

## AN INQUIRY, &c.

### 1.1.1.

*Occasion  
of this  
INQUIRY.*

RELIGION and VIRTUE appear in many respects so nearly related, that they are generally presum'd inseparable Companions. And so willing we are to believe well of their *Union*, that we hardly allow it just to speak, or even think of 'em apart. It may however be question'd, whether the Practice of the World, in this respect, be answerable to our Speculation. 'Tis certain that we sometimes meet with Instances which seem to make against this general Supposition. We have known People, who having the Appearance of great Zeal in *Religion*, have yet wanted even the common Affections of *Humanity*, and shewn themselves extremely degenerate and corrupt. Others, again, who have paid little regard to Religion, and been consider'd as mere Atheists, have yet been observ'd to practice the Rules of *Morality*, and act in many Cases with such good Meaning and Affection towards Mankind, as might seem to force an Acknowledgment of their being *virtuous*. And, in general, we find mere moral Principles of such weight, that in our dealings with Men, we are seldom satisfy'd by the fullest Assurance given us of their Zeal in Religion, till we hear something further of their Character. If we are told, a Man is religious; we still ask, "What are his Morals?" But if we hear at first that he has honest moral Principles, and is a Man of natural Justice and good Temper, we seldom think of the other Question, "Whether he be *religious* and *devout*?"

This has given occasion to enquire, "What *Honesty* or *Virtue* is, consider'd by it-self; and in what manner it is influenc'd by Religion: How far *Religion* necessarily implies *Virtue*, and whether it be a true Saying, *That it is impossible for an Atheist to be virtuous, or share any real degree of Honesty, or Merit.*"

And here it cannot justly be wonder'd at, if the *Method* of explaining Things shou'd appear somewhat unusual; since the *Subject-Matter* has been so little examin'd, and is of so nice and dangerous Speculation. For so much is the religious part of Mankind alarm'd by the Freedom of some late Pens; and so great a Jealousy is rais'd every-where on this Account; that whatever an Author may suggest in favour of *Religion*, he will gain little Credit in the Cause, if he allows the least Advantage to any other Principle. On the other side, the Men of Wit and Raillery, whose pleasantest Entertainment is in the exposing the weak sides of Religion, are so desperately afraid of being drawn into any serious Thoughts of it, that they look upon a Man as guilty of foul Play, who assumes the air of a *Free Writer*, and at the same time preserves any regard for the Principles of Natural Religion. They are apt to give as little quarter as they receive: And are resolv'd to think as ill of the Morals of their Antagonists, as their Antagonists can possibly think of theirs. Neither of 'em, it seems, will allow the least Advantage to the other. 'Tis as hard to persuade one sort, that there is any *Virtue* in Religion, as the other, that there is any *Virtue* out of the Verge of their particular Community. So that, between both, an Author must pass his time ill, who dares plead for *Religion* and *Moral Virtue*, without lessening the force of either; but allowing to each its proper

Province, and due Rank, wou'd hinder their being made Enemies by Detraction.

However it be: If we wou'd pretend to give the least new light, or explain any thing effectually, within the intended Compass of this *Inquiry*; 'tis necessary to take Things pretty deep; and endeavour, by some short Scheme, to represent the Original of each Opinion, whether natural or unnatural, relating to the Deity. And if we can happily get clear of this thorny part of our Philosophy; the rest, 'tis hop'd, may prove more plain and easy.

### 1.1.2.

IN the Whole of Things (or in the Universe) either all is according to a good Order, and the most agreeable to a general Interest: or there is that which is otherwise, and might possibly have been better constituted, more wisely contriv'd, and with more advantage to the general Interest of Beings, or of the Whole.

If every thing which exists be according to a good Order, and *for the best*, then of necessity there is no such thing as real ILL in the Universe, nothing ILL with respect to the Whole.

Whatsoever, then, is so as that it cou'd not really have *been* better, or any way *better order'd*, is perfectly *good*. Whatsoever in the Order of the World can be call'd ILL, must imply a possibility in the nature of the thing to have been better contriv'd, or order'd. For if it cou'd not; it is perfect, and as it shou'd be.

Whatsoever is *really* ILL, therefore, must be caus'd or produc'd, either by *Design*, (that is to say, with Knowledge and Intelligence) or, in defect of this, by Hazard, and mere *Chance*.

If there be any thing ILL in the Universe from *Design*, then that which disposes all things, is no one good designing Principle. For either the *one* designing Principle is it-self corrupt; or there is some *other* in being which operates contrarily, and is ILL.

If there be any ILL in the Universe from mere *Chance*, then a designing Principle or Mind, whether Good or Bad, cannot be the Cause of *all* things. And consequently, if there be suppos'd a designing Principle, who is the Cause only of Good, but cannot prevent the Ill which happens from Chance, or from a contrary ill Design; then there can be suppos'd in reality no such thing as a superior good Design or Mind, other than what is impotent and defective: For not to correct, or totally exclude that Ill of Chance, or of a contrary ill Design, must proceed either from *Impotency*, or *Ill-Will*.

Whatsoever is superior in any degree over the World, or rules in Nature with Discernment and a Mind, is what, by universal Agreement, Men call God. If there are several such superior Minds, they are so many *Gods*: But if that single, or those several Superiors are not in their nature necessarily good, they rather take the name of Daemon.

To believe therefore that every thing is govern'd, order'd, or regulated *for the best*, by a designing Principle, or Mind, necessarily good and permanent, is to be a perfect Theist.

To believe nothing of a designing Principle or Mind, nor any

*State of  
Opinions.*

Cause, Measure, or Rule of Things, but *Chance*, so that in Nature neither the Interest of *the Whole*, nor of any *Particulars*, can be said to be in the least design'd, pursu'd, or aim'd at; is to be a perfect Atheist.

To believe no *one* supreme designing Principle or Mind, but rather *two*, three, or more, (tho in their nature *good*) is to be a Polytheist.

To believe the governing Mind, or Minds, not absolutely and necessarily good, nor confin'd to what is best, but capable of acting according to mere Will or Fancy; is to be a Daemonist.

There are few who think always consistently, or according to one certain Hypothesis, upon any Subject so abstruse and intricate as the *Cause of all Things*, and the *OEconomy or Government of the Universe*. For 'tis evident in the Case of the most devout People, even by their own Confession, that there are Times when their Faith hardly can support 'em in the Belief of a supreme Wisdom; and that they are often tempted to judg disadvantageously of a Providence, and just Administration in the Whole.

That alone, therefore, is to be call'd a Man's Opinion, which is of any other the most habitual to him, and occurs upon most occasions. So that 'tis hard to pronounce certainly of any Man, that *he is an Atheist*, because unless his whole Thoughts are at all Seasons, and on all Occasions, steddily bent against all Supposition or Imagination of *Design in Things*, he is no *perfect* Atheist. In the same manner, if a Man's Thoughts are not at all times steddy and resolute against all Imagination of *Chance, Fortune, or ill Design* in Things, he is no *perfect* Theist. But if anyone believes more of Chance and Confusion than of Design; he is to be esteem'd more *an Atheist* than *a Theist*, from that which most predominates, or has the ascendent. And in case he believes more of the Prevalency of an ill-designing Principle, than of a good one, he is rather a Daemonist; and may be justly so call'd, from the Side to which the Balance of his Judgment most inclines.

All these sorts both of *Daemonism, Polytheism, Atheism, and Theism*, may be mix'd. Religion excludes only *perfect Atheism*. Perfect *Daemonists* undoubtedly there are in Religion; because we know whole Nations who worship a *Devil* or *Fiend*, to whom they sacrifice and offer Prayers and Supplications, in reality on no other account than because they *fear* him. And we know very well that, in some Religions, there are those who expresly give no other Idea of God, than of a Being arbitrary, violent, causing Ill, and ordaining to Misery; which in effect is the same as to substitute a Daemon, or *Devil*, in his room.

Now since there are these several Opinions concerning a *superior Power*, and since there may be found perhaps some Persons, who have no form'd Opinion at all upon this Subject; either thro' *Scepticism*, Negligence of Thought, or Confusion of Judgment: the Consideration is, how any of these Opinions, or this want of any certain Opinion, may possibly consist with Virtue and Merit; or be compatible with an *honest* or *moral* Character.

### 1.2.1.

WHEN we reflect on any ordinary Frame or Constitution either of Art or Nature; and consider how hard it is to give the least account of a particular *Part*, without a competent Knowledge of *the Whole*: we need not wonder to find our-selves at a loss in many things relating to the Constitution and Frame of *Nature* her-self. For to what End in Nature many things, even whole Species of Creatures, refer; or to what purpose they serve; will be hard for any-one justly to determine: But to what End the many Proportions and various Shapes of Parts in many Creatures actually serve; we are able, by the help of Study and Observation, to demonstrate, with great exactness.

We know that every Creature has a private Good and Interest of his own; which Nature has compel'd him to seek, by all the Advantages afforded him, within the compass of his Make. We know that there is in reality a right and a wrong State of every Creature; and that his right-one is by Nature forwarded, and by himself affectionately sought. There being therefore in every Creature a certain *Interest or Good*; there must be also a certain End, to which every thing in his Constitution must *naturally* refer. To this End, if any thing, either in his Appetites, Passions, or Affections, be not conducing, but the contrary; we must of necessity own it *ill* to him. And in this manner he is *ill, with respect to himself*; as he certainly is, *with respect to others of his kind*, when any such Appetites or Passions make him any-way injurious to them. Now, if by the natural Constitution of any rational Creature, the same Irregularity of Appetite which make him ill to *Others*, make him ill also to *Himself*; and if the same Regularity of Affections, which causes him to be good in *one* sense, causes him to be good also in the *other*; then is that Goodness by which he is thus useful to others, a real Good and Advantage to himself. And thus *Virtue* and *Interest* may be found at last to agree.

