

The Differences of Actions from which some are constituted *morally Good*, and others *morally Evil*, have always been accounted a very important Subject of Inquiry: And therefore, every Attempt to free this Subject from the usual Causes of Error and Dispute, the *Confusion of ambiguous Words*, must be excusable.

Definitions.

In the following Discourse, *Happiness* denotes pleasant *Sensation* of any kind, or a continued State of such *Sensations*; and *Misery* denotes the contrary *Sensations*.

Such Actions as tend to procure Happiness to the Agent, are called *privately useful*: and such Actions as procure Misery to the Agent, *privately hurtful*.

Actions procuring Happiness to others may be called *publicly useful*, and the contrary Actions *publicly hurtful*. Some Actions may be both *publicly and privately useful*, and others both *publicly and privately hurtful*.

These different *natural Tendencies* of Actions are universally acknowledged; and in proportion to our *Reflection* upon human Affairs, we shall enlarge our Knowledge of these Differences.

Two Questions about Morality.

When these *natural Differences* are known, it remains to be inquired into: 1st, “What *Quality* in any Action determines our *Election* of it rather than the contrary?” Or, if the Mind determines itself, “What *Motives* or *Desires* excite to an Action, rather than the contrary, or rather than to the *Omission*?” 2dly, “What *Quality* determines our *Approbation* of one Action, rather than of the contrary Action?”

The Words *Election* and *Approbation* seem to denote simple Ideas known by *Consciousness*; which can only be explained by *synonymous Words*, or by concomitant or consequent Circumstances. *Election* is purposing to do an Action rather than its contrary, or than being inactive. *Approbation* of our own Action denotes, or is attended with a Pleasure in the *Contemplation* of it, and in *Reflection* upon the *Affections* which inclined us to it. *Approbation* of the Action of another is pleasant, and is attended with *Love* toward the Agent.¹

The *Qualities* moving to *Election*, or *exciting to Action*, are different from those moving to *Approbation*: We often do Actions which we do not *approve*, and *approve* Actions which we *omit*: We often *desire* that an Agent had omitted an Action which we *approve*; and *wish* he would do an Action which we *condemn*. *Approbation* is employed about the Actions of *others*, where there is no room for our *Election*.

Now in our Search into the *Qualities* exciting either our *Election* or *Approbation*, let us consider the several *Notions* advanced of moral Good and Evil in both these Respects; and what *Senses*, *Instincts*, or *Affections*, must be necessarily supposed to account for our *Approbation* or *Election*.

The Epicurean Opinion.

There are two Opinions on this Subject entirely opposite: The one that of the old *Epicureans*, as it is beautifully explained in the first Book of *Cicero*, *De finibus*; which is revived by Mr. *Hobbes*, [*Hobbes*, *Rochechouart*, and others of the last Century,] and followed by many better Writers: “That all the *Desires* of the *human Mind*, nay of all *thinking Natures*, are reducible to *Self-Love*, or *Desire of private Happiness*: That from this *Desire* all Actions of any Agent do flow.” Our *Christian Moralists* [of this Scheme] introduce other sorts of Happiness to be desired, but still “’tis the *Prospect of private Happiness*, which, with some of them, is the sole *Motive of Election*. And that, in like manner, what determines any Agent to *approve* his own Action, is its *Tendency to his private Happiness* in the whole, tho it may bring *present Pain* along with it: That the *Approbation* of the Action of another, is from an Opinion of its *Tendency to*

the Happiness of the *Approver*, either *immediately* or more *remotely*: That each Agent may discover it to be the surest way to promote his private Happiness, to do *publicly useful Actions*, and to abstain from those which are *publicly hurtful*: That the neglecting to observe this, and doing *publicly hurtful Actions*, does mischief to the whole of Mankind, by hurting any one part; that every one has some little *damage* by this Action: Such an *inadvertent Person* might possibly be *pernicious* to any one, were he in his Neighbourhood; and the very *Example* of such Actions may extend over the whole World, and produce some pernicious Effects upon any Observer. That therefore every one may look upon such Actions as *hurtful to himself*, and in this view does disapprove them, and hates the Agent. In the like manner, a *publicly useful Action* may diffuse some small *Advantage* to every Observer, whence he may *approve* it, and *love* the Agent.”

Does not answer the Appearances.

This Scheme can never account for the principal Actions of human Life:² Such as the *Offices of Friendship*, *Gratitude*, *natural Affection*, *Generosity*, *publick Spirit*, *Compassion*. Men are conscious of no such Intentions or *acute Reflections* in these Actions. Ingenious speculative Men, in their straining to support an *Hypothesis*, may contrive a thousand *subtle selfish Motives*, which a kind generous Heart never dreamed of. In like manner, this Scheme can never account for the sudden *Approbation*, and violent *Sense* of something amiable in Actions done in distant Ages and Nations, while the Approver has perhaps never thought of these distant *Tendencies* to his Happiness. Nor will it better account for our *want of Approbation* toward *publicly useful Actions* done *casually*, or only with Intention of *private Happiness* to the Agent. And then, in these Actions reputed *generous*, if the Agent’s Motive was only a view to his *own Pleasure*, how come we to approve them more than his *enriching himself*, or his *gratifying his own Taste* with good Food? The whole *Species* may receive a like Advantage from both, and the Observer an equal Share.

Were our *Approbation* of Actions done in *distant Ages* and *Nations*, occasioned by this Thought, that such an Action done toward our selves would be useful to us, why don’t we approve and love in like manner any Man who *finds a Treasure*, or *indulges* himself in any exquisite *Sensation*, since these Advantages or Pleasures might be conferred on *our selves*; and tend more to *our Happiness* than any Actions in distant Ages?

The *Sanctions of Laws* may make any Agent chuse the Action required, under the Conception of *useful* to himself, and lead him into an Opinion of *private Advantage* in it, and of detriment in the contrary Actions; but what should determine any Person to approve the *Actions of others*, because of a Conformity to a Law, if Approbation in any Person were only an Opinion of private Advantage?

The opposite Opinion does plainly.

The other Opinion is this, “That we have not only *Self-Love*, but *benevolent Affections* also toward others, in various Degrees, making us desire their Happiness as an *ultimate End*, without any view to private Happiness: That we have a *moral Sense* or Determination of our Mind, to *approve every kind Affection* either in our selves or others, and all publicly useful Actions which we imagined do flow from such Affection, without our having a view to our *private Happiness*, in our Approbation of these Actions.”

These two Opinions seem both intelligible, each consistent with itself. The former seems not to represent human Nature as it is; the other seems to do it.

Schemes seemingly different from both.

There have been many *ways of speaking* introduced, which seem to signify something different from both the former Opinions. Such as these, that “Morality of Actions consists in *Conformity to Reason*, or *Difformity from it*.” That “*Virtue* is acting according to the *absolute Fitness and Unfitness of Things*, or agreeably to the *Natures or Relations of Things*,” and many others in different Authors. To examine these is the Design of the following Sections; and to explain more fully how the *Moral Sense* alledged to be in Mankind, must be presupposed even in these Schemes.

¹ [See *Treat.* II. Sect. 2. Parag. ult.] [*Approbation* of the Action of another has some little Pleasure attending it in the Observer, and raises Love toward the *Agent*, in whom the Quality approved is deemed to reside, and not in the *Observer*, who has a Satisfaction in the Act of approving.]

² See *Treat.* III. Sect. 1.

Section I: Concerning the Character of Virtue, agreeable to Truth or Reason.

