

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 uncaused. 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*.

Section III: Mr. Woolaston's Significancy of Truth, as the Idea of Virtue considered

Mr. Woolaston¹² has introduced a new Explication of *moral Virtue*, viz. *Significancy of Truth in Actions*, supposing that in every Action there is some *Significancy*, like to that which *Moralists* and *Civilians* speak of in their *Tacit Conventions*, and *Quasi Contractus*!

Signification wherein it consists.

The Word *Signification* is very common, but a little Reflection will shew it to be very ambiguous. In *Signification of Words* these things are included: 1. An *Association of an Idea with a Sound*, so that when any *Idea* is formed by the Speaker, the *Idea of a Sound* accompanies it. 2. The *Sound perceived* by the Hearer excites the *Idea* to which it is connected. 3. In like manner a *Judgment* in the Speaker's Mind is accompanied with the *Idea of a Combination of Sounds*. 4. This *Combination of Sounds* heard raises the *Apprehension* of that *Judgment* in the Mind of the Hearer. Nothing farther than these Circumstances seems to be denoted by *Signification*.

Conclusions drawn from Speech.

Hearing a Proposition does not of itself produce either *Assent* or *Dissent*, or *Opinion* in the Hearer, but only presents to his Apprehension the *Judgment*, or *Thema Complexum*. But the Hearer himself often forms *Judgments* or *Opinions* upon this occasion, either *immediately* without Reasoning, or by some short *Argument*. These *Opinions* are some one or more of the following *Propositions*. 1. *That a Sound is perceived, and a Judgment apprehended*. 2. *Such a Person caused the Sound heard*. 3. *The Speaker intended to excite in the Hearer the Idea of the Sound, and the Apprehension of the Judgment, or Thema Complexum*. This Judgment is not always formed by the Hearer, nor is it always true, when Men are heard speaking. 4. *The Speaker intended to produce Assent in the Hearer*: This Judgment is not always true. 5. *The Speaker assents to the Proposition spoken*: This Judgment in the Hearer is often false, and is formed upon Opinion of the Speaker's *Veracity*, or speaking what expresses his *Opinion* usually. 6. *The Speaker does not assent to the Proposition spoken*: This Judgment of the Hearer is often false, when what is spoken is every way true. 7. *The Speaker intended that the Hearer should believe or judge, "that the Proposition spoken was assented to by the Speaker."* 8. *The Speaker had the contrary Intention, to that*

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.]

¹² In his *Religion of Nature delineated*.

supposed in the last Judgment: Both these latter Judgments may be false, when the Proposition spoken is every way true. 9. *The Proposition spoken represents the Object as it is, or is logically true.* 10. *The Proposition spoken does not represent the Object as it is, or it is logically false.*

Morality does not consist in Significancy.

As to the first four *Circumstances* which make up the proper *Significancy* of Speech, 'tis scarce possible that any one should place *moral Good* or *Evil* in them. Whether the Proposition were *logically true* or *false*, the having a bare *Apprehension* of it as a *Thema Complexum*, or raising this in another, without intending to produce *Assent* or *Dissent*, can have no more *moral Good* or *Evil* in it, than the *Reception* of any other *Idea*, or raising it in another. This *Significancy* of *Falshood* is found in the very *Propositions* given in *Schools*, as *Instances* of *Falshood*, *Absurdity*, *Contradiction to Truth*, or *Blasphemy*. The *pronouncing* of which, are Actions *signifying* more properly than most of our other *Actions*; and yet no body condemns them as immoral.

Nor in Conclusions formed by Hearers.

As to the *Opinions* formed by the Hearer, they are all his own *Action* as much as any other *Conclusion* or *Judgment* formed from *Appearances* of any sort whatsoever. They are *true* or *false*, according to the Sagacity of the Observer, or his *Caution*. The Hearer may form perfectly true *Opinions* or *Judgments*, when the *Speaker* is guilty of the basest *Fraud*; and may form *false Judgments*, when the *Speaker* is perfectly *innocent*, and spoke nothing *false* in any Sense.

The *Evils* which may follow from the false Judgments of the Hearer, are no otherwise chargeable on the *Speaker*, than as the evil Consequences of another's Action of any kind may be chargeable upon any Person who *co-operated*; or, by his *Action*, or *Omission*, the Consequence of which he might have *foreseen*, did either actually *intend* this Evil, or *wanted that Degree of kind Affection*, which would have inclined him to have prevented it.

The Morality of Speech in the Intention.

The *Intention* of the *Speaker* is what all *Moralists* have hitherto imagined the *Virtue* or *Vice* of Words did depend upon, and not the bare *Significancy* of Truth or Falshood. This *Intention* is either, 1. *To lead the Hearer into a true or false Opinion about the Sentiments of the Speaker.* 2. *To make the Hearer assent to the Proposition spoken.* Or, 3. *Both to make the Hearer assent to the Proposition, and judge that the Speaker also assents to it.* Or, 4. *To accomplish some End, by means of the Hearer's assent to the Proposition spoken.* This End may be known by the *Speaker* to be either *publicly useful*, or *publicly hurtful*.

Some *Moralists*¹³ of late have placed all *Virtue in Speech* in the *Intention* of the last kind, viz. "Accomplishing some publicly useful End, by speaking either *logical Truth* or *Falshood*: and that all *Vice* in speaking, consists in intending to effect something *publicly hurtful* by Speech, whether *logically true* or *false*, and known to be such; or by using Speech in a manner which we may foresee would be *publicly hurtful*, whether we actually *intend* this evil Consequence or not." Some stricter *Moralists* assert, that "the *public Evils* which would ensue from destroying mutual Confidence, by allowing to speak *Propositions known to be false* on any occasion, are so great, that no particular *Advantage* to be expected from speaking *known logical Falshoods*, can ever over-balance them; that all use of Speech supposes a *tacit Convention of Sincerity*, the *Violation* of which is always evil." Both sides in this Argument agree, that the *moral Evil* in Speech consists either in some *direct malicious Intention*, or a *Tendency to the public Detriment* of Society; which Tendency the Agent might have *foreseen*, as connected with his Action, had he not *wanted* that Degree of *good Affections* which makes Men *attentive* to the Effects of their Actions. Never was bare *Significancy of Falshood* made the *Idea* of *moral Evil*. Speaking *logical Falshood* was still looked upon as innocent in many cases. Speaking *contrary to Sentiment*, or *moral Falshood*, was always proved evil, from some *publicly hurtful Tendency*, and not supposed as evil *immediately*, or the same *Idea* with *Vice*. The *Intention to deceive* was the Foundation of the Guilt. This *Intention* the *Speaker* studies to *conceal*, and does not *signify* it: It is an *Act of the Will*, neither *signified* by his Words, nor itself *signifying* any thing else.

This Point deserved Consideration, because if any Action be *significant*, 'tis certainly the *Act of Speaking*: And yet even in this the *Virtue* is not the *signifying of Truth*, nor the *Vice* the *signifying Falshood*.

The Significancy of Actions.

The *Signification* of some *Actions* depends upon a like *Association of Ideas* with them, made either by *Nature*, or *arbitrarily*, and by *Custom*, as with *Sounds*. Letters are by *Custom* the *Signs of Sounds*. A *Shriek* or *Groan* is a natural *Sign of Fear* or *Pain*: A *Motion of the Hand* or *Head* may signify *Assent*, *Dissent*, or *Desire*. The *cutting down tall Poppies* was an *answer*: The *sending Spurs, advice to Flight: Kindling many Fires* raises the Opinion of an *Encampment*: *Raising a Smoke* will raise Opinion of *Fire*.

The most important Distinction of *Signs* is this, that¹⁴ 1. "Some *Appearances* are the Occasion upon which an Observer, by his *own reasoning*, forms a Judgment, without supposing, or having reason to believe, that the *Agent*, who caused these *Appearances*, did it with *design to communicate his Sentiments* to others; or when the *Actions* are such as are usually done by the *Agents*, without *designing to raise Opinions* in Observers. 2. Some *Actions* are never used but with *professed Design* to convey the *Opinions of the Agent* to the *Observer*; or such as the *Observer infers* nothing from, but upon having reason to believe that the *Causers* of the *Appearance intended to convey some Sentiment to the Observer*." 3. Other *Signs* are used, when "the *Signifier* gives no reason to conclude any other *Intention*, but only to raise an *Apprehension of the Judgment, or the Thema Complexum*, without *professing any design to communicate his Sentiments*, or to produce any *Assent* in the *Observer*."

To do *Actions* from which the *Observer* will form *false Opinions*, without having reason to imagine an *Intention* in the *Agent*, is never of itself imagined *evil*, let the *Signs* be *natural* or *instituted*; provided there be no *malicious Intention*, or *neglect of publick Good*. 'Tis never called a Crime in a *Teacher*, to pronounce an *absurd Sentence* for an instance; in a *Nobleman*, to travel without *Coronets*; or a *Clergyman* in *Lay-Habit*, for private Convenience, or to avoid troublesome Ceremony; to *leave Lights in a Lodge*, to make People conclude there is a *Watch kept*. This *Significancy* may be in any *Action* which is observed; but as *true Conclusions* argue no *Virtue* in the *Agent*, so *false ones* argue no *Vice*.

Raising *false Opinions* designedly by the *second Sort* of *Signs*, which reasonably lead the *Observer* to conclude *Intention in the Agent to communicate his Sentiments*, whether the *Signs* be *customary*, *instituted*, or *natural*, is generally *evil*, when the *Agent* knows the *Falshood*; since it tends to diminish *mutual Confidence*. To *send Spurs* to a Friend, whom the *Sender* imagines to be in no danger, to deceive by *Hieroglyphicks* or *Painting*, is as criminal as a *false Letter*. This *Significancy* occurs in very few human *Actions*: Some of the most important *Virtues* profess no *design of communicating Sentiments*, or *raising Opinions* either true or false: Nor is there any more *Intention* in some of the most *vicious Actions*. Again, who can imagine any *Virtue*, in all *Actions*, where there is this *Significancy of Truth with Intention*? Is it *Virtue* to say at *Christmas*, that "the *Mornings* are sharp?" to *beckon with the Hand*, in sign of *Assent* to such an Assertion? And in *false Propositions* thus signified by *Actions* or *Words*, there is no *Evil* apprehended where the *Falshood* is only *logical*. When the *Falshood* is known by the *Agent*, the *Evil* is not imagined in the *Significancy*, but in doing what one may foresee tends to breed *Distrust in Society*. And did all *moral Evil* consist in *moral Falshood*, there could be no *Sins of Ignorance*. If Mr. *Woolaston* alledges, that "Ignorance of some things signifies this *Falshood*, viz. *We are not obliged to know the Truth*:" This *Falshood* is not signified with *Intention*; nor is it *moral Falshood*, but only *logical*: since no Man in an Error knows that "he is obliged to know the contrary *Truth*," Mr. *Woolaston's* use of the Words [ought] or [obliged] without a distinct Meaning, is not peculiar to this Place.

The third sort of *Significancy of Falsehood* is never apprehended as *morally Evil*: if it were, then every *Dramatick Writer* drawing *evil Characters*, every *History Painter*, every *Writer of Allegories*, or *Epicks*, every *Philosopher* teaching the Nature of *contradictory Propositions*, would be thought criminal.