Of this we shall consider particularly in the latter part of our *Inquiry*. Our first Design is, to see if we can clearly determine what that Quality is to which we give the Name of *Goodness*, or *Virtue*.

Shou'd a Historian or Traveller describe to us a certain Creature of a more solitary Disposition than ever was yet heard of; one who had neither Mate nor Fellow of any kind; nothing of his own Likeness, towards which he stood well-affected or inclin'd; nor any thing without, or beyond himself, for which he had the least Passion or Concern: we might be apt to say perhaps, without much hesitation, "That this was doubtless a very melancholy Creature, and that in this unsociable and sullen State he was like to have a very disconsolate kind of Life." But if we were assur'd, that notwithstanding all Appearances, the Creature enjoy'd himself extremely, had a great relish of Life, and was in nothing wanting to his own Good; we might acknowledg perhaps, "That the Creature was no *Monster*, nor absurdly constituted *as to himself*." But we shou'd hardly, after all, be induc'd to say of him, "That he was a *good Creature*." However, shou'd it be urg'd against us, "That such as he was, the Creature was still *perfect in himself*, and therefore to be esteem'd

A  
Constitution.

Whole and  
Parts.

Interest or  
End in  
Creatures.

Interest of  
the Species.

Goodness.

Private  
Good.

Private  
SYSTEM.

good: *For what had he to do with others?* In this sense, indeed, we might be forc'd to acknowledg, "That he was a *good Creature*; if he cou'd be understood to be absolute and compleat in himself; without any real relation to any thing in the Universe besides." For shou'd there be any where in Nature a *System, System of the Species*. of which this living Creature was to be consider'd as a *Part*; then cou'd he no-wise be allow'd *good*; whilst he plainly appear'd to be such a *Part*, as made rather to the harm than good of that System or *Whole* in which he was included.

If therefore in the Structure of this or any other Animal, there be any thing which points beyond himself, and by which he is plainly discover'd to have relation to some other Being or Nature besides his own; then will this Animal undoubtedly be esteem'd a *Part* of some other System. For instance, if an Animal has the Proportions of a Male, it shews he has relation to a Female. And the respective Proportions both of the Male and Female will be allow'd, doubtless, to have a joint-relation to another Existence and Order of things beyond themselves. So that the Creatures are both of 'em to be consider'd as Parts of *another System*: which is that of a particular Race or Species of living Creatures, who have some one *common Nature*, or are provided for, by some one *Order* or *Constitution* of things subsisting together, and co-operating towards their Conservation, and Support.

In the same manner, if a whole Species of Animals contribute to the Existence or Well-being of some other; then is that whole Species, in general, a *Part* only of some other System.

For instance; To the Existence of the Spider, that of the Fly is absolutely necessary. The heedless Flight, weak Frame, and tender Body of this latter Insect, fit and determine him as much a *Prey*, as the rough Make, Watchfulness, and Cunning of the former, fit him for Rapine, and the ensnaring part. The Web and Wing are suted to each other. And in the Structure of each of these Animals, there is as apparent and perfect a relation to the other, as in our own Bodys there is a relation of Limbs and Organs; or, as in the Branches or Leaves of a Tree, we see a relation of each to the other, and all, in common, to *one* Root and Trunk.

In the same manner are Flies also necessary to the Existence of other Creatures, both Fowls and Fish. And thus are other Species or Kinds subservient to one another; as being *Parts* of a *certain System*, and included in one and the same *Order* of Beings.

So that there is a System of all Animals; an *Animal-Order* or *OEconomy*, according to which the animal Affairs are regulated and dispos'd.

Now, if the whole System of Animals, together with that of Vegetables, and all other things in this inferior World, be properly comprehended in *one System* of a Globe or Earth: And if, again, this *Globe* or *Earth* it-self appears to have a real Dependence on something still beyond; as, for example, either on its Sun, the Galaxy, or its Fellow-Planets; then is it in reality a Part only of some other System. And if it be allow'd, that there is in like manner a System of *all Things, and a Universal Nature*,

*Animal System.*

*System of the Earth.*

*Planetary System.*

*Universal System.*

there can be no particular Being or System which is not either good or ill in that *general one* of the *Universe*: For if it be insignificant and of no use, it is a Fault or Imperfection, and consequently ill in the general System.

Therefore if any Being be *wholly* and *really* Ill, it must be ill with respect to the Universal System; and then the System of the Universe is ill, or imperfect. But if the Ill of one private System be the Good of others; if it makes still to the Good of the general System, (as when one Creature lives by the Destruction of another; one thing is generated from the Corruption of another; or one planetary System or *Vortex* may swallow up another) then is the Ill of that private System no real Ill in it-self; any more than the pain of breeding Teeth is ill, in a System or Body which is so constituted, that without this occasion of Pain, it wou'd suffer worse, by being defective.

So that we cannot say of any Being, that it is *wholly* and *absolutely ill*, unless we can positively shew and ascertain, that *what* we call Ill is no where Good besides, in any other System, or with respect to any other Order or OEconomy whatsoever.

But were there in the World any intire Species of Animals destructive to every other, it may be justly call'd an *ill* Species; as being ill in the *Animal-System*. And if in any Species of Animals (as in *Men*, for example) one Man is of a nature pernicious to the rest, he is in this respect justly styl'd an *ill Man*.

We do not however say of any-one, that he is an *ill Man* because he has the Plague-Spots upon him, or because he has convulsive Fits which make him strike and wound such as approach him. Nor do we say on the other side, that he is a *good Man*, when having his Hands ty'd up, he is hinder'd from doing the Mischief he designs; or (which is in a manner the same) when he abstains from executing his ill purpose, thro' a fear of some impending Punishment, or thro' the allurements of some exterior Reward.

So that in a sensible Creature, that which is not done thro' any Affection at all, makes neither Good nor Ill in the nature of that Creature; who then only is suppos'd *Good*, when the Good or Ill of the System to which he has relation, is the immediate Object of some Passion or Affection moving him.

Since it is therefore by Affection merely that a Creature is esteem'd good or ill, *natural* or *unnatural*; our business will be, to examine which are the *good* and *natural*, and which the *ill* and *unnatural* Affections.

### 1.2.2.

IN the first place then, it may be observ'd, that if there be an Affection towards any Subject consider'd as private Good, which is not really such, but imaginary; this Affection, as being superfluous, and detracting from the Force of other requisite and good Affections, is in it-self vitious and ill, even in respect of the private Interest or Happiness of the Creature.

If there can possibly be suppos'd in a Creature such an Affection towards Self-Good, as is actually, in its natural degree, conducing to his private Interest, and at the same time inconsistent

*Absolute  
ILL.*

*Relative  
ILL.*

*Good and ill  
Man.*

*Goodness  
thro'  
Affection.*

*Private or  
Self-Affection.*



with the publick Good; this may indeed be call'd still a vitious Affection: And on this Supposition a Creature cannot really be good and natural in respect of his Society or Publick, without being ill and unnatural toward himself. But if the Affection be then only injurious to the Society, when it is immoderate, and not so when it is moderate, duly temper'd, and allay'd; then is *the immoderate* degree of the Affection truly vitious, but not *the moderate*. And thus, if there be found in any Creature a more than ordinary Self-concernment, or Regard to private Good, which is inconsistent with the Interest of the Species or Publick; this must in every respect be esteem'd an ill and vitious Affection. And this is what we commonly call SELFISHNESS, and disapprove so much, in whatever Creature we happen to discover it.

On the other side, if the Affection towards private or Self-good, however *selfish* it may be esteem'd, is in reality not only consistent with publick Good, but in some measure contributing to it; if it be such, perhaps, as for the good of the Species in general, every Individual ought to share; 'tis so far from being ill, or blameable in any sense, that it must be acknowledg'd absolutely necessary to constitute a Creature *Good*. For if the want of such an Affection as that towards Self-preservation, be injurious to the Species; a Creature is ill and unnatural as well thro' this Defect, as thro' the want of any other natural Affection. And this no-one wou'd doubt to pronounce, if he saw a Man who minded not any Precipices which lay in his way, nor made any distinction of Food, Diet, Clothing, or whatever else related to his Health and Being. The same wou'd be aver'd of one who had a Disposition which render'd him averse to any Commerce with Womankind, and of consequence unfitted him thro' *Illness of Temper* (and not merely thro' a Defect of Constitution) for the propagation of his Species or Kind.

Thus the Affection towards Self-good, may be a good Affection, or an ill-one. For if this private Affection be too strong, (as when the *excessive Love of Life* unfits a Creature for any generous Act) then is it undoubtedly vitious; and if vitious, the Creature who is mov'd by it, is vitiously mov'd, and can never be otherwise than vitious in some degree, when mov'd by that Affection. Therefore if thro' such an earnest and passionate *Love of Life*, a Creature be accidentally induc'd to do Good, (as he might be upon the same terms induc'd to do Ill) he is no more a good Creature for this Good he executes, than a Man is the more an honest or good Man either for pleading a just Cause, or fighting in a good one, for the sake merely of his Fee or Stipend.

