, and consequently no remorse. Without troubling themselves about the justice or injustice of the punishment, they have always been used to looking on the gallows as a lot very likely to fall to them. So when it does fall to them, they consider themselves merely not quite as lucky as some of their companions. They submit to their fate without any uneasiness other than what may arise from the fear of death—a fear which, as we often see, even such worthless wretches can conquer so easily and so very completely. The innocent man, by contrast, over and above whatever uneasiness this fear may cause, is tormented by his own indignation at the injustice done to him. He is struck with horror at the thought of the infamy the punishment may cast on his memory. He foresees, with the most exquisite anguish, that from now on he will be remembered by his dearest friends and relations not with regret and affection but with shame, and even with horror, for his supposed disgraceful conduct. And the shades of death seem to close around him with a darker and more melancholy gloom than naturally belongs to them. For the peace of mankind, it is to be hoped that such fatal accidents happen very rarely in any country. But they happen sometimes in every country, even in those where justice is in general very well administered. The unfortunate Calas was a man of much more than ordinary steadiness. He was broken on the wheel and burned at Toulouse for the supposed murder of his own son, of which he was perfectly innocent. With his last breath he seemed to plead against, not so much the cruelty of the punishment, as the disgrace the accusation might bring on his memory.[1] After he had been broken, and was just about to be thrown into the fire, the monk attending the execution urged him to confess the crime for which he had been

1 Jean Calas, a Protestant merchant of Toulouse, was executed in 1762 on a charge of killing his son to prevent his conversion to Catholicism; Voltaire's campaign on his behalf led to his posthumous exoneration in 1765.

condemned. "Father," said Calas, "can you yourself bring yourself to believe that I am guilty?"

III.2.12 To people in such unfortunate circumstances, that humble philosophy which confines its view to this life can perhaps offer only a little consolation. Everything that could make either life or death respectable has been taken from them. They are condemned to death and to everlasting infamy. Religion alone can offer them any real comfort. She alone can tell them that it matters little what man may think of their conduct, so long as the all-seeing Judge of the world approves of it. She alone can set before them the prospect of another world—a world of more candor, humanity, and justice than the present one—where their innocence will in due time be declared and their virtue finally rewarded. And the same great principle that alone can strike terror into triumphant vice offers the only real consolation to disgraced and insulted innocence.

III.2.13 In small offenses as well as in great crimes, it often happens that a person of sensibility is much more hurt by an unjust accusation than the real criminal is by actual guilt. A woman who carries on love affairs laughs even at well-founded rumors about her conduct. The most baseless rumor of the same kind is a mortal wound to an innocent young woman. As a general rule, I believe, we may lay it down that a person who deliberately commits a disgraceful action can seldom have much sense of the disgrace, and a person who habitually commits it can scarcely ever have any.

III.2.14 Every man of even middling understanding readily despises applause he has not earned. How, then, does it come about that unearned reproach can often mortify men of the soundest and best judgment so severely? The question may perhaps deserve some consideration.

III.2.15 Pain, as I have already had occasion to observe, is in almost every case a sharper sensation than the opposite and corresponding pleasure. Pain almost always drives us much further below the ordinary state of our happiness—what may be called its natural state—than pleasure ever lifts us above it. A man of

sensibility tends to be more humbled by just censure than he is ever elevated by just applause. A wise man always rejects unearned applause with contempt, but he often feels the injustice of unearned censure very keenly. If he lets himself be applauded for what he has not done, and takes credit for a merit that does not belong to him, he feels that he is guilty of a low falsehood, and that he deserves not the admiration but the contempt of the very people who were mistakenly led to admire him. It may perhaps give him some well-founded pleasure to find that many people thought him capable of doing what he did not do. But though he may be obliged to his friends for their good opinion, he would think himself guilty of the greatest baseness if he did not set them straight at once. He takes little pleasure in looking at himself in the light in which other people actually see him when he knows that, if they knew the truth, they would see him in a very different light. A weak man, however, is often greatly delighted to view himself in this false and deceptive light. He claims the merit of every praiseworthy action that is ascribed to him, and lays claim to many that nobody ever thought of ascribing to him. He pretends to have done what he never did, to have written what another wrote, to have invented what another discovered; and so he is led into all the miserable vices of plagiarism and common lying. But though no man of middling good sense can take much pleasure in being credited with a praiseworthy action he never performed, a wise man may suffer great pain from being seriously charged with a crime he never committed. In this case nature has made the pain not only sharper than the opposite and corresponding pleasure, but sharper by a far greater margin than usual. A denial rids a man at once of the foolish and ridiculous pleasure, but it will not always rid him of the pain. When he declines a merit ascribed to him, nobody doubts his truthfulness. It may well be doubted when he denies a crime he is accused of. He is at once enraged at the falsehood of the charge and mortified to find that anyone gives it credit. He feels that his character is not enough to protect him. He feels that his fellow men, far from seeing him in the

light in which he anxiously wants them to see him, think him capable of doing what he is accused of. He knows perfectly well that he has not done it. He knows perfectly well what he has done; but perhaps scarcely anyone can know perfectly what he himself is capable of doing. What the particular constitution of his own mind may or may not allow is perhaps, for every man, more or less a matter of doubt. The trust and good opinion of his friends and neighbors do more than anything to relieve him of this most disagreeable doubt; their distrust and poor opinion do more than anything to increase it. He may feel quite confident that their unfavorable judgment is wrong. But this confidence can seldom be so great as to keep that judgment from making some impression on him; and the greater his sensibility, the greater his delicacy—in short, the greater his worth—the greater this impression is likely to be.

III.2.16 It must be observed that in every case, whether other people's sentiments and judgments agree or disagree with our own matters to us more or less in exact proportion as we ourselves are more or less uncertain about the propriety of our own sentiments and the accuracy of our own judgments.

III.2.17 A man of sensibility may sometimes feel great uneasiness that he may have given way too far even to what may be called an honorable passion—perhaps to his just indignation at an injury done either to himself or to his friend. He is anxiously afraid that, meaning only to act with spirit and to do justice, he may, through the excessive violence of his emotion, have done a real injury to someone else, who, though not innocent, may not have been quite as guilty as he at first supposed. In this case the opinion of other people becomes of the utmost importance to him. Their approval is the most healing balm; their disapproval is the bitterest and most tormenting poison that can be poured into his uneasy mind. When he is perfectly satisfied with every part of his own conduct, the judgment of other people often matters less to him.

III.2.18 There are some very noble and beautiful arts in which the degree of excellence can be determined only by a certain

delicacy of taste, whose verdicts, however, always seem to some extent uncertain. There are others in which success admits either of clear demonstration or of very satisfactory proof. Among those who compete for excellence in these different arts, anxiety about public opinion is always much greater in the first kind than in the second.

III.2.19 The beauty of poetry is so delicate a matter that a young beginner can scarcely ever be sure he has achieved it. Nothing delights him so much, therefore, as the favorable judgments of his friends and of the public, and nothing mortifies him so severely as unfavorable ones. The one confirms, and the other shakes, the good opinion he is anxious to hold of his own work. Experience and success may in time give him a little more confidence in his own judgment. At all times, however, he remains liable to be most severely mortified by the unfavorable judgments of the public. Racine was so disheartened by the lukewarm reception of his *Phaedra*—perhaps the finest tragedy extant in any language—that, though he was in the prime of life and at the height of his powers, he resolved to write no more for the stage. That great poet often told his son that the most paltry and impertinent criticism had always given him more pain than the highest and most just praise had ever given him pleasure. Everybody knows how extremely sensitive Voltaire was to the slightest censure of the same kind.[2] Mr. Pope's *Dunciad* is an everlasting monument to how deeply the most correct, as well as the most elegant and harmonious, of all English poets had been hurt by the criticisms of the lowest and most contemptible authors. Gray—who joins to the sublimity of Milton the elegance and harmony of Pope, and who perhaps lacks nothing to make him[3] the first poet in the English language, except to have written a little more—is said to have been so hurt by a foolish and impertinent parody of two of his finest odes that he never after-

2 *Phèdre* (1677). Racine wrote nothing further for the public stage, though he returned to drama in 1689 with *Esther*, written for the girls' school at Saint-Cyr.
3 *The Dunciad* (1728–1743), Alexander Pope's mock-epic satire on the dull writers and critics who had attacked him.

ward attempted any considerable work. Those men of letters who pride themselves on what is called fine writing in prose come somewhat close to the sensibility of poets.[4]

III.2.20 Mathematicians, by contrast, may be perfectly assured both of the truth and of the importance of their discoveries, and they are often quite unconcerned about the reception these may meet with from the public. The two greatest mathematicians I have ever had the honor of knowing, and, I believe, the two greatest who have lived in my time, Dr. Robert Simpson of Glasgow and Dr. Matthew Stewart of Edinburgh never seemed to feel even the slightest uneasiness at the neglect with which an ignorant public received some of their most valuable works. Sir Isaac Newton's great work, his *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, was, I have been told, neglected by the public for several years.[5] Probably that great man's tranquility was never disturbed on that account for a single quarter of an hour. Natural philosophers come close to mathematicians in their independence of public opinion, and in judging the merit of their own discoveries and observations they enjoy something of the same security and tranquility.[6]

III.2.21 The morals of these different classes of men of letters are perhaps sometimes somewhat affected by this very great difference in their position with regard to the public.

III.2.22 Because mathematicians and natural philosophers are independent of public opinion, they have little temptation to form themselves into factions and cabals, whether to support their own reputations or to run down those of their rivals. They are almost always men of the most amiable simplicity of manners. They live in harmony with one another, are friends to one another's reputations, and enter into no intrigue to secure public applause. They are pleased when their works are approved,

4 Thomas Gray (1716–1771). The parody was George Colman and Robert Lloyd's *Two Odes* (1760), aimed at Gray's "The Progress of Poesy" and "The Bard."

5 Robert Simson (1687–1768; Smith spells him "Simpson"), professor of mathematics at Glasgow; Matthew Stewart (1717–1785), professor of mathematics at Edinburgh.

6 "Natural philosophy": what we now call physics and the other natural sciences.

without being much vexed or very angry when they are neglected.

III.2.23 It is not always the same with poets, or with those who pride themselves on what is called fine writing. They are very apt to split into a kind of literary faction. Each cabal is often openly, and almost always secretly, the mortal enemy of the reputation of every other. Each uses all the low arts of intrigue and canvassing to win public opinion in advance for the works of its own members and against those of its enemies and rivals. In France, Despréaux and Racine did not think it beneath them to put themselves at the head of a literary cabal in order to run down the reputations, first of Quinault and Perrault, and afterward of Fontenelle and La Motte. They even treated the good La Fontaine with a kind of most disrespectful kindness. In England, the amiable Mr. Addison did not think it unworthy of his gentle and modest character to put himself at the head of a little cabal of the same kind, in order to keep down the rising reputation of Mr. Pope.[7] Mr. Fontenelle wrote the lives and characters of the members of the Academy of Sciences, a society of mathematicians and natural philosophers, and in doing so he often has occasion to celebrate the amiable simplicity of their manners. This quality, he observes, was so universal among them as to be characteristic of that whole class of men of letters rather than of any individual.[8] Mr. D'Alembert wrote the lives and characters of the members of the French Academy, a society of poets and fine writers, or of those supposed to be such. He seems not to have had such frequent occasion for any remark of this kind, and he nowhere claims that this amiable quality is characteristic of the class of men of letters whom he celebrates.[9]

III.2.24 Our uncertainty about our own merit, together with our anxiety to think well of it, would naturally enough make us want

7 Despréaux is Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636–1711), poet and critic; Smith spells Perrault "Perreault."

8 Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757), secretary of the Académie des Sciences, whose éloges of its members appeared from 1708 on.

9 Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717–1783), whose *Histoire des membres de l'Académie française* appeared in 1785–1787.

to know other people's opinion of it. It would make us more than ordinarily elated when that opinion is favorable, and more than ordinarily mortified when it is not. But these feelings should not make us want either to obtain the favorable opinion or to avoid the unfavorable one by intrigue and cabal. When a man has bribed all the judges, the most unanimous decision of the court may win him his lawsuit, but it cannot give him any assurance that he was in the right. Had he carried on his lawsuit merely to satisfy himself that he was in the right, he would never have bribed the judges. But though he wished to find himself in the right, he also wished to win his lawsuit; and so he bribed the judges. If praise mattered to us only as a proof of our own praise-worthiness, we would never try to obtain it by unfair means. For wise men, praise matters chiefly on this account, at least in doubtful cases. But it also matters somewhat for its own sake. And therefore men very far above the common level (though on such occasions we cannot, indeed, call them wise men) have sometimes tried both to obtain praise and to avoid blame by very unfair means.

III.2.25 Praise and blame express what other people's sentiments about our character and conduct actually are. Praise-worthiness and blame-worthiness express what those sentiments naturally ought to be. The love of praise is the desire to obtain the favorable sentiments of our fellows. The love of praise-worthiness is the desire to make ourselves the proper objects of those sentiments. So far, the two principles resemble each other and are akin. The same affinity and resemblance hold between the dread of blame and the dread of blame-worthiness.

III.2.26 The man who wishes to do a praise-worthy action, or who actually does one, may also want the praise due to it, and sometimes perhaps more than is due. In this case the two principles are blended together. How far his conduct was influenced by the one and how far by the other may often be unknown even to himself. To other people it must almost always be unknown. Those who are inclined to lessen the merit of his conduct put it down chiefly or entirely to the mere love of praise, or to what

they call mere vanity. Those who are inclined to think better of it put it down chiefly or entirely to the love of praise-worthiness. They ascribe it to the love of what is really honorable and noble in human conduct, and to the desire not merely to obtain but to deserve the approval and applause of his fellows. The spectator's imagination casts one color or the other over it, according either to his habits of thinking or to the liking or dislike he may have for the person whose conduct he is considering.

III.2.27 Some sour-tempered philosophers, in judging human nature, have done what peevish individuals tend to do in judging one another's conduct. They have attributed to the love of praise, or to what they call vanity, every action that ought to be ascribed to the love of praise-worthiness. I shall have occasion later to give an account of some of their systems, and will not stop to examine them now.[10]

III.2.28 Very few men can be satisfied with their own private awareness that they have attained the qualities, or performed the actions, that they admire and think praise-worthy in other people. They need it also to be generally acknowledged that they possess the one or have performed the other. In other words, they need actually to have obtained the praise they think due to both. In this respect, however, people differ considerably from one another. Some seem indifferent about the praise when they are perfectly satisfied in their own minds that they have attained the praise-worthiness. Others appear much less anxious about the praise-worthiness than about the praise.

III.2.29 No man can be completely, or even tolerably, satisfied with having avoided everything blame-worthy in his conduct unless he has also avoided the blame or reproach. A wise man may often neglect praise, even when he has most deserved it. But in all matters of serious consequence he will take the greatest care to regulate his conduct so as to avoid not only blame-worthiness but also, as far as possible, every likely imputation of blame. He will never, indeed, avoid blame by

10 Smith chiefly means Bernard Mandeville, author of *The Fable of the Bees*, whose "licentious system" he discusses in Part VII.

doing anything he judges blame-worthy. He will not omit any part of his duty, or neglect any opportunity of doing something he judges to be really and greatly praise-worthy. But with these qualifications, he will avoid it most anxiously and carefully. To show much anxiety about praise, even for praise-worthy actions, is seldom a sign of great wisdom. It is generally a sign of some degree of weakness. But in being anxious to avoid even the shadow of blame or reproach there may be no weakness at all, and often the most praise-worthy prudence.

III.2.30 "Many people," says Cicero, "despise glory, yet are most severely mortified by unjust reproach—and that most inconsistently." This inconsistency, however, seems to be grounded in the unalterable principles of human nature.[11]

III.2.31 The all-wise Author of Nature has in this way taught man to respect the sentiments and judgments of his fellow men. He is to be more or less pleased when they approve of his conduct, and more or less hurt when they disapprove of it. God has made man, if I may put it so, the immediate judge of mankind. In this respect, as in many others, he has created him in his own image and appointed him his deputy on earth, to oversee the behavior of his fellow men. They in turn are taught by nature to acknowledge the power and jurisdiction thus conferred on him. They are to be more or less humbled and mortified when they have incurred his censure, and more or less elated when they have won his applause.

III.2.32 But though man has in this way been made the immediate judge of mankind, he has been made so only in the first instance. An appeal lies from his sentence to a much higher tribunal. That is the tribunal of their own consciences, of the supposed impartial and well-informed spectator, of the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of their conduct. The jurisdictions of these two tribunals rest on principles that are in some respects similar and related, but in reality different and distinct. The jurisdiction of the man outside is founded entirely on the desire of actual praise and the aversion to actual

11 Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC), Roman orator, statesman and philosopher.

blame. The jurisdiction of the man within is founded entirely on the desire of praise-worthiness and the aversion to blame-worthiness. It rests on the desire to possess those qualities, and perform those actions, that we love and admire in other people; and on the dread of possessing those qualities, and performing those actions, that we hate and despise in other people. Suppose the man outside applauds us, either for actions we have not performed or for motives that had no influence on us. Then the man within can at once humble the pride and elation that such groundless acclaim might otherwise produce. He tells us that since we know we do not deserve it, we make ourselves contemptible by accepting it. Suppose, on the contrary, the man outside reproaches us, either for actions we never performed or for motives that had no influence on those we may have performed. Then the man within may at once correct this false judgment, and assure us that we are by no means the proper objects of the censure so unjustly heaped upon us. But in this and some other cases the man within seems at times, as it were, stunned and bewildered by the vehemence and clamor of the man outside. The violence and loudness with which blame is sometimes poured out on us seem to stupefy and numb our natural sense of praise-worthiness and blame-worthiness. The judgments of the man within are perhaps not absolutely altered or perverted. But they are so shaken in the steadiness and firmness of their decision that their natural effect, which is to secure the tranquility of the mind, is often largely destroyed. We scarcely dare to acquit ourselves when all our fellow men appear loudly to condemn us. The supposed impartial spectator of our conduct seems to give his opinion in our favor with fear and hesitation when all the real spectators are unanimously and violently against us. These are all those with whose eyes, and from whose position, he tries to consider our conduct. In such cases this demigod within the breast appears, like the demigods of the poets, to be partly of immortal but partly also of mortal descent. When his judgments are steadily and firmly directed by the sense of praise-worthiness and blame-worthiness, he seems

to act in keeping with his divine descent. But when he lets himself be stunned and bewildered by the judgments of ignorant and weak man, he reveals his connection with mortality. He then appears to act in keeping with the human rather than the divine part of his origin.

III.2.33 In such cases the only effective consolation of humbled and afflicted man lies in an appeal to a still higher tribunal. That is the tribunal of the all-seeing Judge of the world, whose eye can never be deceived and whose judgments can never be perverted. Before this great tribunal his innocence is in due time to be declared and his virtue finally rewarded. A firm confidence in its unerring rectitude can alone support him under the weakness and despondency of his own mind. It can alone support him under the agitation and bewilderment of the man within the breast, whom nature has set up, in this life, as the great guardian not only of his innocence but of his tranquility. Our happiness in this life thus depends, on many occasions, on the humble hope and expectation of a life to come. This hope and expectation is deeply rooted in human nature. It alone can sustain that nature's lofty ideas of its own dignity. It alone can light up the dreary prospect of its ever-approaching mortality. And it alone can keep up its cheerfulness under all the heaviest calamities to which, through the disorders of this life, it may sometimes be exposed. Consider the doctrine that there is a world to come, where exact justice will be done to every man. There every man will be ranked with those who are really his equals in moral and intellectual qualities. There, too, will be the owner of those humble talents and virtues that, held down by fortune, had no opportunity in this life to display themselves. They were unknown not only to the public; he himself could scarcely be sure he possessed them, and even the man within the breast could scarcely venture to give him any distinct and clear testimony of them; and there that modest, silent and unknown merit will be placed on a level with, and sometimes above, those who in this world enjoyed the highest reputation. These were the people who, from the advantage of their situation, were able to

perform the most splendid and dazzling actions. This doctrine is in every respect so venerable, so comforting to the weakness and so flattering to the grandeur of human nature, that the virtuous man who has the misfortune to doubt it cannot possibly avoid wishing most earnestly and anxiously to believe it. It would never have been exposed to the scoffer's derision if it were not for one thing. Some of its most zealous champions have taught us how rewards and punishments are to be distributed in that world to come, and that distribution has too often been in direct opposition to all our moral sentiments.

III.2.34 We have all heard the complaint from many a venerable but discontented old officer. The assiduous courtier, he says, is often more favored than the faithful and active servant. Attendance and flattery are often shorter and surer roads to promotion than merit or service. And a campaign at Versailles or St. James's is often worth two in Germany or Flanders.[12] But what is considered the greatest reproach even to the weakness of earthly sovereigns has been attributed, as an act of justice, to divine perfection. The duties of devotion, the public and private worship of the Deity, have been represented, even by men of virtue and ability, as the only virtues that can either entitle us to reward or exempt us from punishment in the life to come. These were perhaps the virtues best suited to those men's station, and the ones in which they themselves chiefly excelled. And we are all naturally inclined to overrate the excellences of our own characters. The eloquent and philosophical Massillon preached a sermon when blessing the colors of the Catinat regiment. In it there is the following address to the officers: "What is most deplorable in your situation, Gentlemen, is this. Yours is a hard and painful life, in which the services and duties sometimes go beyond the rigor and severity of the most austere cloisters;[13] yet you always suffer in vain for the life to come, and often even for

12 Versailles and St. James's were the royal courts of France and Britain; Germany and Flanders were the main battlegrounds of eighteenth-century European wars.
13 Jean-Baptiste Massillon (1663–1742), French bishop and celebrated preacher. Nicolas Catinat (1637–1712) was a marshal of France.

this life. Alas! The solitary monk in his cell, obliged to mortify the flesh and subject it to the spirit, is sustained by the hope of a sure reward, and by the secret anointing of that grace which softens the yoke of the Lord. But you, on your deathbed, can you dare to set before Him your fatigues and the daily hardships of your calling? Can you dare to ask Him for any reward? And in all the exertions you have made, in all the violence you have done to yourselves, what is there that He ought to count as done for Him? Yet the best days of your life have been sacrificed to your profession. Ten years' service has worn out your body more than a whole life of repentance and mortification would perhaps have done. Alas! my brother, a single day of those sufferings, consecrated to the Lord, would perhaps have won you eternal happiness. A single action, painful to nature and offered up to Him, would perhaps have secured you the inheritance of the Saints. And you have done all this—and in vain—for this world."

III.2.35 Massillon compares the futile mortifications of a monastery with the ennobling hardships and dangers of war. He supposes that one day, or one hour, spent in the former should have more merit in the eye of the great Judge of the world than a whole life honorably spent in the latter. This is surely contrary to all our moral sentiments, and to all the principles by which nature has taught us to regulate our contempt or admiration. It is this spirit, however, that has reserved the heavenly regions for monks and friars, or for those whose conduct and way of life resembled theirs. It has condemned to the infernal regions all the heroes, all the statesmen and lawgivers, all the poets and philosophers of former ages. It has condemned all those who invented, improved, or excelled in the arts that contribute to the subsistence, convenience, or ornament of human life. It has condemned all the great protectors, teachers and benefactors of mankind—all those to whom our natural sense of praise-worthiness compels us to ascribe the highest merit and the most exalted virtue. Can we wonder that so strange an application of this most respectable doctrine should sometimes have exposed it to contempt and derision? This has happened at least among those

who perhaps had no great taste or inclination of their own for the devout and contemplative virtues.[14]

CHAPTER III: OF THE INFLUENCES AND AUTHORITY OF CONSCIENCE

Only the impartial spectator corrects self-love's distortions, as the earthquake in China shows.

III.3.1 On some extraordinary occasions the approval of his own conscience can scarcely satisfy the weakness of man. The testimony of the supposed impartial spectator, the great inmate of the breast, cannot always support him on its own. Yet the influence and authority of this principle are, on all occasions, very great. Only by consulting this judge within can we ever see what concerns ourselves in its proper shape and dimensions. Only so can we ever make any proper comparison between our own interests and those of other people.

III.3.2 To the eye of the body, objects appear great or small not so much according to their real dimensions as according to how near or far away they are. They appear the same way to what may be called the natural eye of the mind, and we remedy the defects of both these organs in much the same way. In my present situation, an immense landscape of lawns and woods and distant mountains seems to do no more than fill the little window I am writing by. It seems out of all proportion smaller than the room in which I am sitting. There is only one way I can form an accurate comparison between those great objects and the little objects around me. I must transport myself, at least in imagination, to a different position, from which I can survey both at nearly equal distances, and so form some judgment of their real proportions. Habit and experience have taught me to

14 SMITH'S NOTE. See Voltaire.

Vous y grillez sage et docte Platon, / Divin Homere, eloquent Ciceron, etc.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Voltaire (1694–1778), French writer and satirist.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. "There you roast, wise and learned Plato, / divine Homer, eloquent Cicero, etc." From Voltaire's mock-epic *La Pucelle d'Orléans*.

do this so easily and readily that I am scarcely aware that I do it. A man must be to some extent acquainted with the philosophy of vision before he can be thoroughly convinced how small those distant objects would appear to the eye. They would look that small if the imagination, knowing their real size, did not swell and enlarge them.

III.3.3 In the same way, to the selfish and original passions of human nature, the loss or gain of a very small interest of our own seems vastly more important than the greatest concern of another person with whom we have no particular connection. It excites a far more passionate joy or sorrow, a far more ardent desire or aversion. As long as his interests are viewed from this position, they can never be weighed in the balance against our own. They can never restrain us from doing whatever may tend to promote ours, however ruinous to him. Before we can make any proper comparison of these opposed interests, we must change our position. We must view them neither from our own place nor from his, neither with our own eyes nor with his. We must view them from the place and with the eyes of a third person, who has no particular connection with either of us and who judges impartially between us. Here too, habit and experience have taught us to do this so easily and so readily that we are scarcely aware that we do it. In this case too, it takes some degree of reflection, and even of philosophy, to convince us of something. We would take very little interest in the greatest concerns of our neighbor, and be very little affected by anything that relates to him, if the sense of propriety and justice did not correct what would otherwise be the natural inequality of our sentiments.

III.3.4 Let us suppose that the great empire of China, with all its myriads of inhabitants, were suddenly swallowed up by an earthquake. Let us consider how a man of humanity in Europe, who had no sort of connection with that part of the world, would be affected on receiving news of this dreadful calamity. He would, I imagine, first of all express very strongly his sorrow for the misfortune of that unhappy people. He would make

many melancholy reflections on the precariousness of human life, and on the vanity of all the labors of man, which could thus be wiped out in a moment.[15] If he were a man given to speculation, he might also enter into many reasonings about the effects this disaster might have on the commerce of Europe, and on the trade and business of the world in general. And when all this fine philosophy was over, when all these humane sentiments had once been duly expressed, he would go about his business or his pleasure, take his rest or his amusement, with the same ease and tranquility as if no such accident had happened. The most trivial disaster that could befall him personally would cause a more real disturbance. If he were to lose his little finger tomorrow, he would not sleep tonight. But provided he never saw them, he will snore in the most profound security over the ruin of a hundred million of his brethren. The destruction of that immense multitude plainly seems a matter of less interest to him than this paltry misfortune of his own. So, to prevent this paltry misfortune to himself, would a man of humanity be willing to sacrifice the lives of a hundred million of his brethren, provided he had never seen them? Human nature recoils in horror at the thought. Even in its greatest depravity and corruption, the world never produced a villain capable of entertaining it. But what makes this difference? Our passive feelings are almost always so sordid and so selfish. How is it, then, that our active principles are often so generous and so noble? We are always so much more deeply affected by whatever concerns ourselves than by whatever concerns other people. What is it, then, that prompts the generous on all occasions, and the mean-spirited on many, to sacrifice their own interests to the greater interests of others? It is not the soft power of humanity, nor that feeble spark of benevolence which Nature has lit in the human heart, that is able to counteract the strongest impulses of self-love in this way. It is a stronger power, a more forceful motive, that exerts itself on such occasions. It is reason, principle, con-

15 "A man of humanity" means a kind, humane man: in Smith, "humanity" is fellow feeling, not the human race.

science, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct. Whenever we are about to act in a way that affects the happiness of others, it is he who calls out to us, with a voice capable of astonishing the most presumptuous of our passions. He tells us that we are only one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it. He tells us that when we prefer ourselves so shamefully and so blindly to others, we become the proper objects of resentment, abhorrence, and execration. It is from him alone that we learn the real littleness of ourselves and of whatever relates to ourselves. Only the eye of this impartial spectator can correct the natural misrepresentations of self-love. It is he who shows us the propriety of generosity and the ugliness of injustice. He shows us the propriety of giving up the greatest interests of our own for the still greater interests of others. He shows us the ugliness of doing the smallest injury to another in order to obtain the greatest benefit for ourselves. It is not the love of our neighbor, it is not the love of mankind, that on many occasions prompts us to practice those divine virtues. It is a stronger love, a more powerful affection, that generally comes into play on such occasions: the love of what is honorable and noble, of the grandeur, dignity, and superiority of our own characters.

III.3.5 When the happiness or misery of others depends in any way on our conduct, we dare not prefer the interest of one to that of many, as self-love might suggest. The man within immediately calls out to us that we value ourselves too much and other people too little. By doing so, he tells us, we make ourselves the proper object of the contempt and indignation of our brethren. Nor is this sentiment confined to men of extraordinary magnanimity and virtue. It is deeply impressed on every tolerably good soldier. He feels that he would become the scorn of his comrades if he could be thought capable of shrinking from danger, or of hesitating either to expose his life or to throw it away when the good of the service required it.

III.3.6 One individual must never prefer himself even to any other single individual so much as to hurt or injure that other in

order to benefit himself. This holds even if the benefit to the one should be much greater than the hurt or injury to the other. The poor man must neither defraud nor steal from the rich, even though what he gained might benefit him far more than the loss could hurt the rich man. In this case too, the man within immediately calls out to him that he is no better than his neighbor. By this unjust preference he makes himself the proper object of the contempt and indignation of mankind. He also makes himself the proper object of the punishment that this contempt and indignation must naturally dispose them to inflict, because he has violated one of those sacred rules on whose tolerable observance the whole security and peace of human society depend. There is no ordinarily honest man who does not dread the inward disgrace of such an action more than the greatest external calamity that could possibly befall him through no fault of his own. He dreads the indelible stain it would stamp forever on his own mind. Every such man inwardly feels the truth of that great Stoic maxim. For one man unjustly to deprive another of anything, or unjustly to promote his own advantage by another's loss or disadvantage, is more contrary to nature than death, than poverty, than pain, than all the misfortunes that can affect him, whether in his body or in his external circumstances.[16]

III.3.7 Sometimes, indeed, the happiness or misery of others does not depend in any respect on our conduct. Our interests are altogether separate and detached from theirs, so that there is neither connection nor competition between them. In such cases we do not always think it so necessary to restrain our natural and perhaps improper anxiety about our own affairs. Nor do we think it so necessary to restrain our natural and perhaps equally improper indifference about the affairs of other people. The most common education teaches us to act, on all important occasions, with some sort of impartiality between ourselves and others. Even the ordinary dealings of the world can bring our active principles to some degree of propriety. But only the most

16 The maxim is from Cicero, *On Duties* III.21.

artificial and refined education, it has been said, can correct the inequalities of our passive feelings. For this purpose, it has been claimed, we must resort to the severest as well as the profoundest philosophy.

III.3.8 Two different groups of philosophers have tried to teach us this hardest of all the lessons of morality. One group has labored to increase our sensibility to the interests of others; the other, to diminish our sensibility to our own. The first would have us feel for others as we naturally feel for ourselves. The second would have us feel for ourselves as we naturally feel for others. Both, perhaps, have carried their doctrines a good deal beyond the just standard of nature and propriety.

III.3.9 The first are those whining and melancholy moralists who are forever reproaching us for our happiness while so many of our brethren are in misery[17]. They regard as impious the natural joy of prosperity, because it does not think of the many wretches who are laboring at every moment under all sorts of calamities. Some suffer in the languor of poverty, some in the agony of disease, some in the horrors of death, and some under the insults and oppression of their enemies. We never saw these miseries and never heard of them, but we may be sure that they are at all times afflicting great numbers of our fellow creatures. Compassion for them, these moralists think, ought to dampen the pleasures of the fortunate and make a certain melancholy dejection habitual to everyone. But, first of all, this extreme sympathy with misfortunes we know nothing about seems altogether absurd and unreasonable. Take the whole earth on average. For every one man who suffers pain or misery, you will find twenty in prosperity and joy, or at least in tolerable circumstances. Surely no reason can be given why we should weep with the one rather than rejoice with the twenty. Besides, this artificial compassion is not only absurd but seems altogether unat-

17 SMITH'S NOTE. See Thomson's *Seasons*, "Winter": "Ah! little think the gay licentious proud," etc. See also Pascal.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726–30), a popular poem. Pascal's *Pensées* dwells on human wretchedness.

tainable. Those who put on this character commonly have nothing but a certain affected, sentimental sadness. It never reaches the heart and serves only to make their faces and conversation inappropriately dismal and disagreeable. And last of all, even if this disposition of mind could be attained, it would be perfectly useless. It could serve no purpose except to make the person who had it miserable. Some people are entirely outside the sphere of our activity, and we have no acquaintance or connection with them. Whatever interest we take in their fortunes can produce only anxiety for ourselves, without any kind of advantage to them. To what purpose should we trouble ourselves about the world in the moon? All men, even those at the greatest distance, are no doubt entitled to our good wishes, and we naturally give them our good wishes. But if they should be unfortunate all the same, to make ourselves anxious on that account seems no part of our duty. So we take only a little interest in the fortunes of those whom we can neither help nor harm, and who are in every respect so very remote from us. This seems wisely arranged by Nature. Even if it were possible to alter the original constitution of our frame in this respect, we could gain nothing by the change.

III.3.10 No one ever objects that we have too little fellow-feeling with the joy of success. Wherever envy does not prevent it, the favor we show to prosperity tends rather to be too great. The same moralists who blame us for lacking sufficient sympathy with the miserable also reproach us for our levity. We are too apt, they say, to admire, and almost to worship, the fortunate, the powerful, and the rich.

III.3.11 Other moralists try to correct the natural inequality of our passive feelings by diminishing our sensibility to what particularly concerns ourselves. Among these we may count all the ancient sects of philosophers, but especially the ancient Stoics. According to the Stoics, a man ought to regard himself not as something separate and detached, but as a citizen of the world, a member of the vast commonwealth of nature. He ought at all times to be willing that his own little interest should be sacri-

ficed to the interest of this great community. Whatever concerns himself ought to affect him no more than whatever concerns any other equally important part of this immense system. We should not view ourselves in the light in which our own selfish passions tend to place us. We should view ourselves in the light in which any other citizen of the world would view us. What befalls us we should regard as what befalls our neighbor. Or, what comes to the same thing, we should regard it as our neighbor regards what befalls us. "When our neighbor," says Epictetus, "loses his wife or his son, there is nobody who does not recognize that this is a human calamity, a natural event entirely in keeping with the ordinary course of things. But when the same thing happens to us, then we cry out as if we had suffered the most dreadful misfortune.[18] We ought, however, to remember how we were affected when this accident happened to another, and we ought to be in our own case as we were in his."

III.3.12 The private misfortunes for which our feelings tend to go beyond the bounds of propriety are of two different kinds. Some affect us only indirectly, by first affecting other persons who are especially dear to us, such as our parents, our children, our brothers and sisters, or our intimate friends. Others affect us immediately and directly, whether in our body, our fortune, or our reputation, such as pain, sickness, approaching death, poverty, disgrace, and so on.

III.3.13 In misfortunes of the first kind, our emotions may no doubt go far beyond what exact propriety allows. But they may also fall short of it, and they often do. A man who felt no more for the death or distress of his own father or son than for those of any other man's father or son would seem neither a good son nor a good father. Such unnatural indifference, far from winning our applause, would draw our strongest disapproval. Of these domestic affections, however, some are most apt to offend by their excess, and others by their deficiency. For the wisest purposes, Nature has made parental tenderness, in most men

18 Epictetus (c. AD 50–135), Stoic philosopher; the passage is from his *Handbook* (*Enchiridion*), ch. 26.

and perhaps in all, a much stronger affection than filial piety. The continuation and propagation of the species depend entirely on the former, not on the latter. In ordinary cases, the existence and survival of the child depend entirely on the care of the parents. The existence and survival of the parents seldom depend on the care of the child. Nature has therefore made the former affection so strong that it generally needs to be moderated rather than stirred up. Moralists seldom try to teach us how to indulge our fondness for our children. They generally teach us how to restrain it: our excessive attachment, and the unjust preference we are inclined to give our own children over those of other people. They urge us, on the other hand, to pay affectionate attention to our parents, and to make them a proper return in their old age for the kindness they showed us in our infancy and youth. In the Ten Commandments we are commanded to honor our fathers and mothers. No mention is made of loving our children. Nature had prepared us well enough to perform this latter duty. Men are seldom accused of pretending to be fonder of their children than they really are. They have sometimes been suspected of displaying their devotion to their parents with too much show. For a similar reason, the showy sorrow of widows has been suspected of insincerity. If we could believe it sincere, we would respect even the excess of such kind affections. We might not entirely approve of it, but we would not condemn it harshly. That it seems praiseworthy, at least in the eyes of those who put it on, the very pretense proves.

III.3.14 Even the excess of those kind affections that are most apt to offend by excess never seems odious, though it may seem blameworthy. We blame a parent's excessive fondness and anxiety as something that may in the end prove harmful to the child, and that is meanwhile extremely inconvenient to the parent. But we pardon it easily, and never regard it with hatred and detestation. A deficiency in this usually excessive affection, however, always seems peculiarly odious. The man who seems to feel nothing for his own children, and who treats them on every occasion with undeserved severity and harshness, seems of all

brutes the most detestable. The sense of propriety does not require us to root out entirely the extraordinary sensibility we naturally feel for the misfortunes of those closest to us. Far from it: it is always much more offended by a deficiency of that sensibility than it ever is by an excess. In such cases stoical apathy is never agreeable. All the metaphysical sophistries used to support it can seldom do anything except inflate the hard insensibility of a conceited fool to ten times its natural impertinence. The poets and novelists who best portray the refinements and delicacies of love and friendship, and of all the other private and domestic affections (Racine and Voltaire; Richardson, Marivaux, and Riccoboni), are much better teachers in such cases than Zeno, Chrysippus, or Epictetus.[19]

III.3.15 There is a moderated sensibility to the misfortunes of others that does not unfit us for performing any duty. There is the melancholy and affectionate remembrance of our departed friends. There is the pang, as Gray says, "to secret sorrow dear." These are by no means unpleasant sensations. Outwardly they wear the features of pain and grief, but inwardly they are all stamped with the ennobling marks of virtue and self-approval.[20]

III.3.16 It is otherwise with the misfortunes that affect ourselves immediately and directly, in our body, our fortune, or our reputation. Here the sense of propriety is much more apt to be offended by an excess of our sensibility than by a deficiency. There are very few cases in which we can come too close to stoical apathy and indifference.

III.3.17 It has already been observed that we have very little fellow-feeling with any of the passions that originate in the body. Pain with an evident cause, such as the cutting or tearing of the flesh, is perhaps the bodily affection with which the spectator feels the liveliest sympathy. The approaching death of his neighbor, too, seldom fails to affect him a good deal. In both cases,

19 Racine and Voltaire were French dramatists; Samuel Richardson, Pierre de Marivaux (Smith spells him "Maurivaux") and Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni were novelists. Zeno, Chrysippus and Epictetus were Stoic philosophers.

20 Thomas Gray (1716–1771), English poet; the phrase comes from one of his epitaphs.

however, he feels so very little compared with what the person principally concerned feels that the sufferer can scarcely ever offend the spectator by seeming to bear it too easily.

III.3.18 Mere lack of fortune, mere poverty, excites little compassion. Its complaints are too apt to be objects of contempt rather than of fellow-feeling. We despise a beggar, and though his pestering may extract a coin from us, he is scarcely ever the object of any serious pity. The fall from riches to poverty is different. It usually causes the sufferer the most real distress, and so it seldom fails to excite the most sincere pity in the spectator. In the present state of society this misfortune can seldom happen without some misconduct on the sufferer's part, and some very considerable misconduct too. Yet he is almost always so much pitied that he is scarcely ever allowed to fall into the lowest state of poverty. With the help of his friends, and often through the indulgence of the very creditors who have every reason to complain of his imprudence, he is almost always kept in a decent, though humble, middling condition. We could perhaps easily pardon some degree of weakness in people under such misfortunes. At the same time, some keep the firmest countenance and adapt most easily to their new situation. They seem to feel no humiliation from the change, and to rest their rank in society on their character and conduct rather than on their fortune. These are always the most approved of, and they never fail to command our highest and most affectionate admiration.

III.3.19 Of all the external misfortunes that can affect an innocent man immediately and directly, the undeserved loss of reputation is certainly the greatest. So a considerable degree of sensibility to whatever can bring on so great a calamity does not always seem ungraceful or disagreeable. We often think the better of a young man when he resents, even with some violence, any unjust reproach that has been cast on his character or his honor. The distress of an innocent young lady over groundless suspicions that may have been spread about her conduct often seems perfectly endearing. People of advanced age, whom long experience of the folly and injustice of the world has taught to

pay little attention either to its censure or to its applause, ignore and despise abuse. They do not even deign to honor its worthless authors with any serious resentment. This indifference is founded entirely on a firm confidence in their own well-tested and well-established characters. It would be disagreeable in young people, who neither can nor should have any such confidence. In them it might be taken to foreshadow, in their later years, a most improper insensibility to real honor and disgrace.

III.3.20 In all other private misfortunes that affect ourselves immediately and directly, we can very seldom offend by seeming too little affected. We often remember our sensibility to the misfortunes of others with pleasure and satisfaction. We can seldom remember our sensibility to our own without some degree of shame and humiliation.

III.3.21 Suppose we examine the different shades and degrees of weakness and self-command as we meet them in ordinary life. We will easily convince ourselves that this control of our passive feelings is not acquired from the abstruse syllogisms of a quibbling dialectic. It must be acquired from the great discipline that Nature has established for acquiring this and every other virtue: a regard for the sentiments of the real or imagined spectator of our conduct.

III.3.22 A very young child has no self-command. Whatever its emotions, whether fear, grief, or anger, it always tries by the violence of its cries to rouse as much as it can the attention of its nurse or its parents. While it remains in the care of such partial protectors, anger is the first and perhaps the only passion it is taught to moderate. For their own peace, they are often obliged to frighten it into good temper with noise and threats. And so the passion that urges it to attack is restrained by the one that teaches it to look to its own safety. When it is old enough to go to school or to mix with its equals, it soon finds that they have no such indulgent partiality. It naturally wishes to win their favor and to avoid their hatred or contempt. Even concern for its own safety teaches it to do so. And it soon finds that the only way to do so is to moderate, not only its anger, but all its other passions,

to the degree its playmates and companions are likely to be pleased with. It thus enters the great school of self-command. It studies to become more and more master of itself, and it begins to exercise over its own feelings a discipline that the practice of the longest life is very seldom enough to bring to complete perfection.

III.3.23 In all private misfortunes, in pain, in sickness, in sorrow, the weakest man is immediately struck by the view his visitors are likely to take of his situation. This is true when a friend visits him, and still more when a stranger does. Their view draws his attention away from his own, and his breast is to some extent calmed the moment they come into his presence. This effect is produced instantly and, as it were, mechanically, but with a weak man it does not last long. His own view of his situation immediately comes back to him. He gives himself up, as before, to sighs and tears and lamentations. Like a child that has not yet gone to school, he tries to produce some sort of harmony between his own grief and the compassion of the spectator. He does this, not by moderating his grief, but by insistently appealing to the spectator's compassion.

III.3.24 With a man of a little more firmness, the effect lasts somewhat longer. He tries as hard as he can to fix his attention on the view the company are likely to take of his situation. At the same time, he feels the esteem and approval they naturally conceive for him when he keeps his composure in this way. So, though he is under the pressure of some recent and great calamity, he appears to feel for himself no more than they really feel for him. He approves and applauds himself through sympathy with their approbation, and the pleasure he takes in this sentiment sustains him and makes it easier for him to continue this generous effort. In most cases he avoids mentioning his own misfortune, and his company, if they are reasonably well bred, take care to say nothing that might remind him of it. He tries to entertain them in his usual way on unimportant subjects. Or, if he feels strong enough to venture to mention his misfortune, he tries to talk of it as he thinks they are capable of talking of it,

and even to feel it no more than they are capable of feeling it. If he has not been well hardened by the hard discipline of self-command, however, he soon grows weary of this restraint. A long visit tires him. Toward the end of it he is constantly in danger of doing what he never fails to do the moment it is over: giving himself up to all the weakness of excessive sorrow. Modern good manners, which are extremely indulgent to human weakness, forbid for a time any visits from strangers to people in great family distress, and permit visits only from the nearest relatives and most intimate friends. The presence of these, it is thought, will impose less restraint than that of strangers. And the sufferers can more easily adapt themselves to the feelings of those from whom they have reason to expect a more indulgent sympathy. Secret enemies, who imagine that nobody knows them to be enemies, are often eager to make these charitable visits as early as the most intimate friends. In this case the weakest man in the world tries to keep up a manly countenance. Out of indignation and contempt for their malice, he behaves with as much cheerfulness and ease as he can.

III.3.25 Then there is the man of real constancy and firmness: the wise and just man who has been thoroughly trained in the great school of self-command, in the bustle and business of the world, exposed perhaps to the violence and injustice of faction and to the hardships and dangers of war. He maintains this control of his passive feelings on every occasion. Whether alone or in company, he wears nearly the same countenance and is affected in very nearly the same way. In success and in disappointment, in prosperity and in adversity, before friends and before enemies, he has often had to sustain this manliness. He has never dared to forget for one moment the judgment the impartial spectator would pass on his sentiments and conduct. He has never dared to let the man within the breast be absent from his attention for one moment. He has always been accustomed to regard everything that concerns himself with the eyes of this great inmate. This habit has become perfectly familiar to him. He has been in constant practice, and indeed under con-

stant necessity, of modeling, or trying to model, not only his outward conduct and behavior but, as far as he can, even his inward sentiments and feelings, on those of this awe-inspiring and venerable judge. He does not merely put on the sentiments of the impartial spectator. He really adopts them. He almost identifies himself with that impartial spectator, he almost becomes that spectator himself, and he scarcely even feels except as that great arbiter of his conduct directs him to feel.

III.3.26 On such occasions every man surveys his own conduct with some degree of self-approval. That degree is higher or lower exactly in proportion to the degree of self-command needed to earn it. Where little self-command is needed, little self-approval is due. A man who has only scratched his finger cannot applaud himself much, even if he seems to forget this trivial misfortune at once. A man who has lost his leg to a cannon shot, and who a moment later speaks and acts with his usual coolness and composure, exerts a much higher degree of self-command. So he naturally feels a much higher degree of self-approval. With most men, after such an accident, their own natural view of their misfortune would force itself on them so vividly and in such strong colors that it would entirely wipe out all thought of any other view. They would feel nothing, and could attend to nothing, but their own pain and their own fear. Not only the judgment of the ideal man within the breast, but also that of the real spectators who happened to be present, would be entirely overlooked and disregarded.

III.3.27 The reward Nature gives for good behavior under misfortune is thus exactly proportioned to the degree of that good behavior. The only compensation she could possibly make for the bitterness of pain and distress is also, where the good behavior is equal, exactly proportioned to the degree of that pain and distress. The more self-command it takes to conquer our natural sensibility, the greater the pleasure and pride of the conquest. This pleasure and pride are so great that no one who fully enjoys them can be altogether unhappy. Misery and wretchedness can never enter the breast where complete self-satisfaction dwells. It

may perhaps be too much to say, with the Stoics, that under an accident like the one just mentioned, the happiness of a wise man is in every respect equal to what it could have been in any other circumstances. Yet it must at least be acknowledged that this complete enjoyment of his own self-applause, though it may not altogether extinguish his sense of his own sufferings, must certainly relieve it a great deal.

III.3.28 In such paroxysms of distress, if I may call them that, even the wisest and firmest man must, I imagine, make a considerable and even painful exertion to keep his equanimity. His own natural feeling of his distress, his own natural view of his situation, presses hard on him, and he cannot, without a very great effort, fix his attention on the view of the impartial spectator. Both views present themselves to him at the same time. His sense of honor, his regard for his own dignity, directs him to fix his whole attention on the one view. His natural feelings, untaught and undisciplined, keep calling it away to the other. In this case he does not perfectly identify himself with the ideal man within the breast. He does not himself become the impartial spectator of his own conduct. The different views of the two characters exist in his mind separate and distinct from each other, and each directs him to behave differently from the way the other directs him. When he follows the view that honor and dignity point out to him, Nature does not, indeed, leave him without a reward. He enjoys his own complete self-approbation, and the applause of every fair and impartial spectator. By her unalterable laws, however, he still suffers. The reward she gives, though very considerable, is not enough to compensate completely for the sufferings those laws inflict. Nor is it fitting that it should be. If it did compensate them completely, he could have no self-interested motive for avoiding an accident that must necessarily reduce his utility both to himself and to society; and Nature, out of her parental care for both, meant him to avoid all such accidents anxiously. He suffers, therefore. In the agony of the paroxysm he keeps not only a manly countenance but a

calm and sober judgment, yet it takes his utmost and most exhausting exertions to do so.

III.3.29 By the constitution of human nature, however, agony can never be permanent. If he survives the paroxysm, he soon comes, without any effort, to enjoy his ordinary tranquility. A man with a wooden leg no doubt suffers a very considerable inconvenience, and foresees that he must go on suffering it for the rest of his life. He soon comes to view it, however, exactly as every impartial spectator views it: as an inconvenience under which he can enjoy all the ordinary pleasures both of solitude and of society. He soon identifies himself with the ideal man within the breast; he soon becomes himself the impartial spectator of his own situation. He no longer weeps over it, no longer laments it, no longer grieves over it, as a weak man may sometimes do at first. The view of the impartial spectator becomes so perfectly habitual to him that, without any effort or exertion, he never thinks of looking at his misfortune in any other way.

III.3.30 All men, sooner or later, adjust themselves to whatever becomes their permanent situation, and they never fail to do so. This certainty may perhaps lead us to think that the Stoics were at least this far very nearly right. On this view, between one permanent situation and another there is, as regards real happiness, no essential difference. If there is any difference, it is just enough to make some situations objects of simple choice or preference, but not of any earnest or anxious desire. It makes others objects of simple rejection, fit to be set aside or avoided, but not of any earnest or anxious aversion. Happiness consists in tranquility and enjoyment. Without tranquility there can be no enjoyment, and where there is perfect tranquility there is scarcely anything that cannot amuse. But in every permanent situation, where no change is expected, every man's mind returns sooner or later to its natural and usual state of tranquility. In prosperity, after a certain time, it falls back to that state; in adversity, after a certain time, it rises up to it. In the confinement and solitude of the Bastille, after a certain time, the fashionable and frivolous Count de Lauzun recovered enough tran-

quility to be able to amuse himself by feeding a spider.[21] A better-furnished mind would perhaps have recovered its tranquility sooner, and would sooner have found a much better amusement in its own thoughts.

III.3.31 The great source of both the misery and the disorders of human life seems to be overrating the difference between one permanent situation and another. Avarice overrates the difference between poverty and riches; ambition, the difference between a private and a public station; vainglory, the difference between obscurity and wide reputation. A person under the influence of any of these extravagant passions is not only miserable in his actual situation. He is often also disposed to disturb the peace of society in order to reach the situation he so foolishly admires. Yet the slightest observation might satisfy him that in all the ordinary situations of human life a well-disposed mind can be equally calm, equally cheerful, and equally contented. Some of those situations may no doubt deserve to be preferred to others. But none of them can deserve to be pursued with the passionate ardor that drives us to violate the rules either of prudence or of justice. Nor can any deserve that we spoil the future tranquility of our minds, either with shame at the memory of our own folly or with remorse at the horror of our own injustice. Wherever prudence does not direct the attempt to change our situation, wherever justice does not permit it, the man who makes the attempt is playing the most unequal of all games of chance, and stakes everything against scarcely anything. What the favorite of the king of Epirus said to his master may be applied to people in all the ordinary situations of human life. The King had listed for him, in their proper order, all the conquests he planned to make. When he came to the last of them, the Favorite asked, "And what does Your Majesty plan to do then?" "I plan then," said the King, "to enjoy

21 Antoine Nompar de Caumont, Count (later Duke) de Lauzun (1633–1723), French courtier imprisoned under Louis XIV, briefly in the Bastille and for ten years at Pignerol. The spider story is usually told of the writer Paul Pellisson, a prisoner in the Bastille.

myself with my friends, and try to be good company over a bottle." "And what stops Your Majesty from doing so now?" replied the Favorite.[22] Our idle fancy holds out to us the most glittering and exalted situations. Yet the pleasures from which we expect to draw our real happiness there are almost always the same as those we have always at hand and in our power in our actual, though humble, station. Except for the frivolous pleasures of vanity and superiority, we may find in the humblest station, provided there is personal liberty, every pleasure the most exalted can offer. And the pleasures of vanity and superiority are seldom consistent with perfect tranquility, the principle and foundation of all real and satisfying enjoyment. Nor is it always certain that, in the splendid situation we aim at, those real and satisfying pleasures can be enjoyed as securely as in the humble one we are so very eager to leave. Examine the records of history. Recall what has happened within the circle of your own experience. Consider carefully the conduct of almost all those who were greatly unfortunate, in private or public life, whom you have read of, or heard of, or remember; and you will find that the misfortunes of by far the greater part of them arose from their not knowing when they were well off, when it was proper for them to sit still and be content. There is an inscription on the tombstone of the man who had tried to improve a tolerable constitution by taking medicine: "I was well, I wished to be better; here I am." It may generally be applied, with great accuracy, to the distress of disappointed avarice and ambition.[23]

III.3.32 It may be thought a peculiar observation, but I believe it is a just one. In misfortunes that admit of some remedy, most people do not recover their natural and usual tranquility as readily or as universally as in those that plainly admit of none. In misfortunes of the latter kind, it is chiefly in what may be called the paroxysm, or the first attack, that we can find any

22 The king is Pyrrhus of Epirus (319–272 BC) and the favorite his adviser Cineas; the exchange is told in Plutarch's *Life of Pyrrhus*.

23 An Italian epitaph ("Stavo ben, ma per star meglio, sto qui") made familiar to English readers by Addison in *The Spectator*, No. 25. "Physic" in the original means medicine.

noticeable difference between the sentiments and behavior of the wise man and those of the weak. In the end, Time, the great and universal comforter, gradually brings the weak man to the same degree of tranquility that a regard for his own dignity and manhood teaches the wise man to assume from the beginning. The case of the man with the wooden leg is an obvious example of this. In the irreparable misfortunes caused by the death of children, or of friends and relations, even a wise man may for some time allow himself a degree of moderated sorrow. An affectionate but weak woman is often almost completely distraught on such occasions. Time, however, sooner or later, never fails to bring the weakest woman to the same degree of tranquility as the strongest man. In all the irreparable calamities that affect him immediately and directly, a wise man tries from the start to anticipate the tranquility that he foresees a few months or a few years will certainly restore to him in the end, and to enjoy it in advance.