Significancy different from the Morality.

But since only the *first sort of Significancy* can be in all *Actions*, and that too supposing that every *Action* whatsoever is *observed* by some Being or other: Let us see if this will account for *Morality*. Perhaps either, 1st, "Every *Action* is *good* which leads the *Observer* into *true Opinions* concerning the *Sentiments of the Agent*, whether the *Agent's Opinions* be *true* or *false*." Or,

¹³ Barberack's *Notes on Puffendorf*, Lib. iv. c. 1, 7.

¹⁴ See Grotius de Jure Bell. Lib. 3. c. 1.

2dly. “That Action is good which leads the Observer into *true Opinions concerning the Object, the Tendency of the Action, and the Relation between the Agent and the Object.*”

Did *Virtue* consist in this *first sort of Significancy* of Truth, it would depend not upon the *Agent* but the *Sagacity of the Observer*: The acute Penetration of one would constitute an *Action virtuous*, and the Rashness or Stupidity of another would make it *vicious*: And the most *barbarous Actions* would raise no *false Opinion of the Sentiments of the Agent*, in a judicious Observer.

The second *sort* of Significancy would also make *Virtue* consist in the *Power of Observers*. An exact Reasoner would receive no *false Opinion* from the worst Action concerning the *Object* or *Relation* of the Agent to it: And a *false Opinion* might be formed by a weak Observer of a *perfectly good Action*.—An Observer who knew an Agent to have the *basest Temper*, would not from his worst Action conclude any thing *false* concerning the *Object*: And all such *false Opinions* would arise only upon Supposition that *the Agent was virtuous*.

But may it not be said, that “whether Men reason well about Actions or not, there are some *Conclusions really deducible from every Action*? It is a *Datum* from which something may be inferred by *just Consequence*, whether any one actually infers it or not. Then may not this *Quality* in Actions, whether we call it *Significancy* or not, *that only true Propositions can be inferred from them by just Reasoning, be moral Goodness*? And may it not be the *very Idea* of *moral Evil* in Actions, that *some false Conclusions can by just Consequence, be deduced from them*?” Or if we will not allow these to be the *very Ideas* of moral Good and Evil, “are they not *universal just Characters* to distinguish the one from the other?”

One may here observe in general, that since the Existence of the Action is supposed to be a true *Premise* or *Datum*, no *false Conclusion* can possibly be inferred from it by *just Reasoning*. We could perhaps often justly infer, that the Agent had *false Opinions*; but then this Conclusion of the Observer, *viz.* “that the Agent has false Opinions,” is really true.

True Conclusions deducible from Actions, no just Character of Virtue.

But again, it will not make an *universal Character* of good Actions, that a just Reasoner would infer from them, that “*the Opinions of the Agent are true.*” For it is thus Men must reason from Actions; *viz.* *Given the Constitution of Nature, the Affections of Agents, and the Action, to conclude concerning the Opinions*: Or more generally *given any three of these to conclude the fourth*. Thus suppose the “*Constitution of Nature such, that the private Interest of each Individual is connected with the publick Good.*” Suppose an Agent’s Affections *selfish* only, then from a *publickly useful Action* we infer, that “*the Agent’s Opinions are true.*” And from a *publickly hurtful Action* conclude his *Opinions* to be false.

The same *Constitution* supposed with *publick Affections* as well as *selfish*. The observing a *kind* or *publickly useful Action*, will not immediately infer, that the Agent’s *Opinions* are either *true* or *false*: With false Opinions he might do *publickly useful Actions* out of his *publick Affections*, in those cases wherein they are not apparently opposite to his Interest. A *publick Action* opposite to some present *private Interest*, would generally evidence *true Opinions*; or if the *Opinions were false*, that his *publick Affections* were in this Case much stronger than his *Self-Love*. A cruel Action would indeed evidence *false Opinions*.

Suppose the *same Constitution* in all other respects, with *malicious Affections* in an Agent. A *cruel* or *ungrateful Action* would not always prove the *Opinions of the Agent to be false*; but only that his *Malice* in this instance, was more violent than regard to his Interest. A *beneficent Action* would prove only one of these two, either that his *Opinions of the Constitution* were true; or, that if he was mistaken about the *Constitution*, he had also a *false Opinion* of the natural Tendency of the Action. Thus *false Opinions* may be evidenced by contrary Actions.

Suppose “a *Constitution wherein a private Interest could be advanced in Opposition to the publick*” (this we may call an *evil Constitution*.) Suppose only *Self-Love* in the Agent, then a *publickly useful Action*, any way *toilsome* or *expensive* to the Agent, would evidence *false Opinions*: And the most *cruel selfish Actions* would evidence *true Opinions*.

In an *evil Constitution*, suppose *kind Affections* in the Agent; a *publickly useful Action* would not certainly argue either *true* or *false Opinions*. If his *Opinions* were true, but *kind Affections* stronger than *Self-Love*, he might act in the same manner, as if his *Opinions* were false, and *Self-Love* the reigning Affection.

In an *evil Constitution*, suppose *malicious Affections* in an Agent, all *publickly useful Actions* would argue *false Opinions*; and *publickly hurtful Actions* would argue *true ones*.

This may shew us that *Mens Actions* are generally *publickly useful*, when they have *true Opinions*, only on this account; that we neither have *malicious Affections* naturally, nor is there any probability, in our present *Constitution*, of promoting a *private Interest* separately from, or in Opposition to the *Publick*. Were there contrary *Affections* and a contrary *Constitution*, the most cruel Actions might flow from *true Opinions*; and consequently *publickly useful Actions* might flow from false ones.

How far it is a Character of Virtue, that it flows from true Opinions.

In our *present Constitution*, ’tis probable no Person would ever do anything publicly hurtful, but upon some false Opinion. The *flowing from true Opinions* is indeed a tolerable Character or Property of *Virtue*, and *flowing from some false Opinion* a tolerable Character of *Vice*; tho neither be strictly universal. But, 1. This is not *proper Signification*. A judicious Observer never imagines any *Intention to communicate Opinions* in some of the most important Actions, either *good* or *evil*. 2. Did an Action *signify Falshood*, ’tis generally only *logical*. 3. The *false Opinion* in the Agent is not the *Quality* for which the evil Action is *condemned*; nor is the *true Opinion* that for which the good Action is *approved*. True Opinions in Agents often *aggravate Crimes*, as they shew higher Degrees of *evil Affection*, or total *Absence of good*. And *false Opinions* generally *extenuate Crimes*, unless when the very Ignorance or Error has flowed from *evil Affection*, or total *Absence of good*.

’Tis surprizing, for instance, how any should place the *Evil of Ingratitude* in *denying* the Person injured, to have been a *Benefactor*. The Observer of such an Action, if he supposed the Agent had really that *false Opinion*, would think the Crime the less for it: But if he were convinced that the Agent had a *true Opinion*, he would think his *Ingratitude* the *more odious*. Where we most abhor Actions, we suppose often *true Opinions*: And sometimes admire Actions flowing even from *false Opinions*, when they have evidenced no *want* of good Affection.

To write a Censure upon a Book so well designed as Mr. *Woolaston’s*, and so full of very good Reasoning upon the most useful Subjects, would not evidence much *good Nature*. But allowing him his *just Praise*, to remark any *Ambiguities* or *Inadvertencies* which may lead Men into Confusion in their Reasoning, I am confident would have been acceptable to a Man of so much Goodness, when he was living.

One may see that he has had some other Idea of *moral Good*, previous to this *Significancy of Truth*, by his introducing, in the very Explication of it, Words presupposing the *Ideas of Morality* previously known: Such as [*Right*,] [*Obligation*,] [*Lye*,] [*his*] denoting [Property.]

Signifying of Truth *equal* in unequal Virtue.

Mr. *Woolaston* acknowledges that there may be very little *evil* in some Actions signifying Falshood; such as *throwing away that which is of but little Use or Value*. It is objected to him, that there is equal *Contrariety to Truth* in such Actions, as in the greatest *Villany*: He, in answer to it, really unawares gives up his whole Cause. He must own, that there may be the *strictest Truth* and *Certainty* about Trifles; so there may be the most *obvious Falshood* signified by *trifling Actions*. If then *Significancy of Falshood* be the very same with *moral Evil*, all Crimes must be equal. He answers, that *Crimes* increase according to the *Importance* of the Truth denied; and so the *Virtue* increases, as the *Importance* of the Truths affirmed. Then

Virtue and Vice increase, as the *Importance* of Propositions affirmed or denied;

But *Signification of Truth and Falshood* does not so increase:

Therefore *Virtue and Vice* are not the same with *Signification of Truth or Falshood*.

But what is this *Importance of Truth*? Nothing else but the *Moment* or *Quantity* of good or evil, either *private* or *publick*, which should be produced by Actions, concerning which these *true Judgments* are made. But it is plain, the *Signification* of Truth or Falshood is not varied by this *Importance*; therefore *Virtue* or *Vice* denote something different from this *Signification*.

But farther, The *Importance* of Actions toward publick Good or Evil, is not the *Idea of Virtue* or *Vice*: Nor does the one prove *Virtue* in an Action, any farther than it evidences *kind Affections*; or the other *Vice*, farther than it evidences either *Malice* or *Want* of kind Affections: Otherwise a *casual Invention*, an Action wholly from *views of private Interest*, might be as virtuous as the most *kind* and *generous Offices*: And *Chance-Medley*, or *kindly-intended*, but *unsuccessful Attempts* would be as *vicious* as *Murder* or *Treason*.

Some Ambiguities in Mr. Woolaston.

One of Mr. Woolaston's Illustrations that *Significancy of Falshood* is the Idea of moral Evil, ends in this, "*'Tis acting a Lye.*" What then? Should he not first have shewn what was *moral Evil*, and that every Lye was such?

Another Illustration or Proof is that, "*it is acting contrary to that Reason which GOD has given us as the Guide of our Actions.*" Does not this place the original Idea of *moral Evil* in *counteracting the DEITY*, and not in *signifying Falshood*? But, he may say, "Counteracting the DEITY denies him to be our *Benefactor*, and signifies Falshood." Then why is *signifying Falshood* evil? Why, 'tis *counteracting the DEITY*, who gave us Reason for our Guide. Why is this evil again? It denies the Truth, that "*he is our Benefactor.*"

Another Illustration is this, "That *signifying Falshood is altering the Natures of Things, and making them be what they are not, or desiring at least to make them be what they are not.*" If by *altering the Natures* be meant *destroying Beings*, then moral Evil consists in *desiring the Destruction of other Natures*, or in *Evil Affections*. If what is meant be *altering the Laws of Nature*, or *desiring that they were stopped*; this is seldom desired by any but *Madmen*, nor is this *Desire* evidenced by some of the worst Actions, nor is *such Desire* always criminal; otherwise it were as great a Crime as any, to wish, when a *Dam* was broken down, that the Water would not overflow the Country.