Whatsoever therefore is done which happens to be advantageous to the Species, thro' an Affection merely towards Self-good, does not imply any more Goodness in the Creature than as the Affection itself is good. Let him, in any particular, act ever so well; if at the bottom, it be that selfish Affection alone which moves him; he is in himself still vitious. Nor can any Creature be consider'd otherwise, when the Passion towards Self-good, tho ever so moderate, is his real Motive in the doing that, to which a natural Affection for his Kind ought by right to have inclin'd him.

And indeed whatever exterior Helps or Succours an ill-dispos'd Creature may find, to push him on towards the performance of any one good Action; there can no Goodness arise in him, till his *Temper* be so far chang'd, that in the issue he comes in earnest to be led by some immediate Affection, *directly*, and not *accidentally*, to Good, and against Ill.

For instance; if one of those Creatures suppos'd to be by Nature tame, gentle, and favourable to Mankind, be, contrary to his natural Constitution, fierce and savage; we instantly remark the Breach of *Temper*, and own the Creature to be unnatural and corrupt. If at any time afterwards, the same Creature, by good Fortune or right Management, comes to lose his Fierceness, and is made tame, gentle, and treatable, like other Creatures of his Kind; 'tis acknowledg'd that the Creature thus restor'd becomes good and natural. Suppose, now, that the Creature has indeed a tame and gentle Carriage; but that it proceeds only from *the fear of his Keeper*; which if set aside, his predominant Passion instantly breaks out: then is his Gentleness not his real Temper; but, his true and genuine *Nature* or *natural Temper* remaining just as it was, the Creature is still as *ill* as ever.

Nothing therefore being properly either Goodness or Illness in a Creature, except what is from *natural Temper*; "A good Creature is such a one as by the natural Temper or Bent of his Affections is carry'd *primarily and immediately*, and not *secondarily and accidentally*, to Good, and against Ill": And an *ill Creature* is just the contrary; *viz.* "One who is wanting in right Affections, of force enough to carry him *directly* towards Good, and bear him out against Ill; or who is carry'd by other Affections directly to Ill, and against Good."

When in general, all the Affections or Passions are suted to the publick Good, or good of the Species, as above-mention'd; then is the *natural Temper* intirely good. If, on the contrary, any requisite Passion be wanting; or if there be any one supernumerary, or weak, or any-wise disserviceable, or contrary to that main End; then is the natural Temper, and consequently the Creature himself, in some measure corrupt and *ill*.

THERE is no need of mentioning either *Envy*, *Malice*, *Frowardness*, or other such hateful Passions; to shew in what manner they are ill, and constitute an *ill Creature*. But it may be necessary perhaps to remark, that even as to *Kindness* and *Love* of the most natural sort, (such as that of any Creature for its Offspring) if it be immoderate and beyond a certain degree, it is undoubtedly vitious. For thus over-great *Tenderness* destroys the Effect of Love, and excessive *Pity* renders us incapable of giving succour. Hence the Excess of motherly Love is own'd to be a *vitious Fondness*; over-great Pity, *Effeminacy* and *Weakness*; over-great Concern for Self-preservation, *Meanness* and *Cowardice*; too little, *Rashness*; and none at all, or that which is contrary, (*viz.* a Passion leading to Self-destruction) a *mad* and *desperate Depravity*.

### 1.2.3.

BUT to proceed from what is esteem'd mere *Goodness*, and lies

*Temper.*

within the reach and capacity of all *sensible Creatures*, to that which is call'd VIRTUE or MERIT, and is allow'd to *Man* only.

In a Creature capable of forming general Notions of Things, not only the outward Beings which offer themselves to the Sense, are the Objects of the Affection; but the very *Actions* themselves, and the *Affections* of Pity, Kindness, Gratitude, and their Contraries, being brought into the Mind by Reflection, become Objects. So that, by means of this reflected Sense, there arises another kind of Affection towards those very Affections themselves, which have been already felt, and are now become the Subject of a new Liking or Dislike.

The Case is the same in *mental* or *moral* Subjects, as in ordinary *Bodys*, or the common Subjects of *Sense*. The Shapes, Motions, Colours, and Proportions of these latter being presented to our Eye; there necessarily results a Beauty or Deformity, according to the different Measure, Arrangement and Disposition of their several Parts. So in *Behaviour* and *Actions*, when presented to our Understanding, there must be found, of necessity, an apparent Difference, according to the Regularity or Irregularity of the Subjects.

The Mind, which is Spectator or Auditor of *other Minds*, cannot be without its *Eye* and *Ear*; so as to discern Proportion, distinguish Sound, and scan each Sentiment or Thought which comes before it. It can let nothing escape its Censure. It feels the Soft and Harsh, the Agreeable and Disagreeable, in the Affections; and finds a *Foul* and *Fair*, a *Harmonious* and a *Dissonant*, as really and truly here, as in any musical Numbers, or in the outward Forms or Representations of sensible Things. Nor can it with-hold its *Admiration* and *Extasy*, its *Aversion* and *Scorn*, any more in what relates to one than to the other of these Subjects. So that to deny the common and natural Sense of a Sublime and Beautiful in Things, will appear an *Affectation* merely, to any-one who considers duly of this Affair.

Now as in the *sensible* kind of Objects, the Species or Images of *Bodys*, Colours, and Sounds, are perpetually moving before our Eyes, and acting on our Senses, even when we sleep; so in the *moral* and *intellectual* kind, the Forms and Images of Things are no less active and incumbent on the Mind, at all Seasons, and even when the real Objects themselves are absent.

In these vagrant Characters or Pictures of *Manners*, which the Mind of necessity figures to it-self, and carries still about with it, the Heart cannot possibly remain neutral; but constantly takes part one way or other. However false or corrupt it be within it-self, it finds the difference, as to Beauty and Comeliness, between one *Heart* and another, one *Turn of Affection*, one *Behaviour*, one *Sentiment* and another; and accordingly, in all disinterested Cases, must approve in some measure of what is natural and honest, and disapprove what is dishonest and corrupt.

Thus the several Motions, Inclinations, Passions, Dispositions, and consequent Carriage and Behaviour of Creatures in the various Parts of Life, being in several Views or Perspectives represented to the Mind, which readily discerns the Good and Ill towards the Species or Publick; there arises a new Trial or Exer-

*Reflex  
Affection.*

*Moral  
Beauty and  
Deformity.*

cise of the Heart: which must either rightly and soundly affect what is just and right, and disaffect what is contrary; or, corruptly affect what is ill, and disaffect, what is worthy and good.

And in this Case alone it is we call any Creature *worthy* or *virtuous*, when it can have the Notion of a publick Interest, and can attain the Speculation or Science of what is morally good or ill, admirable or blameable, right or wrong. For tho we may vulgarly call an ill Horse *vitious*, yet we never say of a good one, nor of any mere Beast, Idiot, or Changeling, tho ever so good-natur'd, that he is *worthy* or *virtuous*.

So that if a Creature be generous, kind, constant, compassionate; yet if he cannot reflect on what he himself does, or sees others do, so as to take notice of what is *worthy* or *honest*; and make that Notice or Conception of *Worth* and *Honesty* to be an Object of his Affection; he has not the Character of being *virtuous*: for thus, and no otherwise, he is capable of having a *Sense of Right or Wrong*; a Sentiment or Judgment of what is done, thro' just, equal, and good Affection, or the contrary.

Whatsoever is done thro' any unequal Affection, is *iniquous*, *wicked*, and *wrong*. If the Affection be equal, sound, and good, and the Subject of the Affection such as may with advantage to Society be ever in the same manner prosecuted, or affected; this must necessarily constitute what we call *Equity* and *Right* in any Action. For, Wrong is not such Action as is barely the Cause of Harm, (since at this rate a dutiful Son aiming at an Enemy, but by mistake or ill chance happening to kill his Father, wou'd do *a Wrong*) but when any thing is done thro' insufficient or unequal Affection, (as when a Son shews no Concern for the Safety of a Father; or, where there is need of Succour, prefers an indifferent Person to him) this is of the nature of *Wrong*.

Neither can any Weakness or Imperfection in the Senses be the occasion of *Iniquity* or *Wrong*; if the Object of the Mind it-self be not at any time absurdly fram'd, nor any way improper, but sutable, just, and worthy of the Opinion and Affection apply'd to it. For if we will suppose a Man, who being sound and intire both in his Reason and Affection, has nevertheless so deprav'd a Constitution or Frame of Body, that the natural Objects are, thro' his Organs of Sense, as thro' ill Glasses, falsly convey'd and misrepresented; 'twill be soon observ'd, in such a Person's case, that since his Failure is not in his principal or leading Part; he cannot in himself be esteem'd *iniquous*, or unjust.

'Tis otherwise in what relates to *Opinion*, Belief, or Speculation. For as the Extravagance of Judgment or Belief is such, that in some Countrys even Monkeys, Cats, Crocodiles, and other vile or destructive Animals, have been esteem'd *holy*, and worship'd even as *Deitys*; shou'd it appear to any-one of the Religion or Belief of those Countrys, that to save such a Creature as a Cat, preferably to a Parent, was *Right*; and that other Men, who had not the same religious Opinion, were to be treated as Enemies, till converted; this wou'd be certainly *Wrong*, and wicked in the Believer: and every Action, grounded on this Belief, wou'd be an *iniquous*, wicked, and vitious Action.

