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ERRATUM.

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REMARKS

REMARKS UPON THE PRINCIPLES AND REASONINGS OF

Dr. RUTHERFORTH'S
ESSAY on the Nature and Obligations of Virtue:

In vindication of the contrary principles and
reasonings, enforced in the writings of the
late Dr. SAMUEL CLARKE.

Published by Mr. WARBURTON, with a PREFACE.

Οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν εὐρεῖν τὸ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗΣ ἀπὸ ἀρχῆν,
ἀλλ' ἄλλην γένεσιν, ἢ τὴν τῷ ΔΙΟΣ καὶ τῷ ΚΟΙΝΗΣ
ΦΥΣΕΩΣ. Chrysip. apud Plutarch.

First printed in the Year 1747.

VOL. II.

A

P R E F A C E.

THE author of the *Divine Legation* had observed, that God, in order to secure the practice of moral virtue, had been graciously pleased to bestow on man an instinctive approbation of right, and abhorrence of wrong; to which some philosophers have given the name of the *moral sense*. That God had further established a real, essential difference in the qualities of human actions, whereby some are seen to be fit and right, and others wrong and unfit. But, as this author thought, that *obligation* without an obliger, and an *obliger* without agency, were mere jargon, he therefore had recourse to a superior *will*, as the proper and real ground of *moral obligation*. For tho' *instinct* felt a difference in actions; and *reason* discovered that difference to be founded in the nature of things; yet it was *will* only, that could make *compliance* with such difference to be our *duty*; whereby that, which was, before, a *fitness*, now became a *virtue*. On these *three principles*, therefore, he supposed the whole edifice of practical morality to be erected. He observed further, that this admirable provision for the support of virtue had been, in great measure, defeated by its pretended advocates; who, in their eternal squabbles about the true foundation of morality, and the obligations to its practice, had sacrilegiously untwisted this threefold chord, and each (whether he

placed it *falsely*, in the moral sense or essential differences; or *truly*, in the will of God) running away with the part he esteemed the strongest, had affixed *that* to the throne of Heaven, as the golden chain, which is to draw all unto it.

Since the making these observations, the writer here confuted hath afforded one of the most notable examples of the folly there condemned. He seemed indeed to aim at placing the foundation of morality rightly, in the *will of God*: but then he would not so much as allow the other principles to be even a *rule*, to direct us in the knowledge, and, consequently, in the observance of that will. And see, the mischiefs of separating what the divine wisdom had united; for, to support the extravagance of his scheme, he was forced to intrench himself in a vile and abject selfishness; by which he hath not only degraded human nature, and defiled moral virtue, but hath even slipped beside his own professed foundation, the *will of God*; by which miscarriage he hath fallen, before he was aware, into the most impious, as well as most absurd system, that ever entered into the head of a professed religionist; as may be seen by a perusal of the following sheets.

But his answerer, the author of them, proceeds with much greater discretion; as intent only on the advancement of truth and piety. This writer, though placing the foundation of moral virtue (I think, wrongly) in the *eternal relations* of things; yet allows the other principles all their efficacy; and so sagely secures the interests of practical morality. And by this means, seconded by a fine genius and infinite superiority in reasoning, hath given so thorough a confutation of this exclusive, exterminating system, as is rarely to be met with in controversies on these subjects. Indeed, there was little or nothing in the work confuted, but sophistical wrangling, and disingenuous tergiversation;

sation; embarrassed by an understanding more than ordinarily condensed with the frigid subtilty of school-moonshine. To make amends for this, you have, in the confutation, all the clearness of expression, the strength of reason, the precision of logic, and attachment to truth, which make books of this nature really useful to the common cause of virtue and religion.

But after all, on this subject it would not be amiss, for disputants to attend to the advice of M. Bayle: “*Disputez tant qu’il vous plaira sur des questions de logique; mais dans la morale contentez-vous du bon sens, et de la lumiere, que la lecture de l’Evangile repand dans l’esprit.*”

REMARKS

UPON THE

PRINCIPLES

AND MOST

Considerable PASSAGES

OF

Dr. *Rutherford's* ESSAY, &c.

ONE, who has been accustomed to an awful sense of religious duties, as founded on the eternal reason and nature of things; and to consider mankind as a system of social beings, designed to promote each other's welfare, no part being made for itself alone; cannot, I am persuaded, without a good deal of uneasiness, take a view of the unamiable and degrading picture of both, given us by some late moralists, who profess to do honour to religion by establishing it on the *lowest* motives, upon pretence, that they are the *strongest*; and to consult the happiness of mankind, by maintaining, that every individual is concerned solely for his own; that there is no such thing in nature, as a disinterested desire of the good of others; and that no man does, or ought to do, the least beneficent

nescent action, or has any sense of gratitude for those done to him, without a prospect of farther advantage to himself. These doctrines are so contrary to the appearances, that are in the world, as well as to the natural feelings of our own minds, that the assertors of them are obliged to account for all the disinterested actions, that seem to be done, and the sentiments we imagine we have of them, by an unnatural *association of ideas*, or a far fetched string of reflections, that never entered into a benevolent heart; and which (however those writers have found out these distant secret springs) they will never find one virtuous man in the least conscious of.

In this no one has laboured with more advantages of learning, of plausible argument, and all the arts his cause requires, than the author of a late *Essay on Virtue*. The great design of his book, he tells us, is to lead his readers to see, that revelation is necessary, both to teach us how to make ourselves happy, and to oblige us to be virtuous: in which I would heartily concur with him, but see not the necessity of depreciating religious duties, or human nature, in order to that end. Let the God of truth, who has *written his laws in our hearts*, be honoured by the dictates of our nature, as well as by the assistances of revelation.

This author is not unaware, that the most eminent of the advocates for the obligations to virtue, arising from the relations and fitnesses of things, do, as strongly as he, assert the necessity of revelation; for he has taken advantage of their concessions on that point to argue against the sufficiency of their principle. But supposing their principle insufficient, if it is not *inconsistent* with an acknowledgment, that revelation is necessary, why must it be entirely discarded? Supposing mankind inca-

* Dr. Clarke, and Mr. Balguy.

pable of steddily performing their duty in *all* cases, without a prospect of future retributions, how does it follow, that therefore there is no duty in *any* case, but what arises from such a prospect?

Or even granting the author of the *Essay* his main principle, "That every man's own happiness is the ultimate end, which nature and reason teach him to pursue," why may not nature and reason teach him, too, to have some desire to see others happy as well as himself, or give him some delight in doing what seems fit and right, if these things do not interfere with his own happiness? Why indeed may they not make a part of it? At least, if he finds them suitable to a social nature, and commanding his approbation, why may he not amuse himself by the way with such gratifications (as most of us do with very trifling ones) without considering, whether they lead directly to his ultimate end? Why may he not, with the pursuit of that end, join some other pursuits not inconsistent with it, instead of transforming every benevolent affection, every moral view, into self-interest? This surely neither does honour to religion, nor justice to human nature. But let us examine, as concisely as the subject will allow, on what grounds the learned author of the *Essay on Virtue* establishes a scheme, which appears so injurious to both.

He begins chap. i. with a very just observation, "That virtue, which we expect all mankind should practise, must be something, which all mankind either are, or easily may be, acquainted with." And that with regard to the vulgar and illiterate, "common sense, joined to the most ordinary helps of instruction, must afford a more obvious notion of virtue, than any, that is to be met with in the writings of the moralists." And thus far I go along with him. It is not indeed to be expected, that the vulgar or the illiterate should be acquainted with

with general definitions, or abstract reasonings. Their guides to virtue must be something plain and familiar to them; and these I take to be common sense, their natural notions of right and wrong, and the approved customs of the society they live in, by which they commonly know well enough what ought to be their practice, as particular occasions offer, tho' they have little or no notion at all of what virtue in general is. And perhaps if this writer's^b way of life allowed him to be more acquainted with the world, he would find, that the definition, which he has given us of virtue (tho' traced, as he imagines, from the common opinions and sense of mankind) is far less the ground, on which *men of low and unimproved parts* act themselves, or judge of the actions of others, than those *relations and fitnesses of things* are, which he thinks beyond their understanding, nay so unintelligible, that he scarce ventures to mention them without^c making an apology to his readers. But let him not be afraid: however abstruse or obscure the discourses of learned men may have been about them, the things themselves are obvious, and level to most capacities; and much surer guides to the bulk of mankind, than his own^d definition, that *virtue is that quality in our actions, by which they are fitted to do good to others, or to prevent their harm*. For (besides that this is far from taking in the entire system of virtues) there may be cases, in which actions *fitted to do good, &c.* may not be virtuous; but in no case an action suitable to the relations and fitnesses of things can be otherwise.

However, in support of the definition, the author has taken a great deal of pains in chap. ii. of this work, to shew, that the name of *Virtue* is given by common consent to that sort of behaviour *only*, that is fitted to do good, or to prevent harm; expati-

ating on the good and evil consequent upon several instances of behaviour approved or condemned as virtuous or vicious. And truly here is field enough to enlarge upon; virtue is, without doubt, sufficiently fruitful of good, and vice of bad effects, to afford ample matter for declamation. But this is no proof, that the whole of virtue consists, or that it is *commonly supposed* to consist, in a fitness to do good to others. Those, who maintain, that virtue consists in acting suitably to the nature and relations of things, can shew too, that in every instance of virtue there is a suitability to certain relations, &c. and, on the contrary, an unsuitableness in every vice, without exception; and that actions are accordingly judged to be right or wrong, virtuous or vicious, by the natural notions of mankind; which will more strongly prove on their side.

Ask an honest labourer, why he wears himself out with toils and cares to provide for his family, to feed and cloath a parcel of troublesome children. Would he answer, that this action was fitted to do good, and to prevent harm? No, certainly, for he would easily see, that as much good might be done by taking care of some other family: but he would readily answer, that truly he thought it behoved him to take care of his own; that his wife and children were very dear to him; and who should take care of them, if he did not? Tell him again of a jolly neighbour, who enjoys himself at the ale-house, drinking and playing away all he can get, whilst his family is left to go naked and starve; would he not instantly cry out, What an unnatural wretch is that! The very beasts take care of their young! These are the most natural sentiments of a well disposed, though uncultivated mind; and they arise directly from the relations and fitness of things, and a disinterested benevolence, which guide him

^b Vide Page 3.^c Page 3, 12.^d Page 6.

him to virtuous practice, tho' he never heard of any of those terms. And that most perfect rule of life, *To do unto all men, as we would they should do unto me*, which is the sum of all the social virtues, is plainly deduced from the natural relation of equality we bear to each other, and a fitness resulting from thence: yet nothing is more easy and intelligible to common capacities. The same might be shewn of all the particular virtues, and the contrary of the vices instanced in by this author, if my designed brevity would allow me to pursue the observation so minutely.

But I am obliged to take notice of the fallacious manner, in which he pretends to prove, that the *sensualist* is called vicious on account of the harm he may do to others; not for his acting unsuitably to the nature and relation of things, which I the rather observe here, because the same fallacy is made use of in several other parts of this *Essay* for the like purpose; changing the terms, and thereby entirely altering the state of the question. "Do we (says he) disapprove the behaviour of the sensualist, because it is contrary to the character of a man? Who then shall determine what the true character of a man is?" Really that may be pretty hard to determine. But, pray, what moralist ever made acting up to the *character* of a man, or acting contrary to it, the standard of virtue and vice? Character is too equivocal a word to be used in such an enquiry; and our author very well knows, that it is not a term used by any of the writers he opposes; whose arguments he fairly sets down in their own language, but artfully changes it, when he pretends to answer them. In the same manner he goes on a little lower; "Perhaps it would be found, that fact and experience do not put an *aversion* to the pleasures of sense into the notion of a man."

* *Essay*, p. 16.

And

And who ever put *aversion* to the pleasures of sense into the notion of virtue? "I do not remember (adds he) to have seen it, in any of the laboured, and abstract definitions of our species." Nor any body else, I believe, ever saw it: to what purpose then is it brought in? *Aversion* to the pleasures of sense is certainly no part of the nature of man. But did this gentleman never see or hear, that keeping the sensual appetites in subjection to reason, the superior faculty, is acting up to the true nature of a man? Does he not know, that this was what the antients meant by living according to nature? And if the contrary to this, if allowing the lower appetites and passions, to rule in opposition to the governing principle, unsuitably to the relation they bear to one another, and to the nature of a reasonable being, is what we disapprove in the behaviour of the intemperate, or the sensualist, of which he has said nothing; then what does all he has here said, (with his characters and aversions, in which no adversary is concerned) amount to, but mere fallacies to amuse or perplex the reader?

He afterwards allows, that the temperance of a man, who is thrown upon a desolate island for life, may be a virtue, notwithstanding no good comes of it to any one but himself: "Because, says he, the nature of the behaviour is the very same, that it would have been, if he had lived in society; it is fit to do good, and to prevent harm." An extraordinary reason indeed! This instance might rather have shewn him, that his definition is not agreeable to the true, or to the general notion of virtue: for how absurd is it to make the virtue of a man, who is always to live alone, consist in a fitness of his behaving to do good to others, and to prevent their harm? How ridiculous would it be, to suppose him forbearing acts of intemperance, upon considering

* See Dr. Butler's Sermon on human nature. † *Essay*, p. 25.

of

14 *Remarks on Dr. Rutherford's Essay on*

of what ill consequence, such actions might be, if he lived in society? What is that to him, when he can neither do good nor harm to any one? If temperance would be a virtue in a man, tho' living alone, as no doubt it would; it must be, because it is agreeable to the nature of a reasonable being, and to the fitness of things: And it will always be a virtue wherever he lives, for the very same reason.

The last instance of behaviour, this author brings in favour of his notion of virtue, is that of the griping usurer^b, compared with the industrious merchant, and the cruel tyrant with the true patriot.

"Here, he says, the very same objects are pursued, both by those, who are not vicious, and by those, who are: The merchant desires to get money, and perhaps gets more than the usurer: the patriot endeavours to acquire power, as well as the tyrant; yet these deserve our esteem, whilst the other characters are detestable." This he concludes can be for no other reason, than that, in which he supposes the general notion of virtue to consist, "That the merchant *does good* with his riches, and the patriot with his power; whereas the usurer *does no good*, and the tyrant a great deal of *harm*." But surely it is no less manifest, that the virtuous characters in these instances *act conformably to the nature, relations, and fitness of things*, than it is, that they *do good*; and that, on the contrary, there is a manifest *disagreement* in the actions of the vicious characters *to the reason and nature of things*; and in this conformity, or disagreement, consists the *virtue* and the *vice* of all the good, or all the harm they do: For where there is not this disagreement, there may be actions, that *do harm*, which yet are *not vicious* (as in the punishment, suppose, of a rebellious nation, where many innocents must suffer) and, on the other hand, where there is not this conformity, there may

^b P. 31.

the nature and obligations of virtue. 15

be actions, that *do good*, which yet are *not virtuous*. So that I must beg leave to assert, contrary to our authorⁱ, that in the dispute, whether some particular actions have any claim to be placed in the catalogue of virtues, the first and most usual enquiry is not, *whether they do good, or prevent harm*; but whether they are conformable to the nature, relations, and circumstances of the agent and the objects.

To illustrate this in a particular instance: Suppose a rich miser, who had many years denied himself the conveniences, and almost the necessaries of life; hoarding up all he could get or save, and refusing the least assistance to his nearest relations, under great streights and difficulties, and this with a view of leaving all his treasure, without any regard to the ties of nature, to found an hospital after his death, for the maintenance and education of a large number of poor children. I chuse to instance in this case, because I have known it to be fact. Here then is an action *fitted to do good, and to prevent harm*. But I presume the generality of mankind would, upon the whole, perceive such a disagreement in it to nature, and reason, and fitness, as would not allow them to esteem it a virtuous action.

The author of the *Essay*^k approves of the common division of duties, into those, which we owe to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves; but I think not very consistently with himself. For^l he admits those, that are called *self duties*, into the catalogue of *virtues*, solely on account of their being fitted to *do good to others*; and he^m allows them to be *duties* on this single consideration, that *God has commanded them*; neither of which can be any ground for accounting them duties, that *we owe to ourselves*; for (according to his distinction) as *virtues*, they must be ranked among those, which we owe to our neighbour; as *duties*, among those, which we owe to God;

ⁱ *Essay*, p. 34.

^k P. 21.

^l P. 22.

^m P. 20.

so that if his notion was right, no such thing could ever have been thought on, as a *duty we owe to ourselves*: and therefore, this *allowed* division might have shewn him, that the generality of mankind place the virtue of those, that are called the *self-duties*, in a fitness to promote *self-good*, not the good of *others*; and consequently, that this is *not*, as he supposes, the only notion of virtue, that common use has established.

Our author seems likewise to approve of distinguishing between *piety* and *virtue*; and in this he is consistent enough; for since he has restrained the name of *virtue* to those actions, that are *fitted to do good to others, or to prevent their harm*, this must, in his account, effectually bar all our regards to God, from having any pretension to the title of virtues. But I confess myself greatly prejudiced against the distinction, which, I fear, has had very bad consequences. Some have been accustomed so entirely to distinguish between piety and virtue, that they have imagined they could be *religious without virtue*; and others have supposed they might be *virtuous without religion*: and therefore, I cannot but be much better pleased with that notion of moral virtue, which places it in a conformity of our actions to the nature of them, and from the fitnesses resulting from them, and from all the relations we stand in to different beings; for this, without much *metaphysical refining*, unites religion and virtue, directing us to all the duties we owe to our Creator, as well as to our fellow-creatures.

The author takes notice, in this chapter, and in other parts of his work, "That the effect, which any action has, or may have, upon the happiness or misery of the agent himself, is not what gives the name of a virtue, or a vice to it: that the moral goodness of voluntary actions does indeed

"consist in their producing good or happiness, but then it is the good or happiness of others, not of him who does them." A truth, which one would not have expected to find inculcated in a book, the chief tendency of which is to persuade us, that there is no such thing in nature, as doing good to others, without a regard to our own happiness. Indeed it seems matter of wonder, with what view the second chapter was writ; for if the doctrine of the *Essay* be true, I know not what use can be made of it, unless it be to conclude, that virtue is nothing but an empty speculation; that there is no such thing in reality as virtuous practice; and that the best *Christian* in the world neither is, nor ought to be, a *virtuous man*. Whatever might be the intention of the writer, this seems to be a plain consequence from his own notion of virtue, compared with the whole tenor of his book, as will appear to any one, who attentively goes through it.

