

DIOGENES' LAMP

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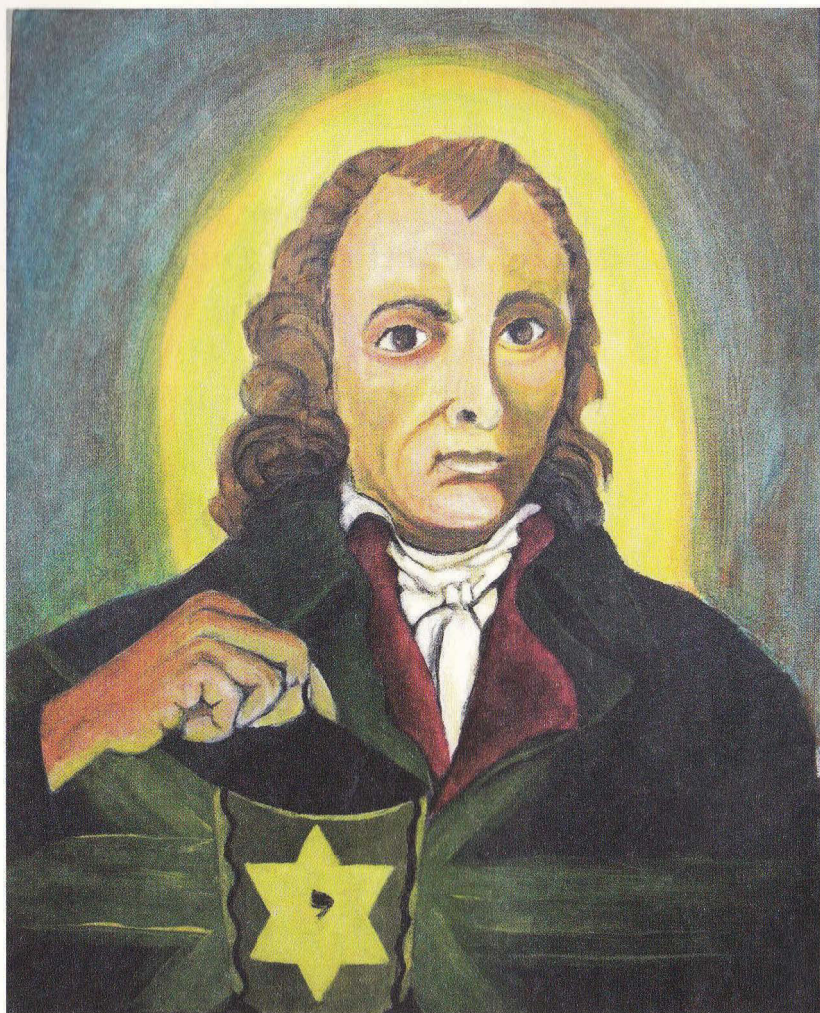
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# Diogenes' Lamp.

*Or, an Examination  
of Our Present-Day Morality and Enlightenment.*





An original painting by Jeremy Wood



# Diogenes' Lamp.



*Or, an Examination  
of Our Present-Day Morality and Enlightenment.*

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*by  
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# **Truth on the Illuminati**

By Sir Mark Bruback K.T.

## **Part I**

Passerby- "Hey buddy, what are you doin' with that lamp?"

Diogenes- "I'm looking for an honest man."

In the last 200 years, no group has been so widely talked about, creating such a conspiratorial cloud of confusion, as the Illuminati. The tenets of soul emancipation & human liberation, can be said to be the most important goals in life, yet keeping the keys from other honest seekers is truly the biggest conspiracy in history.

In the shadowy world of secret societies, the Bavarian Illuminati or 'Perfectibilists' (as they originally called themselves) have already left their mark upon history and the human consciousness. Sadly though, the information written about them, up to this point, has been tainted and perverted into a mish-mash of speculative truths and outright lies. A far cry from the 'self-help' ideals of self knowledge & global unity that the Illuminati promoted during their existence, the truth shall be told with these pages. This book, 'Diogenes Lamp' is the light by which we will cast away the darkness of mystery and set the record straight.

The revolutionary culture of the American 60's gave birth to many a blazing star/hero of freedom. The music, cinema & arts in general, socially aware activists of all quarters and disciplines began to spread a message, (so ancient, yet so 'new') to a society that seemed to have forgotten it's original tenants of freedom. This 'age' of America gave birth to a writer who would bring the esoteric name of our social change group to a modern audience, that writer/philosopher was Robert Anton Wilson.

As the 60's slowly slid into the 70's, Robert A. Wilson (RAW) was working as a humor editor at the internationally renown Playboy magazine. A fan of sci-fi, philosophy, history, religion and metaphysics, RAW began work with Robert Shea in creating a three part book series titled the 'Illuminatus Trilogy'. This instantly became an underground success and became a solid foundation for RAW to continue his more



'spiritual' writings. He later went on to pen 35 books, that have captured the minds & imaginations of new generations every year.

RAW, of all the sage philosophers of modern times, is responsible for bringing the 'Illuminati' into our pop culture dictionary today. His writings are a testament of triumph in translating the 'old ways' into a more coherent language for a new generation to understand the fundamental truths of existence.

The birth pains of bringing the name 'Illuminati' back into the world's eye, is that there are those who did not understand the cosmic joke it was to him. They, (yes, the infamous 'they') overlooked the very humorous story of the Illuminatus Trilogy, (mixed with truths, conspiracies, synchronicities, insider head nods, arcane wisdom and general Tom Foolery) and saw a name they could now place on every sinister & shadowy event their eyes could see or their minds create.

RAW, (bless his heart & may he rest in peace) added fuel to the fire, not only inspiring would-be adepts to seek out the sources of his work, to look for the gems of wisdom that have helped humanity progress, by associating the name 'Illuminati' within his mythos of international conspiracies & intrigue, he unwittingly open the floodgates to wing nuts & paranoid schizophrenic's ravings ever since.

The most notable of these dastardly blowhards is the traitorous British writer who we will simply call 'Icky'. This cankerous coward of counterintelligence has sold hundreds of thousands of books purporting to have the slightest clue as to who and what the Illuminati actually were/are.

As a mentally challenged bigot, he has spread so many lies and drug the name Illuminati through the dirt almost to a humorous degree, (funny if it were not so viciously incorrect). He has used the name as a blanket for every event his small mind has wrestled with & the cost is truth.

He has claimed a connection with the British royal family & the knightly Order of the Templars (fair enough) with them being reptilian aliens bent on world domination (can I get an X-ray or blood test please?) & other science fiction that is hilarious & scary at the same time. Scary because he 'believes' it is true & so speaks to his fans who eat up every word as if it was a Thanksgiving bird. Unfortunately for them, Icky is a modern Jim Jones who has served his followers the



purple punch of cyanide-laced deceit.

Even so, untruth has no specific camp or connection with just one group & we see that not only the far left have adopted the name for use. Right-wing fanatics have also borrowed it for their own agendas, twisting it into another heap of garbage filled lies & slander. Their take on it seems even more underhanded & racist.

Whereas the left have used the name as a general term for inner circles of greedy businessmen with hopes of world domination, (I'm sure there are some) who supposedly control EVERY big company & organization, the right has the equal opposite conclusion. They believe that the Order of the Illuminati is a 'cabal' of evil Jews, who are trying to undermine society by creating a world of loose virtues & values. Promiscuous sex, drug use & destroying 'Christian' morality are but some charges.

Once again, mere rubbish, yet very much promoted by the so-called evangelical sects, (who are so hate-filled that even Jesus the Christ himself would be troubled by their sin). This anti-Semitic rhetoric is further spread by certain political puppets, who are preaching more of an apocalyptic doomsday than 'Heaven on Earth'. The ignorance this hate creates, once again deludes the followers of dogmas based on a narrow & limited view of reality.

One of these leaches of linguistic garbage is one we will call 'LaDouche'. He claims to be Christian, attracting thousands of youthful idealists in college who want to make the world a better place, (OK, Amen, I agree so far) then his mind begins to show the 'tells' of being a raving mad sociopath, with conspiracy theories up the yin yang and more hateful talk that only thinly veils his hatred of the Jews, (bad news, count me out).

Between the fabrications of both extremes of belief system (or B.S. as RAW used to say) is yet another myth perpetrated by a writer who has out done them all, so far. That man is Dan Brown.

In his book 'Angels and Demons' Mr. Brown claims that our Illuminati is, again, a secret society, that governs the world and that it has its invisible hands in shaping world policies. He has romanticized the myth, decorating it frosting sweet with flower-shaped over exaggerations and tying every theory under the sun together into a convenient story that the world has eaten up by the tens of millions.



This is wrong too. Not wrong enough to stop making a Hollywood movie about it based on the book, yet wrong none-the-less. Granted, Mr. Brown is only claiming to be a fiction writer, yet most people believe it's based on some type of fact.

Where am I going with all this?

I want to know, where's their proof?!

Anyone can say anything they want, (our democratic, nay our unalienable human right) yet to claim it as 'TRUTH' one needs to have the adequate facts to back it up. These people & groups, that include the whole spectrum of political belief, have united in attacking a common enemy that is but an illusion with a borrowed name. This name (& the name of its founder Dr. Adam Weishaupt) I am here to clear.

This book that you now hold in your hands is my proof.

Now, what is commonly known about the Illuminati, as an organization, are but a few facts. What people will find on Wikipedia or other sources is but the small information that has been published in English & that, borrowed from a Masonic scholar by the name of Albert G. MacKey M.D. who published the definition of the Illuminati in his "Encyclopedia of Freemasonry" printed at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Here's what he wrote on the Illuminati fraternity:

"Illuminati-This is a Latin word, signifying *the enlightened*, and hence often applied in Latin diplomas as an epithet of Freemasons."

Then next...

"Illuminati of Bavaria- A secret society, founded May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1776, by Adam Weishaupt...its professed objective was, by the mutual assistance of its members, to attain the highest degree of morality and virtue, and to lay the foundation for the reformation of the world by the association of good men to oppose the progress of moral evil."

WB MacKey goes on to describe the system Dr. Weishaupt used to construct his organization, early on associating with the Freemason fraternity. He was initiated into the Masonic Order in Munich in 1777, whose system of degrees, symbolic teaching and secret modes of recognition he emulated, (even though the Illuminati has never been



apart of the Masonic family as a 'Rite' the two have been thrown into the same boat by ignorant writers on the subject). Together with his upbringing as an orphan to Jesuits, Weishaupt utilized the "shrewdness and subtlety" of the disciples of Loyola to create his system of moral teaching.

In 1780, a Freemason by the name of Baron Von Knigge joined the Illuminati & rose quickly to become one of its leaders beside Dr. Weishaupt. Knigge's knowledge of Masonic symbolism (and vast study of ancient religions and culture) aided in creating an elaborate system of degrees, (or passion play stories) for the candidates to the new Order. They were...

A. The Nursery

1. Novice
2. Minerval
3. Illuminatus Minor

B. Symbolic Freemasonry

4. Illuminatus Major, or Scottish Novice
5. Illuminatus Dirigens, or Scottish Knight

C. The Mysteries

*Lesser Mysteries*

6. Prebyster, or Priest
7. Prince or Regent

*Greater Mysteries*

8. Magus
9. Rex, or King

The degrees were building blocks for educating the candidates into the ancient mysteries & philosophies of the Order. One had to be at least 18 to join as a 'Novice' and then the wait time or probation was not less than a year.

Here is what the Illuminati wanted in the fold, as stated by Dr. Weishaupt:

"Whoever does not close their ears to the lamentations of the



miserable, nor their heart to the gentle pity; whoever is the friend and brother of the unfortunate; whoever has a heart capable of love and friendship; whoever is steadfast in adversity, unwearied in carrying out of whatever has been engaged in, undaunted in the overcoming of difficulties, whoever does not mock & despise the weak, whose soul is susceptible of conceiving great designs, desirous of rising superior to base motives, and of distinguishing itself by deeds of benevolence, whoever shuns idleness, whoever considers no knowledge as unessential which they may have the opportunity of acquiring, regarding the knowledge of mankind as their chief study; whoever, when truth and virtue are in question, despising the approbation of the multitude, is sufficiently courageous to follow the dictates of their own heart-such a one is a proper candidate.”

Members of the Order had code names and words for their communications. Weishaupt went by ‘Sparticus’ & Knigge was ‘Philo’. Names of places too were changed, Ingoldstadt was Eleusis, Austria was Egypt, Munich went by Athens and Vienna was Rome. Their calendar too had fictitious names to hide the Order’s designs.

OK, so I’ve just proved the Illuminati WAS a ‘secret’ society, yet let’s explore the reasons for their secrecy.