*Publick  
Good an  
Object.*

*GOODNESS  
and  
VIRTUE.*

*Unequal  
Affection, or  
Iniquity.*

*Impair'd  
Sense.*

*Corrupt  
Opinion.*

And thus whatsoever causes a Misconception or Misapprehension of the Worth or Value of any Object, so as to diminish a due, or raise any undue, irregular, or unsocial Affection, must necessarily be the occasion of *Wrong*. Thus he who affects or loves a Man for the sake of something which is reputed honourable, but which is in reality vitious, is himself vitious and ill. The beginnings of this Corruption may be noted in many Occurrences: As when an ambitious Man, by the Fame of his high Attempts, a Conqueror or a Pirate by his boasted Enterprizes, raises in another Person an Esteem and Admiration of that immoral and inhuman Character, which deserves Abhorrence: 'tis then that the Hearer becomes corrupt, when he secretly approves the Ill he hears. But on the other side, the Man who loves and esteems another, as believing him to have that Virtue which he has not, but only counterfeits, is not on this account either vitious or corrupt.

A Mistake therefore *in Fact* being no Cause or Sign of ill Affection, can be no Cause of Vice. But a Mistake *of Right* being the Cause of unequal Affection, must of necessity be the Cause of vitious Action, in every intelligent or rational Being.

But as there are many Occasions where the matter of *Right* may even to the most discerning part of Mankind appear difficult, and of doubtful Decision, 'tis not a slight Mistake of this kind which can destroy the Character of *a virtuous or worthy Man*. But when, either thro' Superstition or ill Custom, there come to be very gross Mistakes in the assignment or application of the Affection; when the Mistakes are either in their nature so gross, or so complicated and frequent, that a Creature cannot well live in a natural State; nor with due Affections, compatible with human Society and civil Life; then is the Character of Virtue forfeited.

And thus we find how far Worth and Virtue depend on a knowledge of *Right and Wrong*, and on a use of Reason, sufficient to secure a right application of the Affections; that nothing horrid or unnatural, nothing unexemplary, nothing destructive of that natural Affection by which the Species or Society is upheld, may, on any account, or thro' any Principle or Notion of Honour or Religion, be at any time affected or prosecuted as a good and proper object of Esteem. For such a Principle as this must be wholly vitious: and whatsoever is acted upon it, can be no other than Vice and Immorality. And thus if there be any thing which teaches Men either Treachery, Ingratitude, or Cruelty, by divine Warrant; or under colour and pretence of any present or future Good to Mankind: if there be any thing which teaches Men to persecute their Friends thro' Love; or to torment Captives of War in sport; or to offer human Sacrifice; or to torment, macerate, or mangle themselves, in a religious Zeal, before their God; or to commit any sort of Barbarity, or Brutality, as amiable or becoming: be it Custom which gives Applause, or Religion which gives a Sanction; this is not, nor ever can be *Virtue* of any kind, or in any sense; but must remain still horrid Depravity, notwithstanding any Fashion, Law, Custom, or Religion; which may be ill and vitious *it-self*, but can never alter the *eternal*

*Right and Wrong.*

*VICE in Opinion.*

*Vituous Worship.*

*Vituous Custom.*

*Measures*, and immutable independent Nature of *Worth* and *Virtue*.

#### 1.2.4.

UPON the whole. As to those Creatures which are only capable of being mov'd by *sensible Objects*; they are accordingly *good* or *vitious*, as the sensible Affections stand with them. 'Tis otherwise in Creatures capable of framing *rational Objects* of moral Good. For in one of this kind, shou'd the *sensible Affections* stand ever so much amiss; yet if they prevail not, because of those other *rational Affections* spoken of; 'tis evident, the Temper still holds good in the main; and the Person is with justice esteem'd virtuous by all Men.

More than this. If by Temper any one is passionate, angry, fearful, amorous; yet resists these Passions, and notwithstanding the force of their Impression, adheres to *Virtue*; we say commonly in this case, *that the Virtue is the greater*: and we say well. Tho if that which restrains the Person, and holds him to a virtuous-like Behaviour, be no Affection towards Goodness or Virtue it-self, but towards private Good merely, he is not in reality the more virtuous; as has been shewn before. But this still is evident, that if voluntarily, and without foreign Constraint, an angry Temper bears, or an amorous one refrains, so that neither any cruel or immodest Action can be forc'd from such a Person, tho ever so strongly tempted by his Constitution; we applaud his Virtue above what we shou'd naturally do, if he were free of this Temptation, and these Propensities. At the same time, there is no body will say that a Propensity to Vice can be an Ingredient in Virtue, or any way necessary to compleat a virtuous Character.

There seems therefore to be some kind of difficulty in the Case: but it amounts only to this. If there be any part of the Temper in which ill Passions or Affections are seated, whilst in another part the Affections towards moral Good are such as absolutely to master those Attempts of their Antagonists; this is the greatest *Proof* imaginable, that a strong Principle of Virtue lies at the bottom, and has possess'd it-self of the natural Temper. Whereas if there be no ill Passions stirring, a Person may be indeed more *cheaply virtuous*; that is to say, he may conform himself to the known Rules of Virtue, without sharing so much of a virtuous Principle as another. Yet if that other Person, who has the Principle of Virtue so strongly implanted, comes at last to lose those contrary Impediments suppos'd in him, he certainly loses nothing in Virtue; but on the contrary, losing only what is vitious in his Temper, is left more intire to Virtue, and possesses it in a higher degree.

Thus is *Virtue* shar'd in different degrees by rational Creatures; such at least as are call'd *rational*; but who come short of that sound and well-establish'd Reason, which alone can constitute a *just Affection*, a uniform and steddly *Will* and *Resolution*. And thus Vice and Virtue are found variously mix'd, and alternately prevalent in the several Characters of Mankind. For it seems evident from our *Inquiry*, that how ill soever the Temper or Passions may stand with respect either to the sensible or the

*Sensible and rational Objects.*

*Trial of Virtue.*

*Degrees of Virtue.*



moral Objects; however passionate, furious, lustful, or cruel any Creature may become; however vitious the Mind be, or whatever ill Rules or Principles it goes by; yet if there be any Flexibleness or favourable Inclination towards the least moral Object, the least appearance of moral Good (as if there be any such thing as *Kindness, Gratitude, Bounty, or Compassion*), there is still something of *Virtue* left; and the Creature is not wholly vitious and unnatural.

Thus a Ruffian, who out of a sense of Fidelity and Honour of any kind, refuses to discover his Associates; and rather than betray them, is content to endure Torments and Death; has certainly some Principle of Virtue, however he may misapply it. 'Twas the same Case with that Malefactor, who rather than do the Office of Executioner to his Companions, chose to keep 'em company in their Execution.

In short: As it seems hard to pronounce of any Man, "That he is *absolutely an Atheist*"; so it appears altogether as hard to pronounce of any Man, "That he is *absolutely corrupt or vitious*"; there being few, even of the horriddest Villains, who have not something of *Virtue* in this imperfect sense. Nothing is more just than a known saying, "*That it is as hard to find a Man wholly Ill, as wholly Good*"; because wherever there is any good Affection left, there is certainly some *Goodness* or *Virtue* still in being.

And, having consider'd thus of Virtue, *What it is in it-self*; we may now consider how it stands *with respect to the Opinions concerning a Deity*, as above-mention'd.

### 1.3.1.

THE Nature of Virtue consisting (as has been explain'd) *in a certain just Disposition, or proportionable Affection of a rational Creature towards the moral Objects of Right and Wrong*; nothing can possibly in such a Creature exclude a Principle of Virtue, or render it ineffectual, except what,

1. Either takes away the *natural* and *just* Sense of Right and Wrong;
2. Or creates a *wrong* Sense of it;
3. Or causes the right Sense to be oppos'd, by *contrary* Affections.

On the other side, nothing can assist, or advance the Principle of Virtue, except what *either* in some manner nourishes and promotes a Sense of Right and Wrong; *or* preserves it genuine and uncorrupt; *or* causes it, when such, to be obey'd, by subduing and subjecting the other Affections to it.

We are to consider, therefore, how any of the above-mention'd Opinions on the Subject of a Deity, may influence in these Cases, or produce either of these *three* Effects.

#### I. As to the first Case, THE TAKING AWAY THE NATURAL SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG.

IT will not surely be understood, that by this is meant *the taking*

*away the Notion of what is good or ill in the Species, or Society.* For of the Reality of such a *Good* and *Ill*, no rational Creature can possibly be insensible. Every one discerns and owns a publick Interest, and is conscious of what affects his Fellowship or Community. When we say therefore of a Creature, "That he has wholly lost the Sense of Right and Wrong"; we suppose that being able to discern the *Good* and *Ill* of his Species, he has at the same time no Concern for either, nor any Sense of Excellency or Baseness in any moral Action, relating to one or the other. So that except merely with respect to a private and narrowly confin'd Self-good, 'tis suppos'd there is in such a Creature no *Liking* or *Dislike* of Manners; no Admiration, or Love of any thing as morally good; nor Hatred of any thing as morally ill, be it ever so unnatural or deform'd.

There is in reality no rational Creature whatsoever, who knows not that when he voluntarily offends or does harm to anyone, he cannot fail to create an Apprehension and Fear of like harm, and consequently a Resentment and Animosity in every Creature who observes him. So that the Offender must needs be conscious of being liable to such Treatment from every-one, as if he had in some degree offended All.