At the beginning of the third chapter (which being in opposition to the *Fable of the Bees*, I shall have little to do with, but in relation to that we are upon;) he says: "As I undertook, in the foregoing chapter, to determine, wherein the *nature* of virtue consists, some may object, that I ought to have enquired, not what has been *called*, but what really and truly is *virtue*; if they, who make this objection, confound the notions of *virtue* and *duty*, I will endeavour to satisfy them, when I come to explain the cause of moral obligation. But if we keep these two notions *distinct*, then I confess, that I know but little difference between what is really and truly virtue, and that sort of behaviour, which by common consent is called so." And truly if we are to keep these notions *distinct*, if *virtue* is to be distinguished from *duty*, then I confess, that I know of no occasion we have to enquire either after its *name*, or its *nature*. If virtue is not that sort of behaviour, which men, as men, are ob-

liged to, which God requires from us as reasonable beings, how are we concerned at all about it? In one sense, as this writer somewhere says, "Virtue can never be indifferent, for it will always be fitted to do good." But it must certainly be indifferent in a *moral sense*, if no body is obliged from the nature of things to practise it. He talks indeed of proving hereafter, that virtue is our duty; and how does he perform this? Why, by telling us, that it becomes such, when God has promised to make us happy for it. But what consistency is there in saying, that a *prospect of our own happiness* makes it our duty to do good to others, *without any regard to our own happiness*, which is his own notion of virtue? This gentleman seems indeed to delight in paradoxes, by placing the self-duties in a fitness to do good to *others*; and the duty of doing good to others, in regard to *self-good*.

REMARKS on Chap. v.

THE arguments in this chapter are peculiarly levelled against Mr. Hutcheson's scheme, which I have no intention to defend; for tho' I have a great esteem for that ingenious author's writings, in which are many useful truths; yet I cannot agree with him, that a *blind instinct* (if that is what he means by a *moral sense*) or that the public affections (as he calls them) are the proper *foundations of virtue*. But since the design of the author of the *Essay on Virtue* is to maintain, that there is no such thing as a disinterested affection for, or approbation of virtue, I shall consider what he has offered to that purpose, distinct from the relation it bears to the particular writer he opposes.

Before we proceed, it may not be amiss to look back upon the fourth chapter, which I had passed over, it being chiefly employed in explaining terms. But there is a passage in it, occasioned by a definition (the author gives us from Mr. Hutcheson) of moral

goodness

goodness, which having some relation to the subject we are going upon, it may not be improper to observe here the fallacy of his reasoning, independently from any regard to the justness of the definition it is intended to confute, about which I have no concern.

"If, says he, moral good was a quality, which made us desire the happiness of every one, who shews it in his conduct; then, as this quality appears in our own conduct, our love towards ourselves must encrease; the more we practise moral good, the more we must desire our own happiness; we must grow selfish in proportion as we are virtuous, and be the more interested, the more benevolent we are. Either, therefore, our sense of moral good, and our affection for it, do not reach to our own behaviour; or else the practice of virtue must be fatal to itself, by strengthening that self-love, which is represented by these very moralists, as the only thing, that can stop the operation of the public affections, and keep the balance always inclined towards the side of private interest."

The self-love, which those moralists represent as dangerous to the public affections, is that degree, or rather that *wrong application* of it, which *solely* regards private interest, exclusively of all public affections; or, in more intelligible language, which regards *self* alone, without the least concern for the good of any other. This is so vicious a misapplication, that on the account of it, instead of distinguishing the use from the abuse of an innocent principle, all *self-love* has been absurdly and unnaturally exclaimed against, as a vice, that ought to be entirely eradicated. Those enthusiastic writers, who (perhaps misled by the schoolmen) have fallen into this error, considered not self-love as a part of our nature, and consequently the work of God; and saw not,

"That true self-love and social are the same."

But this is now so well understood, that the former sort is come to be commonly distinguished from it, by the name of *selfishness*; a distinction, of which I presume the author of the *Essay* is not unaware, tho' he argues here, without taking notice of the difference, that if we approve and love ourselves, on account of our moral goodness, we must grow *selfish* in proportion as we are virtuous, and be the more *interested*, the more benevolent we are. But of this there is certainly no danger, which he may easily see, if he will allow us to break through the ambiguity of words, and to put him in mind, that all *self-love* is not *selfishness*. That kind of it especially, which is supposed to arise from our approbation of our own conduct, and to encrease by our practice of moral good, must naturally incline us to continue in that practice, and to be the more beneficent, that we may perpetuate to just a foundation of our love and approbation of ourselves: Thus our virtue will be so far from being *fatal to itself* by strengthening our *self-love*, that our virtue will in return be strengthened by it;

" Self-love thus push'd to social, to divine,

" Gives thee to make thy neighbour's blessing
" thine."

Finding thus, our happiness in that of others, virtue and self-love will go hand in hand together, and mutually support each other. We are, therefore, secure enough from growing *selfish* and *interested*, by the practice and approbation of a *disinterested benevolence*; and now may the better go on to enquire, whether there is really any such thing in nature. To return then to chap. v.

Our author begins by telling us, that " the common and ordinary feelings of mankind, the senses and perceptions, that are uppermost in the human constitution, and most attended to, plainly direct " to private good, and instruct each individual to

* *Essay on man*, Ep. iv.

" provide

" provide for himself in the best manner he can." Granting this, are there not other feelings too, almost as common, equally predominant in the human constitution, and constantly attended to, which as plainly direct to the good of others? Of this I need only mention one undeniable instance, the natural affection of parents for their children, which as strongly carries them to provide for the good of their offspring, as any other propensions do to provide for their own. This is a dictate of nature so obvious and so general, that it effectually overthrows the sole principle, upon which this whole *Essay* is founded, viz. *That men neither do, nor does nature or reason teach them, to pursue any other end, but every one his own private happiness.*

In consequence of this principle, the author here maintains, that all our approbation or love of virtue arises from a prospect of some advantage by it to ourselves; and in support of this he is so diffused, puts so many cases and suppositions, and views things in such various lights, that it would be impossible to go through the particulars, without writing a larger book than his own. But it will be less tedious to the reader, and less perplex him in the search of truth, if we give the substance of what is offered, and select all that seems of most weight, or of most importance to answer.

It has been usually urged by divines, in proof of the excellence of virtue, and of our natural perceptions of its worth, that even those, who do not practise it, give testimony to it by their approbation and love of it in others. But this author, with a great profusion of words, and display of his eloquence, accounts for this love and approbation from his *favourite* principle; of which the following may suffice for a specimen.

" All that they approve (he says) in virtue or " moral goodness, is the natural good, that it either

! From p. 75, to 99.

B 3

produces,

" produces, or is fit to produce; and all their love
 " arises from the share, which they suppose they
 " should have in the happy effects of it, when others
 " practise it. Is not such a one the most fond of
 " virtue, when he finds it in his friend or his partner,
 " where he is the person, upon whom it is exercised
 " the ofttest, and where he reaps the greatest
 " advantages from it?" And what is all this to the
 " purpose? Very probably a man, who does not practise
 " virtue himself, will be fonder of the effects of it,
 " when exercised to his advantage, than he would be
 " of the same effects, if others reaped the benefit of
 " them: and this indeed must be placed to the account
 " of his self-love, or desire of his own natural good.
 " But notwithstanding this, his sentiments of the virtue
 " itself, his approbation of the justice, the fidelity,
 " the generosity of his friend or his partner, will be
 " just the same, as if he considered those virtues abstractedly,
 " or in any other instances, where he had no concern;
 " for our natural approbation of virtue is quite distinct from,
 " and independent of all consideration of the effects of it.

This appears evidently in that admiration and delight,
 which we are apt to feel, on hearing or reading of heroic
 disinterested actions, tho' done many ages ago, in distant
 countries, where our interest can have nothing to do;
 as has been often urged on this subject. Yet even this,
 according to our author, is nothing but a reflection we
 make upon the delight it gave us, when virtue was
 practised towards ourselves; for thus, he says, we may
 love virtue at a distance, or when it is exercised on
 others " just as we love roses in winter, or grapes
 whilst another is eating them. It is the pleasure, that
 " we have in smelling the flower, or in tasting the fruit,
 " when they come in our way, which makes us love them:
 " And to say, that we love them, there is no necessity
 for actually feel-

" ing this pleasure: it is sufficient that we can reflect
 " upon it, and know, that they will give us it. And
 " thus when virtue is practised towards ourselves, it
 " makes us happy, and we can reflect upon the delight
 " it gave us, whilst another enjoys it." We can so,
 if we have been made happy by the like virtues. But
 how does this account for that rapturous pleasure,
 which we feel on hearing of some generous heroic action,
 of which we never knew a resembling instance, or could
 possibly have been the objects of? If our approbation,
 love, and admiration of virtue depended on our
 experiencing the happy effects of it, how had the
 singularly eminent virtues we read of in the Roman
 history, passed through ages unapproved, unloved,
 and unadmired! For where is the man, who ever
 could reflect on the happy effects he had found of
 actions, resembling the generous virtues recorded
 there, particularly those of the brave Decii, and the
 intrepid Regulus? Can any man call home the
 actions of those heroes to himself, and recollect the
 delight he found, when such were practised towards
 him? It is not to be imagined: Nor is it the happy
 effects of their virtues, that we admire. It is not
 the good they produced, or were fitted to produce;
 it is the generosity, the magnanimity of the actions
 themselves, that we esteem and love; the strict
 fidelity of the one, and the disinterested patriotism
 of both; and as it is impossible for us to have any
 view to our own advantage in such instances, our
 approbation and love must be no less disinterested,
 than were the virtues we contemplate.

And truly our author is so kind, as to give us leave
 to call it so, provided we will agree to call our love
 of grapes or roses disinterested too. " If any one
 " thinks (says he) that, to approve virtue, tho'
 " on the account of the happiness, which it produces,
 " whilst others practise it, should be called
 " a disinterested approbation, because we approve

"it, whether we ourselves enjoy that happiness or not; he has my leave to call it so: But then it will be necessary for him, tho' our love of grapes or roses arises entirely from the pleasure, which they give us, to call this a disinterested affection too, because we love them as we do virtue, without actually enjoying the pleasure, which they are fitted to produce." But why must this be necessary? Or how will the comparison hold? As fond as this gentleman seems of it, by repeating it often for a parallel case, it goes entirely upon the mistake of supposing, that our approbation and love of virtue is *solely on account of the happiness it produces*, as our liking of fruits and flowers is only for the sake of the agreeable sensations they give. He may not, indeed, be sensible of this mistake, since he has no other notion of virtue; but I am persuaded he is not quite insensible, that our love and approbation of virtue is of a very different kind from our love of grapes or roses; nor does he venture to talk of our *approbation* of them, tho' he talks a great deal about I do not know what *happiness, that virtue affords, which may be taken in by any sense, or by all in their turns*; as if he designed to make virtue appear as much an object of our senses, as fruits or flowers are, that so our love of it may seem no more capable of being disinterested, than our love of grapes or roses can be. Yet (however he may *feel* or *smell* it out) he cannot sure be ignorant, that virtue is an object of the *understanding*; and that we may come to the knowledge of the worth and excellence of it, without having ever *tasted* or *felt* the effects of it; tho' we can have no idea at all of the value of grapes or roses, but by experiencing the agreeable sensations they raise in us; so that our love of them in winter, or when others are enjoying them, can indeed be nothing else but a *remembrance* of the pleasure they gave us, with a desire of repeating it, which can have no pretensions to be called a *disinterested*

interested affection (if it be proper to call such likings *affections* at all.) Whereas we can form an idea in our minds, either of virtue in general, a steady adherence to truth and right; or, in particular, of a just, a generous, or a grateful action, tho' we had never known any of them practised; and when we hear or read of virtuous characters; or of noble actions done a thousand years ago, we can love, approve, and admire the rectitude and magnanimity of them; and often feel a generous emulation of their excellence, without the least reflection of any advantage, that such virtues might bring to us. And this certainly has a better right (without this gentleman's good leave) to be called a *disinterested affection*, than the love of grapes or roses can pretend to.

Here he runs on again, for above six pages, in rejecting the argument commonly urged in favour of virtue, and to prove our natural approbation of it, *viz.* that even those, who do not practise it, will *confess*, that they cannot help admiring it, and that what they do is with the greatest reluctance; and where men condemn their own practices, there can be no room to suspect them of partiality. "But" there is great room (he says) to doubt "their sincerity." And so gives us his conjectures of the several reasons they may have for pretending to love virtue, and to practise vice with reluctance, when they really feel no such thing; putting cases, in which he supposes all their reluctance must be "an effect of what they fear from their vices, and what they might hope for, if they were virtuous." "But" as long (says he) as the reluctance, "which a man pretends to feel, when he is vicious, is an allowed excuse for his being so, it is no wonder, if all of this character make use of a plea, which will set them right at once in the opinion of the world, and which they think, for want of knowing their hearts, can never be over-

"ruled." I do not know what kind of casuists those are, who *allow* of this for an excuse. I have heard, indeed, of one person, a very noted one, who, in the account of his life written by himself, pleads, in excuse for doing a wrong thing, that he did it against his conscience: but I never heard that *this set him right in the opinion of the world*. It is, I think, the general opinion of the world, that acting against conscience rather aggravates than extenuates any man's guilt; and that therefore the vicious are more inclined to *conceal* the reluctance they feel, than to pretend to it when they feel it not. But as this is a fact, which cannot precisely be determined without *knowing their hearts*, (and I suppose our author has no more pretensions to that sort of knowledge than I have) we can only refer every man to his own breast, to observe, if in any instances, where he has deviated from the rules of virtue, he has not secretly approved the characters of those, whose conduct has been more regular. That this has been the case of all, who have had such an occasion of comparing themselves with others, I make not the least doubt; and the consciousness of every particular person of his own sentiments in favour of virtue, is a very probable ground of its being a generally received opinion, *that all men approve it*, even when they do not practise virtue.

I am persuaded, too, that this general approbation has a much more extensive influence on men's practice, than the author of the *Essay* supposes: And am much mistaken in the world, if (bad as it is) there are not great numbers in it, who do good, and generous, and grateful actions, without any kind of interested views. The author's advice is right however, "to try what our approbation of virtue is owing to, and what use it can

"be of to us, by observing how far it engages us to be virtuous ourselves, if we love to be kind and generous ourselves, as much as we love to have others so." But why will he suppose that this is no body's case? Why will he imagine, "that we" approve virtue in others *only* because it does us good, but *seldom* approve it well enough to practise it where it would hurt us? I might have said *never*, adds he, unless some motives of happiness are thrown into the opposite scale," &c. And yet, in the very same page, he talks of our being in raptures, when we receive some signal favour from one, who *distresses himself to do us service*. I wonder of what species those generous-beings are, who give occasion for such raptures! If they are a part of mankind, I suppose this gentleman has discovered some latent motive of their generosity, some remote view to their own advantage, which would abate much of our raptures, if we were as clear-sighted as he: but, till that appears, I must beg leave to conclude, that those at least, *who distress themselves to give assistance to others*, have a truly disinterested affection; and that therefore, all do not deserve the low and unworthy opinion he endeavours to give us of the whole species; contending to the end of this chapter, and indeed through the whole book, that there is no such thing as a disinterested affection among them.

Gratitude is the virtue he has singled out, for what he calls *a favourite instance of a disinterested affection*; and here he tells us, that our loving or approving *gratitude in other men, when they are grateful to us, will never shew our affection to be disinterested*. Who pretends, that it will? And yet in some cases it may be so, when no benefit can accrue to us, from the gratitude of those, whom we

have obliged. But what does he think of gratitude in ourselves towards those, who have done us good offices? "Why this, he says, is the most unfortunate instance, that could have been made choice of, for the proof of a disinterested affection for virtue: selfish regards are contained in the very notion of it. It is an affection towards a character considered as beneficial to us." It is so, and I thought this sense of the word so well known, and so generally agreed in, that there was no need of any ^b "endeavours to shew, that this name belongs to no other benevolent affection, or to settle the meaning of the word gratitude." Nor can I imagine to what purpose, (except to display the author's eloquence) eight or nine pages are employed in telling us, what affections are *not* gratitude; what views we may have of future benefits in being grateful for the past; and in what cases our gratitude would entirely cease. For who is ignorant, that humanity, benevolence, charity, forgiveness, &c. are *not* gratitude? Who knows not, that there may be joined with a grateful sense of past benefits an expectation of future favours? Or who doubts, that former kindnesses may be so entirely cancelled by greater injuries, that no ground for gratitude would remain? These are all unquestionable truths. But what is all this, and a great deal more of the same kind, to the purpose? If there is any such thing at all among mankind, as grateful sentiments, and kind returns for past benefits, where there is no possible expectation of future favours; then gratitude, so circumstantiated, is a very proper instance of a *disinterested affection*, though ten thousand other things should be raked together, which are not.

And that such sentiments are natural to us, even this author himself allows; for ^c putting the case, that we had been at any time in a very distant part

^b Vid. Ess. p. 102, 103.

^c Page 107.

of the world, where some of the inhabitants had treated us with extraordinary kindness and generosity; "we should, he says, without doubt, feel some tender affections, when we were taking leave of a set of men, that we had been so much obliged to; and the sentiments of gratitude would remain, even after we were gone from them, and were settled at so great a distance, as to put it out of their power ever to do us any further services." What then has he been all this while contending against? Is not gratitude, in such a case, an instance of *disinterested affection*, notwithstanding it is towards persons, considered as having been *beneficial to ourselves*? "But still," he tells us, we might depend upon their constant friendship, kind memory, and good offices, though we were never to see or hear the effects of them; and every time that we think of them, we might believe they were thinking of us." These, it seems, are, in this nice gentleman's esteem, *selfish regards*; for in several other places he mentions, as *interested views*, our expecting, that those, to whom we are grateful for past favours, when it is no longer in their power to do us any services, should yet continue their good inclinations and good wishes for us; and this part of their character, he says, is *plainly the object of our gratitude*. Supposing it were so, this would not at all lessen the disinterestedness of it: a desire of the esteem, and love, and good wishes, of those whom we esteem, and love, and wish well to, when it has no farther aim, was never looked on as an interested or selfish view: it is a virtuous desire, which it would be wrong not to have.

That ^d letter, from whence the author of the *Essay* has taken the few lines quoted above (instead of being any thing to his purpose) is a great instance of

^d Mr. Pope's to Dr. Atterbury.

a pure and disinterested friendship; and he might have found many among the familiar letters of that great genius and excellent man, sufficient to overthrow all the arguments of his book, against the reality of disinterested virtue: Not to insist on his generous friendship for persons *out of power, and out of credit*; his tender regards for his mother; his anxious concern for the continuance of her life, when she was of too great an age to be any way useful to him; the satisfaction he expresses in having an opportunity, by his cares and attendance, of returning part of the kind offices she had done him, and his fears of being too soon deprived of it; sentiments, which his heart was so full of, that they break out, on all occasions, to his intimates, in verse as well as prose.

“ Me let the tender office long engage,

“ To rock the cradle of reposing age, &c.