Firstly, in Bavaria at the time, they had a Papal monarchy. As the professed goal of the Order was to liberate humanity, it stands to reason the control of the Catholic church was at stake. The battle for human’s minds (& money) was an underground fight that was playing out as the Revolutionary War of independence in the Americas. Thank God it worked here!

The slander that the previous mentioned detractors use is the same misinformation proliferated by an already ‘secret’ society, the Jesuits. Though that Order was abolished some years earlier for espionage & intrigue, didn’t stop them from influencing a new act that, on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1784, abolished all secret organizations by royal decree. That following year the Elector of Bavaria repeated the decree & Dr. Weishaupt lost his professorship at the University of Ingoldstadt in Bavaria.

This greatly troubled Dr. Weishaupt who in 1772 had received his professorship of law there at the age of 24. Three years later he had



become a Professor of Natural and Canon Law, much to the jealous dismay of the other professors who had all previously been ecclesiastics.

Weishaupt had always been under the harsh scrutiny of the Jesuits who took him in as an orphan at an early age. Adam's liberal views enraged the clergy yet drew much support from the other students & staff.

This core group of 'Bohemians' began to meet at Adam's private apartment to discuss the current topics & 'Enlightenment'. These freethinkers became the core of the Illuminati and when the crushing blow of Papal decree hit, many were imprisoned, tortured, killed or the lucky ones, fled.

By the time the Illuminati was rounded up in southern Germany, it had already spread to several countries such as: France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Hungary & Italy boasting over two thousand members.

Much will be learned when more books from these countries are found, translated & brought to light. The fact that after only 8 years, the Order was officially disbanded, did little to stop the spirit of human emancipation & the call for true freedom.

Dr. Weishaupt left Bavaria and found a good friend & patron in Duke Ernst of Gotha. In this free city, Adam set more quill to parchment, writing quite a number of books, (amazing what one can do without the distraction of too much TV). Though most were never published, 1786 was a busy year as he did manage to promote the ideals of enlightenment in:

'A Picture of the Illuminati'

'History of the Persecutions of the Illuminati'

'An Apology for the Illuminati'

& then in 1787...

'An Improved System of the Illuminati'

These, along with the book you now hold, 'Diogenes Lamp' (1804) are the sole known remains of written work by Dr. Adam Weishaupt. I pray that more will surface & help us untangle the mess of



hearsay & speculation by so many angry (& apparently wounded) pundits of preposterousness.

In 1811, at the age of 63, Dr. Weishaupt passed from the earth to reside with the Great Architect above. He was spoken of highly by his peers, pupils & fellow Illuminists, who regarded him as a scholarly genius & outstanding advocate for human rights, let us remember him as such.



## **Truth on the Illuminati Part II**

### **'The Lamp of Diogenes'**

Who was Diogenes and why did he carry a lamp? A simple question, that shall be answered easily enough, (considering the information on him was written 412 years before Christ).

Diogenes was a philosopher in Ancient Greece and one of the founders of cynicism. A disciple of Antisthenes who was recorded by Plato as being present at Socrates' death, he found & made a virtue of being in extreme poverty and had an equally extreme contempt for a society he felt was being degraded by its own vanity.

His lamp, as all sources of light, is a symbol of truth and knowledge. Even now, our planet circles around the sun in our orbit. Safely held by the sun's gravity as its powerful rays give the light of creation to all life. Without which, we would be but a mere dead satellite circling to infinity.

Diogenes, in fact, was asked by quite a number of people, (of all walks of life), as to why he carried it around Ancient Greece with him.

His answer:

"I'm looking for an honest man."

Ouch! Talk about cynic.

Yet, in the harshness of his response is an underlying TRUTH, by which we all can learn. When we stop glossing over our vain illusions and look within ourselves, when we tear away the masks of our own delusions and really work to find out who we are, only then can we be truly honest with ourselves and others.

Dr. Adam Weishaupt seems to have chosen a perfect philosopher to use as a title to convey the truths within his own work.

I'm excited myself, after all these years of reading all the conspiracies and other bogus claims, to now read this work in English, straight from the horse's mouth.



On that note, I'd like to offer my utmost, knightly thanks to the lovely Lady Amelia Gill who has translated this work from German to English ('Die Leuchte Des Diogenes' originally printed in Regensburg by Montag and Weiss 1804). Her hard work & diligence of pouring through over 387 pages of text is worthy of much respect. The thought too, of there being no paragraphs, chapters and printed ultra-close and with small type in the original is a feat in true scholarship to be sure.

I'd also like to offer thanks to brother Andrew Swanlund whose moral & informational support has helped guide this to manifestation.

On to the nitty-gritty...

In the first portion of the book, Dr. Weishaupt begins by asking us to ponder our own existence. Where did we come from? Who are we? Where are we going? Classical questions of profound significance.

He then asks us to contemplate the past. Are we improving & doing better than our ancestors? Are we worse off now in this time of moral decay?

Here is where the fun begins as he draws the proverbial 'line in the sand', that there is no escape from the reader, but to decide which camp they have become associated with. Dr. Weishaupt disarms us as he addresses basic human thoughts, emotions & actions.

Are you critical of just others? Do you criticize yourself? He concurs that 'thinking too much' is not the best course, though admitting that, he too, is guilty of it. Yet the quest to become our best has created some of the biggest movements of change on our planet. When we go within to find what the ancients called the 'Philosopher's Stone', we do more than just improve ourselves, we radiate the light of hope that shines and inspires all around us.

What was/is the Philosopher's Stone? The core being within us all. Our pure and perfect soul that emanates our garment of flesh. Deep within us all is the diamond that should be sought out by earnest seekers and students of truth. Multi-facaded gemstones reflecting the plethora of light from the source of all light.

In the times after the Reformation another famous fraternity flourished promoting reason & toleration, known as the Rosicrucians. They too veiled their philosophies in allegory yet they used scientific symbolism and talked of turning 'lead into gold' the process by which a person becomes whole. That is our stone of the wise, elixir of life, the

Great Work, true wisdom and perfect happiness.

The camp of negativity seems to have grown through the years. People giving up hope, sadly, as they dwell on our 'evil world', believing most institutions are bad, self-serving and out to pull the wool over our eyes. This form of unhealthy thinking moves many to act as if there is no future and so "no end to the dastardliness" people use to get ahead.

With 'no consequences' so many underhanded events transpire to rob us of the joy of this amazing creation & existence. The mentality of "well, they're doing it too" gives a so-called license to do ill to ourselves and neighbors in the rat race to achieve without an ounce of respect or proper reason.

Dr. Weishaupt repeatedly proclaims his belief in God, the 'higher power' & Divine Plan of the universe, (The very opposite what many modern detractors have said about our man. They've even gone so far to claim he was some type of Luciferian magician who wanted to destroy religion, lies!). All these movements in the game of life are synchronicity in action & apart of a higher order.

As we as a people and society progress, a form of healthy skepticism is encouraged. There are too many contradictions of belief, of what is 'right' and 'wrong' and this work and our good doctor begs us to find the good, what's right and TRUTH. He wants us to heal humanity and has an answer in so doing.

His suggestion is orienting ourselves to find common ground with others. As a philosophical and moral G.P.S. to aid in guiding our actions to a more positive pitch. He states this as 'location' (as we all have a place, the billions of us humans, so too the billions of locations one can see from). Learning to see with other's eyes beyond the vanity of our own ego-based lenses of perception. A far cry from the propaganda against the Illuminati is this message of peace and unity.

We are all so interdependent, when one suffers, we all ultimately do. This entire work is a self-help book before self-help sections were in bookstores.. Beyond ourselves too is the theme of creating a brighter future for our children & all subsequent generations and descendants. Dr. Weishaupt asks us to create a dialog with each other to find the highest good & moral level by which we may square the virtue of our actions.



“We cannot be more painfully insulted then when someone takes the trouble to destroy the illusions in which our vanity has veiled itself.”

So says our good doctor, yet we all act in accordance with our personal belief systems (B.S.) yet what is 'true' for you or I is slightly different than what another may feel or see. Viewpoints differ yet there is an underlying current that drives us all, the seeking of pleasure. Not much different than any living creature, to be sure is this drive to feel 'good', yet how we come to it is based on our ideas of the universe.

There is no bounds to the infinite possibilities we may manifest. By a fortified will, many great achievements may be accomplished & pursuing our goals is the next topic to be discussed in this book.

What is your purpose? As unique and plentiful as the plethora of stars in heaven are our own goals & dreams of who we wish to be. It seems there is only an issue when no goal is set or when our goal constantly changes.

Dr. Weishaupt was very much against all forms of tyranny and ferocious fanaticism, so as a philosopher he brings us to the moral mirror. How shall we achieve our purpose? On the blood, sweat and tears of others? No! A strong system of ethics need to be in place to govern ourselves accordingly. He asks the question: What good is power, wealth and admiration by themselves? A paradox in that for many this is their goal. A means to an end? Vain striving it seems when certain people spend their lives working, saving every penny, just to hoard it all as a miser, (then humorously believing themselves to be thrifty). Worse though, are those who will stop at nothing to amass their own power, wealth and admiration sparing no expense to destroy anyone in the way.

This 'Will to Power' must be tempered with justice and the balances of morality. Many a dictator have used these Machiavellian techniques only to be emulated by business leaders and political organizations today. Scary because this win-at-all-costs mentality is looked upon as a virtue.

There are many ways and paths that one may choose in creating a positive existence. As we move through our lives, over-sensuality and idleness seem to be the common err. Overindulging in the moment without regard to the consequences to ourselves and the future

generations has had a devastating effect on our society and environment. In the camp of negativity naysayers all of this creates in them a loss of hope. Why work? Why even bother? These self-defeating ideologies perpetuate the lie that nothing matters, so why care anyway?

Those with a solid will are constantly working for unimpeded activity. We understand the value of hard work and self sacrifice in order to accomplish greater things. Money has been the 'greatest' driving force to achieve 'power', yet only to establish for ourselves a stronger foundation from which to build our lives. It is, however, not the most noble end as it is based on the inherent lethargy of society. There is a better way to gain 'power' (true power=empowerment) & that is moderating our passions, the key to ethics & the most noble virtue. Only then may we have justice, as it is the scales in respect for the rights of others.

Dr. Weishaupt terms this 'Refined Sensuality'. As all manifestation is first created in the mind, it slowly 'becomes' and unfolds in life through the physical universe. Doing good to others is not only beneficial to them, but to oneself as well. The eastern philosophers called this Karma, physicists made it a law, by which every action had an equal and opposite reaction, yet no matter what you call "it", being good is just good.

When we stay true to our convictions, even in the face of discouragement, we fortify our being with a positive energy and wellspring of hope that can never be broken.

We shall achieve!

"This world is for every human being, without exceptions!" So states our good doctor and so true.

It is believed some people need laws, rules and regulations by institutions to govern themselves. What happened to our moral compass? We see in the 21<sup>st</sup> century all the countless laws based on a lowest common denominator brand of ethics. Yet there is a higher authority and Dr. Weishaupt is in the camp of us who term that GOD. Encouraged by a belief in something better than just the physical world is a point he makes throughout this book. The concept of morality as a guide to be the best you can be and find that harmony of existence that the Great Architect above created so perfectly.

All this introspection, let's quote the good doctor again:



“When, thus, a person does not comprehend great truths, or has no understanding thereof, he may say to himself with mathematical certainty that his ideal is not the best and that he himself is not that which he ought to be & could become. He may be convinced that even the best of his deeds do not stem from the purest of sources; all of our deeds and opinions, every judgment, every praise or rebuke, every joy or sadness, every anger and dissatisfaction; our associations, the people we cling to above others, the subjects we love most to discuss, the enthusiasm or coldness with which we listen to certain propositions; our interest in well-written texts; the selections we make to these ends;-all this reveals our ideal and consequently our true moral value, despite all artificial pretense & hypocrisy.”

Within our own conception of 'right' and 'just' we move through existence in a quest to perfect ourselves. This is the meaning of the profound symbolism of the legends of the Knights of the Round Table seeking the Holy Grail. Searching for redemption and justification of our lives through good works. The mysteries of Freemasonry and many other a mystery school of spiritual teaching convey this truth through the use of dramas/initiations. In integrity all truth-seekers stand for what is honorable and noble, not only in the eyes of our peers, but, most importantly, in the all-seeing eye of God.

Throughout 'Diogenes Lamp', the belief of an enduring soul and a continued existence is promoted. It is our good doctor's belief, (and many millions of fellow humans) that the soul is immortal & that when one believes in a higher power, your morality is raised to know, on many levels, we must do good to others. Was this not the first rule we were given? The Golden Rule, the most noble intention to be one with others.