Thus Offence and Injury are always known as punishable by every-one; and equal Behaviour, which is therefore call'd Merit, as rewardable and well-deserving from every-one. Of this even the wickedest Creature living must have a *Sense*. So that if there be any further meaning in this *Sense* of Right and Wrong; if in reality there be any *Sense* of this kind which an absolute wicked Creature has not; it must consist in a real Antipathy or Aversion to *Injustice* or *Wrong*, and in a real Affection or Love towards *Equity* and *Right*, for its own sake, and on the account of its own natural Beauty and Worth.

'Tis impossible to suppose a mere sensible Creature originally so ill-constituted, and unnatural, as that from the moment he comes to be try'd by sensible Objects, he shou'd have no one good Passion towards his Kind, no foundation either of Pity, Love, Kindness, or social Affection. 'Tis full as impossible to conceive, that a rational Creature coming first to be try'd by rational Objects, and receiving into his Mind the Images or Representations of Justice, Generosity, Gratitude, or other Virtue, shou'd have no *Liking* of these, or *Dislike* of their contraries; but be found absolutely indifferent towards whatsoever is presented to him of this sort. A Soul, indeed, may as well be without *Sense*, as without Admiration in the Things of which it has any knowledg. Coming therefore to a Capacity of seeing and admiring in this new way, it must needs find a Beauty and a Deformity as well in Actions, Minds, and Tempers, as in Figures, Sounds, or Colours. If there be no *real* Amiableness or Deformity in moral Acts, there is at least an *imaginary one* of full force. Tho perhaps the Thing itself shou'd not be allow'd in Nature, the Imagination or Fancy of it must be allow'd to be from Nature alone. Nor can any thing besides Art and strong Endeavour, with long Practice and Meditation, overcome such a *natural Prevention*, or *Prepossession* of the Mind, in favour of this moral Dis-

*Moral Sense.*

*Causes of  
VICE.*

*Of  
VIRTUE.*

*Loss of  
Moral Sense.*

tion.

Sense of Right and Wrong therefore being as natural to us as *natural Affection* itself, and being a first Principle in our Constitution and Make; there is no speculative Opinion, Persuasion or Belief, which is capable *immediately* or *directly* to exclude or destroy it. That which is of original and pure Nature, nothing beside contrary Habit and Custom (a second Nature) is able to displace. And this Affection being *an original one* of earliest rise in the Soul or affectionate Part; nothing beside contrary Affection, by frequent check and controul, can operate upon it, so as either to diminish it in part, or destroy it in the whole.

'Tis evident in what relates to the Frame and Order of our *Bodys*; that no particular odd Mein or Gesture, which is either natural to us, and consequent to our Make, or accidental and by Habit acquir'd, can possibly be overcome by our immediate Disapprobation, or the contrary Bent of our Will, ever so strongly set against it. Such a Change cannot be effected without extraordinary Means, and the intervention of Art and Method, a strict Attention, and repeated Check. And even thus, Nature, we find, is hardly master'd; but lies sullen, and ready to revolt, on the first occasion. Much more is this *the Mind's* Case in respect of that natural Affection and anticipating Fancy, which makes the sense of Right and Wrong. 'Tis impossible that this can instantly, or without much Force and Violence, be effac'd, or struck out of the natural Temper, even by means of the most extravagant Belief or Opinion in the World.

Neither *Theism* therefore, nor *Atheism*, nor *Daemonism*, nor any religious or irreligious Belief of any kind, being able to operate immediately or directly in this Case, but indirectly, by the intervention of opposite or of favourable Affections casually excited by any such Belief; we may consider of this Effect in our last Case, where we come to examine the Agreement or Disagreement of other Affections with this natural and moral one which relates to Right and Wrong.

### 1.3.2.

#### II. As to the second Case, *viz.* THE WRONG SENSE OR FALSE IMAGINATION OF RIGHT AND WRONG.

THIS can proceed only from the Force of Custom and Education in opposition to Nature; as may be noted in those Countrys where, according to Custom or politick Institution, certain Actions naturally foul and odious are repeatedly view'd with Applause, and Honour ascrib'd to them. For thus 'tis possible that a Man, forcing himself, may eat the Flesh of his Enemies, not only against his Stomach, but against his Nature; and think it nevertheless both right and honourable; as supposing it to be of considerable service to his Community, and capable of advancing the Name, and spreading the Terror of his Nation.

But to speak of the *Opinions* relating to a Deity; and what effect they may have in this place. As to *Atheism*, it does not seem that it can directly have any effect at all towards the setting up a false Species of Right or Wrong. For notwithstanding a Man may thro' Custom, or by licentiousness of Practice, favour'd by Athe-

*How  
impair'd:*

*By opposite  
Affection, or  
Antipathy;*

*Not by  
Opinion  
merely.*

*Corruption  
of Moral  
Sense.*

*Causes  
of this  
Corruption.*

*Custom.*

ism, come in time to lose much of his natural *moral Sense*; yet it does not seem that Atheism shou'd *of it-self* be the cause of any estimation or valuing of any thing as fair, noble, and deserving, which was the contrary. It can never, for instance, make it be thought that the being able to eat Man's Flesh, or commit Bestiality, *is good and excellent in it-self*. But this is certain, that by means of *corrupt Religion*, or SUPERSTITION, many things the most horribly unnatural and inhuman, come to be receiv'd as excellent, good, and laudable *in themselves*.

*Superstition.*

Nor is this a wonder. For where-ever any-thing, in its nature odious and abominable, is by Religion advanc'd, as the suppos'd Will or Pleasure of a *supreme Deity*; if in the eye of the Believer it appears not indeed in any respect the less ill or odious on this account; then must *the Deity* of necessity bear the blame, and be consider'd as a Being naturally ill and odious, however courted, and solicited, thro' Mistrust and Fear. But this is what Religion, in the main, forbids us to imagine. It everywhere prescribes Esteem and Honour in company with Worship and Adoration. Whensoever therefore it teaches the Love and Admiration of a Deity, who has any apparent Character of *Ill*; it teaches at the same time a Love and Admiration of *that Ill*, and causes that to be taken for good and amiable, which is in it-self horrid and detestable.

For instance: if Jupiter be He who is ador'd and reverenc'd; and if his History represents him amorously inclin'd, and permitting his Desires of this kind to wander in the loosest manner; 'tis certain that his Worshipers, believing this History to be literally and strictly true, must of course be taught a greater Love of amorous and wanton Acts. If there be a Religion which teaches the Adoration and Love of a God, whose Character it is to be captious, and of high resentment, subject to Wrath and Anger, furious, revengeful; and revenging himself, when offended, on others than those who gave the Offence: and if there be added to the Character of this God, a fraudulent Disposition, encouraging Deceit and Treachery amongst Men; favourable to a few, tho' for slight causes, and cruel to the rest: 'tis evident that such a Religion as this being strongly enforc'd, must of necessity raise even an Approbation and Respect towards the Vices of this kind, and breed a sutable Disposition, a capricious, partial, revengeful, and deceitful Temper. For even *Irregularitys* and *Enormitys* of a heinous kind must in many cases appear illustrious to one, who considers them in a Being admir'd and contemplated with the highest Honour and Veneration.

This indeed must be allow'd; that if in the *Cult* or Worship of such a Deity there be nothing beyond common Form, nothing beside what proceeds from mere Example, Custom, Constraint, or Fear; if there be, at the bottom, no real Heartiness, no Esteem or Love imply'd; the Worshiper perhaps may not be much misled as to his Notion of Right and Wrong. If in following the Precepts of his suppos'd God, or doing what he esteems necessary towards the satisfying of such his Deity, he is compel'd only by *Fear*, and, contrary to his Inclination, performs an Act which he secretly detests as barbarous and unnatural; then has he an



Apprehension or *Sense* still of Right and Wrong, and, according to what has been already observ'd, is sensible of Ill in the Character of his God; however cautious he may be of pronouncing any thing on this Subject, or so thinking of it, as to frame any formal or direct Opinion in the case. But if by insensible degrees, as he proceeds in his religious Faith and devout Exercise, he comes to be more and more reconcil'd to the Malignity, Arbitrariness, Pariality, or Revengefulness of his believ'd Deity; his Reconciliation with these Qualitys themselves will soon grow in proportion; and the most cruel, unjust, and barbarous Acts, will, by the power of this Example, be often consider'd by him, not only as just and lawful, but as divine, and worthy of imitation.

For whoever thinks there is a God, and pretends formally to believe that he is *just* and *good*, must suppose that there is independently such a thing as *Justice* and *Injustice*, *Truth* and *Falshood*, *Right* and *Wrong*; according to which he pronounces that *God* is *just*, *righteous*, and *true*. If the mere *Will*, *Decree*, or *Law* of God be said absolutely to constitute *Right* and *Wrong*, then are these latter words of no significancy at all. For thus if each part of a Contradiction were affirm'd for Truth by the supreme Power, they wou'd consequently become *true*. Thus if one Person were decreed to suffer for another's fault, the Sentence wou'd be *just* and *equitable*. And thus, in the same manner, if arbitrarily, and without reason, some Beings were destin'd to endure perpetual Ill, and others as constantly to enjoy Good; this also wou'd pass under the same Denomination. But to say of any thing that it is *just* or *unjust*, on such a foundation as this, is to say nothing, or to speak without a meaning.

And thus it appears, that where a real Devotion and hearty Worship is paid to a supreme Being, who in his History or Character is represented otherwise than as really and truly just and good; there must ensue a Loss of Rectitude, a Disturbance of Thought, and a Corruption of Temper and Manners in the Believer. His Honesty will, of necessity, be supplanted by his Zeal, whilst he is thus unnaturally influenc'd, and render'd thus immorally devout.