This solicitude

“ To keep a while one parent from the sky, with all his affectionate regards for her, (more than even religion required of him) give us such a proof of disinterested piety and gratitude, as is, I think, irresistible. Nor are there wanting other instances of a like nature, though not so shining, or so generally known, as the virtues of a character so illustrious.

Our author takes notice of one instance of disinterestedness, produced by the noble moralist, and *without doubt*, says he, *more of the same sort may be met with*. “ But the extravagancies, into which our affections hurry us, will only prove, that they are our masters, not that they are natural. The mixture of the kind and friendly, which, in the passion of love between the sexes, is sometimes so much superior to the affection of a vulgar sort, as to make even death itself be voluntarily embraced, for the sake of the person beloved,” will no more demonstrate

* Epist. to Dr. Arb. † Lord Shaft. Vol. ii. p. 105.

(cont-

(continues he) that there are *naturally* in man any disinterestedly kind and friendly affections, than the death of a *Bruno*, a *Vanini*, or *Effendi*, will prove him to have a natural and disinterested love for *atheism*; or than the behaviour of *Felton* or a *Clement* will shew, that nature implanted in man a disinterested desire of *doing mischief*.

To all this I answer, that though our passions, our benevolent affections, our love of truth, and approbation of what appears to us right and fit, are natural, and implanted in us for good and useful purposes; yet the *application* of any of these, is not determined by nature, but is put in our own power, so that we may make either a right or a wrong use of them: It is our fault, if we suffer our passions or affections to be our *masters*: that indeed is not natural, tho' the affections themselves are so; for it is the province of reason to keep them in subjection, to regulate them, and to point out the proper application of them. Those voluntary sufferings of lovers, which the noble moralist speaks of, might be virtues or vices, according as the motives to them, were worthy or not worthy of such a sacrifice: But they certainly *demonstrate*, that there are *naturally* in man *disinterestedly kind and friendly affections*, which he may make either a wise, or an extravagant use of.

In like manner, our natural love of truth and approbation of virtue may be *misapplied*, if we have taken wrong measures in searching after truth, or formed our judgment of virtue by any other rules, than the nature of things, or the revealed will of God. This was the case of all those wretches, mentioned by our author, whose behaviour by no means shews us (as he would suppose) *that piety and truth, or that virtue and truth, are not the same thing*; it only shews, that men may mistake error for truth, and vice for virtue. The resolute death of those atheists proves not, that there is in man a

‡ Ess. p. 112.

natural

natural and disinterested love for atheism: it neither proves their *opinions* to be innate or true, but it strongly proves, that there is in man a disinterested attachment, for what appears to him to be truth: And that this affection may be misapplied, is no more an argument against its being naturally implanted in man, than the absurd use, which atheists have made of their *reason*, is an argument, that reason is not natural to man, or that it does not naturally lead him to the knowledge of an intelligent first cause of all beings.

The behaviour of a *Felton*, or a *Clement*, I do not take to be instances of any disinterested affection at all. The young fryer, was plainly a weak ignorant enthusiast, inflamed by the invectives of the preachers against *Henry III. of France*, and instigated to murder him, by the doctrines then in vogue, that one might, with a good conscience, take away the life of a tyrant, as they represented that king to be: And no doubt the religious assassin expected (without stopping at purgatory) to be immediately transported to heaven for so meritorious an action.

Whether *Felton*, the murderer of the duke of *Buckingham*, was a political or a religious enthusiast, is not so plain from what is known of his character; but his saying, that he had acted solely from the impulse of his own conscience, makes it probable, that he too expected a heavenly reward for having sacrificed his life, in doing what he judged an important service to his country.

These are no instances of *disinterestedness*, but, on the contrary, of highly *interested* prospects, upon false notions of piety and virtue: Mistakes, which, I suppose, no one will deny, that man may fall into, notwithstanding any principles naturally implanted in him; since all allow he has it in his power, either to suffer them to run wild, or to cultivate and improve them; and therefore, it can never be said, as this author suggests, "That every thing is piety and

"virtue in a man, which he has persuaded himself to look upon in that light." Nor will it "excuse the persons concerned in the *Irish* rebellion, the massacre of *St. Bartholomew*, &c." that they were persuaded destroying heretics was *doing God good service*. These, too, were religious enthusiasts, who had departed from all the proper rules, by which they should have judged of their duty, to follow their guides with an *implicit faith*. They ought to have known better, *what spirit they were of*; they ought to have known, that God had forbid them to do evil, that good may come of it; they should not have suffered themselves to be persuaded, that what was contrary to the common sentiments of humanity, and to that universal rule of equity, *doing unto all men, as we would they should do unto us*, could be acceptable to God. His written word, and their own natural notions, left them *without excuse*, in giving the sacred names of *piety and virtue*, to the most infamous treachery, and the most savage barbarity.

I do not know how far such instances as these may affect the principles of those moralists, who found virtue solely on benevolent affections, and an *instinctive* sense of right and wrong; for if these may be worn out, or unattended to, or misguided, virtue must be left on a very precarious foundation, which I leave them to defend as well as they can. I am only concerned to maintain, that a disinterested benevolence and approbation of virtue are *natural* to man, and given him as proper excitements to good actions; that tho' these may be misapplied or misguided, he has it in his power to regulate them, by the obvious relations and nature of things; (for I take our consciousness of right and wrong to be the result of some perception, that every rational mind necessarily has of the essential difference between good and evil,) and therefore, when we are careful

not to be misled from these natural perceptions of the understanding, the *moral sense*, arising from thence, has a real right to influence our actions, is a proper *cause & ground of obligation*. However, I allow, that since it may be extinguished, or misguided, it is too precarious to be esteemed the *sole* cause or foundation of moral obligation. And indeed I see no reason, why any *one* principle should be looked on as such, since there are certainly several principles in the nature of man, which all concur to direct him to the practice of virtue: And if each of these were allowed a share in *obliging* him to it, this would no way weaken the force, or lessen the importance of any other principle, but rather contribute to strengthen it.

I do not know what idea some late writers can have of *moral obligation*, that they are so zealous for excluding every principle from being in any degree a ground or foundation of it, except their favourite one, a prospect of future rewards and punishments. But the author of the *Essay on Virtue* (who has distinguished himself among them) seems to think, that the *cause* of obligation (as his term is) should be something in a manner irresistible; for the reason he gives¹ why an instinctive approbation of virtue cannot be made the *cause of moral obligation*, is, that “this instinct is so much too weak to restrain us, that we can, with a sense of the beauties of virtue upon our mind, and under the full influence of our approbation of it, not only neglect to comply with its dictates, but even act directly against them.” But if this be a good reason for excluding our approbation of virtue, from being a *cause of moral obligation*, I am afraid the same reason will exclude every other principle from being so too; for I know of none strong enough to restrain free agents, when they give a loose to their passions and appetites,

instead of attending to the obligations they are under of subduing them. Future retributions are allowed by all to be considerations of great importance, and generally most effectual to influence the bulk of mankind; yet it is notorious, that great numbers, with a full conviction upon their minds of the reality of the sanctions of God's laws, *not only neglect to comply with their dictates, but even act directly against them*. So that if our author's reasoning hold, here would be an end at once of all moral obligation.

But rather than set mankind free from every obligation, because none is strong enough to force them, I beg leave to conclude, that it is not the *strength* of any principle, but the *tendency* of it, and the *right* it has to influence men's practice, that makes it a true ground of moral obligation. And that the perception we have of the essential difference of things, with the fitnesses and unfitnesses resulting from thence, and our consciousness of right and wrong, have a *tendency* to direct us to virtue, and a *right* to influence our practice, seems to me as clear and certain, as it is, that we are reasonable beings, and moral agents; and that therefore they are both *true causes or grounds of moral obligation*. For,

“By obligation I understand, such a perception of an inducement to act, or to forbear acting, as forces an agent to stand self-condemned, if he does not conform to it.” A definition, which, I think, all the contending parties on this subject might agree in; for no stronger restraint can be laid upon a *free agent*, even by the commands of God, and the sanctions of his laws, than that of forcing him to stand self-condemned, if he chuses to hazard the consequences of disobeying them. So that if this definition were acquiesced in, there could no dispute remain, unless it be, whether we can counter-act our plain perceptions of good and evil, fit and unfit, right

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¹ P. 114.

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right and wrong, without standing self-condemned? Which perhaps would scarce bear a question.

The three or four last pages of this chapter are a train of *sophisms*, founded upon an equivocal use of the terms *reluctance*, *affection*, *approbation*, &c. "If" (says he) the ^k supposed natural *approbation*, from whence the unwillingness to give up virtue is said to arise, was all that obliged us to practise it, we should, upon the same principles, be as much obliged to be vicious; for no vicious man ever gives up a vice without reluctance: and such a reluctance must, in one case as well as in the other, be a mark of his naturally approving what he parts with so unwillingly." Poor sophistry! is there no such thing then as a reluctance of inclination? No difference between a reluctance to part with what we like, and a reluctance to part with what we approve? A man, who gives up his *vices*, does not approve, tho' he may love them; a man, who gives up his *virtue* may approve, tho' he does not love it. The reluctance on one side proceeds from an *affection* to practices, which he perceives to be wrong; the reluctance on the other, from perceiving practices to be *right*, for which he has no *affection*. Are these the same principles? Or can they have an equal right of obliging us? No matter for that, approbation is affection, or affection approbation; a reluctance of the judging faculty, and a reluctance of the sensual appetites, the same thing, whenever this gentleman's argument requires it. But let these things be rightly distinguished, and all his *entangling queries* are resolved. To those, therefore, I shall only answer in general; if our natural conscience, moral sense, or whatever that faculty in us may be called, which judges of our actions, and approves or condemns them, if this is in its own nature superior to mere appetite, and propensions; then a reason will appear, why we should

^k P. 114.

give

give the preference to our approbation of virtue, rather than to our sensual inclinations; why we ought to restrain these, whilst it is our duty to improve the other. And without looking farther, we may find a reason in the *approbation* itself, why it should be esteemed a *true*, tho' not the sole cause of our obligation to virtue.

REMARKS on Chap. vi.

IT is a painful task for a plain searcher after truth, to have to do with an author skilled in all the arts of wrangling in the schools; which may be of use there, to try the sagacity of young students, in detecting the *sophisms*, *cavils*, and *fallacies* of an opponent; but can only serve to puzzle and mislead an ingenuous reader, who expects to be instructed by fair reasoning and solid argument; to which if the author before us had confined himself, his book would have been reduced to a much less compass, and his readers been less perplexed in going through it.

The great point to be proved in this chapter is, that no eternal and necessary differences, no fitness or unfitness of things, can be the cause of moral obligation. The two authors¹, whom in this he chiefly opposes, have established, upon immutable foundations, the obligation of all reasonable beings to act agreeably to the essential differences, nature, relations, and fitness of things; and this with great simplicity, and direct argument, free from all the bewildering arts. But the author of the *Essay* has attacked them in a very different manner; fallacies, cavils, a multitude of puzzling questions, wrong suppositions, and putting unfamiliar cases, are the arms he makes use of; and against such random shots, what possibility is there of making

¹ Dr. Clarke, and Mr. Balguy.

any regular defence? We must look about us, and turn and return as well as we may.

He ^m begins with taking notice of a concession those authors have made, of the necessity of calling in the hopes of a future state, to support men in the practice of virtue, when it would expose them to death or misery here; which he thinks gives him great advantage against them. But I pass it over now, because *this single point*, upon which he supposes *the whole dispute might very safely be rested*, will soon come more than once in our way again. And we have here in the mean time a notable argument to encounter, by which he begins his "*endeavours to prove*, that the reasons for practising virtue, which flow from the differences and relations of things, are not only too precarious to deserve the title of obligation, but farther, that they afford us *no reason at all* for being virtuous. Let us attend to these worthy "*endeavours*."

"There is, without dispute (says our author ⁿ) a natural difference between one thing and another: good and evil, or happiness and misery are certainly not the same thing." I believe, indeed, no body ever disputed this. "And since moral good or virtue consists in doing good to others, or in taking care not to make them miserable; and moral evil or vice in the contrary; one of these must differ as much from the other, as happiness does from misery." Indisputable again. "But from this difference, there cannot arise any obligation to the practice of virtue; for to say, that moral good or virtue is our duty, because it differs naturally and essentially from vice, is to make it our duty for such a reason, as would equally have proved the very reverse: vice or moral evil must be as much our duty upon the same principle, since it dif-

^m Page 119.

ⁿ Page 120.

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"fers naturally and essentially from moral good. "All that can be gathered from this difference is, "that between virtue and vice there is room for "choice." Excellent! But pray, who ever gave for a reason, that moral good or virtue is our duty, barely *because it differs naturally and essentially from vice*? It is not *because it differs* from vice, but because their natural difference is such, as makes one fit to be chosen, and not the other; which is a very different proposition. Certain fitnesses and unfitnesses arise from the essential difference between virtue and vice, which makes it our duty to practise one, and avoid the other. But does this gentleman really think, that nothing more is meant by the natural and essential difference between happiness and misery, or between moral good and evil, but that they are not the same things? If he does, he must suppose the great writer he contends against, to have trifled egregiously in opposing Mr. *Hobbs's* principles, by insisting on the immutable nature and essential difference of moral good and evil; for even *Hobbs* himself, absurd as his principles were, was never absurd enough to maintain, that just and unjust, fidelity and treachery, killing an innocent person, and saving his life, were *the same things*. That which he maintained was, that none of those actions, which are called morally good or evil, were in their own nature *better or worse* than another, till they were made so by *positive institutions*. What then must his opposers mean by asserting the natural and essential difference of good and evil, right and wrong (if they meant any thing to the purpose) but that one of these was, *in its own nature*, antecedent to all positive appointment, better, more valuable, or fitter to be done, than its contrary? And that they did mean this, is plain from the whole tenour of their reasoning. If by the natural and essential difference between happiness and misery, this author really means nothing more than

than that they are *not the same thing*, then, by his own argument, *as this gives no preference of one to the other, it cannot oblige us to either*. He would do well then to tell us, what it is that obliges us to chuse happiness rather than misery; for I fear it will be difficult to find it out, if it be not the *natural difference*, or that *which distinguishes it from misery*. For what is the *natural difference* of happiness from misery, but that the first is suitable to our nature, desirable, and fit to be chosen: misery, on the contrary, unsuitable, hateful, and unfit to be chosen? And this is the very case, the only meaning to the purpose, of the natural and essential difference of right and wrong, virtue and vice, or moral good and evil: one of these is in its own nature, or in *that which distinguishes it from its opposite*, better, more suitable to a reasonable being, and fitter to be chosen than the other. ° If virtue (as this author owns) must differ as much from vice, as happiness does from misery; then their *difference* not only acquaints us, that between them *there is room for choice*, but plainly directs us where that choice ought to be placed; informs us, that virtue, as well as happiness, is fitter to be chosen than vice or misery; and till he can shew

° Upon this subject, the great author of *the Divine Legation* having said, that the contenders for the natural essential difference of things have *mistaken it for the moral difference*; I answered in some remarks formerly published, "That they plainly saw these were distinct things, but they saw too, that one was so dependent on the other, that when they had clearly demonstrated the former, they needed not give themselves much trouble to prove the latter" This I really then took to be the case of the writers, who maintain the natural and essential difference of things: but the fallacious argument of the *Essay* writer having given me occasion to consider this matter farther, I find there was more ground for that great author's observation, than I at that time imagined. The truth is, those writers scarce take any notice at all of what may be strictly called *the natural difference* of things, if by that is only meant, that virtue and vice, justice and injustice, fidelity and treachery, &c.

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us in what that *natural difference* consists between happiness and misery, virtue and vice, *which gives no preference of one to the other*; this formidable argument, by which he thinks we have just now seen, that the essential difference of good and evil *can be no cause of obligation*, can no more oblige us to virtue than to vice, and that therefore *we may be sure there is some fallacy in the argument*; this will itself appear to be but a mere fallacy, and the natural difference of things, the natural preferableness of virtue to vice, with the fitnesses arising from thence, remain an unshaken ground or cause of moral obligation.

The fallacy our author imputes to a ^p favourite writer upon this subject, consists in his using *good to be done*, and *reasonable to be done*, as expressions of the same signification, on which he expostulates as follows: "And if because we must grant, that virtue, from the very nature of it, is good to be done, it was therefore reasonable to be done, and so our duty, &c. But good to be done ^q signifies either good for him who does it, or good for others: and this ambiguous meaning of the words seems to have been made too much use of. For as every body will allow, that what

are not the same things: this, I presume, they could not mistake for a moral difference, but it is a truth so obvious to every one, that it would have been trifling to have solemnly asserted, and formally proved, what no body pretended to deny. Their meaning therefore must be, that there is naturally and essentially such a difference in things, as made one preferable, or fitter to be chosen than another; which is much the same as to say, that *moral good and evil are such in their own nature*, without any positive appointment. This is well known to be their doctrine; and if they called this a *natural difference*, a little attention may convince any one, that this implies in it a *moral difference*; i. e. that one is fitter to be chosen by an agent than the other: the want of which attention may be an excuse for the fallacious consequence drawn from that expression, by the author of the *Essay on Virtue*.

p Dr. Clarke.

q Page 121.

"makes

" makes him happy, who does it, is fit to be done
 " and reasonable; and because it will be readily
 " granted farther, that virtue is good to be done,
 " it is concluded, that virtue must therefore be fit
 " and reasonable. Whereas in granting, that vir-
 " tue is good to be done, we do not mean, that it
 " is in its own nature good for him who does it,
 " but good for others: for if we go no farther
 " than the nature of it, then this is the only sense,
 " in which virtue appears self-evidently to be
 " good." Thus far our author.

But he might have known, that the *favourite* writer, referred to, dealt in no such ambiguities, or trifling propositions; that he never thought of such a thing as *good to be done*, which yet was not *good for him who does it*; of virtue being in its own nature self-evidently good, though not good for the doer; that is to say, *virtue consisting in doing good to others* is in its own nature self-evidently *good for others*. He talked not at this rate indeed; this would have been strange language to him, who thought, that the practice of virtue, or good to be done, was without any ambiguity *good for him who does it*, as it is more suitable to a reasonable being, more perfective of his nature, and makes him more approved to his own mind than the practice of vice: he thought, too, that acting agreeably to our own nature, and to the several relations we stand in to other beings (in which, according to his doctrine, the entire nature of virtue or moral good consists) was *fit and reasonable*, therefore good to be done, good in him that does it, and *so our duty*. Nay even according to this author's own notion of virtue, imperfect as it is, is not *doing good to others* a good action in him, who does it? Is he not a better man than one, who does nothing but mischief? Supposing then all consequences to the *agent perfectly equal*, that he was

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neither to be a *gainer* nor a *loser* by his virtue; would it not in that case be more *fit and reasonable* to make all in his power happy, rather than to make them as miserable as he could? Surely no one can think otherwise, that has not thrown off all sentiments of humanity. And if what is *fit and reasonable* is our *duty*, as this author seems here to own, I hope he will own too, that the practice of virtue may be *fit and reasonable*, and *so our duty*, in cases, where we can do much good without hurting ourselves, though we had no prospect of any particular advantage by it.