Since Reason is understood to denote our *Power of finding out true Propositions*, Reasonableness must denote the same thing, with *Conformity to true Propositions, or to Truth*.

Reasonableness in an Action is a very common Expression, but yet upon inquiry, it will appear very confused, whether we suppose it the Motive to *Election*, or the Quality determining *Approbation*.

Conformity to Truth examined.

There is one sort of *Conformity to Truth* which neither determines to the one or the other; viz. that *Conformity which is between every true Proposition and its Object*. This sort of Conformity can never make us *chuse* or *approve* one Action more than its contrary, for it is found in all Actions alike: Whatever attribute can be ascribed to a *generous kind Action*, the *contrary Attribute* may as *truly* be ascribed to a *selfish cruel Action*: Both Propositions are equally *true*, and the two contrary Actions, the Objects of the two *Truths* are equally *conformable* to their several *Truths*, with that sort of *Conformity* which is between a Truth and its Object. This *Conformity* then cannot make a Difference among Actions, or recommend one more than another either to *Election* or *Approbation*, since any Man may make as many Truths about Villany, as about Heroism, by ascribing to it *contrary Attributes*.

For Instance, these are *Truths* concerning the *Preservation of Property*. "It tends to the Happiness of human Society: It encourages Industry: It shall be rewarded by God." These are also *Truths* concerning *Robbery*. "It disturbs Society: It discourages Industry: It shall be punished by God." The former *three Truths* have the *Preservation of Property* for their *Object*; the latter *three* have *Robbery*. And each Class of Truths hath that sort of *Conformity* to its Object, which is common to all Truths with their Objects. The *moral Difference* cannot therefore depend upon this *Conformity*, which is common to both.

The *Number* of Truths in both cases may be plainly the same; so that a good Action cannot be supposed to agree to *more Truths* than an evil one, nor can an evil Action be disagreeable to any *Truth* or *Compages of Truths* made about it; for whatever Propositions do not agree with their Objects are not Truths.

If *Reasonableness*, the Character of Virtue, denote some other sort of *Conformity* to Truth, it were to be wished that these Gentlemen, who make it the original Idea of moral Good, antecedent to any *Sense* or *Affections*, would explain it, and shew how it determines us antecedently to a *Sense*, either to *Election* or *Approbation*.

They tell us, "we must have some *Standard* antecedently to all *Sense* or *Affections*, since we judge even of our Senses and Affections themselves, and approve or disapprove them: This Standard must be our *Reason*, Conformity to which must be the original Idea of moral Good."

Reasons either justifying or exciting.

But what is this *Conformity of Actions to Reason*? When we ask the Reason of an Action we sometimes mean, "*What Truth shews a Quality in the Action, exciting the Agent to do it?*" Thus, why does a *Luxurious Man* pursue *Wealth*? The Reason is given by this Truth, "Wealth is useful to purchase Pleasures." Sometimes for a Reason of Actions we shew the *Truth expressing a Quality, engaging our Approbation*. Thus the Reason of hazarding Life in just War, is, that "it tends to preserve our honest Countrymen, or evidences publick Spirit:" The Reason for *Temperance*, and against *Luxury* is given thus, "Luxury evidences a selfish base Temper." The former sort of Reasons we will call *exciting*, and the latter *justifying*.³ Now we shall find that all *exciting Reasons* presuppose *Instincts* and *Affections*; and the *justifying* presuppose a *Moral Sense*.

Exciting Reasons suppose Affections.

As to *exciting Reasons*, in every calm rational Action some *end* is desired or intended; no end can be intended or desired previously to some one of these Classes of Affections, *Self-Love*, *Self-Hatred*, or desire of private Misery, (if this be possible) *Benevolence* toward others, or *Mal-*

ice: All Affections are included under these; no *end* can be previous to them all; there can therefore be no *exciting Reason* previous to *Affection*.

We have indeed many confused Harangues on this Subject, telling us, "We have two Principles of Action, *Reason*, and *Affection*, or *Passion* (i.e. strong Affection): the former in common with Angels, the latter with Brutes: No Action is wise, or good, or reasonable, to which we are not excited by *Reason*, as distinct from all *Affections*; or, if any such Actions as flow from *Affections* be good, 'tis only by *chance*, or *materially* and not *formally*." As if indeed *Reason*, or the Knowledge of the Relations of things, could excite to Action when we proposed no *End*, or as if *Ends* could be intended without *Desire* or *Affection*.

[WRITERS on these Subjects should remember the common Divisions of the Faculties of the Soul. That there is 1. *Reason* presenting the natures and relations of things, antecedently to any Act of *Will* or *Desire*: 2. The *Will*, or *Appetitus Rationalis*, or the disposition of Soul to pursue what is presented as good, and to shun Evil. Were there no other Power in the Soul, than that of mere contemplation, there would be no *Affection*, *Volition*, *Desire*, *Action*. Nay without some motion of *Will* no Man would voluntarily persevere in Contemplation. There must be a *Desire* of Knowledge, and of the Pleasure which attends it: this too is an Act of *Willing*. Both these Powers are by the Antients included under the *Λογος* or *λογικὸν μῆρος*. Below these they place two other powers dependent on the Body, the *Sensus*, and the *Appetitus Sensitivus*, in which they place the particular Passions: the former answers to the *Understanding*, and the latter to the *Will*. But the Will is forgot of late, and some ascribe to the *Intellect*, not only *Contemplation* or *Knowledge*, but *Choice*, *Desire*, *Prosecuting*, *Loving*. Nay some are grown so ingenious in uniting the Powers of the Soul, that *contemplating with Pleasure*, *Symmetry* and *Proportion*, an Act of the *Intellect* as they plead, is the same thing with *Good-will* or the virtuous *Desire* of publick Happiness.]

No exciting Reasons for ultimate Ends.

But are there not also exciting Reasons, even previous to any end, moving us to propose one end rather than another? To this *Aristotle* long ago answered, "that there are *ultimate Ends* desired without a view to any thing else, and *subordinate Ends* or Objects desired with a view to something else." To *subordinate Ends* those *Reasons* or *Truths* excite, which shew them to be conducive to the *ultimate End*, and shew *one Object* to be more effectual than another: thus *subordinate Ends* may be called *reasonable*. But as to the *ultimate Ends*, to suppose *exciting Reasons* for them, would infer, that there is no *ultimate End*, but that we desire one thing for another in an infinite Series.

Thus ask a Being who desires *private Happiness*, or has *Self-Love*? "what Reason excites him to desire *Wealth*?" He will give this Reason, that "Wealth tends to procure Pleasure and Ease." Ask his Reason for desiring Pleasure or Happiness: One cannot imagine what Proposition he could assign as his *exciting Reason*. This Proposition is indeed true, "There is an *Instinct* or *Desire* fixed in his Nature, determining him to pursue his Happiness;" but it is not this *Reflection* on his own Nature, or this *Proposition* which excites or determines him, but the *Instinct itself*. This is a Truth, "*Rhubarb* strengthens the Stomach:" But 'tis not a *Proposition* which strengthens the Stomach, but the *Quality* in that Medicine. The Effect is not produced by *Propositions* shewing the *Cause*, but by the *Cause* itself.

In like manner, what Reason can a benevolent Being give, as exciting him to hazard his Life in just War? This perhaps, "such Conduct tends to the Happiness of his Country." Ask him, "why he serves his Country?" he will say, "His Country is a very valuable Part of Mankind." Why does he study the Happiness of Mankind? If his Affections be really *disinterested*, he can give no *exciting Reasons* for it: The Happiness of Mankind in general, or of any valuable Part of it, is an *ultimate End* to that Series of Desires.