III.3.33 Some misfortunes are such that the nature of things admits, or seems to admit, of a remedy, but the means of applying it are beyond the sufferer's reach. In these, it is chiefly his vain and fruitless attempts to restore himself to his former situation, his constant anxiety about their success, and his repeated disappointments when they fail, that keep him from regaining his natural tranquility. They often make a man miserable for the whole of his life, when a greater misfortune that plainly admitted of no remedy would not have disturbed him for two weeks. Consider the fall from royal favor to disgrace, from power to insignificance, from riches to poverty, from liberty to confinement, from robust health to some lingering, chronic, and perhaps incurable disease. In each, the man who struggles least, who most easily and readily accepts the lot that has fallen to him, very soon recovers his usual and natural tranquility. He views the most disagreeable circumstances of his actual situation in the same light in which the most disinterested spectator is disposed to view them, or perhaps in a much less unfavorable one. Faction, intrigue, and cabal disturb the quiet of the unfor-

tunate statesman. Extravagant schemes, visions of gold mines, interrupt the rest of the ruined bankrupt. The prisoner who is continually plotting to escape from his confinement cannot enjoy the carefree security that even a prison can give him. The physician's medicines are often the greatest torment of the incurable patient. Joanna of Castile lost her husband Philip, and a monk tried to comfort her with the story of a king who had been brought back to life fourteen years after his death by the prayers of his grieving queen. With this legendary tale he was not likely to restore calm to the disordered mind of that unhappy princess.[24] She tried to repeat the same experiment in the hope of the same success. For a long time she resisted her husband's burial. Soon afterward she had his body raised from the grave and attended it almost constantly herself. With all the impatient anxiety of frantic expectation, she watched for the happy moment when her wishes would be granted by the revival of her beloved Philip[25].

III.3.34 Our sensibility to the feelings of others, far from being inconsistent with the manhood of self-command, is the very principle on which that manhood is founded. In our neighbor's misfortune, a certain principle or instinct prompts us to feel compassion for his sorrow. In our own misfortune, the very same principle or instinct prompts us to restrain the abject and miserable lamentations of our own sorrow. In his prosperity and success, the same principle or instinct prompts us to rejoice with him in his joy. In our own prosperity and success, it prompts us to restrain the levity and excess of our own joy. In both cases, the propriety of our own sentiments and feelings seems to be exactly proportioned to the liveliness and force with which we enter into and conceive his sentiments and feelings.

III.3.35 The man of the most perfect virtue, the man we naturally love and revere most, is the one who joins the most perfect com-

24 Joanna of Castile (1479–1555), called "the Mad," queen of Castile; her husband Philip the Handsome died in 1506.

mand of his own original and selfish feelings to the most exquisite sensibility to both the original and the sympathetic feelings of others. A man who joins all the great, awe-inspiring, and respectable virtues to all the soft, amiable, and gentle ones must surely be the natural and proper object of our highest love and admiration.

III.3.36 The person whom nature has best fitted to acquire the first of these two sets of virtues is necessarily also best fitted to acquire the second. The man who feels most for the joys and sorrows of others is best fitted to acquire the most complete control of his own joys and sorrows. The man of the most exquisite humanity is naturally the most capable of acquiring the highest degree of self-command. He may not, however, always have acquired it, and very often he has not. He may have lived too much in ease and tranquility. He may never have been exposed to the violence of faction, or to the hardships and dangers of war. He may never have experienced the insolence of his superiors, the jealous and malicious envy of his equals, or the petty, thieving injustice of his inferiors. When, late in life, some accidental change of fortune exposes him to all these, they all make too great an impression on him. He has the disposition that fits him for acquiring the most perfect self-command, but he has never had the opportunity to acquire it. Exercise and practice have been lacking, and without these no habit can ever be tolerably established. Hardships, dangers, injuries, and misfortunes are the only masters under whom we can learn to practice this virtue. But these are all masters to whom nobody willingly goes to school.

III.3.37 The situations in which the gentle virtue of humanity can best be cultivated are by no means the same as those best suited to forming the austere virtue of self-command. The man who is at ease himself can best attend to the distress of others. The man who is himself exposed to hardships is most immedi-

25 SMITH'S NOTE. See Robertson's *Charles V*, vol. ii, pp. 14 and 15, first edition.
TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. William Robertson, *The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V* (1769).

ately called on to attend to his own feelings and to control them. In the mild sunshine of undisturbed tranquility, in the calm retirement of a philosophical leisure that is not frittered away, the soft virtue of humanity flourishes most and is capable of the highest improvement. But in such situations the greatest and noblest exertions of self-command get little exercise. Under the boisterous and stormy sky of war and faction, of public tumult and confusion, the sturdy severity of self-command prospers most and can be cultivated most successfully. But in such situations the strongest promptings of humanity must often be stifled or neglected, and every such neglect necessarily tends to weaken the principle of humanity. Just as it may often be a soldier's duty not to take quarter, so it may sometimes be his duty not to give it. The humanity of a man who has several times been forced to submit to this disagreeable duty can scarcely fail to be considerably diminished.[26] For his own ease, he is too apt to learn to make light of the misfortunes he is so often obliged to cause. And the situations that call forth the noblest exertions of self-command sometimes make it necessary to violate the property of our neighbor, and sometimes his life. In doing so they always tend to diminish, and too often to extinguish altogether, that sacred regard for both which is the foundation of justice and humanity. That is why we so often find in the world men of great humanity who have little self-command. They are indolent and irresolute, and easily discouraged from the most honorable pursuits by difficulty or danger. On the other hand, we find men of the most perfect self-command, whom no difficulty can discourage and no danger appall, and who are always ready for the most daring and desperate enterprises, but who at the same time seem hardened against all sense of justice or humanity.

III.3.38 In solitude we are apt to feel too strongly whatever concerns ourselves. We are apt to overrate the good services we may have done and the injuries we may have suffered. We are apt to be too much elated by our own good fortune and too much

26 "Quarter" is mercy shown to an enemy who surrenders: to "take" quarter is to surrender and accept it, to "give" it is to spare the one who surrenders.

dejected by our bad. The conversation of a friend brings us into a better frame of mind, and that of a stranger into a better one still. The man within the breast, the abstract and ideal spectator of our sentiments and conduct, often needs to be awakened and reminded of his duty by the presence of the real spectator. And it is always from the spectator who offers us the least sympathy and indulgence that we are likely to learn the most complete lesson of self-command.

III.3.39 Are you in adversity? Do not mourn in the darkness of solitude. Do not regulate your sorrow by the indulgent sympathy of your close friends. Return as soon as you can to the daylight of the world and of society. Live among strangers, among those who know nothing about your misfortune or care nothing for it. Do not even shun the company of enemies. Give yourself the pleasure of mortifying their malicious joy, by making them feel how little your calamity affects you and how far you are above it.

III.3.40 Are you in prosperity? Do not confine the enjoyment of your good fortune to your own house, to the company of your own friends—perhaps of your flatterers, of those who hope to mend their own fortunes on the strength of yours. Spend time with those who are independent of you, who can value you only for your character and conduct and not for your wealth. Neither seek nor shun, neither push yourself into nor run away from, the society of those who were once your superiors and who may be hurt to find you their equal, or perhaps even their superior. The insolence of their pride may perhaps make their company too disagreeable. But if it does not, be assured that it is the best company you can possibly keep. And if the simplicity of your unassuming manner wins their favor and kindness, you may rest satisfied that you are modest enough, and that your good fortune has in no way turned your head.

III.3.41 The propriety of our moral sentiments is never so liable to be corrupted as when the indulgent and partial spectator is close at hand and the disinterested and impartial one is far away.

III.3.42 When one independent nation deals with another, neutral nations are the only disinterested and impartial spectators of its conduct. But they are placed so far away that they are almost entirely out of sight. When two nations are in conflict, the citizen of each pays little attention to what foreign nations may think of his conduct. His whole ambition is to win the approbation of his own fellow citizens; and since they are all animated by the same hostile passions that animate him, he can never please them so much as by enraging and offending their enemies. The partial spectator is at hand, the impartial one far away. In war and negotiation, therefore, the laws of justice are very seldom observed. Truth and fair dealing are almost entirely disregarded. Treaties are violated, and if some advantage is gained by the violation, it brings scarcely any dishonor on the violator. The ambassador who dupes the minister of a foreign nation is admired and applauded. Then there is the just man, who scorns either to take or to give any advantage, though he would think it less dishonorable to give one than to take one. In all private dealings he would be the most loved and the most esteemed. In these public dealings he is regarded as a fool and an idiot who does not understand his business, and he always incurs the contempt, and sometimes even the detestation, of his fellow citizens. In war, what are called the laws of nations are frequently violated without bringing any considerable dishonor on the violator (among his own fellow citizens, whose judgment is the only one he cares about). That is not all:[27] most of those laws themselves were laid down with very little regard for the plainest and most obvious rules of justice. Suppose the innocent have some connection with the guilty, or some dependence on them, which perhaps they themselves cannot help. One of the plainest and most obvious rules of justice is that they should not suffer on that account, or be punished for the guilty. Yet in the most unjust war it is commonly the sovereign or the rulers alone who are guilty. The subjects are almost always perfectly

27 "The laws of nations" is the old name for what we now call international law, including the customary rules of war.

innocent. Yet whenever it suits the convenience of a public enemy, the goods of peaceable citizens are seized on land and at sea. Their lands are laid waste and their houses burned, and they themselves, if they dare to offer any resistance, are murdered or carried off into captivity. And all this is in the most perfect conformity with what are called the laws of nations.

III.3.43 The animosity of hostile factions, whether civil or religious, is often even more furious than that of hostile nations, and their conduct toward one another is often still more atrocious. What may be called the laws of faction have often been laid down by grave authors with even less regard for the rules of justice than what are called the laws of nations. The most ferocious patriot never seriously raised the question, "Ought faith to be kept with public enemies?" But "Ought faith to be kept with rebels?" and "Ought faith to be kept with heretics?" are questions that celebrated doctors, both of law and of the church, have often furiously debated.[28] I presume I hardly need to point out that rebels and heretics alike are those unlucky people who, when things have reached a certain degree of violence, have the misfortune to be on the weaker side. In a nation torn by faction there are no doubt always a few, though usually only a very few, who keep their judgment untainted by the general contagion. They seldom amount to more than a solitary individual here and there. He has no influence, and his own candor shuts him out from the confidence of either party. He may be one of the wisest men in the society, but for that very reason he is necessarily one of the most insignificant. The furious zealots of both parties hold all such people in contempt and derision, and often in detestation. A true party man hates and despises candor. In reality, no vice could disqualify him so effectively for the trade of a party man as that single virtue. The real, revered, and impartial spectator, therefore, is never farther off than amid the violence and rage of contending parties. To them, it might be said, such a

28 To "keep faith" is to honor a promise or a safe-conduct. The question about heretics recalls Jan Hus, burned at the Council of Constance (1415) despite an imperial safe-conduct.

spectator scarcely exists anywhere in the universe. Even to the great Judge of the universe they ascribe all their own prejudices, and they often regard that Divine Being as animated by all their own vindictive and implacable passions. Of all the corrupters of moral sentiments, therefore, faction and fanaticism have always been by far the greatest.

III.3.44 On the subject of self-command, I shall only observe further that we admire the man who continues to behave with fortitude and firmness under the heaviest and most unexpected misfortunes. That admiration always presupposes that his sensibility to those misfortunes is very great, so great that it takes a very great effort to conquer or command it. A man who was entirely insensible to bodily pain could deserve no applause for enduring torture with the most perfect patience and composure. A man who had been created without the natural fear of death could claim no merit for keeping his coolness and presence of mind in the midst of the most dreadful dangers. One of Seneca's extravagances is the claim that the Stoic wise man was, in this respect, superior even to a god. The god's security, he says, was entirely the gift of nature, which had exempted him from suffering. The wise man's security was his own achievement, derived entirely from himself and his own exertions.[29]

III.3.45 Some men, however, are sometimes so sensitive to certain things that directly affect them that all self-command becomes impossible. No sense of honor can control the fears of a man who is weak enough to faint, or to fall into convulsions, when danger approaches. Such weakness of nerves, as it has been called, might admit of some cure through gradual exercise and proper discipline, though that may perhaps be doubtful. It seems certain that it ought never to be trusted or employed.

29 Seneca (c. 4 BC–AD 65), Roman Stoic philosopher and statesman; the claim appears in his *Moral Letters* (53.11) and *On Providence* (6.6).

CHAPTER IV: OF THE NATURE OF SELF-DECEIT, AND OF THE ORIGIN AND USE OF GENERAL RULES

Self-deceit clouds our judgment of ourselves, so we form general rules of morality from observing others.

III.4.1 Our judgments about the propriety of our own conduct can be thrown off course even when the real and impartial spectator is not far away. Even when he is close at hand, when he is actually present, the violence and injustice of our own selfish passions are sometimes enough to induce the man within the breast to make a report very different from anything the real circumstances of the case could justify.

III.4.2 There are two different occasions on which we examine our own conduct and try to view it in the light in which the impartial spectator would view it: first, when we are about to act; and second, after we have acted. Our views are apt to be very partial in both cases. But they are apt to be most partial when it matters most that they should not be.

III.4.3 When we are about to act, the eagerness of passion will seldom allow us to consider what we are doing with the candor of a disinterested person. The violent emotions that agitate us at that moment discolor our view of things. We may try to place ourselves in another's situation, and to regard the objects that interest us in the light in which they will naturally appear to him. Even then, the fury of our own passions keeps calling us back to our own place, where self-love magnifies and misrepresents everything. Of how those objects would appear to another, of the view he would take of them, we can get only momentary glimpses, if I may put it so. These vanish in an instant, and even while they last they are not altogether accurate. Even for that moment we cannot rid ourselves entirely of the heat and keenness that our particular situation inspires in us, nor consider what we are about to do with the complete impartiality of a fair judge. That is why, as Father Malebranche says, the passions all

justify themselves, and seem reasonable and proportioned to their objects, for as long as we continue to feel them.[30]

III.4.4 When the action is over, indeed, and the passions that prompted it have subsided, we can enter more coolly into the sentiments of the disinterested spectator. What interested us before has now become almost as indifferent to us as it always was to him, and we can now examine our own conduct with his candor and impartiality. The man of today is no longer agitated by the same passions that distracted the man of yesterday. When a paroxysm of distress is fairly over, we can identify ourselves, as it were, with the ideal man within the breast, and view our own situation, in our own person, with the severe eyes of the most impartial spectator. In the same way, when the paroxysm of emotion is fairly over, we can view our own conduct with those same eyes. But our judgments now are often of little importance compared with what they would have been before. Often they can produce nothing but vain regret and useless repentance, and they do not always secure us against similar errors in the future. Even in this case, however, they are seldom quite candid. The opinion we hold of our own character depends entirely on our judgment of our past conduct. It is so disagreeable to think ill of ourselves that we often deliberately turn our eyes away from the circumstances that might make that judgment unfavorable. He is a bold surgeon, they say, whose hand does not tremble when he operates on his own body. And he is often equally bold who does not hesitate to pull off the mysterious veil of self-delusion that hides the deformities of his own conduct from his view. Rather than see our own behavior in so disagreeable a light, we too often, foolishly and weakly, try to stir up anew the unjust passions that once misled us. We try by artifice to awaken our old hatreds and inflame afresh our almost forgotten resentments. We even exert ourselves for this miserable purpose. And so we persist in

30 Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715), French priest of the Oratory and philosopher; the remark is from his *The Search after Truth* (Book V).

injustice merely because we were once unjust, and because we are ashamed and afraid to see that we were.

III.4.5 So partial are people's views of the propriety of their own conduct, both at the time of acting and afterward. And so hard is it for them to see it in the light in which any impartial spectator would consider it. Suppose instead that they judged their own conduct by a special faculty, such as the moral sense is supposed to be. Suppose they were endowed with a particular power of perception that distinguished the beauty or ugliness of passions and affections. Their own passions would then lie more immediately open to the view of this faculty. It would therefore judge them more accurately than the passions of other people, of which it had only a more distant view.[31]

III.4.6 This self-deceit, this fatal weakness of mankind, is the source of half the disorders of human life. If we saw ourselves in the light in which others see us, or in which they would see us if they knew everything, a reformation would generally be unavoidable. Otherwise we could not bear the sight.

III.4.7 Nature, however, has not left this weakness, which matters so much, entirely without a remedy. Nor has she abandoned us completely to the delusions of self-love. Our continual observation of other people's conduct gradually leads us, without our noticing it, to form certain general rules for ourselves about what is fit and proper to do or to avoid. Some of their actions shock all our natural sentiments. We hear everyone around us express the same detestation of them. This confirms still further, and even sharpens, our natural sense of their ugliness. When we see other people view them in the same light, we are satisfied that we view them in the proper light. We resolve never to be guilty of the like, and never, on any account, to make ourselves in this way the objects of universal disapprobation. So we naturally lay down a general rule for ourselves: all such actions are to be avoided, since they tend to make us odious, contemptible, or punishable, the objects of all those sentiments

31 The "moral sense" was the theory of Francis Hutcheson, Smith's teacher at Glasgow, which Smith examines in Part VII.

we most dread and most shrink from. Other actions, on the other hand, call forth our approbation, and we hear everyone around us express the same favorable opinion of them. Everyone is eager to honor and reward them. They excite all those sentiments that we by nature most strongly desire: the love, the gratitude, the admiration of mankind. We become ambitious to do the like. And so we naturally lay down for ourselves a rule of another kind: every opportunity of acting in this way is to be carefully sought out.

III.4.8 This is how the general rules of morality are formed. They are ultimately founded on experience of what our moral faculties, our natural sense of merit and propriety, approve or disapprove of in particular instances. We do not originally approve or condemn particular actions because, on examination, they appear to agree or conflict with a certain general rule. On the contrary, the general rule is formed by finding from experience that all actions of a certain kind, or in certain circumstances, are approved or disapproved of. Take the man who first saw an inhuman murder, committed out of greed, envy, or unjust resentment, and on someone, too, who loved and trusted the murderer. He watched the last agonies of the dying person. He heard him, with his last breath, complain more of the treachery and ingratitude of his false friend than of the violence done to him. To grasp how horrible such an action was, this man would have no need to reflect that one of the most sacred rules of conduct forbade taking the life of an innocent person, that this was a plain violation of that rule, and that it was consequently a very blameworthy action. His detestation of this crime would clearly arise instantly, before he had formed any such general rule for himself. On the contrary, any general rule he might form afterward would be founded on the detestation he felt arise, as it necessarily would, in his own breast at the thought of this and every other particular action of the same kind.

III.4.9 When we read in history or in fiction an account of generous or of base actions, we feel admiration for the one and con-

tempt for the other. Neither feeling arises from reflecting that there are certain general rules declaring all actions of the one kind admirable and all actions of the other contemptible. On the contrary, those general rules are all formed from our experience of the effects that actions of all different kinds naturally produce on us.

III.4.10 An amiable action, a respectable action, a horrid action are all actions that naturally excite in the spectator love, respect, or horror for the person who performs them. The general rules that determine which actions are, and which are not, the objects of each of these sentiments can be formed in no other way than by observing which actions actually, in fact, excite them.

III.4.11 It is true that once these general rules have been formed, and are universally acknowledged and established by the concurring sentiments of mankind, we often appeal to them as standards of judgment. We do so when we debate what degree of praise or blame is due to certain actions of a complicated and doubtful nature. On these occasions they are commonly cited as the ultimate foundations of what is just and unjust in human conduct. This seems to have misled several very eminent authors into framing their systems as if mankind's original judgments of right and wrong were formed like the decisions of a court of law: by considering first the general rule, and then, second, whether the particular action under consideration properly fell within its scope.

III.4.12 Once those general rules of conduct have been fixed in our minds by habitual reflection, they are very useful for correcting the misrepresentations of self-love about what is fit and proper to do in our particular situation. Take the man of furious resentment. If he listened to the dictates of that passion, he might regard the death of his enemy as only small compensation for the wrong he imagines he has received, though it may be no more than a very slight provocation. But his observation of other people's conduct has taught him how horrible all such bloody revenges appear. Unless his upbringing has been very

unusual, he has laid it down for himself as an inviolable rule to abstain from them on all occasions. This rule keeps its authority over him and makes him incapable of being guilty of such violence. Yet the fury of his own temper may be such that, had this been the first time he considered such an action, he would undoubtedly have judged it quite just and proper, and something every impartial spectator would approve of. But the reverence for the rule that past experience has impressed on him checks the rush of his passion. It helps him correct the too partial views that self-love might otherwise suggest about what was proper to do in his situation. Even if he lets himself be carried so far by passion as to violate this rule, he still cannot entirely throw off the awe and respect with which he has been used to regarding it. At the very time of acting, at the moment when passion runs highest, he hesitates and trembles at the thought of what he is about to do. He is secretly aware that he is breaking through standards of conduct that he had resolved, in all his calm hours, never to infringe. He had never seen others infringe them without the strongest disapprobation. And his own mind forebodes that infringing them must soon make him the object of the same disagreeable sentiments. Before he can take the last fatal resolution, he is tormented with all the agonies of doubt and uncertainty. He is terrified at the thought of violating so sacred a rule, and at the same time the fury of his desires urges and goads him on to violate it. He changes his purpose every moment; sometimes he resolves to hold to his principle and not to indulge a passion that may corrupt the rest of his life with the horrors of shame and repentance. A momentary calm then takes possession of his breast, at the prospect of the security and tranquility he will enjoy once he has decided in this way not to expose himself to the risk of acting otherwise. But immediately the passion rouses itself again, and with fresh fury drives him on to commit what he had resolved a moment before to abstain from. Wearied and distracted by this continual wavering, he at last takes the final, fatal, and irrecoverable step out of a kind of despair. But he takes it with the terror and bewilderment of

someone who, fleeing an enemy, throws himself over a precipice, where he is sure of meeting more certain destruction than from anything pursuing him from behind. Such are his sentiments even at the time of acting. At that time, no doubt, he is less aware of the impropriety of his own conduct than he is afterward. Then, with his passion gratified and gone stale, he begins to view what he has done in the light in which others are apt to view it. He actually feels what he had only very imperfectly foreseen before: the stings of remorse and repentance begin to agitate and torment him.

CHAPTER V: OF THE INFLUENCE AND AUTHORITY OF THE GENERAL RULES OF MORALITY, AND THAT THEY ARE JUSTLY REGARDED AS THE LAWS OF THE DEITY

Regard for general rules is the sense of duty, strengthened when the rules are seen as God's laws.

III.5.1 Regard for those general rules of conduct is what is properly called a sense of duty. It is a principle of the greatest consequence in human life, and the only principle by which the bulk of mankind are capable of directing their actions. Many people behave very decently, and avoid any considerable degree of blame throughout their whole lives, who yet, perhaps, never felt the sentiment on whose propriety we base our approbation of their conduct. They acted merely out of regard for what they saw were the established rules of behavior. A man who has received great benefits from another person may, through the natural coldness of his temper, feel only a very small degree of the sentiment of gratitude. If he has been virtuously brought up, however, he will often have been made to notice how odious those actions appear that show a lack of this sentiment, and how amiable the contrary ones appear. So although his heart is not warmed by any grateful affection, he will strive to act as if it were. He will try to pay his patron all the regard and attention that the liveliest gratitude could suggest. He will visit him regularly; he will behave respectfully toward him; he will never speak of him except with expressions of the highest esteem, and

of the many obligations he owes him. And what is more, he will carefully seize every opportunity of making a proper return for past services. He may do all this, too, without any hypocrisy or blameworthy pretense, without any selfish intention of obtaining new favors, and without any design of deceiving either his benefactor or the public. The motive of his actions may be nothing other than reverence for the established rule of duty, a serious and earnest desire to act in every respect according to the law of gratitude. In the same way, a wife may sometimes not feel the tender regard for her husband that suits the relation between them. If she has been virtuously brought up, however, she will try to act as if she felt it. She will try to be careful, eager to serve, faithful, and sincere, and to fall short in none of the attentions that the sentiment of conjugal affection could have prompted her to perform. Such a friend and such a wife are certainly neither of them the very best of their kinds. Both may have the most serious and earnest desire to fulfill every part of their duty, yet they will still fail in many fine and delicate regards. They will miss many opportunities of obliging which they could never have overlooked if they had possessed the sentiment proper to their situation. Though not the very first of their kinds, however, they are perhaps the second. And if regard for the general rules of conduct has been very strongly impressed on them, neither will fail in any very essential part of their duty. Only those of the happiest mold are capable of fitting their sentiments and behavior, with exact justness, to the smallest difference of situation, and of acting on all occasions with the most delicate and accurate propriety. The coarse clay from which the bulk of mankind are made cannot be worked up to such perfection. There is scarcely anyone, however, who cannot be so impressed with regard for general rules, by discipline, education, and example, as to act with tolerable decency on almost every occasion, and to avoid any considerable degree of blame throughout his whole life.

III.5.2 Without this sacred regard for general rules, there is no man whose conduct can be much depended on. It is this that

makes the most essential difference between a man of principle and honor and a worthless fellow. The first holds to his maxims steadily and resolutely on all occasions, and keeps one even tenor of conduct through the whole of his life. The other acts erratically and at random, according to whichever happens to be uppermost: his mood, his inclination, or his interest. Indeed, all men are subject to such unevenness of mood that, without this principle, even the man who in all his cool hours had the most delicate sensibility to the propriety of conduct might often be led to act absurdly on the most trivial occasions. These would be occasions when one could scarcely point to any serious motive for his behaving that way. A friend pays you a visit when you happen to be in a mood that makes it disagreeable to receive him. In your present state his courtesy is very likely to look like an impertinent intrusion. If you gave way to the views of things that occur to you at that moment, you would treat him with coldness and contempt, civil though your temper is. What makes you incapable of such rudeness is nothing but a regard for the general rules of civility and hospitality, which forbid it. Your past experience has taught you a habitual reverence for these rules. That reverence enables you to act with nearly equal propriety on all such occasions, and it keeps the unevenness of temper to which all men are subject from influencing your conduct to any very noticeable degree. But suppose that, without regard to these general rules, even the duties of politeness would still be violated so often. They are so easily observed, and one can scarcely have any serious motive to violate them. What, then, would become of the duties of justice, truth, chastity, and fidelity, which are often so difficult to observe, and which there may be so many strong motives to violate? Yet the very existence of human society depends on the tolerable observance of these duties. Society would crumble into nothing if mankind were not generally impressed with a reverence for those important rules of conduct.

III.5.3 This reverence is enhanced still further by an opinion that is first impressed on us by nature and afterward confirmed

by reasoning and philosophy. This is the opinion that those important rules of morality are the commands and laws of the Deity, who will in the end reward the obedient and punish those who transgress their duty.

III.5.4 This opinion or apprehension, I say, seems first to be impressed by nature. In every country, certain mysterious beings, whatever they are, happen to be the objects of religious fear, and men are naturally led to ascribe all their own sentiments and passions to them. Men have no others to ascribe to them, and can conceive of none. They imagine those unknown intelligences but do not see them, so they must necessarily form them with some sort of resemblance to the intelligences they do have experience of. In the ignorance and darkness of pagan superstition, mankind seem to have formed their ideas of their gods with so little refinement that they ascribed to them, without discrimination, all the passions of human nature. They did not except even those that do our species the least honor, such as lust, hunger, greed, envy, and revenge. They still felt the highest admiration for the excellence of those beings' nature. So they could not fail to ascribe to them also the sentiments and qualities that are the great ornaments of humanity, and that seem to raise it to a resemblance of divine perfection: the love of virtue and beneficence, and the abhorrence of vice and injustice. The man who was injured called on Jupiter to witness the wrong done to him. He could not doubt that this divine being would look on it with the same indignation that would stir the humblest of mankind who watched an injustice being committed. The man who did the injury felt himself to be the proper object of mankind's detestation and resentment. His natural fears led him to attribute the same sentiments to those awesome beings, whose presence he could not escape and whose power he could not resist. These natural hopes, fears, and suspicions were spread by sympathy and confirmed by education. The gods were everywhere represented, and believed, to be the rewarders of kindness and mercy and the avengers of treachery and injustice. And so religion, even in its crudest form, gave a sanc-

tion to the rules of morality long before the age of artificial reasoning and philosophy. The terrors of religion reinforced the natural sense of duty in this way, and that was too important to the happiness of mankind for nature to leave it dependent on the slowness and uncertainty of philosophical inquiry.

III.5.5 When these inquiries did come to be made, however, they confirmed those original anticipations of nature. We may suppose our moral faculties to be founded on a certain modification of reason, or on an original instinct called a moral sense, or on some other principle of our nature. Whichever it is, it cannot be doubted that they were given to us to direct our conduct in this life. They carry with them the most evident badges of this authority. These show that they were set up within us to be the supreme arbiters of all our actions, to oversee all our senses, passions, and appetites, and to judge how far each of them should be indulged or restrained.[32] Some have claimed that our moral faculties are, in this respect, on a level with the other faculties and appetites of our nature, with no more right to restrain those others than those others have to restrain them. This is by no means so. No other faculty or principle of action judges any other. Love does not judge resentment, nor resentment love. These two passions may be opposed to each other, but they cannot with any propriety be said to approve or disapprove of each other. But it is the special office of the faculties we are now considering to judge, to pass censure or applause on all the other principles of our nature. They may be considered a sort of senses whose objects are those other principles. Every sense is supreme over its own objects. There is no appeal from the eye regarding the beauty of colors, nor from the ear regarding the harmony of sounds, nor from the taste regarding the agreeableness of flavors. Each of these senses judges its own objects in the last resort. Whatever gratifies the taste is sweet, whatever pleases the eye is beautiful, whatever soothes the ear is harmonious. The very essence of each of these qualities consists in its

32 The "moral sense" theory is chiefly associated with Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), Smith's teacher at Glasgow.

being fitted to please the sense it is addressed to. In the same way, it belongs to our moral faculties to determine when the ear ought to be soothed, when the eye ought to be indulged, and when the taste ought to be gratified. They also determine when and how far every other principle of our nature ought to be indulged or restrained. What is agreeable to our moral faculties is fit, right, and proper to be done; the contrary is wrong, unfit, and improper. The sentiments they approve of are graceful and becoming; the contrary, ungraceful and unbecoming. The very words right, wrong, fit, improper, graceful, unbecoming mean only what pleases or displeases those faculties.

III.5.6 These faculties, then, were plainly intended to be the governing principles of human nature. The rules they prescribe are therefore to be regarded as the commands and laws of the Deity, proclaimed by the deputies he has thus set up within us. All general rules are commonly called laws:[33] thus the general rules that bodies observe in the communication of motion are called the laws of motion. But our moral faculties also observe general rules in approving or condemning whatever sentiment or action is submitted to their examination, and these can much more justly be called laws. They bear a much greater resemblance to what are properly called laws: the general rules that the sovereign lays down to direct the conduct of his subjects. Like the sovereign's laws, they are rules to direct the free actions of men. They are prescribed, most surely, by a lawful superior, and they too come with the sanction of rewards and punishments. Those deputies of God within us never fail to punish any violation of them with the torments of inward shame and self-condemnation. On the contrary, they always reward obedience with tranquility of mind, with contentment, and with self-satisfaction.

III.5.7 Countless other considerations serve to confirm the same conclusion. The happiness of mankind, as of all other rational creatures, seems to have been the original purpose the Author of nature intended when he brought them into existence. No

33 "Deputies" renders Smith's "vice-gerents," officers who act with a ruler's delegated authority.

other end seems worthy of the supreme wisdom and divine kindness that we necessarily ascribe to him. The abstract consideration of his infinite perfections leads us to this opinion, and it is confirmed still more when we examine the works of nature, which all seem intended to promote happiness and to guard against misery. But by acting according to the dictates of our moral faculties, we necessarily pursue the most effective means of promoting the happiness of mankind. We may therefore be said, in a sense, to cooperate with the Deity and to advance the plan of Providence as far as is in our power. By acting otherwise, on the contrary, we seem to obstruct, to some degree, the scheme that the Author of nature has established for the happiness and perfection of the world. We seem to declare ourselves, if I may put it so, to some degree the enemies of God. Hence we are naturally encouraged to hope for his extraordinary favor and reward in the one case, and to dread his vengeance and punishment in the other.

III.5.8 There are, besides, many other reasons and many other natural principles that all tend to confirm and instill the same wholesome doctrine. Consider the general rules by which outward prosperity and adversity are commonly distributed in this life. Everything in this world appears to be in disorder, yet we will find that even here every virtue naturally meets with its proper reward, the recompense best suited to encourage and promote it. It does so with such certainty that it takes a very extraordinary combination of circumstances to defeat it entirely. What reward is most fitting to encourage industry, prudence, and circumspection? Success in every kind of business. And is it possible that over the whole of a life these virtues should fail to attain it? Wealth and outward honors are their proper recompense, and a recompense they can seldom fail to acquire. What reward is most fitting to promote the practice of truth, justice, and humanity? The confidence, esteem, and love of those we live with. Humanity does not desire to be great, but to be loved. It is not in being rich that truth and justice would rejoice, but in being trusted and believed. Those virtues must

almost always obtain these recompenses. Through some very extraordinary and unlucky circumstance, a good man may come to be suspected of a crime of which he was altogether incapable. On that account he may be most unjustly exposed, for the rest of his life, to the horror and aversion of mankind. Through an accident of this kind he may be said to lose everything, despite his integrity and justice. In the same way, a cautious man, despite his utmost circumspection, may be ruined by an earthquake or a flood. Accidents of the first kind, however, are perhaps rarer still than those of the second, and still more contrary to the common course of things. It remains true that the practice of truth, justice, and humanity is a certain and almost infallible way of acquiring what those virtues chiefly aim at: the confidence and love of those we live with. A person may very easily be misrepresented with regard to a particular action, but it is scarcely possible that he should be misrepresented with regard to the general tenor of his conduct. An innocent man may be believed to have done wrong; this, however, will rarely happen. On the contrary, the settled opinion that his character is innocent will often lead us to acquit him where he really has been at fault, even against very strong presumptions. In the same way, a knave may escape censure, or even win applause, for a particular piece of knavery in which his conduct is not understood. But no man was ever habitually a knave without being almost universally known to be one. Nor was any such man ever free from frequent suspicion of guilt, even when he was in reality perfectly innocent. And so far as vice and virtue can be punished or rewarded by the sentiments and opinions of mankind, both of them, in the common course of things, meet even here with something more than exact and impartial justice.

III.5.9 When viewed in this cool and philosophical light, the general rules by which prosperity and adversity are commonly distributed appear perfectly suited to the situation of mankind in this life. Yet they are by no means suited to some of our natural sentiments. Our natural love and admiration for some vir-

tues is such that we would wish to bestow on them every sort of honor and reward. We would bestow even those that we must admit are the proper recompense of other qualities, which do not always accompany those virtues. Our detestation of some vices, on the contrary, is such that we would want to heap every sort of disgrace and disaster upon them. We would not except even those that are the natural consequences of very different qualities. Magnanimity, generosity, and justice command so high a degree of admiration that we want to see them crowned with wealth, power, and honors of every kind. Yet these are the natural consequences of prudence, industry, and diligence, and those virtues are not inseparably connected with such qualities. Fraud, falsehood, brutality, and violence, on the other hand, excite such scorn and abhorrence in every human breast that our indignation is stirred to see them possess certain advantages. They may in some sense be said to have earned those advantages by the diligence and industry that sometimes go along with them. The industrious knave cultivates the soil; the indolent good man leaves it uncultivated. Who ought to reap the harvest? Who should starve, and who live in plenty? The natural course of things decides in favor of the knave; the natural sentiments of mankind, in favor of the man of virtue. Man judges that the advantages the knave's good qualities tend to win him reward those qualities far too much. He judges also that the distress the good man's omissions naturally bring upon him punishes them far too severely; and human laws, which are the consequences of human sentiments, declare forfeit both the life and the estate of the industrious and cautious traitor. They reward the loyalty and public spirit of the improvident and careless good citizen with extraordinary recompenses. Thus man is directed by Nature to correct, to some degree, the distribution of things that she herself would otherwise have made. The rules she prompts him to follow for this purpose are different from those she herself observes. She bestows on every virtue and every vice the precise reward or punishment best suited to encourage the one or to restrain the other. She is guided by this

consideration alone. She pays little attention to the different degrees of merit and demerit that they may seem to possess in the sentiments and passions of man. Man, on the contrary, pays attention to this alone. He would try to make the condition of every virtue precisely proportioned to the degree of love and esteem he himself feels for it. He would likewise proportion the condition of every vice to the degree of contempt and abhorrence he feels for it. The rules she follows are fit for her, and those he follows are fit for him. But both are designed to promote the same great end: the order of the world, and the perfection and happiness of human nature.

III.5.10 But man, as we have seen, is employed to alter the distribution of things that natural events would make if left to themselves. Like the gods of the poets, he is always intervening by extraordinary means in favor of virtue and against vice. Like them, he tries to turn aside the arrow aimed at the head of the righteous, and to hasten the sword of destruction raised against the wicked. Yet he is by no means able to make the fortune of either fully match his own sentiments and wishes. Man's feeble efforts cannot entirely control the natural course of things. The current is too fast and too strong for him to stop it. And though the rules that direct it seem to have been established for the wisest and best purposes, they sometimes produce effects that shock all his natural sentiments. That a large combination of men should prevail over a small one; that those who undertake an enterprise with forethought and all necessary preparation should prevail over those who oppose them with none; and that every end should be attained only by the means Nature has established for attaining it—this seems to be a rule that is not only necessary and unavoidable in itself, but even useful and proper for rousing the industry and attention of mankind. Yet when, as a consequence of this rule, violence and cunning prevail over sincerity and justice, what indignation it stirs in the breast of every human spectator! What sorrow and compassion for the sufferings of the innocent, and what furious resentment at the success of the oppressor! We are grieved and enraged

alike at the wrong that is done, but we often find it entirely beyond our power to redress it. When we despair in this way of finding any force on earth that can check the triumph of injustice, we naturally appeal to heaven. All the principles the great Author of our nature has given us to direct our conduct prompt us to attempt justice even here, and we hope that he will himself carry it out hereafter. We hope that he will complete the plan he has himself taught us to begin, and that in a life to come he will render to every one according to the works he has performed in this world. And so we are led to believe in a future state not only by the weaknesses, the hopes and the fears of human nature, but by the noblest and best principles that belong to it: by the love of virtue, and by the abhorrence of vice and injustice.

III.5.11 The eloquent and philosophical bishop of Clermont puts it with a passionate, exaggerating force of imagination that sometimes seems to exceed the bounds of decorum: "Does it suit the greatness of God to leave the world he has created in such universal disorder? Does it suit him to see the wicked almost always prevail over the just? To see the innocent dethroned by the usurper, the father become the victim of an unnatural son's ambition, the husband dying under the blow of a cruel and faithless wife? From the height of his greatness, ought God to look on these sad events as a whimsical entertainment, without taking any part in them?[34] Because he is great, should he be weak, or unjust, or cruel? Because men are small, should they be allowed to be dissolute without punishment, or virtuous without reward? O God! if this is the character of your Supreme Being, if it is you whom we worship under such dreadful ideas, then I can no longer acknowledge you as my father, my protector, the comforter of my sorrow, the support of my weakness, the rewarder of my faithfulness. You would then be nothing more than an idle and capricious tyrant. You would be one who sacrifices mankind to his insolent vanity, and who has brought

34 Jean-Baptiste Massillon (1663–1742), French preacher and bishop of Clermont; Smith gives his own translation of a passage from one of Massillon's sermons.

them out of nothing only so they may serve as the sport of his leisure and his whims."

III.5.12 The general rules that determine the merit and demerit of actions may come to be regarded in this way as the laws of an All-powerful Being. This Being watches over our conduct, and in a life to come he will reward the observance of these rules and punish the breach of them. Once the rules are seen in this light, they necessarily acquire a new sacredness. No one who believes in the existence of the Deity can doubt that our regard for his will ought to be the supreme rule of our conduct. The very thought of disobedience seems to involve the most shocking impropriety. How vain, how absurd it would be for man either to oppose or to neglect the commands laid upon him by Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Power! How unnatural, how impiously ungrateful it would be not to revere the precepts prescribed to him by the infinite goodness of his Creator, even if no punishment were to follow their violation! Here, too, the sense of propriety is well supported by the strongest motives of self-interest. We may escape the notice of men, or be placed beyond the reach of human punishment. Yet we are always acting under the eye of God, the great avenger of injustice, and are always exposed to his punishment. This thought is a motive capable of restraining the most headstrong passions, at least in those who have made it familiar to themselves by constant reflection.

III.5.13 It is in this way that religion enforces the natural sense of duty. That is why mankind are generally inclined to place great confidence in the integrity of those who seem deeply impressed with religious sentiments. Such people, they imagine, act under an additional tie besides those that regulate the conduct of other men. Regard for the propriety of action and for reputation, regard for the applause of one's own breast and for that of others: these motives, people suppose, have the same influence over the religious man as over the man of the world. But the religious man is under a further restraint. He never acts deliberately except as if in the presence of that Great Superior who is finally to repay him according to his deeds. For this

reason greater trust is placed in the regularity and exactness of his conduct. This holds wherever the natural principles of religion are not corrupted by the factious, partisan zeal of some worthless clique, and wherever the first duty religion requires is to fulfill all the obligations of morality. It holds wherever men are not taught to regard trivial observances as more immediate duties of religion than acts of justice and beneficence. And it holds wherever they are not taught to imagine that by sacrifices, ceremonies and empty supplications they can strike a bargain with the Deity for fraud, treachery and violence. In all such cases the world undoubtedly judges rightly in this respect, and justly places a double confidence in the rectitude of the religious man's behavior.

CHAPTER VI: IN WHAT CASES THE SENSE OF DUTY OUGHT TO BE THE SOLE PRINCIPLE OF OUR CONDUCT; AND IN WHAT CASES IT OUGHT TO CONCUR WITH OTHER MOTIVES

Benevolent actions should come from affection; just ones chiefly from regard for justice's precise rules.

III.6.1 Religion provides such strong motives to the practice of virtue, and guards us with such powerful restraints against the temptations of vice, that many have been led to suppose that religious principles were the only praiseworthy motives of action. We ought not, they said, either to reward from gratitude or to punish from resentment; nor ought natural affection to be our reason for protecting our helpless children or supporting our infirm parents. All affections for particular objects ought to be extinguished in our breast, and one great affection should take the place of all the others. That affection is the love of the Deity: the desire to make ourselves agreeable to him, and to direct our conduct in every respect according to his will. We ought not to be grateful from gratitude. Nor ought we to be charitable from humanity, public-spirited from love of our country, or generous and just from love of mankind. The sole principle and motive of our conduct in performing all these different duties ought to be a sense that God has commanded us to perform

them. I shall not take time at present to examine this opinion in detail. I shall only observe that we should not have expected to find it held by any sect that professed a religion whose first precept is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength, and whose second is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. And we surely love ourselves for our own sakes, and not merely because we are commanded to do so. Christianity nowhere teaches that the sense of duty should be the sole principle of our conduct. It teaches, as philosophy and indeed common sense also direct, that it should be the ruling and governing principle. It may be a question, however, in what cases our actions ought to arise chiefly or entirely from a sense of duty, or from a regard to general rules. In other cases, some other sentiment or affection ought to join in and have a principal influence, and it may be asked which cases these are.

III.6.2 The answer to this question perhaps cannot be given with any great accuracy. It will depend on two different circumstances. The first is the natural agreeableness or deformity of the sentiment or affection that would prompt us to an action without any regard to general rules. The second is the precision and exactness, or the looseness and inaccuracy, of the general rules themselves.

III.6.3 I. First, I say, it will depend on the natural agreeableness or deformity of the affection itself how far our actions ought to arise from it, or how far they ought to proceed entirely from a regard to the general rule.

III.6.4 The benevolent affections prompt us to graceful and admired actions, and all these ought to proceed as much from the passions themselves as from any regard to the general rules of conduct. A benefactor thinks himself poorly repaid if the person on whom he has bestowed his good offices repays them merely from a cold sense of duty, without any affection for him personally. A husband is dissatisfied with the most obedient wife when he imagines that her conduct is animated by no other principle than her regard for what her relation to him requires.

A son may fail in none of the offices of filial duty. Yet if he lacks the affectionate reverence that it so well becomes him to feel, the parent may justly complain of his indifference. Nor could a son be fully satisfied with a parent who performed all the duties of his position but had none of the fatherly fondness that might have been expected of him. With all such benevolent and social affections, it is pleasing to see the sense of duty employed to restrain them rather than to enliven them. We like to see it keep us from doing too much, rather than prompt us to do what we ought. It gives us pleasure to see a father obliged to check his own fondness, a friend obliged to set limits to his natural generosity, and a person who has received a benefit obliged to restrain the overeager gratitude of his own temper.

III.6.5 The opposite maxim holds with regard to the malevolent and unsocial passions. We ought to reward from the gratitude and generosity of our own hearts, without any reluctance, and without having to stop and reflect on how great the propriety of rewarding is. But we ought always to punish with reluctance, and more from a sense of the propriety of punishing than from any fierce disposition to revenge. Nothing is more graceful than the behavior of a man who resents the greatest injuries more from a sense that they deserve resentment, and are its proper objects, than from feeling within himself the furies of that disagreeable passion. Like a judge, he considers only the general rule that determines what vengeance is due for each particular offense. In carrying out that rule, he feels less for what he himself has suffered than for what the offender is about to suffer. Though in wrath, he remembers mercy. He is disposed to interpret the rule in the gentlest and most favorable way, and to allow every mitigation that the most fair-minded humanity could admit consistently with good sense.[35]

III.6.6 As was observed earlier, the selfish passions hold a sort of middle place between the social and unsocial affections in other

35 "Though in wrath, remembers mercy" echoes Habakkuk 3:2 ("in wrath remember mercy"). "Candid" in Smith's original means fair-minded or generous in judgment.

respects, and they do so in this respect too. In all common, small and ordinary cases, the pursuit of objects of private interest ought to flow from a regard to the general rules that prescribe such conduct, rather than from any passion for the objects themselves. But on more important and extraordinary occasions we would seem awkward, insipid and ungraceful if the objects themselves did not appear to animate us with a considerable degree of passion. To be anxious, or to lay plots, either to gain or to save a single shilling would lower even the most ordinary tradesman in the opinion of all his neighbors. However humble his circumstances, his conduct must show no attention to such small matters for their own sake. His situation may require the strictest economy and the most exact diligence. But each particular exercise of that economy and diligence must proceed less from regard for that particular saving or gain than from the general rule. It is the rule that prescribes such a course of conduct to him with the utmost rigor. His frugality today must not arise from a desire for the particular threepence he will save by it. Nor must his attendance in his shop arise from a passion for the particular tenpence he will earn by it. Both ought to proceed solely from regard to the general rule, which prescribes this plan of conduct with the most unrelenting severity to everyone in his walk of life. This is where the difference lies between the character of a miser and that of a person of exact economy and diligence. The miser is anxious about small matters for their own sake. The other attends to them only as a consequence of the scheme of life he has laid down for himself.

III.6.7 It is quite different with the more extraordinary and important objects of self-interest. A person who does not pursue these with some degree of earnestness for their own sake seems mean-spirited. We would despise a prince who was not anxious about conquering or defending a province. We would have little respect for a private gentleman who did not exert himself to gain an estate, or even a considerable office, when he could acquire them without either baseness or injustice. A member of parliament who shows no keenness about his own election is

abandoned by his friends as altogether unworthy of their attachment. Even a tradesman who does not bestir himself to get what they call an extraordinary job, or some uncommon advantage, is thought a poor-spirited fellow among his neighbors. This spirit and keenness make the difference between the man of enterprise and the man of dull regularity. Those great objects of self-interest whose loss or acquisition quite changes a person's rank are the objects of the passion properly called ambition. When it keeps within the bounds of prudence and justice, this passion is always admired in the world. Even when it passes the limits of both these virtues, and is not only unjust but extravagant, it sometimes has a certain irregular greatness that dazzles the imagination. Hence the general admiration for heroes and conquerors, and even for statesmen whose projects have been very daring and far-reaching, though altogether devoid of justice—such as those of Cardinal Richelieu and Cardinal de Retz. The objects of avarice and of ambition differ only in their greatness. A miser is as furious about a halfpenny as a man of ambition is about the conquest of a kingdom.[36]

III.6.8 II. Secondly, I say that how far our conduct ought to proceed entirely from a regard to the general rules will depend partly on the precision and exactness, or the looseness and inaccuracy, of the rules themselves.

III.6.9 The general rules of almost all the virtues—the general rules that determine what the duties of prudence, charity, generosity, gratitude, and friendship are—are in many respects loose and inaccurate. They admit of many exceptions and require so many modifications that it is scarcely possible to regulate our conduct entirely by regard to them. The common proverbial maxims of prudence, being founded on universal experience, are perhaps the best general rules that can be given about it. Yet to affect a very strict and literal adherence to them would plainly be the most absurd and ridiculous pedantry. Of all the virtues I have just mentioned, gratitude is perhaps the one

36 Richelieu (1585–1642) was chief minister of Louis XIII of France; Retz (1613–1679), a leading intriguer in the Fronde rebellion, wrote celebrated memoirs.

whose rules are the most precise and admit of the fewest exceptions. That as soon as we can we should make a return of equal, and if possible greater, value for the services we have received would seem to be a fairly plain rule, and one that admits of scarcely any exceptions. Yet on the most superficial examination this rule will appear to be in the highest degree loose and inaccurate, and to admit of ten thousand exceptions. If your benefactor looked after you in your sickness, ought you to look after him in his? Or can you fulfill the obligation of gratitude by making a return of a different kind? If you ought to look after him, for how long? The same time he looked after you, or longer—and how much longer? If your friend lent you money in your distress, ought you to lend him money in his? How much ought you to lend him? When ought you to lend it? Now, or tomorrow, or next month? And for how long? It is evident that no general rule can be laid down by which a precise answer can be given, in every case, to any of these questions. The difference between his character and yours, between his circumstances and yours, may be such that you can be perfectly grateful and still justly refuse to lend him a halfpenny. And, on the contrary, you may be willing to lend, or even to give, him ten times the sum he lent you, and yet be justly accused of the blackest ingratitude, and of not having fulfilled a hundredth part of the obligation you are under. Still, since the duties of gratitude are perhaps the most sacred of all those the beneficent virtues prescribe to us, the general rules that determine them are, as I said before, the most accurate. The rules that fix the actions required by friendship, humanity, hospitality, and generosity are still more vague and indeterminate.

III.6.10 There is, however, one virtue whose general rules determine with the greatest exactness every external action it requires. This virtue is justice. The rules of justice are accurate in the highest degree. They admit of no exceptions or modifications except such as can be fixed as accurately as the rules themselves—and these, indeed, generally flow from the very same principles as the rules do. If I owe a man ten pounds, justice

requires that I pay him precisely ten pounds, either at the time agreed on or when he demands it. What I ought to do, how much I ought to do, when and where I ought to do it—the whole nature and circumstances of the action prescribed—are all precisely fixed and determined. So though it may be awkward and pedantic to affect too strict an adherence to the common rules of prudence or generosity, there is no pedantry in sticking fast to the rules of justice. On the contrary, the most sacred regard is due to them; and the actions this virtue requires are never so properly performed as when the chief motive for performing them is a reverent and religious regard for the general rules that require them. In practicing the other virtues, our conduct should be directed by a certain idea of propriety, by a certain taste for a particular course of conduct, rather than by regard for any precise maxim or rule; and we should consider the purpose and foundation of the rule more than the rule itself. But it is otherwise with justice. Here the man who refines least, and holds with the most obstinate steadfastness to the general rules themselves, is the most commendable and the most to be depended on. Though the purpose of the rules of justice is to keep us from hurting our neighbor, it may often be a crime to violate them even when we could claim, with some show of reason, that this particular violation would do no harm. A man often becomes a villain the moment he begins, even in his own heart, to quibble in this way. The moment he thinks of departing from the firmest and most absolute adherence to what those inviolable precepts prescribe to him, he is no longer to be trusted, and no one can say what degree of guilt he may not reach. The thief imagines he does no wrong when he steals from the rich what he supposes they can easily do without, and what they may never even know has been stolen from them. The adulterer imagines he does no wrong when he corrupts his friend's wife, provided he hides the affair from the husband's suspicion and does not disturb the peace of the family. Once we begin to give way to such refinements, there is no enormity so gross that we may not be capable of it.

III.6.11 The rules of justice may be compared to the rules of grammar; the rules of the other virtues, to the rules that critics lay down for achieving what is sublime and elegant in writing. The first are precise, accurate, and indispensable. The second are loose, vague, and indeterminate; they give us a general idea of the perfection we ought to aim at rather than any certain and infallible directions for reaching it. A man may learn by rule to write grammatically with the most absolute infallibility; and so, perhaps, he may be taught to act justly. But there are no rules whose observance will infallibly lead us to elegance or sublimity in writing, though there are some that may help us, to some extent, to correct and clarify the vague ideas we might otherwise have had of those perfections. And there are no rules the knowledge of which can infallibly teach us to act on every occasion with prudence, with just magnanimity, or with proper beneficence—though there are some that may enable us to correct and clarify, in several respects, the imperfect ideas we might otherwise have had of those virtues.

III.6.12 It may sometimes happen that, with the most serious and earnest desire to act so as to deserve approbation, we mistake the proper rules of conduct, and so are misled by the very principle that ought to direct us. It is vain to expect that in this case mankind should entirely approve of our behavior. They cannot enter into the absurd idea of duty that influenced us, nor go along with any of the actions that follow from it. There is still, however, something respectable in the character and behavior of someone who is betrayed into vice in this way, by a wrong sense of duty, or by what is called an erroneous conscience. However fatally he may be misled by it, to the generous and humane he is still more an object of pity than of hatred or resentment. They lament the weakness of human nature, which exposes us to such unhappy delusions even while we are most sincerely striving after perfection and trying to act on the best principle that can possibly direct us. False notions of religion are almost the only causes that can produce any very gross perversion of our natural sentiments in this way; and only that

principle which gives the greatest authority to the rules of duty is capable of distorting our ideas of them to any considerable degree. In all other cases common sense is enough to direct us, if not to the most exquisite propriety of conduct, then to something not very far from it; and provided we earnestly desire to do well, our behavior will always, on the whole, be praiseworthy. All men agree that the first rule of duty is to obey the will of the Deity. But about the particular commandments that this will may impose on us, they differ widely from one another. Here, therefore, the greatest mutual forbearance and toleration are due. And though the defense of society requires that crimes be punished whatever motives they come from, a good man will always punish them with reluctance when they plainly come from false notions of religious duty. He will never feel against those who commit them the indignation he feels against other criminals. Rather, at the very time he punishes their crime, he will regret, and sometimes even admire, their unfortunate firmness and magnanimity. Voltaire's tragedy *Mahomet*, one of his finest, represents well what our sentiments ought to be toward crimes that come from such motives.[37] In that tragedy, two young people, a man and a woman, of the most innocent and virtuous dispositions, and with no weakness except one that endears them to us all the more—a mutual fondness for each other—are driven by the strongest motives of a false religion to commit a horrible murder, one that shocks all the principles of human nature. A venerable old man, who had shown the most tender affection for them both; for whom, though he was the declared enemy of their religion, they had both come to feel the highest reverence and esteem; and who was in reality their father, though they did not know it—this man is pointed out to them as a sacrifice that God had expressly required at their hands, and they are commanded to kill him. While they are carrying out this crime, they are tortured by all the agonies that can arise from the struggle between, on one side, the idea that religious duty cannot be set aside, and, on the other, compas-

37 Voltaire's *Le Fanatisme, ou Mahomet le Prophète* (1741).

sion, gratitude, reverence for the age of the man they are about to destroy, and love for his humanity and virtue. The staging of this presents one of the most affecting, and perhaps the most instructive, spectacles ever brought onto any stage. The sense of duty, however, at last prevails over all the amiable weaknesses of human nature. They carry out the crime imposed on them; but they immediately discover their error, and the fraud that had deceived them, and are driven distracted with horror, remorse, and resentment. Whatever our sentiments are for the unhappy Seid and Palmira, we ought to feel the same for every person who is misled by religion in this way—when we are sure that it is really religion that misleads him, and not the pretense of it, made into a cover for some of the worst of human passions.