However we are told, that those writers, who found the original obligation to virtue on the reason and nature, and fitness of things, antecedent to all positive appointment, and to all expectation of reward or punishment; do yet own a necessity of the belief of a future state, that God will take care, that we shall, upon the whole, be no losers by our virtue, to support the practice of it in the world; and that in extraordinary cases, it would be unreasonable to expect, that men, by adhering to virtue, should part with their lives, or even all the comforts of life, if thereby they eternally deprive themselves of all possibility of receiving any advantage from that adherence. This the author of the *Essay* thinks is 'giving up their whole cause'; " is plainly not so much supporting this sort of " obligation, as introducing another quite distinct " from it: the will of the Supreme Being is called " in, not to strengthen an obligation, which we " should have been under without it, but to pro- " duce an obligation, where there was none be- " fore; and to make the practice of virtue reason- " able, where it would not have been so other- " wise." But this is quite misrepresenting their sense, as well as the truth of the case: the obliga-

tion to virtue arises always and invariably from the reason, nature, and fitness of things: the practice of virtue, that is, acting agreeably to justice, equity, goodness, and truth, must always be fit and reasonable. Yet in such a world as this, men may be, in some extraordinary cases, so circumstanced, that, by strictly adhering to what they unavoidably judge to be their duty, they must bring upon themselves such sufferings, as it would scarce be possible for them to support themselves under, without a regard to the providence of God, and a full persuasion, that he will not allow his creatures to be finally losers by steddily practising those virtues, which the nature he has given them requires from them, and which therefore must be approved by him. How is this *calling in the will of the supreme being, to produce an obligation where there was none before*? Is not the sole ground of hoping for a future recompence plainly fixed on that perception, which we unavoidably have of a prior obligation? If we did not perceive the practice of virtue to be fit, and reasonable, and our duty, and that its natural tendency is to produce happiness; upon what ground could we expect (without revelation) that God should interpose to make virtue and happiness finally inseparable? But if virtue is acknowledged to be the natural duty of mankind, or a duty arising from their very nature, and designed their chief good; then, from the frequent impediments it will meet with, and the various sufferings, that sometimes attend it *here*, the strongest argument may be deduced, that natural reason can discover, for the certainty of a *future state*: so that calling in this hope for the support of suffering virtue necessarily presupposes our obligation to practise it; presupposes it *fit and reasonable in itself to be done* since otherwise we could have no ground to expect a recompence for it.

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With this view Dr. Clarke urges the necessity of the belief of a future state, to support the practice of virtue in such a world as this, in that very *'Discourse, where he was more immediately engaged in the defence of his darling scheme of morality* (as the author of the *Essay* calls it) and not, as is suggested, *when his thoughts were turned another way*. For that great master of reasoning well knew, that *his scheme, and a prospect of future rewards and punishments, are, by placing the obligations of morality antecedent to that prospect, the stronger supports of each other*. But to go on with our author.

"I see not therefore (says he) the great use of this *fanciful* account of our duty, supposing it could be defended: For if in the more exalted instances we must have recourse to the will of God, and can allow it in them to be a proper foundation to act upon; why may not we submit to it, and entertain the same opinion of it in the lower instances? Why is this the only rational source of obligation, in cases of the greatest importance; but a wrong and unreasonable one in cases, where we meet with few or no temptations to be otherwise than virtuous?" I am sorry to find an account of our duty deduced from the essential difference of good and evil, and the immutable nature and relations of things, called by a grave divine and philosopher, *a fanciful account*; but I am at a loss to know, whose *fancies* he is here opposing: For it is certain the writers he had mentioned have no concern in them; they have always allowed *the will of God*, which is ever directed by the reason and truth of things, to be a proper foundation to act upon, in all instances high or low: yet they have never said, that this is the only rational source of obligation, even in cases of the

^f Evidence of Natural and Revealed Religion.

^g Vide *Essay*, p. 122.

greatest importance; much less that it is a *wrong and unreasonable one* in any case. Let those, whose fancies these are (if our author knows where to find them) be answerable for them.

But perhaps *the will of God* is put here for the *sanctions of his laws*, (fallacies and ambiguities being not unusual with this author :) Yet even in that case, he is out in his reasoning; for though the writers he professes to oppose, allow *future rewards and punishments* to be considerations of great importance, and highly necessary to keep the generality of mankind to the practice of virtue; (so that he may, if he pleases, call them a *proper foundation to act upon*) yet they are never allowed by those authors, to be *the source of moral obligation*, or that which makes virtue to be our duty. The duty is ever supposed *prior* to all consideration of them, though without that support men might not be able or willing to perform it in extraordinary cases; but *in all cases*, the duty arises from the reason, and nature, and fitness of things; for by these the declared will of God is itself directed.

But our author sees not the great use of this *sanctifical* account of our duty, *if in the more exalted instances we must have recourse to the will of God*. He has not, it seems, considered a very obvious use of it in one case; *viz.* where the will of God is not expressly revealed. A great part of mankind have no other rule to govern their actions by, but what they must deduce from the nature and relations of things, and their own unavoidable perceptions of good and evil, right and wrong. These, by a due use of their faculties, may lead them to know the will of their creator, and to a probable expectation of a *future state*, if they suffer *here* by doing what they perceive to be right and fit. This is one great use of the scheme he calls *sanctifical*. But what need of it, he may say, where the will of God is known? Why here again it is of excellent use, to

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convince the mind of the reasonableness, the fitness, and rectitude of all the commands of God. The man, who sees, that they are founded on the essential difference of good and evil; and that they require nothing of him but what was his duty to do as a reasonable being, though it had not been commanded; must, in all likelihood, be better disposed to acquiesce in the will of God, and to acknowledge the goodness and equity of future retributions, than he, who considers God's commands as arbitrary things, which he would have had no obligation to perform, if they had not been required; and who thinks his only business here is to pursue his own happiness: for why might not he have been left to seek happiness directly, by gratifying his most pressing inclinations and appetites? Why must he go such a round about way to his end, as to suppress his own natural desires, and force himself to do good to others, when he has no natural disposition to benevolence, and neither of these would have been *fit or reasonable*, if they had not been commanded? This proceeding must seem a little tyrannical to such a one, and these sentiments upon it be the most natural product of our new *darling selfish scheme of morality*.

I must therefore say, in my turn, I see not the reason, or use, of the great zeal some late writers have shewn to establish it. If mankind are by nature so *selfish* as these gentlemen suppose, and if religion requires them to be divested of that disposition, or to act contrary to it; why do they labour so much to encrease it, by persuading them, that nature and reason teach every one to pursue nothing but his own happiness; and that it would not be fit or reasonable to have the least regard to the good of others, if we were not ourselves to be gainers by it? This seems not to be the readiest way to promote the practice of virtue or true religion, in the world; for moral obligation and true religion

48. *Remarks on Dr. Rutherford's Essay on*

are *internal* principles, that affect the conscience, which *external* motives can never do. Hopes of reward, or fears of punishment, may indeed excite to good actions, or restrain from evil; but of *themselves*, without a sense of duty arising either from the fitness of acting suitably to the nature, which God has given us, or of obedience to his will, they can never make a virtuous or a religious man. Let it be considered then of what service it can be to religion, to decry, as *fanciful*, and void of all obligation, a principle, by which, as St. Paul says, *those, who have not the law, are a law unto themselves*; which, where the will of God is known, necessarily coincides with it, and which equally carries our views to a future state, and upon surer grounds, than the scheme of those, who allow *no cause of duty or obligation*, no not the will of God itself, without a prospect of rewards and punishments. Those gentlemen would do well to consider too, how wantonly they set loose, not only Atheists, but all mankind, who have ever been without the knowledge of God's revealed will, and the sanctions of his laws, from owing any duty to him, or to their fellow creatures; and whether this is not contrary to that express declaration of the Apostle, just now quoted.

The author of the *Essay* having endeavoured to prove, by the fallacious argument we have lately examined, that the *natural difference* of things produces no obligation to the practice of virtue; comes next to consider, "Whether it does not produce such a fitness or unfitness, in the application of different things one to another, as will make some sorts of behaviour evidently wrong, and such as reason will disallow; others right, and such as reason cannot but approve?" Whether, for instance (in the words of a judicious writer)

"To give pain *without cause* to a sensible creature is not an action self-evidently wrong, as being directly repugnant to the nature of the object, and the circumstances of the agent?"—One would think this a question, that could hardly bear disputing: But our author has found means to dispute it through sixteen pages, by all the arts of puzzling without convincing. Chicane, sophistry, captious questions, arguing upon wrong suppositions, or a false sense of words, are the sure means to perplex a plain reasoner, unused to wrangle; who, though he knows the *direct* road to truth well enough, may be at a loss how to come at it by the windings of a maze of words. This author is so fearful of our being misled by a *doubtful* signification of the words, *agreeable or repugnant to nature*, that he has taken care to fix such a meaning to them, as the author he opposes could not possibly intend: "I cannot grant (says he) that an action, which gives pain to a sensible being, is *repugnant to nature*, if by this is meant, that such an action uses it otherwise than its nature has *fitted it to be used*: For nature, which gave it perception, made it *as fit* (by which he means as capable) to receive pain as to receive pleasure."—Now could he suppose any writer of common sense to mean, that to give pain to a sensible being is wrong, because such an action uses it otherwise than its nature has made it *capable* of being used? For how could pain be given to any being, which nature had not made capable of receiving it? or, in our author's new phrase, *fitted it to be so used*, by which that he means *made it capable of being so used*, is plain thro' his whole argument; nay a little lower he gives us his sense in that very expression. After having told us, that giving poison to a man is using him as nature has *fitted* him to be used, since the poison is as sure to kill him as wholesome food would

have been to nourish him; he goes on at the same rate of chicaning thus: "He is *capable* indeed of "happiness, but then he is capable of misery too; "and he who makes him miserable, acts up as "much to the nature of things, as he does who "makes him happy; for the aversion to misery, "of those beings, that have perception, is as *natural* as their desire of happiness, and he who gives "them pain, because they have an aversion to it, "has a reason in nature for what he does, no less "than he who gives them pleasure because they "have a mind to it." What manifest sophistry is all this? How well it shews what work an artist can make with a false or ambiguous sense of words! At this rate of *wrangling* (for I would not wrong the author by supposing he designed it for reasoning) allowing his sense, no kind of usage, no infliction of the greatest evils, sensible beings are *capable* of, can be *repugnant to their nature*; because, as he affects to express it, nature has *fitted them for that sort of treatment*; so that pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, life and death, being equally *natural* to them, must of consequence be equally *agreeable to their nature*, that is, they are made capable of either. But have not all *fair reasoners* hitherto meant, by any thing being *agreeable to the nature of a sensible being*, that it tends either to the happiness, the perfection, or the preservation of it; and by *repugnant to its nature*, the direct contrary? He, who poisons a man, or makes him miserable, finds indeed a ground or reason in nature for the *possibility* of his action, for nature has made him *capable* of being killed, or being miserable; but such a treatment is not the less self-evidently *repugnant to the nature of the object*, in the commonly understood and allowed sense of those words, as destructive of its being, or its happiness.

We have next a train of * questions, that may

puzzle better heads than mine to frame answers to them, being either formed upon wrong suppositions, that lead us from the purpose, or aiming at no body knows what. Let us attend to some of them. "Who are those sensible beings, that are "to be humoured in their inclinations? To whom "is it self-evidently wrong to give pain because "they dislike it? Are not the agents sensible beings as well as the objects? And must it not "therefore be self-evidently wrong for the agents "to give themselves pain?" No doubt it is, if they have no reasonable cause for it; but I believe we are seldom in danger of that. But to go on: "Nay, is it not self-evidently right upon these principles, to give themselves pleasure? I mean, to "make themselves happy. What then is to be "done, when we can make our selves happy by "being vicious; or must submit to pain, by persevering in our virtue? Are we obliged in these "circumstances, to neglect virtue and to pursue "vice? If not, why should we give a preference "to the fitness between happiness and our fellow-creatures, rather than to the same fitness, between "happiness and our selves? Why may we make an "unfit application of misery to a sensible being in "our own case, in order to avoid making it where "others are concerned?"—Truly, I cannot guess what the author aims at here, but must answer at random; that I know of no *fitness* in making either our selves, or our fellow-creatures happy, by being vicious; nor of any *unfit application* in giving them, or ourselves pain, in order to preserve their virtue or our own: this is not giving pain *without cause*, for here is a very important cause for it.

The next enquiry is: "Are we to judge of the "importance of these fitnesses, or unfitnesses, by "the *quantity* of happiness and misery, which a sensible being will feel from our behaviour, and so "to look upon it as a duty to make that applica-

tion, which will produce the greater happiness; and avoid that, which will produce the greater misery? But the approved judgment of mankind does not form itself upon these principles." No, certainly, nor do I know whose judgments are concerned in these enquiries: for, according to the scheme our author should here be opposing, duty, or moral fitnesses, were never pretended to be measured by mathematical proportions; but by the suitability of actions to the circumstances of the agent and the object. All the queries, therefore, and conclusions, made upon that *wrong supposition*, are nothing to the purpose, with regard to that scheme, or to any other purpose, that I can find out; but some of them are not a little surprizing, in respect of his own principles. "Suppose (he says) a man should do himself more good than he does others harm by his vice, is he at liberty to be vicious in these circumstances? If he is not, then balancing the quantity of misery, produced by an unfit application, against the quantity of happiness, that results from a fit one, is not the method, by which we determine what our duty is: But if he is at liberty, then how poor a principle of obligation must this be, which will recommend virtue to us only where it is not against our interest, and will discourage vice only where we can get but little by it?" How poor a principle indeed! but this seems an unlucky observation, from an author, who has writ a large volume to prove, *that interest is the sole cause of obligation*; and I would advise him to apply it where it will be more proper. *The excellence and worth of virtue may, upon that principle, be (as he speaks) greatest of all, when it advances our interest the most*; but upon the principles, which were to be confuted in this chapter (though he often seems to forget them) *the excellence of virtue consists in the rectitude*

rectitude of it, and is neither greater nor less when it advances our interests, or when it does not.

The author of the *Essay* seems to suppose, that what he has urged against their opinion, who contend, that fitness of application is a motive, which obliges to virtue, will shew, that it is not a rational motive in any case, nor indeed any motive at all." But growing a little diffident, he adds: "Or if this has not been made appear already, (we have seen at what rate it has been made appear, for his arguments are all of a piece,) let them *consider farther*, why it should be less a breach of duty to give pain to brutes than to our own species. What causes pain, is as disagreeable to their nature as it is to ours: And if this unfitness of application is not self-evidently wrong, then neither is that so, which gives pain to our fellow-creatures." This is a case, that may have some difficulty in it, even with fair minds, who sincerely seek truth; and therefore is indeed worth *considering*.

If we regard ourselves only as *sensible* beings, the brutes are upon a level with us; and in that case it must appear as wrong to give them pain, as to give it to any of our own species: But as reasonable beings, we are manifestly superior to them; and though this implies no right to give them pain *without a cause*, which must in all cases be self-evidently wrong; yet from that superiority, and the differences between their nature and ours, a cause may arise, that will make it fit and reasonable to treat them in *another manner*, than would be fit from any of us to our fellow-creatures. The general practice of mankind, of sustaining their lives by animal food, except a few philosophers, who scrupled it upon a fond notion of the transmigration of human souls into the bodies of brutes; this almost

universal practice must be derived, either from an original grant of the great Creator (who has an undoubted right to dispose of the lives of all his creatures as he thinks fit) or else from the agreement of it with the common sense of mankind, and their observations on the nature of things. They would soon perceive themselves to be the chief inhabitants of this earth; that there were no other beings here capable of living in society, or entering into mutual compacts; that all *men* being equal by nature, it was reasonable, that every one should do unto others what he would have them do unto him; but that *brutes* being incapable of such reciprocal obligations, it was impossible to live upon the square with them: And as they are manifestly inferior to man, and yet are endued with many faculties, that may be made useful to him, it might well be concluded, that such of them, as could be fitted for his purposes, were designed by nature, or, to speak more properly, by the God of nature, for his service. It was obvious likewise to observe, that a large part of the animal creation do, *by natural instinct*, feed upon others of a different species, that, in some respects, are their inferiors; and since the author of that instinct thoroughly knows the nature of all beings, it must be supposed, that, on some account or other, the most proper means of supporting the lives of such animals is by other living creatures of a *lower rank*; and that therefore the thing cannot be *unfit* in itself, or contrary to nature. This was sufficient to satisfy men, if animal food was the most nourishing and strengthening for them, that it must be fit and reasonable, and that they had the permission of their Creator, for the support of their own lives, to take away the life of creatures so much *inferior* to them, and of so much less importance. And now let our author consider, whether a reason can be found, ^a *of exactly the same sort*, to vindicate

^a *Vide Essay*, p. 129.

us in giving pain to, or in taking the life of, our fellow-creatures; and whether this, though it should appear *fit and reasonable, with respect to brutes*, may not yet, contrary to his conclusion, be *self-evidently wrong, with respect to our own species*.

We need not wonder, that a writer, who could undertake to deny, as we have seen, *that giving pain to a sensible being is repugnant to the nature of the object*; should carry on his opposition to the same author, by denying, that it is *contrary to the nature of the agent*, which may not seem so glaringly odd. The argument he opposes, which is to prove, that vice is *repugnant to reason*, he gives us, as it is stated, “by the most candid, the clearest, and most judicious writer, that ever undertook the defence “of this scheme of morality.” And it were to be wished he had been as just to the reasoning, as he is here to the *character* of that fine writer. He has set down the argument at large, but, according to my designed brevity, I shall only take so much of it, as is necessary to shew it in its whole strength.

“We ^a are, certainly informed by our senses, “that pain is a natural evil: here is therefore a “plain and perpetual reason against the infirmity of it, when no stronger intervenes to “to make it requisite. ^b To give pain to a sensible being must be wrong in a rational or moral “agent, having no cause or reason to give pain, if “it be morally unfit. And that it is morally unfit, seems to me as plain and evident as any proposition can be. It is contrary to the nature “and the truth of things; it is contrary to the nature “of the object; it is contrary to the nature and “circumstances of the agent; because he being rational must act unnaturally, whenever he acts “unreasonably; and he must act unreasonably, “when he acts *both without and contrary to reason*.

^a *Balcan's Treatise*, p. 75.

^b P. 122.