Men have many ultimate Ends.

We may transiently observe one Mistake which many fall into, who in their Philosophical Inquiries have learned to form very *abstract general Ideas*: They suppose, because they have formed some Conception of an *infinite Good*, or *greatest possible Aggregate*, or *Sum of Happiness*, under which all *particular Pleasures* may be included; that there is also some *one great ultimate End*, with a view to which every *particular Object* is desired; whereas, in truth, each *particular Pleasure* is desired without farther view, as an *ultimate End* in the *selfish Desires*. 'Tis true, the *Prospect* of a greater inconsistent Pleasure may surmount or stop this Desire; so may the *Fear*

³ Thus *Grotius* distinguishes the Reasons of War, into the *Justificae*, and *Suasoriae*[], or these, *sub ratione utilis*].

of a prepollent Evil. But this does not prove, that “all Men have formed Ideas of *infinite Good*, or *greatest possible Aggregate*, or that they have any *Instinct* or *Desire*, without an Idea of its Object.” Just so in the *benevolent Affections*, the Happiness of any one Person is an *ultimate End*, desired with no farther view: And yet the observing its *Inconsistency* with the Happiness of another more beloved, or with the Happiness of *many*, tho each one of them were but equally beloved, may overcome the former Desire. Yet this will not prove, that in each *kind Action* Men do form the abstract Conception of *all Mankind*, or the *System of Rationals*. The forming such large Conceptions is indeed useful, that so we may gratify either our *Self-Love* or *kind Affections* in the fullest manner, as far as our Power extends; and may not content our selves with smaller Degrees either of *private* or *publick Good*, while greater are in our power: But when we have formed these *Conceptions*, we do not serve the *Individual* only from Love to the *Species*, no more than we desire *Grapes* with an Intention of the *greatest Aggregate* of Happiness, or from an Apprehension that they make a Part of the *General sum* of our Happiness. These Conceptions only serve to suggest *greater Ends* than would occur to us without Reflection; and by the *Prepollency* of one Desire toward the *greater Good*, either private or publick, to stop the Desire toward the *smaller Good*, when it appears inconsistent with the greater.

The common Reasons examined.

Let us examine the Truths assigned as *exciting* to the Pursuit of publick Good, even by those, who, tho they allow *disinterested Affections*, and a *moral Sense*, yet suppose something *reasonable* in it antecedently. They assign such as these “publick Good is the End proposed by the DEITY.” Then what Reason excites Men to concur with the DEITY? Is it this, “Concurring with the DEITY will make the Agent *happy*?” This is an *exciting Reason* indeed, but plainly supposes *Self-Love*: And let any one assign the *exciting Reason* to the Desire of Happiness. Is the Reason exciting to concur with the DEITY this, “The DEITY is our *Benefactor*?” Then what Reason excites to concur with Benefactors? Here we must recur to an *Instinct*. Is it this Truth, “The divine Ends are *reasonable Ends*?” Then what means the Word [*reasonable*?] Does it mean, that “the Deity has *Reasons* exciting him to promote the publick Good?” What are these *Reasons*? Why, perhaps “we do not know them particularly, but in general are sure that the DEITY has Reasons for them.” Then the Question recurs, What Reason excites us to *implicit Concurrence* with the Ends of the DEITY? The Reasons which excite *one Nature* may not excite another: The Tendency of an Action to the *Happiness of one Agent* may excite him, but will not excite another *Agent* to concur, unless there appears a like Tendency to the Happiness of that *other*. They may say, “they are sure the *divine Ends* are good.” What means *Goodness*? Is it *moral* or *natural*? If the divine Ends be *natural Good*, i.e. *pleasant*, or the *Cause of Pleasure*, to whom is this *Pleasure*? If to the DEITY, then why do we study the Happiness or the pleasing of the DEITY? What Reason excites us? All the possible Reasons must either presuppose some *Affection*, if they are exciting; or some *moral Sense*, if they are justifying.—Is the divine End naturally good to us? This is an exciting Reason, but supposes *Self-Love*. If we say the divine Ends are *morally Good*, we are just where we began. What is *moral Goodness*? *Conformity to Reason*. What are the *Reasons exciting* or *justifying*?

If any alledg as the Reason *exciting* us to pursue publick Good, this Truth, that “the Happiness of a *System*, a *Thousand*, or a *Million*, is a greater Quantity of Happiness than that of *one Person*: and consequently, if Men desire Happiness, they must have stronger Desires toward the *greater Sum*, than toward the *less*.” This Reason still supposes an *Instinct toward Happiness* as previous to it: And again, To *whom* is the Happiness of a *System* a greater Happiness? To *one Individual*, or to the *System*? If to the *Individual*, then his Reason exciting his Desire of a *happy System* supposes *Self-Love*: If to the *System*, then what Reason can excite to desire the greater Happiness of a *System*, or any Happiness to be in the Possession of *others*? None surely which does not presuppose *publick Affections*. Without such *Affections* this Truth, “that an hundred Felicities is a greater Sum than one Felicity,” will no more excite to study the Happiness of the *Hundred*, than this Truth, “an hundred Stones are greater than one,” will excite a Man, who has no *desire of Heaps*, to cast them together.

The same may be observed concerning that *Proposition*, assigned by some as the *ultimate Reason* both *exciting* to, and *justifying* the Pursuit of publick Good, viz. “*It is best that all should be happy*.” Best is most good: Good to whom? To the *Whole*, or to each *Individual*? If to the *former*, when this Truth excites to Action, it must presuppose *kind Affections*; if it is good to each *Individual*, it must suppose *Self-Love*.

The true Meaning of Reasons exciting to Actions, and reasonable Actions.

Let us once suppose *Affections*, *Instincts* or *Desires* previously implanted in our Nature: and we shall easily understand the *exciting Reasons* for Actions, viz. “These Truths which shew them to be conducive toward some *ultimate End*, or toward the *greatest End* of that kind in our Power.” He acts *reasonably*, who considers the various Actions in his Power, and forms *true Opinions* of their *Tendencies*; and then chuses to do that which will obtain the highest Degree of *that*, to which the *Instincts* of his Nature incline him, with the smallest Degree of those things to which the *Affections* in his Nature make him averse.

More particularly, the *exciting Reasons* to a Nature which had only *selfish Affections*, are those Truths which shewed “what Object or Event would occasion to it the greatest Quantity of *Pleasure*.” these would excite to the Prosecution of it. The *exciting Truths* about *Means*, would be only those which pointed out some Means as more certainly effectual than any other, or with less *Pain* or *Trouble* to the *Agent*. *Publick Usefulness* of *Ends* or *Means*, or *publick Hurtfulness* would neither excite nor dissuade, farther than the *publick State* might affect *that* of the Agent.

If there is any Nature with *publick Affections*: The Truths exciting to any *End* in this Order, are such as shew, “that any Event would promote the Happiness of others.” That *End* is called most *reasonable*, which our Reason discovers to contain a greater Quantity of *publick Good*, than any other in our power.