III.6.13 Just as a person may act wrongly by following a wrong sense of duty, so nature may sometimes prevail and lead him to act rightly in opposition to it. In this case we cannot be displeased to see that motive prevail which we think ought to prevail, though the person himself is weak enough to think otherwise. But since his conduct is the effect of weakness, not principle, we are far from granting it anything that approaches complete approbation. A bigoted Roman Catholic who, during the massacre of St. Bartholomew, had been so overcome by compassion as to save some unhappy Protestants whom he thought it his duty to destroy, would not seem entitled to the high applause we would have given him had he shown the same generosity with complete self-approbation. We might be pleased with the humanity of his temper, but we would still regard him with a sort of pity that is altogether inconsistent with the admiration due to perfect virtue. It is the same with all the other passions. We do not dislike seeing them exert themselves properly, even when a false notion of duty would direct the person to restrain them.[38] A very devout Quaker who, on being struck on one cheek, instead of turning the other, so far forgot his literal interpretation of our Savior's precept as to give the brute who insul-

38 The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (August 1572), in which thousands of French Protestants were killed, beginning in Paris.

ted him a good thrashing, would not be disagreeable to us. We would laugh, be amused by his spirit, and rather like him the better for it. But we would by no means regard him with the respect and esteem that would seem due to someone who, on a similar occasion, had acted properly from a just sense of what was proper to be done. No action can properly be called virtuous that is not accompanied by the sentiment of self-approbation.

Part IV: Of the Effect of Utility upon the Sentiment of Approbation

Why we love useful contrivances, the deception that drives ambition, and the invisible hand.

CHAPTER I: OF THE BEAUTY WHICH THE APPEARANCE OF UTILITY BESTOWS UPON ALL THE PRODUCTIONS OF ART, AND OF THE EXTENSIVE INFLUENCE OF THIS SPECIES OF BEAUTY

Utility pleases, yet we often value the fitness of a contrivance more than the end it serves.

IV.1.1 That utility is one of the principal sources of beauty has been noticed by everyone who has considered, with any attention, what the nature of beauty consists in. The convenience of a house pleases the spectator as much as its regularity. He is as much offended when he sees the opposite defect as when he sees matching windows of different shapes, or the door not placed exactly in the middle of the building. The fitness of any system or machine to produce the end it was intended for gives a certain propriety and beauty to the whole, and makes the very thought and contemplation of it agreeable. This is so obvious that nobody has overlooked it.

IV.1.2 The reason why utility pleases has also been given recently by an ingenious and agreeable philosopher. He combines the greatest depth of thought with the greatest elegance of expression, and has the rare and happy talent of treating the most abstruse subjects not only with perfect clarity but with the liveliest eloquence. According to him, the utility of any object pleases its owner by constantly suggesting to him the pleasure

or convenience it is fitted to promote. Every time he looks at it, he is reminded of this pleasure, and in this way the object becomes a source of constant satisfaction and enjoyment.[1] The spectator enters by sympathy into the owner's sentiments, and necessarily sees the object in the same agreeable light. When we visit the palaces of the great, we cannot help imagining the satisfaction we would enjoy if we ourselves owned them and possessed so many skillfully and ingeniously contrived comforts. A similar explanation is given of why the appearance of inconvenience makes any object disagreeable both to its owner and to the spectator.

IV.1.3 But no one, as far as I know, has yet noticed that this fitness, this happy contrivance of any product of art, is often valued more than the very end it was intended for. Nor has anyone noticed that the exact adjustment of the means for attaining some convenience or pleasure is frequently regarded more than that very convenience or pleasure, though their whole merit would seem to lie in attaining it. Yet this is very often the case, as can be seen in a thousand instances, in both the most frivolous and the most important concerns of human life.

IV.1.4 When a person comes into his room and finds the chairs all standing in the middle of it, he is angry with his servant. Rather than see them left in that disorder, he perhaps takes the trouble himself to put them all in their places with their backs to the wall. The whole propriety of this new arrangement comes from its greater convenience in leaving the floor free and clear. To gain this convenience he voluntarily puts himself to more trouble than he could have suffered from the lack of it, since nothing would have been easier than to sit down on one of them —which is probably what he does when his labor is over. So what he wanted, it seems, was not so much this convenience as the arrangement of things that promotes it. Yet it is this convenience that ultimately recommends that arrangement, and gives it the whole of its propriety and beauty.

1 The philosopher is David Hume, who gives this account in the *Treatise of Human Nature* (II.ii.5, III.iii.1) and the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (sec. 5).

IV.1.5 In the same way, a watch that loses more than two minutes a day is despised by someone who takes a connoisseur's interest in watches. He sells it, perhaps, for a couple of guineas, and buys another for fifty, which will not lose more than a minute in two weeks. Yet the sole use of watches is to tell us what time it is, and to keep us from breaking any appointment or suffering any other inconvenience through ignorance on that particular point. And the person so particular about this machine will not always be found more scrupulously punctual than other people, or more anxious for any other reason to know exactly what time of day it is.[2] What interests him is not so much getting this piece of knowledge as the perfection of the machine that serves to get it.

IV.1.6 How many people ruin themselves by spending money on trinkets of frivolous utility? What pleases these lovers of trinkets is not so much the utility as the aptness of the machines fitted to promote it. Their pockets are all stuffed with little conveniences. They devise new pockets, unknown in other people's clothes, so as to carry more of them. They walk about loaded with a multitude of baubles that weigh as much as an ordinary peddler's trinket box, and are sometimes worth as much. Some of these may now and then be of some small use. All of them could at any time be done without quite easily, and their whole utility is certainly not worth the effort of carrying the load.[3]

IV.1.7 Nor is it only with such frivolous objects that our conduct is influenced by this principle. It is often the secret motive of the most serious and important pursuits of both private and public life.

2 A guinea was a gold coin worth twenty-one shillings; fifty guineas was a very large sum.

3 Smith's phrase is a period name for the box of cheap trinkets and small wares that traveling peddlers carried from door to door.

THE POOR MAN'S SON

Ambition drives the poor man's son to a lifetime of toil for wealth that brings no real ease.

IV.1.8 The poor man's son, whom heaven in its anger has afflicted with ambition, admires the condition of the rich when he begins to look around him. He finds his father's cottage too small for his comfort, and imagines he would be lodged more at his ease in a palace. He dislikes being obliged to walk on foot, or to put up with the fatigue of riding on horseback. He sees his superiors carried about in carriages, and imagines that in one of these he could travel with less inconvenience. He feels himself naturally lazy, and inclined to serve himself with his own hands as little as possible. He judges that a large retinue of servants would save him a great deal of trouble.[4] He thinks that if he had attained all these, he would sit still contentedly and be at peace, enjoying the thought of the happiness and tranquility of his situation. He is enchanted with the distant idea of this happiness. It appears in his imagination like the life of some higher order of beings, and to reach it he devotes himself forever to the pursuit of wealth and greatness. To obtain the conveniences these provide, he submits in the first year—no, in the first month—of his efforts to more fatigue of body and more uneasiness of mind than he could have suffered through his whole life from the lack of them. He studies to distinguish himself in some laborious profession. With the most unrelenting industry he labors night and day to acquire talents superior to those of all his competitors. Next he tries to bring those talents into public view, and with equal diligence seeks every opportunity of employment. For this purpose he courts all mankind. He serves those he hates, and is obsequious to those he despises. Through his whole life he pursues the idea of a certain artificial and elegant repose that he may never reach. For it he sacrifices a real tranquility that is

4 Smith's word for the carriages is "machines," tying them to the chapter's theme of contrivances.

always within his power. And if in extreme old age he should at last attain that repose, he will find it in no respect preferable to the humble security and contentment he abandoned for it. It is then, in the last dregs of life, that he begins at last to see that wealth and greatness are mere trinkets of frivolous utility. His body is by then wasted with toil and disease. His mind is galled and ruffled by the memory of a thousand injuries and disappointments that he imagines he has suffered from the injustice of his enemies, or from the treachery and ingratitude of his friends. Wealth and greatness, he now sees, are no better suited to procuring ease of body or tranquility of mind than the trinket-lover's tweezer-cases. Like them, too, they are more troublesome to the person who carries them about than all the advantages they can give him are convenient.[5] There is no other real difference between them, except that the conveniences of the one are somewhat more noticeable than those of the other. The palaces, the gardens, the carriages and horses, the retinue of the great are objects whose convenience is obvious and strikes everybody. Their owners do not need to point out to us what their utility consists in. Of our own accord we readily enter into it, and by sympathy enjoy, and thereby applaud, the satisfaction they are fitted to give him. But the ingenuity of a toothpick, an ear-pick, a machine for cutting the nails, or any other trinket of the same kind is not so obvious. Their convenience may perhaps be just as great, but it is not so striking, and we do not so readily enter into the satisfaction of the man who owns them. They are therefore less reasonable objects of vanity than the magnificence of wealth and greatness, and in this lies the only advantage of the latter: they more effectively gratify the love of distinction that is so natural to man. For someone who was to live alone on a desert island, it might perhaps be doubtful whether a palace would contribute more to his happiness and enjoyment, or a collection of such small conveniences as are commonly contained in a tweezer-case. If he is to live in society,

5 A tweezer-case was a small pocket case holding tweezers, a toothpick, and similar little implements.

of course, there can be no comparison. In this, as in all other cases, we constantly pay more regard to the sentiments of the spectator than to those of the person principally concerned. We consider how his situation will appear to other people rather than how it will appear to himself. If we examine, however, why the spectator singles out the condition of the rich and the great with such admiration, we shall find the reason. It is not so much the greater ease or pleasure they are supposed to enjoy as the countless artificial and elegant contrivances for promoting this ease or pleasure. He does not even imagine that they are really happier than other people; but he imagines that they possess more means of happiness. And the principal source of his admiration is the ingenious and skillful adjustment of those means to the end they were intended for. But in the languor of disease and the weariness of old age, the pleasures of the vain and empty distinctions of greatness vanish. For someone in this situation, they can no longer recommend the toilsome pursuits in which they once engaged him. In his heart he curses ambition, and vainly regrets the ease and idleness of youth. Those pleasures have fled forever, and he foolishly sacrificed them for something that, once he has it, can give him no real satisfaction. This is the miserable light in which greatness appears to every man when low spirits or disease bring him to observe his own situation attentively, and to consider what is really lacking to his happiness. Power and riches then appear to be what they are: enormous and laborious machines contrived to produce a few trifling conveniences for the body. They are made up of the finest and most delicate springs, which must be kept in order with the most anxious attention, and which in spite of all our care are ready at any moment to burst into pieces and crush their unfortunate possessor in the ruins. They are immense structures that take the labor of a lifetime to raise, and that threaten at every moment to overwhelm the person who lives in them. While they stand, they may spare him some smaller inconveniences, but they can protect him from none of the harsher inclemencies of the season. They keep off the summer

shower, not the winter storm. They leave him always as much exposed as before, and sometimes more, to anxiety, to fear, and to sorrow; to diseases, to danger, and to death.

IV.1.9 This melancholy philosophy, which every man knows in times of sickness or low spirits, thus wholly disparages those great objects of human desire. Yet when we are in better health and better humor, we never fail to see them in a more agreeable light. In pain and sorrow our imagination seems confined and cooped up within our own persons; in times of ease and prosperity it expands to everything around us. We are then charmed with the beauty of the comfort that reigns in the palaces and households of the great, and admire how everything is adapted to promote their ease, to anticipate their wants, to gratify their wishes, and to amuse and entertain their most frivolous desires. Consider the real satisfaction all these things are capable of giving, by itself, separated from the beauty of the arrangement fitted to promote it. It will always appear in the highest degree contemptible and trifling. But we rarely view it in this abstract and philosophical light. We naturally confuse it in our imagination with the order, the regular and harmonious movement of the system, the machine or economy by which it is produced. The pleasures of wealth and greatness, considered in this complex view, strike the imagination as something grand and beautiful and noble. Attaining them seems well worth all the toil and anxiety we are so apt to spend on it.

IV.1.10 And it is a good thing that nature deceives us in this way. It is this deception that rouses the industry of mankind and keeps it in continual motion. It is this that first prompted people to cultivate the ground, to build houses, to found cities and commonwealths, and to invent and improve all the sciences and arts that ennoble and embellish human life. These have entirely changed the whole face of the globe. They have turned the rough forests of nature into pleasant and fertile plains, and made the trackless and barren ocean a new source of subsistence and the great highway of communication between the different nations of the earth. Through these labors of mankind the earth has

been obliged to redouble her natural fertility and to support a greater multitude of inhabitants. It is no use for the proud and unfeeling landlord to survey his extensive fields and, without a thought for the wants of his fellow men, consume in his imagination the whole harvest that grows on them. The homely, common proverb that the eye is bigger than the belly was never more fully borne out than in his case. The capacity of his stomach bears no proportion to the immensity of his desires, and it will hold no more than the stomach of the humblest peasant. The rest he is obliged to distribute among those who prepare, in the most refined way, the little that he himself uses; among those who fit out the palace in which this little is to be consumed; and among those who supply and keep in order all the various baubles and trinkets used in the household management of the great. All of these people thus get from his luxury and whims the share of the necessaries of life that they would have expected in vain from his kindness or his justice. The produce of the soil at all times supports roughly the number of inhabitants it is capable of supporting. The rich only select from the heap what is most precious and pleasing. They consume little more than the poor. In spite of their natural selfishness and greed—though they mean only their own convenience, and though the sole end they have in view in the labors of all the thousands they employ is the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires—they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements. They are led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life that would have been made if the earth had been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants. And so, without intending it, without knowing it, they advance the interest of society and provide the means for the multiplication of the species. When Providence divided the earth among a few lordly masters, it neither forgot nor abandoned those who seemed to have been left out of the division. They too enjoy their share of all that it produces. In what makes up the real happiness of human life, they are in no respect inferior to those who would seem to be so

far above them. In ease of body and peace of mind, all the different ranks of life are nearly on a level, and the beggar who suns himself by the side of the highway possesses the security that kings are fighting for.

THE SPIRIT OF SYSTEM IN PUBLIC LIFE

Love of system and contrivance often moves public spirit more than sympathy with the people helped.

IV.1.11 The same principle—the same love of system, the same regard for the beauty of order, of art and contrivance—often serves to recommend the institutions that tend to promote the public welfare. When a patriot exerts himself to improve some part of public administration, his conduct does not always arise from pure sympathy with the happiness of those who are to reap the benefit. It is not usually out of fellow-feeling with carriers and wagon drivers that a public-spirited man encourages the repair of highways. When the legislature sets up bounties and other encouragements to advance the linen or woolen manufactures, its conduct seldom proceeds from pure sympathy with the wearer of cheap or fine cloth, and still less from sympathy with the manufacturer or merchant. The perfection of public administration and the extension of trade and manufactures are noble and magnificent objects. Contemplating them pleases us, and we take an interest in whatever can help advance them. They form part of the great system of government, and the wheels of the political machine seem to move with more harmony and ease because of them. We take pleasure in seeing so beautiful and grand a system perfected, and we are uneasy until we remove any obstruction that might in the least disturb or hamper the regularity of its motions. Yet all constitutions of government are valued only in proportion as they tend to promote the happiness of those who live under them. This is their sole use and purpose. From a certain spirit of system, however, and a certain love of art and contrivance, we sometimes seem to value the means more than the end. We seem eager to promote the

happiness of our fellow creatures more from a wish to perfect and improve a certain beautiful and orderly system than from any immediate sense or feeling of what they suffer or enjoy. There have been men of the greatest public spirit who have shown themselves in other respects not very sensitive to humane feelings. And on the other hand, there have been men of the greatest humanity who seem to have been entirely without public spirit. Everyone can find examples of both kinds in his own circle of acquaintance. Who ever had less humanity, or more public spirit, than the celebrated lawgiver of Muscovy? The sociable and good-natured James the First of Great Britain, on the other hand, seems to have had scarcely any passion for either the glory or the interest of his country.[6] If you want to rouse the industry of a man who seems almost dead to ambition, it will often be useless to describe to him the happiness of the rich and the great—to tell him that they are generally sheltered from the sun and the rain, that they are seldom hungry, seldom cold, and rarely exposed to weariness or to want of any kind. The most eloquent exhortation of this kind will have little effect on him. If you hope to succeed, you must describe to him the convenience and arrangement of the different rooms in their palaces; you must explain to him the propriety of their carriages and retinues, and point out to him the number, the order, and the different duties of all their attendants. If anything can make an impression on him, this will. Yet all these things serve only to keep off the sun and the rain, and to save them from hunger and cold, from want and weariness. In the same way, if you want to plant public virtue in the breast of someone who seems heedless of his country's interest, it will often be useless to tell him what superior advantages the subjects of a well-governed state enjoy: that they are better housed, better clothed, and better fed. These considerations will usually make no great impression. You are more likely to persuade him

6 The lawgiver of Muscovy is Peter the Great (1672–1725), the tsar who forcibly modernized Russia. James VI of Scotland became James I of England in 1603 and reigned until 1625.

if you describe the great system of public administration that secures these advantages; if you explain the connections and dependencies of its various parts, their mutual subordination to one another, and their general service to the happiness of society; if you show how this system might be introduced into his own country, what prevents it from being established there at present, how those obstructions might be removed, and how all the various wheels of the machine of government might be made to move with more harmony and smoothness, without grating against one another or slowing one another's motions. It is scarcely possible for a man to listen to a discussion of this kind without feeling himself stirred to some degree of public spirit. He will, at least for the moment, feel some desire to remove those obstructions and to set so beautiful and orderly a machine in motion. Nothing does so much to promote public spirit as the study of politics— of the various systems of civil government, with their advantages and disadvantages; of the constitution of our own country, its situation and its interests with regard to foreign nations, its commerce, its defense, the disadvantages it labors under, the dangers it may be exposed to, how to remove the one and how to guard against the other. For this reason political inquiries, if they are sound, reasonable, and practicable, are the most useful of all works of speculation. Even the weakest and worst of them are not entirely without utility. At the very least they serve to quicken men's public passions and rouse them to seek out the means of promoting the happiness of society.

CHAPTER II: OF THE BEAUTY WHICH THE APPEARANCE OF UTILITY BESTOWS UPON THE CHARACTERS AND ACTIONS OF MEN; AND HOW FAR THE PERCEPTION OF THIS BEAUTY MAY BE REGARDED AS ONE OF THE ORIGINAL PRINCIPLES OF APPROBATION

Smith argues that utility enhances but is not the first source of our approval of virtue.

IV.2.1 Men's characters, like the contrivances of art or the institutions of civil government, may be suited either to promote or to disturb the happiness of both the individual and society. The prudent, fair, active, resolute, and sober character promises prosperity and satisfaction both to the person himself and to everyone connected with him. The rash, insolent, lazy, effeminate, and pleasure-loving character, on the other hand, foretells ruin for the individual and misfortune for everyone who has anything to do with him. The first turn of mind has at least all the beauty that can belong to the most perfect machine ever invented for the most agreeable purpose; the second has all the ugliness of the most awkward and clumsy contrivance. What institution of government could do as much to promote the happiness of mankind as the general prevalence of wisdom and virtue? All government is only an imperfect remedy for the lack of these. Whatever beauty belongs to civil government on account of its utility must therefore belong in a far higher degree to these. On the other hand, what civil policy can be as ruinous and destructive as the vices of men? The fatal effects of bad government arise from nothing but its failure to guard sufficiently against the mischiefs that human wickedness gives rise to.

IV.2.2 This beauty and ugliness that characters seem to derive from their usefulness or inconvenience tend to strike, in a special way, those who consider the actions and conduct of mankind in an abstract and philosophical light. When a philosopher sets out to examine why humanity is approved of or cruelty condemned, he does not always form for himself, in a very clear and distinct way, the idea of any one particular act of either

cruelty or humanity. He is usually content with the vague and indefinite idea that the general names of those qualities suggest to him. But it is only in particular instances that the propriety or impropriety, the merit or demerit, of actions is very obvious and discernible. Only when particular examples are given do we perceive distinctly the agreement or disagreement between our own feelings and those of the agent, or feel a social gratitude rise toward him in the one case, or a sympathetic resentment in the other. When we consider virtue and vice in an abstract and general way, the qualities by which they excite these various sentiments seem largely to disappear, and the sentiments themselves become less obvious and discernible. On the other hand, the happy effects of the one and the fatal consequences of the other then seem to rise into view and, as it were, to stand out and distinguish themselves from all the other qualities of either.

IV.2.3 The same ingenious and agreeable author who first explained why utility pleases has been so struck by this view of things that he resolves our whole approbation of virtue into a perception of this kind of beauty, the kind that results from the appearance of utility. No qualities of the mind, he observes, are approved of as virtuous except those that are useful or agreeable either to the person himself or to others; and no qualities are disapproved of as vicious except those that have the contrary tendency.[7] And Nature, indeed, seems to have adjusted our sentiments of approbation and disapprobation so happily to the convenience of both the individual and society that, after the strictest examination, this will be found, I believe, to be universally the case. But I still maintain that the view of this utility or harmfulness is neither the first nor the principal source of our approval and disapproval. These sentiments are no doubt heightened and enlivened by the perception of the beauty or ugliness that results from this utility or harmfulness. But still, I say, they are originally and essentially different from this perception.

7 The author is David Hume (1711–1776), Smith's friend; this account of virtue is set out in his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751).

IV.2.4 For, first of all, it seems impossible that our approbation of virtue should be a feeling of the same kind as the one by which we approve of a convenient and well-designed building. Nor can it be that we have no other reason for praising a man than the one for which we commend a chest of drawers.

IV.2.5 And second, it will be found on examination that the usefulness of a disposition of mind is seldom the first ground of our approbation. The sentiment of approbation always includes a sense of propriety quite distinct from the perception of utility. We may observe this in all the qualities that are approved of as virtuous. That holds both for those which, according to this system, are originally valued as useful to ourselves and for those which are esteemed for their usefulness to others.

IV.2.6 The qualities most useful to ourselves are, first, superior reason and understanding, by which we can discern the remote consequences of all our actions and foresee the advantage or harm likely to result from them. Second comes self-command, by which we are able to abstain from a present pleasure or endure a present pain, in order to obtain a greater pleasure or avoid a greater pain at some future time. The virtue of prudence consists in the union of these two qualities, and of all the virtues it is the one most useful to the individual.

IV.2.7 As for the first of these qualities, it was observed earlier that superior reason and understanding are originally approved of as just, right, and accurate, and not merely as useful or advantageous. It is in the more abstruse sciences, particularly the higher parts of mathematics, that the greatest and most admired efforts of human reason have been displayed. But the utility of those sciences, whether to the individual or to the public, is not very obvious. Proving it requires a discussion that is not always easy to follow. So it was not their utility that first recommended them to public admiration. Their utility was little stressed until it became necessary to answer the reproaches of people who had no taste themselves for such sublime discoveries and tried to belittle them as useless.

IV.2.8 In the same way, consider the self-command by which we restrain our present appetites in order to gratify them more fully on another occasion. It is approved of as much under the aspect of propriety as under that of utility. When we act in this way, the feelings that influence our conduct seem to coincide exactly with those of the spectator. The spectator does not feel the pull of our present appetites. To him the pleasure we are to enjoy a week or a year from now is just as interesting as the one we are to enjoy this moment. So when we sacrifice the future for the sake of the present, our conduct appears to him absurd and extravagant in the highest degree, and he cannot enter into the principles that influence it. It is different when we abstain from present pleasure to secure greater pleasure to come, acting as if the remote object interested us as much as the one that presses directly on the senses. Then our affections correspond exactly with his own, and he cannot fail to approve of our behavior. And since he knows from experience how few people are capable of this self-command, he looks on our conduct with a considerable degree of wonder and admiration. This is the source of the high esteem in which all men naturally hold a steady perseverance in frugality, industry, and application, even when it is directed to no other purpose than acquiring a fortune. Such a person, to obtain a great but remote advantage, not only gives up all present pleasures but endures the greatest labor of mind and body. His resolute firmness necessarily commands our approbation. The view of his interest and happiness that seems to regulate his conduct tallies exactly with the idea we naturally form of it. There is the most perfect correspondence between his feelings and our own. At the same time, given our experience of the common weakness of human nature, it is a correspondence we could not reasonably have expected. So we not only approve of his conduct but in some measure admire it, and think it worthy of a considerable degree of applause. Only the consciousness of this deserved approbation and esteem is capable of sustaining the agent in this course of conduct. The pleasure we are to enjoy ten years from now interests us very little compared with the

one we may enjoy today. The passion the first arouses is naturally weak compared with the violent emotion the second tends to produce. So the first could never balance the second unless it were supported by the sense of propriety. It needs the consciousness that by acting in the one way we deserved everyone's esteem and approbation, and that by behaving in the other we became proper objects of their contempt and ridicule.

IV.2.9 Humanity, justice, generosity, and public spirit are the qualities most useful to others. What the propriety of humanity and justice consists in was explained earlier. There it was shown how much our esteem and approbation of those qualities depend on the harmony between the affections of the agent and those of the spectators.

IV.2.10 The propriety of generosity and public spirit rests on the same principle as that of justice. Generosity is different from humanity. These two qualities seem so closely related at first sight, yet they do not always belong to the same person. Humanity is the virtue of a woman, generosity of a man. The fair sex commonly have much more tenderness than ours, but they seldom have as much generosity. That women rarely make considerable gifts is an observation of the civil law.[8] Humanity consists merely in the exquisite fellow-feeling the spectator has with the feelings of the persons principally concerned. He grieves at their sufferings, resents their injuries, and rejoices at their good fortune.[9] The most humane actions require no self-denial, no self-command, no great exertion of the sense of propriety. They consist only in doing what this exquisite sympathy would prompt us to do of its own accord. But it is different with generosity. We are never generous except when in some respect we prefer another person to ourselves. We then sacrifice some great and important interest of our own to an equal interest of a

8 SMITH'S NOTE. Raro mulieres donare solent.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Latin: "Women seldom make gifts." Smith cites it as a maxim of Roman law.

9 "Humanity" here means kindness or tender fellow-feeling. The "civil law" is Roman law.

friend or a superior. Take the man who gives up his claim to an office that was the great object of his ambition, because he thinks another man's services have a better title to it. Take the man who risks his life to defend his friend's, because he judges it to be of more importance. Neither of them acts from humanity, or because he feels what concerns that other person more keenly than what concerns himself. Both consider these opposing interests not in the light in which they naturally appear to themselves, but in the light in which they appear to others. To every bystander, the success or survival of this other person may rightly be more interesting than their own, but it cannot be so to themselves. So when they sacrifice their own interest to that of this other person, they adapt themselves to the feelings of the spectator. By an effort of magnanimity, they act according to the views of things that, they feel, must naturally occur to any third person. The soldier who throws away his life to defend his officer's might perhaps be little affected by that officer's death if it happened through no fault of his own. A very small misfortune befalling himself might arouse a much livelier sorrow. But he tries to act so as to deserve applause, and to make the impartial spectator enter into the principles of his conduct. Then he feels that to everyone but himself his own life is a trifle compared with his officer's. When he sacrifices the one to the other, he acts quite properly, in keeping with what would be the natural view of every impartial bystander.

IV.2.11 It is the same with the greater exertions of public spirit. A young officer may risk his life to win some insignificant addition to his sovereign's dominions. He does not do so because acquiring the new territory is, to him, a more desirable object than preserving his own life. To him his own life is of infinitely more value than the conquest of a whole kingdom for the state he serves. But when he compares these two objects, he does not view them in the light in which they naturally appear to himself. He views them in the light in which they appear to the nation he fights for. To them the success of the war is of the highest importance, and the life of a private person is of scarcely any

consequence. When he puts himself in their situation, he immediately feels that he cannot be too lavish with his blood if by shedding it he can advance so valuable a purpose. The heroism of his conduct consists in thus thwarting the strongest of all natural inclinations, from a sense of duty and propriety. There is many an honest Englishman who, in his private station, would be more seriously disturbed by the loss of a guinea than by the national loss of Minorca. Yet had it been in his power to defend that fortress, he would have sacrificed his life a thousand times rather than let it fall into the enemy's hands through his fault. The first Brutus led out his own sons to be executed because they had conspired against the newly rising liberty of Rome. In doing so he sacrificed the affection that would have seemed the stronger, had he consulted only his own breast, to the weaker.[10] Brutus should naturally have felt much more for the death of his own sons than for anything Rome could probably have suffered from the lack of so great an example. But he viewed them not with the eyes of a father but with those of a Roman citizen. He entered so thoroughly into the feelings of this second character that he paid no regard to the tie that connected him with them. To a Roman citizen, even the sons of Brutus seemed contemptible when weighed against the smallest interest of Rome. In these and all other cases of this kind, our admiration is founded not so much on the utility of such actions as on their propriety. That propriety is unexpected, and for that reason great, noble, and exalted. When we come to consider their utility, it undoubtedly gives them a new beauty, and for that reason recommends them still further to our approbation. This beauty, however, is chiefly perceived by men of reflection and speculation. It is by no means the quality that first recommends such actions to the natural feelings of the bulk of mankind.

IV.2.12 It should be noted that, insofar as the sentiment of approbation arises from the perception of this beauty of utility,

10 Britain lost Minorca to France in 1756, and Admiral Byng was executed for failing to relieve it. Lucius Junius Brutus, traditional founder of the Roman Republic (509 BC), condemned his sons for plotting to restore the Tarquin kings.

it makes no reference of any kind to the feelings of others. Suppose it were possible for a person to grow up to manhood without any communication with society. His own actions might nevertheless be agreeable or disagreeable to him, according to whether they tended to his happiness or to his disadvantage. He might perceive a beauty of this kind in prudence, temperance, and good conduct, and a deformity in the opposite behavior. In the one case he might view his own temper and character with the sort of satisfaction with which we consider a well-designed machine. In the other he might view them with the sort of distaste and dissatisfaction with which we regard a very awkward and clumsy contraption. These perceptions, however, are merely a matter of taste. They have all the feebleness and delicacy of the kind of perceptions on whose accuracy what is properly called taste is founded. So someone in his solitary and miserable condition probably would not pay them much attention. Even if they occurred to him, they would by no means have the same effect on him before his connection with society that they would have as a result of that connection. He would not be cast down with inward shame at the thought of this deformity. Nor would he be lifted up with a secret triumph of mind by the consciousness of the opposite beauty. He would not exult at the idea of deserving reward in the one case, nor tremble at the suspicion of deserving punishment in the other. All such feelings presuppose the idea of some other being who is the natural judge of the person who feels them. Only by sympathy with the decisions of this arbiter of his conduct can he conceive either the triumph of self-applause or the shame of self-condemnation.

Part V: Of the Influence of Custom and Fashion upon the Sentiments of Moral Approbation and Disapprobation

How custom shapes taste and, within limits, moral judgment, across ages, professions and nations.

CHAPTER I: OF THE INFLUENCE OF CUSTOM AND FASHION UPON OUR NOTIONS OF BEAUTY AND DEFORMITY

Custom and fashion shape our sense of beauty in dress, furniture, architecture, verse and nature.

V.1.1 There are other principles besides those already listed which have a considerable influence on the moral sentiments of mankind. They are the chief causes of the many irregular and conflicting opinions that prevail in different ages and nations about what is blameworthy or praiseworthy. These principles are custom and fashion, and they extend their dominion over our judgments about beauty of every kind.

V.1.2 When two objects have often been seen together, the imagination acquires a habit of passing easily from one to the other. If the first appears, we count on the second to follow. They remind us of each other of their own accord, and our attention glides easily along from one to the other. Suppose that, apart from custom, there is no real beauty in their union. Once custom has connected them in this way, we still feel an impropriety in their separation. We think the one awkward when it appears without its usual companion. We miss something we expected to find, and the disappointment disturbs the habitual arrangement of our ideas. A suit of clothes, for example, seems to lack some-

thing if it is without even the most insignificant ornament that usually goes with it. We find something shabby or awkward in the absence of even a haunch button. When there is some natural propriety in the union, custom increases our sense of it,[1] and makes a different arrangement seem even more disagreeable than it otherwise would. Those who are used to seeing things in good taste are more disgusted by whatever is clumsy or awkward. Where the combination is improper, custom either lessens our sense of the impropriety or removes it altogether. Those who are used to slovenly disorder lose all sense of neatness or elegance. Styles of furniture or dress that seem ridiculous to strangers give no offense to the people who are used to them.

V.1.3 Fashion is different from custom, or rather it is a particular kind of custom. The fashion is not what everybody wears. It is what people of high rank or reputation wear. The great have graceful, easy, and commanding manners, and they dress with their usual richness and magnificence. Together these lend grace to whatever form they happen to give their clothes. As long as they continue to use this form, our imaginations connect it with the idea of something genteel and magnificent. In itself it may be quite neutral, but because of this connection it seems to have something genteel and magnificent about it too. As soon as they drop it, it loses all the grace it had seemed to have before. Now only the lower ranks of people use it, and so it seems to carry something of their lowness and awkwardness.

V.1.4 Everyone agrees that dress and furniture are entirely under the dominion of custom and fashion. The influence of these principles, however, is by no means confined to so narrow a sphere. It extends to whatever is in any way an object of taste: to music, to poetry, to architecture. Styles of dress and furniture are constantly changing. The fashion that was admired five years ago appears ridiculous today, and so experience convinces us that it owed its vogue chiefly or entirely to custom and fashion. Clothes and furniture are not made of very durable materi-

1 A haunch button was a decorative button at the back of a coat, at the hip.

als. A well-designed coat is worn out within a year, and after that it can no longer go on spreading the form in which it was made as the fashion. Styles of furniture change less quickly than styles of dress, because furniture is usually more durable. Within five or six years, however, it generally undergoes a complete revolution, and every man sees the fashion in this respect change many different ways in his own lifetime. The products of the other arts are much more lasting. When they are happily conceived, they may go on spreading the fashion of their design for a much longer time. A well-designed building may last many centuries. A beautiful tune may be handed down by a kind of tradition through many successive generations. A well-written poem may last as long as the world. For ages together, all of them go on setting the vogue for the particular style, taste, or manner in which each was composed. Few men have the chance to see the fashion in any of these arts change very much in their own time. Few men know enough of the different styles that have prevailed in remote ages and nations to be thoroughly reconciled to them, or to judge impartially between them and the styles of their own age and country. Few men, therefore, are willing to admit that custom or fashion has much influence on their judgments about what is beautiful or otherwise in the products of any of these arts. Each art has rules they think ought to be observed, and they imagine that all these rules are founded on reason and nature, not on habit or prejudice. Yet very little attention may convince them otherwise. It may satisfy them that custom and fashion rule no more absolutely over dress and furniture than over architecture, poetry, and music.

V.1.5 Can any reason be given, for example, why the Doric capital should be assigned to a column whose height is eight times its diameter, the Ionic volute to one of nine, and the Corinthian foliage to one of ten? The propriety of each of these assignments can rest on nothing but habit and custom. The eye is used to seeing a particular proportion joined to a particular ornament, and it would be offended if they were not joined. Each of the five orders has its own particular ornaments. These cannot be

exchanged for any others without offending everyone who knows anything of the rules of architecture.[2] Some architects, indeed, hold that the ancients assigned each order its proper ornaments with such exquisite judgment that no others can be found that are equally suitable. These forms are no doubt extremely pleasing. Still, it seems a little hard to believe that they are the only forms that can suit those proportions, or that there are not five hundred others which, before custom became established, would have fitted them equally well. Once custom has established particular rules of building, however, it is absurd to think of changing them, provided they are not absolutely unreasonable. It is absurd to change them for others that are only equally good, or even for others that naturally have some slight advantage over them in elegance and beauty. Suppose a man appeared in public in a suit of clothes quite different from those commonly worn. He would be ridiculous, however graceful or convenient the new dress might be in itself. There seems to be the same kind of absurdity in decorating a house in a manner quite different from the one custom and fashion have prescribed, even if the new ornaments are in themselves somewhat superior to the usual ones.

V.1.6 According to the ancient rhetoricians, nature suited a certain meter to each particular kind of writing. Each meter naturally expressed the character, sentiment, or passion that ought to dominate in that kind of writing. One verse, they said, was fit for serious works and another for light ones, and they thought the two could not be exchanged without the greatest impropriety. The experience of modern times, however, seems to contradict this principle, though in itself it would seem extremely probable. What is burlesque verse in English is heroic verse in French. The tragedies of Racine and the *Henriad* of Voltaire are in nearly the same verse as[3]

2 The five classical orders of architecture are the Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite.

3 Jean Racine (1639–1699), the French tragic dramatist; Voltaire's *Henriade* (1728) is an epic poem on Henry IV of France. Both are written in the twelve-syllable alexandrine.

V.1.7 Let me have your advice in a weighty affair.[4]

V.1.8 French burlesque verse, on the other hand, is much the same as the English heroic verse of ten syllables. Custom has led one nation to associate gravity, sublimity, and seriousness with the very meter the other nation connects with whatever is light, flippant, and ludicrous. Nothing would seem more absurd in English than a tragedy written in the Alexandrine verse of the French. Nothing would seem more absurd in French than a work of the same kind in ten-syllable lines.

V.1.9 An eminent artist will bring about a considerable change in the established styles of any of these arts, and introduce a new fashion of writing, music, or architecture. An agreeable man of high rank recommends his dress, however peculiar and fanciful it is, and it soon comes to be admired and imitated. In the same way the excellences of an eminent master recommend his peculiarities, and his manner becomes the fashionable style in the art he practices. Within the last fifty years the Italians' taste in music and architecture has undergone a considerable change, from imitating the peculiarities of some eminent masters in each of those arts. Quintilian accuses Seneca of having corrupted the taste of the Romans, and of having introduced a frivolous prettiness in place of majestic reason and manly eloquence. Others have brought the same charge against Sallust and Tacitus, though in a different way. These two, it is claimed, made a certain style respected. In the highest degree it was concise, elegant, expressive, and even poetic. But it lacked ease, simplicity, and naturalness, and it was evidently the product of the most labored and studied affectation. How many great qualities must a writer possess who can make even his faults agreeable in this way?[5] Perhaps the highest tribute that can be paid to any author, after the praise of refining a nation's taste, is to say that he corrupted it. In our own language, Mr. Pope and Dr. Swift have each introduced a new manner into all works written in

4 The second line of Swift's comic poem "The Grand Question Debated" (1729), in the lilting four-beat meter of English light verse.

5 Quintilian's criticism of Seneca is in *Institutio Oratoria* X.i.125–131.

rhyme, different from what was practiced before. Pope did so in long lines, Swift in short ones. The quaintness of Butler has given way to the plainness of Swift. Nobody now imitates the rambling freedom of Dryden, or the correct but often tedious and prosaic languor of Addison. All long verse is now written in the manner of Mr. Pope's vigorous precision.[6]

V.1.10 Nor is it only over the products of the arts that custom and fashion exert their dominion. They influence our judgments in the same way with regard to the beauty of natural objects. How many various and opposite forms are thought beautiful in different kinds of things? The proportions admired in one animal are altogether different from those valued in another. Every class of things has its own particular structure, which we approve of. It has a beauty of its own, distinct from that of every other kind. On this account a learned Jesuit, Father Buffier, has concluded that the beauty of every object consists in the form and color most usual among things of its particular kind. Thus, in the human form, the beauty of each feature lies in a certain middle point, equally removed from a variety of other forms that are ugly. A beautiful nose, for example, is neither very long nor very short, neither very straight nor very crooked. It is a kind of middle among all these extremes, and differs less from any one of them than they all differ from one another.[7] It is the form that Nature seems to have aimed at in all of them. She departs from it in a great variety of ways and very seldom hits it exactly, but all those departures still bear a very strong resemblance to it. When a number of drawings are made from one model, they may all miss it in some respects, but they will all still resemble it more than they resemble one another. The general character of the model will run through all of them. The most singular and odd will be those furthest from it. Very few will copy it exactly, yet the most accurate drawings will

6 Samuel Butler (1613–1680), author of the comic poem *Hudibras* in short eight-syllable couplets.

7 Claude Buffier (1661–1737), French Jesuit philosopher, author of the *Traité des premières vérités* (1724).

resemble the most careless ones more than the careless ones resemble each other. In the same way, in each species of creature, what is most beautiful bears the strongest marks of the general structure of the species. It most strongly resembles the greater part of the individuals classed with it. Monsters, on the contrary, or what is completely deformed, are always the most singular and odd. They least resemble the generality of the species they belong to. So in one sense the beauty of each species is the rarest of all things, because few individuals hit this middle form exactly. In another sense it is the most common, because all the departures from it resemble it more than they resemble one another. In each kind of thing, therefore, the most customary form is, according to him, the most beautiful. This is why we need a certain practice and experience in contemplating each kind of object before we can judge of its beauty, or know what its middle and most usual form consists in. The most precise judgment of beauty in the human species will not help us to judge the beauty of flowers, or horses, or any other kind of thing. The same reason explains why different ideas of a species' beauty prevail in different climates, and wherever different customs and ways of living prevail. In such places those circumstances give the generality of that species a different structure. The beauty of a Moorish horse is not exactly the same as that of an English horse. What different ideas are formed in different nations about the beauty of the human shape and face? A fair complexion is a shocking deformity on the coast of Guinea. Thick lips and a flat nose are a beauty. In some nations everyone admires long ears that hang down to the shoulders. In China, if a lady's foot is large enough to walk on, she is regarded as a monster of ugliness.[8] Some of the Native nations of North America tie four boards around their children's heads. While the bones are still soft and gristly, they squeeze them in this way into an almost perfectly square shape. Europeans are astonished at the absurd barbarity of this practice, and some missionaries have blamed it for the singular stupidity of the nations where it

8 Smith is alluding to the Chinese custom of foot-binding.

prevails. But those who condemn these peoples do not reflect on the ladies of Europe. Until a very few years ago, for nearly a century, these ladies had been trying to squeeze the beautiful roundness of their natural shape into a square form of the same kind.[9] This practice was known to cause many distortions and diseases. Even so, custom had made it agreeable among some of the most civilized nations the world has perhaps ever seen.

V.1.11 Such is the system of this learned and ingenious Father concerning the nature of beauty. On his view, the whole charm of beauty would seem to come from its fitting in with the habits that custom has impressed on the imagination about things of each particular kind. I cannot, however, be brought to believe that even our sense of external beauty is founded entirely on custom. The utility of any form, its fitness for the useful purposes it was intended for, evidently recommends it and makes it agreeable to us, independent of custom. Certain colors are more agreeable than others, and give the eye more delight the very first time it sees them. A smooth surface is more agreeable than a rough one. Variety is more pleasing than a tedious, unvaried uniformity. Connected variety is more agreeable than a disjointed and disorderly collection of unconnected objects. In connected variety, each new appearance seems to be introduced by what came before it, and all the adjoining parts seem to have some natural relation to one another. Custom is not, I cannot admit, the sole principle of beauty. Yet I can grant the truth of this ingenious system to this extent. There is scarcely any external form so beautiful that it will please us if it is quite contrary to custom and unlike whatever we have been used to in that particular kind of thing. Nor is there any form so deformed that it will fail to be agreeable if custom uniformly supports it and accustoms us to seeing it in every single individual of the kind.

9 Smith means the tight-laced stays, or corsets, of eighteenth-century fashion.

CHAPTER II: OF THE INFLUENCE OF CUSTOM AND FASHION UPON MORAL SENTIMENTS

Custom affects moral feelings less than taste, but shapes the manners expected of each rank and age.

V.2.1 Our sentiments about beauty of every kind are so strongly influenced by custom and fashion that we cannot expect our sentiments about the beauty of conduct to be entirely exempt from the rule of those principles. Their influence here, however, seems to be much smaller than it is anywhere else. There is perhaps no form of external objects, however absurd and fantastic, that custom will not reconcile us to, or that fashion will not even make agreeable. But the characters and conduct of a Nero or a Claudius are things no custom will ever reconcile us to and no fashion will ever make agreeable. The one will always be an object of dread and hatred, the other of scorn and derision.[10] The principles of the imagination, on which our sense of beauty depends, are very fine and delicate, and habit and education can easily alter them. But the sentiments of moral approbation and disapprobation are founded on the strongest and most vigorous passions of human nature. They may be somewhat warped, but they cannot be entirely perverted.

V.2.2 The influence of custom and fashion on moral sentiments is not quite so great, but it works in exactly the same way as it does everywhere else. When custom and fashion coincide with the natural principles of right and wrong, they heighten the delicacy of our sentiments and increase our abhorrence of everything that comes close to evil. Some people have been brought up in what really is good company, not in what is commonly called good company. They have been used to seeing nothing in the people they esteemed and lived with but justice, modesty, humanity, and good order. Such people are more shocked by anything that seems inconsistent with the rules

10 Nero (emperor AD 54–68) and Claudius (AD 41–54): Roman emperors, the first remembered for cruelty, the second for foolishness.

those virtues prescribe. Others, by contrast, have had the misfortune to be brought up amid violence, licentiousness, falsehood, and injustice. They do not lose all sense of the impropriety of such conduct, but they do lose all sense of its dreadful enormity, and of the vengeance and punishment it deserves. They have been familiar with it since infancy, and custom has made it habitual to them. They are very apt to regard it as what is called the way of the world: something that either may or must be practiced, to keep us from being the dupes of our own integrity.

V.2.3 Fashion, too, will sometimes lend a good reputation to a certain degree of disorder and, on the other hand, frown on qualities that deserve esteem. In the reign of Charles II, a degree of licentiousness was considered the mark of a liberal education. According to the notions of those times, it was connected with generosity, sincerity, magnanimity, and loyalty, and it proved that the person who behaved this way was a gentleman and not a Puritan. Strict manners and regular conduct, on the other hand, were altogether unfashionable. In the imagination of that age they were connected with cant, cunning, hypocrisy, and low manners. To superficial minds, the vices of the great always seem agreeable.[11] Such minds connect those vices not only with the splendor of wealth but also with many superior virtues that they ascribe to their superiors: the spirit of freedom and independence, frankness, generosity, humanity, and politeness. The virtues of the lower ranks of people, on the contrary, seem to them low and disagreeable: their sparing frugality, their laborious industry, and their rigid adherence to rules. They connect these virtues both with the lowly station to which such qualities usually belong and with many great vices that they suppose usually go along with them, such as an abject, cowardly, ill-natured, lying, pilfering disposition.

V.2.4 Men in the different professions and walks of life deal with very different objects. These objects accustom them to very

11 Charles II reigned 1660–85, after the Puritan Commonwealth; his court was famous for its loose morals.

different passions, and so naturally form very different characters and manners in them. In each rank and profession we expect a degree of the manners that experience has taught us belong to it. In each species of things we are particularly pleased with the middle form, the one that agrees most exactly, in every part and feature, with the general standard nature seems to have set for things of that kind. In the same way, in each rank, or, if I may put it so, in each species of men, we are particularly pleased if they have neither too much nor too little of the character that usually goes with their particular condition and situation. A man, we say, should look like his trade and profession; yet the pedantry of every profession is disagreeable. For the same reason, the different periods of life have different manners assigned to them. In old age we expect gravity and sedateness, which its infirmities, its long experience, and its worn-out sensibility seem to make both natural and respectable. In youth we count on finding sensibility, gaiety, and sprightly liveliness. Experience teaches us to expect these from the vivid impressions that all interesting objects tend to make on the tender, unpracticed senses of that early period of life. Each of these two ages, however, can easily have too much of the peculiarities that belong to it. The flirtatious levity of youth and the immovable insensibility of old age are equally disagreeable. The young, according to the common saying, are most agreeable when their behavior has something of the manners of the old, and the old are most agreeable when they keep something of the gaiety of the young. Either of them, however, can easily have too much of the other's manners. The extreme coldness and dull formality that are pardoned in old age make youth ridiculous. The levity, carelessness, and vanity that are indulged in youth make old age contemptible.

V.2.5 Custom leads us to assign a particular character and manners to each rank and profession, and these perhaps sometimes have a propriety independent of custom. We would approve of them for their own sake if we took into account all the different circumstances that naturally affect people in each walk of life.

The propriety of a person's behavior does not depend on its fitting any one circumstance of his situation. It depends on its fitting all the circumstances that, when we bring his case home to ourselves, we feel ought naturally to claim his attention. If he seems so taken up with any one of them that he entirely neglects the rest, we disapprove of his conduct. It is something we cannot entirely go along with, because it is not properly adjusted to all the circumstances of his situation. Yet perhaps the emotion he expresses for the object that chiefly interests him is no greater than what we would entirely sympathize with and approve of in someone whose attention nothing else required. A parent in private life who lost an only son might, without blame, express a degree of grief and tenderness that would be unpardonable in a general at the head of an army, when glory and the public safety demanded so great a part of his attention. On ordinary occasions, different objects ought to occupy the attention of men in different professions, and in the same way different passions ought naturally to become habitual to them; and when we bring their situation home to ourselves in this particular respect, we must be aware that every event should naturally affect them more or less, depending on whether the emotion it arouses agrees or clashes with the fixed habit and temper of their minds. We cannot expect in a clergyman the same sensibility to the cheerful pleasures and amusements of life that we count on in an officer. The clergyman's particular occupation is to keep the world mindful of the awful future that awaits it. He is to announce what may be the fatal consequences of every departure from the rules of duty, and he is himself to set an example of the most exact conformity to them. He seems to be the bearer of tidings that cannot, with propriety, be delivered with either levity or indifference. His mind is supposed to be continually occupied with things too grand and solemn to leave any room for the impressions of the frivolous objects that fill the attention of the dissipated and the pleasure-loving. So we readily feel that, independent of custom, there is a propriety in the manners custom has allotted to this profession. Nothing could

be more suitable to the character of a clergyman than the grave, austere, and abstracted severity we are used to expecting in his behavior. These reflections are so very obvious that scarcely anyone is so thoughtless as never to have made them, and never to have explained to himself in this way why he approves of the usual character of this order.

V.2.6 The basis of the customary character of some other professions is less obvious. Our approval of it rests entirely on habit, and no reflections of this kind either confirm or enliven it. Custom leads us, for example, to attach the character of gaiety, levity, and sprightly freedom, as well as some degree of dissipation, to the military profession. Yet suppose we considered what mood or tone of temper would best suit this situation. We might well conclude that the most serious and thoughtful cast of mind would best become those whose lives are continually exposed to uncommon danger, and who should therefore be more constantly occupied than other men with thoughts of death and its consequences. It is quite probably this very circumstance, however, that explains why the opposite cast of mind is so common among men of this profession. When we look at death steadily and attentively, it takes so great an effort to conquer our fear of it that those who are constantly exposed to it find it easier to turn their thoughts away from it altogether. They wrap themselves up in careless security and indifference, and to this end they plunge into every sort of amusement and dissipation. A camp is not the element of a thoughtful or melancholy man. People of that cast are indeed often determined enough, and by a great effort they can go on with inflexible resolution to the most unavoidable death. But it exhausts and depresses the mind to be exposed to continual, though less imminent, danger, and to be obliged to keep up a degree of this effort for a long time. It makes the mind incapable of all happiness and enjoyment. The lighthearted and careless bear such circumstances more easily. They need make no effort at all; they simply resolve never to look ahead, and to lose all anxiety about their situation in continual pleasures and amusements.

Whenever some particular circumstances give an officer no reason to expect to be exposed to any uncommon danger, he is very apt to lose the gaiety and dissipated thoughtlessness of his character. The captain of a city guard is usually as sober, careful, and penny-pinching an animal as the rest of his fellow citizens. For the same reason, a long peace is very apt to reduce the difference between the civilian and the military character. The ordinary situation of men in this profession, however, makes gaiety and a degree of dissipation their usual character to such an extent, and custom has connected this character with this walk of life so strongly in our imagination, that we are very apt to despise any man whose particular temperament or situation makes him incapable of acquiring it. We laugh at the grave and careful faces of a city guard, which so little resemble those of their profession.[12] The guardsmen themselves often seem ashamed of the regularity of their own manners and, so as not to be out of step with the fashion of their trade, like to affect a levity that is by no means natural to them. Whatever bearing we have been used to seeing in a respectable order of men comes to be so associated with that order in our imagination that whenever we see the one, we expect to meet with the other. When we are disappointed, we miss something we expected to find. We are embarrassed and brought up short. We do not know how to address ourselves to a character that plainly affects to be of a different species from the one we would have been inclined to class it with.

V.2.7 In the same way, the different situations of different ages and countries tend to give different characters to most of the people who live in them. Their sentiments about the particular degree of each quality that is either blamable or praiseworthy vary according to the degree that is usual in their own country and their own times. A degree of politeness that would be highly esteemed in Russia, and perhaps thought effeminate flattery there, would be regarded as rudeness and barbarism at the

12 A city guard was a municipal watch, such as the Edinburgh Town Guard of Smith's day.

court of France. A degree of order and frugality that would be considered excessive stinginess in a Polish nobleman would be regarded as extravagance in a citizen of Amsterdam. Every age and country takes the degree of each quality commonly found in those it esteems as the golden mean of that particular talent or virtue. Their different circumstances make different qualities more or less habitual to them, and this degree varies accordingly. So their sentiments about the exact propriety of character and behavior vary too.

CIVILIZED AND UNCIVILIZED MANNERS

Civilized peoples cultivate humanity; peoples living in hardship cultivate self-denial and stoic endurance.

V.2.8 Among civilized nations, the virtues founded on humanity are more cultivated than those founded on self-denial and the command of the passions. Among primitive and uncivilized nations it is quite otherwise: the virtues of self-denial are more cultivated than those of humanity. The general security and happiness that prevail in ages of civility and politeness give little exercise to contempt of danger, or to patience in enduring labor, hunger, and pain. Poverty can easily be avoided, so contempt of it almost ceases to be a virtue. Abstinence from pleasure becomes less necessary, and the mind is freer to relax and to indulge its natural inclinations in all those particular respects.

V.2.9 Among tribal peoples and barbarians it is quite the reverse. Every tribesman undergoes a kind of Spartan discipline, and the necessity of his situation hardens him to every sort of hardship. He is in constant danger. He is often exposed to the most extreme hunger, and frequently dies of sheer want. His circumstances not only accustom him to every kind of distress but also teach him to give way to none of the passions that such distress tends to arouse. He can expect no sympathy or indulgence from his countrymen for such weakness. Before we can feel much for others, we must to some degree be at ease ourselves. If our own misery pinches us very severely, we have no leisure to

attend to our neighbor's. All tribal peoples are too taken up with their own wants and necessities to pay much attention to anyone else's. A tribesman, therefore, whatever the nature of his distress, expects no sympathy from those around him. For that reason he disdains to expose himself by letting the least weakness escape him. His passions, however furious and violent, are never allowed to disturb the serenity of his face or the composure of his conduct and behavior. The Native peoples of North America, we are told, put on the greatest indifference on every occasion. They would think themselves degraded if they ever appeared in any respect to be overcome by love, or grief, or resentment. Their magnanimity and self-command in this respect are almost beyond what Europeans can conceive. In a country where all men are on a level in rank and fortune, one might expect the mutual inclinations of the two parties to be the only thing considered in marriage, and to be indulged without any sort of restraint. Yet this is the country in which all marriages, without exception, are arranged by the parents. Here a young man would think himself disgraced forever if he showed the least preference for one woman over another, or did not express the most complete indifference both about when, and about whom, he was to marry. The weakness of love, so much indulged in ages of humanity and refinement, is regarded among tribal peoples as the most unpardonable effeminacy. Even after the marriage, the two parties seem ashamed of a connection founded on so sordid a necessity. They do not live together. They see each other only in secret. Each continues to live in the house of his or her own father, and the open cohabitation of the two sexes, which is permitted without blame in every other country, is here considered the most indecent and unmanly sensuality. Nor is it only over this agreeable passion that they exercise this absolute self-command. In full sight of all their countrymen, they often bear injuries, reproach, and the grossest insults with an air of the greatest insensibility, and without expressing the slightest resentment. When a tribesman is taken prisoner in war and receives, as is usual, the sentence of

death from his conquerors, he hears it without showing any emotion. He afterward submits to the most dreadful torments without ever lamenting his fate, or revealing any passion except contempt for his enemies. While he hangs by the shoulders over a slow fire, he mocks his tormentors. He tells them how much more ingeniously he himself had tormented those of their countrymen who had fallen into his hands. After he has been scorched, burned, and lacerated in all the most tender and sensitive parts of his body for several hours on end, he is often allowed a short respite, to prolong his misery, and is taken down from the stake. He spends this interval talking about all sorts of trivial subjects and asks for the news of the country. The only thing he seems indifferent to is his own situation. The spectators show the same insensibility. The sight of so horrible an object seems to make no impression on them. They scarcely look at the prisoner, except when they lend a hand to torment him. At other times they smoke tobacco and amuse themselves with any ordinary object, as if nothing of the kind were going on. Every tribesman is said to prepare himself for this dreadful end from his earliest youth. For this purpose he composes what they call the song of death. He is to sing it when he has fallen into the hands of his enemies and is dying under the tortures they inflict on him. It consists of insults to his tormentors, and expresses the highest contempt for death and pain. He sings this song on every extraordinary occasion: when he goes out to war, when he meets his enemies in the field, or whenever he wants to show that he has accustomed his imagination to the most dreadful misfortunes, and that no human event can shake his resolution or change his purpose. The same contempt for death and torture prevails among all other tribal nations. There is not a man from the coast of Africa who does not, in this respect, possess a degree of magnanimity that the soul of his sordid master is too often scarcely capable of conceiving.[13] Fortune never exercised her power over mankind more cruelly than when she subjected

13 Smith is speaking of enslaved Africans and the slaveholders in the European colonies.

those nations of heroes to the refuse of the jails of Europe. These are wretches who possess the virtues neither of the countries they come from nor of those they go to, and whose levity, brutality, and baseness so justly expose them to the contempt of the vanquished.