If *making Things be what they are not*, means "attempting or desiring that any Subject should have two *opposite Qualities at once*, or a *Quality* and its *Privation*;" 'tis certain then, that according to the *Stoicks*, all *vicious Men* are *thoroughly mad*. But 'tis to be doubted, that such Madness never happened to even the *worst of Mankind*. When a Man *murders*, he does not desire his *Fellow-Creature* to be both *dead* and *living*. When he *robs*, he does not desire that both *he* and the *Proprietor* should at the *same time* possess. If any says, that he desires to have a *Right* to that, to which another has a *Right*; 'tis probably false. Robbers neither think of *Rights* at all, nor are solicitous about acquiring them: Or, if they retain some *wild Notions of Rights*, they think their *Indigence, Conquest* or *Courage* gives them a *Right*, and makes the other's *Right* to *cease*. If *attempting to make old Qualities or Rights give place to new*, be the Idea of *moral Evil*, then every *Artificer, Purchaser*, or *Magistrate invested with an Office* is criminal.

Many of Mr. Woolaston's Propositions contradicted by Actions, are about *Rights, Duties, Obligation, Justice, Reasonableness*. These are *long Words, principal Names*, or *Attributes* in Sentences. The little Word [his,] or the Particles [as, according] are much better: they may escape Observation, and yet may include all the Ambiguities of *Right, Property, Agreement, Reasonableness*: "*Treating Things as they are, and not as they are not.*" Or, "*According to what they are, or are not,*" are Expressions he probably had learned from another truly great Name, who has not explained them sufficiently.

In Quasi Contracts, or Tacit, no Signification of Truth.

It may perhaps not seem improper on this occasion to observe, that in the *Quasi Contractus*, the *Civilians* do not imagine any Act of the Mind of the *Person obliged* to be really signified, but by a sort of *Fictio juris* supposing it, order him to act as if he had contracted, even when they know that he had *contrary Intentions*.

In the *Tacit Conventions*, 'tis not a *Judgment* which is signified, but an *Act of the Will transferring Right*, in which there is no Relation to *Truth* or *Falshood* of itself. The *Non-performance of Covenants* is made *penal*, not because of their *signifying Falshoods*, as if this were the Crime in them: But it is necessary, in order to preserve *Commerce* in any Society, to *make effectual* all *Declarations of Consent to transfer Rights* by any usual *Signs*, otherwise there could be no *Certainty* in *Mens Transactions*.

Section IV: Shewing the Use of Reason concerning Virtue and Vice, upon Supposition that we receive these Ideas by a Moral Sense.

Truths about Morals, four sorts.

Had those who insist so much upon the *antecedent Reasonableness of Virtue*, told us distinctly what is *reasonable* or *provable* concerning it, many of our Debates had been prevented. Let us

consider what *Truths* concerning Actions Men could desire to know, or prove by *Reason*. I fancy they may be reduced to these Heads. 1. "To know whether there are not *some Actions* or *Affections* which obtain the *Approbation* of any Spectator or Observer, and others move his *Dislike* and *Condemnation*?" This Question, as every Man can answer for himself, so *universal Experience* and *History* shew, that in all Nations it is so; and consequently the *moral Sense* is *universal*. 2. "Whether there be any particular *Quality*, which, wherever it is apprehended, gains *Approbation*, and the contrary raises *Disapprobation*?" We shall find this *Quality* to be *kind Affection*, or Study of the Good of others; and thus the *moral Senses* of Men are generally *uniform*. About these two Questions there is little reasoning; we know how to answer them from reflecting on our own *Sentiments*, or by consulting others. 3. "What Actions do really *evidence kind Affections*, or do really *tend to the greatest publick Good*?" About this Question is all the special *Reasoning* of those who treat of the particular *Laws of Nature*, or even of *Civil Laws*: This is the largest Field, and the most useful Subject of *Reasoning*, which remains upon every *Scheme of Morals*. 4. "What are the Motives which, even from *Self-Love*, would excite each Individual to do those Actions which are publickly useful?" 'Tis probable indeed, no Man would *approve* as virtuous an Action *publickly useful*, to which the Agent was excited only by *Self-Love*, without any *kind Affection*: 'Tis also probable that no view of *Interest* can raise that *kind Affection*, which we *approve* as virtuous; nor can any *Reasoning* do it, except that which shews some *moral Goodness*, or *kind Affections* in the Object; for this never fails, where it is observed or supposed in any Person to raise the *Love* of the Observer; so that *Virtue* is not properly *taught*.

Yet since all Men have naturally *Self-Love* as well as *kind Affections*, the former may often counteract the latter, or the latter the former; in each case the Agent is *uneasy*, and in some degree *unhappy*. The first *rash Views* of human Affairs often represent *private Interest* as opposite to the *Publick*: When this is apprehended, *Self-Love* may often engage Men in *publickly hurtful Actions*, which their *moral Sense* will condemn; and this is the ordinary Cause of Vice. To represent these Motives of *Self-Interest*, to engage Men to publickly useful Actions, is certainly the most necessary Point in *Morals*. This has been so well done by the *antient Moralists*, by Dr. *Cumberland, Puffendorf, Grotius, Shaftesbury*; 'tis made so certain from the *divine Government* of the World, the *State of Mankind*, who cannot subsist without Society, from *universal Experience* and *Consent*, from *inward Consciousness* of the Pleasure of kind Affections, and *Self-Approbation*, and of the *Torments of Malice, or Hatred, or Envy, or Anger*; that no Man who considers these things, can ever imagine he can have any possible *Interest* in opposing the publick Good; or in checking or restraining his kind Affections; nay, if he had no *kind Affections*, his very *Self-Love* and Regard to his private Good might excite him to publickly useful Actions, and dissuade from the contrary.

What farther should be provable concerning *Virtue*, whence it should be called *reasonable antecedently to all Affection, or Interest, or Sense*, or what it should be *fit* for, one cannot easily imagine.

Perhaps what has brought the Epithet *Reasonable*, or *flowing from Reason*, in opposition to what flows from *Instinct, Affection, or Passion*, so much into use, is this, "That it is often observed, that the very best of our particular *Affections* or *Desires*, when they are grown violent and *passionate*, thro' the *confused Sensations* and *Propensities* which attend them, do make us incapable of considering calmly the whole *Tendency* of our Actions, and lead us often into what is *absolutely pernicious*, under some Appearance of *relative* or *particular Good*." This indeed may give some ground for distinguishing between *passionate Actions*, and those from *calm Desire* or *Affection* which employs our *Reason* freely: But can never set *rational Actions* in Opposition to those from *Instinct, Desire* or *Affection*. And it must be owned, that the most perfect *Virtue* consists in the *calm, unpassionate Benevolence*, rather than in particular Affections.

How we judge of our Moral Sense.

If one asks "how do we know that *our Affections are right when they are kind*?" What does the Word [right] mean? Does it mean *what we approve*? This we know by *Consciousness* of our *Sense*. Again, how do we know that our *Sense* is right, or that we *approve our Approbation*? This can only be answered by another Question, *viz.* "How do we know we are pleased when we are pleased?"—Or does it mean, "how do we know that we shall *always* approve what we *now* approve?" To answer this, we must first know that the *same Constitution* of our *Sense* shall always remain: And again, that we have applied our selves carefully to consider the *natural Tendency* of our Actions. Of the *Continuance* of the same Constitution of our *Sense*, we are as

sure as of the Continuance of *Gravitation*, or any other *Law of Nature*: The *Tendency* of our own Actions we cannot always know; but we may know certainly that we *heartily* and *sincerely* studied to act according to what, by all the Evidence now in our Power to obtain, appeared as most *probably tending to publick Good*. When we are conscious of this *sincere Endeavour*, the *evil Consequences* which we could not have foreseen, never will make us *condemn* our Conduct. But without this *sincere Endeavour*, we may often approve at *present* what we shall *afterwards* condemn.

How our Moral Sense is corrected by Reason.

If the Question means, “How are we sure that what *we* approve, *all others* shall also approve?” Of this we can be sure upon *no Scheme*; but ’tis highly probable that the *Senses* of all Men are pretty *uniform*: That the DEITY also approves *kind Affections*, otherwise he would not have implanted them in us, nor determined us by a *moral Sense* to approve them. Now since the *Probability that Men shall judge truly*, abstracting from any presupposed *Prejudice*, is greater than that *they shall judge falsely*; ’tis more probable, when our Actions are really *kind* and *publickly useful*, that *all Observers* shall judge *truly* of our *Intentions*, and of the *Tendency* of our Actions, and consequently approve what *we* approve our selves, than that they shall judge *falsly* and condemn them.

If the Meaning of the Question be, “Will the doing what our *moral Sense* approves tend to our *Happiness*, and to the avoiding Misery?” ’Tis thus we call a *Taste wrong*, when it makes that *Food* at present *grateful*, which shall occasion *future Pains*, or *Death*. This Question concerning our *Self-Interest* must be answered by such *Reasoning* as was mentioned above, to be well managed by our *Moralists* both antient and modern.

Thus there seems no part of that *Reasoning* which was ever used by *Moralists*, to be superseded by supposing a *moral Sense*. And yet without a *moral Sense* there is no Explication can be given of our *Ideas of Morality*; nor of that *Reasonableness* supposed *antecedent* to all *Instincts*, *Affections*, or *Sense*.

“But may there not be a *right* or *wrong State* of our *moral Sense*, as there is in our other *Senses*, according as they represent their Objects to be *as they really are*, or represent them otherwise?” So may not our *moral Sense* approve that which is *vicious*, and *disapprove Virtue*, as a *sickly Palate* may dislike *grateful Food*, or a *vitiating Sight* misrepresent *Colours* or *Dimensions*? Must we not know therefore *antecedently* what is *morally Good* or *Evil* by our *Reason*, before we can know that our *moral Sense* is *right*?

To answer this, we must remember that of the *sensible Ideas*, some are allowed to be only *Perceptions* in our Minds, and not Images of any like *external Quality*, as *Colours*, *Sounds*, *Tastes*, *Smells*, *Pleasure*, *Pain*. Other Ideas are *Images* of something *external*, as *Duration*, *Number*, *Extension*, *Motion*, *Rest*: These latter, for distinction, we may call *concomitant Ideas* of *Sensation*, and the former *purely sensible*. As to the *purely sensible Ideas*, we know they are *alter’d* by any Disorder in our *Organs*, and made *different* from what arise in us from the same Objects at other times. We do not denominate Objects from our *Perceptions during the Disorder*, but according to our *ordinary Perceptions*, or those of others in *good Health*: Yet no body imagines that therefore *Colours*, *Sounds*, *Tastes*, are not *sensible Ideas*. In like manner many *Circumstances* diversify the *concomitant Ideas*: But we denominate Objects from the Appearances they make to us in an *uniform Medium*, when our *Organs are in no disorder*, and the *Object not very distant from them*. But none therefore imagines that it is *Reason* and not *Sense* which discovers these *concomitant Ideas*, or *primary Qualities*.