"Now he is supposed to have no reason for giving pain, and yet must see a good reason for not giving it; for where there is no reason for pain, there is always a good reason against it, arising from the nature of the thing itself." This, I confess, seems to me an unanswerable demonstration, that to give pain, a known evil, having no cause or reason to give it, is *contrary to the nature of a rational agent*; for what can be more unnatural in such a being, than to act *both without and contrary to reason*? But how does the author of the *Essay* confute this argument? Why, just at the usual rate; he wrangles, and cavils, and objects to every thing, but neither proves nor disproves any thing. ^a First, he lays hold of the expression of acting *without reason*; but to act without reason, he tells us, is not in all cases, contrary to our duty, as in chusing one, between two things, quite indifferent, or preferring white wine to red, only for whim: who (says he) would think it a violation of his duty to get up and walk, when he might have sat still? And what is all this to the purpose? If in trifles or things quite indifferent, where reason has nothing to do, there is no crime in acting without reason; does it follow, that in cases of importance, as in the instance of inflicting a known evil, where reason ought to interpose, there will be no violation of duty in acting *without reason*? But the writer he opposes had urged farther, that an agent, in giving *causeless* pain to a sensible creature, acts unreasonably and therefore unnaturally, since he acts *both without and contrary to reason*. This our author takes notice of too; this, he says, is *indeed alledged*. And what does he alledge against it? Truly nothing, though this was the main point to be disproved. But that writer having before said, that *pain being a natural evil, there is a plain and perpetual reason against the*

^a *Essay*, p. 132.

infliction

infliction of it, when no stronger intervenes to make it requisite; he runs off from the principal point to ask: "And what ^d is that stronger reason, which may intervene? Does it depend upon the interest of the agent?" he is sure to fix upon what he knows is not the case; and here he could not but know, that, according to the principles he is opposing, *the interest of the agent* can never be urged as a reason for giving pain, or any way injuring a fellow-creature; because this is contrary to the fitness of things, contrary to that relation of equality, which subsists between them. This is a reason, which could only be allowed in *Hobbs's state of nature*, where every one might be doing mischief to another for his own interest, till all were destroyed: ^a But let the judge, who condemns a criminal, the surgeon, who cuts off a limb, or the prudent parent, who corrects his child, be asked what it is that makes it fit and reasonable in them to give pain to a sensible creature? Their motives will acquaint him (if he wants to be informed) that the safety of the publick, of the life, or the virtue of the object, and such like, is *that stronger reason, which may intervene*, and which in no case depends upon *the interest of the agent*. But our author seems to delight in putting *wrong suppositions*, only to shew his art in objecting against them, whilst he fights without an adversary. Well then; "If that stronger reason *does not* depend upon the interest of the agent; then tell me" (says he) *why the agent, by neglecting to give a pleasure to himself, or by chusing to give pain to himself, does not act as irrationally as by giving pain to others?*" I believe no body denies, that this would be irrational in any agent, unless some *stronger reason intervenes to make it requisite* to forbear pleasure, or to give himself pain. But so he goes on, repeating the same kind of expostulations, and the questions we had a little before,

^d P. 133.

about

about the agent's having perception as well as the objects: "Why is not it a duty to give pain to them, if by that means he can avoid suffering it himself? And why is it not irrational to give pain to brutes? Is it because the advantages we receive from their pain is a stronger reason, which intervenes? Then why is not this reason from interest, which keeps us clear of any crime in killing or in hurting them, sufficient to make the same behaviour towards our own species neither irrational nor wrong?" This gentleman seems to have no just notion of the scheme he opposes, by making suppositions, and queries, quite inconsistent with *the nature, relations, and fitness of things*; and indeed he gives frequent grounds to apprehend, that he does not know the true meaning of those terms. But all the questions here, which are only repetitions, have been considered * already, so far as their aim could be guessed at, and I hope sufficient satisfaction given, particularly with respect to that *difference* of the nature of brutes from ours, which may make the same behaviour fit and reasonable towards them, that would be irrational and wrong towards our own species, who are all by nature equal. But I find we shall have occasion given us hereafter to consider this subject farther; yet here I would observe, that to give pain unnecessarily, even to brutes, out of a cruel humour, or wantonly only for sport, is contrary to nature and reason, and morally *unfit*, tho' perhaps not so much attended to as it ought to be.

We have next a heap of cavils at particular parts of the argument he was to confute; putting imaginary senses upon words and propositions, when the true sense was the most obvious; then wrangling against his own fancies, and repeating a great

* In p. 53, 56—7. of these remarks.

† From p. 134, to 138.

deal of what we had before, about nature having fitted sensible beings to receive pain as well as pleasure, &c. which would be tiresome to the reader to go over again, or to examine his cavils minutely: and indeed it is needless, for there is not so much as an attempt to confute the argument, by which the writer he opposes had proved, that *to give pain to a sensible creature, without cause, is contrary to the nature of a rational agent*. He only tells us, that he does not perceive the self-evidence of this proposition, and that the demonstration, which follows, does not make it much clearer to him, viz. *Whatever is contrary to the nature, or truth of things, is wrong: such an action, as gives pain to a sensible object, without cause, is contrary to the nature of things, as has been just proved*. "But what (says our author) had been just proved? That such an action is contrary to the nature of the sensible being, which feels it, not that it is contrary to the nature of the rational agent, which produces it; for this latter point was to be made good by the demonstration." Here he seems to be mistaken; this latter point was made good before; nor was the demonstration intended for a new proof of it. But the judicious writer having enlarged upon his argument, and urged the *glaring disagreement*, which a rational agent must perceive between such an action *coming from him*, and such an object; in case his proposition should not be strictly self-evident, puts the proofs he had given of it before, into the closer form of a syllogism; a method, which certainly has nothing in it unworthy of an *ingenuous writer*. But it was not to be expected, that our author should go back for proofs, which he had at first slipped over unnoticed: it was a more compendious way to affirm roundly, that "When this writer says, he had just proved such an action to be contrary to the nature of things, he means, that it is contrary

“ to the nature of the *object*; and that, *this in truth was all that he had proved.*” But it does not follow (continues he) “ that every action is a breach of duty in a rational agent, by which he gives pain to others. To have supported such a conclusion, it ought to have been shewn, that it is as *contrary to the nature of the agent to give it*, as it *con-fessedly* is to that of the patient to receive it.” And, pray, what was the whole purpose of the argument we have been considering, but to shew this? Whether it has been sufficiently shewn, must be left to the judgment of the reader, who has the argument before him. One would think there needed no great skill in logic to prove, that it is contrary to the nature of a rational agent to act *unreasonably*: the art lies in evading proofs, and not seeming to see such, as cannot be confuted. However, let it be observed, that our author is here at last so sincere as to own, that giving pain to a sensible being is *con-fessedly contrary to the nature of the patient who receives it*; notwithstanding all his cavils and objections to perplex a proposition, which otherwise, by a plain understanding, might have been thought self-evident.

And now, since we are still likely to ramble and wrangle on for a while, lest the reader should be at a loss to know what we are about, it may not be amiss to put him in mind, that the design of the chapter we are upon, is to confute that scheme of morality, which deduces our obligation to the practice of virtue, from the nature, relations; and fitness of things; and therefore he is to consider all the cavils he meets with, as having some how or other a view to that end. But truly I am afraid, the very next, that occurs, will be found to have no view at all, unless the mere pleasure of disputing.

The same judicious writer, whom we have been just now defending, not having the fear of a cavil-

ling answer before his eyes, had said, that ^b there is an agreement between the ideas of *bounty and gratitude*, that they tally to each other with great exactness; omitting to particularise that bounty, which a man's self had been the object of. But though he sometimes uses a general expression, probably for brevity's sake, and because his adversary had used it; yet in that very place, he much ⁱ oftner speaks in the more limited terms, of the suitableness of gratitude to the mind of a *person obliged*; of receiving benefits being a good reason why the *receiver* should be grateful; that a man ought to be grateful to *his* benefactors being equivalent to a self-evident proposition, &c. all which our author must know, and therefore could not think any other *bounty* was meant here, than that, which the grateful person had been the object of; besides, that gratitude is always understood to relate to no other bounty or benefits, but what has been conferred on a man's self. I cannot guess, therefore, to what purpose he lays hold on this expression, to argue against no body: “ ^k That it is not the agreement between the notions of gratitude and bounty (meaning bounty in general) which obliges us to be grateful; for then we should have been as much obliged to be grateful towards the benefactor of another person, as towards our own, since the fitness of these two notions to each other would be the same in both cases;” with more of the like nature, which I pass over as quite insignificant. Might he not, without all this cavilling, even as well have begun where he ends? which is by observing, that if any fitness obliges us to be grateful, when we have received a favour, it must be *an agreement between such a behaviour, and the relation we stand in to our benefactor.* This

^b *Balg. Tracts*, p. 109.

ⁱ *Ibid* p. 110, 112, 114.

^k *Essay*, p. 139.

will, no doubt, be allowed him, and he may, if he pleases, observe too, that an agreement between the ideas of gratitude, and of bounty, or benefits received, is the very same thing in other words; for what is this, but an agreement between the ideas of a suitable *behaviour* in the person obliged, and of the *relation* he stands in to his benefactor? Well; but if gratitude is our duty, because it is agreeable to certain relations; "from hence, he says, it would follow, that every behaviour, which is *expressive of* (he should have said *agreeable to*) "the relations we bear, must be our duty." We grant it, and what then? Why then our author has an argument at hand to prove, that *this rule will oblige to vice as much as to virtue*; and cut off at once all pretensions to make virtue consist in acting agreeably to relations. This would be news indeed, and what the reader may think must be worthy his attention, if he is not, by this time, enough acquainted with him to suspect some fallacy. Let us see what we can make of it.

"If, ¹ says he, this agreement was the true reason, why our behaviour is fit and right; then "it must, in every instance, be fit and right to act agreeably to our relations, and wrong to counteract them. But the relation between a tyrant and his vassals is as clear, as that between a king and his subjects; and either of them are such, as may be *expressed* by behaviour. Is it therefore the duty of a tyrant to behave like a tyrant? If it is, then relations may indeed oblige, but they oblige to vice as much as to virtue: if it is not, then there may be a fitness between behaviour and *character*, or behaviour may be agreeable to relations, and yet at the same time be wrong: and therefore fit, in this sense, does not mean the same as right, and it

¹ Page 140.

"would be a false conclusion, that an action is "right, because it has this fitness, or is expressive "of the character and relation of him, who does "it." It would be a false conclusion indeed; for an action may be very *wrong* (and perhaps have no fitness in it) that is *expressive of the character* of him, who does it. But why does this author change his terms, when he pretends to answer, and give us such, as are never made use of by any of the moralists he opposes? We apprehended a fallacy, and this is the very same, which I took notice of once before. *Character* is put here, as if it signified the same with *relation*; and *expressive of*, for suitable or agreeable to it; but I must beg leave to tell him, that an action may be agreeable to a man's *character*, or *expressive of* it, that is very unsuitable to all the *relations* he stands in to other beings: when a tyrant behaves like a tyrant, he acts agreeably to his own character, but very unsuitably to the fitness of things, or to the relation between him and his vassals. To them he is related as *a man*, and as *a governor*; by the first relation he is obliged to that equitable behaviour, which men, being all equal by nature, have a right to from one another, doing unto them what, in the same circumstances, he would have had them do unto him. By the second relation he is obliged to protect and defend them from all injuries and oppressions. In becoming a tyrant he has violated all the duties flowing from those relations, but the relations still subsist; and what new relations has he acquired? That of an injurer and oppressor. Now if all relations oblige to act agreeably to them, the question here will be, what behaviour is suitable to this relation. Is it the duty of a tyrant to continue to injure and oppress? That cannot be, for it is contrary to all the *previous relations* he was engaged in, and which he cannot divest himself of. How then must he act suitably to this *new relation*? Truly I know of nothing

nothing so suitable, as to get out of it as fast as he can, by redressing and repairing all the injuries he has done, as far as it lies in his power: this is the only duty, that can be incumbent upon one, who is engaged in relations, *that arise from his vices.*

And here if I should say (what every good man will say) "that ^m such relations as are expressed by " vices, ought not to be engaged in;" how would this be *giving up the cause*, as our author pretends? Why he tells us, if a man may engage in some relations, but may not engage in others, "the " notion of crime and duty must be previous to " these relations, and so cannot be owing to them." What a consequence is this! May not the *notion* of crime and duty resulting from all possible relations, be previous to engaging in those relations, and yet the crime or duty be owing to its agreement or disagreement with them? The *notion* of gratitude, as due to a benefactor (the particular virtue our author chuses to instance in) may certainly be previous to engaging in the relation of *persons obliged*; but the *duty* can be owing to nothing else but the *fitness* of acting agreeably to that relation.

We have here a good deal, but little to the purpose, about the different significations of the word *fit*: it may signify decent and proper, or right and reasonable; and then we are asked, "How does it follow, that gratitude is a duty, " because it is *fit* and *right* only in one sense, when " what is a duty is *fit* and *right* only in another? " If either gratitude was self-evidently decent and " proper, right and reasonable; or if whatever behaviour is conformable to any relation, that we " bear to mankind, was apparently a duty; then, " and not till then, the conclusion would be rightly " made: but the former of these is the very point " in question; the latter has been shewn not to

" be true." That gratitude is *self-evidently decent and proper, right and reasonable*, one would think should be a point quite out of question; for what disposition of mind can possibly be thought of so decent, proper, right, and reasonable, as *gratitude to a benefactor*? It is indeed too plain to admit of any proof, nor can any one, who understands the terms, make the least doubt of it. Gratitude then must be *fit* and *right*, not only in *one sense*, but *fit* in all the senses, which this author has imagined to perplex the meaning of that word: and since the fallacies of his reasoning about acting agreeably to relations have, I presume, been clearly removed, *the conclusion* he would evade must appear to be *rightly made*; viz. That the *duty* not only of gratitude, but of all other virtues, *arises from the fitness and relations of things*. For, from what has been said, a behaviour *conformable to any relation we bear to mankind*, rightly understood, must be *apparently a duty*; and the arguments, by which he pretends, that this *has been shewn not to be true*, will be found no other than an artful piece of sophistry, by the help of a fallacious use of terms, and putting a false sense on *the duty of acting agreeably to relations*.

Nay, notwithstanding all this gentleman's art in contending against so plain a principle, as that it must be our duty to act agreeably to the several relations we bear to other beings; he sometimes appears sensible himself, that virtue consists in this conformity. "If, says he, a man asks what his " duty is, who knows beforehand that virtue in " general is; he should be directed to consider " what good his circumstances point out to him " to be done: here *all his different relations are to " be examined*." And even when he seems afraid of being thought to have asserted here something, which he had opposed before, he cannot explain

his sentiment away; "when ° I say, continues he, "the relations, that we bear to those about us, will "teach us what virtue is to men in our circumstances, I do not mean, that any sort of relations "are the *mark or characteristic of virtue* (which if "any body means, I do not know who can understand) but only that, from a view of our several "relations, we may learn to practise virtue." And pray how can we learn to practise virtue from that view, unless virtue consists in acting agreeably to those relations? But if our author should allow this point, it would still be a question with him, whether it is our *duty* to be virtuous.

"After all, says he, which these relations teach "us, the great question is still unanswered; why "are we obliged to be virtuous? Why is it our "duty to do good, and to avoid doing harm?" This would seem a strange question to a plain well-meaning man, who had been accustomed to look upon *virtue* and *duty* as the same thing, and to think, that doing good, and avoiding to do harm, were practices, that carry their reason with them: to tell such a man, that actions suitable to his nature, circumstances and relations, are *virtuous* actions, would be the same thing as to tell him they are his *duty*. But our new system of morality has not only taught us to distinguish between *duty* and *virtue*, but would have us learn too, that neither the nature, reason, relations, or fitness of things, from whence virtue arises, can make it our duty to be virtuous. Virtue, according to these moralists, is a very good thing, that is, to those, who are the *objects* of it; but is quite indifferent, has no goodness or worth in it to the *agent*; until he is secure to be a gainer by it; and then, and not till then, it becomes his *duty*.

In support of this doctrine, the author of the *Essay* goes on in his way of proving, that *fitnesses arising from relations produce no obligation*. To make this appear, he chuses an instance, frequently urged on the other side, which he gives us in the words of Dr. Clarke: "It is as certainly fit, that "men should honour and worship, obey and imitate God, rather than the contrary, as it is certainly true, that they have an entire dependance "upon him; and not only so, but also that his "will is as certainly and unalterably just, and "equitable, in giving his commands, as his power "is irresistible in requiring submission to it." The fitness therefore (as our author remarks) "of worshipping God, is owing to our dependance upon "him, and to the justice and equity of his commands." Rightly observed. And yet in the very next line he supposes this fitness to consist *only in its being expressive of the relation between the creature and the creator*, though there is no mention here of that relation at all; but from this supposition he takes occasion to urge, that "such a "fitness has been shewn in other instances to produce no obligation; and in this instance, he "says, it will appear so, to as great advantage as "in any of the rest." By what *fallacy* this was pretended to be shewn, has been so lately considered, that the reader may easily recollect it. But we have here a fairer and more plausible argument, which proceeds thus: "For would not this "relation subsist as well between the evil principle "of the *Manichees* and his creatures, as between "the good and gracious God of the *Christians* and his? And yet very few can think it a duty to "worship a malevolent creator: they in particular "certainly thought otherwise, who, to make out "the duty of worship, added the consideration of

“ God’s commands being just and equitable. But if every fitness of behaviour to express a relation makes a duty, why is not it a duty to worship our creator, whether he is just and good, or unjust and cruel? Will nothing but benevolence in him give our worship such a fitness, as to make it a duty? Then that behaviour, which has, in it conformity to relations, is not always decent, proper, and right. But does not this very instance shew us what makes an action fit in such a manner as to be proper and right? It is fit to honour and obey a benevolent creator only. And what is a benevolent creator? Is not it such a one, as provides for the good and happiness of his creatures? Therefore, as far as we are persuaded, that it will be the better for us to obey such a master, so far it is fit, so far it is right, and our duty to obey him.” This is the substance of the argument, though I have taken the liberty to shorten it a little, and must now beg leave to reply.