This proves also, the utter delusion of the skeptics and conspiracy nuts who fear some 'New World Order'. Are we afraid that we can all coexist in harmony? Do we hate the concept that in a world of Chaotic elements, in our expanded consciousness as humans, we can create Order? There shall be order, as there is already in this perfect universe. Our doctor never used these words exactly, yet he did have a concept of universal freedom & a refined state of society, working together for the benefit of the whole. Yet enough of negative foul-minded fools!

“If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all.”

My great grandmother used to say. I don't think she meant be silent and not express yourself, just be aware of your words & the magickal effect they have to create wonders.

Yet, the infectious drivel of so-called 'experts' permeates our culture as toxic sounds of sludge. So much time and energy wasted on anger & hate as a re-action to what they claim are the true 'evils' of the world. Yet, are they not continuing the cycle? What a way to destroy your 'enemies' than to discourage and dash the dreams of those, (who, if healthy) could be true workers of social change. They seem to have turned virtue into vice and made rotten everything nice. So sad.

Yet, beyond this is something so much more profound, certain as the sun rising in the east or the glory in the lion of the noon day sun. The promotion of world peace and unity with a new outlook on holistic community. How shall we achieve this end?

Seek knowledge.

Not only to amass a cerebral warehouse of random facts & statistics, but for the noble purpose of becoming complete.

On the Tree of Life in the Kabbalah, there are ten spheres known as the Sephiroth. The sphere of 'knowledge' is not on the tree. It is located in what is termed 'the abyss', a stage before Understanding (Binah) & Wisdom (Chokmah). Most important is applying this knowledge with right action. When we work for self knowledge (the highest philosophy) we begin to act in accordance with the divine position we've been assigned and life seems to flow smoothly, connecting all the random happenings into a steady stream of amazing events for the greatest reality show ever, YOUR life.

With an inquisitive spirit and open heart to discover TRUTH, all the prescribed boundaries fall away. In the Great College, it is said:

“...few indeed are called, but of these few, many are chosen.”

-Liber Porta Lucis (sub figura X)

or as the great Persian poet said:

“Ah, my beloved, fill the cup that clears



To-day of past regrets & future fears-  
to-morrow?-Why, to-morrow I may be  
myself with yesterday's sev'n thousand years."  
-Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

Not only does 'Diogenes Lamp', come across as an illuminating master key of wholeness, it contains many profound poems throughout the text, to illustrate it.

As a poet myself, I shouldn't have been surprised, to have Lara Croft style acquired it, only to find it contains this personal passion of mine. There are so many quotes & lines of metaphysical meter throughout the text that Dr. Weishaupt utilizes, by such masters of enlightenment as Voltaire (1694-1778), Alexander Pope (1688-1744), Ovid (43BC-17AD), Cicero (106BC-43BC), John Dryden (1631-1700), Horace (65BC-8BC), Shakespeare (1564-1616), Rousseau (1712-1778), La Bruyere (1645-1696), Nicolas Boileau (1636-1711) & other poetic & philosophical genius' to emphasize several points throughout the book. Even the good Doctor starts this 'Lamp' with his own rhyming verse to summarize his mission as a Bodhisattva.

So inspired myself, here I go...

Yes! another day to live adventurously;  
how quick we came to the 21<sup>st</sup> century  
mixed joyful hurrahs & tumultuous tears;  
but a second on the boat of a million years  
for freedom & love are what people demanded;  
is technology all that seems to have expanded?  
Whirling wonder as darting Dervish dancers;  
another generation, coming up, searching for answers  
not seeing the unity of all creation?  
We need more pioneers like space exploration  
be an optimist & do your God-given best;  
is your life amazing? Simply done in jest?  
Shangrila? Or is society seasick seeming?  
never give up on your dauntless dreaming  
for the fetters of the false fall away when you shake it;

with unlimited possibilities, this life is what you make it!

and may you make it so much better for yourself and all of us here on space station earth. There is an art in enjoying everything life gives us. No matter what may befall us on our journey, should be the understanding that everything happens for us the way its suppose to. This ancient mystery has been spoken on from time immemorial, of 'letting go & letting God' the way of 'non-action' of the Tao. Existence may not give us every little thing we desire at the moment we desire it, yet the universe has an amazing way of giving us what we need, when we truly need it.

Not surprising is the widespread belief that the greatest crime is *not getting what we believe we deserve*. Dr. Weishaupt has much to say on this too:

“This includes all dissatisfaction and grumbling while suffering; all untimely shame and human reverence; all denial of one's friends, and a better conviction as soon as one's well-being is threatened; all crawling around & humiliation before evil and bad men whose hands hold a higher degree of violence; all undignified praise and flattery; all faulty knowledge & false estimation of one's self; all associated conceit, arrogance, contempt, and injustice to service from others; all indifference toward higher purposes and points of view; the ridiculousness heaped thereupon; the lassitude, sensuality, destructive tendencies, greed, vanity, lust for fame and power; all weaknesses which do not combat injustice where they might and should do so; all unifications of slavery, idiocy, and blindness for the purpose of unifying one's own influence, and a thousand other flaws which are the results of erroneous beliefs & a low point of view.”

The mystery schools of old encouraged candidates to 'walk the middle path' between severity and mildness, to find one's center. We follow their wise lead as we work to become more compatible with others. As it says in the holy book the Tao Te Ching:

“Therefore the sage concentrateth upon one WILL, and it is as a light to the whole world. Hiding himself, he shineth; withdrawing himself, he attracteth notice; humbling himself, he is exalted; dissatisfied with himself, he gaineth force to achieve his will. Because he striveth not, no



man may contend against him.”

-XXII (Ko Hsuan translation 1918)

When we act without 'lust of result', non-attached to outcome, yet working for the good of others, there seems to be no end to the blessings that manifest. I understand myself this natural law, having done many things in my short time on this planet. No matter how much one strives, sometimes the universe gives you a big NO. Listen to your heart in these matters. Intuition and one's 'gut-feeling' are powerful subconscious tools. The lesson during hardship is releasing our own attachment to certain outcomes, as these 'painful' events turn out way better once our will is redirected, where before we vainly struggled to no end.

So it seems that our will needs to be encouraged and focused to create around and in ourselves the most viable reality. To experience happiness as all humans are want to do. In the words of a fellow poet and metaphysical master, in regards to schools of human emancipation craft:

“That shall end never that began.

All things endure because they are.

Do what thou wilt, for every man  
and every woman is a star.”

-Aleister Crowley (One Star In Sight)

Who was not the first misunderstood poet nor, unfortunately in all probability, the last. He must have read the great Renaissance writer Francois Rabelais (1494-1553) who wrote in his story Gargantua in regard to a Abby of Will:

“In all their rule, and strictest tie of their Order, there was but one clause to be observed. *Do What Thou Wilt*. Because men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompteth them unto virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice, which is called honour.”

This is a call to all people, men and women, of every nation & religion. We must learn to understand and love one another if we are to survive. The banner of freedom and hope has been picked up once again

in order to rally humanity into a new age. A new Enlightenment, whereby the balance of science and religion, the government of free citizens, the philosophy of liberation, light and liberty are brought together in oneness.

Only then can we move forward into the boundless realms of peace & tranquility. We can do it!

I have full faith that we shall bring this dream to fruition. Not only for ourselves, our families, friends and neighbors, but for the continued generations who shall take the reigns of the planet when we are but memories in the minds of our great grand children. Let us create a legacy of inspired hope & good will.

Dr. Weishaupt mentions several times throughout 'Diogenes Lamp' his attempt to work to emancipate humanity from the bonds of fanatic philosophies and ruthless tyrants. Though he wrote it while banished from his homeland, his words are eloquent and his ideas profound. Nowhere does he seem to have become jaded and clouded by the frustrations of seeing & experiencing so much hardship.

Would we as readers be impressed with a writer who spoke of high ideals such as personal liberty and positive manifestation who only focused on negativity and self-serving issues? No. The credence of his passion pours as poetry through the text and will guarantee his proper place in history. He writes:

“What I am writing here comes from the innermost basis of my soul. Perhaps circumstance and necessity have enabled me to experience the benefits of such principles more than other people have. In the times when people were slandering me, clamoring about me, denying me, and misjudging me, when so many who did not even know me like village dogs began to howl in chorus as soon as one of them started to howl, and even today when they still do not seem to tire of it, I have indeed felt most deeply the injustice that has been my fate. And yet it seemed bearable to me, because I could say to myself that there is a God who knows better than these people do. They are judging you on the basis of their understanding and their interests. A time will come when they will fall silent and be ashamed of what they do.”



Dr. Adam Weishaupt, I am proud to announce to you & the world:

That time has come and it is now.

Welcome to the light of liberty & truth on the Illuminati!

# Diogenes' Lamp.



*Or, an Examination  
of Our Present-Day Morality and Enlightenment.*

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*by  
Dr. Adam Weishaupt.*

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*Regensburg,  
Montag and Weiss, 1804.*

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*But, Lords, we hear this fearful tempest sing,  
Yet seek no shelter to avoid the storm:  
We see the wind sit sore upon our sails,  
And yet we strike not, but securely perish,  
Wee see the very wreck that we must suffer;  
And unavoided is the danger now  
For suffering so the causes of our wreck.  
-K. Richard II. Act II. Sc. I*



*To the Author's Patron and Friend,*

*the*

*Lord's Highest*

*and*

*Baron Franz von Zach,*

*High and Well Born.*



Come then, my friend! my Genius! come along,  
 And while the Muse now stoops, or now ascends,  
 To man's low passions, or their glorious ends,  
 Teach me, like thee, in various nature wise,  
 To fall with dignity, with temper rise;  
 Form'd by thy converse, happily to steer  
 From grave to gay, from lively to severe;  
 Correct with spirit, eloquent with ease,  
 Intent to reason, or polite to please.  
 Oh! while along the stream of time thy name  
 Expanded flies, and gathers all its fame;  
 Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,  
 Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale?  
 When statesmen, heroes, kings in dust repose.  
 Whose sons shall blush, their fathers were my foes,  
 Shall then this book to future age pretend  
 Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and friend?  
 That urg'd by thee, I turn'd the useful art  
 From sounds to things, from fancy to the heart,  
 For wit's false mirror held up nature's light;  
 Shew'd erring pride whatever is, is right;  
 That reason, passion, answer one great aim;  
 That true self-love and social are the same;  
 That virtue only makes our bliss below;  
 And all our knowledge is, ourselves to know.

When I compare our world of today with the worlds  
 of older times, the worlds of the Greeks and the Romans, or  
 even just the Middle Ages, the differences appear so great  
 to me that, by my way of thinking, people from those  
 distant eras would have trouble recognizing themselves in  
 us or convincing themselves that the scene of their former  
 activities is still the same place and that we are their

descendants. Not just people and actors have changed, but also objects and things. Both Heaven and Earth have expanded since that time, and entirely new peoples have shared in the ruling of this earthly globe. Where, in the older world, nomadic tribes wandered with their flocks through the wilderness, states have now arisen that, like so many powers of the first water, have advanced the direction of European political knowledge. Conversely, places where very mighty empires once flourished are now ruled by anarchy, barbarians, and weakness. Entirely new languages, new religions, new morals and customs, new ideas and ways of thinking, even new virtues and vices have arisen since that time. Everything around us is new, and it seems that everything is subjected to unceasing change. A hundred years from now, more or less, and perhaps some feared colossus still standing today will have been destroyed, and little will remain of that which currently frightens or astonishes us. Already, a new world is arising before our very eyes, and new morals prevail. Outside actors will arrive to push us off the stage or to mock us, but, like us, they too will soon make room for new arrivals and pass away.

Under such conditions, two observations are borne in upon every observer wandering through the ruins of the past world and gazing toward future; these observations must necessarily come before all others, though they are at the same time very temporary things, more's the pity. — Reflection on the frailty and vanity of all human things, and the desire to find out what will become of this eternal cycle of growth and decay; where ought we to seek and find the Permanent and the Constant, which we as Free States must have to maintain our peace? I would have thought that no other idea could hold more interest for humanity's



self-love, now grown shy, than the idea that our Today will not be Today forever, but rather, like so many prior Todays, will be replaced by a tomorrow, stored in the Archive of Eternity, and live on only in and through its consequences.—Be that as it may, all experience indicates that it is precisely this idea that people too focused on the present will heed the least, and it is a very bad thing for such people to ignore it so much.