Just so in our *Ideas of Actions*. These three Things are to be distinguished, 1. The Idea of the *external Motion*, known first by *Sense*, and its *Tendency to the Happiness or Misery* of some *sensitive Nature*, often inferr’d by *Argument* or *Reason*. 2. *Apprehension* or *Opinion of the Affections* in the Agent, concluded by our *Reason*: So far the Idea of an *Action* represents something *external* to the Observer. 3. The *Perception of Approbation or Disapprobation* arising in the Observer, according as the *Affections of the Agent* are apprehended *kind* in their *just Degree*, or *deficient*, or *malicious*. This *Approbation* cannot be supposed an *Image of any thing external*, more than the *Pleasure of Harmony*, of *Taste*, of *Smell*. But let none imagine, that calling the *Ideas of Virtue* and *Vice* *Perceptions of a Sense*, upon apprehending the *Actions* and *Affections* of another does diminish their *Reality*, more than the like *Assertions* concerning all *Pleasure* and *Pain*, *Happiness* or *Misery*. Our *Reason* does often correct the *Report of our Senses*, about the *natural Tendency* of the external Action, and corrects *rash Conclusions* about the *Affections* of the Agent.

But whether our *moral Sense* be subject to such a Disorder, as to have *different Perceptions*, from the same apprehended *Affections* in an Agent, at *different times*, as the *Eye* may have of the *Colours* of an unaltered Object, ’tis not easy to determine: Perhaps it will be hard to find any Instances of such a *Change*. What *Reason* could correct, if it fell into such a *Disorder*, I know not; except suggesting to its *Remembrance* its *former Approbations*, and representing the *general Sense* of Mankind. But this does not prove *Ideas of Virtue* and *Vice* to be previous to a *Sense*, more than a like *Correction* of the *Ideas of Colour* in a Person under the *Jaundice*, proves that *Colours* are perceived by *Reason*, previously to *Sense*.

If any say, “this *moral Sense* is not a *Rule*.” What means that Word? It is not a *strait rigid Body*: It is not a *general Proposition*, shewing what *Means* are fit to obtain an end: It is not a *Proposition*, asserting, that a *Superior will make those happy who act one way, and miserable who act the contrary way*. If these be the Meanings of *Rule*, it is no *Rule*; yet by reflecting upon it our Understanding may find out a *Rule*. But what *Rule* of Actions can be formed, without Relation to some *End* proposed? Or what *End* can be proposed, without presupposing *Instincts*, *Desires*, *Affections*, or a *moral Sense*, it will not be easy to explain.

Section V: Shewing that *Virtue* may have whatever is meant by *Merit*, and be *rewardable* upon the Supposition, that it is perceived by a *Sense*, and elected from *Affection* or *Instinct*.

Some will not allow any *Merit* in *Actions* flowing from *kind Instincts*: “*Merit*, say they, attends Actions to which we are excited by *Reason* alone, or to which we *freely* determine ourselves. The Operation of *Instincts* or *Affections* is *necessary*, and not *voluntary*; nor is there more *Merit* in them than in the *Shining of the Sun*, the *Fruitfulness of a Tree*, or the *Overflowing of a Stream*, which are all *publickly useful*.”

Merit, what.

But what does *Merit* mean? or *Praiseworthiness*? Do these Words denote the “Quality in Actions, which gains *Approbation* from the Observer?” Or, 2dly, Are these Actions called meritorious, “which, when any Observer does *approve* all other *Observers* approve him for his *Approbation* of it; and would condemn any *Observer* who did not *approve* these Actions?” These are the only Meanings of *meritorious*, which I can conceive as distinct from *rewardable*, which is considered hereafter separately. [Let those who are not satisfied with either of these Explications of *Merit*, endeavour to give a Definition of it reducing it to its simple Ideas: and not, as a late Author has done, quarrelling these Descriptions, tell us only that it is *Deserving* or *being worthy of Approbation*, which is defining by giving a synonymous Term.]

Now we endeavoured already to shew, that “no *Reason* can excite to Action previously to some *End*, and that no *End* can be proposed without some *Instinct* or *Affection*.” What then can be meant by being *excited by Reason*, as distinct from all Motion of *Instincts* or *Affections*? [Some perhaps take the Word [*Instinct*] solely for such Motions of *Will*, or bodily Powers, as determine us without Knowledge or Intention of any End. Such *Instincts* cannot be the Spring of *Virtue*. But the Soul may be as naturally determined to *Approbation* of certain Tempers and *Affections*, and to the *Desire* of certain Events when it has an Idea of them, as Brutes are, by their lower *Instincts*, to their Actions. If any quarrel the Application of the Word *Instinct* to any thing higher than what we find in Brutes, let them use another Word. Though there is no Harm in the Sound of this Word, more than in a *Determination to pursue Fitness*, which they must allow in the *Divine Will*, if they ascribe any *Will* to him at all.]

Then *determining our selves freely*, does it mean *acting without any Motive* or *exciting Reason*? If it did not mean this, it cannot be opposed to *acting from Instinct* or *Affections*, since all *Motives* or *Reasons* presuppose them. If it do mean this, that “*Merit* is found only in Actions done without *Motive* or *Affection*, by mere *Election*, without prepollent *Desire* of one *Action* or *End* rather than its opposite, or without *Desire* of that *Pleasure* which¹⁵ some do suppose follows

¹⁵ This is the Notion of *Liberty* given by the Archbishop of *Dublin*, in his most ingenious Book, *De Origine Mali*. This Opinion does not represent *Freedom* of Election, as opposite to all *Instinct* or *Desire*; but rather as arising from the *Desire* of that *Pleasure* supposed to be connected with every *Election*. Upon his Scheme there is a *Motive* and *End* proposed in every *Election*, and a natural *Instinct* toward *Happiness*

upon any *Election*, by a *natural Connexion*." Then let any Man consider whether he ever acts in this manner by *mere Election*, without any previous *Desire*? And again, let him consult his own Breast, whether such kind of Action gains his *Approbation*? Upon seeing a Person not more disposed by *Affection, Compassion, or Love or Desire*, to make his Country happy than miserable, yet choosing the one rather than the other, from no *Desire of publick Happiness*, nor *Aversion to the Torments of others*, but by such an *unaffectionate Determination*, as that by which one moves his *first Finger* rather than the *second*, in giving an Instance of a *trifling Action*; let any one ask if this Action should be *meritorious*: and yet that there should be no *Merit* in a *tender compassionate Heart*, which shrinks at every *Pain* of its *Fellow-Creatures*, and triumphs in their *Happiness*; with *kind Affections* and *strong Desire* labouring for the publick Good. If this be the Nature of *meritorious Actions*; I fancy every honest Heart would disclaim all *Merit in Morals*, as violently as the old *Protestants* rejected it in *Justification*.

But let us see which of the two Senses of *Merit* or *Praise-worthiness* is founded on this (I won't call it *unreasonable* or *casual*) but *unaffectionate Choice*. If *Merit* denotes the *Quality moving the Spectator to approve*, then there may be *unaffectionate Election* of the greatest Villany, as well as of the most useful Actions; but who will say that they are *equally approved*?—But perhaps 'tis not the *mere Freedom of Choice* which is approved, but the *free Choice of publick Good*, without any *Affection*. Then *Actions* are approved for *publick Usefulness*, and not for *Freedom*. Upon this Supposition the *Heat of the Sun*, the *Fruitfulness of a Tree*, would be *meritorious*: or if one says, "these are not Actions;" they are at least *meritorious Qualities, Motions, Attractions*, &c. And a *casual Invention* may be *meritorious*.—Perhaps *Free Election* is a *Conditio sine qua non*, and *publick Usefulness* the immediate *Cause* of *Approbation*; neither separately, but both jointly are *meritorious*: *Free Election alone* is not *Merit*; *Publick Usefulness alone* is not *Merit*; but both concurring. Then should any Person by *mere Election*, without any *Desire* to serve the publick, set about *Mines*, or any *useful Manufacture*; or should a Person by *mere Election* stab a Man, without knowing him to be a *publick Robber*; here both *free Election* and *publick Usefulness* may concur: Yet will any one say there is *Merit* or *Virtue* in such Actions? Where then shall we find *Merit*, unless in *kind Affections*, or *Desire* and *Intention* of the publick Good? This moves our *Approbation* wherever we observe it: and the want of this is the true *Reason* why a *Searcher for Mines*, a *free Killer* of an unknown Robber, the *warming Sun*, or the *fruitful Tree*, are not counted *meritorious*.

But it may be said, that to make an Action *meritorious*, it is necessary not only that the Action be *publickly useful*, but that it be *known* or *imagined* to be *such*, before the Agent freely chuses it. But what does this add to the former Scheme? Only a *Judgment* or *Opinion* in the *Understanding*, concerning the *natural Tendency* of an Action to the publick Good: Few, it may be presumed, will place *Virtue* in *Assent* or *Dissent*, or *Perceptions*. And yet this is all that is superadded to the former Case. The Agent must not *desire* the publick Good, or have any *kind Affections*. This would spoil the *Freedom of Choice*, according to their Scheme, who insist on a *Freedom opposite to Affections or Instincts*: But he must *barely know* the Tendency to publick Good, and without any *Propensity* to, or *Desire* of, the Happiness of others, by an *arbitrary Election*, acquire his *Merit*. Let every Man judge for himself, whether these are the Qualities which he *approves*.

What has probably engaged many into this way of speaking, "that *Virtue* is the Effect of *rational Choice*, and not of *Instincts* or *Affections*," is this; they find, that "some Actions flowing from particular kind Affections, are sometimes condemned as *evil*," because of their *bad Influence* upon the State of larger Societies; and that the *Hurry* and *confused Sensations* of any of our Passions, may divert the Mind from considering the *whole Effect* of its Actions: They require therefore to *Virtue a calm and undisturbed Temper*.

There is indeed some ground to recommend this *Temper* as very necessary in many Cases; and yet some of the most *passionate Actions* may be perfectly good. But in the *calmest Temper* there must remain *Affection* or *Desire*, some implanted *Instinct* for which we can give no *reason*; otherwise there could be no Action of any kind. As it was shewn above in the first Section.

If *meritorious Actions* are these which whosoever does not *approve*, is himself *condemned* by others; the Quality by which they are constituted *meritorious* in this Sense, is the same which moves our *Approbation*. We *condemn* any Person who does not *approve* that which we our

selves *approve*: We presume the *Sense* of others to be constituted like our own; and that any other Person, would he attend to the Actions which we *approve*, would also *approve* them, and love the Agent; when we find that another does not *approve* what we approve, we are apt to conclude, that he has not had *kind Affections* toward the Agent, or that some *evil Affection* makes him overlook his *Virtues*, and on this account condemn him.

Perhaps by *meritorious* is meant the same thing with another Word used in like manner, *viz. rewardable*. Then indeed the *Quality* in which *Merit* or *Rewardableness* is founded, is different from that which is denoted by *Merit* in the former Meanings.

Rewardable, or *deserving Reward*, denotes either that *Quality which would incline a superior Nature to make an Agent happy*: Or, 2dly, That *Quality of Actions which would make a Spectator approve a superior Nature, when he conferred Happiness on the Agent, and disapprove that Superior, who inflicted Misery on the Agent, or punished him*. Let any one try to give a Meaning to the Word *rewardable* distinct from these, and not satisfy himself with the Words *worthy of*, or *deserving*, which are of very complex and ambiguous Signification.

Now the *Qualities* of an Action determining a powerful Nature to reward it, must be various, according to the *Constitution* and *Affections* of that Superior. If he has a *moral Sense*, or *something analogous* of a more excellent sort, by which he is determined to *love* those who evidence *kind Affections*, and to desire their Happiness, then *kind Affection* is a Quality moving to Reward.