Creation is the ground of so many benefits to such a being as man, that we have been accustomed to consider creation itself as the chief of them, and to deduce all the duties we owe the deity from the relation of a creature to its creator. But strictly speaking, existence is *of itself* no benefit at all, without regard to the *manner* of it; and if it were attended with inevitable misery, would be the greatest of injuries. Could we suppose a creator to have brought creatures into being, on purpose to make them miserable, nothing could be due from such creatures to their creator, but hatred and detestation; not only on account of the evil he had done them, but on account of the malignity of his own nature, his having no regard to rectitude, justice, or equity. Worship could not be due to such a creator: he might compel indeed to obedience and external worship; but the true worship

worship of the mind, honour, veneration, and love, he could not force, nor would it be in their power to give, where the object was so unworthy of it. To make out therefore the duty of worship and free obedience, it is absolutely necessary to add to the relation of a creator that of a *benefactor*; and likewise to consider him as a being of perfect rectitude, whose commands must all be just and equitable. So that it is undeniably true, that *it is fit to honour and obey a benevolent creator only*. But notwithstanding this concession, the conclusions our author would draw from it will not be allowed him: it does not follow, *that a behaviour, which has in it conformity to relations, is not always proper and right*. It only follows, that the same behaviour, which is conformable to the relation of a benevolent creator, and therefore fit, proper, and right, would not be conformable to the relation of a *malevolent* creator, and therefore neither fit, proper, nor right. Creation considered of itself, abstractedly from the nature and manner of existence of the beings created, produces no *moral* relation, and consequently no fitness of behaviour resulting from it: the relation and fitness arise from the nature and *manner* of the creature’s existence. The relation therefore between the evil principle of the *Manichees* and his creatures, (whom we must suppose created to misery) would not be *the same*, as that between the good and gracious God of the *Christians* and his: one is the relation of creatures highly benefited, the other of creatures deeply injured: consequently *the same behaviour* could not be suitable to both relations, but the different behaviour conformable to each would always be proper and right. Neither can I agree to the other conclusion our author would draw from the fitness, *to honour and obey a benevolent creator only*; therefore, says he, as far as we are persuaded, that *it will be the better for us to obey such a master, so far it is fit or proper, so far*

it is right; and our duty to obey him. The duty of honouring and obeying a benevolent creator, arises, as has been observed, both from the perfection of his nature, and the benefits he has bestowed upon his creatures. If he is a being worthy of honour and veneration, it must be fit and right to pay him that worship, which is due to his perfections: if he has given us many excellent faculties, and valuable enjoyments, gratitude and obedience would be fit, right, and our duty, in return of those benefits we have received, independently of any persuasion, that this *will be the better for us*. Supposing our creator had given us no assurance of a future state, can it be said, that we should be under no obligations to him, for all the blessings of our present existence? Or can it be made appear, that no returns are proper, fit, or due, for favours received, unless we are persuaded, that more are to follow? It is sufficient, that we are certain from the rectitude of his nature, that our divine benefactor will never deal otherwise with us than is just and equitable. This undoubtedly gives him a right to our worship and obedience, both in acknowledgment of his superior excellence, and of all the benefits we are at present possessed of, though we should have no expectation of *bettering* our condition by it.

Our author tells us¹, he shall trouble the reader with examining only one more of those writers arguments he is here opposing; but it is one, says he, which has as many ambiguities in it, as any they make use of. The ambiguities must be then of his own making, by imagining senses the authors never thought of; for none ever was freer from them than that plain and fair reasoner he here quotes, whose words are these: "That the same reason of things, with regard to which, the

¹ Essay, p. 148. Dr. Clarke.

" will

" will of God always, and necessarily does determine itself to act in constant conformity to the eternal rules of justice, equity, goodness, and truth, ought also constantly to determine the wills of all subordinate rational beings to govern all their actions by the same rules, is very evident." The reasons given for this, our author has not thought fit to examine, and, as if none had been given, answers by asking, "But what obliges us to make that the rule of our actions, which God has been pleased to make the rule of his? Why is it our duty to follow the same law, that he from the beginning hath set himself to work by, if the reason of that law should either be unknown to us, or be such, as we are no way concerned in?" If this gentleman had considered on what grounds we are assured, that the will of God always determines itself to act in conformity to the eternal rules of justice, equity, &c. he would have seen, that *the reason of that law, which God from the beginning hath set himself to work by*, can neither be unknown to us, nor be such, as we are no way concerned in. Let him consider, that the common administrations of providence can give us no certainty of the perfect rectitude of God's government, but would rather furnish us with objections against it. It is from the moral perfections of the deity, which are deducible from his natural attributes, that this must be demonstrated. Now we can have no knowledge, that those are moral perfections, which we ascribe to the deity, but from our own ideas of the essential difference of good and evil, right and wrong, and of the agreement of justice, equity, goodness, and truth, with the reason and nature of things; from whence we conclude, that acting in conformity to them must be *fittest* and best for a reasonable being, and that therefore God himself makes this the invariable rule of all his actions. From this brief deduction

it will be easy to see, that *the reason* of that law, which he hath set himself to work by, cannot be unknown to rational beings, if they make a right use of their faculties; and that it is such as they must have a *very great concern in*: for the very same arguments, which I have but just hinted at, as they serve to convince us, that God *does* always act in conformity to the rules of equity, goodness, and truth, must shew us likewise, that all subordinate rational beings *ought* constantly to govern their actions by the same rules, as most suitable to the nature of intelligent and moral agents, to the perceptions of their own minds, and to the reason and relations of things; as well as most conformable to that perfect pattern, which God himself has set us.

To this last reason our author objects: "This is putting obligation upon a very different footing from what was intended; it is deducing it from the authority of God's example, not from the reasons and relations of things." But in this he is mistaken; it is not the *authority* of God's example, but the *perfection of the pattern*, that obliges us to imitate him. We are obliged to govern our actions by the same rules, to which the will of God is always conformed, because they are such, as must oblige all reasonable beings, whom he has made so far like himself, as to be capable of distinguishing good and evil, and of chusing one and refusing the other. And since we are sure, that God does this in the most perfect manner, knowing with the greatest exactness all the different natures, circumstances, and relations of things; therefore, so far as we can trace him in the wisdom, goodness, and rectitude of his conduct towards his creatures, so far we are to set his example before us for our imitation; as one, who would acquire any art, endeavours to imitate the most perfect ma-

ster in that art, which, I presume, is never called acting upon *the authority of the example*.

But our author goes on in objecting: "And indeed, continues he, unless these reasons and relations are otherwise *explained* than we commonly find them, it will be difficult to shew, that our behaviour is even agreeable to them, when we practise the virtue of benevolence in imitation of the goodness of God: For if the relations between a creature and its creator are different from those between beings of the same kind, the same conduct cannot well suit with both, or be *expressive* of relations so very unlike. If doing good to his creatures suits with the notion of a creator, one would think, that the same behaviour could not *express* the relation, which a creature bears to those of his own species." I don't know what explanation this gentleman requires; but he seems indeed, both by his former arguments, and the present, and by the terms he uses, not very well to understand, what is meant by acting *agreeably to the reasons and relations of things*. The same rule of behaviour may be suitable to all intelligent beings, though the very same behaviour is not: acting in conformity to the rules of justice, goodness, and truth, must be *suitable* to all relations, (I do not say *expressive* of them, not knowing what that unusual phrase may import) but the application of these rules, in different circumstances and relations, may require very different actions. When God gives rain and sun-shine in their seasons, he acts agreeably to the relation of a benevolent creator to his creatures. In this we cannot imitate the *action* of God; but when we bestow part of the possessions he has given us, to relieve the distresses of our fellow-creatures, in this we imitate the *goodness* of God, act agreeably to that reason and nature of things, with regard to which his will is always determined; yet suitably to our own circumstances,

and to that relation we bear to those of our own species. I hope this language will not be altogether unintelligible to the author of the *Essay on Virtue*; and that he will excuse my not using the peculiarities of expression, which he has brought into this subject; some of which I have dropped, even in quoting him, because I think the accustomed terms of the authors he opposes, more *expressive* of their sense, without fallacy or ambiguity, and I have no delight in wrangling.

The next argument we meet with, is in opposition to the reason given for concluding, that God always acts agreeably to goodness, justice, and truth; and that we ought to govern our actions by the same rule. This, it is urged, is *best and fittest* to be done, and that the will of God, being under the guidance of infinite wisdom, cannot but chuse to do what is *fittest and best to be done*. These propositions have been largely proved, both from the essential difference and necessary relations of things, and from the natural attributes of God. Yet our author has thought fit to contend against them (as if no such proofs had been offered) in the following manner: "That God should govern the world by the rules of justice, goodness, and truth, is, without all dispute, most agreeable to the nature of his creatures, and therefore it may, *in respect of them*, be called *best and fittest*: But as far as infinite wisdom is concerned in the guidance of his will, he must be unerringly directed to do what is *best and fittest for him to do*, or what is most agreeable to *his own nature*." And is not this the very thing, which the great writer*, he pretends here to oppose, has clearly and strongly proved, *viz.* that acting in constant conformity to those eternal rules, as it is best, upon the whole, for the government of the creatures, is absolutely *best and fittest for God to do*, and most agreeable to his own nature? But our author goes on: "So that after all, this question re-

* *Essay*, p. 151.

* *Clarke, Boyle's Lectures.*

"mains

"mains to be determined; Is it most agreeable to the nature of God to do that, which it is most agreeable to the nature of his creatures to desire he should do?" Then he determines the question himself. "If he is a benevolent being, it is; if he is a malevolent one, it is not: And thus (says he) what is called a demonstration of the goodness of God, has, from an ambiguity in the words *best and fittest*, the appearance of one; but leaves us just where we set out, and teaches us no more than this, that his wisdom will direct him to act according to the rules of goodness, if he is good, but to act otherwise, if he is not." What would this gentleman be at? Who is it, that teaches us no more than this, that *if God is good*, he will act according to the rules of goodness? Where are we to find that ambiguous use of the words *best and fittest*, which has given us only an appearance of what is called a demonstration of the goodness of God? And by whom was his question left undetermined, about the manner, that is most agreeable to the nature of God to deal with his creatures? I really don't know what to make of all this, but am very certain, that the writer, whose arguments he pretends to be here considering, has no concern in any one word of it. He has not left it doubtful, whether God is a benevolent or a malevolent being, having plainly demonstrated the goodness, and all the other moral perfections of the supreme being, *a priori*, from his natural attributes; he has shewn, that it is most agreeable to the nature of a reasonable being, always to act according to the reason of the thing, and the truth of the case; and wherever he speaks of acting in conformity to the eternal rules of equity, goodness, and truth, as *best and fittest to be done*, his plain and obvious meaning constantly is, *best and fittest for the doer*. If there is any ambiguity in the words, it must have been occasioned since by those, who

* See *Clarke, Boyle's Lectures.*

have

have applied them to an unusual and very trifling sense: the practice of virtue, they say, or doing good, is best and fittest only for those, who are the objects of it, those, to whom the good is done; that is, *it is good and fit for people to have good done to them.* A very instructive proposition! This set of moralists can have no notion, it seems, how the practice of virtue, or rectitude of action, can be at all fit or good for the doer. What then do they mean by *goodness*? If it is any thing more than a mere abstract idea, there must be some *subject* of it; and who does it belong to? Not to the objects of it, I suppose, those, to whom good is done: it must belong to the agent then, and if it is not good for him, I hope it will be allowed, at least, to be good in him. However, the author of the *Essay*, we find, has at last been taught, that if God is good, his wisdom will direct him to act according to the rules of goodness. And by what means, I pray, are we taught this? Is it not by *perceiving*, that it is fittest and best for a wise and good being, to act in constant conformity to the most perfect rule of equity, goodness, and truth? There is no other way to learn it that I know of: Yet our author, unwilling to perceive this, goes on, as if still *untaught* it, saying: "And if we do not know what infinite wisdom can discover, in doing good, which should make it best and fittest for the doer of it." What would he know more, than that infinite wisdom discovers *rectitude of action*, or acting by the most perfect rules, to be absolutely fittest and best for an intelligent and moral agent? He would know, I presume, *why this is fit, when the agent can have no advantage by it.* To which I can only answer, that it is itself absolute good, and therefore worthy the choice of such a being. If he does not see this, if he sees no goodness in doing good, nothing better in doing right than in doing wrong, nothing fitter in making creatures happy than in making

making them miserable; better and fitter, I mean in the *doer* of it; if he *will* see nothing of all this, I can no more convince him of it, than I could prove, that there is day-light in the world when the sun shines; to a man, who with his eyes open should deny it. But I beg the author's pardon for interrupting him, who proceeds thus: "However sure we may be, that it is best and fittest for the infinitely wise God, by seeing, that he always does good; however sure we may be by what we feel in ourselves, that it is best and fittest for those, to whom it is done; yet when out of duty we imitate God, we are virtuous upon no other principle but that of an implicate conformity to his example. This, if he does not require it, would be no better than enthusiasm in us: If he does require it, but does not design to make us happy for obeying his authority, it would be tyranny in him: But if he does both expect it, and intend to reward us for it, then is this the very principle of duty, that I would endeavour to establish."

The knowledge, that God requires us to imitate him, and intends to reward us for it, is unquestionably a very solid principle of duty: But supposing this not to be known, suppose we knew nothing more of the matter, but that God is a good and wise being, and is always doing good to his creatures; if from thence we should conclude, that since this is fittest and best for supreme wisdom, it must be fit and reasonable, and therefore the duty of all subordinate beings, who are capable of distinguishing good and evil, to imitate their great benefactor, by doing all the good they can to their fellow-creatures, agreeably to their several circumstances and relations; where, I beseech you, would be the *enthusiasm* of this?

On the other hand, supposing God had *required* of all his reasonable creatures, to imitate him in his goodness

goodness and equitable dealings towards them, by constantly observing the rule of equity, and by doing good to their fellow-creatures as occasions offer; without acquainting them of any designed reward for their conduct; where would be the *tyranny* of this? If they were conscious, that his commands were such, as their own minds could not but approve, as tending to promote the good of the whole, and consequently of every individual, where would be the hardship put upon them? Might not such creatures say, when they had done all, *we are unprofitable servants, we have done what was our duty to do*. And how it would be tyranny in God to require a conduct, which is right and fit in itself, and necessary for the natural good of the system, though no positive rewards were appointed for it, I confess I cannot see. We do not reckon it tyranny in a magistrate to require a strict observance of his laws, if they are visibly calculated to promote the publick good: this is commonly thought a sufficient reason for obeying his authority, and even for punishing those, who do not pay obedience to it, though no particular reward is assigned for those that do. And why would not the same reason acquit the supreme governor of the world from tyranny, in requiring all mankind to imitate him, by conforming all their actions to the rules of equity, goodness, and truth, upon no other consideration, than that this conduct is the fittest to procure the welfare of the whole, and of every particular, if strictly adhered to? Nay would not this consideration alone be sufficient to make every good man think the practice of virtue to be his duty, that he might contribute his share towards the natural and moral good of the society, to which he belongs, though he had no views beyond his present existence?

Extraordinary cases may indeed be supposed, where virtue may expose a man to great sufferings, even

even for the sake of his virtue; and then it is not to be expected, that he could persevere in it, without the support which natural religion might afford him, of a full persuasion, that God would not allow him to be finally a loser, by a conduct, which he had made him unavoidably judge to be his duty. But these cases are in fact very rare, and, in the general course of things, virtue certainly bids fairer for that measure of happiness, that is to be attained in this life, than vice can do. The tumultuous pleasures, which the intemperate and the debauchee are transported with, attended as they are with the disorder of their faculties, and the anxiety and dangers to which they are exposed, by breaking in upon the honour and peace of families; cannot, sure, by a sound mind, be thought preferable to that calm delight, that solid lasting satisfaction, which the virtuous man enjoys without alloy. And yet this set of moralists reason, as if all the natural advantages were on the other side, as if vice was *in itself* far more eligible than virtue; since, according to them, nothing can make it fit or reasonable, or be any motive to practise virtue; it would be enthusiasm in man, and tyranny in God, to expect it in imitation of him, without an immense reward; whilst *vice*, it should seem, may be reasonably followed for its native charms, if no punishment was to ensue. A discovery, which I could wish had been left to the *minute philosophers*. 'Tis surprising to find the author of the *Essay on Virtue* perpetually linking *virtue and misery, vice and happiness* together, as if they were the same things, or at least constantly so united in this world: And yet he has himself given us a description of very considerable advantages in being virtuous; and many inconveniencies to be feared from being vicious; sufficient, I should have thought, to have determined our choice in favour of virtue, if nothing more than

20 *Remarks on Dr. Rutherford's Essay on*

the natural consequences of both were to be considered. What need of any bribe to follow her, *whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace?*

Brief REMARKS on Chap. vii. viii. and ix.

The author of the *Essay on Virtue*, having hitherto exerted his arts, in attempting to demolish the schemes of others, which yet, I presume, remain unhurt, begins now to establish his own; and in the four following chapters endeavours to prove, that nature and reason teach us to pursue nothing but our own happiness; and that we can be under no obligation to practise virtue, till we are first secure, that it will make us happy. Chap. vii. is wholly employed in shewing, *that all men seek happiness*; a point I intend not to dispute with him; but cannot pass by an observation he there makes,² "That there is in all of us a great unwillingness to confess, that the principal end, which we have in view, is to make ourselves happy: that all mankind are taught alike, either by fear or shame, to conceal the motives, which influence their behaviour, and to deny, that they have any design of promoting their own happiness at all." I don't know among what sort of people this author has made his remarks; but by all my observation, I cannot find, that mankind have learnt any such lesson. Men neither pretend to be regardless of their own interest, nor expect, that others should be so of theirs. Many, indeed, profess a disinterested pursuit of the publick good, and some perhaps not very sincerely: but if any one should pretend, that he had a great desire to promote the happiness of others, but had no concern at all for his own; he would be laughed at for so unnatural an exclusion,

² P. 154, 155.

rather

the nature and obligations of virtue. 81

rather than admired for his disinterested benevolence. It is, I think, allowed by all, that every man's first care should be for his own good. *Charity begins at home*, is a maxim, not only of fact, but of right, implying, that it ought to do so. But then, if charity ends at home too, this indeed men are unwilling and ashamed to confess, and with very good reason, first, because it is not true, that men are generally unconcerned about every body's happiness but their own; and next, because it is a very blameable selfishness, where this is the case. Yet unwilling as mankind are to confess this, a few late moralists have (no body knows how or why) got the better of all disinterested professions, and own, without either fear or shame, that they would not stir a foot, or give themselves the least trouble, to do the greatest good to their country, their friends, or nearest relations, unless they were sure of being gainers by it themselves. And let them keep to themselves the honour of their prudent resolution, I am persuaded, mankind will not readily acquiesce in a principle so contrary to their natural feelings and propensions: as long as there are any such things as affectionate parents and children, brotherly love, generous friendships, or publick spirit, in the world, till these are no more, mankind will assert a natural disinterested benevolence; and yet they will confess, *that nature teaches every man to pursue his own happiness*. These things are by no means inconsistent, and notwithstanding all the pains some writers take to separate them, they will very frequently be united in the same breast. "There need not our author's comprehensive views of the means, by which the good of each particular is closely connected with that of all mankind." Men feel their own happiness so involved with, and dependent on that of others, that they pursue both

² *Ibid.*

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together,

together, even without reflecting on the connection.