V.2.10 This heroic and unconquerable firmness, which the custom and education of his country demand of every tribesman, is not required of those brought up to live in civilized societies. Suppose they complain when they are in pain, grieve when they are in distress, or let themselves be overcome by love or upset by anger. They are easily pardoned. Such weaknesses are not thought to affect the essential parts of their character. As long as they do not let themselves be carried away into doing anything contrary to justice or humanity, they lose very little reputation, even if the serenity of their face, or the composure of their speech and behavior, is somewhat ruffled and disturbed. A humane and refined people, who have more sensibility to the passions of others, can more readily enter into animated and passionate behavior, and can more easily pardon a little excess. The person chiefly concerned is aware of this. Assured of the fairness of his judges, he indulges in stronger expressions of passion, and is less afraid of exposing himself to their contempt by the violence of his emotions. We can venture to show more emotion in front of a friend than in front of a stranger, because we expect more indulgence from the one than from the other. In the same way, the rules of decorum among civilized nations allow more animated behavior than is approved among barbarians. The first converse with the openness of friends; the second with the reserve of strangers. The French and the Italians, the two most refined nations on the continent, express themselves with great emotion and liveliness on any occasion of the least interest. At first this surprises strangers who happen to be traveling among them. Having been raised among a people of duller sensibility, these strangers cannot enter into such passionate behavior, since they have never seen an example of it in their own country. A young French nobleman will weep in front of

the whole court on being refused a regiment. An Italian, says the Abbé Du Bos, shows more emotion on being fined twenty shillings than an Englishman on receiving a sentence of death.[14] Cicero, in the age of Rome's highest refinement, could weep with all the bitterness of sorrow in sight of the whole senate and the whole people without degrading himself. He evidently must have done so at the end of almost every speech. The orators of the earlier and rougher ages of Rome probably could not, consistently with the manners of their times, have expressed themselves with so much emotion. It would have been regarded, I suppose, as a violation of nature and propriety for the Scipios, the Laeliuses, and the elder Cato to expose so much tenderness to public view.[15] Those ancient warriors could express themselves with order, gravity, and good judgment. But they are said to have been strangers to the sublime and passionate eloquence that was first introduced into Rome, not many years before Cicero's birth, by the two Gracchi, by Crassus, and by Sulpicius. This animated eloquence has long been practiced in France and Italy, with or without success, and is only just beginning to be introduced into England. So wide is the difference between the degrees of self-command required in civilized and in barbarous nations, and by such different standards do they judge the propriety of behavior.[16]

V.2.11 This difference gives rise to many others that are no less essential. A refined people, being used to giving way to some degree to the impulses of nature, become frank, open, and sincere. Barbarians, on the contrary, are obliged to stifle and hide the appearance of every passion, and so necessarily acquire habits of falsehood and dissimulation. Everyone who has had

14 Jean-Baptiste Du Bos (1670–1742), French critic and historian, author of *Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting* (1719).

15 Roman statesmen of the second century BC: the Scipio family (Africanus and Aemilianus), Gaius Laelius and his son, and Cato the Elder (234–149 BC), famous for his austerity.

16 Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, Lucius Licinius Crassus, and Publius Sulpicius Rufus were celebrated Roman orators of the late second and early first centuries BC; Cicero was born in 106 BC.

dealings with tribal nations, whether in Asia, Africa, or America, observes that they are all equally impenetrable. When they want to hide the truth, no questioning can draw it out of them. They cannot be trapped by the most artful questions. Even torture cannot make them confess anything they do not wish to tell. The passions of a tribesman, too, never show themselves in any outward emotion but lie hidden in the sufferer's breast. Yet they are all raised to the highest pitch of fury. Though he seldom shows any sign of anger, his vengeance, when he does give way to it, is always bloody and dreadful. The least affront drives him to despair. His face and speech, indeed, remain sober and composed, and express nothing but the most perfect tranquility of mind. His actions, however, are often the most furious and violent. Among the North Americans it is not uncommon for young people of the tenderest age, and of the more timid sex, to drown themselves on receiving only a slight scolding from their mothers. They do this without showing any passion or saying anything except "you shall no longer have a daughter." In civilized nations the passions of men are not usually so furious or so desperate. They are often clamorous and noisy, but seldom very harmful. They frequently seem to aim at no other satisfaction than convincing the spectator that they are right to be so moved, and winning his sympathy and approbation.

CUSTOM AND PARTICULAR PRACTICES

Custom can sanction particular practices, such as infant exposure, but never a whole style of conduct.

V.2.12 All these effects of custom and fashion on the moral sentiments of mankind, however, are slight compared with those they give rise to in some other cases. These principles produce the greatest perversion of judgment not in the general style of character and behavior, but in the propriety or impropriety of particular practices.

V.2.13 Custom teaches us to approve different manners in the different professions and walks of life, but these do not concern

matters of the greatest importance. We expect truth and justice from an old man as well as a young one, from a clergyman as well as an officer. It is only in matters of little moment that we look for the distinguishing marks of their respective characters. Even with regard to these, there is often some unnoticed circumstance which, if we attended to it, would show us that, independently of custom, there was a propriety in the character custom had taught us to assign to each profession. In this case, therefore, we cannot complain that the perversion of natural sentiment is very great. The manners of different nations may require different degrees of the same quality in the character they think worthy of esteem. Even so, the worst that can be said to happen here is that the duties of one virtue are sometimes stretched so far that they encroach a little on the territory of another. The rustic hospitality in fashion among the Poles perhaps encroaches a little on economy and good order; and the frugality esteemed in Holland, on generosity and good fellowship. The hardiness demanded of tribal peoples diminishes their humanity. Perhaps, too, the delicate sensibility required in civilized nations sometimes destroys the manly firmness of the character. In general, the style of manners prevailing in any nation can usually be said, on the whole, to be the one best suited to its situation. Hardiness is the character best suited to the circumstances of a tribesman; sensibility, to those of someone who lives in a highly civilized society. Even here, therefore, we cannot complain that the moral sentiments of men are very grossly perverted.

V.2.14 It is not, therefore, in the general style of conduct or behavior that custom authorizes the widest departure from the natural propriety of action. With regard to particular practices, its influence is often far more destructive of good morals. It can establish as lawful and blameless particular actions that shock the plainest principles of right and wrong.

V.2.15 Can there be greater barbarity, for example, than to hurt an infant? Its helplessness, its innocence, and its endearing ways call forth the compassion even of an enemy. Not to spare

that tender age is regarded as the most furious act of an enraged and cruel conqueror. What, then, must we imagine of the heart of a parent who could injure that weakness which even a furious enemy is afraid to violate? Yet exposure—that is, the murder of newborn infants—was a practice allowed in almost all the states of Greece, even among the refined and civilized Athenians. Whenever the parent's circumstances made it inconvenient to raise the child, abandoning it to hunger or to wild beasts was regarded without blame or censure. This practice had probably begun in times of the most brutal barbarity. Men's imaginations had first been made familiar with it in that earliest period of society, and the unbroken continuance of the custom had afterward kept them from perceiving its enormity. We find at this day that the practice prevails among all tribal nations. In that rudest and lowest state of society it is undoubtedly more pardonable than in any other. A tribesman's poverty is often so extreme that he himself is frequently exposed to the most extreme hunger. He often dies of sheer want, and it is frequently impossible for him to support both himself and his child. We cannot wonder, therefore, that in this case he should abandon it. Suppose someone fleeing from an enemy whom it was impossible to resist threw down his infant because it slowed his flight. He would surely be excusable, since by trying to save it he could hope only for the consolation of dying with it. In this state of society, therefore, we ought not to be so greatly surprised that a parent should be allowed to judge whether he can raise his child. In the later ages of Greece, however, the same thing was permitted for reasons of remote interest or convenience, which could in no way excuse it. By this time uninterrupted custom had so thoroughly authorized the practice that the loose maxims of the world tolerated this barbarous prerogative. Even the doctrine of philosophers, which ought to have been more just and exact, was led astray by the established custom. On this as on many other occasions, philosophy did not condemn the horrible abuse but supported it with far-fetched considerations of public utility. Aristotle speaks of it as something the magistrate ought on many occasions to

encourage. The humane Plato is of the same opinion. For all the love of mankind that seems to animate everything he wrote, he nowhere marks this practice with disapproval.[17] When custom can sanction so dreadful a violation of humanity, we may well imagine that there is scarcely any particular practice so gross that it cannot authorize it. "Such a thing is commonly done," we hear people say every day. They seem to think this a sufficient excuse for what is, in itself, the most unjust and unreasonable conduct.

V.2.16 There is an obvious reason why custom should pervert our sentiments less about the general style and character of conduct and behavior than about the propriety or unlawfulness of particular practices. There never can be any such custom. No society could survive for a moment in which the usual tenor of men's conduct and behavior matched the horrible practice I have just mentioned.

17 See Aristotle, *Politics* VII.16, and Plato, *Republic* V.

Part VI: Of the Character of Virtue

Added in 1790: prudence, beneficence toward individuals, societies and the world, and self-command.

INTRODUCTION

Character can be viewed as it affects one's own happiness and as it affects others.

VI.intro.1 When we consider the character of any individual, we naturally view it from two different sides: first, as it may affect his own happiness; and second, as it may affect the happiness of other people.

SECTION I: OF THE CHARACTER OF THE INDIVIDUAL, SO FAR AS IT AFFECTS HIS OWN HAPPINESS; OR OF PRUDENCE

Prudence guards health, fortune, rank and reputation, earning cold esteem rather than warm admiration.

VI.i.1 The preservation and health of the body seem to be the things that Nature first commends to each individual's care. The appetites of hunger and thirst, and the agreeable or disagreeable sensations of pleasure and pain, of heat and cold, and so on, may be regarded as lessons delivered by the voice of Nature herself, telling him what he ought to choose and what he ought to avoid for this purpose. Most of the first lessons he is taught by those entrusted with his childhood aim at the same end. Their main object is to teach him how to keep out of harm's way.

VI.i.2 As he grows up, he soon learns that some care and foresight are needed to provide the means of satisfying those natural appetites: of getting pleasure and avoiding pain, of

securing an agreeable temperature and avoiding a disagreeable one. The art of preserving and increasing what is called his external fortune consists in directing this care and foresight properly.

VI.i.3 It is to supply the necessities and conveniences of the body that the advantages of external fortune are first recommended to us. Yet we cannot live long in the world without seeing that the respect of our equals, and our credit and rank in the society we live in, depend very much on how far we possess, or are thought to possess, those advantages. The desire to become proper objects of this respect, to deserve and obtain this credit and rank among our equals, is perhaps the strongest of all our desires. Accordingly, our anxiety to obtain the advantages of fortune is far more roused and inflamed by this desire than by the desire to supply all the necessities and conveniences of the body, which are always very easily supplied.

VI.i.4 Our rank and credit among our equals also depend very much on our character and conduct—on which, perhaps, a virtuous man would wish them to depend entirely—or on the confidence, esteem, and goodwill that these naturally inspire in the people we live with.

VI.i.5 The care of the individual's health, fortune, rank, and reputation—the things on which his comfort and happiness in this life are supposed chiefly to depend—is regarded as the proper business of the virtue commonly called Prudence.

VI.i.6 We suffer more, as has already been observed, when we fall from a better situation to a worse than we ever enjoy when we rise from a worse to a better. Security, therefore, is the first and principal object of prudence. Prudence is unwilling to expose our health, our fortune, our rank, or our reputation to any sort of risk. It is cautious rather than enterprising, and more anxious to preserve the advantages we already have than eager to urge us on to gain still greater ones. The methods of improving our fortune that it chiefly recommends to us are those that expose us to no loss or risk: real knowledge and skill in our trade or profession, diligence and industry in practicing it, and

frugality, even a certain degree of parsimony, in all our expenses.

VI.i.7 The prudent man always studies seriously and earnestly to understand whatever he claims to understand, and not merely to persuade other people that he understands it. His talents may not always be very brilliant, but they are always entirely genuine. He does not try to impose on you by the cunning tricks of a crafty impostor, or by the arrogant airs of a presumptuous pedant, or by the confident assertions of a shallow and reckless pretender. He does not show off even the abilities he really has. His conversation is simple and modest, and he dislikes all the quack's arts by which other people so often push themselves into public notice and reputation. For his reputation in his profession, he is naturally inclined to rely a good deal on the solidity of his knowledge and abilities. He does not always think of cultivating the favor of those little clubs and cliques that, in the higher arts and sciences, so often set themselves up as the supreme judges of merit, and that make it their business to celebrate one another's talents and virtues and to run down whatever might come into competition with them. If he ever attaches himself to a group of this kind, it is merely in self-defense: not in order to impose on the public, but to keep the public from being imposed on, to his disadvantage, by the clamor, the whispers, or the intrigues of that particular group or of some other of the same kind.

VI.i.8 The prudent man is always sincere, and is horrified at the very thought of exposing himself to the disgrace that follows when a falsehood is detected. But though always sincere, he is not always frank and open. He never says anything but the truth, yet he does not always think himself bound to tell the whole truth when he is not properly called on to do so. As he is cautious in his actions, so he is reserved in his speech, and he never rashly or needlessly pushes forward his opinion about either things or persons.

VI.i.9 The prudent man is not always marked by the most exquisite sensibility, but he is always very capable of friendship.

His friendship, however, is not that ardent and passionate, but too often fleeting, affection that seems so delightful to the generosity of youth and inexperience. It is a sedate but steady and faithful attachment to a few well-tried and well-chosen companions; and in choosing them he is guided not by giddy admiration of dazzling accomplishments but by sober esteem for modesty, discretion, and good conduct. But though capable of friendship, he is not always much inclined to general sociability. He rarely frequents, and still more rarely shines in, those convivial gatherings that are known for the jollity and gaiety of their conversation. Their way of life might too often interfere with the regularity of his temperance, interrupt the steadiness of his industry, or break in on the strictness of his frugality.

VI.i.10 But though his conversation may not always be very lively or entertaining, it is always perfectly inoffensive. He hates the thought of being guilty of any petulance or rudeness. He never impertinently sets himself above anybody, and on all ordinary occasions he is willing to place himself below rather than above his equals. In both his conduct and his conversation he observes decency exactly, and he respects all the established proprieties and ceremonies of society with an almost religious scrupulousness. In this respect he sets a much better example than has often been set by men of far more splendid talents and virtues—men who, in every age, from that of Socrates and Aristippus down to that of Dr.[1] Swift and Voltaire, and from that of Philip and Alexander the Great down to that of the great Czar Peter of Muscovy, have too often distinguished themselves by the most improper and even insolent contempt for all the ordinary proprieties of life and conversation. They have thereby set the most harmful example to those who wish to resemble them, and who too often content themselves with imitating their follies without even trying to attain their excellences.[2]

1 Aristippus of Cyrene (c. 435–356 BC), pupil of Socrates and founder of the pleasure-loving Cyrenaic school, famous for his indifference to convention.

2 Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great; Peter the Great (1672–1725), czar of Russia, notorious for his coarse manners.

VI.i.11 In the steadiness of his industry and frugality—in his steadily sacrificing the ease and enjoyment of the present moment for the probable expectation of still greater ease and enjoyment over a more distant but more lasting period of time—the prudent man is always both supported and rewarded by the full approbation of the impartial spectator, and of the impartial spectator's representative, the man within the breast. The impartial spectator does not feel worn out by the present labor of those whose conduct he observes, nor does he feel pressed by the insistent demands of their present appetites. To him their present situation and what is likely to be their future one are very nearly the same: he sees them at nearly the same distance and is affected by them in very nearly the same way. He knows, however, that to the people chiefly concerned they are very far from the same, and that they naturally affect them very differently. He cannot help approving, and even applauding, that proper exertion of self-command which enables them to act as if their present and future situations affected them in nearly the same way they affect him.

VI.i.12 The man who lives within his income is naturally content with his situation, which, through continual though small accumulations, is growing better every day. He is able by degrees to relax both the rigor of his thrift and the severity of his labor, and he feels this gradual increase of ease and enjoyment with double satisfaction, having felt before the hardship that came with lacking them. He is in no hurry to change so comfortable a situation, and he does not go looking for new enterprises and adventures, which might endanger, but could hardly increase, the secure tranquility he actually enjoys. If he does enter into any new projects or enterprises, they are likely to be well planned and well prepared. No necessity can ever hurry or drive him into them; he always has time and leisure to consider soberly and calmly what their consequences are likely to be.

VI.i.13 The prudent man is unwilling to take on any responsibility that his duty does not impose on him. He is not a busybody in business that does not concern him, nor a meddler in other

people's affairs, nor a professed counselor or adviser who pushes his advice where nobody is asking for it. He confines himself to his own affairs as far as his duty allows, and he has no taste for that foolish importance which many people hope to gain from appearing to have some influence in managing the affairs of others. He is unwilling to enter into any party disputes, he hates faction, and he is not always very quick to listen to the voice even of noble and great ambition. When plainly called on, he will not refuse to serve his country, but he will not intrigue in order to force his way into its service; and he would be much better pleased to see public business well managed by someone else than to have the trouble, and bear the responsibility, of managing it himself. At the bottom of his heart he would prefer the undisturbed enjoyment of secure tranquility not only to all the empty splendor of successful ambition, but also to the real and solid glory of performing the greatest and most magnanimous actions.

VI.i.14 In short, prudence, when it is directed merely to the care of the individual's health, fortune, rank, and reputation, is regarded as a most respectable quality, and even to some degree as an amiable and agreeable one; yet it is never considered one of the most endearing or the most ennobling of the virtues. It commands a certain cold esteem, but seems not to be entitled to any very ardent love or admiration.

VI.i.15 Wise and judicious conduct, when it is directed to greater and nobler purposes than the care of the individual's health, fortune, rank, and reputation, is often, and very properly, called prudence. We speak of the prudence of the great general, of the great statesman, of the great legislator. In all these cases prudence is combined with many greater and more splendid virtues: with valor, with wide-ranging and strong benevolence, with a sacred regard for the rules of justice, and all of these supported by a proper degree of self-command. This superior prudence, when carried to the highest degree of perfection, necessarily presupposes the art, the talent, and the habit or disposition of acting with the most perfect propriety in every pos-

sible circumstance and situation. It necessarily presupposes the utmost perfection of all the intellectual and all the moral virtues. It is the best head joined to the best heart. It is the most perfect wisdom combined with the most perfect virtue. It makes up very nearly the character of the Academic or Peripatetic sage, as the inferior prudence makes up that of the Epicurean.[3]

VI.i.16 Mere imprudence, or the mere lack of ability to take care of oneself, is an object of compassion to generous and humane people; to those of less delicate feelings it is an object of neglect, or at worst of contempt, but never of hatred or indignation. When it is combined with other vices, however, it aggravates to the highest degree the infamy and disgrace that would otherwise attend them. The crafty scoundrel, whose skill and adroitness spare him—not from strong suspicion, but from punishment or clear detection—is too often received in the world with an indulgence he by no means deserves. The clumsy and foolish one, who for want of this skill and adroitness is convicted and punished, is the object of universal hatred, contempt, and ridicule. In countries where great crimes often go unpunished, the most atrocious actions become almost familiar and cease to strike the people with the horror that is universally felt in countries where justice is strictly administered. The injustice is the same in both countries, but the imprudence is often very different. In the latter, great crimes are evidently great follies. In the former, they are not always considered so. In Italy, during most of the sixteenth century, assassinations, murders, and even murders of people who had trusted their murderer seem to have been almost commonplace among the upper ranks. Cesare Borgia invited four of the minor princes in his neighborhood—each of whom held a small sovereignty and commanded a small army of his own—to a friendly conference at Senigallia, and as soon as they arrived he had them all put to death. This infamous act, though certainly not approved of even in that age of crimes, seems to have done very little to discredit its perpetrator, and

3 The Academics were followers of Plato, the Peripatetics followers of Aristotle; Smith discusses these schools and the Epicureans in Part VII.

nothing at all to ruin him. His ruin came a few years later, from causes entirely unconnected with this crime.[4] Machiavelli—not, indeed, a man of the most refined morality even for his own times—was resident at Cesare Borgia's court as envoy of the republic of Florence when this crime was committed. He gives a very detailed account of it, in the pure, elegant, and simple language that distinguishes all his writings. He speaks of it very coolly. He is pleased with the skill with which Cesare Borgia carried it out, and has much contempt for the gullibility and weakness of the victims; but he has no compassion for their miserable and untimely death, and no indignation whatever at the cruelty and treachery of their murderer.[5] The violence and injustice of great conquerors are often regarded with foolish wonder and admiration; those of petty thieves, robbers, and murderers are always regarded with contempt, hatred, and even horror. The former, though a hundred times more harmful and destructive, often pass, when successful, for deeds of the most heroic magnanimity. The latter are always viewed with hatred and aversion, as the follies as well as the crimes of the lowest and most worthless of mankind. The injustice of the former is certainly at least as great as that of the latter, but the folly and imprudence are nowhere near as great. A wicked and worthless man of ability often goes through the world with far more credit than he deserves. A wicked and worthless fool always appears the most hateful, as well as the most contemptible, of all mortals. As prudence combined with other virtues makes up the noblest of all characters, so imprudence combined with other vices makes up the vilest.

4 Cesare Borgia (1475–1507), son of Pope Alexander VI; the treachery at Senigallia took place at the end of 1502.

5 Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) reported the episode in his dispatches from Borgia's camp and in a short account, the *Description of the Method Used by Duke Valentino in Killing Vitellozzo Vitelli*.

SECTION II: OF THE CHARACTER OF THE INDIVIDUAL, SO FAR AS IT CAN AFFECT THE HAPPINESS OF OTHER PEOPLE

Justice restrains us from harming others; this section explains the order of our beneficence.

VI.ii.intro.1 Everyone's character, so far as it can affect the happiness of other people, must do so through its disposition either to harm them or to benefit them.

VI.ii.intro.2 Proper resentment of injustice, whether attempted or actually committed, is the only motive that, in the eyes of the impartial spectator, can justify our harming or disturbing our neighbor's happiness in any respect. To do so from any other motive is itself a violation of the laws of justice, and force ought to be used either to restrain it or to punish it. The wisdom of every state or commonwealth tries, as well as it can, to use the force of the society to restrain those subject to its authority from harming or disturbing one another's happiness. The rules it establishes for this purpose make up the civil and criminal law of each particular state or country. The principles on which those rules either are, or ought to be, founded are the subject of a particular science. Of all sciences it is by far the most important, but so far, perhaps, the least cultivated: the science of natural jurisprudence. It does not belong to our present subject to go into any detail about it.[6] A sacred and religious regard for never harming or disturbing our neighbor's happiness in any respect, even in cases where no law can properly protect him, makes up the character of the perfectly innocent and just man. When this character is carried to a certain delicacy of attention, it is always highly respectable, and even venerable, for its own sake. It can scarcely ever fail to be accompanied by many other virtues: by great feeling for other people, great humanity, and great benevolence. It is a character well enough understood, and it needs no further explanation. In the present section I shall

6 Smith long planned a treatise on natural jurisprudence but never published it. His views survive in students' notes, printed as the *Lectures on Jurisprudence*.

only try to explain the foundation of the order that nature seems to have marked out for distributing our good offices, that is, for directing and employing our very limited powers of beneficence: first, toward individuals; and second, toward societies.

VI.ii.intro.3 It will be found that the same unerring wisdom which regulates every other part of nature's conduct directs, in this respect too, the order of her recommendations. These are always stronger or weaker in proportion as our beneficence is more or less necessary, or can be more or less useful.

CHAPTER I: OF THE ORDER IN WHICH INDIVIDUALS ARE RECOMMENDED BY NATURE TO OUR CARE AND ATTENTION

Nature recommends to our care ourselves first, then family, kin, colleagues, neighbors and friends.

VI.ii.1.1 Every man, as the Stoics used to say, is first and principally recommended to his own care. And every man is certainly, in every respect, fitter and more able to take care of himself than of anyone else. Every man feels his own pleasures and his own pains more keenly than those of other people. His own are the original sensations; those of others are the reflected or sympathetic images of those sensations. The first may be said to be the substance, the second the shadow.

VI.ii.1.2 After himself, the members of his own family are naturally the objects of his warmest affections: those who usually live in the same house with him, his parents, his children, his brothers and sisters. They are naturally and usually the people whose happiness or misery his conduct must most influence. He is more used to sympathizing with them. He knows better how everything is likely to affect them, and his sympathy with them is more precise and definite than it can be with most other people. In short, it comes closer to what he feels for himself.

VI.ii.1.3 This sympathy, too, and the affections founded on it, are by nature more strongly directed toward his children than toward his parents. His tenderness for his children generally seems a more active principle than his reverence and gratitude toward his parents. In the natural state of things, as has already

been observed, the child's existence depends entirely on the parent's care for some time after it comes into the world; the parent's existence does not naturally depend on the child's care. In the eye of nature, it would seem, a child is a more important object than an old man, and it excites a much livelier, as well as a much more universal, sympathy. It ought to. Everything may be expected, or at least hoped, from the child. In ordinary cases, very little can be either expected or hoped from the old man. The weakness of childhood engages the affections of the most brutal and hard-hearted. It is only to the virtuous and humane that the infirmities of old age are not objects of contempt and aversion. In ordinary cases an old man dies without being much regretted by anybody. Scarcely a child can die without tearing apart somebody's heart.

VI.ii.1.4 The earliest friendships are those among brothers and sisters, the friendships naturally formed when the heart is most open to that feeling. Their getting on well together, while they remain in the same family, is necessary to its tranquility and happiness. They can give more pleasure or pain to one another than to most other people. Their situation makes their mutual sympathy of the utmost importance to their common happiness. By the wisdom of nature, the same situation also obliges them to accommodate themselves to one another, and so makes that sympathy more habitual, and thereby livelier, more distinct, and more definite.

VI.ii.1.5 The children of brothers and sisters are naturally connected by the friendship that continues between their parents after they have separated into different families. Their getting on well improves the enjoyment of that friendship; their discord would disturb it. Since they seldom live in the same family, however, they matter much less to one another than brothers and sisters do, though more than they matter to most other people. As their mutual sympathy is less necessary, it is also less habitual, and therefore proportionally weaker.

VI.ii.1.6 The children of cousins, being still less connected, matter still less to one another; and the affection gradually diminishes as the relationship grows more and more remote.

VI.ii.1.7 What is called affection is in reality nothing but habitual sympathy. Consider our concern for the happiness or misery of those who are the objects of what we call our affections, and our desire to promote the one and prevent the other. These are either the actual feeling of that habitual sympathy or its necessary consequences. Relatives are usually placed in situations that naturally create this habitual sympathy, so a suitable degree of affection is expected to arise among them. We generally find that it actually does. We therefore naturally expect that it should, and for that reason we are more shocked when, on any occasion, we find that it does not. The general rule is established that people related to one another in a certain degree ought always to feel toward one another in a certain way. There is always the highest impropriety, and sometimes even a sort of impiety, in their feeling otherwise. A parent without parental tenderness, a child without any filial reverence, appear as monsters, objects not only of hatred but of horror.

VI.ii.1.8 In a particular case, the circumstances that usually produce these so-called natural affections may, through some accident, not have occurred. Yet respect for the general rule will often, to some extent, take their place, and produce something which, though not altogether the same, may still bear a very considerable resemblance to those affections. Suppose a child was separated from his father in infancy by some accident and does not come back to him until grown to manhood. The father tends to be less attached to such a child. He tends to feel less paternal tenderness for the child, and the child less filial reverence for the father. Brothers and sisters who have been educated in distant countries tend to feel a similar lessening of affection. With the dutiful and the virtuous, however, respect for the general rule will often produce something which, though by no means the same, may yet very much resemble those natural affections. Even during the separation, the father and the child,

the brothers or the sisters, are by no means indifferent to one another. They all regard one another as people to whom, and from whom, certain affections are due. They live in the hope of being, at some time or other, in a position to enjoy the friendship that ought naturally to have arisen among people so closely connected. Until they meet, the absent son and the absent brother are often the favorite son and the favorite brother. They have never given offense; or if they have, it was so long ago that the offense is forgotten, like some childish prank not worth remembering. Every account they have heard of one another has been flattering and favorable in the highest degree, if it was passed on by people of any tolerable good nature. The absent son, the absent brother, is not like other, ordinary sons and brothers. He is an all-perfect son, an all-perfect brother, and the most romantic hopes are entertained of the happiness to be enjoyed in the friendship and conversation of such people. When they meet, they are often so strongly disposed to form the habitual sympathy that constitutes family affection that they are very apt to imagine they have actually formed it, and to behave toward one another as if they had. Time and experience, however, I am afraid, too often undeceive them. On closer acquaintance, they often discover in one another habits, moods, and inclinations different from what they expected. They now find it hard to accommodate themselves to these, for want of habitual sympathy, for want of the real principle and foundation of what is properly called family affection. They have never lived in the situation that almost necessarily forces that easy accommodation. Though they may now sincerely wish to adopt it, they have really become incapable of doing so. Their everyday conversation and dealings soon become less pleasing to them, and for that reason less frequent. They may go on living together in the mutual exchange of all essential good offices, and with every other outward appearance of decent regard. But there is a heartfelt satisfaction, a delicious sympathy, a confiding openness and ease, that naturally arise in the conversation of people who have

lived long and familiarly together. It seldom happens that they can enjoy these completely.

VI.ii.1.9 It is only with the dutiful and the virtuous, however, that the general rule has even this slender authority. The dissipated, the profligate, and the vain disregard it entirely. They are so far from respecting it that they seldom mention it except with the most indecent mockery. An early and long separation of this kind never fails to estrange them from one another completely. With such people, respect for the general rule can at best produce only a cold and affected civility (a very slender semblance of real regard). Even this is commonly ended altogether by the slightest offense or the smallest clash of interests.

VI.ii.1.10 In the higher ranks of life, the education of boys at distant great schools, of young men at distant colleges, and of young ladies in distant convents and boarding schools seems to have done the most fundamental harm to the domestic morals, and consequently to the domestic happiness, of both France and England. Do you want to educate your children to be dutiful to their parents, and kind and affectionate to their brothers and sisters? Then put them under the necessity of being dutiful children and kind and affectionate brothers and sisters: educate them in your own house. From their parents' house they may, with propriety and advantage, go out every day to attend public schools; but let them always live at home.[7] Respect for you must always place a very useful restraint on their conduct, and respect for them may often place a far from useless restraint on your own. Surely no accomplishment that can possibly be gained from what is called a public education can in any way make up for what is almost certainly and necessarily lost by it. Domestic education is the institution of nature; public education, the contrivance of man. It is surely unnecessary to say which is likely to be the wiser.

VI.ii.1.11 In some tragedies and romances we meet with many beautiful and moving scenes founded on what is called the force

7 "Public" schools and "public education" here mean schooling outside the home, as opposed to private tutoring within it.

of blood. This is the wonderful affection that close relatives are supposed to feel for one another even before they know they are related at all. This force of blood, however, I am afraid, exists nowhere but in tragedies and romances. Even there, it is never supposed to arise between any relatives except those who are naturally brought up in the same house: between parents and children, and between brothers and sisters. To imagine any such mysterious affection between cousins, or even between aunts or uncles and nephews or nieces, would be too ridiculous.

VI.ii.1.12 In pastoral countries, and in all countries where the authority of law is not by itself enough to give complete security to every member of the state, all the different branches of the same family commonly choose to live near one another. Their association is often necessary for their common defense. They are all, from the highest to the lowest, of more or less importance to one another. Their harmony strengthens this necessary association; their discord always weakens it, and might destroy it. They have more dealings with one another than with the members of any other tribe. Even the most distant members of the same tribe claim some connection with one another. All other circumstances being equal, they expect to be treated with more marked attention than is due to those who have no such claim. Not many years ago, in the Highlands of Scotland, the chieftain used to regard the poorest man of his clan as his cousin and relation. The same wide regard for kindred is said to exist among the Tartars, the Arabs, the Turkomans, and, I believe, among all other nations that are in nearly the same state of society as the Scottish Highlanders were in about the beginning of the present century.[8]

VI.ii.1.13 In commercial countries, where the authority of law is always fully sufficient to protect the humblest man in the state, the descendants of the same family have no such motive for keeping together. They naturally separate and scatter, as interest or inclination directs. They soon cease to matter to one another.

8 "The present century": the eighteenth, so Smith means the Highlands around 1700, before the clan system was broken up after the Jacobite risings.

In a few generations they lose not only all concern for one another, but all memory of their common origin and of the connection that existed among their ancestors. In every country, regard for distant relations grows less and less the longer and more completely this state of civilization has been established. It has been established longer and more completely in England than in Scotland. Distant relations are accordingly given more consideration in Scotland than in England, though in this respect the difference between the two countries is growing smaller every day. Great lords, it is true, are proud in every country to remember and acknowledge their connection with one another, however remote. The memory of such illustrious relations flatters the family pride of all of them not a little. It is not from affection, nor from anything resembling affection, but from the most frivolous and childish of all vanities, that this memory is so carefully kept alive. Should some humbler kinsman, though perhaps a much nearer one, presume to remind these great men of his relation to their family, they seldom fail to tell him that they are poor genealogists and wretchedly ill-informed about their own family history. It is not in that rank of people, I am afraid, that we should expect any extraordinary extension of what is called natural affection.

VI.ii.1.14 I consider what is called natural affection to be more the effect of the moral connection between parent and child than of the supposed physical one. A jealous husband, it is true, often regards with hatred and aversion the unhappy child he supposes to be the offspring of his wife's infidelity. He does so despite the moral connection, and despite the child's having been brought up in his own house. The child is the lasting monument of a most disagreeable episode: of his own dishonor, and of the disgrace of his family.

VI.ii.1.15 Among well-disposed people, the necessity or convenience of accommodating one another very often produces a friendship not unlike the one that arises among those who are born to live in the same family. Colleagues in office and partners in trade call one another brothers, and often feel toward one

another as if they really were. Their good agreement is an advantage to all of them. If they are tolerably reasonable people, they are naturally inclined to agree. We expect them to, and their disagreement is a kind of minor scandal. The Romans expressed this sort of attachment by the word *necessitudo*, which, from its etymology, seems to signify that it was imposed by the necessity of the situation.[9]

VI.ii.1.16 Even the trifling circumstance of living in the same neighborhood has some effect of the same kind. We respect the face of a man we see every day, provided he has never offended us. Neighbors can be very convenient to one another, and they can be very troublesome. If they are decent people, they are naturally inclined to agree. We expect them to get along, and to be a bad neighbor is a very bad character to have. There are accordingly certain small favors which everyone allows are due to a neighbor, in preference to any other person who has no such connection.

VI.ii.1.17 We have a natural disposition to adjust and assimilate, as much as we can, our own sentiments, principles, and feelings to those we see fixed and rooted in the people with whom we are obliged to live and talk a great deal. This disposition is the cause of the contagious effects of both good and bad company. The man who associates chiefly with the wise and the virtuous may not become either wise or virtuous himself, but he cannot help forming at least a certain respect for wisdom and virtue; and the man who associates chiefly with the profligate and the dissolute, though he may not become profligate and dissolute himself, must soon lose at least all his original abhorrence of profligacy and dissolute manners. The similarity of family characters, which we so often see handed down through several successive generations, may perhaps be partly owing to this disposition to assimilate ourselves to those with whom we are obliged to live and talk a great deal. The family character, however, like the family face, seems to be owing not entirely to the moral connec-

9 *Necessitudo*: Latin for a close tie or bond between people (kinsmen, friends, colleagues), formed from the same root as *necessitas*, "necessity."

tion, but partly also to the physical one. The family face is certainly owing entirely to the physical.

FRIENDSHIP, GRATITUDE AND RANK

Friendship founded on virtue, gratitude to benefactors, and regard for the great and the wretched.

VI.ii.1.18 But of all attachments to an individual, the one founded entirely on esteem and approval of his good conduct and behavior, confirmed by much experience and long acquaintance, is by far the most respectable. Such friendships do not arise from a forced sympathy, nor from a sympathy that has been put on and made habitual for the sake of convenience and accommodation. They arise from a natural sympathy—from an involuntary feeling that the persons to whom we attach ourselves are the natural and proper objects of esteem and approbation. Such friendships can exist only among men of virtue. Only men of virtue can feel that complete confidence in one another's conduct and behavior which can assure them, at all times, that they can never either offend or be offended by one another. Vice is always capricious; only virtue is regular and orderly. The attachment that is founded on the love of virtue, as it is certainly the most virtuous of all attachments, so it is also the happiest, as well as the most lasting and secure. Such friendships need not be confined to a single person. They may safely embrace all the wise and virtuous with whom we have been long and intimately acquainted, and on whose wisdom and virtue we can, for that reason, entirely depend. Those who would confine friendship to two persons seem to confuse the wise security of friendship with the jealousy and folly of love. Then there are the hasty, infatuated, and foolish intimacies of young people. These are commonly founded on some slight similarity of character that has nothing to do with good conduct: on a taste, perhaps, for the same studies, the same amusements, the same diversions, or on their agreement in some peculiar principle or opinion not commonly held. Such intimacies, which a whim begins and a whim

ends, however agreeable they may seem while they last, can by no means deserve the sacred and venerable name of friendship.

VI.ii.1.19 Of all the persons, however, whom nature points out for our special beneficence, there are none to whom it seems more properly directed than those whose beneficence we have already experienced ourselves. Nature formed men for the mutual kindness so necessary to their happiness, and so it makes every man the special object of kindness to the persons to whom he himself has been kind. Their gratitude may not always match his beneficence, but the sense of his merit—the sympathetic gratitude of the impartial spectator—will always match it. The general indignation of other people at the baseness of their ingratitude will sometimes even increase the general sense of his merit. No benevolent man ever entirely lost the fruits of his benevolence. If he does not always gather them from the persons from whom he ought to have gathered them, he seldom fails to gather them, with a tenfold increase, from other people. Kindness is the parent of kindness. If to be loved by our fellows is the great object of our ambition, the surest way to obtain it is to show by our conduct that we really love them.

VI.ii.1.20 Some persons are recommended to our beneficence by their connection with ourselves, by their personal qualities, or by their past services. After them come those who are pointed out not, indeed, to what is called our friendship, but to our benevolent attention and good offices. These are the people distinguished by their extraordinary situation: the greatly fortunate and the greatly unfortunate, the rich and powerful, the poor and wretched. The distinction of ranks and the peace and order of society are, to a great extent, founded on the respect we naturally feel for the former. The relief and consolation of human misery depend entirely on our compassion for the latter. The peace and order of society is of more importance than even the relief of the miserable. Our respect for the great is accordingly most apt to go wrong by excess, and our fellow-feeling for the miserable by deficiency. Moralists urge us to charity and compassion. They warn us against the fascination of greatness.

This fascination is indeed so powerful that the rich and great are too often preferred to the wise and virtuous. Nature has wisely judged that the distinction of ranks, the peace and order of society, would rest more securely on the plain and palpable difference of birth and fortune than on the invisible and often uncertain difference of wisdom and virtue. The undiscriminating eyes of the great mob of mankind can perceive the former well enough. Even the precise discernment of the wise and virtuous can make out the latter only sometimes, and with difficulty. In the order of all these recommendations, the benevolent wisdom of nature is equally evident.

VI.ii.1.21 It may perhaps be unnecessary to observe that when two or more of these causes that excite kindness are combined, the kindness increases. The favor and partiality we naturally feel toward greatness, when envy does not come into it, are much increased when greatness is joined with wisdom and virtue. If, despite that wisdom and virtue, the great man should fall into those misfortunes, those dangers and distresses, to which the most exalted stations are often the most exposed, we take a much deeper interest in his fortune than we would in that of a person equally virtuous but in a humbler situation. The most moving subjects of tragedies and romances are the misfortunes of virtuous and magnanimous kings and princes. If, by the wisdom and courage of their efforts, they should free themselves from those misfortunes and fully recover their former superiority and security, we cannot help viewing them with the most enthusiastic and even extravagant admiration. The grief we felt at their distress and the joy we feel at their prosperity seem to combine in heightening the partial admiration we naturally feel both for their station and for their character.

VI.ii.1.22 These different beneficent affections sometimes happen to pull in different directions. When they do, it is perhaps altogether impossible to determine by any precise rules in which cases we ought to follow the one, and in which the other. In what cases friendship ought to give way to gratitude, or gratitude to friendship; in what cases the strongest of all natural

affections ought to give way to concern for the safety of those superiors on whose safety that of the whole society often depends; and in what cases natural affection may, without impropriety, prevail over that concern—all this must be left entirely to the decision of the man within the breast, the supposed impartial spectator, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct. We may place ourselves completely in his situation, really view ourselves with his eyes and as he views us, and listen with diligent and reverent attention to what he suggests to us. If we do, his voice will never deceive us. We shall have no need of casuistic rules to direct our conduct. Such rules often cannot be adapted to all the different shades and gradations of circumstance, character, and situation. They cannot be fitted to differences and distinctions which, though not imperceptible, are often altogether impossible to define because they are so fine and delicate. Take Voltaire's beautiful tragedy, *The Orphan of China*. We admire the magnanimity of Zamti, who is willing to sacrifice the life of his own child to preserve that of the only feeble survivor of his ancient sovereigns and masters. At the same time we not only pardon but love the maternal tenderness of Idame. At the risk of revealing her husband's momentous secret, she reclaims her infant from the cruel hands of the Tartars, into which it had been delivered.[10]

CHAPTER II: OF THE ORDER IN WHICH SOCIETIES ARE BY NATURE RECOMMENDED TO OUR BENEFICENCE

Our own country is the society most strongly recommended to us, and national prejudice follows.

VI.ii.2.1 The same principles that direct the order in which individuals are recommended to our beneficence also direct the order in which societies are recommended to it. Those societies

10 Voltaire's *L'Orphelin de la Chine* (1755), set during the Tartar conquest of China under Genghis Khan. The mandarin Zamti offers his own son in place of the last heir of the imperial house.

to which our beneficence is, or may be, of most importance are recommended to it first and foremost.

VI.ii.2.2 The state or sovereign power in which we were born and raised, and under whose protection we continue to live, is in ordinary cases the largest society whose happiness or misery our good or bad conduct can much affect. Accordingly, nature recommends it to us most strongly. Not only we ourselves but all the objects of our kindest affections are commonly included within it: our children, our parents, our relations, our friends, our benefactors, all those whom we naturally love and revere most; and their prosperity and safety depend to some extent on its prosperity and safety. So nature endears it to us through all our selfish affections, and through all our private benevolent ones as well. Because of our own connection with it, its prosperity and glory seem to reflect a kind of honor on ourselves. When we compare it with other societies of the same kind, we are proud of its superiority, and somewhat mortified if it seems in any respect to fall below them. Consider all the illustrious characters it has produced in former times: its warriors, its statesmen, its poets, its philosophers, and its men of letters of every kind. (I say former times, because envy may sometimes prejudice us a little against those of our own.) We are inclined to view them with the most partial admiration, and to rank them, sometimes most unjustly, above those of all other nations. The patriot who lays down his life for the safety, or even for the vainglory, of this society appears to act with the most exact propriety. He appears to view himself in the light in which the impartial spectator naturally and necessarily views him. In the eye of that fair-minded judge he is only one of the multitude, of no more consequence than any other in it, but bound at all times to sacrifice and devote himself to the safety, the service, and even the glory of the greater number. But though this sacrifice appears perfectly just and proper, we know how difficult it is to make, and how few people are capable of making it. His conduct therefore excites not only our entire approbation but our highest wonder and admiration, and seems to merit all the applause that can be

due to the most heroic virtue. The traitor, by contrast, appears the most detestable of all villains. In some unusual situation he imagines he can advance his own little interest by betraying his native country's interest to the public enemy. Disregarding the judgment of the man within the breast, he prefers himself, so shamefully and so basely, to all those with whom he has any connection.

VI.ii.2.3 The love of our own nation often disposes us to view the prosperity and growing power of any neighboring nation with the most malignant jealousy and envy. Independent neighboring nations have no common superior to settle their disputes, so they all live in continual dread and suspicion of one another. Each sovereign expects little justice from his neighbors, and is inclined to treat them with as little as he expects from them. Independent states profess, or pretend, to think themselves bound to observe certain rules in their dealings with one another, the laws of nations. Their regard for these laws is often little more than mere pretense and profession. For the smallest interest, on the slightest provocation, we see those rules every day either evaded or openly violated without shame or remorse. Each nation foresees, or imagines it foresees, its own subjugation in the growing power and expansion of any of its neighbors. In this way the low principle of national prejudice is often founded on the noble one of the love of our own country. The elder Cato is said to have ended every speech he made in the senate, whatever the subject, with the sentence: "It is my opinion likewise that Carthage ought to be destroyed." This was the natural expression of the fierce patriotism of a strong but coarse mind, enraged almost to madness against a foreign nation from which his own had suffered so much.[11] Scipio Nasica is said to have ended all his speeches with a more humane sentence: "It is my opinion likewise that Carthage ought not to be destroyed." This was the liberal expression of a broader and more enlightened mind, which felt no aversion to the prosperity even of an old

11 Marcus Porcius Cato (234–149 BC), Roman statesman and censor. Carthage was destroyed by Rome in 146 BC, shortly after his death.

enemy, once that enemy had been reduced to a state in which it could no longer threaten Rome.[12] France and England may each have some reason to dread the growth of the other's naval and military power. But it is surely beneath the dignity of two such great nations for either to envy the other's internal happiness and prosperity: the cultivation of its lands, the advance of its manufactures, the growth of its commerce, the security and number of its ports and harbors, its proficiency in all the liberal arts and sciences. These are all real improvements of the world we live in. Mankind benefits from them, and human nature is ennobled by them. In such improvements each nation ought not only to try to excel itself, but also, from the love of mankind, to promote the excellence of its neighbors instead of obstructing it. These are all proper objects of national emulation, not of national prejudice or envy.

VI.ii.2.4 The love of our own country does not seem to be derived from the love of mankind. The former sentiment is entirely independent of the latter, and sometimes even seems to dispose us to act inconsistently with it. France may contain perhaps nearly three times as many inhabitants as Great Britain. In the great society of mankind, therefore, the prosperity of France should appear a much more important object than that of Great Britain. Yet a British subject who, for that reason, preferred the prosperity of France to that of Britain on every occasion would not be thought a good citizen of Great Britain. We do not love our country merely as a part of the great society of mankind. We love it for its own sake, independently of any such consideration. The wisdom that contrived the system of human affections, as well as every other part of nature, seems to have judged that the interest of the great society of mankind would be best promoted by directing each individual's principal attention to the particular portion of it that lay most within the sphere both of his abilities and of his understanding.

VI.ii.2.5 National prejudices and hatreds seldom extend beyond neighboring nations. We very weakly and foolishly, perhaps, call

the French our natural enemies, and they perhaps just as weakly and foolishly regard us in the same way. Neither they nor we feel any envy at all of the prosperity of China or Japan. It very rarely happens, however, that our goodwill toward such distant countries can be exercised to much effect.

VI.ii.2.6 The most extensive public benevolence that can commonly be exercised to any considerable effect is that of statesmen who plan and form alliances among neighboring or not very distant nations, to preserve either what is called the balance of power or the general peace and tranquility of the states within the circle of their negotiations. The statesmen who plan and carry out such treaties, however, seldom have anything in view but the interest of their own countries. Sometimes, indeed, their views are broader. According to the Cardinal de Retz, a man not overly ready to believe in other people's virtue, the Count d'Avaux, France's plenipotentiary at the treaty of Münster, would have been willing to sacrifice his life to restore the general tranquility of Europe through that treaty. King William seems to have had a real zeal for the liberty and independence of most of the sovereign states of Europe. This zeal was perhaps a good deal spurred by his particular aversion to France, the state that chiefly endangered that liberty and independence in his time. Some share of the same spirit seems to have passed down to Queen Anne's first ministry.[13]

VI.ii.2.7 Every independent state is divided into many different orders and societies, each with its own particular powers, privileges, and immunities. Every individual is naturally more attached to his own particular order or society than to any other. His own interest and his own vanity, and the interest and vanity of many of his friends and companions, are commonly a good deal bound up with it. He is ambitious to extend its priv-

12 Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica Corculum, Roman consul (162 and 155 BC), who opposed Cato's call for the destruction of Carthage.

13 Claude de Mesmes, Count d'Avaux (1595–1650), negotiated for France at Münster in the talks that produced the Peace of Westphalia (1648); Retz (1613–1679) wrote famous memoirs. William III reigned in England 1689–1702; Anne's first ministry (from 1702) continued his war against Louis XIV.

ileges and immunities, and zealous to defend them against the encroachments of every other order or society.

VI.ii.2.8 What is called the constitution of a particular state depends on the way that state is divided into the different orders and societies that compose it, and on the particular distribution of their respective powers, privileges, and immunities.

VI.ii.2.9 The stability of that particular constitution depends on the ability of each order or society to maintain its own powers, privileges, and immunities against the encroachments of every other. The constitution is necessarily more or less altered whenever any of its subordinate parts is either raised above or pushed below the rank and condition it had before.

VI.ii.2.10 All those different orders and societies depend on the state to which they owe their security and protection. Even the most partial member of each of them acknowledges that they are all subordinate to the state, and established only to serve its prosperity and preservation. Yet it may often be hard to convince him that the prosperity and preservation of the state require any reduction in the powers, privileges, and immunities of his own particular order or society. This partiality, though it may sometimes be unjust, need not for that reason be useless. It checks the spirit of innovation. It tends to preserve whatever balance is established among the different orders and societies into which the state is divided. It sometimes appears to obstruct changes of government that may be fashionable and popular at the time, but in reality it contributes to the stability and permanence of the whole system.

LOVE OF COUNTRY AND THE MAN OF SYSTEM

Patriotism joins respect for the constitution with care for citizens; Smith warns against the man of system.

VI.ii.2.11 The love of our country seems, in ordinary cases, to involve two different principles. First, a certain respect and reverence for the constitution or form of government actually established. Second, an earnest desire to make the condition of

our fellow citizens as safe, respectable, and happy as we can. A man is not a citizen if he is not disposed to respect the laws and obey the civil magistrate. And he is certainly not a good citizen if he does not wish to promote, by every means in his power, the welfare of the whole society of his fellow citizens.

VI.ii.2.12 In peaceful and quiet times, those two principles generally coincide and lead to the same conduct. When we see that the established government actually keeps our fellow citizens in a safe, respectable, and happy situation, supporting it seems clearly the best means of keeping them there. But in times of public discontent, faction, and disorder, the two principles may pull in different directions. Even a wise man may then be inclined to think some change necessary in a constitution or form of government that, in its present condition, appears plainly unable to maintain public tranquility. In such cases, however, it often requires perhaps the highest effort of political wisdom to decide when a real patriot ought to support the authority of the old system and try to re-establish it, and when he ought to give way to the more daring, but often dangerous, spirit of innovation.

VI.ii.2.13 Foreign war and civil faction are the two situations that offer the most splendid opportunities for displaying public spirit. The hero who serves his country successfully in foreign war satisfies the wishes of the whole nation, and for that reason is the object of universal gratitude and admiration. In times of civil discord, the leaders of the contending parties may be admired by one half of their fellow citizens, but they are commonly cursed by the other half. Their characters, and the merit of their respective services, commonly appear more doubtful. For this reason the glory acquired in foreign war is almost always purer and more splendid than any that can be acquired in civil faction.

VI.ii.2.14 The leader of the successful party, however, may sometimes render his country a service far more essential and important than the greatest victories and the most extensive conquests. He can do so if he has enough authority to persuade

his own friends to act with proper temper and moderation, which he often does not. He may re-establish and improve the constitution. Leaving behind the very doubtful and ambiguous character of a party leader, he may take on the greatest and noblest of all characters, that of the reformer and legislator of a great state. By the wisdom of his institutions he may secure the internal tranquility and happiness of his fellow citizens for many generations to come.

VI.ii.2.15 Amid the turbulence and disorder of faction, a certain spirit of system is apt to mix itself with the public spirit that is founded on the love of humanity, on a real fellow-feeling with the hardships and distresses to which some of our fellow citizens may be exposed. This spirit of system commonly takes over the direction of that gentler public spirit; it always animates it, and often inflames it even to the madness of fanaticism. The leaders of the discontented party seldom fail to hold out some plausible plan of reform. They claim it will not only remove the hardships and relieve the distresses immediately complained of, but will prevent any return of similar hardships and distresses for all time to come. For this reason they often propose to remodel the constitution, and to alter, in some of its most essential parts, a system of government under which the subjects of a great empire may have enjoyed peace, security, and even glory for several centuries together. The great body of the party are commonly intoxicated with the imaginary beauty of this ideal system. They have no experience of it, but it has been represented to them in all the most dazzling colors that their leaders' eloquence could paint. Those leaders themselves may originally have meant nothing but their own advancement, yet in time many of them become the dupes of their own sophistry, and are as eager for this great reform as the weakest and most foolish of their followers. Even if the leaders have kept their own heads free from this fanaticism, as indeed they commonly do, they do not always dare to disappoint their followers' expectations. They are often obliged, against their principles and their conscience, to act as if they shared the common delusion. The

violence of the party refuses all palliatives, all compromises, all reasonable accommodations. By demanding too much, it frequently obtains nothing. The hardships and distresses that, with a little moderation, might largely have been removed and relieved are left with no hope of a remedy at all.

VI.ii.2.16 The man whose public spirit is driven entirely by humanity and benevolence will respect the established powers and privileges even of individuals, and still more those of the great orders and societies into which the state is divided. Even if he thinks some of them abusive to some degree, he will be content to moderate what he often cannot abolish without great violence. When he cannot overcome the rooted prejudices of the people by reason and persuasion, he will not try to subdue them by force. Instead he will religiously observe what Cicero rightly calls the divine maxim of Plato: never to use violence against his country, any more than against his parents.[14] He will fit his public arrangements, as well as he can, to the settled habits and prejudices of the people. He will also remedy, as well as he can, the inconveniences that may follow from the lack of those regulations the people are unwilling to accept. When he cannot establish what is right, he will not scorn to improve what is wrong. Like Solon, when he cannot establish the best system of laws, he will try to establish the best that the people can bear.[15]

VI.ii.2.17 The man of system, on the contrary, tends to be very wise in his own conceit. He is often so in love with the supposed beauty of his own ideal plan of government that he cannot allow the smallest deviation from any part of it. He goes on to establish it completely and in all its parts, without any regard either to the great interests or to the strong prejudices that may oppose it. He seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society as easily as the hand arranges the different pieces on a chess-board. He does not consider that the pieces on the chess-board have no principle of motion other

14 Cicero, *Letters to Friends* I.9.18, drawing on Plato's *Crito* and *Seventh Letter*.
15 Solon (c. 640–560 BC), Athenian lawgiver; the saying is reported in Plutarch's *Life of Solon*.

than the one the hand impresses on them. But in the great chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own, altogether different from the one the legislature might choose to impress on it. If those two principles coincide and act in the same direction, the game of human society will go on easily and harmoniously, and is very likely to be happy and successful. If they are opposed or different, the game will go on miserably, and the society must at all times be in the highest degree of disorder.