But farther, if this Superior be *benevolent*, and observes that inferior Natures can by their mutual Actions promote their mutual Happiness; then he must incline to excite them to *publickly useful Actions*, by Prospects of *private Interest* to the Agent, if it be needful: Therefore he will engage them to publickly useful Actions by *Prospects of Rewards*, whatever be the internal Principle of their Actions, or whatever their *Affections* be. These *two Qualities* in Actions, *viz. flowing from kind Affections*, and *publick Usefulness* concurring, undoubtedly incline the *benevolent Superior* to confer Happiness: The *former alone*, where, thro' want of *Power*, the Agent is disappointed of his kind Intentions, will incline a benevolent Superior to reward; and the *want of Power* in the Agent will never incline him to punish. But the *want of kind Affections*, altho there be *publickly useful Actions*, may be so offensive to the *moral Sense* of the *superior Nature*, as to prevent *Reward*, or excite to *punish*; unless this Conduct would occasion *greater publick Evil*, by withdrawing from many Agents a *necessary Motive* to publick Usefulness, *viz. the Hope of Reward*.

But if the Superior were *malicious* with a *moral Sense contrary to ours*, the contrary *Affections* and *Tendency of Actions* would excite to reward, if any such thing could be expected from such a *Temper*.

If Actions be called *rewardable*, when "a *Spectator* would approve the *superior Mind* for conferring Rewards on such Actions:" Then various Actions must be *rewardable*, according to the *moral Sense* of the Spectator. *Men* approve rewarding all *kind Affections*: And if it will promote publick Good to promise Rewards to *publickly useful Actions* from whatsoever *Affections* they proceed, it will evidence Benevolence in the Superior to do so. And this is the Case with *human Governors*, who cannot dive into the Affections of Men.

Whether Motives or Inclinations to Evil be necessary to make an Agent rewardable?

Some strongly assert (which is often the only Proof) that "to make an Action *rewardable*, the Agent should have had Inclinations to evil as well as to good." What does this mean, That a good governing MIND is only inclined to make an Agent happy, or to confer a *Reward* on him when he has some *evil Affections*, which yet are surmounted by the *benevolent Affections*? But would not a *benevolent Superior* incline to make any *benevolent Agent* happy, whether he had any weaker evil Inclinations or not? Evil Inclinations in an Agent would certainly rather have some Tendency to *diminish* the Love of the superior Mind. Cannot a good Mind *love* an Agent, and *desire* his Happiness, unless he observes some Qualities, which, were they alone, would excite *Hatred* or *Aversion*? Must there be a Mixture of *Hatred* to make *Love* strong and effectual, as there must be a Mixture of *Shade* to set off the Lights in a Picture, where there are no *Shades*? Is there any Love, where there is no *Inclination to make happy*? Or is strong Love made up of *Love* and *Hatred*?

'Tis true indeed, that *Men* judge of the *Strength* of kind Affections generally by the contrary Motives of *Self-Love*, which they surmount: But must the DEITY do so too? Is any Na-

presupposed: Though it is such a *Motive* and *End* as leaves us in perfect *Liberty*. Since it is a *Pleasure* or *Happiness*, not connected with one thing more than another, but following upon the *Determination* itself.

ture the less lovely, for its having no Motive to make itself *odious*? If a Being which has no Motive to evil can be *beloved* by a Superior, shall he not *desire the Happiness* of that Agent whom he loves? 'Tis true, such a Nature will do good Actions without Prospect of any *Self-Interest*; but would any benevolent Superior study the less to make it happy on that account?—But if they apply the Word *rewardable* to those Actions alone, *which an Agent would not do without Prospect of Reward*: then indeed to make an Action in this Sense *rewardable*, 'tis necessary that the Agent should either have *no kind Affections*, or that he should live in such Circumstances, wherein Self-Love should lead to Actions *contrary* to the publick Good, and over-power any kind Affections; or that he should have *evil Affections*, which even in a good Constitution of the World, his *Self-Love* could not over-balance without *Reward*.

This poor Idea of *Rewardableness* is taken from the *Poverty* and *Impotence* of human *Governors*: Their Funds are soon exhausted; they cannot make happy all those whose Happiness they desire: Their *little Stores* must be frugally managed; none must be rewarded for what good they will do without Reward, or for abstaining from Evils to which they are not inclined. Rewards must be kept for the *insolent Minister*, who without reward would fly in the Face of his Prince; for the *turbulent Demagogue*, who will raise Factions if he is not bribed; for the *covetous, mean-spirited, but artful Citizen*, who will serve his Country no farther than it is for his private Interest. But let any kind honest Heart declare what *sort of Characters it loves*? Whose Happiness it most desires? Whom it would reward if it could? Or what these *Dispositions* are, which if it saw rewarded by a superior Nature, it would be most pleased, and most *approve* the Conduct of the Superior? When these Questions are answer'd, we shall know what makes Actions *rewardable*.

If we call all Actions *rewardable*, the rewarding of which we *approve*; then indeed we shall approve the rewarding of all Actions *which we approve*, whether the Agent has had any *Inclinations* or *Motives* to Evil or not: We shall also approve the *promising* of Rewards to all *publicly useful Actions*, whatever were the Affections of the Agents. If by this *Prospect of Reward* either *malicious* Natures are restrained from Mischief, or *selfish* Natures induced to serve the Publick, or *benevolent* Natures not able without reward to surmount real or apparent *selfish Motives*: In all these Cases, the *proposing Rewards* does really advance the Happiness of the *Whole*, or diminish its *Misery*; and evidences *Benevolence* in the superior Mind, and is consequently *approved* by our *moral Sense*.

In this last Meaning of the Word *rewardable*, these Dispositions are rewardable. 1. *Pure unmixed Benevolence*. 2. *Prepollent good Affections*. 3. *Such weak Benevolence, as will not without Reward overcome apparently contrary Motives of Self-Love*. 4. *Unmixed Self-Love, which by Prospect of Reward may serve the publick*. 5. *Self-Love, which by Assistance of Rewards, may overbalance some malicious Affections*. If in these Cases *proposing Rewards* will increase the Happiness of the System, or diminish its Misery, it evidences *Goodness* in the Governor, when he cannot so well otherwise accomplish so much good for the whole.

If we suppose a Necessity of making all virtuous Agents *equally happy*, then indeed a *Mixture of evil Dispositions*, tho surmounted by the good, or of *strong contrary Motives* overbalanced by *Motives to Good*, would be a Circumstance of some Importance in the Distribution of Rewards: Since such a Nature, during the *Struggle of contrary Affections* or *Motives*, must have had less *Pleasure* than that virtuous Nature which met with no *Opposition*: But as this very *Opposition* did give this Nature *full Evidence* of the Strength of its Virtue, this *Consciousness* may be a peculiar *Recompence* to which the unmixed Tempers are Strangers: And there seems no such necessity of an *equal Happiness of all Natures*. It is no way inconsistent with perfect Goodness, to make different *Orders of Beings*; and, provided all the Virtuous be at last *fully content*, and as happy as they desire, there is nothing absurd in supposing *different Capacities* and *different Degrees*; and during the Time of *Probation*, there is no necessity, not the least shew of it, that all be equal.

Those who think “no Person punishable for any Quality or Action, if he had it not in his Power to have had the opposite Quality, or to have abstained from the Action if he had willed it;” perhaps are not mistaken: but then let them not assert on the *other Hand*, that it is unjust to reward or make happy those, who neither had any *Dispositions to Evil*, nor could possibly *desire* any such Dispositions. Now if Mens Affections are naturally good, and if there be in their Fellows no *Quality* which would necessarily raise *Malice* in the Observer; but, on the contrary, *all Qualities* requisite to excite at least *Benevolence* or *Compassion*: It may be justly said to be in the *Power* of every one, by due Attention, to prevent any *malicious Affections*, and to excite in himself

kind Affections toward all. So that the intricate Debates about human *Liberty* do not affect what is here alledged, concerning our *moral Sense* of Affections and Actions, any more than any other Schemes.

Some alledge, that MERIT supposes, beside *kind Affection*, that the Agent has a *moral Sense*, reflects upon his own Virtue, *delights* in it, and *chuses* to adhere to it for the *Pleasure* which attends it.¹⁶ We need not debate the Use of this Word *Merit*: 'tis plain, we *approve* a generous kind Action, tho the Agent had not made this *Reflection*. This *Reflection* shews to him a Motive of Self-Love, the joint View to which does not increase our *Approbation*: But then it must again be owned, that we cannot form a just Conclusion of a *Character* from one or two kind, generous Actions, especially where there has been no very strong *Motives to the contrary*. Some apparent Motives of *Interest* may afterwards overbalance the *kind Affections*, and lead the Agent into vicious Actions. But the *Reflection* on Virtue, the being once *charmed* with the lovely Form, will discover an *Interest* on its side, which, if well attended to, no other Motive will overbalance. This *Reflection* is a great *Security* to the *Character*; this must be supposed in such Creatures as *Men* are, before we can well depend upon a *Constancy in Virtue*. The same may be said of many other Motives to Virtue from *Interest*; which, tho they do not *immediately* influence the *kind Affections* of the Agent, yet do remove these *Obstacles* to them, from *false Appearances of Interest*. Such are these from the Sanctions of *divine Laws* by future Rewards and Punishments, and even the manifest *Advantages of Virtue in this Life*: without *Reflection* on which, a steady *Course of Virtue* is scarce to be expected amidst the present Confusion of human Affairs.

Section VI: How far a Regard to the Deity is necessary to make an Action virtuous

I. Some do imagine, that “to make an Action virtuous, it is necessary that the Agent should have previously known his Action to be *acceptable to the DEITY*, and have undertaken it chiefly with design to please or obey him. We have not, say they, reason to imagine a *malicious Intention* in many of the worst Actions: the very *want of good Affections in their just Degree*, must constitute *moral Evil*. If so, then the *moral Evil* in the *want of Love or Gratitude*, must increase in proportion to the *Causes of Love or Gratitude* in the Object: by the *Causes of Love*, they mean *those Qualities in the Object* upon Observation of which Love or Gratitude do arise in every good Temper. Now the *Causes of Love* toward the DEITY are infinite; therefore the want of the highest possible Degree of Love to him, must be infinitely evil.—To be excited more by *smaller Motives* or *Causes* than by greater; to love those who are less *lovely*, while we neglect him in whom are *infinite Causes of Love*, must argue great *Perverseness* of Affections. But the *Causes of Love* in the DEITY, his infinite *Goodness* toward all, and even toward our selves, from whence springs all the Happiness of our Lives, are infinitely above any *Causes of Love* to be found in *Creatures*: Therefore to act from Love to them without *Intention* to please GOD, must be infinitely evil.”

If this Reasoning be just, the best of Men are infinitely evil. The Distinction between *habitual* and *actual Intention* will not remove the Difficulty, since these Arguments require *actual Intention*. An *habitual Intention* is not a present act of Love to the DEITY, influencing our Actions more than actual Love to *Creatures*, which this Argument requires; but a prior general *Resolution* not at present repeated.

To find what is just on this Subject, we may premise some Propositions of which Men must convince themselves by *Reflection*.

How we compute the Goodness of Temper.