And in the same manner they practise virtue in every other instance, without considering whether it will make them happy: they find something in it fit and right, worthy of their approbation and choice, something which they cannot counteract, without standing self-condemned. If it does not make them happy, they find it at least a *sine qua non*: nothing can (whilst they continue reasonable beings) make them happy without it. It is a fundamental error in this set of writers, to place the whole happiness of man in *sensible* good, which is what they always appear to mean by *natural good*: this may make a considerable part of our happiness as we are sensible beings; but sure there is some different kind of happiness belongs to us as *reasonable* beings; for what gratification can reason find in any of the pleasures of sense? Our superior faculties must have a good proper to them, some object, which they can rest in as an ultimate end. And what objects can be imagined so suitable to our reasoning and elective powers, as *truth* and *virtue*? Why may not these be allowed a right to our pursuit, as parts of the natural happiness of rational beings, even upon the grand principle of this *Essay*, that men are obliged to pursue nothing but their own happiness?

Chap. viii. leads us through the various opinions of the old philosophers, in order to shew, that they all agree in making happiness, or self-good, the ultimate end of action; against which I have nothing to object. But when the learned author was thus engaged, and found among that wiser part of mankind, that reason teaches us to pursue self-good, or our own happiness; 'tis strange he should not learn from them another truth, which reason taught them too, that *virtue is the good of a reasonable being*. The *Stoics* would indeed have carried him too far, for

for *sensible beings* ought not to overlook *sensible good*; and that this gentleman must allow was their case: whether they were wrapped up in admiration of moral good for its *self-excellence*, or as their only *natural good*, it was still in regard of *sensible good*, and was so understood by the ingenious^b writer he disagrees with on that point. But this only by the way.

The *Peripatetics* kept more within the bounds of nature and truth; who by maintaining, that virtue is our *greatest good*, and yet allowing the advantages of body and fortune to be good too, and the want of them an evil, might have helped our author to see (with the better lights he now enjoys) that virtue may be an essential part of the happiness of such a *compound* creature as man, necessary to the perfection of his nature, and therefore his duty, though it should not be sufficient to make him completely happy in the present state of things, where the sensible part of him is liable to many evils, which it is not in his power to secure himself from, either by the practice of virtue, or by any other course of action.

But far from seeing this, our author having in chap. ix. rambled through all the various disappointments, that men will meet with in the pursuit of happiness without a guide; concludes, that virtue cannot be their happiness, and consequently not their duty, since it does not secure them from many external calamities, by which they may be very miserable, notwithstanding the most perfect rectitude of their conduct. I need not be particular on this chapter, which has more of declamation than argument in it, or opposes principles, that I have no concern to support. But it would be doing the author wrong to pass by, unnoticed, a specimen he there gives of his usual art of disputation.

^b See *Essay*, p. 208.

Some writers having said, that the happiness of all beings consists in the perfection of their nature; and that a rational being is most perfect, and consequently most happy, when its actions are perfectly rational. Our author applies^c this to a *mechanic*, who works by the exact rules of mathematical reasoning; and a *mariner*, who navigates his ship with perfect art; who, if acting rationally was their sovereign good, must, he says, be happy whilst they thus act, though one should be under the torture of the stone, and the other find, that, in spite of all his skill and labour, he must be wrecked within sight of the harbour. As if any moralist, in speaking of the perfection and happiness of a *moral being*, could be supposed to mean, by *acting rationally*, any other kind of actions than such as are of a *moral nature*. Yet upon this fallacy he triumphs, as if he had defeated his adversary, and proved, that man's happiness cannot consist in *acting rationally*, tho' he makes not the least mention there of the *practice of virtue*, the only sense of that expression, which any moralist (even a free-thinking one) could intend: And in that sense man's happiness might consist in *acting rationally*, i. e. *virtuously*, though it did not in the sense of rightly navigating a ship, or making a watch by the exactest mathematical rules. But this was only to shew his art in managing *ambiguities*; for, to give him his due, he labours abundantly elsewhere to prove, that virtue cannot be the happiness of man. This is one of the great designs of chap. ix. which in general is to convince us, that we want a guide to teach us what our happiness, and what our duty is. On this I shall take the liberty to expostulate a little, and so leave it.

No *Christian* can be insensible of his advantages, in having an infallible guide, to teach him plainly the way he should chuse, and the end, to which it

leads: but what must those do, who happen to be set out upon the journey of life where no such guide is to be had? They can only consider what course of action their nature directs them to, as most likely to bring them safely to the end they were designed for. If in this search they should observe, with the author of the *Essay*, that virtue cannot secure them from various external calamities, by which they may be very miserable; should they then resolve to quit virtue and pursue vice, that I presume would no better secure them from any of those accidents, which he has reckoned up as allays to the virtuous man's happiness; or, if they aim at riches, power, or honours, these would still be liable to the same objection: even these, how successfully soever pursued, could not exempt them from suffering by the tortures of a gout or stone, the disloyalty of a wife, or the misbehaviour of children. What then is to be done? Must they pursue none of these things, since they may be miserable in the full possession of them all? Or is virtue only to be deserted on that account? This would sure be too partial a judgment, and yet this seems to be our author's conclusion, for he does not direct men to pursue virtue as they do other desirable objects, to get all the good by it they can; and take their chance of the evils, that may attend it; but tells them plainly, that nothing can make it fit or reasonable for them to practise virtue, unless they are certain it will make them happy: Not all the natural advantages it bids fair for, nor the usefulness of it to mankind; nor the suitableness we perceive in it to a rational nature; not even the hopes we may deduce from thence, that it may be itself, or lead us to our *final good*; though he^d observes that, in all other pursuits, men constantly act upon bare *probability*; nothing less, it seems, than *certainty* of

^d P. 235.

the event can reasonably determine men to the pursuit of virtue; which is not to be had without an express revelation.

However the philosophers he has been lately travelling with, were necessitated to go on in their journey, without any other guide but nature and reason, to teach them what their happiness, or what their duty was; and those *Gentiles*, of whom St. Paul says, *these having not the law, are a law unto themselves*, were in the same case; yet some of them found out, that virtue was their *duty*, and others judged it to be their *sovereign good*. Had our author lived with them, he would, no doubt, have assured them, that they were all mistaken; that nature and reason taught them to pursue nothing but their own happiness; that virtue is plainly not their happiness, and therefore it could not be their duty to pursue it, since it cannot secure them from being miserable by bodily pains, and other calamities in this life, and they had no certainty of being rewarded for it in another. These are the principles he labours through the whole *Essay* to establish; and therefore, we may presume them to be the doctrine he would have taught the *Peripatetics*, and those *Gentiles* St. Paul speaks of; in whose name I take the liberty to offer what probably would have been their sentiments upon it.

We would readily, say they, pursue whatever is most likely to procure us happiness; but if we look for it in the goods of body and fortune, a small reflection will serve to inform us, that our sovereign good is not to be found among them; and that whatever degree of good may be in them, it is in no man's power to secure to himself the possession of them. Virtue we perceive to be a good of a superior kind to any of these, more agreeable to the nature of a rational being, more perfective of it, and the only good, which man has in his own power. This therefore we think must be our *greatest good*, and that

that which nature and reason teach us to pursue. Virtue, it is true, will not prevent our being exposed to pain, and many calamities incident to man; but neither will any other conduct of life secure us from these. The supreme governor of the world seems to have reserved to himself the disposal of all *external* good and evil, which he dispenses when and where, and in what measure he sees fit, so that no man can ascertain to himself any portion of the one, nor by the greatest caution avoid the other. Virtue is the only good, which he has put in our power to acquire, without danger of disappointment, if we are steady in the pursuit of it. This, therefore, we conclude, must be the part he has allotted us: the nature he has given us requires it; the judgment of our minds unavoidably approves it, and condemns us, if we neglect it; we find from it a *self-approving joy*, which nothing else can give, and which is our only support under afflictions. By thus consulting nature, we are assured, that the practice of virtue is acceptable to the author of nature; that it is the end he has formed and fitted us for; and if it fails of making us happy here, this gives us great ground to hope, that there will be some future state of things, where we shall find our account in it, and ample amends be made to those, who have suffered by adhering to what we must perceive to be our duty, since the very frame of our nature directs us to it.

If it should be objected, that the moral reflections of the philosophers did not lead them to the knowledge of a *future state*; this is very well accounted for, by the great author of *The Divine Legation*, from their strong attachment to their false *metaphysics*. But that did not hinder them from seeing, that virtue was so agreeable to their nature, that it must be, though they know not how, the greatest good of a reasonable being. And I appeal to the common sense of mankind, whether the foregoing reflections

reflections are not more just and suitable to unprejudiced persons, under the influence of *natural religion*, than any author's scheme could suggest.

He would do well to consider to what purpose our wise creator (who certainly does nothing in vain) has bestowed on man, a judgment to discern the essential differences of things, with a consciousness of right and wrong, if he did not design, by our natural reflections, to lead us to the knowledge of our duty? These faculties are utterly useless, if they are not directions to us, what course of action the author of our nature has fitted us for, and requires of us. We could, *without them*, have been taught, that if we obey the revealed will of God here, he will make us happy hereafter; and if those, who have never been taught this, cannot, *with them*, discover, that virtue is their duty; then God has formed all mankind with perceptions and faculties adapted to moral things, of which (according to our author's scheme) a great part of them have *no need*, and the other part can have *no use*.

The design of chap. x. is to shew, that virtue becomes our duty, when revelation has informed us, that God will make us finally happy for it in a life after this. But first the author leads us to consider, whether we can discover the will of God in this particular, by our own reasoning upon what we see now. And here he runs into various views and reflections on the works of creation, in order to observe, that the creator had, in all of them, the happiness of his creatures in view. But it is not our business to pursue him through his large excursions; it is sufficient, if we attend him, when in his way he touches upon the principal subject.

The first return I meet with of this kind, is after having observed the influence, which the moral world has upon the good of the natural world,

* Essay, p. 247.

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" That the practice of virtue is the only channel, through which God conveys his blessings, in the ordinary course of providence, to many of his creatures; that through our neglect, what was ordained for good, may fail of accomplishing it, and, by our perverseness, the best institutions may be made to produce evil. Thus, adds he, in one sense, the virtuous act agreeably to the will of God, for they comply with that rule, by which he wills to act himself." One would think the most natural conclusion, that could be drawn from this observation, should be, that man was designed by his creator, to practise virtue, in order to carry on the gracious course of his providence. But quite the contrary; it is only made here to introduce the old questions, "Are we obliged to pursue the same end, that he pursues? Is the law, which he expects we should obey, the same, that he has set himself to work by? Though we may be sure, from the constitution of things, that the practice of virtue is doing what God wills to do *himself*; can we from thence conclude, that this practice is doing what he wills *we* should do? Such a conduct may be the law of *his* nature, without being the law of *ours*," &c. I have before given an answer to his queries of this kind, and shall only add now, that if the law, which God has set to himself to work by, were of an arbitrary nature, depending merely on his will, and changeable at pleasure, there might be room for such doubts as these: we could not in that case know by what law God governed his own actions, nor consequently, whether he expected, that we should observe the same: but since the law, to which he constantly conforms, is immutable, and founded on the nature of things; it cannot be peculiar to the divine nature, but must

f Page 248.

g See p. 71. of these Remarks.

necessarily oblige all reasonable beings; and therefore we may be certain, that God expects we should guide our actions by the same rule, that he directs his: having made us such creatures as we are, he could give us no other law, but the law of virtue, as some of the writers on that side have themselves asserted.

However, our author stops not long here, but runs immediately off to another point, which seems to have no connection with that we have just left. "Man, he says, is sometimes vain and partial enough to imagine, that the care and favours of his creator are confined to him alone." This serves to introduce a beautiful description from our late great poet, of the care, by which God and man provide for the brute creation: A passage designed, I suppose, to relieve his readers; for I see not, that it is any way else to his purpose. He takes indeed occasion from it, to renew his former expostulations in favour of brutes, with large additions; and though we have already considered their case, we will not refuse it a review, since it is laid again before us.

Having shewn us, in the poet's fine words, that God has worked for the good of all his creatures; our author expostulates thus: "Will ^b any one say, after this view of things, that we are therefore obliged to be virtuous because God is good? Does reason assure us, that what he does in the natural world, is the measure of that behaviour, which he requires from us in the moral one? I would ask, why our duty does not, upon these principles, extend to brutes, as well as to men. If you go on with this reasoning, you will find yourself forced to confess, that our duties reach as far as the relations and fitness of things would have carried them; and that our obligations to-

^b Essay, p. 250—51.

"wards

"wards all sensible beings whatsoever, are exactly the same with those towards mankind. For if you prove from God's having worked for the good of man, that he could have no design in creating us but our happiness, you may prove, by the same argument, that he could have no design but the happiness of brutes in creating them: and then you must conclude, that the behaviour, which tends to prevent their misery, and to promote their happiness, is what God requires of us, and will reward us for. Why is not it, therefore, as criminal to warm ourselves with the *fleece of our sheep*, as with the *fleece of the fatherless*? Why, is killing a man one of the blackest crimes, but to kill an ox no crime at all?" Though I am not disposed to *allow*, much less to *prove*, that God *could* have no design in the creation, but the happiness of his creatures; yet as there is no occasion to dispute that point here, and I deny not, that God has worked for the good of all his creatures; let us suppose the truth of the principle, and consider what will follow from thence, and from our being obliged to act for the same end, and by the same rule that God does. "We shall be forced to confess (our author says) that our duties reach as far as the relations and fitness of things would have carried them; and that our obligations towards all sensible beings are exactly the same with those towards mankind." *Exactly the same!* How so, unless our relation to them all is exactly the same? What is meant here by *our duties reaching as far as relations and fitness would carry them*, I really do not know. But I hope it does not mean so absurd a thing, as that the brutes stand in the same relation to us, that mankind are in to one another; or that the fitness of things requires exactly the same behaviour towards irrational beings, as towards those that are rational. These are suppositions so evidently false, that I would not suppose

suppose they could be intended. But (as our author argues) God has worked for the good of *brutes* as well as for the good of *man*, and therefore if we are obliged to act for the same end that God does, "Why ought we not to have the same regard, in every instance, for the happiness of the creatures below us, as we have for the interests of those, which are placed in the same rank with ourselves?" If we have the same regard for the creatures *below us* that God has, I hope it will be thought sufficient; and I believe it will be pretty difficult to shew, that God has had an *equal* regard for their welfare in *every instance*, as for that of mankind, though we may conclude, he has done for them as well as for us, what is best upon the whole. It is evident enough, that the uses we make of them is really to their advantage; they are much better provided for, and even those we kill are longer lived, than they could have been without our protection, or if we did not lay up winter stores for them. This the beautiful passage our author has quoted, might have instructed him in, of which the following lines are a part, and which he much mistakes, if he thinks it in favour of his argument:

"Man cares for all: to birds he gives his woods,
 "To beasts his pastures, and to fish his floods.
 "That very life his learned hunger craves
 "He saves from famine, from the savage saves;
 "Nay feasts the animal he dooms his feast,
 "And till he ends the being makes it blest."

Thus we see it is by our means, that *God provides* for a great part of the lower rank of creatures, which, if we had no occasion for them, would be far less happy than they are. Our common creator, in giving to brutes faculties, that

would be useless, if we did not employ them, and to man a capacity of discerning and training them up to the purposes they are fitted for, has plainly shewn, that he intended them for our service; and this makes it our duty to be careful of their interests, as far as is consistent with our own. In making them our food, we are directed by a pattern, which God himself has set us; for *natural instinct* is the work of God: by that he has licensed several species of animals to feed upon others, whom they excel either in strength, or swiftness, or cunning; and certainly man excels the highest rank of brutes, by so much a greater proportion than they can exceed one another in, as may well entitle him to the like privilege. If we make slaves of some of them, they are generally treated with much less hardship than those wretched slaves of our own species, who differ from their masters in nothing but complexion. And for such of the beasts, as are employed by sportsmen, it is well known, that they are frequently used with more tenderness and care than the rational part of the family. Thus in designing the brutes for the service of mankind, God has provided better, upon the whole, for their happiness, than if they had been left to themselves.

And now, *will any one say, after this view of things*, that, "if the end, which God works for, is the measure, by which he expects we should regulate our conduct, we must find out different sorts of food, of clothing, and of diversions from what are in use at present." There is certainly no kind of reason to doubt, that one end, which God had in view, in the creation of brutes, was their usefulness to man, to feed, to clothe, and to assist him in his labours. As for his *diversions*, I have not much to say; let those, who,

suppose they could be intended. But (as our author argues) God has worked for the good of *brutes* as well as for the good of *man*, and therefore if we are obliged to act for the same end that God does, "Why¹ ought we not to have the same regard, "in every instance, for the happiness of the creatures below us, as we have for the interests of "those, which are placed in the same rank with "ourselves?" If we have the same regard for the creatures *below us* that God has, I hope it will be thought sufficient; and I believe it will be pretty difficult to shew, that God has had an *equal* regard for their welfare in *every instance*, as for that of mankind, though we may conclude, he has done for them as well as for us, what is best upon the whole. It is evident enough, that the uses we make of them is really to their advantage; they are much better provided for, and even those we kill are longer lived, than they could have been without our protection, or if we did not lay up winter stores for them. This the beautiful passage our author has quoted, might have instructed him in, of which the following lines are a part, and which he much mistakes, if he thinks it in favour of his argument:

"Man cares for all: to birds he gives his woods,
 "To beasts his pastures, and to fish his floods.
 "That very life his learned hunger craves
 "He saves from famine, from the savage saves;
 "Nay feasts the animal he dooms his feast,
 "And till he ends the being makes it blest."

Thus we see it is by our means, that *God provides* for a great part of the lower rank of creatures, which, if we had no occasion for them, would be far less happy than they are. Our common creator, in giving to brutes faculties, that

would be useless, if we did not employ them, and to man a capacity of discerning and training them up to the purposes they are fitted for, has plainly shewn, that he intended them for our service; and this makes it our duty to be careful of their interests, as far as is consistent with our own. In making them our food, we are directed by a pattern, which God himself has set us; for *natural instinct* is the work of God: by that he has licensed several species of animals to feed upon others, whom they excel either in strength, or swiftness, or cunning; and certainly man excels the highest rank of brutes, by so much a greater proportion than they can exceed one another in, as may well entitle him to the like privilege. If we make slaves of some of them, they are generally treated with much less hardship than those wretched slaves of our own species, who differ from their masters in nothing but complexion. And for such of the beasts, as are employed by sportsmen, it is well known, that they are frequently used with more tenderness and care than the rational part of the family. Thus in designing the brutes for the service of mankind, God has provided better, upon the whole, for their happiness, than if they had been left to themselves.

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for sport's sake only, divert themselves by giving *needless* pain to sensible beings, acquit their conduct of immorality if they can; I am no advocate of theirs.