VI.ii.2.18 Some general, and even systematic, idea of the perfection of policy and law may no doubt be necessary to guide the statesman's views. But to insist on establishing everything that idea may seem to require—and on establishing it all at once, in spite of all opposition—must often be the highest degree of arrogance. It is to set up his own judgment as the supreme standard of right and wrong. It is to imagine himself the only wise and worthy man in the commonwealth, and to suppose that his fellow citizens should adapt themselves to him and not he to them. This is why, of all political theorists, sovereign princes are by far the most dangerous. This arrogance comes perfectly naturally to them. They have no doubt of the immense superiority of their own judgment. So when such imperial and royal reformers condescend to contemplate the constitution of the country entrusted to their government, they seldom see anything so wrong in it as the obstacles it may sometimes put in the way of carrying out their own will. They hold the divine maxim of Plato in contempt, and regard the state as made for themselves, not themselves for the state. The great object of their reform, therefore, is to remove those obstacles: to reduce the authority of the nobility, to take away the privileges of cities and provinces, and to make both the greatest individuals and the greatest orders of the state as incapable of opposing their commands as the weakest and most insignificant.

CHAPTER III: OF UNIVERSAL BENEVOLENCE

Our goodwill can embrace the whole universe, but its care belongs to God, not man.

VI.ii.3.1 Although our effective good offices can very seldom reach any wider society than our own country, our good will is limited by no boundary and may embrace the immensity of the universe. We cannot form the idea of any innocent and sentient being whose happiness we would not desire, or whose misery, when vividly brought home to the imagination, we would not feel some degree of aversion to. The idea of a harmful, though sentient, being does indeed naturally provoke our hatred. But the ill will we bear it in this case is really the effect of our universal benevolence. It is the effect of the sympathy we feel with the misery and resentment of those other innocent and sentient beings whose happiness is disturbed by its malice.

VI.ii.3.2 This universal benevolence, however noble and generous, can be the source of no solid happiness to anyone who is not thoroughly convinced that all the inhabitants of the universe, the humblest as well as the greatest, are under the immediate care and protection of that great, benevolent, and all-wise Being who directs all the movements of nature, and who is determined, by his own unalterable perfections, to maintain in it at all times the greatest possible quantity of happiness. To this universal benevolence, on the contrary, the mere suspicion of a fatherless world must be the most melancholy of all reflections, since it brings the thought that all the unknown regions of infinite and incomprehensible space may be filled with nothing but endless misery and wretchedness. All the splendor of the highest prosperity can never lighten the gloom with which so dreadful an idea must necessarily overshadow the imagination. Nor, in a wise and virtuous man, can all the sorrow of the most afflicting adversity ever dry up the joy that necessarily springs from a habitual and thorough conviction that the opposite view is true.

VI.ii.3.3 The wise and virtuous man is at all times willing that his own private interest should be sacrificed to the public interest of his own particular order or society. He is at all times willing, too, that the interest of this order or society should be sacrificed to the greater interest of the state or sovereignty, of which it is only a subordinate part. He should therefore be equally willing that all those lesser interests should be sacrificed to the greater interest of the universe—to the interest of that great society of all sentient and intelligent beings, of which God himself is the immediate administrator and director. Suppose he is deeply impressed with the habitual and thorough conviction that this benevolent and all-wise Being can admit into his system of government no partial evil that is not necessary for the universal good. Then he must regard all the misfortunes that may befall himself, his friends, his society, or his country as necessary for the prosperity of the universe. He must regard them, therefore, not only as something he ought to submit to with resignation, but as something he himself, had he known all the connections and dependencies of things, ought sincerely and devoutly to have wished for.

VI.ii.3.4 Nor does this magnanimous resignation to the will of the great Director of the universe seem in any way beyond the reach of human nature. Good soldiers, who both love and trust their general, often march with more cheerfulness and eagerness to the forlorn station from which they never expect to return than they would to one where there was neither difficulty nor danger. In marching to the latter, they could feel no sentiment other than the dullness of ordinary duty. In marching to the former, they feel that they are making the noblest effort it is possible for a human being to make. They know that their general would not have ordered them to this station if it had not been necessary for the safety of the army and the success of the war. They cheerfully sacrifice their own little systems to the prosperity of a greater system. They take an affectionate leave of their comrades, wishing them every happiness and success, and they march out—not only in submissive obedience, but often

with shouts of the most joyful exultation—to the fatal, but splendid and honorable, station to which they have been assigned. No commander of an army can deserve more unlimited trust, or more ardent and zealous affection, than the great Conductor of the universe. In the greatest public as well as private disasters, a wise man ought to consider that he himself, his friends, and his countrymen have only been ordered to the forlorn station of the universe; that they would not have been so ordered had it not been necessary for the good of the whole; and that it is their duty not only to submit to this allotment with humble resignation, but to try to embrace it with eagerness and joy. A wise man should surely be capable of doing what a good soldier holds himself ready to do at all times.

VI.ii.3.5 The idea of that divine Being whose benevolence and wisdom have, from all eternity, designed and directed the immense machine of the universe so as to produce at all times the greatest possible quantity of happiness is certainly, of all the objects of human contemplation, by far the most sublime. Every other thought necessarily seems low by comparison. The man we believe to be chiefly occupied in this sublime contemplation seldom fails to be the object of our highest veneration. Even if his life is entirely contemplative, we often regard him with a kind of religious respect far greater than that with which we look on the most active and useful servant of the commonwealth. The *Meditations* of Marcus Antoninus, which turn chiefly on this subject, have perhaps contributed more to the general admiration of his character than all the various acts of his just, merciful, and beneficent reign.[16]

VI.ii.3.6 The administration of the great system of the universe, however—the care of the universal happiness of all rational and sentient beings—is the business of God and not of man. To man is assigned a much humbler department, but one far better suited to the weakness of his powers and the narrowness of his understanding: the care of his own happiness, and of that of his family, his friends, and his country. That he is occupied in con-

16 Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Roman emperor AD 161–180 and Stoic philosopher.

templating the more sublime department can never excuse his neglecting the humbler one. He must not lay himself open to the charge that Avidius Cassius is said to have brought, perhaps unjustly, against Marcus Antoninus: that while he busied himself with philosophical speculations and contemplated the prosperity of the universe, he neglected that of the Roman empire.[17] The most sublime speculation of the contemplative philosopher can scarcely make up for the neglect of the smallest active duty.

SECTION III: OF SELF-COMMAND

Self-command over fear and anger, and over love of ease and pleasure, gives all virtues their luster.

VI.iii.1 The man who acts according to the rules of perfect prudence, strict justice, and proper benevolence may be said to be perfectly virtuous. But the most perfect knowledge of those rules will not by itself enable him to act in this way. His own passions are very apt to mislead him—sometimes to drive him, and sometimes to seduce him, into violating all the rules that he himself approves of in all his sober and cool hours. The most perfect knowledge, if it is not supported by the most perfect self-command, will not always enable him to do his duty.

VI.iii.2 Some of the best of the ancient moralists seem to have divided those passions into two different classes. First, there are those that require a considerable exertion of self-command to restrain even for a single moment. Second, there are those that are easy to restrain for a single moment, or even for a short period, but which, by their continual and almost incessant urgings, are very apt over the course of a life to mislead us into great deviations.

VI.iii.3 Fear and anger, together with some other passions mixed or connected with them, make up the first class. The love of ease, of pleasure, of applause, and of many other selfish gratific-

17 Avidius Cassius, Roman general who rebelled against Marcus Aurelius in AD 175.

ations make up the second. Extravagant fear and furious anger are often difficult to restrain even for a single moment. The love of ease, of pleasure, of applause, and of other selfish gratifications is always easy to restrain for a single moment, or even for a short period; but by their continual urgings they often mislead us into many weaknesses that we later have good reason to be ashamed of. The first set of passions may often be said to drive us from our duty, the second to seduce us from it. The ancient moralists I have referred to called the command of the first set fortitude, manhood, and strength of mind; the command of the second they called temperance, decency, modesty, and moderation.

VI.iii.4 The command of each of these two sets of passions has a beauty of its own, quite apart from the beauty it derives from its utility—from its enabling us on all occasions to act according to the dictates of prudence, justice, and proper benevolence. It seems to deserve, for its own sake, a certain degree of esteem and admiration. In the one case, it is the strength and greatness of the effort that excites some degree of that esteem and admiration. In the other, it is the uniformity, evenness, and unremitting steadiness of that effort.

VI.iii.5 The man who, in danger, under torture, or at the approach of death, keeps his tranquility unaltered, and lets no word or gesture escape him that does not perfectly accord with the feelings of the most uninvolved spectator, necessarily commands a very high degree of admiration. If he suffers in the cause of liberty and justice, for the sake of humanity and the love of his country, then the tenderest compassion for his sufferings, the strongest indignation against the injustice of his persecutors, the warmest sympathetic gratitude for his beneficent intentions, and the highest sense of his merit all join and mingle with our admiration of his magnanimity, and often inflame that sentiment into the most enthusiastic and rapturous veneration. Many of the heroes of ancient and modern history who are remembered with the most particular favor and affection are those who perished on the scaffold in the cause of truth, liberty,

and justice, and who behaved there with the ease and dignity that became them. Had the enemies of Socrates allowed him to die quietly in his bed, the glory even of that great philosopher might never have acquired the dazzling splendor in which it has been seen in all the ages since. In English history, when we look over the illustrious heads engraved by Vertue and Houbraken, there is scarcely anyone, I imagine, who does not feel that the axe—the emblem of having been beheaded—engraved under some of the most illustrious of them, under those of the Sir Thomas Mores, the Raleighs, the Russells, the Sidneys, and so on, sheds a real dignity and interest over the characters to which it is attached. That dignity far exceeds anything they can draw from all the futile ornaments of heraldry that sometimes accompany them.[18]

VI.iii.6 This magnanimity does not lend luster only to the characters of innocent and virtuous men. It draws some degree of favorable regard even to the greatest criminals. When a robber or highwayman is brought to the scaffold and behaves there with decency and firmness, we fully approve of his punishment. Yet we often cannot help regretting that a man with such great and noble powers should have been capable of such base and monstrous crimes.

VI.iii.7 War is the great school both for acquiring and for exercising this kind of magnanimity. Death, as we say, is the king of terrors, and the man who has conquered the fear of death is not likely to lose his presence of mind when any other natural evil approaches. In war, men become familiar with death, and so are necessarily cured of the superstitious horror with which the weak and inexperienced view it. They consider it merely as the loss of life. They are averse to it only so far as life happens to be something they desire. They also learn from experience that many dangers that seem great are not as great as they appear. With courage, energy, and presence of mind, there is often a good chance of getting out with honor from situations in which

18 George Vertue (1684–1756) and Jacobus Houbraken (1698–1780) engraved the portraits for Thomas Birch's *Heads of Illustrious Persons of Great Britain* (1743–52).

at first they could see no hope. The dread of death is thus greatly diminished, and the confidence or hope of escaping it is increased. They learn to expose themselves to danger with less reluctance. They are less anxious to get out of it, and less apt to lose their presence of mind while they are in it. It is this habitual contempt of danger and death that ennobles the profession of a soldier, and that gives it, in the natural judgment of mankind, a rank and dignity above that of any other profession. The skillful and successful exercise of this profession in the service of their country seems to have been the most distinguishing feature in the character of the favorite heroes of every age.

VI.iii.8 Great feats of war, even when undertaken against every principle of justice and carried on without any regard to humanity, sometimes interest us. They even win some degree of a certain kind of esteem for the quite worthless characters who conduct them. We are interested even in the exploits of the buccaneers. We read with a sort of esteem and admiration the history of the most worthless men, who, in pursuit of the most criminal purposes, endured greater hardships, overcame greater difficulties, and met greater dangers than perhaps any that the ordinary course of history records.[19]

VI.iii.9 The command of anger appears on many occasions no less generous and noble than the command of fear. The proper expression of just indignation makes up many of the most splendid and admired passages of eloquence, both ancient and modern. The *Philippics* of Demosthenes and the *Catilinarians* of Cicero owe their whole beauty to the noble propriety with which this passion is expressed. But this just indignation is nothing but anger restrained and properly tempered to what the impartial spectator can enter into. The blustering, noisy passion that goes beyond this is always odious and offensive. It makes us take the side, not of the angry man, but of the man he is angry

19 The buccaneers were the pirates and privateers who raided Spanish shipping and settlements in the Caribbean in the seventeenth century.

with.[20] The nobleness of pardoning appears on many occasions superior even to the most perfect propriety of resenting. Sometimes the offending party has made proper amends. Sometimes, even without any such amends, the public interest requires that the deadliest enemies unite to carry out some important duty. In such cases the man who can cast away all animosity, and act with trust and cordiality toward the person who had most grievously offended him, seems justly to deserve our highest admiration.

VI.iii.10 The command of anger, however, does not always appear in such splendid colors. Fear is the opposite of anger, and is often the motive that restrains it. In such cases the lowness of the motive takes away all the nobleness of the restraint. Anger prompts us to attack, and giving way to it sometimes seems to show a sort of courage and superiority to fear. Giving way to anger is sometimes a matter of vanity. Giving way to fear never is. Vain and weak men, among their inferiors or among those who dare not resist them, often put on a showy display of temper, and imagine that in doing so they show what is called spirit. A bully tells many stories of his own insolence that are not true, and imagines that this makes him, if not more amiable and respectable, at least more formidable to his audience. Modern manners favor the practice of dueling, and so may be said in some cases to encourage private revenge. They perhaps contribute a good deal, in modern times, to making the restraint of anger by fear seem still more contemptible than it otherwise might. There is always something dignified in the command of fear, whatever motive it rests on. It is not so with the command of anger. Unless it rests entirely on the sense of decency, of dignity, and of propriety, it is never perfectly agreeable.

VI.iii.11 To act according to the dictates of prudence, of justice, and of proper beneficence seems to have no great merit where there is no temptation to do otherwise. But consider what it is to

20 Demosthenes' *Philippics* were speeches against Philip II of Macedon (4th century BC); Cicero's *Catilinarians* were his speeches against the conspirator Catiline (63 BC).

act with cool deliberation in the midst of the greatest dangers and difficulties. Or to observe religiously the sacred rules of justice in spite of the greatest interests that might tempt us, and the greatest injuries that might provoke us, to violate them. Or never to let the benevolence of our temper be dampened or discouraged by the malice and ingratitude of the individuals toward whom we have exercised it. This is the character of the most exalted wisdom and virtue. Self-command is not only a great virtue in itself; all the other virtues seem to draw their chief luster from it.

VI.iii.12 The command of fear and the command of anger are always great and noble powers. When they are directed by justice and benevolence, they are not only great virtues in themselves but add to the splendor of those other virtues. They may, however, sometimes be directed by very different motives; and in that case, though still great and respectable, they may be extremely dangerous. The most fearless courage may be employed in the cause of the greatest injustice. Under great provocation, apparent calm and good humor may sometimes conceal the most determined and cruel resolve to take revenge. The strength of mind such concealment requires is always and necessarily tainted by the baseness of falsehood. It has nonetheless often been much admired by many people whose judgment is far from contemptible. The profound historian Davila often celebrates the dissimulation of Catherine de' Medici; the grave and conscientious Lord Clarendon celebrates that of Lord Digby, afterward Earl of Bristol; and the judicious Mr. Locke, that of Ashley, the first Earl of Shaftesbury. Even Cicero seems to regard this deceitful character, not indeed as of the highest dignity, but as not unsuited to a certain flexibility of manners. Such flexibility, he thinks, may nonetheless be, on the whole, both agreeable and respectable. He illustrates it by the characters of Homer's Ulysses, the Athenian Themistocles, the Spartan Lysander, and

the Roman Marcus Crassus.[21] This character of dark and deep dissimulation occurs most commonly in times of great public disorder, amid the violence of faction and civil war. When law has become largely powerless, and the most perfect innocence cannot by itself ensure safety, concern for self-defense obliges most men to resort to dexterity, to skill in handling people, and to an apparent accommodation with whatever party happens to prevail at the moment. This false character is also frequently accompanied by the coolest and most determined courage. To play it properly presupposes that courage, since death is usually the certain consequence of being found out. It may be employed equally well either to inflame or to calm the furious hatreds between opposing factions that make it necessary to adopt it. And though it may sometimes be useful, it is at least as likely to be extremely harmful.

VI.iii.13 The command of the less violent and turbulent passions seems much less liable to be abused for any harmful purpose. Temperance, decency, modesty, and moderation are always amiable, and can seldom be directed to any bad end. It is from the unremitting steadiness of these gentler exertions of self-command that the amiable virtue of chastity, and the respectable virtues of industry and frugality, draw all the sober luster that attends them. The conduct of all those who are content to walk the humble paths of private and peaceful life draws from the same principle the greater part of the beauty and grace that belong to it. This beauty and grace, though much less dazzling, is not always less pleasing than the beauty and grace that accompany the more splendid actions of the hero, the statesman, or the legislator.

21 Enrico Caterino Davila wrote a history of the French civil wars (1630); Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* treats the English Civil War; Locke served Shaftesbury as physician and secretary and wrote a memoir of him. Cicero's discussion is in *On Duties* (*De Officiis*) I.108–9.

EXCESS AND DEFECT IN THE PASSIONS

For each passion Smith asks whether its excess or its defect is more disagreeable.

VI.iii.14 After what has already been said in several different parts of this work about the nature of self-command, I judge it unnecessary to go into any further detail about these virtues. I shall only observe for now that the point of propriety—the degree of any passion that the impartial spectator approves of—is located differently in different passions. In some passions the excess is less disagreeable than the defect; and in such passions the point of propriety seems to stand high, nearer to the excess than to the defect. In other passions the defect is less disagreeable than the excess; and in such passions the point of propriety seems to stand low, nearer to the defect than to the excess. The former are the passions the spectator is most disposed to sympathize with; the latter, those he is least disposed to sympathize with. The former, too, are the passions whose immediate feeling or sensation is agreeable to the person principally concerned; the latter, those whose immediate feeling is disagreeable. It may be laid down as a general rule that the passions the spectator is most disposed to sympathize with—in which, for that reason, the point of propriety may be said to stand high—are those whose immediate feeling or sensation is more or less agreeable to the person principally concerned. On the contrary, the passions the spectator is least disposed to sympathize with—in which, for that reason, the point of propriety may be said to stand low—are those whose immediate feeling or sensation is more or less disagreeable, or even painful, to the person principally concerned. This general rule, so far as I have been able to observe, does not admit a single exception. A few examples will at once explain it sufficiently and demonstrate its truth.

VI.iii.15 The disposition to the affections that tend to unite men in society—to humanity, kindness, natural affection, friendship, esteem—may sometimes be excessive. Yet even the excess of this

disposition makes a man interesting to everybody. Though we blame it, we still regard it with compassion, and even with kindness, and never with dislike. We are more sorry about it than angry at it. To the person himself, indulging even such excessive affections is on many occasions not only agreeable but delicious. On some occasions, indeed, especially when they are directed, as too often happens, toward unworthy objects, it exposes him to much real and heartfelt distress. Even on such occasions, however, a well-disposed mind regards him with the most exquisite pity, and feels the highest indignation against those who make a show of despising him for his weakness and imprudence. The defect of this disposition, on the contrary—what is called hardness of heart—makes a man insensible to the feelings and distresses of other people, and makes other people equally insensible to his. By shutting him out from the friendship of all the world, it shuts him out from the best and most comforting of all social enjoyments.

VI.iii.16 The disposition to the affections that drive men apart, and that tend, as it were, to break the bonds of human society—the disposition to anger, hatred, envy, malice, revenge—is, on the contrary, much more apt to offend by its excess than by its defect. The excess makes a man wretched and miserable in his own mind, and an object of hatred, and sometimes even of horror, to other people. The defect is very seldom complained of. Yet it may be deficient. The lack of proper indignation is a most essential defect in the manly character, and on many occasions makes a man incapable of protecting either himself or his friends from insult and injustice. Even the principle whose excess and wrong direction make up the odious and detestable passion of envy may be deficient. Envy is the passion that views with malignant dislike the superiority of those who are really entitled to all the superiority they possess. Yet the man who, in matters of consequence, tamely lets other people who are entitled to no such superiority rise above him or get ahead of him is justly condemned as mean-spirited. This weakness is commonly rooted in indolence. Sometimes it is rooted in good

nature, in an aversion to opposition, to commotion, and to soliciting favors. Sometimes, too, it is rooted in a sort of ill-judged magnanimity, which imagines it can always go on despising the advantage it despises now, and therefore gives up so easily. Such weakness, however, is commonly followed by much regret and repentance. What had some appearance of magnanimity at the beginning frequently gives way in the end to a most malignant envy, and to a hatred of that superiority which those who have once attained it may often come to be really entitled to, by the very fact of having attained it. To live comfortably in the world, it is on every occasion as necessary to defend our dignity and rank as it is to defend our life or our property.

VI.iii.17 Our sensibility to personal danger and distress, like our sensibility to personal provocation, is much more likely to offend by excess than by defect. No character is more contemptible than a coward's. No character is more admired than that of the man who faces death without fear, and keeps his calm and presence of mind amid the most dreadful dangers. We esteem the man who bears pain, and even torture, with manliness and firmness; and we can have little regard for one who sinks under them and gives himself up to useless outcries and womanish lamentations. A fretful temper, which feels every little mishap with too much sensibility, makes a man miserable in himself and offensive to other people. A calm temper is different. It does not let its tranquillity be disturbed by the small injuries or the little disasters that belong to the ordinary course of human affairs. Amid the natural and moral evils that infest the world, it expects to suffer a little from both and is content to do so. Such a temper is a blessing to the man himself, and gives ease and security to all his companions.

VI.iii.18 Our sensibility to our own injuries and our own misfortunes, however, though generally too strong, may also be too weak. The man who feels little for his own misfortunes must always feel even less for those of other people, and be less inclined to relieve them. The man who has little resentment for the injuries done to himself must always have less for those

done to others, and be less inclined either to protect or to avenge them. A stupid insensibility to the events of human life necessarily extinguishes all that keen and earnest attention to the propriety of our own conduct which is the real essence of virtue. We can feel little anxiety about the propriety of our own actions when we are indifferent to the events that may follow from them. Consider the man who feels the full distress of the calamity that has befallen him, and the whole baseness of the injustice done to him, but who feels still more strongly what the dignity of his own character requires; who does not give himself over to the guidance of the undisciplined passions his situation might naturally inspire, but governs his whole behavior and conduct by those restrained and corrected emotions which the great inmate, the great demigod within the breast, prescribes and approves. He alone is the real man of virtue, the only real and proper object of love, respect, and admiration. Insensibility is far from being the same thing as that noble firmness, that exalted self-command, which is founded on the sense of dignity and propriety. In fact, in proportion as insensibility is present, the merit of self-command is in many cases entirely taken away.

VI.iii.19 A total lack of sensibility to personal injury, danger and distress would, in such situations, take away the whole merit of self-command. But that sensibility may very easily be too exquisite, and it often is. When the sense of propriety, the authority of the judge within the breast, can control this extreme sensibility, that authority must no doubt appear very noble and very great. But exercising it may be too exhausting; it may have too much to do. By a great effort, the individual may behave perfectly well. But the contest between the two principles, the warfare within the breast, may be too violent to be at all consistent with inner tranquillity and happiness. Suppose Nature has endowed a wise man with this too exquisite sensibility, and early education and proper exercise have not sufficiently blunted and hardened his too lively feelings. He will avoid, as far as duty and propriety allow, the situations for which he is not perfectly suited. The man whose feeble and del-

icate constitution makes him too sensitive to pain, to hardship, and to every kind of bodily distress, should not recklessly take up the profession of a soldier. The man too sensitive to injury should not rashly enter the contests of faction. Even if the sense of propriety is strong enough to command all those sensibilities, the composure of the mind must always be disturbed in the struggle. In this disorder the judgment cannot always keep its ordinary sharpness and precision. Though he may always mean to act properly, he may often act rashly and imprudently, in a way he will be ashamed of for the rest of his life. A certain fearlessness, a certain firmness of nerves and hardiness of constitution, whether natural or acquired, are undoubtedly the best preparation for all the great exertions of self-command.

VI.iii.20 War and faction are certainly the best schools for training every man to this hardiness and firmness of temper, and the best remedies for curing him of the opposite weaknesses. Yet if the day of trial should happen to come before he has fully learned his lesson, before the remedy has had time to take its proper effect, the consequences might not be pleasant.

VI.iii.21 Our sensibility to the pleasures, amusements and enjoyments of human life may offend in the same way, either by excess or by defect. Of the two, however, the excess seems less disagreeable than the defect. Both to the spectator and to the person principally concerned, a strong propensity to joy is certainly more pleasing than a dull insensibility to things that amuse and divert. We are charmed by the gaiety of youth, and even by the playfulness of childhood. But we soon grow weary of the flat and tasteless gravity that too often accompanies old age. Sometimes, to be sure, this propensity is not restrained by the sense of propriety. It is unsuited to the time or the place, or to the age or situation of the person, or he neglects his interest or his duty to indulge it. Then it is justly blamed as excessive, and as harmful both to the individual and to society. In most such cases, however, what is chiefly at fault is not so much the strength of the propensity to joy as the weakness of the sense of propriety and duty. A young man who has no taste for the diver-

sions and amusements that are natural and suitable to his age, who talks of nothing but his book or his business, is disliked as stiff and pedantic. We give him no credit for abstaining even from improper indulgences, since he seems to have so little inclination for them.

TWO STANDARDS OF SELF-JUDGMENT

We judge ourselves against ideal perfection and against ordinary attainment; the wise man looks to the first.

VI.iii.22 The principle of self-estimation may be too high, and it may also be too low. It is so very pleasant to think highly of ourselves, and so very unpleasant to think meanly of ourselves, that to the person himself some degree of excess must surely be much less disagreeable than any degree of defect. But to the impartial spectator, it may perhaps be thought, things must look quite different: to him the defect must always be less disagreeable than the excess. And in our companions, no doubt, we complain of the excess far more often than of the defect. When they presume on us, or put themselves ahead of us, their self-estimation mortifies our own. Our own pride and vanity prompt us to accuse them of pride and vanity, and we stop being impartial spectators of their conduct. When the same companions, however, let some other man assume a superiority over them that does not belong to him, we not only blame them but often despise them as mean-spirited. Suppose, on the contrary, that among other people they push themselves a little further forward, and scramble up to an elevation out of proportion, as we think, to their merit. We may not perfectly approve of their conduct, but on the whole we are often amused by it. And where there is no envy involved, we are almost always much less displeased with them than we would have been if they had let themselves sink below their proper station.

VI.iii.23 In estimating our own merit, in judging our own character and conduct, there are two different standards to which we naturally compare them. One is the idea of exact propriety and

perfection, so far as each of us is capable of grasping that idea. The other is the degree of approximation to this idea that is commonly reached in the world, and that most of our friends and companions, our rivals and competitors, may actually have arrived at. We very seldom (I am inclined to think, never) try to judge ourselves without paying more or less attention to both these standards. But the attention of different men, and even of the same man at different times, is often very unequally divided between them. Sometimes it is directed principally toward the one, and sometimes toward the other.

VI.iii.24 So far as our attention is directed toward the first standard, the wisest and best of us can see nothing in his own character and conduct but weakness and imperfection. He can find no ground for arrogance and presumption, but a great deal for humility, regret and repentance. So far as our attention is directed toward the second, we may be affected in either way, and feel ourselves either really above or really below the standard to which we compare ourselves.

VI.iii.25 The wise and virtuous man directs his principal attention to the first standard, the idea of exact propriety and perfection. In every man's mind there exists an idea of this kind, gradually formed from his observations on the character and conduct both of himself and of other people. It is the slow, gradual and progressive work of the great demigod within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of conduct. In every man this idea is drawn more or less accurately: its coloring is more or less true, its outlines more or less exactly designed. That depends on the delicacy and acuteness of the sensibility with which those observations were made, and on the care and attention spent in making them. In the wise and virtuous man they have been made with the most acute and delicate sensibility, and with the utmost care and attention. Every day some feature is improved; every day some blemish is corrected. He has studied this idea more than other people do. He grasps it more distinctly, he has formed a far more correct image of it, and he is far more deeply in love with its exquisite and divine beauty. He tries as well as

he can to make his own character resemble this archetype of perfection. But he is imitating the work of a divine artist, which can never be equaled. He feels how imperfectly all his best efforts succeed, and sees with grief and distress in how many features the mortal copy falls short of the immortal original. He remembers with concern and humiliation how often, from lack of attention, lack of judgment, or lack of temper, he has violated the exact rules of perfect propriety, both in words and in actions, both in conduct and in conversation. To that extent he has departed from the model by which he wished to fashion his own character and conduct. When he turns his attention to the second standard, to be sure, to the degree of excellence his friends and acquaintances have commonly reached, he may be aware of his own superiority. But since his principal attention is always directed to the first standard, he is necessarily much more humbled by the one comparison than he can ever be elevated by the other. He is never so elated as to look down with insolence even on those who are really below him. He feels his own imperfection so well, and knows so well how hard it was to reach his own distant approximation to rectitude, that he cannot regard with contempt the still greater imperfection of other people. Far from gloating over their inferiority, he views it with the most indulgent compassion, and by his advice as well as his example he is always willing to help them advance further. They may happen to be superior to him in some particular qualification (for who is so perfect as not to have many superiors in many different qualifications?). If so, far from envying their superiority, he, who knows how hard it is to excel, esteems and honors their excellence, and never fails to give it the full measure of applause it deserves. In short, his whole mind is deeply impressed, and his whole behavior and bearing distinctly stamped, with the character of real modesty: a very moderate estimate of his own merit and, at the same time, a full sense of the merit of other people.

VI.iii.26 In all the liberal and ingenious arts—in painting, poetry, music, eloquence, philosophy—the great artist always feels the

real imperfection of his own best works. He is more aware than anyone how far they fall short of that ideal perfection of which he has formed some conception, which he imitates as well as he can, but which he despairs of ever equaling. Only the inferior artist is ever perfectly satisfied with his own performances. He has little conception of this ideal perfection, having given it little thought. It is chiefly with the works of other artists, perhaps of a still lower order, that he condescends to compare his own. Boileau, the great French poet (in some of his works perhaps not inferior to the greatest poet of the same kind, ancient or modern), used to say that no great man was ever completely satisfied with his own works. His acquaintance Santeuil, a writer of Latin verses, had the weakness to imagine himself a poet because of that schoolboy accomplishment. He assured Boileau that he himself was always completely satisfied with his own works. Boileau replied, perhaps with a sly ambiguity, that he certainly was the only great man who ever was.[22] In judging his own works, Boileau compared them with the standard of ideal perfection. In his own particular branch of the poetic art he had, I presume, meditated on that standard as deeply, and conceived it as distinctly, as it is possible for a human being to conceive it. Santeuil, in judging his own works, compared them, I suppose, chiefly with those of the other Latin poets of his own time, and to most of those he was certainly very far from inferior. But to sustain the conduct and conversation of a whole life, and finish them off, if I may put it that way, into some resemblance of this ideal perfection, is surely much more difficult than to bring any product of any of the ingenious arts to an equal resemblance. The artist sits down to his work undisturbed, at leisure, in full possession and command of all his skill, experience and knowledge. The wise man must maintain the propriety of his conduct in health and in sickness, in success and in disappointment, in the hour of fatigue and drowsy indol-

22 Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636–1711), French poet and critic, author of satires, epistles and *L'Art poétique*. Jean-Baptiste Santeul or Santeuil (1630–1697) was a celebrated writer of Latin hymns and verse.

ence as well as in the hour of the most alert attention. The most sudden and unexpected assaults of difficulty and distress must never take him by surprise. The injustice of other people must never provoke him to injustice. The violence of faction must never confuse him. All the hardships and dangers of war must never either dishearten or appall him.

EXCESSIVE SELF-ESTIMATION

Excessive self-admiration often accompanies great success, from Alexander and Caesar to modern generals.

VI.iii.27 Some people, in estimating their own merit and judging their own character and conduct, direct by far the greater part of their attention to the second standard: the ordinary degree of excellence that other people commonly attain. Among them are some who really and justly feel themselves very much above it, and who, in the eyes of every intelligent and impartial spectator, are acknowledged to be so. Their attention, however, is always directed chiefly to the standard of ordinary perfection, not of ideal perfection. So they have little sense of their own weaknesses and imperfections. They have little modesty. They are often assuming, arrogant, and presumptuous, great admirers of themselves and great despisers of other people. Their characters are in general much less correct than that of the man of real and modest virtue, and their merit much inferior. Yet their excessive presumption, founded on their own excessive self-admiration, dazzles the multitude, and often imposes even on those who are far superior to the multitude. The frequent, and often astonishing, success of the most ignorant quacks and impostors, both civil and religious, is proof enough of how easily the multitude are taken in by the most extravagant and groundless pretensions. But suppose those pretensions are backed by a very high degree of real and solid merit. Suppose they are displayed with all the splendor that ostentation can give them, supported by high rank and great power, often exerted with success, and for that reason greeted with the loud acclamations of the multitude.

Then even the man of sober judgment often gives himself up to the general admiration. The very noise of those foolish acclamations often helps to confuse his understanding. While he sees those great men only from a certain distance, he is often inclined to worship them with a sincere admiration, greater even than that with which they appear to worship themselves. When envy does not enter into it, we all take pleasure in admiring. For that reason we are naturally disposed, in our own imaginations, to make complete and perfect in every respect those characters that are, in many respects, so very worthy of admiration. The wise men who are on familiar terms with those great men perhaps understand their excessive self-admiration well, and even see through it with some degree of derision. They secretly smile at those lofty pretensions, which people at a distance often regard with reverence, almost with adoration. Such, however, in every age, have been most of the men who have won for themselves the noisiest fame and the widest reputation. That fame and reputation, too, have often come down to the remotest posterity.

VI.iii.28 Great success in the world, and great authority over the sentiments and opinions of mankind, have very seldom been acquired without some degree of this excessive self-admiration. Consider the most splendid characters: the men who have performed the most illustrious actions and brought about the greatest revolutions, both in the situations and in the opinions of mankind; the most successful warriors, the greatest statesmen and legislators, the eloquent founders and leaders of the most numerous and most successful sects and parties. Many of them have been distinguished no more for their very great merit than for a degree of presumption and self-admiration wholly out of proportion even to that very great merit. This presumption was perhaps necessary. It prompted them to undertakings a more sober mind would never have thought of, and it also commanded the submission and obedience of the followers who supported them in those undertakings. When it was crowned with success, accordingly, this presumption has often

led them into a vanity bordering on insanity and folly. Alexander the Great seems not only to have wished other people to think him a god, but to have been at least very much inclined to imagine himself one. On his deathbed, the least godlike of all situations, he asked his friends that his old mother Olympia might also have the honor of being added to the respectable list of deities into which he himself had long before been entered. Socrates lived amid the respectful admiration of his followers and disciples and the universal applause of the public. The oracle, which had probably followed the voice of that applause, had pronounced him the wisest of men. His great wisdom did not allow him to imagine himself a god. But it was not great enough to keep him from imagining that he received secret and frequent intimations from some invisible and divine being.[23] Caesar's sound head was not so perfectly sound as to keep him from being much pleased with his divine descent from the goddess Venus. Nor did it keep him from receiving the Roman Senate without rising from his seat, in front of the temple of this supposed great-grandmother, when that illustrious body came to present him with decrees conferring on him the most extravagant honors. This insolence, along with some other acts of an almost childish vanity, was hardly to be expected from an understanding at once so very sharp and so wide-ranging. By inflaming the public's jealousy, it seems to have emboldened his assassins and hastened the carrying out of their conspiracy.[24] The religion and manners of modern times give our great men little encouragement to imagine themselves gods, or even prophets. Yet success, joined to great popular favor, has often so turned the heads of the greatest of them that they ascribe to themselves an importance and an ability far beyond what they really had. By this presumption they throw themselves into many rash and sometimes ruinous adventures. One trait is

23 Olympia: Olympias, Alexander's mother. The oracle is that of Delphi; the "intimations" are Socrates' divine sign, or daimonion.

24 The temple of Venus Genetrix in Caesar's Forum; the incident took place shortly before his assassination in 44 BC.

almost unique to the great Duke of Marlborough. He enjoyed ten years of success so uninterrupted and so splendid that scarcely any other general could boast of the like. Yet that success never led him into a single rash action, and scarcely into a single rash word or expression.[25] The same temperate coolness and self-command cannot, I think, be ascribed to any other great warrior of recent times: not to Prince Eugene, not to the late King of Prussia, not to the great Prince of Condé, not even to Gustavus Adolphus. Turenne seems to have come closest to it. But several different episodes in his life show clearly enough that in him it was by no means as perfect as in the great Duke of Marlborough.[26]

VI.iii.29 In the humble projects of private life, as well as in the ambitious and proud pursuits of high stations, great abilities and successful enterprise at the start have often encouraged people to take on undertakings that necessarily ended in bankruptcy and ruin.

VI.iii.30 Every impartial spectator feels esteem and admiration for the real merit of those spirited, magnanimous, and high-minded people. Because that sentiment is just and well founded, it is also steady and permanent, and wholly independent of their good or bad fortune. It is different with the admiration he tends to feel for their excessive self-estimation and presumption. While they are successful, indeed, he is often completely conquered and overwhelmed by them. Success hides from his eyes not only the great imprudence of their enterprises but often their great injustice. Far from blaming this defective part of their character, he often views it with the most enthusiastic admiration. When they are unlucky, however, things change their colors and their names. What was before heroic magnanimity takes back its proper name of extravagant rashness and folly. The blackness of their greed and injustice, previously hid-

25 John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough (1650–1722), commander of the allied armies in the War of the Spanish Succession.

26 Prince Eugene of Savoy; Frederick the Great (d. 1786); Louis II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé; Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden; Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, Vicomte de Turenne.

den under the splendor of prosperity, comes fully into view and blots out the whole luster of their enterprise. Had Caesar lost the battle of Pharsalia instead of winning it, his character would today rank only a little above that of Catiline. The weakest person would have viewed his enterprise against the laws of his country in blacker colors than perhaps even Cato ever viewed it at the time, with all the animosity of a party man.[27] His real merit would all have been acknowledged: the soundness of his taste, the simplicity and elegance of his writings, the propriety of his eloquence, his skill in war, his resourcefulness in distress, his cool and steady judgment in danger, his faithful attachment to his friends, his unexampled generosity to his enemies. In the same way, the real merit of Catiline, who had many great qualities, is acknowledged today. But the insolence and injustice of Caesar's all-grasping ambition would have darkened and extinguished the glory of all that real merit. In this respect, as in some others already mentioned, fortune has great influence over the moral sentiments of mankind. As she is favorable or adverse, she can make the same character the object either of general love and admiration or of universal hatred and contempt. This great disorder in our moral sentiments is by no means without its utility, however; and here, as on many other occasions, we may admire the wisdom of God even in the weakness and folly of man. Our admiration of success rests on the same principle as our respect for wealth and greatness. It is just as necessary for establishing the distinction of ranks and the order of society. This admiration of success teaches us to submit more easily to whatever superiors the course of human affairs may assign to us. It teaches us to regard with reverence, and sometimes even with a sort of respectful affection, the fortunate violence we are no longer able to resist. That includes the violence of such splendid characters as a Caesar or an Alexander, and often also that of the most brutal and fierce barbarians, an

27 Pharsalia: Pharsalus in Thessaly, where Caesar defeated Pompey in 48 BC. Catiline led a failed conspiracy against the Roman Republic in 63 BC; Cato the Younger was Caesar's firmest republican opponent.

Attila, a Genghis, or a Tamerlane. The great mob of mankind are naturally disposed to look up to all such mighty conquerors with wonder, though no doubt with a very weak and foolish admiration. Yet this admiration teaches them to accept with less reluctance the government that an irresistible force imposes on them, and from which no reluctance could set them free.

VI.iii.31 In prosperity, then, the man of excessive self-estimation may sometimes appear to have some advantage over the man of correct and modest virtue. The applause of the multitude, and of those who see them both only from a distance, is often much louder for the one than it ever is for the other. Yet, all things fairly reckoned, the real balance of advantage is perhaps in every case greatly in favor of the latter and against the former. Consider the man who neither ascribes to himself, nor wishes others to ascribe to him, any merit except what really belongs to him. He fears no humiliation and dreads no exposure. He rests content and secure on the genuine truth and solidity of his own character. His admirers may be neither very numerous nor very loud in their applause. But the wisest man who sees him most closely and knows him best admires him most. To a truly wise man, the judicious and well-weighed approbation of a single wise man gives more heartfelt satisfaction than all the noisy applause of ten thousand ignorant, though enthusiastic, admirers. He may say what Parmenides said. Parmenides was reading a philosophical discourse before a public assembly at Athens. He noticed that the whole company except Plato had left him, but he read on nonetheless, and said that Plato alone was audience enough for him.[28]

VI.iii.32 It is different with the man of excessive self-estimation. The wise men who see him most closely admire him least. Amid the intoxication of prosperity, their sober and just esteem falls so far short of his own extravagant self-admiration that he regards it as mere malice and envy. He suspects his best friends. Their company becomes offensive to him. He drives them from

28 Cicero (*Brutus* 191) tells this story of the poet Antimachus, not of Parmenides; Smith seems to have misremembered the name.

his presence. He often repays their services not only with ingratitude but with cruelty and injustice. He hands his confidence over to flatterers and traitors who pretend to idolize his vanity and presumption; and a character that at the beginning was on the whole both amiable and respectable, though defective in some respects, becomes contemptible and odious in the end. Amid the intoxication of prosperity, Alexander killed Cleitus for having preferred the exploits of his father Philip to his own. He put Callisthenes to death under torture for having refused to worship him in the Persian manner;[29] and he murdered his father's great friend, the venerable Parmenio. Before that, on the most groundless suspicions, he had sent the old man's only remaining son first to torture and then to the scaffold; all Parmenio's other sons had already died in Alexander's own service. This was the Parmenio of whom Philip used to say that the Athenians were very lucky, since they could find ten generals every year, while he himself in his whole life had never been able to find more than one, Parmenio.[30] Philip relied at all times, with confidence and security, on the vigilance and attention of this Parmenio. In his hours of merriment and festivity he used to say, "Let us drink, my friends; we may do it safely, for Parmenio never drinks." It was this same Parmenio of whom it had been said that with his presence and counsel Alexander had won all his victories, and without them he had never won a single one. Alexander left his humble, admiring, and flattering friends behind him in power and authority, and they divided his empire among themselves. Having thus robbed his family and kin of their inheritance, they put every surviving member of that family to death, one after another, whether male or female.

VI.iii.33 We often not only pardon but thoroughly enter into and sympathize with the excessive self-estimation of those splendid characters in whom we observe a great and distinguished

29 Cleitus (Smith's "Clytus") was killed by Alexander at a banquet in 328 BC. The historian Callisthenes had refused to perform proskynesis, the Persian prostration before the king.

30 The son was Philotas, executed in 330 BC; Parmenio was killed on Alexander's orders soon after.

superiority above the common level of mankind. We call them spirited, magnanimous, and high-minded. All these words carry in their meaning a considerable degree of praise and admiration. But we cannot enter into and sympathize with the excessive self-estimation of characters in whom we can discern no such distinguished superiority. It disgusts and revolts us, and only with some difficulty can we either pardon it or put up with it. We call it pride or vanity. Of these two words the second always, and the first for the most part, carries in its meaning a considerable degree of blame.

PRIDE AND VANITY

Smith contrasts the proud man and the vain man and the different faults of each.

VI.iii.34 These two vices are alike in some respects, since both are forms of excessive self-estimation. In many respects, however, they are very different from each other.

VI.iii.35 The proud man is sincere. At the bottom of his heart he is convinced of his own superiority, though it may sometimes be hard to guess what that conviction rests on. He wants you to see him in no other light than the one in which he really sees himself when he puts himself in your situation. He asks no more of you than what he thinks is justice. If you seem not to respect him as he respects himself, he is more offended than mortified, and he feels the same indignant resentment as if he had suffered a real injury. Even then, however, he does not deign to explain the grounds of his claims. He disdains to court your esteem. He even affects to despise it. He tries to keep up his assumed station not so much by making you aware of his superiority as by making you aware of your own lowness. He seems to want not so much to raise your esteem for him as to humble your esteem for yourself.

VI.iii.36 The vain man is not sincere, and at the bottom of his heart he is very seldom convinced of the superiority he wants you to ascribe to him. He wants you to see him in far more

splendid colors than those in which he can really see himself when he puts himself in your situation and supposes you to know all that he knows. So when you seem to see him in different colors, perhaps in his true colors, he is much more mortified than offended. He takes every opportunity of displaying the grounds of his claim to the character he wants you to ascribe to him. He does so partly by the most ostentatious and unnecessary display of the good qualities and accomplishments he really possesses in some tolerable degree. Sometimes he does it even by false claims to those he possesses in no degree, or in so very slight a degree that he may fairly be said to possess them in no degree at all. Far from despising your esteem, he courts it with the most anxious diligence. Far from wanting to humble your self-estimation, he is happy to cherish it, in the hope that you will cherish his in return. He flatters in order to be flattered. He makes a study of pleasing. He tries to bribe you into a good opinion of him by politeness and obligingness, and sometimes even by real and substantial good turns, though these are often displayed, perhaps, with unnecessary ostentation.

VI.iii.37 The vain man sees the respect that is paid to rank and wealth, and he wants to usurp this respect as well as the respect paid to talents and virtues. Accordingly his dress, his carriage and servants, and his way of living all announce a higher rank and a greater fortune than really belong to him. To keep up this foolish deception for a few years at the start of his life, he often reduces himself to poverty and distress long before the end of it.[31] As long as he can keep up his spending, however, his vanity delights in seeing himself not in the light in which you would see him if you knew all that he knows, but in the light in which, as he imagines, his own skill has actually led you to see him. Of all the illusions of vanity, this is perhaps the most common. Obscure strangers who visit foreign countries most often try it, and so do those who come from a remote province to visit the capital of their own country for a short time. The attempt is

31 "Carriage and servants" renders Smith's "equipage," the coach, horses, and attendants that displayed a person's station.

always very foolish and most unworthy of a sensible man. On such occasions, however, the folly may not be quite as great as on most others. If their stay is short, they may escape any shameful exposure. After indulging their vanity for a few months or a few years, they may go back home and make up for the waste of their past extravagance by thrift in the future.

VI.iii.38 The proud man can very seldom be accused of this folly. His sense of his own dignity makes him careful to keep his independence. When his fortune happens not to be large, he wants to live decently, but he also takes care to be frugal and attentive in all his spending. The ostentatious spending of the vain man is highly offensive to him. It outshines, perhaps, his own. It provokes his indignation as an insolent assumption of a rank that is by no means due, and he never speaks of it without heaping on it the harshest and severest reproaches.

VI.iii.39 The proud man does not always feel at ease in the company of his equals, and still less in that of his superiors. He cannot lay aside his lofty pretensions, yet the looks and conversation of such company overawe him so much that he dares not display them. So he falls back on humbler company. He has little respect for it, he would not willingly choose it, and it is by no means agreeable to him: it is the company of his inferiors, his flatterers, and his dependents. He seldom visits his superiors. If he does, it is more to show that he is entitled to live in such company than for any real satisfaction he finds in it. It is as Lord Clarendon says of the Earl of Arundel: he sometimes went to court because only there could he find a greater man than himself, but he went very seldom because there he found a greater man than himself.[32]

VI.iii.40 It is quite otherwise with the vain man. He courts the company of his superiors as much as the proud man shuns it. Their splendor, he seems to think, reflects splendor on those who are often around them. He haunts the courts of kings and

32 Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon (1609–1674), wrote of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel (1585–1646), in his *History of the Rebellion*. The greater man at court was the king.

the morning receptions of ministers, and gives himself the air of a candidate for fortune and advancement. In reality he has the far more precious happiness of not being one, if only he knew how to enjoy it. He loves to be admitted to the tables of the great, and he loves still more to exaggerate to other people the familiarity with which he is honored there.[33] He associates himself as much as he can with fashionable people, with those who are supposed to direct public opinion, with the witty, the learned, and the popular. He avoids the company of his best friends whenever the very uncertain current of public favor happens to run against them in any way. With the people he wants to recommend himself to, he is not always very scrupulous about the means he uses. These include unnecessary ostentation, groundless claims, constant agreement, and frequent flattery. For the most part it is a pleasant and lively flattery, and very seldom the gross and fawning flattery of a parasite. The proud man, on the contrary, never flatters, and he is often scarcely civil to anybody.

VI.iii.41 Yet for all its groundless pretensions, vanity is almost always a lively and cheerful passion, and very often a good-natured one. Pride is always grave, sullen, and severe. Even the falsehoods of the vain man are all innocent falsehoods, meant to raise himself, not to lower other people. To do the proud man justice, he very seldom stoops to the baseness of falsehood. When he does, however, his falsehoods are by no means so innocent. They are all mischievous and meant to lower other people. He is full of indignation at the superiority that is granted to them, which he thinks unjust. He views them with malice and envy. When he talks of them, he often tries as far as he can to diminish and belittle whatever grounds their superiority is supposed to rest on. He seldom invents stories to their disadvantage himself. Yet whatever such stories circulate, he often takes pleasure in believing them, is by no means unwilling to repeat them, and sometimes even repeats them with some exaggera-

33 "Morning receptions" renders "levees," the formal gatherings at which great men received visitors and petitioners.

tion. The worst falsehoods of vanity are all what we call white lies. Those of pride, whenever it condescends to falsehood, are all of the opposite color.

VI.iii.42 Our dislike of pride and vanity generally inclines us to rank the people we accuse of those vices below the common level rather than above it. In this judgment, however, I think we are most often wrong. Both the proud man and the vain man are often (perhaps for the most part) a good deal above it, though not nearly so far as the proud man really thinks himself, or as the vain man wants you to think him. If we compare them with their own pretensions, they may appear fair objects of contempt. But when we compare them with what most of their rivals and competitors really are, they may appear quite otherwise, and very much above the common level. Where there is this real superiority, pride is often accompanied by many respectable virtues: truthfulness, integrity, a high sense of honor, warm and steady friendship, and the most inflexible firmness and resolution. Vanity is accompanied by many amiable ones: humanity, politeness, a desire to oblige in all small matters, and sometimes a real generosity in great ones. Vanity, however, often wants to display that generosity in the most splendid colors it can. In the last century the French were accused of vanity by their rivals and enemies, and the Spaniards of pride. Foreign nations were inclined to consider the French the more amiable people and the Spaniards the more respectable.[34]

VI.iii.43 The words "vain" and "vanity" are never taken in a good sense. When we are talking about a man in good humor, we sometimes say that he is the better for his vanity, or that his vanity is more amusing than offensive. But we still regard it as a weakness and something ridiculous in his character.

VI.iii.44 The words "proud" and "pride," on the contrary, are sometimes taken in a good sense. We often say of a man that he is too proud, or has too much noble pride, ever to let himself do a base thing. In this case pride is confused with magnanimity.

34 Smith means the seventeenth century.

Aristotle, a philosopher who certainly knew the world, drew the character of the magnanimous man. He painted him with many features that in the last two centuries were commonly ascribed to the Spanish character. He made him deliberate in all his resolutions and slow, even tardy, in all his actions. His voice was deep, his speech measured, and his step and movements slow.[35] He seemed indolent and even lazy. He was not at all inclined to bustle about small matters, but he acted with the most determined and vigorous resolution on all great and illustrious occasions. He was not a lover of danger, nor eager to expose himself to small dangers, but only to great ones. When he did expose himself to danger, he was utterly careless of his life.

VI.iii.45 The proud man is usually too well satisfied with himself to think that his character needs any improvement. The man who feels himself all-perfect quite naturally despises all further improvement. His self-sufficiency and absurd conceit of his own superiority usually stay with him from his youth to his most advanced age. He dies, as Hamlet says, with all his sins upon his head, "unanointed, unanealed."[36]

VI.iii.46 It is often quite otherwise with the vain man. People may desire the esteem and admiration of others for qualities and talents that are the natural and proper objects of esteem and admiration. When they do, that desire is the real love of true glory. If it is not the very best passion of human nature, it is certainly one of the best. Vanity is very often no more than an attempt to usurp that glory prematurely, before it is due. Your son may be nothing but a conceited fop while he is under twenty-five. Do not on that account despair of his becoming, before he is forty, a very wise and worthy man. He may become truly accomplished in all the talents and virtues to which at present he is only an ostentatious and empty pretender. The great secret of education is to direct vanity to proper objects. Never let him value himself on trivial accomplishments. But do

35 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IV.3, on the "great-souled" man.
36 *Hamlet* I.v. The words are actually spoken by the Ghost of Hamlet's father. "Unanealed" (Shakespeare's "unaneled") means without the last rites.

not always discourage his claims to those that are of real importance. He would not lay claim to them if he did not earnestly desire to possess them. Encourage this desire, and give him every means to make the acquisition easier. Do not take too much offense if he sometimes puts on the air of having attained it a little before the time.

VI.iii.47 Such, I say, are the distinguishing features of pride and vanity when each of them acts according to its own proper character. But the proud man is often vain, and the vain man is often proud. Nothing could be more natural than this. The man who thinks far more highly of himself than he deserves will naturally wish other people to think still more highly of him. And the man who wishes other people to think more highly of him than he thinks of himself will naturally, at the same time, think far more highly of himself than he deserves. Since these two vices are often blended in the same character, the features of both are necessarily mixed together. We sometimes find the superficial and impertinent ostentation of vanity joined to the most malicious and mocking insolence of pride. For that reason we are sometimes at a loss how to classify a particular character, and whether to place it among the proud or among the vain.

UNDERRATING ONESELF

Those who underrate themselves suffer most, and some excess of self-esteem is less disagreeable.

VI.iii.48 Men whose merit is well above the common level sometimes underrate themselves, just as they sometimes overrate themselves. Such characters, though not very dignified, are often far from disagreeable in private society. His companions all feel very much at ease in the company of a man so perfectly modest and unassuming. Unless those companions have both more discernment and more generosity than is ordinary, however, they seldom have much respect for him, though they may have some kindness for him. And the warmth of their kindness is very seldom enough to make up for the coldness of their

respect. People of no more than ordinary discernment never rate anyone higher than he appears to rate himself. He seems doubtful himself, they say, whether he is entirely fit for such a position or such an office. So they immediately give the preference to some impudent blockhead who has no doubt at all about his own qualifications. Even if they have discernment, if they lack generosity they never fail to take advantage of his simplicity, and to assume over him an impertinent superiority to which they are in no way entitled. His good nature may enable him to bear this for some time. But at last he grows weary, and often only when it is too late—when the rank he ought to have taken is lost beyond recovery, and has been usurped, because of his own backwardness, by some of his more forward though far less meritorious companions. A man of this character must have been very lucky in his early choice of companions if, as he goes through the world, he always meets with fair justice, even from those whom his own past kindness might give him some reason to consider his best friends. A youth that is too unassuming and too unambitious is often followed by an insignificant, complaining, and discontented old age.