II. There is in Mankind such a *Disposition* naturally, that they desire the Happiness of any known *Sensitive Nature*, when it is not inconsistent with something more strongly desired; so that were there no *Oppositions of Interest* either private or publick, and *sufficient Power*, we would confer upon every Being the highest Happiness which it could receive.

¹⁶ See Lord Shaftesbury's Inquiry concerning Virtue. Part 1.

But our *Understanding* and *Power* are limited, so that we cannot know many other Natures, nor is our utmost *Power* capable of promoting the Happiness of many: our Actions are therefore influenced by some *stronger Affections* than this general *Benevolence*. There are certain *Qualities* found in some Beings more than in others, which excite stronger *Degrees* of *Good-will*, and determine our *Attention* to their Interests, while that of others is neglected. The Ties of *Blood*, *Benefits conferred* upon us, and the Observation of *Virtue* in others, raise much more vigorous *Affections*, than that general *Benevolence* which we may have toward all. These *Qualities* or *Relations* we may call the *Causes of Love*.

However these *Affections* are very different from the general *Benevolence* toward all, yet it is very probable, that there is a *Regularity* or *Proportion* observed in the Constitution of our Nature; so that, abstracting from some acquired *Habits*, or *Associations of Ideas*, and from the more sudden *Emotions* of some particular Passions, that Temper which has the most lively *Gratitude*, or is the most susceptible of *Friendship* by virtuous Characters, would also have the strongest general *Benevolence* toward indifferent Persons: And on the contrary, where there is the weakest general *Benevolence*, there we could expect the least *Gratitude*, and the least *Friendship*, or *Love toward the Virtuous*. If this *Proportion* be observed, then, if we express all these Desires of the good of others by the Name of *Benevolence*, we may denote the several *Degrees* in which Men possess these several kind Dispositions by the *Goodness of the Temper*: And the *Degrees* of Desire toward the Happiness of any Person, we may call the *Quantity of Love* toward him. Then,

The *Quantity of Love* toward any Person is in a compound Proportion of the apprehended *Causes of Love* in him, and of the *Goodness of Temper* in the Observer. Or $L = C \times G$.

When the *Causes of Love* in two Objects are apprehended equal, the *Love* toward either in different Persons is as the *Goodness of Temper*; or $L = G \times 1$.

When the *Goodness of Temper* is the same or equal, the *Love* toward any Objects will be as the *Causes*; or $L = C \times 1$.

The *Goodness of any Temper* is therefore as the *Quantity of Love*, divided by the apprehended *Causes*, or $G = L/C$. And since we cannot apprehend any Goodness in having the *Degree of Love* above the *Proportion* of its Causes, the most virtuous Temper is that in which the *Love* equals its *Causes*, which may therefore be expressed by Unity.¹⁷

Hence it follows, that if there were any Nature incomparably more excellent than any of our *Fellow-Creatures*, from whom also we our selves, and all others had received the greatest *Benefits*; there would be less *Virtue* in any small *Degree of Desire of his Happiness*, than in a like *Degree of Love* toward our *Fellow-Creatures*. But *not loving* such a Being, or having a *smaller Degree of Love*, must evidence a much greater *Defect* in *Virtue*, than a like *want of Love* toward our *Fellow-Creature*. For the *Causes of Love* being very great, unless the *Love* be also very great, the *Quotient* which expresses the *Goodness of Temper* will be very much below Unity.

The general Rules applied to the Love of God.

III. To apply this to the DEITY is very obvious. Our *Affections* toward him arise in the same manner as toward our *Fellows*, in proportion to our *Attention* to the *Causes of Love* in him, and the *Goodness of our Temper*. The Reflection on his Goodness raises *Approbation* and *Complacence*, his *Benefits* raise *Gratitude*, and both occasion *Good-will* or *Benevolence*. Some imagine, that "his *Happiness* is wholly detached from all Events in this World, absolute, and unvaried in himself." And yet the same *Inclination* of Mind might remain in us, tho we had this Opinion. When the *Happiness of a Friend* is in *Suspense*, we desire it; when he has obtained all that which we desired, the same *Inclination of Mind* seems to remain toward him, only without that *Uneasiness* accompanying Desire of an *uncertain* Object: Thus *Gravity* may be said to be the same when a Body is resting on a fixed Base, as when it caused descent.

Upon this Scheme of the divine Happiness, it is not easy to account how our *Love* to him could excite us to promote the *Happiness of our Fellows*. Our frequent *Contemplation* of such an amiable excellent Nature, might indeed tend to *reform* or *improve* our Temper.

If we imagine that the DEITY has such *Perceptions of Approbation* or *Dislike* toward Actions as we have our selves, then indeed our *Love* to him would directly excite us to do whatever he

approves, and shun what he condemns. We can scarce avoid imagining, that the frequent recurring of Events *disapproved*, must be uneasy to any Nature, and that the observing *approved Actions* must be delightful.

If we imagine that the *divine Happiness*, or any part of it is connected with the Happiness of his *Creatures*, so that their Happiness is constituted the Occasion of his; then indeed our *Love to the DEITY* will directly excite us to all manner of *beneficent Actions*. 'Tis true, many good Men deny these two last Opinions, yet it is probable, when their Minds are diverted from *Speculations*, by Opportunities of Action, there recurs some Imagination of *Offence*, *Uneasiness*, and *Resentment* in the DEITY, upon observing *evil Actions*; of *Delight* and *Joy* in beholding good Actions; of *Sorrow* upon observing the *Misery* of his *Creatures*, and *Joy* upon seeing them happy: So that by their *Love to the DEITY* they are influenced to beneficent Actions, notwithstanding their *speculative Opinions*. In our Conceptions of the DEITY, we are continually led to imagine a Resemblance to what we feel in our selves.

Whoever maintains these Opinions of the DEITY to be true, must also suppose "a particular *Determination* of all Events in the Universe;" otherwise this *part* of the divine Happiness is made *precarious* and *uncertain*, depending upon the *undetermined Will* of *Creatures*.

The Diversity of Opinions concerning the *divine Happiness*, may lead Men into different ways of accounting for the *Influence* which the *Love of GOD* may have upon our Actions toward our *Fellows*: But the *Affections* toward the DEITY would be much the same upon both Schemes. Where there were the same just *Apprehensions* of the *divine Goodness* in two Persons, the *Love* to the DEITY in both would be proportioned to the *Goodness of Temper*. Tho the highest possible *Degree* of *Love* to a perfectly good DEITY, would evidence no more *Virtue of Temper*, than a proportioned *Love to Creatures*; yet the having only *smaller Degrees* of *Love* to the DEITY, would evidence a greater *Defect* of Goodness in the Temper, than any want of *Affection* toward *Creatures*.

Here it must be remembred, that in arguing concerning the *Goodness of Temper* from the *Degree* of *Love* directly, and the *Causes of Love* inversly, *actual Attention* to the *Causes of Love* is supposed in the Person. For 'tis plain, that in the best Temper no one *Affection* or *Idea* can always continue present, and there can be no *Affection* present to the Mind, toward any Object, while the *Idea* of it is not present. The bare *Absence* therefore of *Affection*, while the Mind is employed upon a different Object, can argue no *evil* in the Temper, farther than want of *Attention* may argue want of *Affection*. In like manner, in the *best Temper*, there can be no *Love* toward an Object *unknown*: The want therefore of *Love* to an Object *unknown*, can argue no *evil* in the Temper, farther than *Ignorance* may argue want of *Affection*. It is certain indeed, that he who knows that there is a good DEITY, and actually thinks of him, and of all his *Benefits*, yet has not the *strongest Love and Gratitude* toward him, must have a Temper void of all Goodness; but it will not follow, that that Mind is void of Goodness which is not *always thinking* of the DEITY, or actually *loving* him, or even does not know him. How far the want of *Attention* to the DEITY, and *Ignorance* of him, may argue an *evil Temper*, must be shown from different *Topicks*, to be considered hereafter.

What Degrees of Affection necessary to Innocence.

IV. But previously to these Inquiries we must consider "what *Degrees* or *Kinds* of *Affection* are necessary to obtain the simple *Approbation of Innocence*." 'Tis plain, the bare *Absence* of all *Malice* is not enough. We may have the general *Benevolence* toward a mere *sensitive Nature*, which had no other desire but *Self-Love*; but we can apprehend no *moral Goodness* in such a Being: Nay, 'tis not every *small Degree* of kind *Affections* which we *approve*. There must be some *proportion* of kind *Affections* to the *other Faculties* in any Nature, particularly to its *Understanding* and *active Powers* to obtain *Approbation*. Some Brutes evidence small *Degrees of Good-will*, which make them be *approved in their Kind*; but the same *Degrees* would not be approved in a *Man*. There is an higher *Degree* expected in Mankind, to which, if they do not come up, we do not account them *innocent*. It is not easy to fix precisely that *Degree* which we approve as *innocent* by our moral Sense. Every kind *Affection*, if it be considered only with relation to its own Object, is indeed approved; such as *natural Affection*, *Gratitude*, *Pity*, *Friendship*: And yet when we take a more *extensive View* of the Tendency of some Actions proceeding even from these *Affections*, we may often condemn these Actions when they are apprehended as pernicious to *larger Systems* of Mankind. In the same manner we often condemn Actions done from *Love* to a particular Country, when they appear to be *pernicious to*

¹⁷ See *Treat. 2. Sect. 3. Art. II.* last Paragraph.

Mankind in general. In like manner, *Self-Preservation* and pursuing *private Advantage* abstractly considered, is *innocent*: But when it is apprehended as very pernicious in any case to the Safety of *others*, it is condemned.

Mankind are capable of large extensive Ideas of *great Societies*. And it is expected of them, that their *general Benevolence* should continually direct and limit, not only their *selfish Affections*, but even their *nearer Attachments* to others: that their Desire of *publick Good*, and Aversion to *publick Misery*, should overcome at least their Desire of *positive private Advantages*, either to themselves or their particular Favourites; so as to make them abstain from any Action which would be positively pernicious or hurtful to *Mankind*, however *beneficial* it might be to *themselves*, or their *Favourites*. To undergo *positive Evil* for the sake of *positive Good* to others, seems some degree of *Virtue* above *Innocence*, which we do not universally expect: But to reject *positive* attainable good, either for our selves or our particular Favourites, rather than occasion any considerable *Misery* to others, is requisite to obtain the Approbation of *Innocence*. The *want* of this Degree we positively condemn as evil; and an Agent must rise above it by *positive Services* to Mankind, with some *Trouble* and *Expence* to himself, before we approve him as virtuous. We seem indeed universally to expect from all Men those good Offices which give the Agent no trouble or expence: Whoever refuses them is below *Innocence*. But we do not *positively condemn* those as evil, who will not sacrifice their private Interest to the Advancement of the *positive Good* of others, unless the private Interest be *very small*, and the publick Good *very great*.¹⁸

But as the Desire of *positive private Good* is weaker than Aversion to *private Evil*, or Pain; so our *Desire* of the positive Good of others, is weaker than our *Aversion* to their Misery: It seems at least requisite to *Innocence*, that the stronger *publick Affection*, viz. our Aversion to the Misery of others, should surmount the *weaker private Affection*, the Desire of positive private Good; so that no prospect of Good to our selves, should engage us to that which would occasion *Misery* to others. It is in like manner requisite to *Innocence*, that our Aversion to the Misery of *greater or equal Systems*, should surmount our Desire of the *positive Good* of these to which we are more particularly attached.