To this we need only add, that as the *ill Character* of a God does injury to the Affections of Men, and disturbs and impairs the natural Sense of Right and Wrong; so, on the other hand, nothing can more highly contribute to the fixing of right Apprehensions, and a sound Judgment or Sense of Right and Wrong, than to believe a God who is ever, and on all accounts, represented such as to be actually a true Model and Example of the most exact Justice, and highest Goodness and Worth. Such a View of divine Providence and Bounty, extended to *All*, and express'd in a constant good Affection towards *the Whole*, must of necessity engage us, within our Compass and Sphere, to act by a like Principle and Affection. And having once the Good of our Species or Publick in view, as our End or Aim, 'tis impossible we shou'd be misguided by any means to a false Apprehension or Sense of Right or Wrong.

As to this second Case therefore; Religion (according as the kind may prove) is capable of doing great Good, or Harm; and

Atheism nothing positive in either way. For however it may be indirectly an occasion of Mens losing a good and sufficient Sense of Right and Wrong; it will not, *as Atheism merely*, be the occasion of setting up a false Species of it; which only false Religion, or fantastical Opinion, deriv'd commonly from Superstition and Credulity, is able to effect.

### 1.3.3.

NOW as to the last Case, THE OPPOSITION MADE BY OTHER AFFECTIONS TO THE NATURAL SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG.

*Opposition of the Affections.*

'TIS evident, that a Creature having this sort of Sense or *good Affection* in any degree, must necessarily act according to it; if it happens not to be oppos'd, either by some settled sedate Affection towards a conceiv'd *private Good*, or by some sudden, strong and forcible Passion, as of *Lust* or *Anger*, which may not only subdue the Sense of Right and Wrong, but the very Sense of private Good it-self; and overrule even the most familiar and receiv'd Opinion of what is conducing to Self-interest.

But it is not our business in this place to examine the several Means or Methods by which this Corruption is introduc'd or increas'd. We are to consider only how the Opinions concerning a *Deity* can influence one way or another.

That it is possible for a Creature capable of using Reflection, to have a Liking or Dislike of moral Actions, and consequently a Sense of Right and Wrong, before such time as he may have any settled Notion of a God, is what will hardly be question'd: it being a thing not expected, or any-way possible, that a Creature such as *Man*, arising from his Childhood, slowly and gradually, to several degrees of Reason and Reflection, shou'd, at the very first, be taken up with those Speculations, or more refin'd sort of Reflections, about the Subject of God's Existence.

*Rise of Moral Sense.*

Let us suppose a Creature, who wanting Reason, and being unable to reflect, has, notwithstanding, many good Qualitys and Affections; as Love to his Kind, Courage, Gratitude, or Pity. 'Tis certain that if you give to this Creature a reflecting Faculty, it will at the same instant approve of Gratitude, Kindness, and Pity; be taken with any shew or representation of the social Passion, and think nothing more amiable than this, or more odious than the contrary. And this is *to be capable of Virtue*, and *to have a Sense of Right and Wrong*.

Before the time, therefore, that a Creature can have any plain or positive Notion one way or other, concerning the Subject of a God, he may be suppos'd to have an Apprehension or Sense of *Right* and *Wrong*, and be possess'd of *Virtue* and *Vice* in different degrees; as we know by Experience of those, who having liv'd in such places, and in such a manner as never to have enter'd into any serious Thoughts of Religion, are nevertheless very different among themselves, as to their Characters of Honesty and Worth: some being naturally *modest*, *kind*, *friendly*, and consequently Lovers of *kind* and *friendly Actions*; others *proud*, *harsh*, *cruel*, and consequently inclin'd to admire rather the Acts of *Violence* and mere *Power*.

*Influence of Religion.*

Now, as to the Belief of a Deity, and how Men are influenc'd by it; we may consider, in the first place, on what account Men yield Obedience, and act in conformity to such a supreme Being. It must be either *in the way of his Power*, as presupposing some Disadvantage or Benefit to accrue from him: or *in the way of his Excellency and Worth*, as thinking it the Perfection of Nature to imitate and resemble him.

If, as in the first Case, there be a Belief or Conception of a Deity, who is consider'd only as *powerful* over his Creature, and enforcing Obedience to his *absolute Will* by particular Rewards and Punishments; and if on this account, thro' hope merely of *Reward*, or fear of *Punishment*, the Creature be incited to do the Good he hates, or restrain'd from doing the Ill to which he is not otherwise in the least degree averse; there is in this Case (as has been already shewn) no Virtue or Goodness whatsoever. The Creature, notwithstanding his good Conduct, is intrinsically of as little Worth, as if he acted in his natural way, when under no dread or terror of any sort. There is no more of *Rectitude*, *Piety*, or *Sanctity* in a Creature thus reform'd, than there is *Meekness* or *Gentleness* in a Tiger strongly chain'd, or *Innocence* and *Sobriety* in a Monkey under the Discipline of the Whip. For however orderly and well those Animals, or Man himself upon like terms, may be induc'd to act, whilst the Will is neither gain'd, nor the Inclination wrought upon, but *Awe* alone prevails and forces Obedience; the Obedience is *servile*, and all which is done thro' it, merely *servile*. The greater degree of such a Submission or Obedience, is only the greater *Servility*; whatever may be the Object. For whether such a Creature has a good Master, or an ill one, he is neither more or less servile in his own nature. Be the Master or Superior ever so perfect, or excellent, yet the greater Submission caus'd in this Case, thro' this sole Principle or Motive, is only the lower and more abject Servitude; and implies the greater Wretchedness and Meanness in the Creature, who has those Passions of Self-love so predominant, and is in his Temper so vitious and defective, as has been explain'd.

As to the second Case. If there be a Belief or Conception of a Deity, who is consider'd as *worthy* and *good*, and admir'd and reverenc'd as such; being understood to have, besides mere Power and Knowledge, the highest Excellence of Nature, such as renders him justly amiable to All: and if in the manner this Sovereign and mighty Being is represented, or, as he is historically describ'd, there appears in him a high and eminent regard to what is good and excellent, a Concern for the good of *All*, and an Affection of Benevolence and Love towards *the Whole*; such an Example must undoubtedly serve (as above explain'd) to raise and increase the Affection towards Virtue, and help to submit and subdue all other Affections to that alone.

Nor is this Good effected by *Example* merely. For where the Theistical Belief is intire and perfect, there must be a steady Opinion of the Superintendency of a Supreme Being, a Witness and Spectator of human Life, and conscious of whatsoever is felt or acted in the Universe: So that in the perfectest Recess or

DEITY.

Hope and  
Fear.

Fear.

Honour and  
Love.

Divine  
Example.

deepest Solitude, there must be *One* still presum'd remaining with us; whose Presence singly must be of more moment than that of the most august Assembly on Earth. In such a Presence, 'tis evident, that as the *Shame* of guilty Actions must be the greatest of any; so must the *Honour* be, of well-doing, even under the unjust Censure of a World. And in this Case, 'tis very apparent how conducing a *perfect Theism* must be to Virtue, and how great Deficiency there is in *Atheism*.

What the Fear of *future Punishment*, and Hope of *future Reward*, added to this Belief, may further contribute towards Virtue, we come now to consider more particularly. So much in the mean while may be gather'd from what has been said above; That neither this *Fear* or *Hope* can possibly be of the kind call'd *good Affections*, such as are acknowledg'd the Springs and Sources of all Actions truly *good*. Nor can this Fear or Hope, as above intimated, consist in reality with Virtue, or Goodness; if it either stands as *essential* to any moral Performance, or as a *considerable Motive* to any Act, of which some better Affection ought, *alone*, to have been a *sufficient Cause*.

It may be consider'd withal; That, in this religious sort of Discipline, the Principle of *Self-love*, which is naturally so prevailing in us, being no-way moderated or restrain'd, but rather improv'd and made stronger every day, by the exercise of the Passions in a Subject of more extended Self-interest; there may be reason to apprehend lest the Temper of this kind shou'd extend it-self in general thro' all the Parts of Life. For if the Habit be such as to occasion, in every particular, a stricter Attention to Self-good, and private Interest; it must insensibly diminish the Affections towards publick Good, or the Interest of Society; and introduce a certain Narrowness of Spirit, which (as some pretend) is peculiarly observable in the devout Persons and Zealots of almost every religious Persuasion.

This, too, must be confess'd; That if it be *true Piety*, to love God for *his own sake*, the over-sollicitous regard to private Good expected from him, must of necessity prove a diminution of Piety. For whilst *God* is belov'd only as the Cause of private Good, he is no otherwise belov'd than as any other Instrument or Means of Pleasure by any vitious Creature. Now the more there is of this violent Affection towards *private Good*, the less room is there for the other sort towards *Goodness it-self*, or any good and deserving Object, worthy of Love and Admiration for its own sake; such as *God* is universally acknowledg'd, or at least by the generality of civiliz'd or refin'd Worshipers.

'Tis in this respect that the strong Desire and *Love of Life* may also prove an Obstacle to Piety, as well as to Virtue and publick Love. For the stronger this Affection is in any-one, the less will he be able to have true *Resignation*, or Submission to the Rule and Order of the Deity. And if that which he calls *Resignation* depends only on the expectation of infinite Retribution or Reward, he discovers no more Worth or Virtue here, than in any other Bargain of Interest: The meaning of his Resignation being only this, "That he resigns his present Life and Pleasures, conditionally for That, which he himself confesses to be beyond an

Divine  
Presence.