VI.iii.49 Those unfortunate persons whom nature has formed a good deal below the common level sometimes seem to rate themselves even further below it than they really are. This humility sometimes appears to sink them into intellectual disability. Anyone who has taken the trouble to observe people with intellectual disabilities attentively will find that in many of them the faculties of the understanding are by no means weaker than in several other people who, though acknowledged to be dull and stupid, are not considered intellectually disabled by anybody. Many people with intellectual disabilities, with no more than an ordinary education, have been taught to read, write, and do sums tolerably well. Many persons who have never been considered intellectually disabled have never managed to acquire any one of those three accomplishments to any tolerable degree. This is despite the most careful education, and despite their having had spirit enough, later in life, to try to

learn what their early education had not taught them. By an instinct of pride, however, they put themselves on a level with their equals in age and situation, and with courage and firmness they keep their proper place among their companions. By an opposite instinct, the person with an intellectual disability feels himself below every company into which you can introduce him. Ill-treatment, to which he is extremely exposed, can throw him into the most violent fits of rage and fury. But no good treatment, no kindness or indulgence, can ever raise him to the point of talking with you as your equal. If you can bring him to talk with you at all, however, you will often find his answers quite pertinent, and even sensible. But they are always stamped with a distinct awareness of his own great inferiority. He seems to shrink and, as it were, to withdraw from your gaze and your conversation. When he puts himself in your situation, he seems to feel that, however graciously you appear to come down to his level, you cannot help regarding him as immensely below you. Some people with intellectual disabilities—perhaps most of them—seem to be so chiefly or entirely because of a certain numbness or sluggishness in the faculties of the understanding. But there are others in whom those faculties do not seem any more sluggish or numb than in many other people who are not considered intellectually disabled. Yet the instinct of pride that is needed to hold people up on an equal footing with their fellows seems to be entirely lacking in the former, and not in the latter.

VI.iii.50 The degree of self-estimation, therefore, that contributes most to the happiness and contentment of the person himself seems likewise to be the most agreeable to the impartial spectator. The man who esteems himself as he ought, and no more than he ought, seldom fails to obtain from other people all the esteem that he himself thinks due. He desires no more than is due to him, and he rests on it with complete satisfaction.

VI.iii.51 The proud man and the vain man, on the contrary, are constantly dissatisfied. The one is tormented with indignation at what he thinks is the unjust superiority of other people. The

other lives in continual dread of the shame that he foresees would follow the discovery of his groundless pretensions. Even the man of real magnanimity has his extravagant pretensions. When they are supported by splendid abilities and virtues, and above all by good fortune, they impose on the multitude, whose applause he cares little about. But they do not impose on those wise men whose approval is the only kind he can value, and whose esteem he is most anxious to win. He feels that they see through his excessive presumption, and suspects that they despise it. And he often suffers the cruel misfortune of becoming the enemy—first jealous and secret, at last open, furious, and vindictive—of the very persons whose friendship it would have given him the greatest happiness to enjoy in unsuspicious security.

VI.iii.52 Our dislike of the proud and the vain often inclines us to rank them below rather than above their proper station. Yet unless we are provoked by some particular and personal impertinence, we very seldom venture to treat them badly. In ordinary cases, for our own ease, we try rather to go along with their folly, and to accommodate ourselves to it as well as we can. But to the man who underrates himself—unless we have both more discernment and more generosity than most men have—we seldom fail to do at least all the injustice he does to himself, and often a great deal more. He is not only more unhappy in his own feelings than either the proud man or the vain man, but he is also much more exposed to every kind of ill-treatment from other people. In almost all cases it is better to be a little too proud than to be too humble in any respect. In the sentiment of self-estimation, some degree of excess seems less disagreeable than any degree of deficiency, both to the person himself and to the impartial spectator.

VI.iii.53 In this, therefore, as in every other emotion, passion, and habit, the degree that is most agreeable to the impartial spectator is likewise most agreeable to the person himself. And whichever of the two, the excess or the deficiency, is less offens-

ive to the former is correspondingly less disagreeable to the latter.

CONCLUSION OF THE SIXTH PART

Prudence, justice and beneficence please by their effects; self-command pleases by its propriety.

VI.concl.1 Concern for our own happiness recommends to us the virtue of prudence. Concern for the happiness of other people recommends the virtues of justice and beneficence: the one restrains us from hurting that happiness, the other prompts us to promote it. Leaving aside any regard to what the sentiments of other people are, or ought to be, or would be under a certain condition, the first of these three virtues is originally recommended to us by our selfish affections, and the other two by our benevolent affections. Regard to the sentiments of other people, however, comes in afterwards both to enforce and to direct the practice of all these virtues. No man, through the whole course of his life or through any considerable part of it, ever walked steadily and consistently in the paths of prudence, of justice, or of proper beneficence, unless his conduct was chiefly directed by regard to the sentiments of the supposed impartial spectator —of the great inmate of the breast, the great judge and arbiter of conduct. Suppose that in the course of the day we have strayed in any respect from the rules he prescribes to us; that we have gone too far or fallen short in our frugality; that we have gone too far or fallen short in our industry; that, through passion or carelessness, we have hurt the interest or happiness of our neighbor in any respect; or that we have neglected a plain and proper opportunity of promoting that interest and happiness. Then it is this inmate who, in the evening, calls us to account for all those omissions and violations. His reproaches often make us blush inwardly, both for our folly and inattention to our own happiness and, perhaps, for our still greater indifference and inattention to the happiness of other people.

VI.concl.2 But though the virtues of prudence, justice, and beneficence may, on different occasions, be recommended to us almost equally by two different principles, the virtues of self-command are, on most occasions, recommended to us chiefly and almost entirely by one: by the sense of propriety, by regard to the sentiments of the supposed impartial spectator. Without the restraint this principle imposes, every passion would on most occasions rush headlong, if I may put it that way, to its own gratification. Anger would follow the promptings of its own fury, and fear those of its own violent agitations. No regard to time or place would make vanity hold back from the loudest and most impertinent display, or the love of pleasure from the most open, indecent, and scandalous indulgence. Respect for what the sentiments of other people are, or ought to be, or would be under a certain condition, is the only principle that, on most occasions, overawes all those mutinous and turbulent passions into the tone and temper which the impartial spectator can enter into and sympathize with.

VI.concl.3 On some occasions, it is true, these passions are restrained not so much by a sense of their impropriety as by prudential considerations of the bad consequences that might follow from indulging them. In such cases the passions, though restrained, are not always subdued, but often remain lurking in the breast with all their original fury. The man whose anger is restrained by fear does not always lay his anger aside. He only saves its gratification for a safer opportunity. But consider the man who, in telling some other person about the injury done to him, at once feels the fury of his passion cooled and calmed by sympathy with the more moderate sentiments of his companion. He at once adopts those more moderate sentiments, and comes to view the injury not in the black and atrocious colors in which he first saw it, but in the much milder and fairer light in which his companion naturally views it. Such a man not only restrains his anger but to some extent subdues it. The passion really becomes less than it was before, and less capable of driv-

ing him to the violent and bloody revenge that at first, perhaps, he might have thought of taking.

VI.concl.4 Passions that are restrained by the sense of propriety are all moderated and subdued by it to some degree. But passions that are restrained only by prudential considerations of any kind are, on the contrary, often inflamed by the restraint. Sometimes (long after the provocation, when nobody is thinking about it) they burst out absurdly and unexpectedly, with tenfold fury and violence.

VI.concl.5 Anger, however, like every other passion, may on many occasions be very properly restrained by prudential considerations. Some exertion of manhood and self-command is even necessary for this kind of restraint. The impartial spectator may sometimes regard it with the sort of cold esteem due to conduct that he considers a mere matter of common prudence. But he never regards it with the affectionate admiration with which he views the same passions when, by the sense of propriety, they are moderated and subdued to a pitch that he himself can readily enter into. In the first kind of restraint he may often discern some degree of propriety and, if you like, even of virtue. But it is a propriety and virtue of a much lower order than those he always feels with rapture and admiration in the second.

VI.concl.6 The virtues of prudence, justice, and beneficence tend to produce nothing but the most agreeable effects. Regard to those effects first recommends them to the person who acts, and afterwards recommends them to the impartial spectator as well. In our approval of the character of the prudent man, we feel with particular satisfaction the security he must enjoy while he walks under the protection of that sedate and deliberate virtue. In our approval of the character of the just man, we feel with equal satisfaction the security that all those connected with him, whether as neighbors, in society, or in business, must derive from his scrupulous anxiety never either to hurt or to offend. In our approval of the character of the beneficent man, we enter into the gratitude of all those within the sphere of his good offices, and share with them the highest sense of his merit.

In our approval of all these virtues, our sense of their agreeable effects—of their utility, either to the person who exercises them or to some other persons—joins with our sense of their propriety. Together they always make up a considerable part of that approval, and often the greater part.

VI.concl.7 But in our approval of the virtues of self-command, satisfaction with their effects sometimes makes up no part of that approval, and often only a small part. Those effects may sometimes be agreeable and sometimes disagreeable. Our approval is no doubt stronger in the first case, but it is by no means entirely destroyed in the second. The most heroic valor may be employed in the cause of injustice just as readily as in the cause of justice. It is no doubt far more loved and admired in the first case, but even in the second it still appears a great and respectable quality. In valor, and in all the other virtues of self-command, the splendid and dazzling quality always seems to be the greatness and steadiness of the exertion, together with the strong sense of propriety needed to make and maintain that exertion. Far too often, the effects are given far too little attention.

Part VII: Of Systems of Moral Philosophy

Smith reviews ancient and modern theories of virtue and of moral approval, and how moralists have taught their rules.

SECTION I: OF THE QUESTIONS WHICH OUGHT TO BE EXAMINED IN A THEORY OF MORAL SENTIMENTS — INTRODUCTION

Smith sets out the two questions a theory of morals must answer: what virtue is, and what faculty approves it.

VII.i.1 If we examine the most celebrated and remarkable of the various theories that have been offered about the nature and origin of our moral sentiments, we will find that almost all of them coincide with some part or other of the theory I have been trying to set out; and that, if everything already said is fully considered, we will have no difficulty explaining what view or aspect of nature led each particular author to form his particular system. Every system of morality that has ever had any reputation in the world has perhaps ultimately been derived from one or another of the principles I have been trying to unfold. Since they are all, in this respect, founded on natural principles, they are all to some extent right. But since many of them are derived from a partial and imperfect view of nature, many of them are also in some respects wrong.

VII.i.2 In treating the principles of morals there are two questions to consider. First, what does virtue consist in? Or what is the tone of temper and the tenor of conduct that make up the excellent and praise-worthy character—the character that is the natural object of esteem, honor, and approbation? And second, by what power or faculty in the mind is it that this character,

whatever it may be, is recommended to us? Or in other words, how and by what means does it come about that the mind prefers one tenor of conduct to another? How does it come to call the one right and the other wrong, and to regard the one as the object of approbation, honor, and reward, and the other as the object of blame, censure, and punishment?

VII.i.3 We examine the first question when we consider whether virtue consists in benevolence, as Dr. Hutcheson imagines; or in acting suitably to the different relations we stand in, as Dr. Clarke supposes; or in the wise and prudent pursuit of our own real and solid happiness, as others have held.[1]

VII.i.4 We examine the second question when we consider by what the virtuous character, whatever it consists in, is recommended to us. Is it by self-love, which makes us see that this character, both in ourselves and in others, does most to promote our own private interest? Or by reason, which shows us the difference between one character and another in the same way that it shows us the difference between truth and falsehood? Or by a special power of perception, called a moral sense, which this virtuous character gratifies and pleases, just as the contrary character disgusts and displeases it? Or, last of all, by some other principle in human nature, such as a modification of sympathy, or something of the kind?

VII.i.5 I will begin by considering the systems that have been formed concerning the first of these questions, and will go on afterward to examine those concerning the second.

SECTION II: OF THE DIFFERENT ACCOUNTS WHICH HAVE BEEN GIVEN OF THE NATURE OF VIRTUE — INTRODUCTION

Accounts of virtue reduce to three: it lies in propriety, in prudence, or in benevolence.

VII.ii.intro.1 The different accounts that have been given of the nature of virtue, or of the temper of mind that makes up the

1 Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), English philosopher and theologian who grounded morality in the "fitness" of actions to the relations between things.

excellent and praise-worthy character, may be reduced to three classes. According to some, the virtuous temper of mind does not consist in any one kind of affection, but in the proper government and direction of all our affections. These may be either virtuous or vicious, depending on the objects they pursue and the degree of vehemence with which they pursue them. According to these authors, therefore, virtue consists in propriety.

VII.ii.intro.2 According to others, virtue consists in the judicious pursuit of our own private interest and happiness, or in the proper government and direction of those selfish affections that aim solely at this end. In the opinion of these authors, therefore, virtue consists in prudence.

VII.ii.intro.3 Another set of authors make virtue consist only in those affections that aim at the happiness of others, not in those that aim at our own. According to them, therefore, disinterested benevolence is the only motive that can stamp the character of virtue on any action.

VII.ii.intro.4 Clearly, the character of virtue must either be ascribed without distinction to all our affections when they are under proper government and direction, or else be confined to some one class or division of them. The great division of our affections is into the selfish and the benevolent. If, therefore, the character of virtue cannot be ascribed without distinction to all our affections when they are under proper government and direction, it must be confined either to those that aim directly at our own private happiness or to those that aim directly at the happiness of others. If virtue, therefore, does not consist in propriety, it must consist either in prudence or in benevolence. Besides these three, it is scarcely possible to imagine any other account that could be given of the nature of virtue. I will try to show later how all the other accounts, which seem different from any of these, coincide at bottom with one or another of them.

CHAPTER I: OF THOSE SYSTEMS WHICH MAKE VIRTUE CONSIST IN PROPRIETY

Plato's soul as a little republic, ruled by reason, with justice as the harmony of its parts.

VII.ii.1.1 According to Plato, to Aristotle, and to Zeno, virtue consists in the propriety of conduct, or in the suitableness of the affection from which we act to the object that excites it.[2]

VII.ii.1.2 I. In Plato's system[3] the soul is considered as something like a little state or republic, made up of three different faculties or orders.

VII.ii.1.3 The first is the judging faculty. This is the faculty that determines not only what the proper means are for attaining any end, but also what ends are fit to be pursued, and what degree of relative value we ought to place on each. Plato called this faculty reason—as it is very properly called—and regarded it as having the right to be the governing principle of the whole. Under this name, clearly, he included not only the faculty by which we judge of truth and falsehood, but also the one by which we judge of the propriety or impropriety of desires and affections.

VII.ii.1.4 The various passions and appetites are the natural subjects of this ruling principle, though they are very apt to rebel against their master. Plato reduced them to two classes or orders. The first consisted of the passions founded in pride and resentment, or in what the schoolmen called the irascible part of the soul: ambition, animosity, the love of honor and the dread of shame, the desire of victory, of superiority, and of revenge—all those passions, in short, that are supposed either to arise from, or to indicate, what by a metaphor in our language we commonly call spirit or natural fire.[4] The second consisted of the passions founded in the love of pleasure, or in what the

2 Zeno of Citium (c. 334–262 BC), founder of the Stoic school.

3 SMITH'S NOTE. See Plato, *Republic*, book 4.

4 The schoolmen were the medieval scholastic philosophers. "Irascible" here means belonging to anger and spirited aggression.

schoolmen called the concupiscible part of the soul. It included all the appetites of the body, the love of ease and security, and the love of all sensual gratifications.[5]

VII.ii.1.5 We rarely break in on the plan of conduct that the governing principle prescribes, and that in all our cool hours we had laid down for ourselves as the most proper course to pursue, unless we are prompted by one or other of these two sets of passions—either by ungovernable ambition and resentment, or by the insistent pleadings of present ease and pleasure. But although these two orders of passions are so apt to mislead us, they are still regarded as necessary parts of human nature. The first was given to defend us against injuries, to assert our rank and dignity in the world, to make us aim at what is noble and honorable, and to make us single out those who act in the same way. The second was given to provide for the support and necessities of the body.

VII.ii.1.6 In the strength, acuteness, and perfection of the governing principle was placed the essential virtue of prudence. According to Plato, this consisted in a just and clear discernment, founded on general and scientific ideas, of the ends that were proper to be pursued and of the means that were proper for attaining them.

VII.ii.1.7 When the first set of passions, those of the irascible part of the soul, had the degree of strength and firmness that enabled them, under the direction of reason, to despise all dangers in the pursuit of what was honorable and noble, this constituted the virtue of fortitude and magnanimity. According to this system, this order of passions was of a more generous and noble nature than the other. On many occasions they were regarded as the auxiliaries of reason, to check and restrain the inferior and brutal appetites. We are often angry at ourselves, it was observed—we often become the objects of our own resentment and indignation—when the love of pleasure prompts us to do what we disapprove of. In this way the irascible part of our nature is called in to assist the rational part against the concupiscible.

5 "Concupiscible" means belonging to desire, especially bodily desire.

VII.ii.1.8 When all three of these parts of our nature were in perfect concord with one another—when neither the irascible nor the concupiscible passions ever aimed at any gratification that reason did not approve of, and when reason never commanded anything but what these passions were willing to perform of their own accord—this happy composure, this perfect and complete harmony of soul, constituted the virtue that in their language is expressed by a word we commonly translate "temperance," but which might more properly be translated "good temper," or "sobriety and moderation of mind."[6]

VII.ii.1.9 Justice, the last and greatest of the four cardinal virtues, took place, according to this system, when each of these three faculties of the mind kept to its proper office without trying to encroach on that of any other. It took place when reason directed and passion obeyed, and when each passion performed its proper duty and exerted itself toward its proper object easily and without reluctance, with the degree of force and energy that suited the value of what it pursued. In this consisted that complete virtue, that perfect propriety of conduct, which Plato, following some of the ancient Pythagoreans, called Justice.

VII.ii.1.10 It should be observed that the word for justice in the Greek language has several different meanings. And since the corresponding word in every other language, so far as I know, has the same meanings, there must be some natural affinity among these various senses. In one sense we are said to do justice to our neighbor when we abstain from doing him any positive harm, and do not directly hurt him, whether in his person, in his property, or in his reputation. This is the justice I treated above: its observance may be extorted by force, and its violation exposes us to punishment. In another sense we are said not to do justice to our neighbor unless we feel for him all the love, respect, and esteem that his character, his situation, and his connection with ourselves make suitable and proper for us to feel, and unless we act accordingly. It is in this sense that we are said to do injustice to a man of merit who is connected

6 The Greek word is *sōphrosynē*.

with us, even though we abstain from hurting him in every respect, if we do not exert ourselves to serve him and to place him in the situation in which the impartial spectator would be pleased to see him. The first sense of the word coincides with what Aristotle and the schoolmen call commutative justice, and with what Grotius calls the *justitia expletrix*. This consists in abstaining from what belongs to another, and in doing voluntarily whatever we can with propriety be forced to do. The second sense of the word coincides with what some have called distributive justice[7], and with the *justitia attributrix* of Grotius. This consists in proper beneficence, in the becoming use of what is our own, and in applying it to those purposes, whether of charity or of generosity, to which it is most suitable, in our situation, that it should be applied.[8] In this sense justice includes all the social virtues. There is yet another sense in which the word justice is sometimes taken, still broader than either of the others, though closely akin to the second; and this sense too, so far as I know, runs through all languages. It is in this last sense that we are said to be unjust when we do not seem to value some particular object with the degree of esteem, or to pursue it with the degree of ardor, that it may appear to the impartial spectator to deserve, or to be naturally fitted to excite. Thus we are said to do injustice to a poem or a picture when we do not admire it enough, and to do it more than justice when we admire it too much. In the same way we are said to do injustice to ourselves when we seem not to give enough attention to some particular object of self-interest. In this last sense, what is called justice means the same thing as exact and perfect propriety of conduct and behavior. It includes not only the duties of both commutative and distributive justice, but those of every other virtue as well—of prudence, of fortitude, of temperance. It is clearly in

7 SMITH'S NOTE. Aristotle's distributive justice is somewhat different. It consists in the proper distribution of rewards from the public stock of a community. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 5, chapter 2.

8 Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Dutch jurist, in *On the Law of War and Peace* (1625). The Latin terms mean roughly "completing" (strict) justice and "attributing" (allotting) justice.

this last sense that Plato understands what he calls justice, which, according to him, therefore includes the perfection of every sort of virtue.

VII.ii.1.11 Such is Plato's account of the nature of virtue, or of the temper of mind that is the proper object of praise and approbation. According to him, it consists in the state of mind in which every faculty keeps within its proper sphere without encroaching on that of any other, and performs its proper office with exactly the degree of strength and vigor that belongs to it. His account, clearly, coincides in every respect with what we said above about the propriety of conduct.

ARISTOTLE: VIRTUE AS THE HABIT OF THE MEAN

Aristotle places virtue in a habit of the mean between two opposite vices.

VII.ii.1.12 II. Virtue, according to Aristotle,[9] consists in the habit of mediocrity according to right reason. Each particular virtue, in his view, lies in a kind of middle between two opposite vices. One of these goes wrong by being too much affected by a particular kind of object, the other by being too little affected by it. Thus the virtue of fortitude, or courage, lies in the middle between the opposite vices of cowardice and presumptuous rashness. The first goes wrong by being too much affected by the objects of fear, the second by being too little affected by them.[10] In the same way, the virtue of frugality lies in a middle between avarice and extravagance. The first consists in an excess of proper attention to the objects of self-interest, the second in a deficiency of it. Likewise magnanimity lies in a middle between the excess of arrogance and the deficiency of faintheartedness. The first consists in too extravagant a sentiment of our own worth and dignity, the second in too weak a

9 SMITH'S NOTE. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 2, chapter 5 and following; and book 3, chapter 5 and following.

10 "Mediocrity" is used in its old sense: the mean, the middle point between two extremes, with no suggestion of second-rate quality.

one. There is no need to point out that this account of virtue also corresponds fairly exactly with what was said above about the propriety and impropriety of conduct.

VII.ii.1.13 Admittedly, according to Aristotle,[11] virtue did not consist so much in those moderate and right affections as in the habit of this moderation. To understand this, we should notice that virtue may be considered either as the quality of an action or as the quality of a person. Considered as the quality of an action, it consists, even according to Aristotle, in the reasonable moderation of the affection from which the action proceeds, whether or not this disposition is habitual to the person. Considered as the quality of a person, it consists in the habit of this reasonable moderation—in its having become the customary and usual disposition of the mind. Thus an action that comes from an occasional fit of generosity is undoubtedly a generous action. But the man who performs it is not necessarily a generous person, since it may be the only action of the kind he ever performed. The motive and disposition of heart from which he acted may have been entirely just and proper. But since this happy mood seems to have come from passing whim rather than from anything steady or permanent in his character, it can bring the performer no great honor. When we call a character generous or charitable, or virtuous in any respect, we mean that the disposition each of those names expresses is the person's usual and customary disposition. But single actions of any kind, however proper and suitable, do little to show that this is so. If a single action were enough to stamp the character of some virtue on the person who performed it, the most worthless of mankind might lay claim to all the virtues, since there is no one who has not, on some occasion, acted with prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. But though single actions, however praiseworthy, bring very little praise to the person who performs them, a single vicious action by someone whose conduct is usually very regular greatly diminishes, and sometimes entirely destroys, our opinion of his virtue. A single action of this kind is

11 SMITH'S NOTE. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 2, chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4.

enough to show that his habits are not perfect, and that he is less to be relied on than we might have been inclined to think from the usual course of his behavior.

VII.ii.1.14 When Aristotle, too,[12] made virtue consist in practical habits, he probably meant to oppose the doctrine of Plato. Plato seems to have held that just sentiments and reasonable judgments about what should be done or avoided were enough by themselves to constitute the most perfect virtue. Virtue, according to Plato, might be considered a kind of science; and no one, he thought, could see clearly and demonstratively what was right and what was wrong and not act accordingly. Passion might make us act against doubtful and uncertain opinions, but not against plain and evident judgments. Aristotle, on the contrary, held that no conviction of the understanding could overcome ingrained habits, and that good morals came not from knowledge but from action.

THE STOICS: LIVING ACCORDING TO NATURE

Zeno's Stoics make virtue right choosing and rejecting, and cheerful submission to the order of the whole.

VII.ii.1.15 III. According to Zeno,[13] the founder of the Stoic doctrine, every animal was by nature commended to its own care, and was endowed with the principle of self-love, so that it might try to preserve not only its existence but all the different parts of its nature in the best and most perfect state they were capable of.

VII.ii.1.16 The self-love of man embraced, if I may put it this way, his body and all its different members, his mind and all its different faculties and powers, and desired that they all be preserved and maintained in their best and most perfect condition. Whatever tended to support this state of existence was therefore pointed out to him by nature as fit to be chosen, and whatever tended to destroy it as fit to be rejected. Thus health, strength,

12 SMITH'S NOTE. See Aristotle, *Magna Moralia*, book 1, chapter 1.
13 SMITH'S NOTE. See Cicero, *De finibus* (*On Ends*), book 3; also Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Zeno*, book 7, section 84.

agility, and ease of body, as well as the external conveniences that could promote these—wealth, power, honors, the respect and esteem of those we live with—were naturally pointed out to us as things worth choosing, things better to have than to lack. On the other hand, sickness, infirmity, clumsiness, bodily pain, as well as all the external inconveniences that tend to cause or bring on any of them—poverty, lack of authority, the contempt or hatred of those we live with—were in the same way pointed out to us as things to be shunned and avoided. Within each of these two opposite classes of objects, some appeared to be more objects of choice, or of rejection, than others in the same class. Thus in the first class health appeared clearly preferable to strength, and strength to agility; reputation to power, and power to riches. And so too in the second class, sickness was more to be avoided than clumsiness of body, disgrace than poverty, and poverty than the loss of power. Virtue and the propriety of conduct consisted in choosing and rejecting all the various objects and circumstances according to how far nature had made them more or less objects of choice or rejection. When we could not obtain all the objects of choice presented to us, it consisted in always selecting the one most to be chosen; and when it was not in our power to avoid all the objects of rejection offered to us, it consisted in selecting the one least to be avoided. By choosing and rejecting with this just and accurate discernment—by giving every object exactly the degree of attention it deserved, according to its place in this natural scale of things—we maintained, according to the Stoics, that perfect rightness of conduct which constituted the essence of virtue. This was what they called living consistently, living according to nature, and obeying the laws and directions that nature, or the Author of nature, had laid down for our conduct.

VII.ii.1.17 So far the Stoic idea of propriety and virtue is not very different from that of Aristotle and the ancient Peripatetics.[14]

VII.ii.1.18 Among the primary objects that nature had recommended to us as worth choosing was the prosperity of our family,

our relatives, our friends, our country, mankind, and the universe in general. Nature had also taught us that, since the prosperity of two was preferable to that of one, the prosperity of many, or of all, must be infinitely more so. We ourselves were only one; and consequently, wherever our prosperity conflicted with that of the whole, or of any considerable part of the whole, it ought, even by our own choice, to give way to what was so vastly preferable. Since all the events in this world were directed by the providence of a wise, powerful, and good God, we could be sure that whatever happened tended to the prosperity and perfection of the whole. If, then, we ourselves were in poverty, in sickness, or in any other calamity, we ought first of all to do our very utmost, so far as justice and our duty to others allowed, to rescue ourselves from this unpleasant circumstance. But if, after all we could do, we found this impossible, we ought to rest satisfied that the order and perfection of the universe required us to remain in this situation for the time being. And since the prosperity of the whole ought, even to us, to appear preferable to so insignificant a part as ourselves, our situation, whatever it was, ought from that moment to become something we liked, if we wished to maintain that complete propriety and rightness of sentiment and conduct in which the perfection of our nature consisted. If, indeed, some opportunity of getting ourselves out of it should arise, it became our duty to take it. The order of the universe, clearly, no longer required us to remain in this situation, and the great Director of the world was plainly calling on us to leave it by pointing out so clearly the road we were to follow. The case was the same with the misfortunes of our relatives, our friends, our country. If, without violating any more sacred obligation, it was in our power to prevent their calamity or put an end to it, it was undoubtedly our duty to do so. The propriety of action, the rule Jupiter had given us to direct our conduct, clearly required this of us. But if it was entirely out of our power to do either, we ought then to regard this event

14 The Peripatetics were the followers of Aristotle, named after the covered walk (*peripatos*) of his school.

as the most fortunate that could possibly have happened, because we could be sure that it tended most to the prosperity and order of the whole—which was what we ourselves, if we were wise and fair-minded, ought to desire most of all. It was our own ultimate interest, considered as a part of that whole, whose prosperity ought to be not merely the principal object of our desire but the only one.

VII.ii.1.19 "In what sense," says Epictetus, "are some things said to be according to our nature, and others contrary to it? It is in the sense in which we consider ourselves as separated and detached from all other things. For in that sense it may be said to be according to the nature of the foot to be always clean. But if you consider it as a foot, and not as something detached from the rest of the body, it must be its part sometimes to trample in the dirt, sometimes to tread on thorns, and sometimes, too, to be cut off for the sake of the whole body; and if it refuses this, it is no longer a foot.[15] This, too, is how we ought to think about ourselves. What are you? A man. If you consider yourself as something separated and detached, it is in keeping with your nature to live to old age, to be rich, to be healthy. But if you consider yourself as a man, and as a part of a whole, then for the sake of that whole it will be your part sometimes to be sick, sometimes to be exposed to the hardship of a sea voyage, sometimes to be in want, and at last, perhaps, to die before your time. Why then do you complain? Do you not know that by doing so, just as the foot ceases to be a foot, so you cease to be a man?"

VII.ii.1.20 A wise man never complains of what Providence has destined for him, nor thinks the universe in disorder when he himself is out of sorts. He does not see himself as a whole, separated and detached from every other part of nature, to be taken care of by itself and for itself. He regards himself in the light in which he imagines the great genius of human nature and of the world regards him. He enters, if I may put it this way, into the sentiments of that divine Being, and considers himself as an atom, a particle, of an immense and infinite system, which must

15 The passage paraphrases Epictetus, *Discourses*, book 2, chapter 5.

and ought to be arranged according to the convenience of the whole. Confident in the wisdom that directs all the events of human life, he accepts with joy whatever lot befalls him, satisfied that if he had known all the connections and dependencies among the different parts of the universe, it is the very lot he would have wished for himself. If it is life, he is content to live; and if it is death, then since nature must have no further need of his presence here, he goes willingly where he is sent. "I accept," said a Cynic philosopher, whose doctrines in this respect were the same as those of the Stoics, "I accept with equal joy and satisfaction whatever fortune can befall me.[16] Riches or poverty, pleasure or pain, health or sickness, it is all alike to me; nor would I wish the gods to change my destiny in any respect. If I were to ask them for anything beyond what their bounty has already given, it would be that they tell me beforehand what they intend to do with me, so that I might put myself in that situation of my own accord, and show the cheerfulness with which I embraced what they had allotted me." "If I am going to sail," says Epictetus, "I choose the best ship and the best pilot, and I wait for the fairest weather that my circumstances and duty will allow. Prudence and propriety, the principles the gods have given me to direct my conduct, require this of me; but they require no more. And if, in spite of all this, a storm arises that neither the strength of the ship nor the skill of the pilot is likely to withstand, I give myself no trouble about the outcome. All that I had to do is already done. The directors of my conduct never command me to be miserable, anxious, despairing, or afraid. Whether we are to be drowned or to reach a harbor is the business of Jupiter, not mine. I leave it entirely to his decision, and never lose any sleep wondering which way he is likely to decide it, but receive whatever comes with equal indifference and calm."

VII.ii.1.21 From this perfect confidence in the benevolent wisdom that governs the universe, and from this complete resignation to

16 "Cynical" here means belonging to the Cynic school of philosophy, founded in the tradition of Diogenes of Sinope.

whatever order that wisdom might see fit to establish, it necessarily followed that to the Stoic wise man all the events of human life must be largely indifferent. His happiness consisted entirely in two things. First, it lay in contemplating the happiness and perfection of the great system of the universe, the good government of the great republic of gods and men, of all rational and sentient beings. Second, it lay in doing his duty, in acting properly in the affairs of this great republic, in whatever small part that wisdom had assigned him. The propriety or impropriety of his efforts might be of great importance to him. Their success or failure could be of no importance at all. It could arouse no passionate joy or sorrow, no passionate desire or aversion. He might prefer some events to others, and choose some situations while rejecting others. If he did, it was not because he thought the one kind in itself better in any respect than the other. Nor did he think his own happiness would be more complete in what is called good fortune than in what is regarded as distress. It was because propriety of action, the rule the gods had given him to direct his conduct, required him to choose and reject in this way. All his affections were absorbed and swallowed up in two great ones: the affection for doing his own duty, and the affection for the greatest possible happiness of all rational and sentient beings. For the satisfaction of the second, he relied with perfect security on the wisdom and power of the great Superintendent of the universe. His only anxiety concerned the first. It was not about the outcome, but about the propriety of his own efforts. Whatever the outcome might be, he trusted a superior power and wisdom to turn it toward the great end that he himself most wished to promote.

VII.ii.1.22 This propriety of choosing and rejecting was originally pointed out to us by the things chosen and rejected, and for their sake. They recommended it to us and introduced us to it, as it were. Yet once we had become thoroughly acquainted with it, the order, the grace and the beauty we discerned in this conduct, and the happiness we felt arising from it, necessarily seemed to us far more valuable than actually obtaining all the

various objects of choice or actually avoiding all the objects of rejection. From observing this propriety came the happiness and the glory of human nature; from neglecting it came its misery and its disgrace.

VII.ii.1.23 But to a wise man, one whose passions had been brought into perfect subjection to the ruling principles of his nature, the exact observance of this propriety was equally easy on every occasion. If he was prosperous, he thanked Jupiter for placing him among circumstances that were easily mastered and offered little temptation to do wrong. If he was in adversity, he equally thanked the director of this spectacle of human life for setting a vigorous athlete against him. The contest was likely to be fiercer, but the victory over such an opponent would be more glorious, and just as certain. Can there be any shame in a distress that comes upon us through no fault of our own, and in which we behave with perfect propriety? There can therefore be no evil in it. On the contrary, it brings the greatest good and advantage. A brave man exults in dangers that his fortune, and not any rashness of his own, has drawn him into. They give him the chance to exercise heroic fearlessness, and that exercise brings the exalted delight that flows from being conscious of superior propriety and of admiration deserved. Someone who has mastered all his exercises has no objection to measuring his strength and agility against the strongest. In the same way, someone who has mastered all his passions does not dread any circumstance in which the Superintendent of the universe may see fit to place him. The bounty of that divine Being has given him virtues that make him superior to every situation. If it is pleasure, he has temperance to refrain from it. If it is pain, he has constancy to bear it. If it is danger or death, he has magnanimity and fortitude to despise it. The events of human life can never catch him unprepared, or leave him at a loss how to maintain that propriety of sentiment and conduct which, in his own view, constitutes both his glory and his happiness.

LIFE AS A GAME; THE OPEN DOOR

Life as a game of skill, and the Stoic "open door" of voluntary death.

VII.ii.1.24 The Stoics seem to have regarded human life as a game of great skill, but one that involved a mixture of chance, or of what is commonly taken to be chance. In such games the stake is usually a trifle, and the whole pleasure of the game comes from playing well, playing fairly and playing skillfully. If, despite all his skill, the good player happens to lose through chance, the loss ought to be a matter for amusement rather than serious sorrow. He has made no false move. He has done nothing he ought to be ashamed of. He has fully enjoyed the whole pleasure of the game. If, on the contrary, the bad player happens in the same way to win despite all his blunders, his success can give him little satisfaction. He is mortified by the memory of all the mistakes he made. Even while he is playing, he can enjoy none of the pleasure the game is able to give. Because he does not know the rules, almost every move he makes is preceded by the disagreeable feelings of fear, doubt and hesitation. Once he has made it, the mortification of finding it a gross blunder usually completes the unpleasant circle of his sensations. According to the Stoics, human life, with all the advantages that can possibly come with it, ought to be regarded as a mere twopenny stake. It is far too insignificant to deserve any anxious concern. Our only anxious concern ought to be the proper way of playing, not the stake. If we placed our happiness in winning the stake, we placed it in something that depended on causes beyond our power and outside our direction. We necessarily exposed ourselves to constant fear and uneasiness, and often to grievous and mortifying disappointments. Suppose instead that we placed it in playing well, fairly, wisely and skillfully; in short, in the propriety of our own conduct. Then we placed it in something that proper discipline, education and attention could make entirely our own, within our power and under our direction. Our happiness was perfectly secure and beyond the reach

of fortune. If the outcome of our actions was out of our power, it was equally out of our concern. We could never feel fear or anxiety about it, nor could we ever suffer any grievous, or even any serious, disappointment.

VII.ii.1.25 Human life itself, they said, like every particular advantage or disadvantage that can come with it, might be the proper object either of our choice or of our rejection, depending on circumstances. Suppose there were more circumstances in our actual situation that agreed with nature than were contrary to it, more that were objects of choice than of rejection. In that case life, on the whole, was the proper object of choice, and propriety of conduct required us to remain in it. Suppose, on the other hand, that our actual situation held more circumstances contrary to nature than agreeable to it, more that were objects of rejection than of choice, and that there was no likely hope of improvement. In that case life itself became, to a wise man, an object of rejection. He was not only free to leave it. Propriety of conduct, the rule the gods had given him to direct his conduct, actually required him to do so. "I am ordered," says Epictetus, "not to live at Nicopolis. I do not live there. I am ordered not to live at Athens. I do not live at Athens. I am ordered not to live in Rome.[17] I do not live in Rome. I am ordered to live on the small, rocky island of Gyara. I go and live there. But the house smokes on Gyara. If the smoke is moderate, I will bear it and stay. If it is excessive, I will go to a house from which no tyrant can remove me. I always keep in mind that the door is open. I can walk out when I please and retire to that hospitable house which is always open to the whole world. Beyond my innermost garment, beyond my body, no man alive has any power over me."[18] If your situation is on the whole disagreeable, said the Stoics, and your house smokes too much for you, then by all means walk out. But walk out without repining, murmuring or complaining. Walk

17 Nicopolis, in Epirus in western Greece, was where Epictetus taught after Domitian banished the philosophers from Rome.

18 Gyara (Smith's "Gyarae") is a barren Aegean island to which the Romans sent exiles. The house "from which no tyrant can remove me" is death.

out calm, contented and rejoicing, and thank the gods. Out of their infinite bounty they have opened the safe and quiet harbor of death, always ready to receive us from the stormy ocean of human life. They have prepared this sacred, inviolable and great sanctuary. It is always open and always accessible, entirely beyond the reach of human rage and injustice. It is large enough to hold all those who wish to retire to it and all those who do not. This sanctuary takes from every man every excuse for complaining, or even for imagining that human life holds any evil except what he may suffer from his own folly and weakness.

VII.ii.1.26 In the few fragments of their philosophy that have come down to us, the Stoics sometimes speak of leaving life with a gaiety, and even a levity, that might mislead us if we considered those passages alone. We might believe they thought we could properly leave life whenever we pleased, wantonly and capriciously, at the slightest disgust or uneasiness. "When you dine with a certain person," says Epictetus, "you complain of the long stories he tells you about his Mysian wars. 'Now, my friend,' he says, 'having told you how I seized a hill at such a place, I will tell you how I was besieged at such another place.' But if you do not want to be troubled with his long stories, do not accept his dinner. If you accept his dinner, you have not the slightest excuse to complain of his long stories. It is the same with what you call the evils of human life. Never complain of something you always have the power to rid yourself of." Despite this gaiety and even levity of expression, however, the Stoics held that the choice between leaving life and remaining in it called for the most serious and weighty deliberation. We ought never to leave life until we were distinctly called to do so by the superintending power that had originally placed us in it. But we were to consider ourselves called to do so at other times than the appointed and unavoidable end of human life. The providence of that superintending Power might make our condition in life, on the whole, the proper object of rejection rather than of choice. Whenever it did, the great rule he had given us to direct our conduct required us to leave. We might then be said to hear the awe-

inspiring and benevolent voice of that divine Being distinctly calling us to do so.

VII.ii.1.27 It was for this reason that, according to the Stoics, it might be the duty of a wise man to leave life even though he was perfectly happy. On the other hand, it might be the duty of a weak man to remain in it even though he was necessarily miserable. If the wise man's situation contained more circumstances that were natural objects of rejection than of choice, the whole situation became an object of rejection. The rule that the gods had given him to direct his conduct then required him to leave it as quickly as particular circumstances made convenient. Yet he was perfectly happy even for as long as he thought it proper to remain. He had placed his happiness not in obtaining the objects of his choice or in avoiding those of his rejection, but in always choosing and rejecting with exact propriety. It lay not in the success of his efforts and exertions, but in their fitness. If, on the other hand, the weak man's situation contained more circumstances that were natural objects of choice than of rejection, his whole situation became the proper object of choice, and it was his duty to remain in it. He was nevertheless unhappy, because he did not know how to use those circumstances. However good his cards, he did not know how to play them. He could take no real satisfaction either in the course of the game or in its outcome, however it happened to turn out[19].

THE ANCIENTS AND VOLUNTARY DEATH

Why voluntary death was praised in the violent age of the Greek republics, and how the fashion spread at Rome.

VII.ii.1.28 The Stoics perhaps insisted more than any other school of ancient philosophers on the propriety of voluntary death on some occasions. Yet it was a doctrine common to all of them, even to the peaceable and ease-loving Epicureans. The founders

19 SMITH'S NOTE. See Cicero, *De finibus*, book 3, chapter 13, Olivet's edition.
TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Pierre-Joseph d'Olivet edited Cicero's complete works (1740–42).

of all the principal schools of ancient philosophy flourished during the Peloponnesian War and for many years after it ended. In that age all the various republics of Greece were almost always torn at home by the most furious factions, and caught up abroad in the bloodiest wars. In these wars each sought not merely superiority or dominion. Each sought either to wipe out all its enemies completely, or, what was no less cruel, to reduce them to the vilest of all conditions, that of domestic slavery, and to sell them—man, woman, and child—like so many herds of cattle to the highest bidder in the market. Most of those states were small, too, so for each of them it was no very improbable event that it might itself fall into the very calamity it had so often inflicted, or at least tried to inflict, on some of its neighbors. In this disorderly state of things, the most perfect innocence, joined to both the highest rank and the greatest public services, could give no man any security. Even at home, among his own relations and fellow citizens, he might at some time or other be condemned to the most cruel and shameful punishment, whenever some hostile and furious faction gained the upper hand. If he was taken prisoner in war, or if his city was conquered, he was exposed to injuries and insults that were, if possible, still greater. But every man naturally—or rather necessarily—familiarizes his imagination with the distresses to which he foresees his situation may often expose him. A sailor cannot help often thinking of storms and shipwrecks, and of foundering at sea, and of how he himself is likely both to feel and to act on such occasions. In the same way, a Greek patriot or hero could not help familiarizing his imagination with all the different calamities to which he knew his situation must often, or rather constantly, expose him. A Native American prepares his death-song and considers how he should act when he has fallen into his enemies' hands and is put to death by them with the most lingering tortures, amid the insults and mockery of all the spectators. In just the same way, a Greek patriot or hero could not avoid often turning his thoughts to what he ought both to suffer and to do in banishment, in captivity, when reduced to slavery,

when put to torture, when brought to the scaffold. But the philosophers of all the different schools quite rightly represented virtue—that is, wise, just, firm, and temperate conduct—as not merely the most probable but the certain and infallible road to happiness, even in this life. Yet such conduct could not always shield the person who followed it from all the calamities that went with that unsettled state of public affairs. It might sometimes even expose him to them. They therefore tried to show that happiness was either entirely, or at least in great measure, independent of fortune. The Stoics held that it was entirely so; the Academic and Peripatetic philosophers held that it was so in great measure. Wise, prudent, and good conduct was, in the first place, the conduct most likely to ensure success in every kind of undertaking. Second, even if it failed to succeed, the mind was not left without consolation. The virtuous man could still enjoy the complete approbation of his own breast. He could still feel that, however badly things might go outside, all was calm and peace and harmony within. He could generally comfort himself, too, with the assurance that he had the love and esteem of every intelligent and impartial spectator, who could not fail both to admire his conduct and to regret his misfortune.

VII.ii.1.29 At the same time, those philosophers tried to show that the greatest misfortunes to which human life is liable could be borne more easily than was commonly imagined. They tried to point out the comforts a man might still enjoy when reduced to poverty, when driven into banishment, when exposed to the injustice of popular clamor, when suffering under blindness or deafness, in the extremity of old age, at the approach of death. They also pointed out the considerations that might help sustain his constancy under the agonies of pain and even of torture, in sickness, in grief for the loss of children, for the death of friends and relations, and so on. A few fragments of what the ancient philosophers wrote on these subjects have come down to us. They form perhaps one of the most instructive, as well as one of the most interesting, remains of antiquity. The spirit and manli-

ness of their doctrines make a wonderful contrast with the despondent, plaintive, and whining tone of some modern systems.

VII.ii.1.30 In this way those ancient philosophers tried to suggest every consideration that could, as Milton says, "arm the hardened breast with stubborn patience, as with triple steel." But at the same time they worked above all to convince their followers that there neither was nor could be any evil in death. If their situation ever became too hard for their constancy to bear, the remedy was at hand: the door was open, and they might walk out without fear whenever they pleased.[20] If there was no world beyond the present one, death, they said, could be no evil. If there was another world, the gods must be in that other world too, and a just man could fear no evil while under their protection. In short, those philosophers prepared a death-song, if I may put it that way, which Greek patriots and heroes could use on the proper occasions. Of all the different schools, the Stoics, I think it must be acknowledged, had prepared by far the most animated and spirited song.

VII.ii.1.31 Suicide, however, never seems to have been very common among the Greeks. Except for Cleomenes, I cannot at present recall any very illustrious patriot or hero of Greece who died by his own hand. The death of Aristomenes lies as far beyond the period of true history as that of Ajax. The common story of Themistocles' death falls within that period, but it bears on its face all the marks of a highly romantic fable. Of all the Greek heroes whose lives Plutarch wrote, Cleomenes seems to have been the only one who died in this way.[21] Theramenes, Socrates, and Phocion certainly did not lack courage. Yet they let themselves be sent to prison and submitted patiently to the death to which the injustice of their fellow citizens had condemned them. The brave Eumenes let himself be handed over by his own mutinous soldiers to his enemy Antigonus, and was starved

20 Milton, *Paradise Lost* II.568–69, describing the fallen angels' philosophizing: "Or arm th' obdured breast / With stubborn patience as with triple steel."

21 Cleomenes III, king of Sparta, killed himself in Egypt after a failed revolt (219 BC). Aristomenes was a legendary Messenian hero; Themistocles was said to have taken poison rather than lead a Persian army against Athens.

to death[22] without attempting any violence. The gallant Philopoemen let himself be taken prisoner by the Messenians. He was thrown into a dungeon and was believed to have been secretly poisoned. It is true that several of the philosophers are said to have died in this way. But their lives have been written so very foolishly that most of the tales told about them deserve very little belief.[23] Three different accounts have been given of the death of Zeno the Stoic. The first is that after enjoying the most perfect health for ninety-eight years, he happened to fall as he was leaving his school. He suffered no other injury than a broken or dislocated finger. Yet he struck the ground with his hand and, in the words of Euripides' Niobe, said, "I come—why do you call me?" Then he at once went home and hanged himself. At that great age, one would think, he might have had a little more patience. The second account is that at the same age, and after a similar accident, he starved himself to death.[24] The third account is that he died a natural death at seventy-two. This is by far the most probable of the three. It is supported, too, by the authority of a contemporary who must have had every opportunity to be well informed: Persaeus, at first Zeno's slave and afterward his friend and disciple. The first account is given by Apollonius of Tyre, who flourished around the time of Augustus Caesar, between two and three hundred years after Zeno's death. I do not know who is the author of the second account. Apollonius was himself a Stoic. He had probably thought that, since the school talked so much about voluntary death, it would do honor to its founder to have died in this way, by his own hand. After their deaths, men of letters are often more talked about than the greatest princes or statesmen of their time. During their lives, however, they are generally so obscure and insignificant that contemporary historians seldom record their

22 Theramenes and Phocion were Athenian statesmen condemned to drink hemlock (404 and 318 BC). Eumenes, one of Alexander's generals, was betrayed to his rival Antigonus in 316 BC.

23 Philopoemen, general of the Achaean League, died in Messenian captivity in 183 BC.

24 Euripides' *Niobe* survives only in fragments.

adventures. Later writers wanted to satisfy public curiosity, and they had no authentic documents either to support or to contradict their stories. They seem often to have shaped those stories to their own fancy, and almost always with a large admixture of the marvelous. In this particular case the marvelous, though supported by no authority, seems to have won out over the probable, though the probable was supported by the best. Diogenes Laertius plainly prefers Apollonius's story. Lucian and Lactantius both seem to have believed the story of the great age and the violent death.[25]

VII.ii.1.32 This fashion of voluntary death seems to have been much more prevalent among the proud Romans than it ever was among the lively, ingenious, and accommodating Greeks. Even among the Romans, the fashion seems not to have been established in the early ages of the republic, the ages called virtuous. The common story of the death of Regulus is probably a fable. Yet it could never have been invented if people had thought that any dishonor could fall on that hero for patiently submitting to the tortures the Carthaginians are said to have inflicted on him. In the later ages of the republic, I suspect, some dishonor would have attended such submission.[26] In the various civil wars that preceded the fall of the commonwealth, many eminent men of all the contending parties chose to die by their own hands rather than fall into those of their enemies. Cicero celebrated the death of Cato and Caesar censured it, and it became the subject of a very serious controversy between perhaps the two most illustrious advocates the world had ever seen. That death stamped on this way of dying a character of splendor that it seems to have kept for several ages afterward. Cicero's eloquence was superior to Caesar's.[27] The admiring party won out decisively over the censuring one. For many ages afterward, lovers of liberty looked up to Cato as the most venerable martyr of

25 Diogenes Laertius (3rd century AD) wrote *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*; Lucian was a 2nd-century satirist and Lactantius a 4th-century Christian writer.
26 Marcus Atilius Regulus, Roman consul captured in the First Punic War, was said to have returned to Carthage as he had sworn to do and been tortured to death.
27 Cicero praised Cato in a eulogy, *Cato*, and Caesar answered with an *Anticato*.

the republican party. The head of a party, the Cardinal de Retz observes, may do whatever he pleases: as long as he keeps the confidence of his own friends, he can never do wrong. His Eminence himself had occasion more than once to experience the truth of this maxim. Cato, it seems, added to his other virtues that of being an excellent drinking companion. His enemies accused him of drunkenness. But, says Seneca, whoever charges Cato with this vice will find it much easier to prove that drunkenness is a virtue than that Cato could be addicted to any vice.

VII.ii.1.33 Under the emperors this way of dying seems to have been perfectly fashionable for a long time. In Pliny's letters we find accounts of several people who chose to die in this way. It would seem they did so out of vanity and ostentation rather than for any reason that would appear proper or necessary even to a sober and judicious Stoic. Even the ladies, who are seldom slow to follow a fashion, seem often to have chosen, quite unnecessarily, to die in this way. Like the ladies of Bengal, they would on some occasions accompany their husbands to the tomb. The prevalence of this fashion certainly caused many deaths that would not otherwise have happened.[28] This was perhaps the highest exertion of human vanity and folly. Yet the havoc it could cause would probably never be very great at any time.[29]

VII.ii.1.34 The principle of suicide—the principle that would teach us, on some occasions, to regard that violent act as something to applaud and approve—seems to be entirely a refinement of philosophy. Nature, in her sound and healthy state, never seems to prompt us to suicide. There is, indeed, a kind of melancholy (a disease to which human nature, among its other calamities, is unhappily subject) that seems to be accompanied by what one may call an irresistible appetite for self-destruction. Often in circumstances of the greatest outward prosperity, and sometimes even in spite of the most serious and deeply

28 Pliny the Younger (c. AD 61–113). Smith alludes to sati, the practice of a widow's self-immolation on her husband's funeral pyre.

29 "Folly" renders Smith's "impertinence," used in its older sense of absurdity.

impressed religious feelings, this disease has frequently been known to drive its wretched victims to this fatal extreme. The unfortunate people who die in this miserable way are proper objects not of censure but of compassion. To try to punish them, when they are beyond the reach of all human punishment, is as unjust as it is absurd. That punishment can fall only on their surviving friends and relatives, who are always perfectly innocent, and for whom losing their friend in this disgraceful way must, by itself, always be a very heavy calamity. Nature, in her sound and healthy state, prompts us to avoid distress on all occasions, and on many occasions to defend ourselves against it, even at the risk, or even with the certainty, of dying in that defense. But when we have neither been able to defend ourselves from it nor died in that defense, no natural principle, no regard for the approbation of the supposed impartial spectator, for the judgment of the man within the breast, seems to call on us to escape it by destroying ourselves. Only the consciousness of our own weakness—of our own inability to bear the calamity with proper manliness and firmness—can drive us to this resolution. I do not remember ever reading or hearing of any Native American who, on being taken prisoner by a hostile tribe, killed himself to avoid being put to death afterward under torture, amid the insults and mockery of his enemies. He places his glory in bearing those torments with manliness, and in answering those insults with tenfold contempt and derision.

EPICTETUS AND ANTONINUS

Epictetus's contempt of life and Marcus Aurelius's contentment with every event.

VII.ii.1.35 This contempt of life and death, however, together with the most complete submission to the order of Providence—the most complete contentment with every event that the current of human affairs could possibly throw up—may be regarded as the two fundamental doctrines on which the whole structure of Stoic morality rested. The independent and spirited, but often

harsh, Epictetus may be regarded as the great apostle of the first of these doctrines; the mild, humane, and benevolent Antoninus, of the second.[30]

VII.ii.1.36 The freed slave of Epaphroditus—who in his youth had been subjected to the insolence of a brutal master; who in his later years was banished from Rome and Athens by the jealousy and caprice of Domitian and obliged to live at Nicopolis; and who might expect at any moment to be sent by the same tyrant to Gyara, or perhaps to be put to death—could preserve his tranquility only by cultivating in his mind the most sovereign contempt for human life. Accordingly, he never exults so much, and his eloquence is never so animated, as when he describes the futility and nothingness of all its pleasures and all its pains.[31]

VII.ii.1.37 The good-natured emperor, absolute sovereign of the whole civilized part of the world, who certainly had no special reason to complain of his own lot, delights in expressing his contentment with the ordinary course of things, and in pointing out beauties even in those parts of it where ordinary observers are not inclined to see any. There is a propriety, he observes, and even an engaging grace, in old age as well as in youth; and the weakness and decrepitude of the one state are as suited to nature as the bloom and vigor of the other. Death, too, is just as proper an ending to old age as youth is to childhood, or manhood to youth. Just as we often say, he remarks elsewhere, that the physician has ordered some man to ride on horseback, or to take cold baths, or to walk barefoot, so we ought to say that Nature, the great director and physician of the universe, has ordered for some man a disease, or the amputation of a limb, or the loss of a child. Under the prescriptions of ordinary physicians the patient swallows many a bitter potion and undergoes many a painful operation. Yet, on the very uncertain hope that health may follow, he gladly submits to all of it. In the same way, the patient may hope that the harshest prescriptions of the great Physician of nature will contribute to his own health, to his own

30 Antoninus: the emperor Marcus Aurelius, author of the Stoic *Meditations*.
31 Epaphroditus was a freedman and secretary of the emperor Nero.

ultimate prosperity and happiness; and he may be perfectly certain that they not only contribute to, but are indispensably necessary for, the health, prosperity, and happiness of the universe, for the furtherance and advancement of the great plan of Jupiter. Had they not been so, the universe would never have produced them; its all-wise Architect and Director would never have allowed them to happen. Just as all the coexisting parts of the universe, even the smallest, are exactly fitted to one another and all contribute to make up one immense and connected system, so all the successive events that follow one another, even those that seem most insignificant, are parts—necessary parts—of that great chain of causes and effects which had no beginning and will have no end. And since they all necessarily result from the original arrangement and design of the whole, they are all essentially necessary not only to its prosperity but to its continuance and preservation. Whoever does not wholeheartedly embrace whatever happens to him, whoever is sorry that it has happened to him, whoever wishes that it had not happened to him, wishes, as far as lies in his power, to stop the motion of the universe, to break that great chain of succession through whose progress alone that system can be continued and preserved, and, for some small convenience of his own, to disorder and upset the whole machine of the world. "O world," he says elsewhere, "all things suit me that suit you. Nothing is too early or too late for me that is timely for you. All is fruit to me that your seasons bring forth. From you are all things; in you are all things; for you are all things. One man says, 'O beloved city of Cecrops.' Will you not say, 'O beloved city of God'?"[32]

32 Cecrops was the legendary first king of Athens; Marcus Aurelius is quoting a poet's line about Athens.

THE STOIC PARADOXES AND THE PLAN OF NATURE

The Stoic paradoxes, and how Nature's plan for our conduct differs from Stoic apathy.