When troubles brew in some corner of the earth, or bloody feuds flare up between neighboring peoples, our curiosity is momentarily aroused and waits to find out what the outcome will be. Just as when enterprises are begun, people's opinions will differ when predicting their success. Even in private life, every businessman will oscillate between hope and fear when he finds himself unable to predict with some certainty the route his affairs are going to take and whether good or bad is imminent for him. Nothing is more important to us than the fate of the Parts, than the moment which will arrive next. But what will become of the Whole of which we are all Parts, whose fate is our fate, without which everything that can happen to us, good or bad, is neither good nor bad? Will the next consequence not have its own consequences in turn, and what will be their nature?—For this question alone people have very little understanding, and this keystone, which is the greatest of our thoughts, occupies us the least. When the State of which I am a Part suffers or is destroyed, the misfortune I suffer at the same time may be great, but replacement is not impossible, for there are many other countries on this earth whose peaceful situations can guarantee me against similar accidents. But what should become of me? Where should I seek aid and a Free State if the Whole should crumble into ruins?

*A long series of centuries has already ended, and the events that happened in them frequently arrived in heaps and waves. Things upon things happen. But we do not know much more than the fact that they have happened. Why, and for what purpose, do so many things occur? And what will be the result of them? Will, in fact, and in what manner will, these many scattered Parts arrange themselves into a common Whole? What will be the nature of this Whole? To what end is this general restless world activity heading?—We know little or nothing at all of such things.*

*“There is a history in all men’s lives,  
Figuring the nature of the times deceas’d:  
The which observ’d a man may prophecy,  
With a near aim, of the main chance of things  
As yet not come to life; which in their seeds,  
And weak beginnings, lie entreasur’d.  
Such things become the hatch and brood of time.”<sup>1</sup>*

*What is the first and greatest of all events on this earth, if it has no causes, consequences, and purpose? What are all consequences and purposes, if they have no ultimate common consequences or purposes? Can something have value if it has no consequences? Can the Parts have value if the Whole has no value? Or is this world in fact not a Whole whose nature is determined by the nature of its Parts?*

*Questions and exercises that are no more than the objects of curiosity, where vanities shine forth, wide reading puts itself on display, or wit or cleverness can*

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<sup>1</sup> K. Henry IV. Part II. Act III. Sc. 4.



*develop—for questions such as whether a certain discovery was made one year earlier or later, more or less? Who the first creator and discoverer of a certain thing was? Who was the author of a certain book? Who was the primogenitor of a family? What manner of reading is the true one? In what earthly location should we search for the ruins of Troy, Thebes, Babylon, or Carthage—on these and similar questions there is no end of writing and research, and the world has not infrequently divided, with storms and fury, into factions over queries of this type.—But where will the unceasing evolution ultimately lead? Is there planning, order, or connections among the world's events? Will nature's activities converge overall to our fortune or to our misfortune? Are we moving forward or backward?—On such topics, very little is being said and thought that gives satisfaction, and not just at this time. Rather, more than once, the world has even, more than once, rewarded with contempt and indifference the efforts of those who were willing to take on this work, and thus society appears to assume our history has no more noble purpose than to serve as an antidote for boredom or as a foundation for dubious legal claims.*

*For about four thousand years, as far back as our history goes, we humans have, on this earth, thought, acted, believed, taught, and governed. Despite all this, it is widely and generally believed that we remain unchanged, and not one iota better than before. If this belief has grounds, then thinking, believing, teaching, and governing are the most unnecessary things in the world, and it would be impossible to make their disgrace and disparagement more plain.. Such shameful verdicts ought to awaken our thinking processes, making us become mistrustful of our standards, or despise one another. Thinking, acting, believing,*

teaching, and governing are truly things upon whose better or ignobler arrangement all peace and happiness depend. In a world where it does not matter how each person thinks or acts, what they believe, or how they are taught and governed, in a world in which every living thing has only bad things to look forward to, where everything is only ever started and never finished, where all splendor ends only in a dream and disappears into Nothing; in such a place, Being frankly has little to recommend it over Not Being. In such a world, it is impossible to live lives either pleasant or carefree, both of which we humans desire and require, as far as I know humans and can adjudge based on my own experience; indeed, our nature and our most general and important instincts force us to both desire and require a pleasant, carefree existence. Hence the question: What will become of everything? What will result from the whole thing, the entire series of changes? What were we, what are we at present, and what will become of us later on? After so many centuries have passed, are we better or worse off, are we closer to Truth and Perfection? Should or can more happen, to this purpose? Can our ruination be reduced or is it completely incurable? These appear to be very great questions and somewhat more than peevish humor and mere scholastic hairsplitting. After so many thousands of years, it is impossible for it to be too early for us to finally direct a great deal of thought to ourselves, take an exact accounting, dare to sum it all up, and hold up and compare the current state of our assets with those of the Future and the Past.

As of this time, very little of this has ever been done. After millennia (and, this must be said, to our thoroughly earned humiliation and disgrace), humans either think it entirely beneath their dignity to reflect on such questions,

it being of no matter to them what they or the world be; or they constantly vacillate in the most complete indecision from one of these ways of thinking to the next without ever being ashamed of their own contradictions. After millennia, humans still do not know whether they are good or bad, what they should consider themselves to be. They know even less what value the World has as a whole. The opinions on these matters do not just vary among different people. Every single human being unceasingly contradicts himself or herself on these matters, judging things one way today and another way on the morrow, depending where their passion's interest lies. The same person who thinks he knows everything,

*Il connoit l'univers, il se ne connoit pas.*

Humans only lack a uniform and coherent system when it comes to themselves and the value of the world. Nothing therefore is more self-contradictory than their judgements of another's value or of their own value, as their judgements of the Whole of which they are a Part. That this accusation, sadly enough, has only too much basis in fact, will become clear from the following facts, which are beyond any doubt.

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The century that most recently flowed away took no heed of the judgements of future generations with regard to its value or lack thereof. Playing the judge at its own trial, it issued its own verdict, decreeing that its society, the fineness of its morals and taste, and its Enlightenment in general by far surpassed those of all earlier times. We, as the immediate heirs to its lot of collected hand-me-downs,



*believe we can see even further; and lo, for as long as the world has existed, sons and descendants have always considered themselves wiser than their fathers and ancestors. Thus we can look back on an uninterrupted series of centuries, each of which bested its predecessor in taste and enlightenment.*

*Either this judgement is just an illusion inspired by our vanity, or we are hearing here the unanimous confession of all centuries that our culture inexorably progresses and that humans and the World are moving from a less perfect state to a better one.*

*This prospect is uplifting and is a very natural result of the premise described above. We believe we are wiser than our predecessors, and there are not a few people who believe our current enlightenment so solidly grounded that they consider every relapse to be an impossibility. If such men ever face the question whether our species is perceptibly perfecting itself, whether Nature contains a Plan that will lead to a better state, you will be justly astonished to see them make the opposite claim, and describe the world in the most dreadful colors, any time their vanity becomes offended in the least little way or their prospects obscured. Sadly, such occurrences, in which people's judgement becomes miscalibrated, to the World's disadvantage, happen only too frequently. Let us now explore the counterpart to the favorable judgement described above, coming from the same source and made by the same people.*

*When we assemble the scattered complaints and testimonials about the decline of morality made by writers in the various eras of the world, from century to century,*

we end up with a unanimous confession from all the centuries that things get worse with each new generation. What *H o r a c e* accused his age of has since been said by each era to the next:

*Damnosa quid non imminuit dies?  
Aetas parentum, peior avis, tulit  
Nos nequiores, mox daturos  
Progeniem vitiosorem.*  
*H o r a c e. Carm. lib. III. Ode 4.*

This is the oldest of all laments, which *N e s t o r* made in *H o m e r*'s works, as did the Prophets among the Jews. It reaches like an unbroken chain from generation to generation and lives on in all moral poets and other writers, in the pulpits of the Christian church, in philosophers' lecture halls, and even in the royal courts and among worldly men. Even in our times, it is becoming louder and more strident with every passing day. I, myself, as will be seen from the ideas to follow in this book, do not consider that I have a calling to write unconditional panegyrics for my era.

If, in accordance with this unanimous evidence, every subsequent generation has truly deteriorated, this contrasts strangely with the claim described above. If, to avoid this contradiction, one wanted to differentiate between morality and enlightenment, and concede the increase of the latter while nevertheless considering the ruination of morality to be possible, one still would seem not to have taken into consideration that incorrect conduct is always the result of an incorrect way of thinking, and consequently of false ideas and principles, and that from these beginnings it is impossible for an era to increase in

*enlightenment when its principles and ideas are deteriorating each day with the increasing moral ruination.—But this contradiction does not lack for company.*

*Since no one can cling to a conviction that appears erroneous and incorrect to his or her own understanding, each person cannot but believe that his or her convictions are the only ones, the truest ones, and the best ones. A world in which one's own way of thinking frequently finds followers and admirers, or in which one's own way of thinking is the general and prevailing one, can only appear to be an enlightened and perfect world. We all think that other people are only right to the extent that their way of thinking approaches our own. This happens so universally that no matter how much people lament the severity and injustice of their fortunes in all other circumstances, it still is not easy to find someone dissatisfied with their own common sense and the degree of their understanding, or who consider themselves to be shortchanged in this area. Everyone thinks they at least know one thing that others do not know. And they consider the information they think is known by them alone to be very important. They will not accept any reprimands on it. In their eyes, it is something everyone should know first and foremost, at least if they were sensible. Who doesn't know that, knows nothing at all.*

*Let us now consider the world as a Whole as each person judges it from their own standpoint, and let us then, trusting in that point of view, collect the individual votes. The result? No folly can exist upon this wide Earth, and no person exists who is not enlightened to the highest degree. A world that only contains such people could never be unenlightened, bad, or less than perfect.*



*Let us now consider, conversely, what each human being thinks of his fellow human beings.*

*Que l'homme le moins sage*

*Croit toujours seul avoir la sagesse en partage;  
Et qu'il n'est point de fou, qui par belles raisons*

*Ne loge son voisin aux Petites-Maisons?*

*Boileau. Sat. IV.*

*Let us consider the fact that humans will appreciate or discard a new conviction merely based on its agreement or contradiction with their own prior convictions; and let us furthermore consider the fact that agreement even among people with the most similar attitudes is only weak and imperfect, and that as a result we think that everyone else everywhere is chock full of bias, contradictions, prejudices, short-sightedness, and stubborn blindness; and let us finally consider the fact that everything we accuse others of, we return to them in fullest measure. Let us now collect the individual votes again, keeping all this in mind: The result is that there is no human being on this earth who thinks truly and correctly. Ergo, there exists not even one Truth, merely contradictions. It is impossible to understand how an age in which, according to the unanimous confession of all those alive, no humans can think correctly, could see itself as the most enlightened.*

*Our assessment of humanity's moral behavior does not look much better. In this area as well, all human beings hold very high opinions of themselves'). Humanity's finer*

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) L'homme de sa nature pense hautement et superbement de lui même. La modestie ne tend qu'à faire que personne n'en souffre. Elle est une vertu

*side conceals such opinions behind the veil of modesty. But this so-pleasant virtue is for the most part just a facial expression we assume, only organizing the visible portion of our behavior, shunting aside everything objectionable, with the result that our too high estimation of ourselves expresses itself in a way that offends fewer people than might perhaps otherwise be the case. But, thanks to our inner convictions, people think and act in a way that betrays that they consider others to be of no value. Others will always come up short when compared to ourselves, and every quarrel that might cast our own claims into doubt will never be decided before our Throne of Judgement in any way other than in our own favor.*

*As a result, everyone has the greatest difficulty suspecting themselves capable of flaws and afflictions. No man craves failure. Both the simplest and the cleverest among us have perfectly mastered the art of glossing over their errors and turning each one into a virtue. Chatterboxes think themselves to be eloquent, reckless daredevils think themselves brave, obstinate people consider themselves to be in the right, and voluptuaries see themselves as wise men or as men who know how to experience art and the world. Wastrels believe themselves generous, and misers believe themselves to be good housekeepers. In this way, humanity's sophistry in inventing excuses and reasons for glossing over the true situation is inexhaustible, to deceive themselves and others.*

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de dehors, qui règle ses yeux, sa démarche, sa parole, le ton de sa voix, et qui le fait agir extérieurement, comme s'il n'étoit pas vrai qu'il les compte pour rien. Le monde est plein des gens qui saisant intérieurement et par habitude la comparaison d'eux mêmes avec les autres décident toujours en faveur de leur mérite, et agissent conséquemment.

La Bruyère.