Fear and  
Hope.

Self-love,  
How  
advanc'd.

Its Effects in  
Religion.

False  
Resignation.

Equivalent; *eternal living in a State of highest Pleasure and Enjoyment.*"

But notwithstanding the Injury which the Principle of Virtue may possibly suffer, by the Increase of the selfish Passion, in the way we have been mentioning; 'tis certain, on the other side, that the Principle of *Fear of future Punishment*, and *Hope of future Reward*, how mercenary or servile soever it may be accounted, is yet, in many Circumstances, a great Advantage, Security, and Support to *Virtue*.

It has been already consider'd, that notwithstanding there may be implanted in the Heart a real Sense of Right and Wrong, a real good Affection towards the Species or Society; yet by the violence of Rage, Lust, or any other counterworking Passion, this good Affection may frequently be controul'd and overcome. Where therefore there is nothing in the Mind capable to render such ill Passions the Objects of its Aversion, and cause them earnestly to be oppos'd; 'tis apparent how much a good Temper in time must suffer, and a Character by degrees change for the worse. But if Religion interposing, creates a Belief that the ill *Passions* of this kind, no less than their consequent *Actions*, are the Objects of a Deity's Animadversion; 'tis certain, that such a Belief must prove a seasonable Remedy against Vice, and be in a particular manner advantageous to Virtue. For a Belief of this kind must be suppos'd to tend considerably towards the calming of the Mind, and disposing or fitting the Person to a better Recollection of himself, and to a stricter Observance of that good and virtuous Principle, which needs only his Attention, to engage him wholly in its Party and Interest.

And as this Belief of a future Reward and Punishment is capable of supporting those who thro' *ill Practice* are like to apostatize from Virtue; so when by *ill Opinion* and wrong Thought, the Mind it-self is bent against the honest Course, and debauch'd even to an Esteem, and deliberate Preference of a vicious one; the Belief of the kind mention'd may prove on this occasion the only Relief and Safety.

A Person, for instance, who has much of Goodness and natural Rectitude in his Temper, but withal, so much Softness, or Effeminacy, as unfits him to bear Poverty, Crosses or Adversity; if by ill Fortune he meets with many Trials of this kind, it must certainly give a Sourness and Distaste to his Temper, and make him exceedingly averse to that which he may falsely presume the occasion of such Calamity or Ill. Now if his own Thoughts, or the corrupt Insinuations of other Men, present it often to his Mind, "*That his Honesty is the occasion of this Calamity, and that if he were deliver'd from this Restraint of Virtue and Honesty, he might be much happier*": 'tis very obvious that his Esteem of these good Qualities must in proportion diminish every day, as the Temper grows uneasy, and quarrels with it-self. But if he opposes to this Thought the Consideration, "*That Honesty carries with it, if not a present, at least a future Advantage, such as to compensate that Loss of private Good which he regrets*"; then may this injury to his good Temper and honest Principle be prevented, and his Love or Affection towards Honesty and Virtue remain as it was

*Belief of  
future Life,*

*How advantageous,*

*Supporting.*

*Saving.*

before.

In the same manner, where instead of *Regard* or *Love*, there is rather an *Aversion* to what is good and virtuous, (as, for instance, where *Lenity* and *Forgiveness* are despis'd, and *Revenge* highly thought of, and belov'd) if there be this Consideration added, "*That Lenity* is, by its Rewards, made the cause of a greater Self-good and Enjoyment than what is found in *Revenge*"; that very Affection of *Lenity* and *Mildness* may come to be industriously nourish'd, and the contrary Passion depress'd. And thus *Temperance*, *Modesty*, *Candour*, *Benignity*, and other good Affections, however despis'd at first, may come at last to be valu'd *for their own Sakes*, the contrary Species rejected, and the good and proper Object belov'd and prosecuted, when the Reward or Punishment is not so much as thought of.

Thus in a *civil State* or Publick, we see that a virtuous Administration, and an equal and just Distribution of Rewards and Punishments, is of the highest service; not only by restraining the Vicious, and forcing them to act usefully to Society; but by making Virtue to be apparently the Interest of every-one, so as to remove all Prejudices against it, create a fair reception for it, and lead Men into that path which afterwards they cannot easily quit. For thus a People rais'd from Barbarity or despotick Rule, civiliz'd by Laws, and made virtuous by the long Course of a lawful and just Administration; if they chance to fall suddenly under any Misgovernment of unjust and arbitrary Power, they will on this account be the rather animated to exert a stronger Virtue, in opposition to such Violence and Corruption. And even where, by long and continu'd Arts of a prevailing Tyranny, such a People are at last totally oppress'd, the scatter'd Seeds of Virtue will for a long time remain alive, even to a second Generation; ere the utmost Force of misapply'd Rewards and Punishments can bring them to the abject and compliant State of long-accustom'd Slaves.

But tho a right Distribution of Justice in a Government be so essential a cause of Virtue, we must observe in this Case, that it is *Example* which chiefly influences Mankind, and forms the Character and Disposition of a People. For a virtuous Administration is in a manner necessarily accompany'd with Virtue in the Magistrate. Otherwise it cou'd be of little effect, and of no long duration. But where it is sincere and well establish'd, there Virtue and the Laws must necessarily be respected and belov'd. So that as to Punishments and Rewards, their Efficacy is not so much from the Fear or Expectation which they raise, as from a natural Esteem of *Virtue*, and Detestation of *Villany*, which is awaken'd and excited by these publick Expressions of the Approbation and Hatred of Mankind in each Case. For in the publick Executions of the greatest Villains, we see generally that the Infamy and Odiousness of their Crime, and the Shame of it before Mankind, contribute more to their Misery than all besides; and that it is not the immediate Pain, or Death it-self, which raises so much Horror either in the Sufferers or Spectators, as that ignominious kind of Death which is inflicted for publick Crimes, and Violations of Justice and Humanity.

*Improving.*

*Rewards  
and  
Punishments,*

*In the State.*



And as the Case of Reward and Punishment stands thus in the Publick, so, in the same manner, as to *private Familys*. For Slaves and mercenary Servants, restrain'd and made orderly by Punishment, and the Severity of their Master, are not on this account made good or honest. Yet the same Master of the Family using proper Rewards and gentle Punishments towards his Children, teaches them Goodness; and by this help instructs them in a Virtue, which afterwards they practice upon other grounds, and without thinking of a Penalty or Bribe. And this is what we call a *Liberal Education* and a *Liberal Service*: the contrary Service and Obedience, whether towards God or Man, being *illiberal*, and unworthy of any Honour or Commendation.

In the Case of Religion, however, it must be consider'd, that if by the *Hope of Reward* be understood the Love and Desire of virtuous Enjoyment, or of the very Practice and Exercise of Virtue in another Life; the Expectation or Hope of this kind is so far from being derogatory to Virtue, that it is an Evidence of our loving it the more sincerely and *for its own sake*. Nor can this Principle be justly call'd *selfish*: for if the Love of Virtue be not mere Self-Interest, the Love and Desire of Life for Virtue's sake cannot be esteem'd so. But if the Desire of Life be only thro' the Violence of that natural Aversion to Death; if it be thro' the Love of something else than virtuous Affection, or thro' the Unwillingness of parting with something else than what is purely of this kind; then is it no longer any sign or token of real Virtue.

Thus a Person loving Life for Life's sake, and Virtue not at all, may by the Promise or Hope of Life, and Fear of Death, or other Evil, be induc'd to practice Virtue, and even *endeavour* to be truly virtuous, by a Love of what he practices. Yet neither is *this very Endeavour* to be esteem'd a *Virtue*: For tho he may intend to be virtuous, he is not become so, for having only intended, or aim'd at it, thro' love of the Reward. But as soon as he is come to have any Affection towards what is morally good, and can like or affect such Good *for its own sake*, as good and amiable *in itself*; then is he in some degree good and virtuous, and not till then.

Such are the Advantages or Disadvantages which accrue to Virtue from Reflection upon private Good or Interest. For tho the Habit of *Selfishness*, and the Multiplicity of *interested Views*, are of little Improvement to real *Merit* or *Virtue*; yet there is a necessity for the preservation of *Virtue*, that it shou'd be thought to have no quarrel with *true Interest*, and *Self-enjoyment*.

Whoever therefore, by any strong Persuasion or settled Judgment, thinks in the main, *That Virtue causes Happiness, and Vice Misery*, carries with him that Security and Assistance to Virtue which is requir'd. Or tho he has no such Thought, nor can believe Virtue his real Interest, either with respect to his own Nature and Constitution, or the Circumstances of human Life; yet if he believes any supreme Powers concern'd in the *present Affairs* of Mankind, and *immediately* interposing in behalf of the Honest and Virtuous, against the Impious and Unjust; this will serve to preserve in him, however, that just Esteem of Virtue, which might otherwise considerably diminish. Or shou'd he still

*In the Family.*

*In Religion.*

*Security to Virtue.*

believe little of the *immediate* Interposition of Providence in the Affairs of *this present Life*; yet if he believes a God dispensing Rewards and Punishments to Vice and Virtue in a *future*, he carries with him still the same Advantage and Security; whilst his Belief is stedly, and no-wise wavering or doubtful. For it must be observ'd, that an Expectation and Dependency, so miraculous and great as this, must naturally take off from other inferior Dependencies and Encouragements. Where infinite Rewards are thus inforc'd, and the Imagination strongly turn'd towards them, the other common and natural Motives to Goodness are apt to be neglected, and lose much by Dis-use. Other Interests are hardly so much as computed, whilst the Mind is thus transported in the pursuit of a high Advantage and Self-Interest, so narrowly confin'd within our-selves. On this account, all other Affections towards Friends, Relations, or Mankind, are often slightly regarded, as being *worldly*, and of little moment, in respect of the Interest of *our Soul*. And so little thought is there of any immediate Satisfaction arising from such good Offices of Life, that it is customary with many devout People zealously to decry all temporal Advantages of Goodness, all natural Benefits of Virtue; and magnifying the contrary Happiness of a vitious State, to declare, "That except only for the sake of future Reward, and fear of future Punishment, they wou'd divest themselves of all Goodness at once, and freely allow themselves to be most immoral and profligate." From whence it appears, that in some respects there can be nothing more fatal to Virtue, than the weak and uncertain Belief of a future Reward and Punishment. For the stress being laid wholly here, if this Foundation come to fail, there is no further Prop or Security to Mens Morals. And thus Virtue is supplanted and betray'd.