How far it may be necessary to *Innocence* to submit to smaller *private Pains* to prevent the *greater Sufferings* of others, or to promote some great *positive Advantages*; or how far the Happiness of *private Systems* should be neglected for the Happiness of the *greater*, in order to obtain the *Approbation of Innocence*, it is perhaps impossible precisely to determine, or to fix any *general Rules*; nor indeed is it necessary. Our business is not to find out “at how *cheap* a Rate we can purchase *Innocence*, but to know what is *most noble, generous and virtuous* in Life.” This we know consists in sacrificing all *positive Interests*, and bearing all *private Evils* for the publick Good: And in submitting also the Interests of all *smaller Systems* to the Interests of the whole: Without any other *Exception or Reserve* than this, that every Man may look upon himself as a *Part* of this System, and consequently not sacrifice an *important private Interest* to a less *important Interest* of others. We may find the same sort of Difficulty about all our other Senses, in determining precisely what Objects are *indifferent*, or where Pleasure ends, and Disgust begins, tho the positive Degrees of the *grateful* and *ungateful* are easily distinguished.

It is also very difficult to fix any precise *Degree* of Affection toward the DEITY, which should be barely requisite to *Innocence*. Only in general we must disapprove that Temper, which, upon Apprehension of the perfect Goodness of the DEITY, and of his innumerable Benefits to Mankind, has not *stronger Affections* of Love and *Gratitude* toward him, than those toward any other Being. Such Affections would necessarily raise frequent *Attention* and *Consideration* of our Actions; and would engage us, if we apprehended any of them to be offensive to him, or contrary to that *Scheme of Events* in which we apprehended the DEITY to *delight*, to avoid them with a more firm Resolution than what we had in any other Affairs. *Positive Virtue* toward the DEITY must go farther than a *resolute abstaining from Offence*, by engaging us with the greatest Vigor, to do whatever we apprehend as *positively pleasing*, or conducive to those Ends in which we apprehend the DEITY delights. It is scarce conceivable that any *good Temper* can want such Affections toward the DEITY, when once he is known, as were above supposed necessary to *Innocence*. Nor can we imagine *positive Degrees* of Goodness of Temper above *Innocence*, where Affections toward the DEITY do not arise proportionably.

¹⁸ [In many Questions of this Nature we must have recourse with *Aristotle* to a *Sense*, which is the last Judge in particular Cases.]

What is here said relates only to the *Apprehensions of our moral Sense*, and not to those Degrees of *Virtue* which the DEITY may require by *Revelation*: And every one's Heart may inform him, whether or no he does not *approve*, at least as *innocent*, those who omit many good Offices which they might *possibly* have done, provided they do a great deal of good; those who carefully abstain from every *apprehended Offence* toward the DEITY, tho they might possibly be more frequent in Acts of *Devotion*. 'Tis true indeed, the *Omission of what we know to be required* is positively evil: so that by a *Revelation* we may be obliged to farther Services than were requisite previously to it, which we could not innocently omit, after this *Revelation* is known: But we are here only considering our *moral Sense*.

How far Ignorance of DEITY is Evil.

V. Now let us inquire how far *simple Ignorance* of a DEITY, or *unaffected Atheism* does evidence an *evil Disposition*, or *Defect* of good Affections below *Innocence*.

1. Affections arising upon *apparent Causes*, or present *Opinions*, tho false, if they be such as would arise in the *best Temper*, were these *Opinions true*, cannot argue any present *want of Goodness* in any Temper, of themselves: the *Opinions* indeed may often argue a *want of Goodness* at the *time* they were formed: But to a benevolent Temper there is no *Cause of Malice*, or Desire of the *Misery* or *Non-existence* of any Being for itself. There may be Causes of Dislike, and Desire of Misery or Non-existence, as the Means of greater Good, or of lessening Evil.

2. No Object which is entirely *unknown*, or of which we have no *Idea*, can raise *Affection* in the best Temper; consequently *want of Affection* to an unknown Object evidences no evil. This would be the Case of those who never heard even the *Report of a DEITY*, if ever there were any such: Or who never heard of any *Fellow-Creatures*, if one may make a Supposition like to that made by *Cicero*.¹⁹ And this is perhaps the Case, as to the DEITY, of any unfortunate Children, who may have some little *Use of Reason*, before they are instructed in any *Religion*.

If there really were an *Innate Idea* of a DEITY so imprinted, that no Person could be without it; or if we are so disposed, as *necessarily* to receive this *Idea*, as soon as we can be called moral Agents: then no *Ignorance* of a DEITY can be innocent; all *Atheism* must be affected, or an Opinion formed, either thro' *evil Affection*, or *want of good Affection* below *Innocence*. But if the *Idea of a DEITY* be neither imprinted, nor offer itself even previously to any *Reflection*, nor be universally excited by *Tradition*, the bare *Want* of it, where there has been no *Tradition* or *Reflection*, cannot be called criminal upon any Scheme. Those who make *Virtue* and *Vice* relative to a *Law*, may say, “Men are required to reflect, and thence to know a DEITY.” But they must allow *Promulgation* necessary, before Disobedience to a Law can be criminal. Now previously to *Reflection* it is supposed impossible for the Agent to know the *Legislator*, or to know the *Law requiring him to reflect*, therefore this *Law requiring him to reflect*, was not antecedently to his *Reflection* published to him.

The Case of *human Laws*, the Ignorance of which does not excuse, is not parallel to this. No Person under any Civil Government can be supposed ignorant that there are *Laws* made for the whole State. But in the present Supposition, Men antecedently to *Reflection* may be ignorant of the DEITY, or that there are *Laws of Nature*. If any Subject could thus be *unapprized*, that he lived under Civil Government, he should not be accounted *Compos Mentis*. The Supposition indeed in both Cases is perhaps wholly *imaginary*; at least as to Persons above Childhood. One can scarce imagine that ever any Person was wholly unapprized of a *governing Mind*, and of a *Right and Wrong* in Morals. Whether this is to be ascribed to *innate Ideas*, to *universal Tradition*, or to some *necessary Determination* in our Nature, to imagine a designing *Cause* of the beautiful Objects which occur to us, with a *moral Sense*, let the curious inquire.

3. Suppose an Idea formed in a *benevolent Mind*, of other *sensitive Natures*, *Desire* of their Existence and Happiness would arise.

4. A good *Temper* would incline any one to wish, that other Natures were *benevolent*, or morally Good, since this is the chief *Happiness*.

5. A good *Temper* would desire that the Administration of Nature were by a *benevolent* or *good Mind*.

¹⁹ De Nat. Deor. Lib. 2. cap. 37. Ex Aristotele.

6. All Desire of any Event or Circumstance inclines any Mind to search into the *Truth* of that Event or Circumstance, by all the *Evidence* within its power to obtain.

7. Where there is such *Desire*, and sufficiently obvious *Evidence* given in proportion to the *Sagacity* of the desiring Mind, it will come to the Knowledge of the Truth, if its Desire be strong.

Now from these Propositions we may deduce the following Corollaries.

1. Supposing the Idea of a good DEITY once apprehended, or excited either by *Report*, or the slightest *Reflection*; if there be *objective Evidence* in Nature proportioned to the *Capacity* of the Inquirer, for the Existence of a good DEITY, *Atheism* directly argues want of good Affection below *Innocence*.

2. If there be only the simple *Tradition* or *Presumption* of a governing Mind once raised; and if there be *Evidence* as before for his *Goodness*, to conclude the DEITY *evil* or *malicious*, must argue want of *good Affection* as before.

3. Suppose the Idea of an *evil* DEITY once excited, and some Presumptions for his *Malice* from *Tradition*, or slight *Reflection* upon particular *Evils* in Nature; to rest in this Opinion without Inquiry, would argue *want of good Affection*; to desire to *reject* this Opinion, or *confute* it by contrary Evidence, would argue *good Affection*: Suppose such contrary *Evidences* obvious enough in Nature to one who inquired as diligently about it as about his own *Interest*; to continue in the *false Opinion* cannot be innocent.

How Ignorance in human Affairs evidences a bad Temper.

VI. In like manner concerning our Fellow-Creatures, who are actually known to us.

4. To imagine Fellow-Creatures *morally Good*, either according to *Evidence* upon Inquiry, or even by a rash *Opinion*, evidences *good Affection*.

5. Imagining them Evil contrary to obvious *Evidence*, argues *want of good Affection* below *Innocence*.

6. Retaining and *inculcating* an Opinion either of the *Causes of Love* in others, or of the *Causes of Aversion*, induces an *Habit*; and makes the Temper prone to the *Affection* often raised. Opinion of *Goodness* in the DEITY and our Fellows, increases *good Affection*, and improves the *Temper*: *Contrary Opinion* of either, by raising frequent *Aversions*, weakens *good Affection*, and impairs the *Temper*.

This may shew how cautious Men ought to be in passing Sentence upon the *Impiety* of their Fellows, or representing them as *wicked* and *profane*, or *base* to the DEITY, and justly given over to eternal Misery: We may see also what a wise *Mark* it is to know the *true Church* by, that "it pronounces Damnation on all others." Which is one of the Characters of the *Romish Church*, by which it is often recommended as the safest for Christians to live in.

The same *Propositions* may be applied to our Opinions concerning the *natural Tendencies* of Actions. Where the Evidence is obvious as before, good Affection will produce *true Opinions*, and *false Opinions* often argue *want of good Affection* below *Innocence*. Thus, tho in *Assent* or *Dissent* of themselves, there can neither be *Virtue* nor *Vice*, yet they may be *Evidences* of either in the Agent, as well as his *external Motions*. 'Tis not possible indeed for Men to determine precisely in many cases the *Quantity of Evidence*, and its *proportion* to the *Sagacity* of the Observer, which will argue *Guilt* in him, who contrary to it, forms a *false Opinion*. But Men are no better judges of the *Degrees of Virtue and Vice* in external Actions. This therefore will not prove that all *false Opinions* or *Errors* are innocent, more than *external Actions*: The Searcher of Hearts can judge exactly of both. Human *Punishments* are only *Methods of Self-Defence*; in which the *Degrees of Guilt* are not the proper Measure, but the *Necessity of restraining Actions for the Safety of the Publick*.

How want of Attention evidences a bad Temper.

VII. It is next to be considered, how far *want of Attention* to the DEITY can argue *want of good Affections*, in any Agent, to whom he is known.

Every *good Temper* will have strong Affections to a good DEITY, and where there is *strong Affection* there will be *frequent Reflection* upon the Object beloved, *Desire* of pleasing, and *Caution* of offence. In like manner every Person of good Temper, who has had the Knowledge of a *Country*, a *System*, a *Species*, will consider how far these great Societies may be affected by his

Actions, with such Attention as he uses in his own Affairs; and will abstain from what is injurious to them.