When any Event may affect both the *Agent* and *others*, if the Agent have both *Self-Love* and *publick Affections*, he acts according to that Affection which is *strongest*, when there is any *Opposition* of Interests; if there be no *Opposition*, he follows both. If he discovers this Truth, that “his constant pursuit of *publick Good* is the most probable way of promoting his *own Happiness*,” then his Pursuit is truly reasonable and constant; thus both Affections are at once gratify’d, and he is consistent with himself. Without knowledge of that Truth he does not act *reasonably* for his own Happiness, but follows it by *Means* not tending effectually to this *End*: and must frequently, from the Power of *Self-Love*, neglect or counteract his other *End*, the *publick Good*. If there be also a *moral Sense* in such an Agent, while yet he is inadvertent to the *Connexion* of *private Happiness* with the *Study of the publick*; he must be perpetually yet more uneasy, either thro’ the apprehended *Neglect of private Interest* when he serves the *Publick*; or when he pursues only *private Interest*, he will have perpetual *Remorse* and *Dissatisfaction* with his own Temper, thro’ his *moral Sense*. So that the Knowledge of this *Connexion* of private Interest, with the Study of publick Good, seems absolutely necessary to preserve a constant *Satisfaction* of Mind, and to prevent an *alternate Prevalence* of seemingly contrary Desires.

Should any one ask even concerning these two *ultimate Ends*, *private Good* and *publick*, is not the latter more *reasonable* than the former?—What means the Word *reasonable* in this Question? If we are allowed to presuppose *Instincts* and *Affections*, then the Truth just now supposed to be discoverable concerning our State, is an *exciting Reason* to *serve the publick Interest*, since this Conduct is the most *effectual Means* to obtain both ends. But I doubt if any Truth can be assigned which *excites* in us either the Desire of *private Happiness* or *publick*. For the *former* none ever alledged any *exciting Reason*: and a *benevolent Temper* finds as little Reason *exciting* him to the latter; which he desires without any view to *private Good*. If the meaning of the Question be this, “does not every *Spectator* approve the Pursuit of publick Good more than private?” The Answer is obvious that he does: but not for any *Reason* or *Truth*, but from a *moral Sense* [in the Constitution of the Soul].

This leads to consider *Approbation* of Actions, whether it be for *Conformity to any Truth*, or *Reasonableness*, that Actions are ultimately approved, independently of any *moral Sense*? Or if all *justifying Reasons* do not presuppose it?

Justifying Reasons suppose a moral Sense.

If *Conformity to Truth*, or *Reasonable*, denote nothing else but that “an Action is the *Object of a true Proposition*,” ’tis plain, that all Actions should be approved equally, since as many Truths may be made about the worst, as can be made about the best. See what was said above about exciting Reasons.

But let the *Truths* commonly assigned as *justifying* be examined. Here ’tis plain, “*A Truth shewing an Action to be fit to attain an End*,” does not justify it; nor do we approve a *subordinate End* for any Truth, which only shews it to be fit to promote the *ultimate End*; for the worst

Actions may be conducive to their *Ends*, and *reasonable* in that Sense. The *justifying Reasons* then must be about the *Ends* themselves, especially the *ultimate Ends*. The Question then is, “Does a *Conformity to any Truth* make us *approve an ultimate End*, previously to any *moral Sense*?” For example, we approve *pursuing the publick Good*. For what *Reason*? or what is the *Truth* for *Conformity* to which we call it a *reasonable End*? I fancy we can find none in these Cases, more than we could give for our liking any *pleasant Fruit*.⁴

The Reasons assigned are such as these; “*Tis the End proposed by the DEITY.*” But why do we *approve* concurring with the divine Ends? This Reason is given, “*He is our Benefactor.*” But then, for what *Reason* do we approve *Concurrence with a Benefactor*? Here we must recur to a *Sense*. Is this the Reason moving to *Approbation*, “*Study of publick Good tends to the Advantage of the Approver?*” Then the Quality moving us to *approve* an Action, is its being *advantageous to us*, and not *Conformity to a Truth*. This Scheme is intelligible, but not true in fact. Men *approve* without Perception of *private Advantage*; and often do not *condemn or disapprove* what is plainly pernicious; as in the Execution of a *just Sentence*, which even the Criminal [Sufferer] may *approve*.

If any allege, that this is the *justifying Reason* of the *Pursuit of publick Good*, “*that it is best all be happy,*” then we approve Actions for their *Tendency to that State which is best*, and not for *Conformity to Reason*. But here again, what means *best*? *morally best*, or *naturally best*? If the *former*, they explain the same Word by itself in a Circle: If they mean the *latter*, that “it is the most happy State where all are happy;” then, *most happy*, for whom? the *System*, or the *Individual*? If for the *former*, what Reason makes us *approve the Happiness of a System*? Here we must recur to a *Sense* or *kind Affections*. Is it most happy for the *Individual*? Then the Quality moving *Approbation* is again *Tendency to private Happiness*, not *Reasonableness*.

Obligation supposes either Affections or a moral Sense.

There are some other *Reasons* assigned in Words differing from the former, but more confused, such as these: “*Tis our Duty to study publick Good. We are obliged to do it. We owe Obedience to the Deity. The whole is to be preferred to a Part.*” But let these Words *Duty*, *Obligation*, *Owing*, and the meaning of that Gerund, *is to be preferred*, be explained; and we shall find our selves still at a Loss for *exciting Reasons* previously to *Affections*, or *justifying Reasons* without recourse to a *moral Sense*.

The meaning of Obligation.

When we say one is obliged to an Action, we either mean, 1. *That the Action is necessary to obtain Happiness to the Agent, or to avoid Misery*: Or, 2. *That every Spectator, or he himself upon Reflection, must approve his Action, and disapprove his omitting it, if he considers fully all its Circumstances*. The former Meaning of the Word *Obligation* presupposes *selfish Affections*, and the *Senses of private Happiness*: The latter Meaning includes the *moral Sense*. Mr. *Barbeyrac*, in his Annotations upon *Grotius*,⁵ makes *Obligation* denote an *indispensable Necessity to act in a certain manner*. Whoever observes his Explication of this *Necessity*, (which is not *natural*, otherwise no Man could act against his Obligation) will find that it denotes only “such a Constitution of a powerful Superior, as will make it impossible for any Being to obtain *Happiness*, or avoid *Misery*, but by such a Course of Action.” This agrees with the former Meaning, tho sometimes he also includes the latter.

Many other confused Definitions have been given of Obligation, by no obscure Names in the learned World. But let any one give a distinct Meaning, different from the two above-mentioned. To pursue them all would be endless; only let the *Definitions* be substituted in place of the Word OBLIGATION, in other parts of each Writer, and let it be observed whether it makes good Sense or not.⁶

⁴ [This is what *Aristotle* so often asserts that the *προαιρετὸν* or *βουλευτὸν* is not the End, but the Means.]

⁵ *Lib. I. Chap. 1. Sect. 10.*

⁶ [The common Definition, *Vinculum Juris quo necessitate adstringimur alicujus rei præstandæ*, is wholly metaphorical, and can settle no Debate precisely.]

Arguments for some Standard of Morals prior to a Sense considered.

