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**TO The Reverend Mr. Hume, Author of DOUGLAS, a Tragedy.**

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## DISSERTATION I. NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION.

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## DISSERTATION I. The Natural History of Religion.

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"But in such subjects as these,"

adds the historian,

"which exceed all human capacity, it may well happen, that those, who discourse the most, know the least; reaching a specious appearance of truth in their reasonings, while extremely wide of the real truth and matter of fact."

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Eldest of beings, chaos first arose;  
Next earth, wide–stretcht, the seat of all.

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

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

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conceived to be only a little superior to mankind, and to have been, many of them, advanced from that

inferior ranking, we are more at our ease in our addresses to them, and may even, without proof, announce

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

ABSALOM and ACHITOPHEL.

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

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## DISSERTATION II. OF THE PASSIONS.

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## DISSERTATION II. Of the Passions.

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along with him, we shall become more concise in our proofs.

THE passion of fear and hope may arise,

when the chances are equal on both sides, and no superiority can be discovered in one above the other.

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"As the fancy delights in every thing, that is great, strange, or beautiful, and is still the more pleased the more it finds of these perfections in the same object, so it is capable of receiving new satisfaction by the assistance of another sense. Thus, any continued sound, as the music of birds, or a fall of waters, awakens every

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moment the mind of the beholder, and makes him more attentive to the several beauties of the place, that lie before him. Thus, if there arises a fragranciness of smells or perfumes, they heighten the pleasure of the imagination, and make even the colours and verdure of the landscape appear more agreeable; for the ideas of both senses recommend each other, and are pleasanter together than where they enter the mind separately: As the different colours of a picture, when they are well disposed, set off one another, and receive an additional beauty from the advantage of the situation."

In these phaenomena, we may remark the association both of impressions and ideas; as well as the mutual assistance these associations lend to each other.

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but a resemblance of tendency or direction.  
Its effect, however, is the same, in producing an association

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## DISSERTATION III. OF TRAGEDY.

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## DISSERTATION III. Of Tragedy.

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"PLEASURE and pain,"

says he,

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

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

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compensation, indignation, receives a new direction from the sentiments of beauty. The latter, being the pr



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## DISSERTATION IV. OF THE STANDARD OF TASTE.

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## DISSERTATION IV. Of the Standard of Taste.

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exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. One

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passions.  
At twenty,  
Ovid may  
be the favourite  
author; Horace  
at forty; and  
perhaps Tacitus  
at fifty.

Vainly would we, in such cases, endeavour to enter into the sentiments of others, and divest ourselves

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"What is this,"

says the heroic Joad to Josabet, finding her in discourse with Mattan, the priest of Baal,

"Does the daughter of David speak to this traitor? Are you not afraid, left the earth should open and pour forth flames to devour you both? Or that these holy walls should fall and crush you together? What is his purpose? Why comes that enemy of God hither to poison the air, which we breath, with his horrid presence?"

Such sentiments are received with great applause on the theatre of Paris; but at London the spectators would be full as much pleased to hear Achilles tell Agamemnon, that he

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

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