*Our vanity is never more wounded to the quick than when we are accused of weakness or offence. We all more or less believe ourselves Morality's Heroes and perfect examples of Selflessness. We are even simple enough to believe that we do all good things merely because they are good, because they are our duty. This is the unanimous conviction of all humans whenever they assess their own morality. If ever a stray doubt arises in their souls, these doubts are only a temporary phenomenon and are quickly silenced by the vigilance of our amour propre. For it is impossible for humans to continuously think themselves bad and imperfect.*

*Interrogeons marchands, financiers, gens de guerre,  
Courtisans, magistrats; chez eux, si je les crois,  
L'intérêt ne peut rien, l'honneur seul sait la loi.*

*Seen from each person's eyes, and the eyes of their nearest and dearest, there exist, therefore, no depraved people, no unjust people, no hypocrites or swindlers. From this point of view, the world appears the cradle of honesty and virtue, and no one can explain why in such a moral world they always have to remain watchful and guard themselves against deception, malice, and injustice.*

*Meanwhile,*

*Lors-qu'aux yeux leur portant la lanterne,  
J'examine au grand jour, l'esprit qui les gouverne,  
Je n'apperçois par tout, que folle ambition,  
Foiblesse, iniquité, fourbe, corruption,  
Que ridicule orgueil de soi-même idolâtre.*

*That is Boileau's opinion, and the opinion of every*



person as soon as they stop looking at themselves and start looking at other people. No one can understand the situations other people ought to so easily be able to discover in themselves, how others can be blind to their own faults and so obstinately hide their own flaws and ugliness from themselves. What and how much we truly entrust to others' honesty is evidenced by our reserve, our locks and oaths, and our army of insurance, security, and detention institutions that experience has proved necessary in our relations with other human beings. It is evidenced by the complaints being raised on all sides against the increasing ruination of our morals. If these claims are founded, if the world, as we pretend, is worsening from generation to generation, what monsters of indecency must we have become? What is to become of those yet to be born? Sooner or later, the generation must finally appear that has reached the utter apex of dastardliness. A time must come when such a hateful species, whose existence has no other purpose than to deteriorate and to demonstrate how far the game of degeneration and depravity can be played, when, say I, such a species wipes itself out and self-exterminates.

So what are the World, and what are Humans, if we give credence to such contradictory assessments? Are they good or bad? These facts seem to make it clearly evident that humans have not created a solid system for dealing with this issue, or when we do in fact have a decisive opinion on the subject, it tends to incline toward the worst. Tither it seems to us that Good and Bad alternate and maintain an equilibrium or, in what seems more credible and the more widely held belief, we think that Humanity and the World tend to be rather more Bad than Good. This becomes clearest when measured by the degree of contentment and spiritual peace currently found among

the populace.

*Dissatisfied people have existed in every age, and it may appear doubtful and not so plausibly proven that there are more of them today, whether or not this appears to me to truly be our situation and evidence of our increasing culture, as will be more clearly shown below. But, in any case, this much remains undeniable to me, based on my experience: that I know very few people, in fact I'd like to say I know no one, who is truly happy about their existence, who would thank Nature's Wellspring for their creation, or who have truly convinced themselves that it is better To Be than Not To Be. I know no one who would want to be born a second time and re-experience what he has experienced. No one likes it down here. The lamentations and reproaches never cease. Show me the person who does not believe that he would not prefer this world to be more reasonably organized. I know a great deal of people who seriously wish that they had never been born and yet, in the strangest of all contradictions, loathe Death as the greatest of all evils.*

*Nul ne voudroit mourir, nul ne voudroit renaître.  
V o l t a i r e.*

*Nothing stands out more in this atmosphere than the way the dissatisfied will then ridicule anyone who thinks up a better organization for the earth and its peoples, calling him a short-sighted fool who knows nothing of the world. If such treatment is deserved, then the nature of human wisdom is very exceptional indeed. Separation from their own dissatisfaction seems to hurt people. The root must lie in a special type of pleasure found in self-torment. I do not understand what the reason is for all the*

complaints. *Life must be far more peacefully and pleasantly lived in a world where no man is satisfied with his part than in a world where no one asks for more than either what he owns already or what he can acquire at no man's disadvantage. If the degree of our dissatisfaction represents the extent of our wisdom, then modest people are the only fools on this earth, and we ourselves are very much in the wrong when we detest or punish other people's high-handedness and injustices. Nothing more is needed for the perfecting of this world than for the spirit of dissatisfaction to become even more widespread than it is already.*

*I, for my part, am not one of these wise people.*

*'Praetulerim, scriptor delirus inersque videri,  
Dum mea delectent mala me, vel denique fallant,  
Quam sapere, et ringi.*

*Horace. Ep. Lib. II. Ep. 2.*

*To my way of thinking, contentedness, moderation, modesty, and resignation to one's fate are very great and estimable virtues whose exercise show much more magnanimity of spirit and grandeur of mind, qualities that, one might wish, might become prevailing and universal, to the Earth's great good fortune. I myself have no dearer wish than for them to be my enduring virtues.*

*Tout chétif que je suis, je dois vous avouer,  
Qu'en me plaignant du sort, j'ai de quoi m'en louer.  
D. Sancho d'Arragon. Act. IV. Sc. 5.*

*My belief remains unshakable that, although no human being would ever be able to avoid all discontent if*



*Nature was arranged according to a much wiser pattern, nevertheless in such a system we could achieve a great deal with only moderate effort. When you consider the matter coldly, there are only very few people for whom, if the accounting is made on its merits, the Evil would not considerably outweigh the Good they enjoyed during their lifespans.')* For these reasons, I would everlastingly consider all dissatisfaction and discontent to be the result of a misconception, of an incorrect and unreasonable estimation of certain things, and thus that each human being's degree of dissatisfaction indicates the degree of their stupidity and foolishness. To my way of thinking, there is thus no more reliable means to correct our reason and unearth the most damaging of our fallacies than examining the sources of our discontent; for each annoyance is the result of a misconception.

*No doubt, each of my readers is fully aware from their own experience that people exist who may, in a fit of displeasure and black mood, curse their own existence. I myself confess to this fault, and I do not lack reasons to go on doing it. Each person who sees himself or herself compelled to make frequent use of higher principles is guaranteed to have to do battle against many offensive circumstances that enormously detract from and disturb one's enjoyment of life. I can certainly understand that people in the grip of such a mood might impetuously sever*

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- \*) Triginta mihi quatuorque messes  
 Tecum, si memini, fuere Juli,  
 Quarum dulcia mixta sunt amaris.  
 Sed jucunda tamen fuere plura  
 Et si calculus omnis huc et illuc  
 Diversus bicolorque digeratur,  
 Vincet candida turba nequiozem.

Martialis. Lib. XII. Ep. [ill.], 4.

*the bonds that bind them to the world, and say to themselves*

*Quand on a tout perdu, quand on n'a plus d'espoir,  
La vie est un oppobre, et la mort un devoir.  
M é r o p e. Act II. Sc. 7.*

*It is equally easy to believe that all people who turn their backs to the world and to Fate, who stand there in the world alone and abandoned like unto an island, and who experience, in addition to humanity's injustices, storms of misfortune striking them from all sides, that such people have a more immediate cause and more urgent demand to fail to recognize the merits of their existence and to curse a world in which it appears that they are so little cared for. Similar blasphemies from the mouths of the great unthinking masses would appear no less natural. But, in a strange reversal, it is just exactly the latter, the people who might have more justification for grumbling, who bear every misfortune with an excellent moderation.*

*And in contrast, the spirit of dissatisfaction and of weariness with life is never voiced more fiercely and loudly than in those classes of people for whom everything has been done to secure their happiness, and for whom too much happiness has become an overwhelming burden.*

*Ces illustres ingrats,  
Ces gens malheureux par trop de fortune.  
L a F o n t a i n e.*

*They are the ones for whom life appears a burden and who believe that it is better Not To Be than To Be. Such lamentations thus ring out most frequently among the*

*Great and Wealthy, among all ambitious and powerful people, among people with an extensive experience of the world, whose minds receive a greater education thanks to their wider experience. It is even the voice of the scholar and, who would have thought it, the voice of some philosophers and teachers of the Church.*

*Therefore, if anyone would like to convince himself or herself that this world is ever going to produce any seeds of contentment and modesty, anywhere; that all the examples of these virtues, so important to us, are not going to disappear from the earth—that person will search in vain in our royal courts, in the halls of our greats, in the councils of our scholars. Such contentment unfortunately (!) can only be found among wild peoples.*

*Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutor'd mind  
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;  
His soul, proud science never taught to stray  
Far as the solar walk, or milky way. — — —  
To be, contents his naturale desire  
He asks no angel's wings, no seraph's fire;  
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky  
His faithful dog shall bear him company.  
P o p e. Essay on Man. Ep. I.*

*There, and in lowly huts and workshops, with the unspoiled craftsman or husbandman, there alone it can be found. It only dwells among people who know little, think little, have experienced little, and thus wish for little. Here, and almost here alone, do we find people who bear the burdens of an arduous life, never cursing it, with a patience, indifference, and calmness for which there are few examples among the upper and educated classes and*



*from which our philosophers have created an ideal without however making use of it themselves.*

*This remark adduces very important conclusions of a dissimilar type. But people who apparently have made it their rule to be their own hangmen and torturers, and who consider only that which humiliates and torments them to be wisdom, will also fail to draw the conclusion here that they ought to draw.*

*These uneducated masses, according to the confessions of men of the world and even of our wise men, distinguish themselves by their blindness, ignorance, and a complete lack of all finer and nobler understanding, and thus cannot possibly be seen as the more sensible portion. In the unanimous opinion of the entire world, the upper classes, and the more by those who have made the education of the mind their lifelong affair, who have the most solidly grounded claims to insight, enlightenment, and reason, nonetheless behave so unmanfully at every adverse circumstance that they deny the value of existence and they fail to enjoy the riches so abundantly available to them. It thus appears more and more as if reason and higher education exist in disadvantageous proportion to our peace and happiness, and in fact truly hinder them. It even seems as if our misery will increase in proportion to increases in our insight and understanding. Nothing thus appears more likely than the old saying, proven again and again throughout the ages:*

*Qui addit sapientiae, addit dolori.*

*Or, as Sophocles writes in his Ajax:*

Εν τῷ Φρονεῖν γὰρ μὴδεν ἠδίστος βίος.

*All this leads very naturally to the idea that Reason is a privilege that a spiteful deity gave humans for the purpose of causing them harm. That all higher culture is said to be an embarrassing, artificial, unnatural condition and the actual source of our continuing misery. For this reason, we find ourselves inclined to prefer, with Rousseau, the state of ignorance and savagery to all bourgeois refinements, or even to envy the fate of animals whose pleasure is neither interrupted nor lessened by any ideas about an unpleasant future, and for whom*

*When the worst comes, it comes unfear'd.  
Young.*

*We even find ourselves inclined to become ignorance's advocates and to seek in unreason that peace of the soul and calmness of spirit that we have waited for in vain from all reason and wisdom until this hour. Thus it fully begins to appear as if all these arrogant words, ideas, and principles that philosophers have been working so well to discover and spread since the beginning of all time, were empty phrases, idle words, and useless platitudes absolutely incapable of strengthening or truly healing any sufferers.—To make such crushing discoveries now, after having lived more than fifty years in such a notorious world and spent the greater part of my earthly existence fruitlessly searching for truth; and if these discoveries are, as people seem to pretend, life's only true wisdom, and the highest and final results of our reason—well, in hindsight such a foolishly spent life is both sad and mortifying, and I cannot*

*help making the humiliating confession that I have very poorly understood the art of living and enjoying life, spent my time very badly, and, as a complete fool, utterly missed my objective. At the end of your life you are tempted to make use of your remaining moments and, in order to share that enjoyment with others, to think and act the way they think and act.')*

*This assertion is given more credibility and reinforcement by the fact that we perceive uniformity and agreement throughout in our stupidity and ignorance, and in the whole only one language and interest. In contrast, because of the great variety of things and the endless presumptions and contradictions of those people who think themselves possessed of reason, no one can reliably say*

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) For my part, I draw a very different conclusion therefrom. To me, all this appears to indicate the true source of all errors and to prove that theory and practice, erudition and wisdom are two very different things, of lesser value. Everything I have said so far makes only too credible the fact that we understand the artificial game of our passions, and the secret mainsprings of our search for truth, very little, and the influence of our hearts on our opinions even less. I should think we would have had far too much experience already to not have finally admitted that we all appreciate and crave truth only in its ability to function as a means to satisfy a reigning passion. We should learn to expect our interest to have altered when we see that our concepts of what is true, good, beautiful, or just have changed. After so many confusions and contradictions, it is about time for us to seriously want to make use of the fruitful discovery that the key to our heads and our thoughts lies in our hearts, that all that reasoning and philosophizing, all doubts and certainties, all theories and systems, all superstition and disbelief, all reason and unreason originate in our hearts and receive their form and shape from that organ only. We would quickly see that such and such a desire is always the parent of such and such a thought; that from a disposition so strongly controlled by moods, self-interest, and every other passion, whose point of view and interest are so constantly subject to change, no other result can be obtained.