Before we quit this Character *Reasonableness*, let us consider the Arguments brought to prove that there must be some Standard of moral Good antecedent to any Sense. Say they, “*Perceptions of Sense* are deceitful, we must have some Perception or Idea of *Virtue* more stable and certain; this must be *Conformity to Reason*: *Truth* discovered by our *Reason* is certain and invariable: *That* then alone is the Original Idea of *Virtue*, *Agreement with Reason.*” But in like manner our *Sight* and *Sense of Beauty* is deceitful, and does not always represent the true *Forms* of Objects. We must not call that *beautiful* or *regular*, which pleases the *Sight*, or an *internal Sense*; but *Beauty* in external Forms too, consists in *Conformity to Reason*. So our *Taste* may be vitiated: we must not say that *Savour* is perceived by *Taste*, but must place the original Idea of *grateful Savours* in *Conformity to Reason*, and of *ungrateful* in *Contrariety to Reason*. We may mistake the real *Extent* of Bodies, or their *Proportions*, by making a Conclusion upon the first sensible Appearance: Therefore *Ideas of Extension* are not originally acquired by a *Sense*, but consist in *Conformity to Reason*.

If what is intended in this *Conformity to Reason* be this, “That we should call no Action *virtuous*, unless we have some *Reason* to conclude it to be virtuous, or some *Truth* shewing it to be so.” This is very true; but then in like manner we should count no Action *vicious*, unless we have some *Reason* for counting it so, or when ’tis *Truth* “that it is vicious.” If this be intended by *Conformity to Truth*, then at the same rate we may make *Conformity to Truth* the original Idea of *Vice* as well as *Virtue*; nay, of every Attribute whatsoever. That *Taste* alone is *sweet*, which there is *Reason* to count *sweet*; that *Taste* alone is *bitter*, concerning which ’tis true that it is *bitter*; that *Form* alone is *beautiful*, concerning which ’tis true that it is *beautiful*; and that alone *deformed*, which is truly *deformed*. Thus *Virtue*, *Vice*, *Sweet*, *Bitter*, *Beautiful*, or *Deformed*, originally denote *Conformity to Reason*, antecedently to Perceptions of any *Sense*. The *Idea of Virtue* is particularly that concerning which ’tis *Truth*, that it is *Virtue*; or *Virtue* is *Virtue*; a wonderful Discovery!

So when some tell us, “that *Truth* is naturally pleasant, and more so than any *sensible Perception*; this must therefore engage Men more than any other Motive, if they attend to it.” Let them observe, that as much *Truth* is known about *Vice* as *Virtue*. We may demonstrate the publick *Miseries* which would ensue upon *Perjury*, *Murder*, and *Robbery*. These Demonstrations would be attended with that *Pleasure* which is peculiar to *Truth*; as well as the Demonstrations of the publick *Happiness* to ensue from *Faith*, *Humanity* and *Justice*. There is equal *Truth* on both sides.

Whence it is that Virtue is called reasonable and not Vice.

We may transiently observe what has occasioned the Use of the Word *reasonable*, as an Epithet of only *virtuous Actions*. Tho we have *Instincts* determining us to desire *Ends*, without supposing any previous *Reasoning*; yet ’tis by use of our *Reason* that we find out the Means of obtaining our *Ends*. When we do not use our Reason, we often are disappointed of our End. We therefore call those Actions which are *effectual* to their Ends, *reasonable* in one Sense of that Word.

Again, in all Men there is probably a *moral Sense*, making publickly useful Actions and kind Affections *grateful* to the Agent, and to every Observer: Most Men who have thought of human Actions, agree, that the *publickly useful* are in the whole also *privately useful* to the Agent, either in this Life or the next: We conclude, that all Men have the *same Affections and Senses*: We are convinced by our Reason, that ’tis by publickly useful Actions alone that we can promote *all our Ends*. Whoever then acts in a contrary manner, we presume is *mistaken*, *ignorant of*, or *inadvertent* to, these Truths which he might know; and say he acts *unreasonably*. Hence some have been led to imagine, some *Reasons* either exciting or justifying previously to all *Affections* or a *moral Sense*.

Objections from our judging even of our Affections and Senses themselves.

Two Arguments are brought in defense of this Epithet, as antecedent to any Sense, *viz.* “That we judge even of our *Affections* and *Senses* themselves, whether they are *morally Good* or *Evil*.”

The second Argument is, that “if all *moral Ideas* depend upon the *Constitution* of our *Sense*, then all *Constitutions* would have been alike reasonable and good to the DEITY, which is absurd.”

I. That we judge our Senses themselves.

As to the first Argument, 'tis plain we judge of our own *Affections*, or those of others by our *moral Sense*, by which we approve kind *Affections*, and disapprove the contrary. But none can apply *moral Attributes* to the very *Faculty* of perceiving *moral Qualities*; or call his *moral Sense* *morally Good or Evil*, any more than he calls the *Power of Tasting*, *sweet*, or *bitter*; or of *Seeing*, *strait* or *crooked*, *white* or *black*.

Answered.

Every one judges the *Affections* of others by his own *Sense*; so that it seems not impossible that in these *Senses* Men might differ as they do in *Taste*. A *Sense* approving *Benevolence* would disapprove that *Temper*, which a *Sense* approving *Malice* would delight in. The *former* would judge of the *latter* by his *own Sense*, so would the *latter* of the *former*. Each one would at first view think the *Sense* of the other perverted. But then, is there no difference? Are both *Senses* equally *good*? No certainly, any *Man* who observed them would think the *Sense* of the *former* more desirable than of the *latter*; but this is, because the *moral Sense* of every *Man* is constituted in the former manner. But were there any *Nature* with no *moral Sense* at all observing these two *Persons*, would he not think the *State* of the *former* preferable to that of the *latter*? Yes, he might: but not from any *Perception* of *moral Goodness* in the one *Sense* more than in the other. Any rational *Nature* observing two *Men* thus constituted, with *opposite Senses*, might by reasoning see, not *moral Goodness* in one *Sense* more than in the contrary, but a *Tendency to the Happiness of the Person himself*, who had the former *Sense* in the one *Constitution*, and a *contrary Tendency* in the opposite *Constitution*: nay, the *Persons* themselves might observe this; since the *former Sense* would make these *Actions* grateful to the *Agent* which were useful to others; who, if they had a like *Sense*, would *love* him, and return *good Offices*; whereas the *latter Sense* would make all such *Actions* as are *useful to others*, and apt to engage their *good Offices*, ungrateful to the *Agent*; and would lead him into *publicly hurtful Actions*, which would not only procure the *Hatred* of others, if they had a *contrary Sense*, but engage them out of their *Self-Love* to study his *Destruction*, tho' their *Senses* agreed. Thus any *Observer*, or the *Agent* himself with this *latter Sense*, might perceive that the *Pains* to be feared, as the *Consequence* of *malicious Actions*, did over-balance the *Pleasures* of this *Sense*; so that it would be to the *Agent's Interest* to counteract it. Thus one *Constitution* of the *moral Sense* might appear to be more *advantageous* to those who had it, than the contrary; as we may call that *Sense* of *Tasting* *healthful*, which made wholesom *Meat* pleasant; and we would call a *contrary Taste* *pernicious*. And yet we should no more call the *moral Sense* *morally good or evil*, than we call the *Sense* of *Tasting* *savoury* or *unsavoury*, *sweet* or *bitter*.