Now as to *Atheism*: tho it be plainly deficient and without remedy, in the case of *ill Judgment on the Happiness of Virtue*; yet it is not, indeed, of necessity the Cause of any such *ill Judgment*. For without an absolute Assent to any Hypothesis of *Theism*, the Advantages of Virtue may possibly be seen and own'd, and a high Opinion of it establish'd in the Mind. However, it must be confess'd, that the natural Tendency of Atheism is very different.

'Tis in a manner impossible, to have any great opinion of the Happiness of Virtue, without conceiving high thoughts of the Satisfaction resulting from the generous Admiration and Love of it: And nothing beside the Experience of such a Love is likely to make this Satisfaction credited. The chief Ground and Support therefore of this Opinion of *Happiness in Virtue*, must arise from the powerful feeling of this generous moral Affection, and the knowledg of its Power and Strength. But this is certain, that it can be no great strengthening to the moral Affection, no great support to the pure Love of Goodness and Virtue, to suppose there is neither *Goodness* nor *Beauty* in the Whole it-self; nor any Example, or Precedent of good Affection in any superior Being. Such a Belief must tend rather to the weaning the Affections from any thing amiable or self-worthy, and to the suppressing the very Habit and familiar Custom of admiring natural Beautys, or whatever in the Order of things is according to just Design,

*Caution.*

*Imprudent Zeal.*

*Atheism.*

Harmony, and Proportion. For how little dispos'd must a Person be, to love or admire any thing as *orderly* in the Universe, who thinks the Universe it-self a Pattern of *Disorder*? How unapt to reverence or respect any particular subordinate Beauty of a *Part*; when even the Whole it-self is thought to want Perfection, and to be only a vast and infinite Deformity?

Nothing indeed can be more melancholy, than the Thought of living in a distracted Universe, from whence many Ills may be suspected, and where there is nothing good or lovely which presents it-self, nothing which can satisfy in Contemplation, or raise any Passion besides that of Contempt, Hatred, or Dislike. Such an Opinion as this may by degrees imbitter the Temper, and not only make the Love of Virtue to be less felt, but help to impair and ruin the very Principle of Virtue, *viz. natural and kind Affection*.

Upon the whole; whoever has a firm Belief of a God, whom he does not merely *call* good, but of whom in reality he *believes* nothing beside *real Good*, nothing beside what is truly suitable to the exactest Character of Benignity and Goodness; such a Person believing Rewards or Retributions in another Life, must believe them annex'd to real Goodness and Merit, real Villany and Baseness, and not to any accidental Qualities or Circumstances; in which respect they cannot properly be styl'd *Rewards* or *Punishments*, but *capricious Distributions of Happiness or Unhappiness to Creatures*. These are the only Terms, on which the Belief of a World to come can happily influence the Believer. And on these Terms, and by virtue of this Belief, Man perhaps may retain his Virtue and Integrity, even under the hardest Thoughts of human Nature; when either by any ill Circumstance or untoward Doctrine, he is brought to that unfortunate Opinion of *Virtue's being naturally an Enemy to Happiness in Life*.

This, however, is an Opinion which cannot be suppos'd consistent with sound *Theism*. For whatever be decided as to a future Life, or the Rewards and Punishments of hereafter; he who, as a sound *Theist*, believes a reigning Mind, sovereign in Nature, and ruling all things with the highest perfection of Goodness, as well as of Wisdom and Power, must necessarily believe Virtue to be naturally good and advantageous. For what cou'd more strongly imply an unjust Ordinance, a Blot and Imperfection in the general Constitution of Things, than to suppose Virtue the natural Ill, and Vice the natural Good of any Creature?

And now last of all, there remains for us to consider a yet further Advantage to Virtue, in the *Theistical* Belief above the *Atheistical*. The Proposition may at first sight appear over-refin'd, and of a sort which is esteem'd too nicely philosophical. But after what has been already examin'd, the Subject perhaps may be more easily explain'd.

There is no Creature, according to what has been already prov'd, who must not of necessity be *ill* in some degree, by having any Affection or Aversion in a stronger degree than is suitable to his own private Good, or that of the System to which he is join'd. For in either Case the Affection is *ill* and vitious. Now if a rational Creature has that Degree of Aversion which is requisite

to arm him against any particular Misfortune, and alarm him against the Approach of any Calamity; this is regular and well. But if after the Misfortune is happen'd, his Aversion continues still, and his Passion rather grows upon him; whilst he rages at the Accident, and exclaims against his private Fortune or Lot; this will be acknowledg'd both vitious *in present*, and *for the future*, as it affects the Temper, and disturbs that easy Course of the Affections on which Virtue and Goodness so much depend. On the other side, the patient enduring of the Calamity, and the bearing up of the Mind under it, must be acknowledg'd *immediately* virtuous, and *preservative of Virtue*. Now, according to the Hypothesis of those who exclude a general Mind, it must be confess'd, there can nothing happen in the Course of things to deserve either our Admiration, and Love, or our Anger, and Abhorrence. However, as there can be no Satisfaction at the best in thinking upon what *Atoms and Chance* produce; so upon disastrous Occasions, and under the Circumstances of a calamitous and hard Fortune, 'tis scarce possible to prevent a natural kind of Abhorrence and Spleen, which will be entertain'd and kept alive by the Imagination of so perverse an Order of Things. But in another Hypothesis (that of perfect *Theism*) it is understood, "*That whatever the Order of the World produces, is in the main both just and good.*" Therefore in the Course of Things in this World, whatever Hardship of Events may seem to force from any rational Creature a hard Censure of his private Condition or Lot; he may by Reflection nevertheless, come to have Patience, and to acquiesce in it. Nor is this all. He may go further still in this Reconciliation; and from the same Principle may make the Lot it-self an Object of his good Affection; whilst he strives to maintain this generous Fealty, and stands so well-dispos'd towards the Laws and Government of his higher Country.

Such an Affection must needs create the highest Constancy in any State of Sufferance, and make us in the best manner support whatever Hardships are to be endur'd for Virtue's sake. And as this Affection must of necessity cause a greater Acquiescence and Complacency with respect to ill Accidents, ill Men, and Injuriys; so of course it cannot fail of producing still a greater Equality, Gentleness, and Benignity in the Temper. Consequently the Affection must be a truly good one, and a Creature the more truly good and virtuous, by possessing it. For whatsoever is the occasion or means of more affectionately uniting a rational Creature to his Part in Society, and causes him to prosecute the publick Good, or Interest of his Species, with more Zeal and Affection than ordinary; is undoubtedly the Cause of more than ordinary Virtue in such a Person.

This too is certain; That the Admiration and Love of Order, Harmony and Proportion, in whatever kind, is naturally improving to the Temper, advantageous to social Affection, and highly assistant to *Virtue*, which is it-self no other than the Love of Order and Beauty in Society. In the meanest Subjects of the World, the Appearance of *Order* gains upon the Mind, and draws the Affection towards it. But if *the Order of the World it-self* appears just and beautiful; the Admiration and Esteem of *Order* must run

*Theism.*

*Atheism and  
Theism.*

*Effects of  
each.*

*Of Atheism.*

*Of Theism.*

*Contem-  
plation.*

higher, and the elegant Passion or Love of Beauty, which is so advantageous to Virtue, must be the more improv'd by its Exercise in so ample and magnificent a Subject. For 'tis impossible that such a *Divine Order* shou'd be contemplated without Extasy and Rapture; since in the common Subjects of Science, and the liberal Arts, whatever is according to just Harmony and Proportion, is so transporting to those who have any Knowledg or Practice in the kind.

*Religious  
Affection.*

Now if the Subject and Ground of this divine Passion be not really just or adequate, (the Hypothesis of *Theism* being suppos'd false) the Passion still in it-self is so far natural and good, as it proves an Advantage to Virtue and Goodness; according to what has been above demonstrated. But if, on the other side, the Subject of this Passion be really adequate and just, (the Hypothesis of *Theism* being real, and not imaginary) then is the Passion also just, and becomes absolutely *due* and *requisite* in every rational Creature.

HENCE we may determine justly the Relation which Virtue has to Piety; the *first* being not compleat but in the *latter*: Since where the latter is wanting, there can neither be the same Bignity, Firmness, or Constancy; the same good Composure of the Affections, or Uniformity of Mind.

*Conclusion.*

And thus the Perfection and Height of Virtue must be owing to *the Belief of a God*.

[...]