L'esprit enfin, l'esprit, je le répète,  
N'est que du coeur l'esclave ou l'interprète.

F. [sic] B. R o u s s e a u. Ep. à Racine.



where that reason and wisdom can be found to which one might safely subject oneself. It is difficult to cite features that could not be used to substantiate the most flagrant fallacy's opinions and statements, with every appearance of being equally in the right. A hundred different schools and churches boast with equal confidence and warmth about having access to exclusive wisdom, and yet against each of these infallibles, ninety-nine voices unite in proving the errors of its claims. In addition to this is the fact that people have been preaching, philosophizing, teaching, educating, commanding, and forbidding for thousands of years, and nevertheless it appears and it is said that people are no more moral than before.

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With opinion diverging so much about all aspects of knowledge, certainly no one can be taken aback by the statement that people still vary to the extreme in their assessments of the world's value, and that people contradict themselves. That this really happens is proven by the facts I have cited. Nothing is as uncertain, nothing as contradictory, as people's judgements of this matter; this is shown indisputably by people's own actions. People's theories are undecided about this question, and judging by their practices their opinions unfortunately incline toward the idea that the world is more bad than good.

Such a thing has greater consequences than people believe, and precisely the fact that people think so little about the nature of the world seems to prove that they do not see or do not recognize the consequences. No one seems to suspect what astounding consequences this seemingly idle or purely speculative question has for humanity's

*practical life, treatment, and blissful happiness.*

*By my ideas, this question is the foundation of morality and even of politics. Our ability to judge human nature, our future perfection, and the entire ruling and educating of people depend on this question's resolution. The arrangement of these things depends on the ideas we have about people and their government. And they cannot but differ depending on whether people think the world, of which humanity is a part, be good or evil.*

*Three opinions are possible here. The world is either changing purely for the worse, or its changes are for the good of the whole, or, finally, the world has no Plan whatsoever and there are no ultimate common good or evil consequences, but rather Evil alternates with Good and Good alternates with Evil without any higher intention or planning. - Should, or can, it be of no consequence which one we claim to be true? Can a person who assumes the first concept act in the same way as one convinced of the truth of the second? If that is impossible, then this question is not speculative but rather one pivotal for humanity's happiness and fate, a practical, most important question that will create a revolution in thought and deed and eliminate a great deal of obstacles impeding our morality and being considered insurmountable after so many failed attempts.*

*The idea that the world is getting worse is such a black, undignified thought for a human to think that it scarcely merits refutation. In such a system, people could do naught else but hate and persecute themselves and others. Our ruination would be incurable, and all institutions for our improvement and ennoblement would be ineffective and laughable. The greatest of all*

inconsequences would be wanting to improve people doomed to deterioration. Government could only consider itself an end in itself, and its despicable creatures thus as naught else but tools. All the government's wisdom could go to work on naught else but neutralizing humanity's naturally incurable maliciousness and preventing its outbreaks as much as possible. In such a world, selfishness is the only true system; all human cleverness could only consist in carefully taking advantage of every opportunity to pleasure oneself. In a world with such crushing prospects, it would be that much more important to cling to the present. Where every cause for reassurance is eliminated, where the smallest evil must be seen as a real evil, no one could devote too much thought to their own selves, nor help but eliminate every unpleasant impression, no matter what sort. Every system of morality and politics would thus run more or less to this end: Why, the wrong is but a wrong i'the world; and, having the world for your labor, 'tis a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right. And when, on the strength of such a system, people might want to judge their own merit, it would be difficult to think anything more consoling of themselves than

Were I, who to my cost already am  
One of those prodigious creatures, man,  
A spirit free to choose for my own share,  
What sort of flesh an blood, I pleas'd to wear:  
I'd be a dog, a monkey, or a bear,  
Or any thing, but that vain animal  
Who is so proud of being rational.  
The Earl of Rochester.



*The minute we assume that the world is changing for the better, things become very different, and our behavior must change completely. Then, then there is a plan and a purpose to the world and everything must relate to them. This gives morality and politics a fixed, unchangeable point; both know then what they ought to be working toward. Then, our institutions for our improvement do make sense and promise a certain amount of success. Then, our evil is not incurable. Humans themselves are possessed of some greatness and can be happy to be in existence. Then, there is true consolation on this earth, and we do not have to worry about what is yet to come. Then, there is a future for us, and the horizons of our existences and our lifetimes expand. Then, it would be laughable and foolish if people only cared for the whole, for the species, for an abstract idea, and neglected the individuals they included. Then, a person would not be a means, but rather an end, and can demand that his leaders treat him as such, and demand to be taught and educated in accordance with his own stipulation.*

*Since the first system's results are too ugly, and the latter's are too flattering, and appear to be in contrast to actual events, humanity's thinkers have found it more reasonable to pursue a type of middle course and to believe that Good and Bad alternate in the world with no plan or higher intentions. This system appears to be the one usually followed in practice, the one considered by our men of the world to be the only true and reasonable one, the one that appears to be based on our experience; and thus it is worthy of a closer examination.*

*When I attentively go through the history of so many countries and eras, and see, next to so much greatness on*

*this earth, so much that is small-minded and low; with people capable of so much self-sacrifice, yet so much self-interest; so much courage and majesty of spirit, yet so much shyness and vileness and creeping flattery; so many monuments to reason, yet so much evidence of foolishness; so much apparent reason, yet such a degree of unreason; so many virtues, yet such an excess of cruelty and abomination, and while I am seeing these things I also see the everlasting change, transition, and back and forth vacillating from the height of greatness to decline, from good to bad, from truth to error, and from wisdom to stupidity;—when I search out the reasons behind similar events, and investigate the causes for why some things do happen;—when I realize how the best and most indispensable things for our good health are distorted again and again in the hands of malicious, self-serving people, and that no institution of Good has yet to be achieved that has not been taken advantage of to satisfy some passion: well, then I myself do not know, I admit it, if I would not agree with the men of the world. I do not know whether I should be happy about the good that has occurred or saddened that it lasted so briefly. It appears incomprehensible to me how this Whole could arise from so many imperfect and heterogenous Parts, because an overview of the Whole shows that it does contain some great and splendid things. I am becoming aware that humans have stopped at nothing to destroy all order. The fact that bourgeois society continues to exist cannot reliably be ascribed to humanity's merits.*

*People, writes L a B r u y è r e, have so much trouble approaching one another during their dealings; the least of their advantages is associated with so many alarming things; they have such a tendency to let one difficulty arise*

after another; they would so love to cheat others and do so fear to be deceived themselves; they overvalue their property and undervalue others' property so much; that I cannot comprehend, I admit it, how marriages, contracts, peace accords, and alliances could ever be concluded under such conditions. The question has arisen: Why cannot all people form one nation, speak one language, live under one set of laws, and have one set of morals and one religion? When I think of the great variety in people's ways of thinking, basic convictions and tastes, I cannot help but be amazed that seven or eight people can assemble under the same roof, lock themselves into the same ring of walls, and unite in a single family.

When you see such things, doubts can arise within you as to whether the world and its people have a better purpose. Such facts seem to show that there is both a great deal of reason and very little reason on this earth. There is a great deal of reason if erudition is reason, if everything people want to achieve by virtue of their passions is of the highest and most unquestionable purpose, if every kind of connection or context is, at the same time, reason. For everything that people have wanted to achieve until now in order to become rich and powerful, to deceive others—Well, no one is more reasonable than those people for they are doing everything that has to be done to reach that ultimate goal.

When, however, true and actual reason can only be sought where universal, general context or connections exist between all ideas and desires; when people can only be said to have reason if they are wise as well, understand the sublimation of the end, and act and desire accordingly: well then there is, unfortunately, very, very little reason. Our



reason, about which so much noise is being made, is a violent, puffed-up, mad reason. If it were only of a better type, it could cold-bloodedly listen, compare, and consider. But instead this sort of reason takes offence as soon as a person's thought process ceases to dance according to its tune. And yet I have yet to see the letter of credence establishing these tone-setters' infallibility. What I am saying here without any inhibitions or reserve could itself become evidence of how much reason is to be found among the people. It can only upset those who have given little thought to why we are reasonable or virtuous, only those who think they see reason everywhere where there is learning and any type of connection, or where good effects are being produced.

Nevertheless I believe that the pretensions of our men of the world contain more appearance than truth. The idea that Good alternates with Evil in this world without any sort of plan whatsoever contains all the inconsistencies of the first system without taking advantage of the greater advantages of the second. Experience also proves that, in practice, things always change for the worse for the world and for men. I am also unable to see and unconvinced that this discovery contains the deep thought and the degree of wisdom that people boast for it. Yes, this statement is based on how the facts appear to be, but it explains very little about the thing in itself. Rather, it is like the short dispatch treatises so common these days that people think they can use to dodge making real explanations. Such short dispatches betray a great leisureliness of thought, and they prevent the direction of attention to the heart of the thing and investigations of the origins of many a matter. Because of them, people never hear anything about the more precise nature and context of things. Nothing has a consequence,

*and nothing has a cause. Things happen the way they happen because they couldn't possibly happen any other way. These are the only results you will get from such antecedents.*

*But this opinion is also an illogical one, and all who profess it apparently do not understand to what inconsistencies this way of thinking leads. They seem not to have realized that if this opinion is grounded, and if people wanted to act completely in consequence to it, all intellectual activity would end and humans would become the unhappiest of all creatures. That they themselves can only act and desire by forgetting their own theory, that consequently they are contradicting themselves, and that in practice many of their actions support an opinion their theory condemns, shall be proven by the following reasoning.*

*A person who during his lifetime lacked every desirable thing could not, as even all my opponents would have to admit, be seen as anything other than a highly imperfect being that, due to a lack of all activity, is not happy or even not existent.*

*All objects cease being desirable when everything that we desire and wish to achieve through our activity has no value at all, or appears petty, unimportant, useless, superfluous, pointless, or harmful, or as soon as there are no longer objects that we can avoid and despise.*

*When the world's events do not produce a commonly good or bad result, the whole thing has no point and thus no value.*

*Thus all the Parts are also as pointless as they are worthless.*

*For whatever purpose one might want to assume for the individual parts, we would still find ourselves obliged to admit that even if individual things have a purpose and consequently have value for the sake of achieving that purpose, that this purpose does not have a purpose and ergo there are purposeless purposes because all these makeshift borrowings of purposes lead to nothing in the end and no reason can be found why the individual parts should have such a purpose. Thus nothing on earth would be truly good or bad; everything is futile and vanity. All the ideas about right and wrong fall away, and morality is unfounded. Nothing is worth desiring. Our entire intellectual activity either completely stops or it only survives by our forgetting that everything ends in nothing and that all purposes do not have a purpose.*

*If thus the belief that our activity should result in something of permanence that is worth the effort is such a necessary condition for the development of our mental powers, how could we possibly reasonably support an opinion that destroys the grounds for all activity? Why would we want to maintain this activity in such a precarious and flawed way, with the help of an illusion that defeats our theory?*

*People supposed to take action must always be in pursuit of some sort of interest and hold the belief that creating a certain result will be worth the effort. But when everything leads to nothing, there will be no true interest. And everything will lead to nothing as soon as*



*the Whole has no purpose, no commonly good or bad result. Recognition of the nature and thus the purpose and the course of the Whole is for this reason the foremost and most important of all examinations. Before we are agreed and clear about that, all talk, writing, dispute, and proofs about the nature and the value of the Parts will remain shaky and have neither foundation, reason, nor meaning. Until this happens, people will in the future as in the past differ in their opinions as to the value of goods and the most important things in life. They will argue and contradict each other without converting or improving anyone. People who are unsure about the most important thing will now act one way, now act another, and no one will lack justifications for their behavior. But the effect of truth itself will always remain imperfect because it will remain a truth that will be contradicted by a great portion of humanity and contradicted by all appearances. Thus, whilst this fundamental question remains unresolved, morality itself will be uncertain; and the result of this uncertainty will be that people will not know what is Right and what is Wrong. Even politics will start to sway without this support and will be like a creature with neither legs nor a head.*

*This world thus contains a series of consequences and purposes that either extends onward into Infinity and will leave us in eternal uncertainty, or that will continue onwards until a common result appears.*

*This result will then be either Good or Evil, or, it being one and the same, Earth and Humanity will either deteriorate during their lifetime or make incontestable progress toward perfection. One or the*

other of these two ideas must hold true, and the opinion that Good and Evil alternate unsystematically in this world is, despite all appearances of wisdom, an illogical opinion.