But must we not own, that we judge of all our *Senses* by our *Reason*, and often correct their *Reports* of the *Magnitude*, *Figure*, *Colour*, *Taste* of *Objects*, and pronounce them *right* or *wrong*, as they agree or disagree with *Reason*? This is true. But does it then follow, that *Extension*, *Figure*, *Colour*, *Taste*, are not *sensible Ideas*, but only denote *Reasonableness*, or *Agreement with Reason*? Or that these *Qualities* are perceivable antecedently to any *Sense*, by our *Power of finding out Truth*? Just so a *compassionate Temper* may rashly imagine the *Correction of a Child*, or the *Execution of a Criminal*, to be cruel and inhuman: but by *reasoning* may discover the *superior Good* arising from them in the whole; and then the same *moral Sense* may determine the *Observer* to approve them. But we must not hence conclude, that it is any *reasoning* antecedent to a *moral Sense*, which determines us to *approve* the *Study* of publick *Good*, any more than we can in the former *Case* conclude, that we perceive *Extension*, *Figure*, *Colour*, *Taste*, antecedently to a *Sense*. All these *Sensations* are often corrected by *Reasoning*, as well as our *Approbations* of *Actions* as *Good* or *Evil*:⁷ and yet no body ever placed the *Original Idea* of *Extension*, *Figure*, *Colour*, or *Taste*, in *Conformity to Reason*.

[TIS manifest we have in our *Understanding*, *moral Ideas*, or they are *Perceptions* of the *Soul*: we reason about them, we compare, we judge; but then we do all the same *Acts* about *Extension*, *Figure*, *Colour*, *Taste*, *Sound*, which *Perceptions* all *Men* call *Sensations*. All our *Ideas*, or the materials of our reasoning or judging, are received by some immediate *Powers* of *Perception* internal or external, which we may call *Senses*; by these too we have *Pleasure* and *Pain*. All *Perception* is by the *Soul*, not by the *Body*, tho' some *Impressions* on the bodily *Organs* are the *Occasions* of some of them; and in others the *Soul* is determined to other

sorts of *Feelings* or *Sensations*, where no bodily *Impression* is the immediate *Occasion*. A certain *incorporeal Form*, if one may use that *Name*, a *Temper* observed, a *Character*, an *Affection*, a *State* of a sensitive *Being*, known or understood, may raise *Liking*, *Approbation*, *Sympathy*, as naturally from the very *Constitution* of the *Soul*, as any bodily *Impression* raises external *Sensations*. Reasoning or *Intellect* seems to raise no new *Species* of *Ideas*, but to discover or discern the *Relations* of those received. Reason shews what *Acts* are conformable to a *Law*, a *Will* of a *Superior*; or what *Acts* tend to *Private Good*, or to *Publick Good*: In like manner, Reason discovers contrary *Tendencies* of contrary *Actions*. Both *Contraries* are alike the *Object* of the *Understanding*, and may give that sort of *Pleasure* which arises upon *Discovery* of *Truth*. A *Demonstration* that certain *Actions* are detrimental to *Society* is attended with the peculiar *Pleasure of new Knowledge*, as much as a like *Demonstration* of the *Benefit* of *Virtue*. But when we approve a kind beneficent *Action*, let us consider whether this *Feeling*, or *Action*, or *Modification* of the *Soul* more resembles an *Act of Contemplation*, such as this [when *strait Lines* intersect each other, the *vertical Angles* are equal:] or that *Liking* we have to a beautiful *Form*, an harmonious *Composition*, a grateful *Sound*.]

Thus tho' no *Man* can immediately either *approve* or *disapprove* as *morally good or evil* his own *moral Sense*, by which he approves only *Affections* and *Actions* consequent upon them; yet he may see whether it be *advantageous* to him in other respects, to have it constituted *one way* rather than another. One *Constitution* may make these *Actions* grateful to this *Sense* which tend to procure *other Pleasures* also. A *contrary Constitution* may be known to the very *Person* himself to be *disadvantageous*, as making these *Actions* immediately *grateful*, which shall occasion all *other sorts* of *Misery*. His *Self-Love* may excite him, tho' with *Dissatisfaction*, to counteract this *Sense*, in order to avoid a greater *Evil*. Mr. *Hobbes* seems to have had no better *Notions* of the *natural State* of *Mankind*. An *Observer*, who was *benevolent*, would desire that all had the former sort of *Sense*; a *malicious Observer*, if he feared no *Evil* to himself, from the *Actions* of the *Persons* observed, would desire the *latter Constitution*. If this *Observer* had a *moral Sense*, he would think that *Constitution* which was contrary to his own, *strange* and *surprising*, or *unnatural*. If the *Observer* had no *Affections* toward others, and were disjoined from *Mankind*, so as to have neither *Hopes* nor *Fears* from their *Actions*, he would be indifferent about their *Constitutions*, and have no *Desire* or *Preference* of one above another; tho' he might see which were *advantageous* to them, and which *pernicious*.

The 2d Objection, that all *Constitutions* would have been alike reasonable, answered.

As to the second Argument, What means [*alike reasonable or good to the DEITY?*] Does it mean, "that the *DEITY* could have had no *Reasons* exciting him to make one *Constitution* rather than another?" 'Tis plain, if the *DEITY* had nothing *essential* to his *Nature*, corresponding [resembling or analogous] to our *sweetest* and *most kind Affections*, we can scarce suppose he could have any *Reason* exciting him to any thing he has done: but grant such a *Disposition* in the *DEITY*, and then the manifest *Tendency of the present Constitution to the Happiness of his Creatures* was an exciting *Reason* for chusing it before the contrary.⁸ Each sort of *Constitu-*

⁸ [A late Author on the *Foundation of Moral Goodness*, &c. p. 9. thus argues: "If such a *Disposition* is in the *Deity*, is it a *Perfection*, or is it not? is it better than the contrary, more worthy of his *Nature*, more agreeable to his other *Perfections*? If not, let us not ascribe it to him: If it be, then for what *Reason*, *Account*, or *Ground* is it better? That *Reason*, *Account*, or *Ground*, must be the *Foundation* of moral *Goodness*. If there be no *Reason* why it is better, then *God* is acted by a blind unaccountable *Impulse*." In Answer, one may first ask the precise *Meaning* of these vague Words, *Perfection*, *Betterness*, *Worthiness*, *Agreement*. If these Terms denote "whatever makes the *Being* possessed of them *happier*, than he would be without them;" then, 1. It is plain, kind *Dispositions* are *Perfections to Men* in our present *Frame*; are better for us than the contrary, and agree better with our other *Powers*; i. e. they tend to preserve them, and procure us many *Enjoyments*. 2. Our apprehending such *Dispositions* in *God*, according to our *Frame* makes us *esteem* and *love* him. 3. Our *Knowledge* of *God* is so imperfect, that it is not easy to prove that such *Dispositions* tend to make or preserve him *happy*, or to procure him other *Enjoyments*. And yet, 4. We may have good *Reason*, *Ground*, or *Evidence*, from his *Works* and *Administration* to believe him *Benevolent*. 5. If he has real *Good-will* to his *Creatures*, their *Perfection* or *Happiness* is to him an ultimate *End*, intended without farther *View* or *Reason*: And yet, 6. He is not acted by a blind *Impulse*: the ultimate *End* is known to him, and the best *Means* chosen; which never happen in what we call blind *Impulses*; unless one calls willing any ultimate *End* a blind *Impulse*. For thus each *Man* should desire his own *Happiness* by a blind *Impulse*: And *God's* willing to regard the *Fitness of Things*, must be a blind *Impulse*, unless he have a prior *Reason* why he wills what his *Understanding* represents as fit, rather than what is unfit; for his *Understanding* represents both. And there must be a prior *Fitness* or *Reasonable-*

⁷ See Sect 4. of this Treatise.

tion might have given Men an equal *immediate Pleasure* in present *Self-Approbation* for any sort of Action; but the Actions approved by the *present Sense*, procure all *Pleasures* of the *other Senses*; and the Actions which would have been approved by a *contrary moral Sense*, would have been productive of all *Torments of the other Senses*.