But this I must say, that supposing men were ever so much in the wrong as to their usage of inferior creatures, or that their practice could not be shewn to be consistent with the principles, which the author of the *Essay* opposes; this would only prove, that men may mistake in the application of their principles, and by too great a partiality for their own species, not extend their duties so far, as the fitness of things, and the end of God in the creation, would have carried them; but it would by no means follow, from such mistakes, either that the principles themselves are *not the rule of our duty*, or *not agreeable to the sense of mankind*; as this gentleman supposes. So that he has bestowed a vast profusion of words, and laid a mighty stress upon an argument, which, if granted him, would conclude nothing for his purpose. However, as he had the objection, the answer, and replies in his own management, which he has taken care should be such as he might best deal with, it would be hard, if he could not bring them to what conclusion he pleased. "Thus, says he¹, the only method of shewing, why brutes may be treated in a different manner from men, will bring us to the very conclusion, that I wanted to establish." And what is that? Why, that "we do not use to determine what God requires of us by knowing what he does himself, but by knowing what he will make us happy for." But I presume it has now been shewn, that our treating the brutes in a different manner from men, is founded on reason, and the nature of things, on the appointments of God, the pattern he has set us, and the

¹ *Essay*, p. 258.

ends he designed them for, distinct from all consideration of his rewarding or not rewarding us for it.

Once more we are happily returned to the principal subject, which we will now pursue to the end, without running after any digressions we may meet with. "The will of God (argues^m our author) declared to us at first by our nature and constitution, and suggested to us again by the voice of reason, cannot differ from that will, by which he governs the world: and as the former directs us to pursue happiness, the latter cannot be supposed to direct us to pursue virtue, till we know, whether it will make us happy or miserable; for before we can tell what course he would have us follow, it is necessary we should be satisfied, that it leads to the end, which he has taught us constantly to endeavour after." Very well; but if the will of God, by the voice of nature and reason, directs us to pursue *virtue* as well as happiness, a direction, which the wisest of the *Heathens* well understood, then what will become of this fine reasoning? However, let us go on with it: "So that instead of saying God requires us to be virtuous, therefore he will make us happy for it; we should reason the other way, and should have some grounds for believing, that he designs to make us happy for our virtue hereafter, before we can determine, that he requires us to practise it, when it makes us miserable at present." Poor virtue always appears, to this gentleman, joined with misery! But even if that was the case, what possible grounds can we have (supposing no revelation) for believing, that God designs to make us happy for our virtue hereafter, without a clear perception, that virtue is the law of our nature, and that therefore it must be the will of him, who gave us that nature? This once ac-

^m Page 259.

knowledge, it may be reasonably inferred, that whatever we suffer for it here, will be recompensed hereafter. But take away this natural judgment of the human mind, this sense of right and wrong, of moral good and evil, and of our duty to practise one, and avoid the other; take away this, and you deprive mankind of the strongest proof, that reason can discover, of a future state of rewards and punishments; which is no small objection against this author's *inverted* scheme, that seems to turn religion and morality topsy-turvy, with the wrong end uppermost, and the seamy-side without.

He cannot see any force in a proof, which is founded on a supposition, that men may perceive virtue to be their duty from its agreeableness to nature and reason; nay, he often argues, as if no such proof had been offered. "Why, says he, do we hear of an unequal distribution of things, of suffering virtue, and of prosperous vice? Is the justice of God at all concerned to make men happy for what he did not require of them? Can they be entitled to any future recompence for having made themselves miserable by their adherence to virtue, if it was matter of their own free choice, and what they might have let alone; if nature did not persuade it, nor reason dictate it, nor God command it." I do not know what this reasoning tends to confute, except the author's own principles; for certainly those, from whom we hear of an *unequal distribution of things*, as matter of complaint, or a ground for future expectations, have either proved beforehand, or thought it clear enough to be taken for granted, that virtue was *not* a matter of free choice, and what they might have let alone: they plainly say, that *nature did persuade, and reason dictate, and*

God, by the voice of both, require it. Upon this ground it is, that we hear of *suffering virtue*, and of *prosperous vice*, as the general complaint of mankind, till it leads them to the hope of more equitable distributions in a future state. But this gentleman must needs invert the common order of our natural reflections, and begin where they used to end.

"Teach me, says he, that my creator will hereafter put me in possession of my final good, upon condition I behave, whilst I am here, so as to please him; and then, from the nature of things, I can satisfy myself, that virtue is my duty." And why cannot he satisfy himself of this, as well before he is taught what his creator intends to do with him, as after? *The nature of things*, from which he owns he can satisfy himself, that virtue is his duty, is, I presume, just the same; before he knows, that God will recompense him according to his behaviour here, as it is when he knows this. Why then will he not *first* deduce his duty from thence, that he may, with a better grace, enquire after a reward? But whatever end he thinks fit to begin at, this is a plain concession, that we may know from the nature of things, that virtue is our duty. Now how preposterous is it to direct men to learn what God will do with them hereafter, which he has not taught them, (I mean where there is no revelation) and not to allow them to learn what he requires them to do here, which he has taught them by the nature of things, and the dictates of their own minds, that having not the law they may be a law unto themselves?

But what can be expected from an author, whose head is so turned with the notion, "That we are incapable of being obliged to any thing without a view to our own happiness," as to be ca-

* See page 268—69.

* Page 266.

pable of saying³, that "even God's authority will have little weight, where our compliance with it does not forward the pursuit of our ultimate end; for the cause of our obligation to practise virtue is not so much his will to have us practise it, as his will to make us happy for it." Modest and pious! The maintainers of this doctrine, we see, are for making a sure bargain. Let their duty appear ever so plain in the nature of things, or let God command as he pleases, what is that to them? Not a foot will they stir, till they are certain what they are to get by it. Sentiments very suitable to the principles, from which they are deduced, viz. That every man's own happiness is the only end he is obliged to pursue; that moral good is no part of that end; and that there is nothing in the nature of it, or in the nature of man, that can oblige him to pursue it, till God has assured him, that he will make him happy for it. These are principles, which run through the whole *Essay on Virtue*, and are the foundation of a great many wrong conclusions, and false reasonings, diffused through every part of it. A minute examination of these would be a tedious and unnecessary labour: they must fall with the principles they are founded on, which need only be set in a just light to shew their deficiency.

To suppose a system of *social* beings, that is, beings fitted to live together, to have a mutual dependance, and their happiness to be unavoidably interwoven with each others; and yet that every one of them, as if made for himself alone, was designed *solely* to pursue his own private happiness, is a *contradictory idea*. Again, how absurd is it to suppose *moral agents*, that is, beings capable of perceiving good and evil, right and wrong, and of chusing or refusing either; yet quite uncon-

cerned about them, having no consciousness of any obligation to pursue moral good, as any good to them, or to trouble themselves, whether they chuse right or wrong? Once more, if there is nothing in the nature of virtue or moral good, that can oblige us to chuse it, then there is no essential difference between moral good and moral evil: justice and fidelity are no better than fraud and treachery, till God has assured us, that he will reward one, and punish the other; so that we have here the exploded principles of the *Leviathan* revived in a new dress.

But if virtue has no essential worth or preferableness to vice, that can oblige us to chuse it, and the will of God is not the cause of our obligation to practise it, as is here maintained; I fear the principles of this *Essay* will fall very short of proving virtue to be our *duty* at all. The promises of a reward will make it our *interest* indeed; but interest and duty are very different things, which ought not to be confounded. The first is an *external* motive, that can only affect us as sensible beings; but duty becomes us as *moral agents*, and must arise from a consciousness, either of the fitness and rectitude of an action, or of the obedience due to an authority commanding it. Where neither of these is, there can be no foundation for duty; and since both these principles are excluded by the author of the *Essay on Virtue*, all that can be collected from the principle he has so much laboured to establish, is, that though neither the law of nature, nor reason, nor the will of God, can make it our *duty* to be virtuous, he has made it our *interest*, by promising to make us happy for it.

And now I would ask the author of the *Essay*, whether in making this promise, he supposes God to have had chiefly in view sensible good, or moral good, the happiness, or the virtue, of his creatures? If he says (as upon his principles, I think, he

must say) that God's chief design was to make his creatures happy; then certainly he cannot suppose, that God will make any of them miserable for the neglect of virtue, which he esteems of inferior consideration. And what a fine encouragement is here to libertines, who imagine they may find their happiness in their vices! for though God commands them to be virtuous, he cannot, they may think, be very angry with them for preferring happiness, which he is supposed himself to prefer to virtue. But if, to avoid this, our author should chuse to say, either that the chief design of God was to make men virtuous, or that virtue is so necessary to the happiness he designed them for, that one is not attainable without the other; then I must have leave to conclude, that in either case God must have originally designed man to pursue virtue, either as the *end*, for which he was created, or a *necessary means* to that end. And if so, whatever doubts this author may suggest, about our being obliged to pursue *the same end, that God pursues* (which, by the way, he has not attempted to disprove, nor given any answer to the reasons alledged for that obligation) certainly no one can pretend to doubt, that we are obliged to pursue *the end, or the necessary means to that end, for which God created us, and to which he has fitted our nature*. Now by whatever means this can be discovered, it must oblige us to the practice of virtue, though there was no explicate command or reward appointed for it.

I hope nothing has been said in these papers, that can be fairly construed in favour of the prejudices, which the author of the *Characteristics* expresses against any regard to future retributions. No body, I am persuaded, can have a deeper sense, than I have, of God's goodness and condescension in assisting our weakness by such assurances, and appointing, for our imperfect performances, the

reward

reward of an *exceeding weight of glory*. Yet I am sorry so just cause of offence should have been given to the disciples of that noble author, by running into the other extreme, as is done in this *Essay*, and by the preceding writers on the interested scheme. There seems to me something strangely absurd in the notion, that God designed the reward of our duty should be the *sole motive* to it. Who can doubt, that it will be more acceptable to him, who *requireth truth in the inward parts*, if we acquit ourselves of our several duties to him, to our neighbour, and to ourselves, from an awful sense of the homage due to him, from a consciousness of the fitness of promoting the welfare of our fellow-creatures, and of subjecting our passions and appetites to reason; with an humble acknowledgment of God's goodness, in designing to reward *unprofitable servants, who had done what was their duty to do*? Under the influence of these principles, who would not appear before his judge at the last day, with more assurance, than if he could only plead, that he had done what God had required of him, and had directed others so to do, because he had promised to make them happy, for what otherwise they need not have thought themselves obliged to perform? For my own part, were it my case, I should greatly fear to be answered, *inasmuch as you did it not in regard to goodness, truth, and righteousness, you did it not in regard to me*.

In the three last chapters of the *Essay*, the author proposes to shew, that all the revelations, that have been made to mankind (which he divides into three periods) enforced their obedience to the will of God, by the promises of happiness *in a life after this*. The first of these periods is that before the law of *Moses* was given, which beginning with the state of innocence, he, at first setting

ting out, contradicts himself, by * supposing the promise made to *Adam* to enforce his obedience, was the continuance of the happiness he then enjoyed in *Paradise*, and not that of a life after this. The second period is whilst the law of *Moses* subsisted; and here he engages a volunteer in the unaccountable opposition to a noble design of turning the objections of *infidels* against *Moses*, to proofs of his *Divine Legation*; and to a curious dissertation, which sets the command to *Abraham*, of sacrificing his son, in such a light, as dispels all the difficulties it was environed with; either of which, one would think, none but unbelievers could have any concern to oppose. It is certainly of no consequence to the design of *the Essay on Virtue*, whether obedience was enforced under the *Mosaic* dispensation, by the hopes of a future life, or by the promises of temporal happiness only; for if the promises of God to make men happy, are the sole ground or cause of duty, as it is the whole purpose of the *Essay* to maintain, they are equally such, whether they respect this life or another; and therefore the author had no call here to declare for the opposition. Neither is it of any more consequence to the cause I am defending; for whether the sanctions of God's laws are temporal or eternal, it is equally true, that they are not the proper cause or ground of duty. Moral obligation must arise from the reason and nature of things, not from *external motives*, whether present or future. It is therefore no more incumbent upon me, than it was upon the author of the *Essay*, to enter into that debate; and I have less inclination to go a volunteering. This part of the work should have been wholly unnoticed by me, had not an extraordinary * passage called upon me to give the reader a further opportunity of considering, whether

this author's definition of virtue can be a true one, or agreeable to the common sense of mankind, in consequence of which he has advanced the following odd, and, I believe, singular notions:

"If virtue, says he, was from the very nature of it, from its own beauty and excellence, the ultimate end of man, then virtue itself suffered no damage by the fall, and man suffered but little. For though we became mortal and unhappy, yet virtue still retained the same charms, that it had before; and we lost nothing, that was of any consequence; so inconsistent is this scheme of morality with the *Mosaic* history of man's origin and fall; so vain, if it was true, would be the penalty inflicted upon man for his disobedience! The haughty *Stoic* would have smiled at the empty threats of his creator, and would, in his own heart, have triumphed at the thoughts of losing nothing, which he cared for. What is it to him, that his life is to be full of pain and sorrow, who does not desire any thing but virtue?" Again; "What if man lost his happiness, not by parting with his virtue, but by transgressing a positive command? If his happiness, before he disobeyed that command, consisted in being virtuous, as disobeying that command would have left him in possession of his virtue, it is impossible it should have deprived him of his happiness."—"Virtue itself, he says, suffered no damage by the fall;—virtue still retained the same charms, that it had before." This may be allowed of virtue in the *abstract*, which is nothing to the purpose; for it is not the *idea*, but the *practice* of virtue, in which happiness is supposed to consist. But who ever thought, till now, that virtue in the *concrete*, that *Adam's* virtue, suffered no damage by the fall? Or had this disobedience left him in possession of his virtue? Had the haughty *Stoic* been as well acquainted with his creator, and

the advantages of the state of innocence as *Adam* was, he would have been conscious, that disobeying even a *positive* command of his great benefactor, was a moral evil, which he could not be guilty of without departing from his virtue: for the *Stoic's* notion of virtue (as this author very well knows) was not that partial and imperfect one, to which his definition has restrained it. *Fitness, rectitude, agreeableness to nature, to relations, &c.* were, in their language, the characteristics of virtue; and every one of these must be violated in disobeying the known will of God, though in an instance, which, *of itself*, might have no immorality in it. So that the *Stoic* could never have dreamt of man's possessing his virtue when he lost his innocence. Instead of smiling at his creator's sentence, as *empty threats*, he would then have perceived, that amidst the calamities, to which he was going to be exposed, virtue would be no more so uniformly practised, or with such perfection, as to make his happiness compleat; yet that this did not hinder virtue from being still his *duty*, still self-eligible, and the greatest good a reasonable nature can be capable of.

For want of knowing the *Mosaic history of the fall*, the *Stoics* were indeed a little too self-sufficient: otherwise their scheme of morality was no ways inconsistent with that history; for it is by the steady practice of virtue, that man must recover, as far as in him lies, the happiness he lost by deviating from that principal of moral virtues, the obedience due to his beneficent creator. How little consistent with that history, or true in itself, our author's scheme of morality must be, who supposes man to have retained his virtue, when he knowingly disobeyed the command of his God, is, I think, pretty apparent. He seems to have given us here an instance of the justness of an observation of his own, p. 64. where he says, "This is the great danger of using words, even after we have
" defined

" defined them, in a sense different from their
" common one; that when we have found out
" consequences, which are true, whilst the words
" are used in our own sense, we are very apt to
" think them true too in their more usual accep-
" tation." Now it may perhaps be true, that *Adam* retained his virtue, in this author's sense of the term virtue: but whether this is agreeable to the common notions of mankind, or whether (to use his own words) " it will be unfair to extend
" this consequence to virtue, in the sense, which
" *common use* has given it," let the judicious reader judge.

And now I promise myself I shall have his leave to conclude, that the *Essay on Virtue* has neither given us a just account of what the nature of virtue consists in, nor assigned the true grounds of our obligation to practise it, since all *internal* motives are excluded. He may remember, that I have shewn all the author's arguments, against any obligation arising from the essential difference and relations of things, to be mere *sophisms*; and I persuade myself, that not a few will, by consulting their own breasts, and their observations of nature, agree with me, that in denying to mankind all *disinterested benevolence*, and to the duties of religion or virtue any foundation but the *prospect of a reward*; he highly injures and dishonours both.

This last point I have greatly at heart, it seeming to me essential to true virtue, and sincere religion, that they proceed from a *consciousness of what is fit and right*, and, on that account, *acceptable to God*. Without this, whatever good works may be done, or external worship and obedience may be paid to the governor of the world, they will never make a virtuous or religious man. God certainly requires us to act from an *internal* principle, to *approve things that are excellent*, *Phil. i. 10*. What else can be meant by worshipping him *in spirit and in truth*,
by

by being subject *not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake?* Rom. xiii. 5.

And now we are appealing to Scripture, it is of importance to observe, that in delivering particular precepts, the inspired writers frequently refer us to the example of God, *forgiving one another even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you,* Eph. iv. 32. *If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another,* 1 St. John iv. 11. Or to the reason of the thing; *Speak every one truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another,* Eph. iv. 25. And this sufficiently shews, that those principles, which the *Essay* most strenuously labours to exclude, the *imitation of God, and the relations of things*, are true grounds of duty or obligation; tho' enforced, as became a divine commission, by the authority of God, and the sanctions of his laws.

Before I take leave of Dr. *Rutherford*, I would desire him to observe, that there is an insuperable difficulty attends the doctrine he is so zealous to establish; which I do not find has been obviated or answered by any of those moralists, who found all obligation to the practice of virtue, solely on the promise of God to make us happy for it. I suppose it is agreed on all hands, that whatever part of mankind have, in any ages of the world, lived under the law of nature, they were accountable to God, and will be punished at the last judgment for their immoralities, or their neglect of moral virtue. Now this certainly supposes them under some obligation to practise it; for how can persons be accountable, or justly punishable, where there is no duty, no obligation incumbent upon them? Either therefore these authors must conclude, that those, who have known no other law but that of nature, will *not* be punished at the last judgment for the most immoral lives; which is contrary to the general opinion of the *Christian* world, and leaves the Heathens in a *safer* condition than those, who

have had the benefit of revelation. Or else they must allow, that *duty arises* from that perception, which we have of the essential moral difference and fitness of things, *that law, which God has written in our hearts.* They must allow, that he expects we should attend to it, should consider it as flowing from the nature of such beings as we are; and consequently the will of him, who gave us that nature. Upon this principle, and upon this only, it may be reasonably concluded, that *Heathens*, and even *Atheists*, are justly punishable for the neglect of moral virtue. But if, according to the principles of the *Essay*, *virtue was not their duty*, for want of knowing, that God designed to make them happy for it; I see not how the author can do less than set them free from *punishment*, for the neglect of what, by his doctrine, they could not be under any obligation to pursue. Or if, rather than yield them such an advantage, he will chuse the other part of the dilemma, the publick may be willing to accept so easy a refutation of his elaborate *Essay*.