VII.ii.1.38 From these very sublime doctrines the Stoics, or at least some of them, tried to deduce all their paradoxes.

VII.ii.1.39 The Stoic wise man tried to enter into the views of the great Superintendent of the universe, and to see things in the same light in which that divine Being saw them. But to the great Superintendent of the universe, all the different events that the course of his providence may bring forth—what to us seem the smallest and the greatest, the bursting of a bubble, for example, as Mr. Pope says, and that of a world—were perfectly equal: equally parts of that great chain which he had predestined from all eternity, equally the effects of the same unerring wisdom, of the same universal and boundless benevolence.[33] In the same way, to the Stoic wise man all those different events were perfectly equal. In the course of those events, indeed, a little department had been assigned to him, in which he himself had some little management and direction. In this department he tried to act as properly as he could, and to conduct himself according to the orders which, he understood, had been prescribed to him. But he took no anxious or passionate concern either in the success or in the failure of his own most faithful efforts. The highest prosperity and the total destruction of that little department, of that little system which had in some measure been committed to his care, were perfectly indifferent to him. If those events had depended on him, he would have chosen the one and rejected the other. But since they did not depend on him, he trusted to a higher wisdom, and was perfectly satisfied that the event that happened, whatever it might be, was the very event that he himself, had he known all the connections and dependencies of things, would most earnestly and devoutly have wished for. Whatever he did under the influ-

33 Pope, *An Essay on Man* I.90: "And now a bubble burst, and now a world."

ence and direction of these principles was equally perfect; and when he stretched out his finger—to give the example they commonly used—he performed an action in every respect as meritorious, as worthy of praise and admiration, as when he laid down his life in the service of his country. Just as to the great Superintendent of the universe the greatest and the smallest exertions of his power—the formation and dissolution of a world, the formation and dissolution of a bubble—were equally easy, equally admirable, and equally the effects of the same divine wisdom and benevolence, so to the Stoic wise man what we would call the great action required no more effort than the little one. It was equally easy, proceeded from exactly the same principles, and was in no respect more meritorious, nor worthy of any higher degree of praise and admiration.

VII.ii.1.40 As all those who had reached this state of perfection were equally happy, so all those who fell even the smallest degree short of it, however closely they might approach it, were equally miserable. Just as the man who was only an inch below the surface of the water, they said, could no more breathe than the man a hundred yards below it, so the man who had not completely subdued all his private, partial, and selfish passions—who had any other earnest desire than the desire for universal happiness, who had not completely emerged from that abyss of misery and disorder into which his anxiety to gratify those private, partial, and selfish passions had plunged him—could no more breathe the free air of liberty and independence, could no more enjoy the security and happiness of the wise man, than the man furthest from that situation. As all the actions of the wise man were perfect, and equally perfect, so all those of the man who had not reached this supreme wisdom were faulty, and, as some Stoics claimed, equally faulty. Just as one truth, they said, could not be truer than another, nor one falsehood more false, so an honorable action could not be more honorable than another, nor a shameful one more shameful. As in shooting at a target the man who missed it by an inch had missed it just as much as the man who missed it by a hundred yards, so the

man who had acted improperly and without sufficient reason in what seems to us the most insignificant action was just as faulty as the man who had done so in what seems to us the most important: the man who killed a rooster, for example, improperly and without sufficient reason, as faulty as the man who murdered his father.

VII.ii.1.41 If the first of these two paradoxes seems violent enough, the second is plainly too absurd to deserve any serious consideration. It is indeed so absurd that one can scarcely help suspecting it must have been to some extent misunderstood or misrepresented. At any rate, I cannot let myself believe that men like Zeno or Cleanthes—men said to have had the simplest as well as the most sublime eloquence—could have been the authors either of these or of most of the other Stoic paradoxes, which are generally mere pointless quibbles, and do so little credit to their system that I shall give no further account of them. I am inclined rather to attribute them to Chrysippus, who was indeed the disciple and follower of Zeno and Cleanthes, but who, from everything handed down to us about him, seems to have been a mere dialectical pedant, without taste or elegance of any kind. He may have been the first to reduce their doctrines to a scholastic or technical system of artificial definitions, divisions, and subdivisions—perhaps one of the most effective ways of extinguishing whatever good sense there may be in any moral or metaphysical doctrine.[34] Such a man may very easily be supposed to have taken too literally some lively expressions his masters used in describing the happiness of the man of perfect virtue and the unhappiness of anyone who fell short of that character.

VII.ii.1.42 The Stoics in general seem to have admitted that there might be some degree of progress in those who had not advanced to perfect virtue and happiness. They divided these learners into different classes according to how far they had advanced; and they called the imperfect virtues they supposed them capable of practicing not rectitudes but proprieties, fit-

34 Cleanthes and then Chrysippus succeeded Zeno as heads of the Stoic school.

nesses, decent and becoming actions for which a plausible or probable reason could be given—what Cicero expresses by the Latin word *officia*, and Seneca, more exactly I think, by *convenientia*. The doctrine of these imperfect but attainable virtues seems to have made up what we may call the practical morality of the Stoics.[35] It is the subject of Cicero's *Offices*, and is said to have been the subject of another book, written by Marcus Brutus, which is now lost.[36]

VII.ii.1.43 The plan and system that Nature has sketched out for our conduct seems to be altogether different from that of the Stoic philosophy.

VII.ii.1.44 By Nature, the events that immediately affect that little department in which we ourselves have some little management and direction—that immediately affect ourselves, our friends, our country—are the events that interest us most, and that chiefly arouse our desires and aversions, our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows. Should those passions be too vehement, as they are very apt to be, Nature has provided a proper remedy and correction. The real or even the imagined presence of the impartial spectator, the authority of the man within the breast, is always at hand to awe them into the proper tone and temper of moderation.

VII.ii.1.45 If, despite our most faithful efforts, all the events that can affect this little department turn out as unfortunate and disastrous as possible, Nature has by no means left us without consolation. That consolation may be drawn not only from the complete approbation of the man within the breast but, if possible, from a still nobler and more generous principle. This is a firm reliance on, and a reverent submission to, that benevolent wisdom which directs all the events of human life. We may be sure that this wisdom would never have allowed those misfortunes to happen, had they not been indispensably necessary for the good of the whole.

VII.ii.1.46 Nature has not prescribed this sublime contemplation to us as the great business and occupation of our lives. She only

35 *Officia*: "duties"; *convenientia*: "things fitting" or "appropriate acts."

points it out to us as the consolation for our misfortunes. The Stoic philosophy prescribes it as the great business and occupation of our lives. That philosophy teaches us to take an earnest and anxious interest in no events outside the good order of our own minds and the propriety of our own choosing and rejecting. The only exception is the events which concern a department in which we neither have nor ought to have any kind of management or direction: the department of the great Superintendent of the universe. It prescribes a perfect apathy to us. It tries not merely to moderate but to root out all our private, partial, and selfish affections. Whatever may befall ourselves, our friends, or our country, it allows us to feel not even the sympathetic and reduced passions of the impartial spectator. In all these ways it tries to make us entirely indifferent to, and unconcerned with, the success or failure of everything that Nature has prescribed to us as the proper business and occupation of our lives.

VII.ii.1.47 It may be said that the reasonings of philosophy, though they may confuse and perplex the understanding, can never break the necessary connection which Nature has established between causes and their effects. The causes which naturally excite our desires and aversions, our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, would no doubt still produce their proper and necessary effects on each individual, in spite of all the reasonings of Stoicism. How strong those effects were would depend on the degree of his actual sensibility. The judgments of the man within the breast, however, might be considerably affected by those reasonings. That great inmate might be taught by them to try to overawe all our private, partial, and selfish affections into a more or less perfect tranquillity. To direct the judgments of this inmate is the great purpose of all systems of morality. It cannot be doubted that the Stoic philosophy had a very great influence on the character and conduct of its followers. It might sometimes incite them to unnecessary violence. But its general tendency was to inspire them to actions of the most heroic magnanimity and the most far-reaching benevolence.

36 Cicero's *Offices*: his *De officiis* ("On Duties"), 44 BC.

MODERN SYSTEMS OF PROPRIETY

Clarke, Wollaston and Shaftesbury also place virtue in propriety, but give no measure of it.

VII.ii.1.48 IV. Besides these ancient systems, there are some modern ones according to which virtue consists in propriety, that is, in the suitableness of the affection from which we act to the cause or object which excites it. First there is the system of Dr. Clarke. It places virtue in acting according to the relations of things, that is, in regulating our conduct according to the fitness or incongruity there may be in applying certain actions to certain things or to certain relations. Then there is that of Mr.[37] Wollaston, which places it in acting according to the truth of things: according to their proper nature and essence, or treating them as what they really are and not as what they are not. Finally there is that of Lord Shaftesbury, which places it in maintaining a proper balance of the affections and in allowing no passion to go beyond its proper sphere. All of these are more or less inaccurate descriptions of the same fundamental idea.[38]

VII.ii.1.49 None of those systems gives, or even pretends to give, any precise or distinct measure by which this fitness or propriety of affection can be ascertained or judged. That precise and distinct measure can be found nowhere but in the sympathetic feelings of the impartial and well-informed spectator.

VII.ii.1.50 Each of those systems gives a description of virtue, or at least means and intends to give one, for some of the modern authors are not very happy in their way of expressing themselves. That description is no doubt quite just as far as it goes. There is no virtue without propriety, and wherever there is propriety some degree of approbation is due. But this description is still imperfect. For though propriety is an essential ingredient in

37 Smith spells the name "Clark."

38 William Wollaston (1659–1724), author of *The Religion of Nature Delineated* (1722). Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), author of *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711).

every virtuous action, it is not always the only ingredient. Beneficent actions have another quality in them, by which they appear to deserve not only approbation but reward. None of those systems accounts, either easily or adequately, for the higher degree of esteem which seems due to such actions, or for the different sentiment which they naturally excite. Nor is the description of vice any more complete. For in the same way, though impropriety is a necessary ingredient in every vicious action, it is not always the only ingredient. And there is often the highest degree of absurdity and impropriety in very harmless and insignificant actions. Deliberate actions that tend to harm those we live with have, besides their impropriety, a peculiar quality of their own. Because of it they appear to deserve not only disapprobation but punishment, and to be objects not merely of dislike but of resentment and revenge. None of those systems easily and adequately accounts for the higher degree of detestation we feel for such actions.

CHAPTER II: OF THOSE SYSTEMS WHICH MAKE VIRTUE CONSIST IN PRUDENCE

Epicurus reduces every virtue to prudence in pursuing bodily ease and peace of mind.

VII.ii.2.1 Of the systems which make virtue consist in prudence, the most ancient one that has left us any considerable remains is that of Epicurus. He is said, however, to have borrowed all the leading principles of his philosophy from some of those who came before him, particularly from Aristippus. Despite this charge by his enemies, it is very probable that at least his way of applying those principles was entirely his own.[39]

VII.ii.2.2 According to Epicurus[40], bodily pleasure and pain were the only ultimate objects of natural desire and aversion. He thought it needed no proof that they were always the natural objects of those passions. Pleasure might indeed sometimes

39 Epicurus (341–270 BC), Athenian philosopher, founder of the Epicurean school.
40 SMITH'S NOTE. See Cicero, *De finibus*, book 1; Diogenes Laertius, book 10.

appear to be avoided. But this was not because it was pleasure. It was because by enjoying it we would either lose some greater pleasure, or expose ourselves to some pain that was more to be avoided than this pleasure was to be desired. In the same way, pain might sometimes appear to be worth choosing. But this was not because it was pain. It was because by enduring it we might either avoid a still greater pain or gain some much more important pleasure. He thought, therefore, that it was abundantly evident that bodily pain and pleasure were always the natural objects of desire and aversion. Nor, he believed, was it any less evident that they were the only ultimate objects of those passions. According to him, whatever else was desired or avoided was desired or avoided because of its tendency to produce one or the other of those sensations. The tendency to bring pleasure made power and riches desirable, just as the opposite tendency to bring pain made poverty and insignificance objects of aversion. Honor and reputation were valued because the esteem and love of those we live with were of the greatest importance, both for procuring pleasure and for protecting us from pain. Disgrace and a bad reputation, on the contrary, were to be avoided. The hatred, contempt, and resentment of those we lived with destroyed all security and necessarily exposed us to the greatest bodily evils.

VII.ii.2.3 According to Epicurus, all the pleasures and pains of the mind were ultimately derived from those of the body. The mind was happy when it thought of the body's past pleasures and hoped for others to come. It was miserable when it thought of the pains the body had endured before and dreaded the same or greater ones in future.

VII.ii.2.4 But the pleasures and pains of the mind, though ultimately derived from those of the body, were vastly greater than their originals. The body felt only the sensation of the present instant. The mind, however, also felt the past and the future: the one by remembrance, the other by anticipation. Consequently it both suffered and enjoyed much more. When we are in the greatest bodily pain, he observed, we shall always find, if we pay

attention, that it is not the suffering of the present instant that chiefly torments us. It is either the agonizing memory of the past or the still more horrible dread of the future. The pain of each instant, considered by itself and cut off from all that comes before and after it, is a trifle not worth regarding. Yet this is all that the body can ever be said to suffer. In the same way, when we enjoy the greatest pleasure, we shall always find that the bodily sensation, the sensation of the present instant, makes up only a small part of our happiness. Our enjoyment arises chiefly either from the cheerful recollection of the past or from the still more joyful anticipation of the future. The mind always contributes by far the largest share of the entertainment.

VII.ii.2.5 Our happiness and misery, therefore, depended chiefly on the mind. So if this part of our nature was well disposed, and our thoughts and opinions were as they should be, it mattered little how our body was affected. Even in great bodily pain we might still enjoy a considerable share of happiness, if our reason and judgment kept their superiority. We might entertain ourselves with the memory of past pleasure and the hope of future pleasure. We might soften the severity of our pains by recalling what it was that, even in this situation, we were under any necessity of suffering. This, we might recall, was merely the bodily sensation, the pain of the present instant, which by itself could never be very great. Whatever agony we suffered from dreading that it would continue was the effect of an opinion of the mind, and this could be corrected by juster sentiments. We could consider that, if our pains were violent, they would probably be short; that, if they lasted long, they would probably be moderate and allow many intervals of ease; and that, in any case, death was always at hand and within call to deliver us. According to him, death put an end to all sensation, whether of pain or pleasure, and so it could not be regarded as an evil. "When we are," he said, "death is not; and when death is, we are not; death therefore can be nothing to us."

VII.ii.2.6 If the actual sensation of positive pain was in itself so little to be feared, that of pleasure was even less to be desired.

The sensation of pleasure was naturally much less sharp than that of pain. If, then, pain could take so very little from the happiness of a well-disposed mind, pleasure could add scarcely anything to it. When the body was free from pain and the mind from fear and anxiety, any added sensation of bodily pleasure could be of very little importance. It might vary the happiness of this situation, but it could not properly be said to increase it.

VII.ii.2.7 According to Epicurus, therefore, the most perfect state of human nature, the most complete happiness that man was capable of enjoying, consisted in ease of body and in security or tranquillity of mind. To obtain this great end of natural desire was the sole object of all the virtues. According to him, these were desirable not for their own sake but for their tendency to bring about this situation.

VII.ii.2.8 Prudence, for example, was not desirable for its own sake, even though this philosophy made it the source and principle of all the virtues. That careful, laborious, and circumspect state of mind is always watchful and always attentive to the most distant consequences of every action. Such a state could not be pleasant or agreeable for its own sake. It was valued only for its tendency to procure the greatest goods and keep off the greatest evils.

VII.ii.2.9 Likewise, the office of temperance was to abstain from pleasure and to curb and restrain our natural passions for enjoyment. This could never be desirable for its own sake. The whole value of this virtue arose from its utility. It enabled us to postpone a present enjoyment for the sake of a greater one to come, or to avoid a greater pain that might follow from it. Temperance, in short, was nothing but prudence with regard to pleasure.

VII.ii.2.10 Fortitude would often lead us into situations where we had to bear labor, endure pain, or be exposed to danger or death. These were surely even less the objects of natural desire. They were chosen only to avoid greater evils. We submitted to labor in order to avoid the greater shame and pain of poverty. We exposed ourselves to danger and death in defense of our liberty and property, which were the means and instruments of

pleasure and happiness. Or we did so in defense of our country, whose safety necessarily included our own. Fortitude enabled us to do all this cheerfully, as the best that could possibly be done in our present situation. It was in reality no more than prudence, good judgment, and presence of mind in properly weighing pain, labor, and danger, always choosing the lesser in order to avoid the greater.

VII.ii.2.11 It is the same with justice. To abstain from what belongs to another was not desirable for its own sake, and it surely could not be better for you that I should possess what is my own than that you should possess it. You ought, however, to abstain from whatever belongs to me, because if you do otherwise you will provoke the resentment and indignation of mankind. The security and tranquillity of your mind will be entirely destroyed. You will be filled with fear and dismay at the thought of the punishment that you will imagine men are always ready to inflict on you, and from which, in your own imagination, no power, no skill, no concealment will ever be enough to protect you. That other kind of justice, which consists in doing proper good offices to different persons according to the various relations in which they may stand to us—as neighbors, kinsmen, friends, benefactors, superiors, or equals—is recommended by the same reasons. To act properly in all these different relations wins us the esteem and love of those we live with, just as acting otherwise arouses their contempt and hatred. By the one we naturally secure our own ease and tranquillity, the great and ultimate objects of all our desires; by the other we necessarily endanger them. The whole virtue of justice, therefore—the most important of all the virtues—is no more than discreet and prudent conduct toward our neighbors.

SMITH'S JUDGMENT OF EPICURUS

Smith finds what is true in Epicurus, and where he goes wrong.

VII.ii.2.12 Such is the doctrine of Epicurus on the nature of virtue. It may seem extraordinary that this philosopher, who is described

as a man of the most amiable manners, should never have noticed that, whatever the tendency of these virtues, or of the contrary vices, with regard to our bodily ease and security, the sentiments they naturally arouse in others are objects of a far more passionate desire or aversion than all their other consequences; that to be amiable, to be respectable, to be the proper object of esteem, is valued by every well-disposed mind more than all the ease and security that love, respect, and esteem can bring us; that, on the contrary, to be odious, to be contemptible, to be the proper object of indignation, is more dreadful than anything we can suffer in our body from hatred, contempt, or indignation; and that consequently our desire for the one character, and our aversion to the other, cannot arise from any regard to the effects that either is likely to produce on the body.

VII.ii.2.13 This system is, no doubt, wholly inconsistent with the one I have been trying to establish. It is not difficult, however, to discover from what phase, if I may put it that way—from what particular view or aspect of nature—this account of things draws its plausibility. By the wise contrivance of the Author of nature, virtue is, on all ordinary occasions,[41] even with regard to this life, real wisdom, and the surest and quickest means of obtaining both safety and advantage. Our success or failure in our undertakings must depend very much on the good or bad opinion commonly held of us, and on the general disposition of those we live with either to help us or to oppose us. But the best, the surest, the easiest, and the quickest way of obtaining the favorable judgments of others, and of avoiding the unfavorable ones, is undoubtedly to make ourselves the proper objects of the former and not of the latter. "Do you want," said Socrates, "the reputation of a good musician? The only sure way to get it is to become a good musician. Would you, in the same way, like to be thought capable of serving your country as a general or as a statesman? Here too the best way is really to acquire the art and experience of war and government, and to become really fit to

41 "Phasis": an old word for an appearance or phase, as of the moon.

be a general or a statesman.[42] And in the same way, if you want to be thought sober, temperate, just, and equitable, the best way to acquire that reputation is to become sober, temperate, just, and equitable. If you can really make yourself amiable, respectable, and the proper object of esteem, there is no fear that you will not soon gain the love, the respect, and the esteem of those you live with." Since the practice of virtue, therefore, is in general so advantageous, and that of vice so contrary to our interest, the consideration of these opposite tendencies undoubtedly stamps an additional beauty and propriety on the one, and a new deformity and impropriety on the other. Temperance, magnanimity, justice, and beneficence thus come to be approved of, not only in their own proper characters, but in the additional character of the highest wisdom and the most real prudence. And in the same way, the contrary vices—intemperance, faintheartedness, injustice, and either malevolence or sordid selfishness—come to be disapproved of, not only in their own proper characters, but in the additional character of the most short-sighted folly and weakness. In every virtue, Epicurus appears to have attended to this kind of propriety only. It is the kind most likely to occur to those who are trying to persuade others to regular conduct. When men show plainly by their practice, and perhaps by their maxims too, that the natural beauty of virtue is unlikely to have much effect on them, how can we possibly move them except by pointing out the folly of their conduct, and how much they themselves are likely to suffer from it in the end?

VII.ii.2.14 In tracing all the different virtues back to this one kind of propriety, Epicurus also indulged a propensity that is natural to all men, but that philosophers in particular tend to cultivate with special fondness, as the great means of displaying their ingenuity: the propensity to account for all appearances from as few principles as possible. And he no doubt indulged this propensity still further when he referred all the primary objects of natural desire and aversion to the pleasures and pains of the

42 Smith paraphrases Socrates as reported in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (I.vii).

body. The great champion of the atomic philosophy, who took so much pleasure in deriving all the powers and qualities of bodies from the most obvious and familiar of them—the shape, motion, and arrangement of the small parts of matter—no doubt felt a similar satisfaction when he accounted in the same way for all the sentiments and passions of the mind from those that are most obvious and familiar.

VII.ii.2.15 The system of Epicurus agreed with those of Plato, Aristotle, and Zeno in making virtue consist in acting in the way best suited to obtain the primary objects of natural desire.[43] It differed from all of them in two other respects: first, in the account it gave of those primary objects of natural desire; and second, in the account it gave of the excellence of virtue, or of the reason why that quality ought to be esteemed.

VII.ii.2.16 The primary objects of natural desire consisted, according to Epicurus, in bodily pleasure and pain, and in nothing else; whereas, according to the other three philosophers, there were many other objects—such as knowledge, and the happiness of our relatives, our friends, and our country—that were ultimately desirable for their own sakes.

VII.ii.2.17 Virtue too, according to Epicurus, did not deserve to be pursued for its own sake, nor was it itself one of the ultimate objects of natural appetite; it was worth choosing only because of its tendency to prevent pain and to bring ease and pleasure. In the opinion of the other three, on the contrary, it was desirable not merely as the means of obtaining the other primary objects of natural desire, but as something in itself more valuable than all of them. Man, they thought, being born for action, his happiness must consist not merely in the agreeableness of his passive sensations, but also in the propriety of his active exertions.

43 SMITH'S NOTE. *Prima naturæ*.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Latin: "the first things of nature," Cicero's term for the primary objects of natural desire.

CHAPTER III: OF THOSE SYSTEMS WHICH MAKE VIRTUE CONSIST IN BENEVOLENCE

The later Platonists and Hutcheson make disinterested benevolence the whole of virtue.

VII.ii.3.1 The system that makes virtue consist in benevolence, though not, I think, as ancient as all of those I have already described, is nevertheless of very great antiquity. It seems to have been the doctrine of most of those philosophers who, around and after the age of Augustus, called themselves Eclectics, who claimed to follow chiefly the opinions of Plato and Pythagoras, and who for that reason are commonly known as the later Platonists.[44]

VII.ii.3.2 In the divine nature, according to these authors, benevolence or love was the sole principle of action, and directed the exercise of all the other attributes. The wisdom of the Deity was employed in finding the means to bring about the ends that his goodness suggested, just as his infinite power was exerted to carry them out. Benevolence, however, was still the supreme and governing attribute, to which the others were subordinate, and from which the whole excellence—or the whole morality, if I may be allowed such an expression—of the divine operations was ultimately derived. The whole perfection and virtue of the human mind consisted in some resemblance to, or share in, the divine perfections, and consequently in being filled with the same principle of benevolence and love that influenced all the actions of the Deity. Only those actions of men that flowed from this motive were truly praise-worthy, or could claim any merit in the sight of the Deity. It was only by acts of charity and love that we could imitate, as was fitting for us, the conduct of God; that we could express our humble and devout admiration of his infinite perfections; that, by fostering the same divine principle in our own minds, we could bring our own affections into a closer resemblance with his holy attributes, and so become

44 The "later Platonists" are the thinkers now usually called Neoplatonists.

more proper objects of his love and esteem—until at last we arrived at that immediate converse and communication with the Deity to which it was the great aim of this philosophy to raise us.

VII.ii.3.3 This system was much esteemed by many of the ancient fathers of the Christian church, and after the Reformation it was adopted by several divines of the most eminent piety and learning and of the most amiable manners—in particular by Dr. Ralph Cudworth, by Dr. Henry More, and by Mr. John Smith of Cambridge. But of all the champions of this system, ancient or modern, the late Dr. Hutcheson was undoubtedly, beyond all comparison, the most acute, the clearest, the most philosophical, and, what matters most of all, the soberest and most judicious.[45]

VII.ii.3.4 That virtue consists in benevolence is a notion supported by many appearances in human nature. It has already been observed that proper benevolence is the most graceful and agreeable of all the affections; that it is recommended to us by a double sympathy; that, since its tendency is necessarily beneficent, it is the proper object of gratitude and reward; and that for all these reasons it appears to our natural sentiments to possess a merit superior to any other. It has been observed too that even the weaknesses of benevolence are not very disagreeable to us, whereas those of every other passion are always extremely distasteful. Who does not abhor excessive malice, excessive selfishness, or excessive resentment? But even the most excessive indulgence of partial friendship is not so offensive. The benevolent passions alone can exert themselves without any regard or attention to propriety and yet keep something engaging about them. There is something pleasing even in mere instinctive good will, which goes on doing good offices without once reflecting whether this conduct makes it the proper object of blame or of approbation. It is not so with the other passions. The moment they are abandoned by the sense of propriety, the moment they are no longer accompanied by it, they cease to be agreeable.

45 Cudworth (1617–1688), More (1614–1687), and John Smith (1618–1652) were the "Cambridge Platonists."

VII.ii.3.5 Just as benevolence gives the actions that proceed from it a beauty superior to all others, so the lack of it, and still more the contrary inclination, gives a peculiar deformity to whatever shows such a disposition. Harmful actions are often punishable for no other reason than that they show a lack of sufficient attention to the happiness of our neighbor.

VII.ii.3.6 Besides all this, Dr. Hutcheson[46] observed that whenever some other motive was discovered behind an action supposed to proceed from benevolent affections, our sense of the merit of that action was diminished exactly as far as this motive was believed to have influenced it. If an action supposed to proceed from gratitude should be discovered to have arisen from the expectation of some new favor, or if what was taken to proceed from public spirit should be found to have originated in the hope of a money reward, such a discovery would entirely destroy all notion of merit or praise-worthiness in either of these actions. Since, therefore, the mixture of any selfish motive, like that of a baser alloy, diminished or took away altogether the merit that would otherwise have belonged to any action, it was evident, he thought, that virtue must consist in pure and disinterested benevolence alone.

VII.ii.3.7 When, on the contrary, actions commonly supposed to proceed from a selfish motive are discovered to have arisen from a benevolent one, this greatly enhances our sense of their merit. If we believed of anyone that he tried to increase his wealth with no other aim than doing friendly offices and making proper returns to his benefactors, we would only love and esteem him the more. And this observation seemed to confirm still further the conclusion that benevolence alone could stamp the character of virtue on any action.

VII.ii.3.8 Last of all, there was what he took to be clear proof that this account of virtue was correct. In all the disputes of casuists

46 SMITH'S NOTE. See *Inquiry concerning Virtue*, sections 1 and 2.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Hutcheson's *An Inquiry concerning the Original of our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good*, the second treatise of his *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725).

about the rightness of conduct, he observed, the public good was the standard they constantly appealed to. In doing so they universally acknowledged that whatever tended to promote the happiness of mankind was right, praiseworthy, and virtuous, and whatever had the contrary tendency was wrong, blamable, and vicious. In the recent debates about passive obedience and the right of resistance, the only point in dispute among sensible people was this: whether universal submission would probably bring greater evils than temporary insurrections when privileges were invaded.[47] Whether what tended most, on the whole, to the happiness of mankind was not also morally good was never once, he said, called into question.

VII.ii.3.9 Since benevolence was the only motive that could give any action the character of virtue, it followed that the greater the benevolence an action displayed, the greater the praise it must deserve.

VII.ii.3.10 Actions aimed at the happiness of a great community showed a wider benevolence than those aimed only at the happiness of a smaller system. So they were also proportionally more virtuous. The most virtuous of all affections, therefore, was the one that took as its object the happiness of all intelligent beings. On the other hand, the least virtuous of the affections to which the character of virtue could belong in any respect was the one that aimed no further than the happiness of a single individual, such as a son, a brother, or a friend.

VII.ii.3.11 The perfection of virtue consisted in directing all our actions to promote the greatest possible good, in subordinating all lesser affections to the desire for the general happiness of mankind, and in regarding oneself as only one of the many, whose prosperity was to be pursued only so far as it was consistent with, or conducive to, the prosperity of the whole.

VII.ii.3.12 Self-love was a principle that could never be virtuous in any degree or in any direction. It was vicious whenever it

47 The debates over passive obedience and the right of resistance ran through the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, especially around the Revolution of 1688.

obstructed the general good. When its only effect was to make the individual look after his own happiness, it was merely innocent. In that case it deserved no praise, but it ought not to incur any blame either. Benevolent actions performed in spite of some strong motive of self-interest were all the more virtuous for that reason, because they demonstrated the strength and vigor of the benevolent principle.

VII.ii.3.13 Dr. Hutcheson[48] was so far from allowing self-love to be a motive of virtuous action in any case that, according to him, even a regard for the pleasure of self-approbation, for the comforting applause of our own consciences, diminished the merit of a benevolent action. This was a selfish motive, he thought. So far as it contributed to any action, it showed the weakness of that pure and disinterested benevolence which alone could stamp the character of virtue on human conduct. In the common judgments of mankind, however, this regard for the approval of our own minds is not considered something that can diminish the virtue of an action in any respect. Quite the reverse: it is rather looked on as the only motive that deserves to be called virtuous.

VII.ii.3.14 Such is the account of the nature of virtue given in this amiable system. It has a special tendency to nourish and support in the human heart the noblest and most agreeable of all affections. It not only checks the injustice of self-love but, to some extent, discourages that principle altogether, by representing it as something that could never bring any honor to those it influenced.

THE LIMITS OF THE BENEVOLENT SYSTEM

Smith objects that the benevolent system cannot explain our approval of prudence and self-command.

VII.ii.3.15 Some of the other systems I have already described do not sufficiently explain where the special excellence of the supreme

48 SMITH'S NOTE. *Inquiry concerning Virtue*, section 2, article 4; also *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, section 5, last paragraph.

virtue of beneficence comes from. This system seems to have the opposite defect. It does not sufficiently explain where our approval of the lesser virtues comes from: prudence, vigilance, circumspection, temperance, constancy, firmness. The aim and purpose of our affections, and the beneficial or harmful effects they tend to produce, are the only qualities this system attends to at all. Their propriety and impropriety, their suitableness or unsuitableness to the cause that excites them, are disregarded altogether.

VII.ii.3.16 A regard for our own private happiness and interest also appears, on many occasions, to be a very praiseworthy principle of action. The habits of thrift, industry, discretion, attention, and application of thought are generally supposed to be cultivated from self-interested motives. At the same time, they are regarded as very praiseworthy qualities that deserve everyone's esteem and approbation. It is true that the mixture of a selfish motive often seems to tarnish the beauty of actions that ought to arise from a benevolent affection. The reason for this, however, is not that self-love can never be the motive of a virtuous action. It is that, in this particular case, the benevolent principle seems to lack its proper degree of strength and to be wholly unsuited to its object. The character therefore seems plainly imperfect and, on the whole, to deserve blame rather than praise. The mixture of a benevolent motive in an action that self-love alone ought to be enough to prompt is, indeed, less likely to diminish our sense of its propriety, or of the virtue of the person who performs it. We are not inclined to suspect anyone of being deficient in selfishness. This is by no means the weak side of human nature, or the failing we are apt to be suspicious of. Suppose, however, that we could really believe of some man that, if it were not for regard for his family and friends, he would not take proper care of his health, his life, or his fortune, which self-preservation alone ought to be enough to prompt him to do. That would undoubtedly be a failing, though one of those amiable failings that make a person an object of pity rather than of contempt or hatred. Even so, it would somewhat diminish the

dignity and respectability of his character. Carelessness and lack of thrift are universally disapproved of. They are disapproved of, however, not as arising from a lack of benevolence but from a lack of proper attention to the objects of self-interest.

VII.ii.3.17 Casuists often judge what is right or wrong in human conduct by its tendency to promote the welfare or the disorder of society. It does not follow that regard for the welfare of society should be the only virtuous motive of action. It follows only that, whenever motives compete, this regard ought to outweigh all the others.

VII.ii.3.18 Benevolence may perhaps be the only principle of action in the Deity, and there are several not improbable arguments that tend to persuade us it is. It is hard to conceive what other motive could move an independent and all-perfect Being, who needs nothing external and whose happiness is complete in himself. But whatever may be true of the Deity, a creature as imperfect as man, whose existence depends on so many things outside him, must often act from many other motives. The condition of human nature would be peculiarly hard if the affections that, by the very nature of our being, ought often to influence our conduct could never on any occasion appear virtuous, or deserve esteem and commendation from anyone.

OTHER ACCOUNTS OF VIRTUE

Other accounts, such as obedience to God's will or utility, reduce to the three systems.

VII.ii.3.19 These three systems—the one that places virtue in propriety, the one that places it in prudence, and the one that makes it consist in benevolence—are the principal accounts that have been given of the nature of virtue. All the other descriptions of virtue, however different they may appear, can easily be reduced to one or another of them.

VII.ii.3.20 The system that places virtue in obedience to the will of the Deity may be counted either among those that make it consist in prudence or among those that make it consist in pro-

priety. Suppose someone asks why we ought to obey the will of the Deity. Asked out of any doubt that we ought to obey him, the question would be impious and absurd in the highest degree. Otherwise it admits of only two different answers. Either it must be said that we ought to obey the will of the Deity because he is a Being of infinite power, who will reward us eternally if we do so and punish us eternally if we do not. Or it must be said that, independently of any regard for our own happiness, or for rewards and punishments of any kind, there is a congruity and fitness in a creature's obeying its creator, in a limited and imperfect being's submitting to one of infinite and incomprehensible perfections. It is impossible to conceive of any answer to this question other than one or the other of these two. If the first answer is the right one, virtue consists in prudence, or in the proper pursuit of our own ultimate interest and happiness, since that is the reason we are obliged to obey the will of the Deity. If the second answer is the right one, virtue must consist in propriety, since the ground of our obligation to obey is the suitableness or congruity of the sentiments of humility and submission to the superiority of the object that excites them.

VII.ii.3.21 The system that places virtue in utility also coincides with the one that makes it consist in propriety. According to this system, all qualities of mind that are agreeable or advantageous, either to the person himself or to others, are approved of as virtuous, and their contraries are disapproved of as vicious. But the agreeableness or utility of any affection depends on the degree to which it is allowed to exist. Every affection is useful when it is kept within a certain degree of moderation, and every affection is harmful when it goes beyond its proper bounds. According to this system, therefore, virtue consists not in any one affection but in the proper degree of all the affections. The only difference between it and the system I have been trying to establish is that it makes utility, and not sympathy, or the corresponding affection of the spectator, the natural and original measure of this proper degree.

CHAPTER IV: OF LICENTIOUS SYSTEMS

Each system unbalances the affections somewhat, but all encourage good habits.

VII.ii.4.1 All the systems I have described so far suppose that there is a real and essential distinction between vice and virtue, whatever these qualities may consist in. There is a real and essential difference between the propriety and impropriety of any affection, between benevolence and any other principle of action, between real prudence and shortsighted folly or headlong rashness. On the whole, too, all of them help to encourage the praiseworthy disposition and to discourage the blamable one.

VII.ii.4.2 It may perhaps be true of some of them that they tend, to some extent, to upset the balance of the affections, and to give the mind a particular bias toward some principles of action beyond the proportion due to them. The ancient systems, which place virtue in propriety, seem chiefly to recommend the great, the awe-inspiring, and the respectable virtues: the virtues of self-government and self-command; fortitude, magnanimity, independence of fortune, contempt for all outward accidents, for pain, poverty, exile, and death. It is in these great exertions that the noblest propriety of conduct is displayed. By comparison, the soft, amiable, and gentle virtues, all the virtues of indulgent humanity, are given little emphasis. The Stoics in particular seem, on the contrary, often to have regarded them as mere weaknesses that a wise man ought not to harbor in his breast.

VII.ii.4.3 The benevolent system, on the other hand, fosters and encourages all those milder virtues in the highest degree, but it seems entirely to neglect the more awe-inspiring and respectable qualities of the mind. It even denies them the name of virtues. It calls them moral abilities, and treats them as qualities that do not deserve the same kind of esteem and approbation as what is properly called virtue. All the principles of action that

aim only at our own interest it treats, if that is possible, still worse. Far from having any merit of their own, it claims, they diminish the merit of benevolence when they work together with it. And prudence, it asserts, when employed only in promoting private interest, can never even be imagined to be a virtue.

VII.ii.4.4 The system that makes virtue consist in prudence alone, again, gives the highest encouragement to habits of caution, vigilance, sobriety, and judicious moderation. But it seems to degrade both the amiable and the respectable virtues equally, stripping the former of all their beauty and the latter of all their grandeur.

VII.ii.4.5 But despite these defects, the general tendency of each of these three systems is to encourage the best and most praiseworthy habits of the human mind. It would be good for society if mankind in general, or even the few who claim to live by some philosophical rule, regulated their conduct by the precepts of any one of them. We can learn from each of them something both valuable and distinctive. If it were possible to inspire the mind with fortitude and magnanimity by precept and exhortation, the ancient systems of propriety would seem sufficient to do it. Or if it were possible, by the same means, to soften the mind into humanity and to awaken affections of kindness and general love toward those we live with, some of the pictures the benevolent system presents to us might seem capable of producing this effect. From the system of Epicurus, though it is undoubtedly the most imperfect of the three, we can learn how much the practice of both the amiable and the respectable virtues contributes to our own interest, to our own ease, safety, and quiet, even in this life. Since Epicurus placed happiness in attaining ease and security, he took particular pains to show that virtue was not merely the best and surest means of acquiring those invaluable possessions, but the only means. Other philosophers have chiefly celebrated the good effects of virtue on our inward tranquility and peace of mind. Epicurus did not neglect this topic, but he chiefly insisted on the influence of that

amiable quality on our outward prosperity and safety. That is why his writings were so widely studied in the ancient world by men of every philosophical party. It is from him that Cicero, the great enemy of the Epicurean system, borrows his most agreeable proofs that virtue alone is sufficient to secure happiness. And Seneca, though a Stoic, of the sect most opposed to that of Epicurus, quotes this philosopher more often than any other.[49]

MANDEVILLE'S SYSTEM

Mandeville calls all virtue vanity; Smith separates love of virtue, love of true glory, and vanity.

VII.ii.4.6 There is, however, another system that seems to take away the distinction between vice and virtue altogether, and whose tendency is for that reason wholly pernicious: I mean the system of Dr. Mandeville. Though this author's notions are mistaken in almost every respect, there are nonetheless some appearances in human nature which, viewed in a certain way, seem at first sight to support them. Described and exaggerated by Dr. Mandeville's lively and humorous—though coarse and rustic—eloquence, these appearances have given his doctrines an air of truth and probability that very easily takes in the unskilled.[50]

VII.ii.4.7 Dr. Mandeville considers whatever is done from a sense of propriety—from a regard to what is commendable and praiseworthy—as being done from a love of praise and commendation, or, as he calls it, from vanity. Man, he observes, is naturally far more interested in his own happiness than in that of others, and it is impossible that in his heart he can ever really prefer their prosperity to his own. Whenever he appears to do so, we may be sure that he is deceiving us, and that he is then acting from the same selfish motives as at all other times. Among his other selfish passions, vanity is one of the strongest, and he is always

49 Seneca's *Moral Letters to Lucilius* repeatedly close with a saying of Epicurus.
50 Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* (1714; expanded 1723) was subtitled "Private Vices, Publick Benefits."

easily flattered and greatly delighted by the applause of those around him. When he appears to sacrifice his own interest to that of his companions, he knows that this conduct will be highly agreeable to their self-love, and that they will not fail to express their satisfaction by heaping the most extravagant praise on him. The pleasure he expects from this outweighs, in his opinion, the interest he gives up in order to obtain it. On this occasion, therefore, his conduct is in reality just as selfish, and arises from just as low a motive, as on any other. He is flattered, however, and he flatters himself, with the belief that it is entirely disinterested, since unless this were supposed, it would not seem to merit any commendation, either in his own eyes or in those of others. All public spirit, therefore, all preference of public to private interest, is according to him a mere cheat and imposition on mankind; and the human virtue that is so much boasted of, and that gives rise to so much emulation among men, is merely the offspring of flattery begotten on pride.

VII.ii.4.8 Whether the most generous and public-spirited actions may not, in some sense, be regarded as proceeding from self-love, I shall not examine at present. The answer to this question is not, I think, of any importance for establishing the reality of virtue, since self-love may often be a virtuous motive of action. I shall only try to show that the desire of doing what is honorable and noble, of making ourselves the proper objects of esteem and approbation, cannot with any propriety be called vanity. Even the love of well-grounded fame and reputation—the desire of acquiring esteem by what is really estimable—does not deserve that name. The first is the love of virtue, the noblest and the best passion of human nature. The second is the love of true glory, a passion no doubt inferior to the former, but one that in dignity seems to come immediately after it. He is guilty of vanity who desires praise for qualities that are either not praise-worthy in any degree, or not to the degree for which he expects to be praised for them; who stakes his character on the frivolous ornaments of dress and equipage, or on the equally frivolous accomplishments of ordinary behavior. He is guilty of vanity

who desires praise for what does indeed very well deserve it, but what he knows perfectly well does not belong to him.[51] The empty fop who gives himself airs of importance he has no right to, the silly liar who claims the credit of adventures that never happened, the foolish plagiarist who passes himself off as the author of what he has no claim to—these are properly accused of this passion. He too is said to be guilty of vanity who is not content with the silent sentiments of esteem and approbation; who seems fonder of their noisy expressions and acclamations than of the sentiments themselves; who is never satisfied except when his own praises are ringing in his ears; and who solicits, with the most anxious importunity, every external mark of respect, who is fond of titles, of compliments, of being visited, of being waited on, of being noticed in public places with a show of deference and attention. This frivolous passion is altogether different from either of the other two: it is the passion of the lowest and least of mankind, as they are the passions of the noblest and greatest.

VII.ii.4.9 These three passions—the desire of making ourselves the proper objects of honor and esteem, or of becoming what is honorable and estimable; the desire of acquiring honor and esteem by really deserving those sentiments; and the frivolous desire of praise at any price—are widely different. The first two are always approved of, while the last never fails to be despised. Yet there is a certain remote affinity among them, and this affinity, exaggerated by the humorous and entertaining eloquence of this lively author, has enabled him to impose on his readers. There is an affinity between vanity and the love of true glory, since both these passions aim at acquiring esteem and approbation. But they differ in this: the one is a just, reasonable, and fair passion, while the other is unjust, absurd, and ridiculous. The man who desires esteem for what is really estimable desires nothing but what he is justly entitled to, and what cannot be refused him without some sort of injury. He who desires it on any other terms, by contrast, demands what he has no just claim

51 "Equipage": a person's carriage, horses, and attendants, as a display of rank.

to. The first is easily satisfied. He is not inclined to be jealous or suspicious that we do not esteem him enough, and he is seldom anxious about receiving many external marks of our regard. The other, by contrast, can never be satisfied. He is full of jealousy and suspicion that we do not esteem him as much as he wishes, because he has some secret awareness that he wants more than he deserves. The least neglect of ceremony he regards as a mortal insult and as an expression of the most settled contempt. He is restless and impatient, perpetually afraid that we have lost all respect for him. For this reason he is always anxious to obtain new expressions of esteem, and can be kept in good temper only by continual attention and flattery.

VII.ii.4.10 There is an affinity, too, between the desire of becoming what is honorable and estimable and the desire of honor and esteem—between the love of virtue and the love of true glory. They resemble each other not only in this respect, that both aim at really being what is honorable and noble, but even in the respect in which the love of true glory resembles what is properly called vanity: some reference to the sentiments of others. The man of the greatest magnanimity, who desires virtue for its own sake and is most indifferent to what the opinions of mankind about him actually are, is still delighted by the thought of what they ought to be. He is delighted by the awareness that, though he may be neither honored nor applauded, he is still the proper object of honor and applause, and that if mankind were cool, candid, and consistent with themselves, and properly informed of the motives and circumstances of his conduct, they would not fail to honor and applaud him. Though he despises the opinions actually held of him, he sets the highest value on those that ought to be held of him. That he might think himself worthy of those honorable sentiments; and that, whatever idea other men might form of his character, when he put himself in their situation and considered not what their opinion was but what it ought to be, he should always think most highly of it himself— this was the great and exalted motive of his conduct. Since even in the love of virtue, then, there is still some refer-

ence to the opinion of others—if not to what it is, then to what in reason and propriety it ought to be—there is even in this respect some affinity between it and the love of true glory. At the same time, however, there is a very great difference between them. The man who acts solely from a regard to what is right and fit to be done, from a regard to what is the proper object of esteem and approbation, even if these sentiments should never be bestowed on him, acts from the most sublime and godlike motive that human nature is even capable of conceiving. The man, on the other hand, who while he desires to merit approbation is at the same time anxious to obtain it, is laudable on the whole too; yet his motives have a greater mixture of human weakness. He is in danger of being mortified by the ignorance and injustice of mankind, and his happiness is exposed to the envy of his rivals and the folly of the public. The happiness of the other, by contrast, is altogether secure and independent of fortune and of the whims of those he lives with. The contempt and hatred that the ignorance of mankind may throw on him he considers as not belonging to him, and he is not at all mortified by it. People despise and hate him from a false notion of his character and conduct. If they knew him better, they would esteem and love him. It is not, properly speaking, he whom they hate and despise, but another person they mistake him for. A friend of ours whom we met at a masquerade dressed as our enemy would be more amused than mortified if we vented our indignation on him under that disguise. Such are the sentiments of a man of real magnanimity when he is exposed to unjust censure. It seldom happens, however, that human nature reaches this degree of firmness. Though none but the weakest and most worthless of mankind take much delight in false glory, yet, by a strange inconsistency, false disgrace is often capable of mortifying those who seem the most resolute and determined.

PRIVATE VICES, PUBLIC BENEFITS

Mandeville treats every passion as wholly vicious, to argue that private vices are public benefits.

VII.ii.4.11 Dr. Mandeville is not satisfied with representing the frivolous motive of vanity as the source of all those actions commonly considered virtuous. He tries to point out the imperfection of human virtue in many other respects. In every case, he claims, it falls short of the complete self-denial it professes, and instead of a conquest of our passions it is commonly no more than a concealed indulgence of them. Wherever our restraint with regard to pleasure falls short of the most ascetic abstinence, he treats it as gross luxury and sensuality. According to him, everything is luxury that exceeds what is absolutely necessary for the support of human nature, so that there is vice even in wearing a clean shirt or living in a comfortable house. The indulgence of sexual desire, in the most lawful union, he considers the same sensuality as the most harmful gratification of that passion, and he mocks a temperance and a chastity that can be practiced at so cheap a rate. Here, as on many other occasions, the ingenious sophistry of his reasoning is covered by the ambiguity of language. Some of our passions have no names except those that mark their disagreeable and offensive degree. The spectator is more apt to notice them in this degree than in any other. When they shock his own sentiments, when they give him some sort of aversion and unease, he is necessarily obliged to attend to them, and is thereby naturally led to give them a name. When they fit in with the natural state of his own mind, he is very apt to overlook them altogether. Either he gives them no name at all, or, if he gives them one, it is a name that marks the subjection and restraint of the passion rather than the degree to which it is still allowed to exist after being so subjected and restrained. Thus the common names[52] for the love of pleasure and for the love of sex denote a vicious and offensive

52 SMITH'S NOTE. Luxury and lust.

degree of those passions. The words temperance and chastity, on the other hand, seem to mark the restraint and subjection under which those passions are kept, rather than the degree to which they are still allowed to exist. So when he can show that they still exist to some degree, he imagines that he has entirely demolished the reality of the virtues of temperance and chastity, and shown them to be mere impositions on the inattention and simplicity of mankind. Those virtues, however, do not require complete insensibility to the objects of the passions they are meant to govern. They aim only at restraining the violence of those passions far enough that they do not harm the individual, and neither disturb nor offend society.

VII.ii.4.12 It is the great fallacy of Dr. Mandeville's book[53] to represent every passion as wholly vicious if it is vicious in any degree and in any direction. This is how he treats everything as vanity that has any reference either to what the sentiments of others are or to what they ought to be. And it is by means of this sophistry that he establishes his favorite conclusion, that private vices are public benefits. Consider the love of magnificence: a taste for the elegant arts and improvements of human life, for whatever is agreeable in dress, furniture, or carriages and attendants, for architecture, sculpture, painting, and music. If this is to be regarded as luxury, sensuality, and ostentation, even in those whose situation allows them to indulge these passions without any inconvenience, then it is certain that luxury, sensuality, and ostentation are public benefits. For without the qualities on which he sees fit to bestow such abusive names, the arts of refinement could never find encouragement, and would have to languish for lack of employment. Certain popular ascetic doctrines that had been current before his time, which placed virtue in the complete rooting out and annihilation of all our passions, were the real foundation of this licentious system. It was easy for Dr. Mandeville to prove, first, that this complete conquest never actually took place among men; and second, that if it were to take place universally, it would be harmful to

53 SMITH'S NOTE. *The Fable of the Bees.*

society, since it would put an end to all industry and commerce, and in a sense to the whole business of human life. By the first of these propositions he seemed to prove that there was no real virtue, and that what claimed to be virtue was a mere cheat and imposition on mankind. By the second he seemed to prove that private vices were public benefits, since without them no society could prosper or flourish.

VII.ii.4.13 Such is the system of Dr. Mandeville, which once made so much noise in the world. Perhaps it never gave rise to more vice than there would have been without it. But at least it taught the vice that arose from other causes to appear with more effrontery, and to admit the corruption of its motives with a shameless audacity never heard of before.

VII.ii.4.14 But however destructive this system may appear, it could never have deceived so great a number of people, nor caused so general an alarm among the friends of better principles, had it not in some respects bordered on the truth. A system of natural philosophy may appear very plausible, and be very generally accepted in the world for a long time, and yet have no foundation in nature, nor any sort of resemblance to the truth. The vortices of Descartes were regarded by a very ingenious nation, for nearly a century, as a most satisfactory account of the revolutions of the heavenly bodies.[54] Yet it has been demonstrated, to the conviction of all mankind, that these supposed causes of those wonderful effects not only do not actually exist but are utterly impossible, and that if they did exist they could produce no such effects as are ascribed to them. But it is otherwise with systems of moral philosophy. An author who claims to account for the origin of our moral sentiments cannot deceive us so grossly, nor depart so very far from all resemblance to the truth. When a traveler gives an account of some distant country, he may impose on our credulity the most groundless and absurd fictions as the most certain matters of fact. But

54 Descartes held that the planets are carried around the sun by swirling vortices of fine matter. His theory was long favored in France and was displaced by Newton's theory of gravitation.

things are different when someone claims to inform us of what goes on in our neighborhood, and of the affairs of the very parish we live in. Here too, if we are so careless as not to examine things with our own eyes, he may deceive us in many respects. Yet the greatest falsehoods he imposes on us must bear some resemblance to the truth, and must even contain a considerable mixture of truth. An author who writes on natural philosophy, and claims to assign the causes of the great phenomena of the universe, claims to give an account of the affairs of a very distant country. He may tell us what he pleases about it, and as long as his story keeps within the bounds of apparent possibility, he need not despair of winning our belief. But when he proposes to explain the origin of our desires and affections, and of our sentiments of approbation and disapprobation, he claims to give an account not only of the affairs of the very parish we live in, but of our own household concerns. Here too we are very liable to be imposed on, like lazy masters who put their trust in a steward who deceives them. Yet we cannot pass any set of accounts that does not keep some slight regard for the truth. Some of the entries, at least, must be accurate, and even the most inflated must have had some foundation; otherwise the fraud would be detected even by the careless inspection we are inclined to give. Suppose an author assigned, as the cause of some natural sentiment, a principle that had no connection with it, and did not resemble any other principle that had some such connection. He would seem absurd and ridiculous to the most undiscerning and inexperienced reader.

SECTION III: OF THE DIFFERENT SYSTEMS WHICH HAVE BEEN FORMED CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLE OF APPROBATION — INTRODUCTION

Approval has been traced to three sources: self-love, reason, or sentiment.

VII.iii.intro.1 After the inquiry into the nature of virtue, the next important question in Moral Philosophy concerns the principle of approbation. This is the power or faculty of the mind that

makes certain characters agreeable or disagreeable to us. It makes us prefer one course of conduct to another, call the one right and the other wrong, and regard the one as the object of approbation, honor, and reward, and the other as the object of blame, censure, and punishment.

VII.iii.intro.2 Three different accounts have been given of this principle of approbation. According to some, we approve and disapprove both of our own actions and of those of others from self-love alone, or from some view of how they tend to our own happiness or disadvantage. According to others, reason—the same faculty by which we distinguish between truth and falsehood—enables us to distinguish between what is fit and unfit, both in actions and in affections. According to still others, this distinction is entirely the effect of immediate sentiment and feeling, and arises from the satisfaction or disgust that the sight of certain actions or affections inspires in us. Self-love, reason, and sentiment, then, are the three different sources that have been assigned for the principle of approbation.

VII.iii.intro.3 Before I go on to give an account of these different systems, I must observe that the settling of this second question, though of the greatest importance in theory, is of none in practice. The question about the nature of virtue necessarily has some influence on our notions of right and wrong in many particular cases. The question about the principle of approbation cannot possibly have any such effect. To examine from what inner contrivance or mechanism these different notions or sentiments arise is a mere matter of philosophical curiosity.

CHAPTER I: OF THOSE SYSTEMS WHICH DEDUCE THE PRINCIPLE OF APPROBATION FROM SELF-LOVE

Hobbes and his followers derive approval from self-love; Smith answers that sympathy is not selfish.

VII.iii.1.1 Those who account for the principle of approbation by self-love do not all account for it in the same way, and there is a good deal of confusion and inaccuracy in all their different sys-

tems. According to Mr. Hobbes and many of his followers,[55] man is driven to take refuge in society not by any natural love he bears to his own kind, but because without the help of others he is incapable of living in ease or safety.[56] On this account society becomes necessary to him. He considers whatever tends to its support and welfare as tending, remotely, to serve his own interest, and whatever is likely to disturb or destroy it as in some measure hurtful or harmful to himself. Virtue is the great support of human society, and vice its great disturber. The former, therefore, is agreeable to every man, and the latter offensive. For from the one he foresees the prosperity, and from the other the ruin and disorder, of what is so necessary for the comfort and security of his existence.