If it be meant, that “*upon this Supposition, that all our Approbation presupposes in us a moral Sense, the DEITY could not have approved one Constitution more than another*.” where is the Consequence? Why may not the Deity have something of a superior Kind, analogous to our *moral Sense*, essential to him? How does any Constitution of the *Senses of Men* hinder the DEITY to reflect and judge of his own Actions? How does it affect the divine Apprehension, which way soever *moral Ideas* arise with Men?

If it means “*that we cannot approve of one Constitution more than another, or approve the DEITY for making the present Constitution*.” This Consequence is also false. The *present Constitution* of our *moral Sense* determines us to approve all *kind Affections*: This Constitution the DEITY must have foreseen as *tending* to the *Happiness* of his Creatures; it does therefore evidence *kind Affection* or *Benevolence* in the DEITY, this therefore we must *approve*.

The meaning of antecedent Reasonableness.

We have got some strange Phrases, “*that some things are antecedently reasonable in the Nature of the thing*,” which some insist upon: “That otherwise, say they, if before Man was created, any Nature *without a moral Sense* had existed, this Nature would not have approved as morally good in the Deity, his constituting our Sense as it is at present.” Very true; and what next? If there had been no *moral Sense* in that Nature, there would have been no *Perception of Morality*. But “could not such Natures have seen something *reasonable* in one Constitution more than in another?” They might no doubt have *reasoned* about the various *Constitutions*, and foreseen that the *present one* would tend to the *Happiness* of Mankind, and would evidence *Benevolence* in the DEITY: So also they might have *reasoned* about the *contrary Constitution*, that it would make Men miserable, and evidence *Malice* in the Deity. They would have *reasoned* about *both*, and found out *Truths*: are both Constitutions alike *reasonable* to these Observers? No, say they, “the *benevolent* one is *reasonable*, and the *malicious unreasonable*.” And yet these Observers *reasoned* and *discovered Truths* about both: An Action then is called by us *reasonable* when ’tis *benevolent*, and *unreasonable* when *malicious*. This is plainly making the Word *reasonable* denote whatever is *approved* by our moral Sense, without Relation to *true Propositions*. We often use that Word in such a confused Manner: But these *antecedent Natures*, supposed without a *moral Sense*, would not have *approved* one Constitution of the DEITY as *morally* better than another.

Had it been left to the Choice of these *antecedent Minds*, what *manner of Sense* they would have desired for Mankind; would they have seen no *difference*? Yes they would, according to their *Affections* which are presupposed in all *Election*. If they were *benevolent*, as we suppose the DEITY, the *Tendency of the present Sense to the Happiness of Men* would have excited their Choice. Had they been *malicious*, as we suppose the Devil, the *contrary Tendency of the contrary Sense* would have excited their *Election* of it. But is there nothing *preferable*, or *eligible* antecedently to all *Affections* too? No certainly, unless there can be *Desire* without *Affections*, or *superior Desire*, i. e. *Election* antecedently to all *Desire*.

Reasons for Election different from those for Approbation.

Some do farther perplex this Subject, by asserting, that “the same *Reasons* determining *Approbation*, ought also to excite to *Election*.” Here, 1. We often see *justifying Reasons* where we can have no *Election*; viz. when we observe the *Actions of others*, which were even prior to our *Existence*. 2. The Quality moving us to *Election* very often cannot excite *Approbation*; viz. *private usefulness*, not publicly pernicious. This both does and *ought* to move *Election*, and yet I believe few will say, “they *approve* as virtuous the *eating a Bunch of Grapes*, taking a *Glass of Wine*,

ness that he should *will* what is *fit*, and a *yet prior Fitness* that he should *regard* the *Fitness* of *willing* what is *fit*, and so on.

If in these Questions is meant, not by what Argument do we prove that the Deity is benevolent? but, “what is the efficient Cause of that Disposition in God?” Those Gentlemen must answer for us, who tell us also of the *Reason* or *Ground of the Divine Existence*; and that not as a Proof that he does exist, or the *Causa Cognoscendi*, as the Schoolmen speak; but the *Causa Essendi* of that Being which they acknowledge uncased. See Dr. Sam. Clarke’s Boyle’s Lectures.]

or *sitting down* when one is tired.” *Approbation* is not what we can *voluntarily* bring upon our selves. When we are contemplating Actions, we do not *chuse* to approve, because *Approbation* is pleasant; otherwise we would always approve, and never condemn any Action; because this is some way uneasy. *Approbation* is plainly a *Perception* arising without previous *Volition*, or Choice of it, because of any *concomitant Pleasure*. The Occasion of it is the *Perception of benevolent Affections* in our selves, or the discovering the like in others, even when we are incapable of any *Action or Election*. The *Reasons* determining *Approbation* are such as shew that an Action evidenced *kind Affections*, and that in *others*, as often as in *our selves*. Whereas, the *Reasons* moving to *Election* are such as shew the *Tendency of an Action to gratify some Affection* in the Agent.

The *Prospect* of the Pleasure of *Self-Approbation*, is indeed often a Motive to *chuse* one Action rather than another; but this supposes the *moral Sense*, or Determination to *approve*, prior to the *Election*. Were *Approbation* *voluntarily* chosen, from the Prospect of its concomitant Pleasure, then there could be no *Condemnation* of our own Actions, for that is unpleasant.

As to that confused Word [ought] ’tis needless to apply to it again all that was said about *Obligation*.

Section II: Concerning that Character of *Virtue* and *Vice*, The *Fitness* or *Unfitness* of *Actions*.

The Fitness and Unfitness in Morals.

We come next to examine some other Explications of Morality, which have been much insisted on of late.⁹ We are told, “that there are *eternal and immutable Differences* of Things, absolutely and antecedently; that there are also *eternal and unalterable Relations* in the Natures of the Things themselves, from which arise *Agreements* and *Disagreements*, *Congruities* and *Incongruities*, *Fitness* and *Unfitness* of the *Application of Circumstances*, to the *Qualifications of Persons*; that Actions *agreeable* to these *Relations* are *morally Good*, and that the *contrary* Actions are *morally Evil*.” These Expressions are sometimes made of the same Import with those more common ones: “*acting agreeably to the eternal Reason and Truth of Things*.” ’Tis asserted, that “God who knows all these *Relations*, &c. does guide his Actions by them, since he has no wrong Affection” (the Word [wrong] should have been first explained): “And that in like manner these *Relations*, &c. *ought*” (another unlucky Word in Morals) “to determine the *Choice* of all Rationals, abstractly from any *Views of Interest*. If they do not, these Creatures are insolently *counteracting their Creator*, and as far as they can, *making things to be what they are not*, which is the greatest Impiety.”

That Things are now *different* is certain. That *Ideas*, to which there is no *Object* yet existing conformable, are also *different*, is certain. That upon comparing two *Ideas* there arises a *relative Idea*, generally when the two *Ideas* compared have in them any *Modes of the same simple Idea*, is also obvious. Thus every *extended Being* may be compared to any other of the same *Kinds of Dimensions*; and *relative Ideas* be formed of *greater, less, equal, double, triple, subduple*, &c. with infinite variety. This may let us see that *Relations* are not *real Qualities* inherent in external Natures, but only *Ideas* necessarily accompanying our *Perception* of two Objects at once, and comparing them. *Relative Ideas* do continue, when the external Objects do not exist, provided we retain the *two Ideas*. But what the *eternal Relations* in the Natures of Things do mean, is not so easy perhaps to be conceived.