Attention to a DEITY apprehended as good, and governing the Universe, will increase the *Moment of Beneficence* in any good Agent, various ways, such as by Prospects of *Reward*, either present or future, by improving his Temper thro' Observation of so amiable a *Pattern*, or by raising Sentiments of *Gratitude* toward the DEITY, a part of whose Happiness the Agent may imagine depends upon the Happiness of the Universe. In like manner, the considering a *Species* or *System* may increase our *good Offices*, since *their* Interests are advanced by good Offices to *Individuals*.

But then from a like Reasoning to that in *Art. II.* 'tis plain, that in *equal Moments* of good produced by two Agents, the *Goodness of the Temper* is inversely as the several *additional Helps*, or *Motives* to it. So that *more Virtue* is evidenced by any given *Moment* of Beneficence from good Affections only toward our *Fellows*, or particular Persons, than by the *same Moment* produced from the joint Considerations of the DEITY, or of a general *System* or *Species*.²⁰

But an injurious Action which appeared to the Agent not only *pernicious to his Fellows*, or to particular Persons, but *offensive to the DEITY*, and pernicious to a *System*, is much more vicious than when the Agent did not reflect upon the DEITY, or a *Community*.

Nothing in this Scheme supersedes the Duty of Love to the DEITY, and general Benevolence.

VIII. We must not hence imagine, that in order to produce greater Virtue in our selves, we should regard the DEITY no farther, then merely to *abstain from Offences*. Were it our sole Intention in beneficent Actions, only to obtain the *private Pleasure* of *Self-Approbation* for the Degree of our Virtue, this might seem the proper Means of having *great Virtue* with the least *Expence*. But if the real Intention, which constitutes an Action virtuous, be the *promoting publick Good*; then *voluntarily* to reject the Consideration of any Motive which would increase the *Moment* of publick Good, or would make us more vigorous and stedfast in Virtue, must argue *want of good Affection*. In any given *Moment* of Beneficence, the unaffected *Want* of Regard to the DEITY, or to *private Interest*, does really argue greater Virtue. But the *retaining these Motives* with a View to increase the *Moment* of publick Good in our Actions, if they really do so, argues Virtue equal to, or greater than that in the former Case: And the *affected Neglect* of these Motives, that so we may acquit our selves virtuously with the *least Expence* to our selves, or with the least *Moment* of publick Good, must evidence *want of good Affections*, and base *Trick* and *Artifice* to impose upon Observers, or our own Hearts. Therefore

Since Gratitude to the DEITY, and even Consideration of *private Interest*, tend to increase the *Moment* of our Beneficence, and to strengthen good Affections, the voluntary *Retaining* them with this View evidences Virtue, and *affecting* to neglect them evidences Vice.²¹ And yet,

If the *Moment* produced by the Conjunction of these Motives, be not greater than that produced with unaffected Neglect of these Motives, from particular good Affection, there is less Virtue in the former than in the latter.

Men may use Names as they please, and may chuse to call nothing *Virtue* but "what is intended chiefly to evidence *Affection* of one kind or other toward the DEITY." Writers on this Scheme are not well agreed about what this *virtuous Intention* is; whether only to evidence *Submission*, or *Submission* and *Love*, or to *obtain the divine Benevolence*, and *private Happiness* to the Agent, or to *give Pleasure to the Deity*. But let them not assert, against universal *Experience*, that we *approve* no Actions which are not thus intended toward the DEITY. 'Tis plain, a *gen-*

²⁰ [See Luke x. 12, 13, 14.]

²¹ This may sufficiently justify the *Writers of Morality* in their proving, that "Virtue is the surest Means of Happiness to the Agent." 'Tis also plain from universal Experience, that a *Regard to the Deity*, frequent *Reflection* on his Goodness, and consequent *Acts of Love*, are the strongest and most universally prevailing *Means* of obtaining a good Temper. Whatever Institution therefore does most effectually tend to raise Mens *Attention*, to *recall* their Minds from the Hurry of their common Affairs, to *instruct* them in the Ways of promoting publick Good farther than the busy Part of the World without assistance would probably apprehend, must be so *wise* and *good*, that every honest Mind should rejoice in it, even though it had no other *Authority* than *human* to recommend it. Every one will understand that by this is meant a *publick Worship* on set Days, in which a stop is put to Commerce, and the busy part of Mankind instructed in the Duties of *Piety* and *Humanity*.

erous compassionate Heart, which, at first view of the Distress of another, flies impatiently to his Relief, or spares no Expence to accomplish it, meets with strong *Approbation* from every Observer who has not perverted his *Sense of Life* by *School-Divinity*, or *Philosophy*. 'Tis to be suspected, that some *Vanity* must be at the Bottom of these Notions, which place *Virtue* in some *Nicety*, which *active Tempers*, have not leisure to apprehend, and only the *Recluse Student* can attain to.

To be led by a *weaker Motive*, where a *stronger* is alike present to the Mind, to love a Creature *more* than GOD, or to have *stronger Desires* of doing what is grateful to Creatures than to GOD, when we equally attend to both, would certainly argue some *Perversion of our Affections*; or to study the *particular Good* of one, more than that of a *System*, when we reflected on both: But as no *finite Mind* can retain at once a *Multiplicity of Objects*, so it cannot *always* retain any one Object. When a Person therefore not thinking at present of the DEITY, or of a *Community* or *System*, does a beneficent Action from *particular Love*, he evidences *Goodness of Temper*. The bare *Absence* of the Idea of a DEITY, or of *Affections* to him, can evidence no evil; otherways it would be a Crime to *fall asleep*, or to think of any thing else: If the bare *Absence* of this Idea be no evil, the Presence of *kind Affections* to Fellow Creatures cannot be evil. If indeed our Love to the DEITY excited to any Action, and at the *same time* Love to a Creature excited to the Omission of it, or to a contrary Action, we must be very criminal if the *former* do not prevail; yet this will not argue all Actions to be evil in which *pleasing the DEITY*, is not directly and chiefly intended. Nay, that Temper must really be very *deficient* in Goodness, which needs to excite it to any good Office, to recal the Thoughts of a DEITY, or a *Community*, or a *System*. The frequent recalling these Thoughts, indeed, does strengthen all good Affections, and increases the *Moment* of Beneficence to be expected from any Temper; and with this *View* frequently to recal such Thoughts, must be one of the best *Helps* to Virtue, and evidence high Degrees of it. Nay, one cannot call that Temper *entire* and *complete*, which has not the *strongest Affection* toward the greatest Benefactor, and the most worthy Object.

Beings of such Degrees of *Knowledge*, and such *Extent* of Thought, as Mankind are not only capable of, but generally obtain, when nothing interrupts their Inquiries, must naturally arise to the Knowledge of the DEITY, if their Temper be good. They must form *general Conceptions* of the whole, and see the *Order*, *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* in the *Administration of Nature* in some Degree. The Knowledge and Love of the DEITY, the *universal MIND*, is as *natural* a Perfection to such a Being as Man, as any Accomplishment to which we arrive by cultivating our natural Dispositions; nor is that Mind come to the *proper State* and *Vigor* of its kind, where *Religion* is not the main *Exercise* and *Delight*.

Whether the DEITY is the sole proper Object of Love.

IX. There is one very subtle Argument on this Subject. Some alledge, "That since the DEITY is really the *Cause* of all the Good in the Universe, even of all the *Virtue*, or *good Affection* in Creatures, which are the seeming *Causes of Love* toward them, it must argue strange *Perversion* of Temper to love those in whom there is no *Cause of Love*, or who are (as they affect to speak) *nothing*, or *Emptiness of all Goodness*. The DEITY alone is amiable, in whom there is infinite *Fulness of every amiable Quality*. The DEITY, say they, not without some Reason, is the *Cause* of every *pleasant Sensation*, which he immediately excites according to a *general Law*, upon the Occasion of *Motions* arising in our Bodies; that likewise he gave us that general *Inclination*, which we modify into all our different *Affections*; GOD therefore, say they, is alone *lovely*. Other Things are not to be beloved, but only the *Goodness of God appearing in them*; nay some do make the *loving* of them, without considering GOD as displaying his Goodness in them, to be infinitely evil."

In answer to this it must be owned, that "God's being the Cause of all the Good in the Universe, will no doubt raise the highest Love to him in a good Temper, when it reflects upon it."

But 1st, had all Men this Apprehension that "there was no good in any Creature," they really would not love them at all. But Men generally imagine with very good ground, that there are *good Beings* distinct from God, tho produced by him: And whether this Opinion be true or false, it evidences no evil.

2. As upon this Scheme GOD is the Cause of all *pleasant Sensation*, so is he the Cause of all Pain: He is, according to them, the Cause of that *Inclination* which we modify into *evil Affection*, as well as into *good*. If then we are to love GOD only, for what we call *good Affection* in

Creatures, and not the Creatures themselves, we must also only love GOD upon observing *evil Affections* in Creatures, and have no *Aversion* to the *basest Temper*, since God gave the general *INCLINATION* alike in both Cases.

3. If we may suppose *real Beings* distinct from GOD, that *their Affections* are not GOD's Affections, if GOD is not the only *Lover* and *Hater*, if our *moral Sense* is determined to approve *kind Affections*, and our *Love* or *Benevolence* must arise toward what we *approve*; or if we find an *Instinct* to desire the Happiness of every sensitive Nature, we cannot avoid loving Creatures, and we must *approve* any *kind Affections* observed in others toward their Fellows. 'Tis true, we must approve the *highest Affections* toward the DEITY, and *condemn*, as a *Deficiency* of just Affections toward GOD any Degree which is not superior to our other Affections. But still, *Affections* towards Creatures, if they be *distinct Natures* from GOD, must be approved.

4. If to make a Mind virtuous, or even innocent, it be necessary that it should have such sublime Speculations of GOD, as the *τὸ πᾶν* in the *Intellectual active System* (if we call *one Agent* in many *Passive Organs* an *active System*) then God has placed the Bulk of Mankind in an absolute *Incapacity* of Virtue, and inclined them perpetually to infinite Evil, by their very *Instincts* and *natural Affections*. Does the *parental Affection* direct a Man to love the DEITY, or his *Children*? Is it the DIVINITY, to which our *Pity* or *Compassion* is directed? Is God the Object of *Humanity*? Is it a *Design* to support the DIVINITY, which we call *Generosity* or *Liberality*? Upon *Receipt of a Benefit*, does our Nature suggest only *Gratitude toward GOD*? Affections toward the DEITY may indeed often accompany Affections toward Creatures, and do so in a virtuous Temper: but these are distinct Affections. This Notion of making all virtuous Affections to be only directed toward GOD, is not suggested to Men by any thing in their *Nature*, but arises from the long subtle *Reasonings* of Men at leisure, and unemployed in the natural Affairs of Life.

5. If there be no Virtue or Cause of Love in Creatures, it is vain for them to debate wherein their Virtue consists, whether in regard toward the DEITY, or in any thing else, since they are supposed to have none at all.

To conclude this Subject. It seems probable, that however we must look upon that Temper as exceedingly *imperfect*, *inconstant*, and *partial*, in which *Gratitude toward the universal Benefactor*, *Admiration* and *Love* of the *supreme original Beauty*, *Perfection* and *Goodness*, are not the *strongest* and most *prevalent* Affections; yet *particular Actions* may be innocent, nay virtuous, where there is no actual *Intention* of pleasing the DEITY, influencing the Agent.

FINIS.