VII.iii.1.2 Virtue tends to promote the order of society, and vice to disturb it. As I have observed on a former occasion, it cannot be called into question that this tendency, when we consider it coolly and philosophically, reflects a very great beauty on the one and a very great deformity on the other. Human society, when we contemplate it in a certain abstract and philosophical light, appears like a great, an immense machine, whose regular and harmonious movements produce a thousand agreeable effects. In any other beautiful and noble machine produced by human art, whatever tended to make its movements smoother and easier would derive a beauty from this effect, and whatever tended to obstruct them would displease on that account. In the same way virtue, which is, as it were, the fine polish on the wheels of society, necessarily pleases. Vice, like the vile rust that makes them jar and grate against one another, is just as necessarily offensive. This account of the origin of approbation and disapprobation, then, so far as it derives them from a regard for the order of society, runs into the principle that gives beauty to utility, which I have explained on a former occasion. It is from

55 SMITH'S NOTE. Pufendorf, Mandeville.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Samuel von Pufendorf (1632–1694), German jurist and writer on natural law.

56 Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), English philosopher, author of *Leviathan* (1651).

there that this system derives all the appearance of probability it has.[57] These authors describe the innumerable advantages of a cultivated and social life over an uncivilized and solitary one. They enlarge on the necessity of virtue and good order for maintaining the first, and demonstrate how infallibly the spread of vice and disobedience to the laws tends to bring back the second. When they do this, the reader is charmed by the novelty and grandeur of the views they open to him: he plainly sees a new beauty in virtue, and a new deformity in vice, that he had never noticed before. He is commonly so delighted with the discovery that he seldom takes time to reflect on one point. This political view, having never occurred to him before in his life, cannot possibly be the ground of the approbation and disapprobation with which he has always been accustomed to regard those different qualities.

VII.iii.1.3 On the other hand, these authors derive from self-love the interest we take in the welfare of society, and the esteem we therefore bestow on virtue. But they do not mean that when we in this age applaud the virtue of Cato and detest the villainy of Catiline, our sentiments are influenced by the notion of any benefit we receive from the one, or of any harm we suffer from the other. According to these philosophers, we did not esteem the virtuous character and blame the disorderly one because we thought that the prosperity or overthrow of society, in those remote ages and nations, had any influence on our happiness or misery in the present times. They never imagined that our sentiments were influenced by any benefit or damage that we supposed actually came to us from either. They held that our sentiments were influenced by what might have come to us had we lived in those distant ages and countries, or by what might still come to us if in our own times we should meet with characters of the same kind. The idea, in short, that these authors were groping toward, but were never able to set out distinctly, was that indirect sympathy which we feel with the gratitude or resentment of those who received the benefit or suffered the

57 See Part IV.

damage resulting from such opposite characters. It was this they were vaguely pointing at when they said that what prompted our applause or indignation was not the thought of what we had gained or suffered. It was the conception or imagination of what we might gain or suffer if we were to act in society with such associates.

VII.iii.1.4 Sympathy, however, cannot in any sense be regarded as a selfish principle. When I sympathize with your sorrow or your indignation, it may indeed be claimed that my emotion is founded in self-love. For it arises from bringing your case home to myself, from putting myself in your situation, and from there conceiving what I would feel in similar circumstances. Sympathy is very properly said to arise from an imaginary change of situations with the person principally concerned. But this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to me in my own person and character. It happens in the person and character of the one with whom I sympathize. Suppose I grieve with you for the loss of your only son. In order to enter into your grief I do not consider what I, a person of such a character and profession, would suffer if I had a son and if that son were unfortunately to die. I consider what I would suffer if I were really you. I not only change circumstances with you; I change persons and characters. My grief, therefore, is entirely on your account, and not in the least on my own. It is not, therefore, in the least selfish. How can that be regarded as a selfish passion which does not arise even from imagining anything that has happened to me, or that relates to me, in my own proper person and character, but is entirely occupied with what relates to you? A man may sympathize with a woman in childbirth, though it is impossible for him to conceive himself as suffering her pains in his own proper person and character. Consider that whole account of human nature which derives all sentiments and affections from self-love. It has made so much noise in the world, but so far as I know it has never yet been fully and distinctly explained. It seems to me, however, to have arisen from some confused misunderstanding of the system of sympathy.

CHAPTER II: OF THOSE SYSTEMS WHICH MAKE REASON THE PRINCIPLE OF APPROBATION

Against Hobbes, Cudworth made reason the source of moral distinctions; Hutcheson showed first perceptions come from feeling.

VII.iii.2.1 Mr. Hobbes is well known to have taught that a state of nature is a state of war, and that before civil government was instituted there could be no safe or peaceful society among men. According to him, then, to preserve society was to support civil government, and to destroy civil government was the same thing as to put an end to society. But the existence of civil government depends on the obedience paid to the supreme magistrate. The moment he loses his authority, all government is at an end. Self-preservation, therefore, teaches men to applaud whatever tends to promote the welfare of society and to blame whatever is likely to hurt it. In the same way, if they thought and spoke consistently, the same principle ought to teach them to applaud obedience to the civil magistrate on all occasions, and to blame all disobedience and rebellion. The very ideas of praiseworthy and blamable ought to be the same as those of obedience and disobedience. The laws of the civil magistrate, therefore, ought to be regarded as the sole ultimate standards of what was just and unjust, of what was right and wrong.

VII.iii.2.2 By spreading these notions, Mr. Hobbes openly intended to subject men's consciences directly to the civil powers, and not to the ecclesiastical ones. The example of his own times had taught him to regard the turbulence and ambition of the ecclesiastical powers as the main source of the disorders of society. For this reason his doctrine was especially offensive to theologians, who accordingly did not fail to vent their indignation against him with great harshness and bitterness. It was also offensive to all sound moralists, since it supposed that there was no natural distinction between right and wrong—that these were mutable and changeable, and depended on the mere arbitrary

will of the civil magistrate.[58] This account of things was therefore attacked from all sides and with every kind of weapon—with sober reasoning as well as with furious declamation.

VII.iii.2.3 To refute so odious a doctrine, it was necessary to prove that, prior to all law or positive institution, the mind was naturally endowed with a faculty by which it distinguished, in certain actions and affections, the qualities of right, praiseworthy, and virtuous, and in others those of wrong, blamable, and vicious.

VII.iii.2.4 As Dr. Cudworth[59] rightly observed, law could not be the original source of those distinctions. For supposing there were such a law, either it must be right to obey it and wrong to disobey it, or it must be indifferent whether we obeyed or disobeyed it. Plainly, a law that it was indifferent whether we obeyed or disobeyed could not be the source of those distinctions. Nor could a law that it was right to obey and wrong to disobey, since even this still presupposed the prior notions or ideas of right and wrong. It presupposed that obedience to the law agreed with the idea of right, and disobedience with that of wrong.

VII.iii.2.5 Since the mind, then, had a notion of those distinctions prior to all law, it seemed necessarily to follow that it derived this notion from reason. Reason, on this view, pointed out the difference between right and wrong in the same way that it pointed out the difference between truth and falsehood. This conclusion, though true in some respects, is rather hasty in others. It was the more easily accepted at a time when the abstract science of human nature was still in its infancy, and before the distinct functions and powers of the different faculties of the human mind had been carefully examined and distinguished from one another. When this controversy with Mr. Hobbes was being carried on with the greatest heat and intensity, no other faculty had been thought of from which any such ideas could

58 "His own times": the religious conflicts of the English Civil War (1642–1651).

59 SMITH'S NOTE. *Immutable Morality*, book 1.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Cudworth's *Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*, published after his death in 1731.

possibly be supposed to arise. At this time, therefore, it became the popular doctrine that the essence of virtue and vice lay not in the agreement or disagreement of human actions with the law of a superior, but in their agreement or disagreement with reason. Reason was thus regarded as the original source and principle of approbation and disapprobation.

VII.iii.2.6 That virtue consists in conformity to reason is true in some respects. This faculty may quite rightly be considered, in some sense, the source and principle of approbation and disapprobation, and of all solid judgments about right and wrong. It is by reason that we discover those general rules of justice by which we ought to regulate our actions. It is by the same faculty that we form those vaguer and less definite ideas of what is prudent, what is decent, and what is generous or noble. We carry these ideas about with us constantly, and by them we try, as well as we can, to shape the general course of our conduct. The general maxims of morality are formed, like all other general maxims, from experience and induction. We observe, in a great variety of particular cases, what pleases or displeases our moral faculties, and what they approve or disapprove of. By induction from this experience we establish those general rules. But induction is always regarded as one of the operations of reason. So we are quite properly said to derive all those general maxims and ideas from reason. It is by these, however, that we regulate most of our moral judgments. Those judgments would be extremely uncertain and precarious if they depended entirely on something as liable to variation as immediate sentiment and feeling, which different states of health and mood can alter so fundamentally. Our most solid judgments about right and wrong, then, are regulated by maxims and ideas derived from an induction of reason. So virtue may quite properly be said to consist in conformity to reason, and to that extent this faculty may be considered the source and principle of approbation and disapprobation.

VII.iii.2.7 But though reason is undoubtedly the source of the general rules of morality, and of all the moral judgments we

form by means of them, it is altogether absurd and unintelligible to suppose that the first perceptions of right and wrong can be derived from reason. This holds even in those particular cases from whose experience the general rules are formed. These first perceptions, like all the other experiments on which any general rules are founded, cannot be the object of reason. They are the object of immediate sense and feeling. We form the general rules of morality by finding, in a vast variety of instances, that one course of conduct constantly pleases the mind in a certain way, and that another just as constantly displeases it. But reason cannot make any particular object either agreeable or disagreeable to the mind for its own sake. Reason may show that this object is the means of obtaining some other that is naturally either pleasing or displeasing, and in this way may make it agreeable or disagreeable for the sake of something else. But nothing can be agreeable or disagreeable for its own sake unless it is made so by immediate sense and feeling. If, then, virtue in every particular instance necessarily pleases for its own sake, and vice just as certainly displeases the mind, it cannot be reason that in this way reconciles us to the one and alienates us from the other. It must be immediate sense and feeling.

VII.iii.2.8 Pleasure and pain are the great objects of desire and aversion. But we distinguish these not by reason, but by immediate sense and feeling. If, then, virtue is desirable for its own sake, and vice is in the same way the object of aversion, it cannot be reason that originally distinguishes those different qualities. It must be immediate sense and feeling.

VII.iii.2.9 Since reason, however, may in a certain sense rightly be considered the principle of approbation and disapprobation, these sentiments were long regarded, through carelessness, as flowing originally from the operations of this faculty. Dr. Hutcheson had the merit of being the first to distinguish, with any degree of precision, in what respect all moral distinctions may be said to arise from reason, and in what respect they are founded on immediate sense and feeling. In his *Illustrations upon*

the Moral Sense he has explained this so fully, and in my opinion so unanswerably, that if any controversy is still kept up on this subject, I can attribute it only to one of two things. Either it comes from inattention to what that gentleman has written, or it comes from a superstitious attachment to certain forms of expression. This is a weakness not very uncommon among the learned, especially in subjects as deeply interesting as the present one, in which a man of virtue is often reluctant to give up even the propriety of a single phrase he has grown used to.[60]

CHAPTER III: OF THOSE SYSTEMS WHICH MAKE SENTIMENT THE PRINCIPLE OF APPROBATION

Smith criticizes Hutcheson's moral sense and the theory that grounds approval in a special sentiment.

VII.iii.3.1 Those systems which make sentiment the principle of approbation may be divided into two different classes.

VII.iii.3.2 I. According to some, the principle of approbation is founded on a sentiment of a special nature. This is a particular power of perception that the mind exercises at the sight of certain actions or affections. Some of these affect this faculty in an agreeable way, and others in a disagreeable way. The former are stamped with the characters of right, praiseworthy, and virtuous, and the latter with those of wrong, blamable, and vicious. Because this sentiment is of a special nature, distinct from every other, and the effect of a particular power of perception, they give it a particular name and call it a moral sense.

VII.iii.3.3 II. According to others, there is no need to suppose any new power of perception, never heard of before, in order to account for the principle of approbation. Nature, they imagine, acts here as in all other cases with the strictest economy, and produces a multitude of effects from one and the same cause. They think that sympathy is sufficient to account for all the effects ascribed to this special faculty. Sympathy is a power that

60 Hutcheson's *Illustrations on the Moral Sense* was published in 1728 with his *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*.

has always been noticed, and with which the mind is manifestly endowed.

VII.iii.3.4 I. Dr. Hutcheson[61] had taken great pains to prove that the principle of approbation was not founded on self-love. He had also shown that it could not arise from any operation of reason. Nothing remained, he thought, but to suppose it a faculty of a special kind, with which Nature had endowed the human mind in order to produce this one particular and important effect. Once self-love and reason were both excluded, it did not occur to him that any other known faculty of the mind could in any way serve this purpose.

VII.iii.3.5 This new power of perception he called a moral sense, and he supposed it to be somewhat analogous to the external senses. The bodies around us affect these senses in a certain way, and so appear to possess the different qualities of sound, taste, smell, and color. In the same way, the various affections of the human mind touch this particular faculty in a certain way, and so appear to possess the different qualities of amiable and odious, of virtuous and vicious, of right and wrong.

VII.iii.3.6 According to this system, the various senses or powers of perception[62] from which the human mind derives all its simple ideas were of two different kinds. The one kind were called the direct or antecedent senses, and the other the reflex or consequent senses. The direct senses were those faculties from which the mind derived the perception of kinds of things that did not presuppose the prior perception of anything else. Thus sounds and colors were objects of the direct senses. To hear a sound or to see a color does not presuppose the prior perception of any other quality or object. The reflex or consequent senses, on the other hand, were those faculties from which the mind derived the perception of kinds of things that presupposed the prior perception of something else. Thus harmony and

61 SMITH'S NOTE. *Inquiry concerning Virtue*.

62 SMITH'S NOTE. *Treatise of the Passions*.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Hutcheson's *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* (1728).

beauty were objects of the reflex senses. To perceive the harmony of a sound, or the beauty of a color, we must first perceive the sound or the color. The moral sense was considered a faculty of this kind. Mr. Locke calls one faculty reflection, and from it he derived the simple ideas of the different passions and emotions of the human mind. According to Dr. Hutcheson, that faculty was a direct internal sense.[63] The faculty, in turn, by which we perceived the beauty or deformity, the virtue or vice, of those different passions and emotions was a reflex internal sense.

VII.iii.3.7 Dr. Hutcheson tried to support this doctrine further by showing that it fit the analogy of nature, and that the mind was endowed with a variety of other reflex senses exactly like the moral sense. These included a sense of beauty and deformity in external objects; a public sense, by which we sympathize with the happiness or misery of our fellow creatures; a sense of shame and honor; and a sense of ridicule.

VII.iii.3.8 But despite all the pains this ingenious philosopher has taken to prove that the principle of approbation is founded on a peculiar power of perception, somewhat analogous to the external senses, there are some consequences of this doctrine, which he admits follow from it, that many will perhaps regard as a sufficient refutation of it. The qualities that belong to the objects of any sense, he grants[64], cannot without the greatest absurdity be ascribed to the sense itself. Who ever thought of calling the sense of sight black or white, the sense of hearing loud or low, or the sense of taste sweet or bitter? And according to him, it is just as absurd to call our moral faculties virtuous or vicious, morally good or evil. These qualities belong to the objects of those faculties, not to the faculties themselves. So if any man were so absurdly constituted as to approve of cruelty and injustice as the highest virtues, and to disapprove of equity and humanity as the most pitiful vices, such a constitution of

63 In John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), "reflection" is the mind's perception of its own operations, one of the two sources of all ideas.

64 SMITH'S NOTE. *Illustrations upon the Moral Sense*, sect. 1, p. 237 ff.; third edition.

mind might indeed be regarded as inconvenient both to the individual and to society, and also as strange, surprising, and unnatural in itself. But it could not, without the greatest absurdity, be called vicious or morally evil.

VII.iii.3.9 Yet surely, if we saw a man shouting with admiration and applause at a barbarous and undeserved execution ordered by some insolent tyrant, we would not think we were guilty of any great absurdity in calling this behavior vicious and morally evil in the highest degree. We would think so even though it expressed nothing but depraved moral faculties, or an absurd approval of this horrid action as something noble, magnanimous, and great. At the sight of such a spectator, I imagine, our heart would forget for a while its sympathy with the sufferer, and feel nothing but horror and detestation at the thought of so execrable a wretch. We would loathe him even more than the tyrant, who might be goaded on by the strong passions of jealousy, fear, and resentment, and so be more excusable. But the spectator's sentiments would appear entirely without cause or motive, and therefore utterly and completely detestable. There is no perversion of sentiment or affection that our heart would be more reluctant to enter into, or would reject with greater hatred and indignation, than one of this kind; and far from regarding such a constitution of mind as merely something strange or inconvenient, and not in any respect vicious or morally evil, we would rather consider it the very last and most dreadful stage of moral depravity.

VII.iii.3.10 Correct moral sentiments, on the contrary, naturally appear in some degree praiseworthy and morally good. The man whose censure and applause are on every occasion suited with the greatest accuracy to the worth or unworthiness of their object seems to deserve a degree even of moral approval. We admire the delicate precision of his moral sentiments. They guide our own judgments, and because of their uncommon and surprising justness they even excite our wonder and applause. We cannot, of course, always be sure that such a person's conduct would in any way match the precision and accuracy of his

judgments about the conduct of others. Virtue requires habit and resolution of mind, as well as delicacy of sentiment. Unfortunately, the former qualities are sometimes lacking where the latter is in the greatest perfection. This disposition of mind, however, though it may sometimes be accompanied by imperfections, is incompatible with anything grossly criminal, and is the happiest foundation on which the superstructure of perfect virtue can be built. There are many men who mean very well, and seriously intend to do what they think their duty, who are nonetheless disagreeable because of the coarseness of their moral sentiments.

VII.iii.3.11 It may perhaps be said that the principle of approbation, though not founded on any power of perception in any respect analogous to the external senses, may still be founded on a peculiar sentiment that serves this one particular purpose and no other. Approbation and disapprobation, it may be claimed, are certain feelings or emotions that arise in the mind at the sight of different characters and actions. And just as resentment might be called a sense of injuries, or gratitude a sense of benefits, so these may quite properly be given the name of a sense of right and wrong, or a moral sense.

VII.iii.3.12 But this account of things, though it may not be open to the same objections as the preceding one, is exposed to others that are equally unanswerable.

VII.iii.3.13 First of all, whatever variations a particular emotion may undergo, it still keeps the general features that mark it out as an emotion of that kind. These general features are always more striking and noticeable than any variation it may undergo in particular cases. Thus anger is an emotion of a particular kind, and accordingly its general features are always easier to distinguish than all the variations it undergoes in particular cases. Anger against a man is no doubt somewhat different from anger against a woman, and that again from anger against a child. In each of these three cases, the general passion of anger is modified differently by the particular character of its object, as the attentive may easily observe. But the general features of

the passion still predominate in all these cases. To distinguish these requires no precise observation; a very delicate attention, on the contrary, is needed to discover their variations. Everybody notices the former; scarcely anybody observes the latter. If approbation and disapprobation, therefore, were emotions of a particular kind, distinct from every other, like gratitude and resentment, we would expect that through all the variations either of them might undergo, it would still keep the general features that mark it as an emotion of that particular kind—clear, plain, and easily distinguishable. But in fact things turn out quite otherwise. If we attend to what we really feel when on different occasions we approve or disapprove, we shall find that our emotion in one case is often totally different from our emotion in another, and that no common features can possibly be found between them. Thus the approval with which we view a tender, delicate, and humane sentiment is quite different from the approval that strikes us at a sentiment that appears great, daring, and magnanimous. Our approbation of both may, on different occasions, be perfect and complete. But we are softened by the one and elevated by the other, and there is no resemblance whatever between the emotions they excite in us. According to the system I have been trying to establish, however, this must necessarily be the case. The emotions of the person we approve of are, in these two cases, quite opposite to one another, and our approbation arises from sympathy with those opposite emotions. So what we feel on the one occasion can bear no resemblance to what we feel on the other. But this could not happen if approbation consisted in a peculiar emotion that had nothing in common with the sentiments we approved of, and simply arose at the sight of those sentiments, as any other passion arises at the sight of its proper object. The same holds true of disapprobation. Our horror at cruelty bears no resemblance to our contempt for mean-spiritedness. At the sight of these two different vices, we feel quite different kinds of discord between our own minds and the mind of the person whose sentiments and behavior we are considering.

VII.iii.3.14 Secondly, I have already observed that it is not only the different passions or affections of the human mind, when approved or disapproved of, that appear morally good or evil. To our natural sentiments, proper and improper approbation also appear stamped with the same characters. I would ask, therefore: according to this system, how is it that we approve or disapprove of proper or improper approbation? To this question there is, I imagine, only one reasonable answer that can possibly be given. It must be said that when the approbation with which our neighbor regards the conduct of a third person coincides with our own, we approve of his approbation and consider it in some measure morally good. On the contrary, when it does not coincide with our own sentiments, we disapprove of it and consider it in some measure morally evil. It must be granted, therefore, that at least in this one case, the coincidence or opposition of sentiments between the observer and the person observed constitutes moral approbation or disapprobation. And if it does so in this one case, I would ask, why not in every other? What is the point of imagining a new power of perception to account for those sentiments?

VII.iii.3.15 Against every account of the principle of approbation that makes it depend on a peculiar sentiment, distinct from every other, I would raise this objection. It is strange that this sentiment, which Providence undoubtedly intended to be the governing principle of human nature, should until now have been so little noticed that it has not acquired a name in any language. The term "moral sense" is of very recent formation, and cannot yet be considered part of the English language. Only within the last few years has the word "approbation" been appropriated to denote anything of this kind specifically. In proper usage we approve of whatever is entirely to our satisfaction—the form of a building, the design of a machine, the flavor of a dish of food. The word "conscience" does not directly denote any moral faculty by which we approve or disapprove. Conscience does indeed presuppose the existence of some such faculty, and properly means our consciousness of having acted

in accordance with its directions or contrary to them. Love, hatred, joy, sorrow, gratitude, resentment, and so many other passions, all supposed to be subject to this principle, have made themselves important enough to get names to know them by. Is it not surprising, then, that the sovereign of them all should until now have been so little heeded that, apart from a few philosophers, nobody has yet thought it worthwhile to give it a name?

THE FOUR SOURCES OF APPROVAL

Smith traces approval to four sources and asks what is left for a moral sense.

VII.iii.3.16 When we approve of any character or action, the sentiments we feel are, according to the foregoing system, derived from four sources, which differ from one another in some respects. First, we sympathize with the motives of the agent; secondly, we enter into the gratitude of those who receive the benefit of his actions; thirdly, we observe that his conduct has been in accordance with the general rules by which those two sympathies generally act; and, last of all, when we consider such actions as forming part of a system of behavior that tends to promote the happiness either of the individual or of society, they appear to derive a beauty from this utility, not unlike the beauty we ascribe to any well-designed machine. After deducting, in any particular case, everything that must be acknowledged to come from one or another of these four principles, I would be glad to know what remains. I shall freely allow this surplus to be ascribed to a moral sense, or to any other peculiar faculty, provided someone will determine precisely what this surplus is. It might be expected, perhaps, that if there were any such peculiar principle as this moral sense is supposed to be, we would feel it in some particular cases separated and detached from every other, just as we often feel joy, sorrow, hope, and fear pure and unmixed with any other emotion. This, however, I imagine, cannot even be claimed. I have never heard of any instance

put forward in which this principle could be said to operate alone, unmixed with sympathy or antipathy, with gratitude or resentment, with the perception that an action agrees or disagrees with an established rule, or, last of all, with that general taste for beauty and order which is excited by inanimate as well as by animate objects.

VII.iii.3.17 II. There is another system that attempts to account for the origin of our moral sentiments from sympathy, distinct from the one I have been trying to establish. It is the system that places virtue in utility, and that explains the pleasure with which the spectator surveys the utility of any quality by sympathy with the happiness of those affected by it. This sympathy is different both from the sympathy by which we enter into the motives of the agent and from the sympathy by which we go along with the gratitude of the people who benefit from his actions. It is the same principle as the one by which we approve of a well-designed machine.[65] But no machine can be the object of either of the two sympathies just mentioned. I have already given some account of this system in the fourth part of this discourse.

SECTION IV: OF THE MANNER IN WHICH DIFFERENT AUTHORS HAVE TREATED OF THE PRACTICAL RULES OF MORALITY

Moralists have written either like critics, describing virtues generally, or like grammarians, laying down exact rules.

VII.iv.1 It was observed in the third part of this discourse that the rules of justice are the only rules of morality that are precise and accurate. The rules of all the other virtues are loose, vague, and indeterminate. The first may be compared to the rules of grammar. The others may be compared to the rules that critics lay down for achieving what is sublime and elegant in composition—rules that give us a general idea of the perfection we ought

65 Smith means David Hume's account of moral approval, which he discussed in Part IV.

to aim at, rather than any certain and infallible directions for attaining it.

VII.iv.2 Since the different rules of morality admit of such different degrees of accuracy, the authors who have tried to collect and arrange them into systems have done so in two different ways. One group has followed throughout the loose method to which they were naturally led by considering one kind of virtue. Another has tried just as universally to introduce into their precepts the kind of accuracy that only some of those precepts admit of. The first have written like critics, the second like grammarians.

VII.iv.3 I. The first group, among whom we may count all the ancient moralists, have been content to describe the different vices and virtues in a general way. They point out the ugliness and misery of the one disposition, as well as the propriety and happiness of the other. But they have not tried to lay down many precise rules that are to hold without exception in every particular case. They have only tried to determine two things, as far as language is able to determine them. First, they ask what the sentiment of the heart is on which each particular virtue is founded. What sort of inner feeling or emotion makes up the essence of friendship, of humanity, of generosity, of justice, of magnanimity, and of all the other virtues, as well as of the vices opposed to them? Secondly, they ask what the general way of acting is, the ordinary tone and tenor of conduct, to which each of those sentiments would direct us. In other words, how would a friendly, a generous, a brave, a just, and a humane man choose to act on ordinary occasions?

VII.iv.4 To characterize the sentiment of the heart on which each particular virtue is founded requires a brush both delicate and accurate. Even so, it is a task that can be carried out with some degree of exactness. It is impossible, of course, to express all the variations that each sentiment either does or ought to undergo with every possible variation of circumstances. They are endless, and language lacks names to mark them by. The sentiment of friendship we feel for an old man, for example, is different

from what we feel for a young one. What we feel for an austere man differs from what we feel for one of softer and gentler manners, and that again differs from what we feel for one of cheerful liveliness and spirit. The friendship we form for a man is different from the friendship a woman inspires in us, even where there is no mixture of any grosser passion. What author could list and pin down these and all the other infinite varieties this sentiment can undergo? Still, the general sentiment of friendship and familiar attachment that is common to them all can be determined with sufficient accuracy. The picture drawn of it will always be incomplete in many respects. Yet it may resemble the original closely enough for us to recognize it when we meet it. We may even be able to distinguish it from other sentiments that closely resemble it, such as goodwill, respect, esteem, and admiration.

VII.iv.5 It is easier still to describe in a general way the ordinary way of acting to which each virtue would prompt us. In fact, it is scarcely possible to describe the inner sentiment or emotion on which a virtue is founded without doing something of this kind. Language cannot express, if I may put it this way, the invisible features of all the different modifications of passion as they show themselves within. There is no other way of marking and distinguishing them from one another than by describing the effects they produce outwardly: the changes they cause in the face, in a person's air and outward behavior, the resolutions they suggest, the actions they prompt. This is how Cicero, in the first book of his *Offices*, tries to direct us to the practice of the four cardinal virtues. It is also how Aristotle, in the practical parts of his *Ethics*, points out the different habits by which he would have us regulate our behavior, such as liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, and even jocularity and good humor. That indulgent philosopher thought these last qualities worthy of a place in the list of the virtues, although the light approval we naturally give them would not seem to entitle them to so venerable a name.[66]

66 The four cardinal virtues are wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance.

VII.iv.6 Works of this kind give us pleasing and lively pictures of manners. By the vividness of their descriptions they kindle our natural love of virtue and increase our abhorrence of vice. Their observations are both just and delicate, and so they can often help both to correct and to settle our natural sentiments about the propriety of conduct. By suggesting many fine and delicate attentions, they can also train us to a more exact rightness of behavior than we would have been likely to think of without such instruction. Treating the rules of morality in this way is what makes up the science properly called Ethics. Like criticism, this science does not allow the most accurate precision, but it is nonetheless highly useful and pleasing. Of all sciences it is the one most open to the ornaments of eloquence. Through them it can give, if that is possible, a new importance to the smallest rules of duty. Its precepts, dressed and adorned in this way, can make the noblest and most lasting impressions on the pliable minds of the young. Since they fit in with the natural magnanimity of that generous age, they can inspire, for a time at least, the most heroic resolutions. In this way they tend both to establish and to confirm the best and most useful habits the human mind is capable of. Whatever precept and exhortation can do to encourage us to practice virtue is done by this science when it is delivered in this way.

JURISPRUDENCE AND CASUISTRY

Jurisprudence asks what force may exact; casuistry asks what a good man owes, as in a promise to a robber.

VII.iv.7 II. The second group of moralists includes all the casuists of the middle and later ages of the Christian church, as well as all those who in this century and the last have written on what is called natural jurisprudence. They are not content to characterize in this general way the tenor of conduct they would recommend to us. They try to lay down exact and precise rules for directing every circumstance of our behavior. Justice is the only virtue for which such exact rules can properly be given, and so

it is this virtue that has chiefly occupied those two different groups of writers.[67] They treat it, however, in very different ways.

VII.iv.8 Those who write on the principles of jurisprudence consider only what the person to whom the obligation is owed ought to think himself entitled to exact by force. They ask what every impartial spectator would approve of his exacting. Or they ask what a judge or arbiter ought to make the other person suffer or perform, if the case had been submitted to him and he had undertaken to do justice. The casuists, on the other hand, do not so much examine what might properly be exacted by force. They ask instead what the person who owes the obligation ought to think himself bound to perform out of the most sacred and scrupulous regard for the general rules of justice. They also consider what he owes out of the most conscientious dread either of wronging his neighbor or of violating the integrity of his own character. The aim of jurisprudence is to prescribe rules for the decisions of judges and arbiters. The aim of casuistry is to prescribe rules for the conduct of a good man. By observing all the rules of jurisprudence, however perfect we suppose them, we would deserve nothing more than to be free from external punishment. By observing those of casuistry, supposing them to be what they ought to be, we would earn considerable praise for the exact and scrupulous delicacy of our behavior.

VII.iv.9 It may often happen that a good man ought to think himself bound, out of a sacred and conscientious regard for the general rules of justice, to perform many things that it would be the greatest injustice to extort from him. It would be equally unjust for any judge or arbiter to impose those things on him by force. To give a hackneyed example: a highwayman, by threatening death, forces a traveler to promise him a certain sum of money. Whether such a promise, extorted in this way by unjust force,

67 Casuists: moral theologians who worked out the answers to particular "cases of conscience."

ought to be regarded as binding is a question that has been much debated.

VII.iv.10 If we consider it merely as a question of jurisprudence, the answer admits of no doubt. It would be absurd to suppose that the highwayman could be entitled to use force to compel the other to perform. To extort the promise was a crime that deserved the severest punishment, and to extort the performance would only add a new crime to the first. A man has no injury to complain of if he has merely been deceived by someone who could justly have killed him. To suppose that a judge ought to enforce the obligation of such promises, or that the magistrate ought to allow them to ground a lawsuit, would be the most ridiculous of all absurdities. If we consider this question as a question of jurisprudence, then, we can have no difficulty about the answer.

VII.iv.11 But if we consider it as a question of casuistry, it will not be settled so easily. That most sacred rule of justice commands the keeping of all serious promises. Whether a good man, out of a conscientious regard for that rule, would not think himself bound to perform is at least much more doubtful. No regard is owed to the disappointment of the wretch who puts him in this situation. No injury is done to the robber, and consequently nothing can be extorted by force. None of this admits of any dispute. But it may perhaps more reasonably be questioned whether some regard is not owed, in this case, to his own dignity and honor—to the inviolable sacredness of that part of his character which makes him revere the law of truth and abhor everything that comes close to treachery and falsehood. Accordingly the casuists are sharply divided about it. One party, among whom we may count Cicero among the ancients and, among the moderns, Pufendorf, his commentator Barbeyrac, and above all the late Dr. Hutcheson—who in most cases was by no means a lax casuist—decide without any hesitation that no regard at all is owed to such a promise, and that to think otherwise is mere weakness and superstition.[68] Another party, among whom we

68 Jean Barbeyrac (1674–1744) translated and annotated Pufendorf's works.

may count[69] some of the ancient fathers of the church, as well as some very eminent modern casuists, have held a different opinion and have judged all such promises binding.

VII.iv.12 Let us consider the matter according to the common sentiments of mankind. We shall find that some regard would be thought owed even to a promise of this kind. But we shall also find that it is impossible to determine how much by any general rule that will apply to every case without exception. We would not choose as our friend and companion a man who was quite free and easy about making promises of this kind and broke them with just as little ceremony. A gentleman who promised a highwayman five pounds and did not pay would incur some blame. If the sum promised was very large, however, it might be more doubtful what the proper course would be. Suppose, for example, that paying it would entirely ruin the promiser's family, or that the sum was large enough to serve the most useful purposes. Then it would seem in some measure criminal, or at least extremely improper, to throw it into such worthless hands for the sake of a fine point of honor. Imagine a man who beggared himself, or who threw away a hundred thousand pounds, for the sake of keeping such a pledge to a thief. Even if he could afford that vast sum, he would appear to the common sense of mankind absurd and extravagant in the highest degree. Such lavishness would seem inconsistent with his duty, with what he owed both to himself and to others. Regard for a promise extorted in this way could therefore by no means authorize it. To fix by any precise rule, however, what degree of regard ought to be paid to such a promise, or the largest sum that could be owed under it, is plainly impossible. This would vary with the characters of the persons, with their circumstances, with the solemnity of the promise, and even with the incidents of the encounter; and if the promiser had been treated with a great deal of the sort of gallantry that is sometimes found in people of

69 SMITH'S NOTE. St. Augustine, La Placette.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Jean La Placette (1639–1718), French Protestant theologian and moralist.

the most depraved characters, more would seem owed than on other occasions. It may be said in general that exact propriety requires keeping all such promises wherever doing so is not inconsistent with some other, more sacred duties. Such duties include regard for the public interest, and for those whom gratitude, natural affection, or the laws of proper beneficence should prompt us to provide for. But, as was noted earlier, we have no precise rules to determine what outward actions are owed out of regard for such motives. Consequently, we have no precise rules to determine when those virtues are inconsistent with keeping such promises.

VII.iv.13 It should be observed, however, that whenever such promises are broken, even for the most necessary reasons, some degree of dishonor always falls on the person who made them. Once they have been made, we may be convinced that it would be improper to keep them. But there is still some fault in having made them. It is at least a departure from the highest and noblest maxims of magnanimity and honor. A brave man ought to die rather than make a promise that he can neither keep without folly nor break without disgrace. For some degree of disgrace always attends a situation of this kind. Treachery and falsehood are such dangerous and dreadful vices, and at the same time can be indulged so easily and, on many occasions, so safely, that we are more watchful of them than of almost any other. Our imagination therefore attaches the idea of shame to every breach of faith, in every circumstance and every situation. In this respect they resemble violations of chastity in women, a virtue that, for similar reasons, we guard with excessive watchfulness; and our sentiments are no more delicate about the one than about the other. A breach of chastity dishonors beyond recovery. No circumstances and no pressure can excuse it. No sorrow and no repentance can atone for it. We are so exacting on this point that even rape dishonors. In our imagination, the innocence of the mind cannot wash out the pollution of the body. The same holds for breaking faith that has been solemnly pledged, even to the most worthless of mankind.

Fidelity is so necessary a virtue that we generally take it to be owed even to those who are owed nothing else, and whom we think it lawful to kill and destroy. The person guilty of breaking faith may plead that he promised in order to save his life, and that he broke the promise because keeping it was inconsistent with some other respectable duty. It does him no good. These circumstances may lessen his dishonor but cannot wipe it out entirely. He appears to have been guilty of an action to which, in people's imaginations, some degree of shame is inseparably attached. He has broken a promise that he had solemnly declared he would keep. His character may not be stained and polluted beyond recovery, but it at least has a ridicule fixed to it that will be very hard to erase entirely. And no man, I imagine, who had been through an adventure of this kind would be fond of telling the story.

VII.iv.14 This example may serve to show where the difference lies between casuistry and jurisprudence, even when both consider the obligations of the general rules of justice.

VII.iv.15 This difference is real and essential, and the two sciences aim at quite different ends. But because they share the same subject, they have come to resemble each other so closely that most authors whose professed design was to treat jurisprudence have settled the various questions they examine sometimes by the principles of that science and sometimes by those of casuistry. They did so without distinguishing between them, and perhaps without being aware themselves when they were doing the one and when the other.

CONFESSION AND THE CASUISTS

Casuistry grew out of auricular confession and dealt chiefly with justice, chastity and veracity.

VII.iv.16 The doctrine of the casuists, however, is by no means limited to considering what a conscientious regard for the general rules of justice would demand of us. It takes in many other parts of Christian and moral duty. What seems chiefly to have promp-

ted the cultivation of this kind of science was the custom of auricular confession, introduced by the Roman Catholic superstition in times of barbarism and ignorance. Under that institution, a person had to reveal to the confessor his most secret actions, and even his thoughts, wherever they could be suspected of departing in the slightest degree from the rules of Christian purity.[70] The confessor told his penitents whether, and in what respect, they had violated their duty, and what penance they had to undergo before he could absolve them in the name of the offended Deity.

VII.iv.17 The consciousness, or even the suspicion, of having done wrong is a weight on every mind. In all who are not hardened by long habits of wickedness, it brings anxiety and terror. In this, as in all other distresses, people are naturally eager to throw off the oppression they feel weighing on their thoughts. They do so by pouring out the agony of their minds to someone whose secrecy and discretion they can trust. The shame they suffer from this admission is fully made up for by the relief of their uneasiness that the sympathy of their confidant seldom fails to bring. It relieves them to find that they are not wholly unworthy of regard. However their past conduct may be censured, their present disposition is at least approved of, and is perhaps enough to make up for the past, or at least to keep them in some degree of esteem with their friend. In those times of superstition, a numerous and artful clergy had worked their way into the confidence of almost every private family. They possessed all the little learning the times could offer, and their manners, though in many respects rough and disorderly, were polished and regular compared with those of the age they lived in. They were therefore regarded as the great directors not only of all religious duties but of all moral ones. Their familiarity gave standing to anyone lucky enough to enjoy it, and every mark of their disapprobation stamped the deepest disgrace on all who had the misfortune to incur it. Since they were con-

70 Auricular confession: private confession of sins spoken to a priest, literally "into the ear."

sidered the great judges of right and wrong, they were naturally consulted about every scruple that arose. It was creditable for anyone to have it known that he made those holy men the confidants of all such secrets, and that he took no important or delicate step in his conduct without their advice and approbation. It was not hard for the clergy, then, to get it established as a general rule that they should be entrusted with what it had already become fashionable to entrust to them. These were things they generally would have been entrusted with even if no such rule had been established. Qualifying themselves as confessors thus became a necessary part of the studies of churchmen and divines, and this led them to collect what are called cases of conscience: fine and delicate situations in which it is hard to determine just where the propriety of conduct lies. Such works, they imagined, might be useful both to the directors of consciences and to those who were to be directed. Hence the origin of books of casuistry.

VII.iv.18 The moral duties the casuists considered were chiefly those that can, at least to some extent, be marked out by general rules, and whose violation naturally brings some degree of remorse and some dread of punishment. The design of the institution that gave rise to their works was to calm the terrors of conscience that follow the infringement of such duties. But falling short of a virtue does not always bring very severe pangs of this kind. No man goes to his confessor for absolution because he did not perform the most generous, the most friendly, or the most magnanimous action that he could possibly have performed in his circumstances. In failures of this kind, the rule that is broken is usually not very definite. It is also generally of such a nature that keeping it might earn honor and reward, while breaking it seems to expose one to no positive blame, censure, or punishment. The casuists seem to have regarded the exercise of such virtues as a kind of works of supererogation.

These could not be very strictly demanded, so they had no need to treat them.[71]

VII.iv.19 The breaches of moral duty that came before the tribunal of the confessor, and so fell within the casuists' notice, were therefore chiefly of three kinds.

VII.iv.20 First and chiefly, breaches of the rules of justice. Here the rules are all explicit and positive. Breaking them naturally brings the consciousness of deserving punishment from both God and man, and the dread of suffering it.

VII.iv.21 Secondly, breaches of the rules of chastity. In all the grosser cases these are real breaches of the rules of justice, and no one can be guilty of them without doing the most unpardonable injury to someone else. In lesser cases they amount only to a violation of the exact decorum that ought to be observed in dealings between the two sexes, and then, it is true, they cannot fairly be considered violations of the rules of justice. Generally, however, they violate a fairly plain rule. At least in one of the sexes, they tend to bring disgrace on the person guilty of them, and so to bring some degree of shame and contrition to the scrupulous.

VERACITY AND THE DESIRE TO BE BELIEVED

Why lying shames us: the desire to be believed, to lead others, and to be worthy of belief.

VII.iv.22 Thirdly, breaches of the rules of veracity. It should be observed that violating the truth is not always a breach of justice, though on many occasions it is. So it cannot always expose one to any external punishment. The vice of ordinary lying, though a most wretched meanness, may often harm nobody, and in that case neither those deceived nor anyone else has any claim to vengeance or satisfaction. But though violating the truth is not always a breach of justice, it is always a breach of

71 Works of supererogation: a theological term for good works beyond what duty strictly requires.

a very plain rule, and it naturally tends to cover the person guilty of it with shame.

VII.iv.23 There seems to be in young children an instinctive disposition to believe whatever they are told. Nature seems to have judged it necessary for their preservation that, for some time at least, they should place implicit confidence in those entrusted with the care of their childhood and with the earliest and most necessary parts of their education. Their credulity is accordingly excessive. It takes long and extensive experience of human falsehood to bring them down to a reasonable degree of caution and distrust. In grown-up people the degrees of credulity no doubt vary widely. The wisest and most experienced are generally the least credulous. But scarcely a man lives who is not more credulous than he should be. On many occasions each of us believes tales that not only turn out to be entirely false, but that a very moderate degree of reflection and attention could have taught him were unlikely to be true. The natural disposition is always to believe. Only acquired wisdom and experience teach disbelief, and they very seldom teach enough of it. The wisest and most cautious of us all often believes stories that he is afterward both ashamed and astonished he could ever have thought of believing.

VII.iv.24 The man we believe is necessarily our leader and director in the matters on which we believe him, and we look up to him with a certain degree of esteem and respect. But as from admiring other people we come to wish to be admired ourselves, so from being led and directed by other people we learn to wish to become leaders and directors ourselves. We cannot always be satisfied merely with being admired unless we can at the same time persuade ourselves that we really are in some degree worthy of admiration. In the same way, we cannot always be satisfied merely with being believed unless we are at the same time conscious that we really are worthy of belief. The desire of praise and the desire of praise-worthiness, though closely akin, are still distinct and separate desires. In the same way, the desire of being believed and the desire of being worthy

of belief, though also closely akin, are just as distinct and separate.

VII.iv.25 The desire of being believed—the desire of persuading, of leading and directing other people—seems to be one of the strongest of all our natural desires. It is perhaps the instinct on which the faculty of speech is founded, the characteristic faculty of human nature. No other animal has this faculty, and we cannot find in any other animal any desire to lead and direct the judgment and conduct of its fellows. Great ambition—the desire of real superiority, of leading and directing—seems to be entirely peculiar to man. And speech is the great instrument of ambition, of real superiority, of leading and directing the judgments and conduct of other people.

VII.iv.26 It is always mortifying not to be believed. It is doubly so when we suspect the reason is that we are thought unworthy of belief and capable of serious and willful deception. To tell a man that he lies is the most deadly of all insults. But whoever seriously and willfully deceives is necessarily aware that he deserves this insult. He knows that he does not deserve to be believed, and that he forfeits all claim to the kind of credit from which alone he can draw any ease, comfort, or satisfaction in the society of his equals. Suppose a man had the misfortune to imagine that nobody believed a single word he said. He would feel himself an outcast from human society. He would dread the very thought of going into it or presenting himself before it, and could scarcely fail, I think, to die of despair. It is probable, however, that no man ever had good reason to hold this humiliating opinion of himself. The most notorious liar, I am inclined to believe, tells the plain truth at least twenty times for every once that he seriously and deliberately lies. Even in the most cautious, the disposition to believe tends to prevail over the disposition to doubt and distrust. In the same way, even in those most careless of truth, the natural disposition to tell it prevails on most occasions over the disposition to deceive, or in any way to alter or disguise it.

VII.iv.27 We are mortified when we happen to deceive other people, even when we do it unintentionally because we ourselves have been deceived. This involuntary falsehood may often be no sign of any lack of veracity, of any lack of the most perfect love of truth. But it is always in some degree a sign of lack of judgment, of lack of memory, of improper credulity, of some degree of hastiness and rashness. It always lessens our authority to persuade, and always casts some suspicion on our fitness to lead and direct. The man who sometimes misleads by mistake, however, is very different from the man who is capable of willfully deceiving. The former may safely be trusted on many occasions; the latter very seldom on any.

VII.iv.28 Frankness and openness win confidence. We trust the man who seems willing to trust us. We see clearly, we think, the road along which he means to lead us, and we give ourselves up with pleasure to his guidance and direction. Reserve and concealment, on the other hand, call up distrust. We are afraid to follow a man who is going we do not know where. Besides, the great pleasure of conversation and society comes from a certain correspondence of sentiments and opinions, from a certain harmony of minds, which, like so many musical instruments, coincide and keep time with one another. But this most delightful harmony cannot be had unless there is a free communication of sentiments and opinions. For this reason we all want to feel how each of us is affected, to see into each other's hearts, and to observe the sentiments and affections that really exist there. The man who indulges us in this natural passion, who invites us into his heart, who, as it were, opens the gates of his breast to us, seems to practice a kind of hospitality more delightful than any other. No man in ordinarily good temper can fail to please, if he has the courage to say what he really feels, as he feels it, and because he feels it. It is this unreserved sincerity that makes even the prattle of a child agreeable. However weak and imperfect the views of the open-hearted may be, we take pleasure in entering into them. We try, as far as we can, to bring our own understanding down to the level of their capacities, and to

regard every subject in the particular light in which they seem to have considered it. This passion to discover the real sentiments of others is naturally so strong that it often degenerates into a troublesome and impertinent curiosity to pry into those secrets of our neighbors that they have perfectly justifiable reasons for concealing. On many occasions it takes prudence and a strong sense of propriety to govern this passion, as with all the other passions of human nature, and to bring it down to the pitch that any impartial spectator can approve. Yet to disappoint this curiosity, when it is kept within proper bounds and aims at nothing that there can be any just reason to conceal, is in its turn equally disagreeable. The man who evades our most innocent questions, who gives no satisfaction to our most harmless inquiries, who plainly wraps himself in impenetrable obscurity, seems, as it were, to build a wall around his breast. We run forward to get inside it, with all the eagerness of harmless curiosity, and suddenly find ourselves pushed back with the rudest and most offensive violence.

VII.iv.29 The man of reserve and concealment, though seldom a very lovable character, is not disrespected or despised. He seems to feel coldly toward us, and we feel just as coldly toward him. He is not much praised or loved, but he is just as little hated or blamed. He very seldom, however, has reason to regret his caution, and is generally inclined, rather, to pride himself on the prudence of his reserve. So, though his conduct may have been very faulty, and sometimes even harmful, he is very seldom inclined to lay his case before the casuists, or to imagine that he has any need of their acquittal or approbation.

VII.iv.30 It is not always so with the man who has deceived without meaning to—from false information, from inattention, from haste and rashness. Even if it is in a matter of little consequence—in passing on a piece of common news, for example—if he is a real lover of truth, he is ashamed of his own carelessness, and never fails to seize the first opportunity to make the fullest acknowledgment. If it is in a matter of some consequence, his contrition is still greater; and if any unlucky or

fatal consequence has followed from his misinformation, he can scarcely ever forgive himself. Though not guilty, he feels himself to be, in the highest degree, what the ancients called piacular, and he is anxious and eager to make every kind of atonement in his power. Such a person might often be inclined to lay his case before the casuists. They have in general been very favorable to him, and though they have sometimes rightly condemned him for rashness, they have universally acquitted him of the disgrace of falsehood.[72]

VII.iv.31 But the man who had the most frequent reason to consult them was the man of equivocation and mental reservation: the man who seriously and deliberately meant to deceive, but who at the same time wanted to flatter himself that he had really told the truth. With him they have dealt in various ways. When they strongly approved of the motives of his deceit, they have sometimes acquitted him; though, to do them justice, they have generally, and much more often, condemned him.[73]

VII.iv.32 The chief subjects of the casuists' works, therefore, were these: the conscientious regard that is due to the rules of justice; how far we ought to respect the life and property of our neighbor; the duty of restitution; the laws of chastity and modesty, and what made up what in their language are called the sins of concupiscence; the rules of veracity; and the obligation of oaths, promises, and contracts of all kinds.

AGAINST CASUISTRY

Smith rejects casuistry as useless and tiresome, and keeps ethics and jurisprudence.

VII.iv.33 It may be said in general of the casuists' works that they tried, in vain, to direct by precise rules what it belongs to feeling and sentiment alone to judge. How is it possible to fix by rules

72 "Piacular": calling for expiation, as an act that brings guilt on someone who did not intend it. Smith discusses the idea in II.iii.3.

73 "Mental reservation": the practice, debated by casuists, of making a statement literally false while silently adding a qualification in one's mind that would make it true.

the exact point at which, in every case, a delicate sense of justice begins to turn into a frivolous and weak scrupulousness of conscience? The point at which secrecy and reserve begin to grow into dissimulation? How far an agreeable irony may be carried, and at what precise point it begins to degenerate into a detestable lie? What is the highest degree of freedom and ease of behavior that can be regarded as graceful and becoming, and at what point does it first begin to turn into careless and thoughtless license? In all such matters, what would hold good in any one case would scarcely hold exactly in any other, and what makes up the propriety and aptness of behavior varies in every case with the smallest variation of situation. Books of casuistry, therefore, are generally as useless as they are commonly tiresome. They could be of little use to someone who consulted them when the occasion arose, even supposing their decisions to be just. For despite the multitude of cases collected in them, the still greater variety of possible circumstances makes it a matter of chance whether, among all those cases, one will be found exactly parallel to the case under consideration. Someone who is really anxious to do his duty must be very weak if he can imagine that he has much need of them; and as for someone who neglects his duty, the style of those writings is not such as is likely to rouse him to more attention. None of them tends to inspire us toward what is generous and noble. None of them tends to soften us toward what is gentle and humane. Many of them, on the contrary, tend rather to teach us to quibble with our own consciences, and by their empty subtleties serve to authorize countless evasive refinements concerning the most essential articles of our duty. The frivolous precision they tried to bring into subjects that do not admit of it almost necessarily led them into those dangerous errors. At the same time it made their works dry and disagreeable: full of abstruse and metaphysical distinctions, but incapable of exciting in the heart any of those emotions that it is the principal use of books of morality to excite.

VII.iv.34 The two useful parts of moral philosophy, therefore, are Ethics and Jurisprudence. Casuistry ought to be rejected altogether. The ancient moralists seem to have judged much better: in treating the same subjects, they did not affect any such fine exactness, but contented themselves with describing, in a general way, the sentiment on which justice, modesty, and veracity are founded, and the ordinary way of acting to which those virtues would commonly prompt us.

VII.iv.35 Something not unlike the doctrine of the casuists, it is true, seems to have been attempted by several philosophers. There is something of this kind in the third book of Cicero's *Offices*, where he tries, like a casuist, to give rules for our conduct in many delicate cases in which it is hard to determine where the point of propriety lies. It also appears from many passages in the same book that several other philosophers had attempted something of the same kind before him.[74] Neither he nor they, however, seem to have aimed at giving a complete system of this sort. They only meant to show how situations may arise in which it is doubtful whether the highest propriety of conduct consists in observing, or in departing from, what in ordinary cases are the rules of duty.

NATURAL JURISPRUDENCE

Positive laws imperfectly copy natural justice; Grotius first attempted a system of natural jurisprudence.

VII.iv.36 Every system of positive law may be regarded as a more or less imperfect attempt toward a system of natural jurisprudence, or toward an enumeration of the particular rules of justice. Since the violation of justice is something men will never submit to from one another, the public magistrate is obliged to use the power of the commonwealth to enforce the practice of this virtue. Without this precaution, civil society would become a scene of bloodshed and disorder, with every

74 The third book treats conflicts between the honorable and the useful, citing earlier Stoics such as Panaetius, Diogenes of Babylon, Antipater, and Hecato.

man taking revenge by his own hand whenever he imagined he had been injured. To prevent the confusion that would follow from every man's doing justice for himself, the magistrate, in all governments that have acquired any considerable authority, undertakes to do justice to all, and promises to hear and redress every complaint of injury. In all well-governed states, moreover, not only are judges appointed to settle the disputes of individuals, but rules are laid down to regulate those judges' decisions; and these rules are, in general, intended to coincide with those of natural justice. It does not always happen, however, that they do so in every instance. Sometimes what is called the constitution of the state—that is, the interest of the government—and sometimes the interest of particular orders of men who tyrannize over the government, bend the positive laws of the country away from what natural justice would prescribe. In some countries, the crudeness and barbarism of the people prevent the natural sentiments of justice from reaching the accuracy and precision which, in more civilized nations, they naturally attain. Their laws, like their manners, are gross, crude, and undiscriminating. In other countries, the unfortunate constitution of their courts of law prevents any regular system of jurisprudence from ever establishing itself among them, even though the improved manners of the people might be such as would admit of the most accurate one. In no country do the decisions of positive law coincide exactly, in every case, with the rules that the natural sense of justice would dictate. Systems of positive law, therefore, though they deserve the greatest authority as records of the sentiments of mankind in different ages and nations, can never be regarded as accurate systems of the rules of natural justice.

VII.iv.37 One might have expected that the reasonings of lawyers about the various imperfections and improvements of the laws of different countries would have prompted an inquiry into what the natural rules of justice were, independent of all positive institution. One might have expected these reasonings to lead them to aim at establishing a system of what might properly be called natural jurisprudence, or a theory of the general

principles that ought to run through, and be the foundation of, the laws of all nations. But though the reasonings of lawyers did produce something of this kind, and though no one has written systematically on the laws of any particular country without mixing many observations of this sort into his work, it was very late in the world's history before any such general system was thought of, or before the philosophy of law was treated by itself, without regard to the particular institutions of any one nation. In none of the ancient moralists do we find any attempt at a detailed enumeration of the rules of justice. Cicero in his *Offices*, and Aristotle in his *Ethics*, treat justice in the same general way in which they treat all the other virtues. In the *Laws* of Cicero and of Plato, where we might naturally have expected some attempt at an enumeration of those rules of natural equity that ought to be enforced by the positive laws of every country, there is, however, nothing of this kind. Their laws are laws of public administration, not of justice. Grotius seems to have been the first who tried to give the world anything like a system of those principles that ought to run through, and be the foundation of, the laws of all nations; and his treatise on the laws of war and peace, with all its imperfections, is perhaps even today the most complete work yet produced on this subject.[75] In another discourse I shall try to give an account of the general principles of law and government, and of the different revolutions they have undergone in the different ages and periods of society. This will cover not only what concerns justice, but what concerns public administration, revenue, and arms, and whatever else is the object of law. I shall not, therefore, go into any further detail at present about the history of jurisprudence.[76]

75 Cicero's *De legibus* and Plato's *Laws*; Smith's word is "police," meaning public administration and regulation. Grotius's treatise is *De jure belli ac pacis* ("On the Law of War and Peace," 1625).

76 "Public administration, revenue, and arms" renders Smith's "police, revenue, and arms." *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) partly fulfilled this promise; the rest, as the 1790 Advertisement admits, was never completed, and Smith had his unfinished manuscripts burned shortly before his death.