Three sorts of Relations considered.

To shew particularly how far *Morality* can be concerned in *Relations*, we may consider them under these Three Classes. 1. The *Relations of inanimate Objects*, as to their *Quantity*, or *active* and *passive Powers*, as explained by Mr. Locke.” 2. The *Relations of inanimate Objects to rational Agents*, as to their *active* or *passive Powers*. 3. The *Relations of rational Agents among themselves*, founded on their *Powers* or *Actions* past or continued. Now let us examine what *Fitnesses* or *Unfitnesses* arise from any of these *sorts of Relations*, in which the *Morality* of Actions may consist; and whether we can place *Morality* in them, without presupposing a *moral Sense*. ’Tis plain, that ingenious Author says nothing against the Supposition of a *moral Sense*: But many

⁹ See Dr. Samuel Clarke’s Boyle’s Lectures; and many late Authors.

do imagine, that his Account of moral Ideas is independent upon a moral Sense, and therefore are less willing to allow that we have such an immediate Perception, or Sense of Virtue and Vice. What follows is not intended to oppose his Scheme, but rather to suggest what seems a necessary Explication of it; by shewing that it is no otherwise intelligible, but upon Supposition of a *moral Sense*.

None of them explain Morality without a Sense.

1. Relations of *inanimate Objects* being known, puts it in the Power of a rational Agent often to *diversify* them, to *change their Forms, Motions, or Qualities* of any kind, at his pleasure: but no body apprehends any *Virtue or Vice* in such Actions, where no *Relation* is apprehended to a *rational Agent's* [a *rational or sensitive Being's*] *Happiness or Misery*; otherwise we should have got into the Class of Virtues all the practical *Mathematicks*, and the Operations of *Chymistry*.

2. As to the *Relations of inanimate Objects to rational Agents*, the Knowledge of them equally puts it in one's Power to *destroy Mankind*, as to preserve them. Without presupposing *Affections*, this Knowledge will not excite to one Action rather than another; nor without a *moral Sense* will it make us approve any Action more than its contrary. The Relation of *Corn* to human Bodies being known to a Person of *kind Affections*, was perhaps the *exciting Reason* of teaching Mankind *Husbandry*: But the Knowledge of the *Relations of Arsenick* would excite a *malicious Nature*, just in the same manner, to the greatest Mischief. A *Sword*, an *Halter*, a *Musket*, bear the *same Relation* to the Body of an *Hero*, which they do to a *Robber*. The killing of either is equally agreeable to these *Relations*, but not equally *good* in a *moral Sense*. The Knowledge of *these Relations* neither excites to Actions, nor justifies them, without presupposing either *Affections* or a *moral Sense*. *Kind Affections* with such Knowledge makes *Heroes; malicious Affections, Villains*.

3. The last sort of *Relations* is that among *rational Agents*, founded on their *Actions or Affections*; whence one is called *Creator*, another *Creature*; one *Benefactor*, the other *Beneficiary* (if that Word may be used in this general Sense;) the one *Parent*, the other *Child*; the one *Governor*, the other *Subject*, &c. Now let us see what *Fitnesses* or *Unfitnesses* arise from these Relations.

There is certainly, independently of *Fancy* or *Custom*, a *natural Tendency* in some Actions to give *Pleasure*, either to the Agent or to others; and a *contrary Tendency* in other Actions to give *Pain*, either to the Agent or others: This sort of *Relation* of Actions to the *Agents or Objects* is indisputable. If we call these Relations *Fitnesses*, then the most contrary Actions have *equal Fitnesses* for contrary Ends; and each one is *unfit* for the End of the *other*. Thus *Compassion* is *fit* to make *others happy*, and *unfit* to make others *miserable*. *Violation of Property* is *fit* to make Men *miserable*, and *unfit* to make them happy. Each of these is both *fit* and *unfit*, with respect to different Ends. The bare *Fitness then to an End*, is not the Idea of moral Goodness.

Perhaps the *virtuous Fitness* is that of *Ends*. The Fitness of a *subordinate End* to the ultimate, cannot constitute the Action *good*, unless the *ultimate End* be good. To *keep a Conspiracy secret* is not a good *End*, tho it be fit for obtaining a farther *End*, the *Success of the Conspiracy*. The *moral Fitness* must be that of the *ultimate End* itself: The *publick Good* alone is a *fit End*, therefore the *Means* fit for this *End* alone are good.

What means the *Fitness of an ultimate End*? For what is it fit? Why, 'tis an *ultimate End*, not fit for any thing farther, but *absolutely fit*. What means that Word *fit*? If it notes a *simple Idea* it must be the *Perception of some Sense*: thus we must recur, upon this Scheme too, to a *moral Sense*.¹⁰

Agreement with Relations presupposes also a moral Sense.

If Fitness be not a *simple Idea*, let it be defined. Some tell us, that it is "an *Agreement* of an *Affection, Desire, Action, or End*, to the *Relations of Agents*." But what means *Agreement*? Which

of these four Meanings has it? 1. We say one *Quantity* agrees with another of equal *Dimensions* every way. 2. A *Corollary* agrees with a *Theorem*; when our knowing the latter to be Truth, leads us to know that the former is also a *true Proposition*. 3. *Meat* agrees with that *Body* which it tends to *preserve*. 4. *Meat* agrees with the *Taste* of that Being in whom it raises a *pleasant Perception*. If any one of these are the Meanings of *Agreement* in the Definition, then one of these is the Idea of *Fitness*. 1. That an Action or Affection is of the same *Bulk* and *Figure* with the *Relation*. Or, 2. When the *Relation* is a *true Proposition*, so is the *Action or Affection*. Or, 3. The *Action or Affection* tends to *preserve* the *Relation*; and *contrary Actions* would destroy it: So that, for instance, GOD would be no longer related to us as *Creator* and *Benefactor*, when we disobeyed him. Or, 4. The Action raises *pleasant Perceptions* in the *Relation*. All these Expressions seem absurd.¹¹

These Gentlemen probably have some other Meanings to these Words *Fitness* or *Agreement*. I hope what is said will shew the need for *Explication* of them, tho they be so common. There is one Meaning perhaps intended, however it be obscurely expressed, That "certain *Affections* or *Actions* of an Agent, standing in a *certain Relation* to other Agents, is *approved* by every *Observer*, or raises in him a *grateful Perception*, or moves the Observer to *love* the Agent." This Meaning is the same with the Notion of pleasing a *moral Sense*.

Whoever explains *Virtue* or *Vice* by *Justice* or *Injustice, Right* or *Wrong*, uses only more ambiguous Words, which will equally lead to acknowledge a *moral Sense*.

[...]

¹⁰ [A late Author who pleads that *Wisdom* is chiefly employed in choosing the ultimate Ends themselves, and that *Fitness* is a proper Attribute of *ultimate Ends*, in answer to this short Question, "What are they fit for?" answers, "they are fit to be approved by all rational Agents." Now his meaning of the word [*Approved*] is this, *discerned to be fit*. His Answer then is "they are fit to be perceived fit." When Words are used at this rate one must lose his Labour in Replies to such Remarkers. See a Paper called *Wisdom the sole Spring of Action in the Deity*.]

¹¹ [Several Gentlemen who have published Remarks or Answers to this Scheme, continue to use these words *Agreement, Conformity, Congruity*, without complying with this just Request of explaining or fixing precisely the meaning of these words, which are manifestly ambiguous.]