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The above discussion has simplified the object of my examination; from now on, I only have to determine which of the two remaining ideas is the truest and cannot be cast into doubt. The question thus remains: when the world must be assumed to contain a plan, and arbitrariness and imprecision must be ruled out, where does this course lead? To Evil or to Good? We will be in the dark as to the most important matters in life as long as we remain in the dark about these questions. This I will prove in the following manner.

If the world is bad and its course leads to evil, then people too are bad, contemptible creatures. They are merely tools and means to an end and do not deserve to be treated any better than such. Thus our deterioration is incurable and further development of our strengths can lead to nothing but even greater deterioration. Our governments would then be acting very wisely when they set limits to our further development. Governing would thus mean arbitrarily ordering people around.

If, on the other hand, the world's course is of the type to lead to a bettered existence: then although humans are not yet what they ought to be, they are however what they can be and they are capable of becoming a great deal more. Our deterioration thus is not incurable, and we would have

*to examine where it comes from and why it still prevails. 'Undiscovered obstacles must be in existence, and people would know of tools that we had not yet used or had used imperfectly. People would then be worthy of all respect despite their deficiencies and flaws. Humanity itself would have greatness. It would be the end, and the government would be the means. From then on, governing would mean educating. The development of our powers could not be obstructed forever. Enlightenment would be a good thing.*

*What is the difference between the results? Which of these results are true? That cannot be decided until the fundamental question has been decided. 'Until then, we are all drifting in the most harmful uncertainty about the most important matters in life. We do not know if we are good or bad, or what our purpose is. As a result, we know ourselves as little as we know others. The consequence of this deficiency in knowledge about human nature is that human leadership and education will be just as contradictory and backward and based on shaky, uncertain principles. It will cause us to use entirely the wrong set of tools. We will also be uncertain about the basis of political power and which rights are inalienable for rulers and for subjects. We would not be able to determine, while this uncertainty with regard to the prejudicial question persists, whether government is a means or an end. We will be uncertain about whether people should be allowed to set limits to the development of our strengths, whether Enlightenment is good or bad. How much thus rests on the resolution of this single question? And how wrong are our men of the world when they declare the examination pointless or think such considerations beneath their dignity? It appears proven that this question is the*



most important question of all.

*But the resolution of this great question also presupposes ideas and principles from which the question can then be resolved, and which are thus of a higher nature. Consequently, if people are uncertain about the nature of the world's course, they must be lacking the fundamental questions and ideas that would result in this decision. This leads us to the final sources of our thoughts' and deeds' uncertainty and our urge to doubt everything. This examination will thus instigate strange discoveries. Humans should find out, to their amazement, what cracks and gaps exist in our knowledge. We should learn to see how incredibly useful or harmful some principles can be that appear purely speculative. How it all interconnects in our knowledge. What means and tricks people use to paper over the gaps in our knowledge and to think the most flagrant contradictions. We should become convinced that no one ought to be taken aback when we think as we have thought and have act as we have until the present moment. We will realize how necessary it is that the foundation be laid deeper, and modified in accordance with this offensive. It should become apparent that we are not much better than children and neophytes when it comes to human knowledge and human government. For this reason, success will show that humans could experience nothing more salutary than this. Nothing is as absolutely necessary for our progress forward as shattering our too great security, shaking to the core the erroneous delusion of our perfection, and awakening a healthy skepticism toward our current reason and convictions.*

*Loin que la raison nous éclaire  
Et conduise nos actions*

*Nous avons trouvé l'art d'en faire  
L'orateur de nos passions.  
C'est un sophiste qui nous joue,  
Un vil complaisant, qui le loue  
À tous les fous d'univers  
Qui s'habillants du nom des sages  
La tiennent sans cesse à leurs gages  
Pour autoriser leurs travers.*  
I. B. R o u s s e a u.

*And to do this successfully and prove myself correct  
on such a varied subject and against so many  
misunderstandings, it will be necessary for me first to  
discuss with my readers my point of view and name the  
source from which my claims spring.*

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*People, especially worldly people, talk a great deal about  
what is good or bad, right or wrong, true or  
false, clever or foolish, reasonable or  
unreasonable.*

*Le nom de la vertu retentit sur la terre;  
On l'entend au théâtre, au barreau, dans la chaire;  
Jusqu'au milieu des cours il parvient quelquefois:  
Il s'est même glissé dans les traités des rois.  
C'est un beau mot sans doute, et qu'on se plaît  
d'entendre,  
Facile à prononcer, difficile, à comprendre:  
On trompe, on est trompé. Je crois voir des jetons  
Donnés, reçus, rendus, torqués par des fripons.*  
V o l t a i r e.

It seems that no one is able to do without these concepts. All human relations are built upon it. But the words themselves have no meaning unless they are applied to something. What they can be applied to is vast and varied. Thus their meanings are constantly changing, and for this reason the belief that these ideas are of a purely relative nature, that nothing has ever been found that is per se good or bad in all circumstances, is very widespread. These ideas are thus, as experience teaches, of little use. These ideas will remain subjugated to the worst misinterpretation and confusion so long as the common standard to which everything must be compared has been neither given nor found; just as no greatness can be measured before people have agreed on a standard, just so can nothing rightly be deemed good or evil before correction of the failing standards for these two characteristics. But the fact that this standard has either not been discovered at all yet or at least not yet generally accepted and placed beyond doubt is proved by everyday, only too sorrowful experience in which one person calls something Good that the next person thinks Evil, or Clever and Right what seems Foolish and False to so many others. Human judgements are nowhere so self-contradictory as there where general agreement would be so necessary and beneficial. The person who succeeded in fixing the ideas of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, True and False, and in healing humanity of the delusions that destroy all morality and reason, as if these ideas were merely relative or the result of a convention or arrangement, as if there is no such thing as absolute Good, Truth, and Right—such a teacher properly ought to be honored as the human species' greatest benefactor. This one discovery of correction would bring about the greatest of all revolutions in thought and deed, and its discoverer



would be the creator of a new and better moral world.

Many and erudite are the things that have been said about this; what I have to say about it is very simple. But it is just exactly this simplicity that will make what I have to say seem of little importance to many of my readers.

*Alas, it is my vice, my fault:*

*While others fish with craft for great opinion,*

*I with great truth catch mere simplicity;*

*Whilst some with cunning gild their copper crowns*

*With truth and plainness I do wear mine bare*

*Fear not my truth.*

*Troilus and Cressida. Act IV. Sc. 4.*

What, then, is the source of these contradictions we see everywhere? What is the source of the variance in humanity's judgements about what is Good or Evil, True or False, Right or Wrong? Apparently it stems from all the differences in points of view, which everyone can see for themselves, resulting from the variedness of objects.

To fix these ideas, therefore, Equivalence must occur with the points of view and the varying opinions about the objects, because they, too, seem infinitely varied. It seems that people must be given prior instruction in what are the preferable points of view about any given object. Each person must determine for himself the value of an object, and people must in this way receive instruction about which point of view deserves preference in the issue at hand.—All this together is what I call *orienting*: All our practical wisdom, all our knowledge—at this point in time, none of it is oriented. Individual branches of our knowledge are, individual sciences, and in them you can thus also find

reassurance and certainty. But our knowledge as a whole, our reason itself, is not yet oriented. That is the source of our disputes, our contradictions, and our errors. Just like a skipper on the seven seas, or a wanderer when the road branches, has to know where they want to go, in what corner of the globe their destination lies, in what direction they must go to search for this distant land, where morning lies, or evening, midday, or midnight; just like the appearance and knowledge of the North Star or use of the magnetized needle can reliably give one the location of these distant lands and from that alone the location of everything else as well. So, too, do humans need a similar guiding star in the intellectual and moral world. They too must know where their appetites will lead, how to find their way in the labyrinth and torturous paths of this life, and how to follow the safest and shortest route to their objectives. People who act also need a reliable point from which known position they can reliably deduce all other positions. People must also orient themselves in the moral world, as well as in the physical world, as much as possible. He who does not do so will be eternally adrift on a sea of doubts and fallacies and will never reach the goal of his desires. All human confusion comes from the fact that we are not adequately oriented, and as a result we confuse our views and consequently mistake appearances for truth. An idea that oriented people or set their heads straight would put an end to all quarrels and misunderstandings. This is the sort of idea called *i d e a v i c t r i x* by the scholastics. It is what tips the scales for an issue, and creates a breakthrough after much stagnation and delay. This is the type of idea that can mold people and change them in the blink of an eye; when it appears, everything falls into place and no other proof is required. Before this main idea comes to light and corrects people's point of view, the most

*plausible evidence and ideas will be powerless to prove anything. This idea is thus like a spark that falls into a powder keg. It is a light that suddenly ignites in our souls, a light before which all fallacies give way and flee like the stars before the rising sun. Whoever wishes to affect human souls with some success must thus set about it from this angle, comparing his point of view with his opponent's and eliminating his opponent's point of view from the argument. This is the most complete triumph of naked and unaffected Truth before which all contradictions fall mute.*

*But location is everything in this world. And from each location you see another world, another arrangement of things, all things themselves in a different form—nearer or farther, larger or smaller, shorter or taller, more confused or brighter.*

*Consider,  
When you above perceive me like a crow,  
That it is place, which lessens and sets off.  
And you may then revolve what tales I have told you  
Of courts, of princes, of the tricks in war;  
C y m b e l i n e. Act III. Sc. 3.*

*And the strange thing, that causes all the confusion and arguments, is that each person is absolutely sure they are in the right and cannot conclude otherwise while they hold this point of view, and judges things according to their current location, and would in fact be in error if they wanted to judge any other way. Throughout the whole of their life they will insist on it and never think otherwise if their circumstances never permit them to change locations.*

*Scilicet et fluvius, qui non est, maximus illi est,*



*Qui non ante aliquem majorem vidit.*

*To this extent, there is no such thing as a misconception and all people are right. Yet we know that none of them are right. All error can originate only from the following two sources. People can firstly be in the wrong in having such a point of view, of which they must first be convinced, and they can also err in confusing the viewpoints, when they transfer the point of view necessitated by their location into a situation where the point of view is quite different.*

*Every location and every viewpoint thus is a new world within one and the same world. Every one of them has its own experiences, its own way of perceiving, its own ideas, truth, morality, justice, wisdom, means and ends, customs, and conduct. Every single location also has, in the strictest sense of the word, its own language. People with differing viewpoints can therefore appear to say and do the same things without their being the same in fact. They are comparing strangers from very remote countries who can only know and understand each other through what is common to all. Such people will never completely understand one another until after they have traded places, or (what turns the tables even more) until both are standing in the same place. All human leadership thus has no other end than the changing of points of view. One person lends his periscope to another, claiming that it is better. The result depends on whether the other person is better able to use the periscope.—This is what we humans call moral c o n v e r s i o n. In disputes and refutations as well, which so rarely result in the success desired, there is no shorter and more reliable path than to bypass all consequences and directly address your opponent's point of*

view, first exploring it, and then proving its baselessness and weakness.

*Because there are so many viewpoints, infinitely many, because they multiply with each new day and with the appearance of each new object, because we humans discover new knowable objects every single day, no one should be taken aback if with increasing experience and the associated accumulation of objects the paths to truth become more convoluted and confused, and fallacies more frequent. This explains what people are so ill-prepared to comprehend, how fallacies can multiply and yet culture can also multiply notwithstanding, that there are fallacies that require a high degree of intellectual development. Truly it can be said about this state of affairs that those who rebuke this error are making the error.*

*With this number of viewpoints, nothing is more natural than that every age, every gender, every temperament, every passion, and consequently every era, every nation, every smaller community unit, every coterie, and even every individual person have its own philosophy, morality, truth, and its own spirit in general.\*)*

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Chaque coterie, writes Rousseau in his new *Heloise*, chaque coterie a ses règles, ses jugements, ses principes, qui ne font point admis ailleurs. L'honnête homme d'une maison est un fripon dans la maison voisine. Le bon, le mauvais, le beau, le laid, la vérité, la vertu n'ont qu'une existence locale et circonscrite.— Quiconque aime à se répandre et fréquenter plusieurs sociétés, doit être plus flexible qu'Alcibiade, changer de principes comme d'assemblées, modifier son esprit pour ainsi dire à chaque pas et mesurer ses maximes à la toise. Il faut qu'à chaque visite il quitte en entrant son âme, s'il en a une, qu'il en prenne une autre aux couleurs de la maison, comme un laquais prend un habit de livrée; qu'il la pose de même en sortant, et reprenne s'il veut la sienne, jusqu'à nouvel échange.

For one and the same reason I consider each class in bourgeois society a similar location from which people will perceive each other from a completely

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different, new angle. This is how I explain many an unusual moral and political phenomenon. For because each class has its own business and interests binding them to deal more closely with one certain class of humans than another, and because precisely this is the origin of completely differing circumstances, relationships, and needs, so too must the attention and with it the activity of people from such different classes branch off in a direction so different from that of the rest. That is why each class inevitably experiences different experiences, generates from them corresponding ideas and principles, and from this union composes a theory that becomes the basis of that class's conduct. That theory results in a certain type of behavior unique to the class that together constitutes the spirit of the class, without which no person would belong to their class, every person would find themselves standing in the wrong place, acting in opposition to their interests, and being treated by their own kind with contempt and disgust for being a defector. For this reason, attempts to train some mental powers before others will also vary from class to class, and even perfections and virtues will be valued very unequally by the different classes, in the face of such opposed experiences and such dissimilar, contradictory interests. The ideal of perfection, upon which so much is based, will be different for each class. They will crown the virtue most indispensable for their class as the king of all virtues, and judge other people's value according to the degree to which these people are found to demonstrate that favorite virtue. Each class thus has its own very natural ideas about humans as such, and each one thus judges correctly and truly to this extent. But because humans as they appear to this or that class's interests are far removed from humans in general, each class thus has very one-sided and inaccurate ideas about human nature, when, as happens only too frequently, one class wants to force its interests upon the rest of the world and the other classes and demand everyone be no more and no less than what its viewpoint and interests require. This is the wellspring of all the overhasty, one-sided, and contradictory judgements about people on which basis we are now elevated to the angels, now calumniated as devils. That is why there are still no generally valid judgements about the humanity's value, because the different classes have not yet amicably communicated their mode of perception to one another for the purpose of comparison, to determine where all the viewpoints are in agreement. These areas of agreement alone are what is Common and True. They alone show us what people are like in all places and at all times. Everything else is a modification of this general nature that teaches us nothing other than how people appear to one class or another by virtue of that class's interests and experience.

Just as each class has its own spirit, so too does each nation, era, age, gender have its own spirit arising likewise from the experiences enabled by that nation, era, age or gender's situation. And because every person alive belongs to all these groups, because these modes of thought in this combination in a single subject partly justify each other and partly modify each other, thus, from this strange mixture of such varying threads, in conjunction with what every individual experiences in its own



*That contradictions occur in the face of so many interests is unavoidable; but where contradictions occur either a part of each or both must be in error. But because each human being makes his judgements on the basis of his location, it remains difficult to decide on which side the error lies.*

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unique situation as a result of such mixed ways of thinking (the most composite beings on this earth, individual humans' modes of thought and action) thus are produced the concretely accessible ideas that generate individual actions and that, whilst they stand, are so obstinately opposed to the reception of and compliance with higher moral rules.

Because the same virtues are of greater or lesser interest for certain nations, eras, and classes, so do they appear to belong more to some than to others. Each class of humans can thus be viewed as a nursery or as fertile soil in which certain perfections reach maturity as indigenous plants. We would thus have the difference and inequality among the classes, so often bitterly and unjustly criticized, to thank for the fact that all virtues are created by and by, being first cared for and brought to maturity in their maternal soil, and that, taken individually, they are already all in existence. And so, as in the physical world, that which is Excellent and Good and is scattered so far and wide, is bit by bit transplanted to our lands, and slowly in the end becomes indigenous and flourishes everywhere thanks to human art and diligence, so too can we expect that in the moral world the scattered Good of so many nations and classes will start to lose themselves in each other more and more each day due to increasing contact among people, and that in this way sooner or later the real unification will occur representing the sublime Whole of perception that philosophers today are still thinking very unclearly about under the ideal of perfection. Philosophy and worldly wisdom will then cease to be hostile and incompatible aspects of human knowledge. They will unite, amicably and let us hope eternally, as equally important components, to form a higher and third thing—**L i f e w i s d o m**. Then, for the first time, there will be peace between scholars and the World, and both will convince themselves that the World cannot do without Scholastics, and Scholastics cannot do with the World. Men of the world will recognize that their experience is precious but in need of correction, to be placed beyond doubt or refuted because it is contradicted by others' experience. This would be a task for careful reflection and inspiration. This work thus seems excellently suited to that class of people who live less distractedly and have dedicated their entire lives to the search for truth. Thus even universities can make a contribution.

*The viewpoints also include the intentions and purposes, or the effects that each acting person wants to induce. For all intentions and purposes are nothing more than points of view to which something refers, or consequences everyone can see but beyond which no one can or wants to look. Where there is no purpose, there is also no reference point. So nothing can be called good or evil. This alone is the Purpose that determines the selection and the reasonability of the Means. Just as purposes and intentions vary, so too do the Means to their Ends. No matter how artfully a Purpose has been concealed, it will always be betrayed by the Means used to achieve it. People can tell themselves that they are pursuing a higher Purpose; but the Means they use are traitors and will scatter every delusion.*

*Thus there is diversity here, but there is also contradiction. Will the unification of these contradictions prove impossible?—or are men mad? hath nature given them eyes to see this vaulted arch, and the rich crop of Sea and Land, which can distinguish twixt the firey orbs above, and the twinn'd stones upon the number'd beach? and can we not partitions make with spectacles so precious twixt fair and foul?\*)*

*If, therefore, the overwhelming divergence cannot be reduced, this Variety cannot be joined into Unity, eliminating the contradictions of so many points of view; then every human being remains frozen in place and insists on thinking about things in his or her own individual way as the only way and the best way—thus the result of this persisting contradiction in men's judgements*

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\*) *Cymbeline*. Act I. Sc. [ill.]

about what is Good and what is Evil is that it would be better if they abstained from judging because none of their judgements have either value or significance. If therefore we wish to sow concord and peace among human beings; if we are to think and act more uniformly than before and walk hand in hand toward a common goal; if we are to experience and learn to realize, with conviction, what is truly Good or Evil, Just or Unjust, independently of arbitrary judgements—then the individual points of view that each person has, on the strength of their particular location, must become capable of some correction and some exchange for better views. To achieve this, we must be able to prove to all involved in disputes that they would see better and more correctly if they could move themselves to a place with more room than their previous location, somewhere with room for both sides of the dispute. People will stop contradicting each other when both sides share one and the same point of view. This can only occur in the Higher and more Common places that contain in themselves, thanks to their nature, everything of a more Specific and Lower nature. This new common quantity, of a greatness equally recognized by both sides, is the only quantity that both sides can successfully use to determine the value or nonvalue of everything else.

But because even then some differences will remain and the judgements for this reasons will still be able to be contradictory; then, to achieve certainty and complete pacification, this contradiction too must be removed—thus our reason's need to reunite all divergence into one unity will persist as long as multiplicity, great diversity, and contradiction persist in our ways of thinking and our points of view. All this thus requires a single, immutable point of view, and, until it is found, no one should pretend



there is any certainty in thought or uniformity in action.

*Through the unceasing collisions between so many interests, and because of the disputes and contradictions eternally associated therewith, people have all learned at an early age, and with the most complete conviction, that it is impossible for individuals' interests and ways of thinking to be the measure for Good or Justice. They have thus found themselves forced to make use of a sort of higher standard to compensate for their vagaries, and to recognize an interest common to themselves and others. A higher interest of this type that would occur most naturally to anyone is the Good of a Society in which they are a part. Anything acting against that society's benefit would thus be deemed Unjust by members of that society, and what benefits that society would appear good or just. We remain possessed of this point of view today, and since reaching this place our affairs have been running, if not well, then at least bearably, and better than before. The number of contradictions and colliding interests has changed considerably, and as a result we now see ourselves capable of adjudicating some matters of frequent collision. A justice does exist since people developed this point of view. But the justice only exists for those who have this point of view and it only extends as far as the viewpoint itself.*

*This is the reason why the absolute, immutable, general standard for Justice, on the strength of which all disputes can be resolved, has not been found on this path alone, and will never be found until we make some more progress forward and stop lingering where we are. This point of view has not banned highhandedness from the world but only expanded its arena and shifted it around.*

*The disputes and troubles between individuals have indeed been noticeably reduced since the recognition of a common justice and unification into States. But either the disputes among the states and larger corporations are eternal and impossible to exterminate or they can only be reduced by each state's considering itself, like individual human beings, a subordinate Part of a Greater Whole, or as a subject to a mutual, superordinated sovereign, and, together with others of its kind, recognizing a higher interest and acting in accordance therewith. If this does not occur, then here too it will be Parthian against Parthian, and there will be no justice between peoples, or this justice will at the most be solely conventional and will last only while it benefits the mighty. People will still hate each other and kill each other off. Only the reasons for the hate will be different ones. It will become very possible to turn private matters into public affairs, and the evil and bitterness between people will become that much greater and persistent because their source will be of a more noble type, and even have the appearance of a virtue. Thereafter, Britons will deem just what advances the splendor, fame, and prosperity of Britain. This will be in contradiction to like-minded Gauls for quite similar reasons, and to them British justice will appear flagrantly unjust. Which side is right? Where is the injustice? Where lie the reasons for resolving this matter? Do Britain and Gaul contain all the sun's light? Does the sun rise and set in Britain and Gaul alone? Gaul and Britain are both part of the great Book of the World, but they are not its sole contents. The latter is a swan's nest in a large pond. Therefore let us not forget that people live outside Gaul and Britain too.')* I hope that if we think

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\* Hath Britain all the sun that shines? Day, night,  
Are they not but in Britain? I'the world's volume

thusly we should better succeed in discovering the truth.”) So let us not merely limit our examination to things as they now stand. Let us write not for one of the earth’s peoples, but for the species as a whole. Our care and concern must extend to the most distant of our descendants. Let us therefore reach for the globe and embrace it. Let our thoughts wander through the scenes of the future. Because Truth will continue shining after even the heavenly bodies are extinguished.

Thus we are in need, it seems, of something immutable and absolute. But that which we seek and need so badly cannot be a point of view subordinate to a higher point of view and thus multilateral. Such a Purpose is never the only one of its type. And Certainty only begins, and all contradictions only end, where total unity, general understanding, and one sole way of thinking are possible. The contradictions and inconsistencies do in fact lessen to the degree that we progress. With each step upwards, all becomes more intellectual and noble, and it is inconceivable why every single person is not able to say to themselves that the highest point of view alone is the point of all advanced virtue and true mental greatness. It is inconceivable why people have such difficulty turning this

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Our Britain seems as of it, but not in it;  
In a great pool a swan’s nest: Prythee, think  
There’s livers out of Britain.

C y m b e l i n e. Act III. Sc. 4.

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Nor be to present time your view confin’d  
Nor for one nation write, but for mankind.  
On late posterity your thought let fall,  
And with a just ambition grasp the ball  
Through scenes of future being let it stray  
For truth shall shine, when planets shall decay.

Y o u n g. Ep. to Mr. Pope.



*divergence into a pure Whole and proceeding so long and so far until in the end all divergence disappears, until we come across a single, highest, and most general point of view. This alone is the Immutable and the Absolute that we need so much. Here alone is the eternal highest Reason, highest Wisdom, highest Virtue and Perfection. Everything else is, despite all appearances, only fragmentary wisdom, unhelpful pointless knowledge, short-sighted, one-sided, petty foolishness that will only result in unending and unceasing doubts and contradictions. It alone will enable people to comprehend everything incomprehensible that they need to know. Anyone standing there and observing from there the events of the world will judge correctly and truly. They alone will not miss their goal and will be able to reliably determine whether everything is where it ought to be and whether something is good or evil.*

*Whilst this great truth I teach me thinks, I see  
The monster London laugh at me,  
I should at thee too, foolish city!  
If it were fit to laugh at misery.*

*But thy estate I pity.*

*Let but thy wicked men from out thee go,  
And all the fools, that crowd thee so:  
Even thou, who dost thy million boast,  
A village, less then Islington, will grow,  
A solitude almost.*

*C o w l e y.*

*I for my part draw from this the following, not insignificant, conclusions. I conclude, firstly, that all ideas and principles that, in thought and inference, lead to one Highest, Ultimate, and most General thing are simply indispensable for humanity. And for that reason they are*

*such that without them there is no genuine reason, and without their help no one can find his way through this labyrinth of knowable objects. It should thus be clear to all that such ideas must exist, that, were these ideas not true or could their baselessness be proven, it would destroy the entire house of human knowledge with one blow. From this we can comprehend what injury we would do to reason and human knowledge were we to use reason to destroy ourselves.*

*Secondly, I conclude that if no highest point of view does in fact exist, then all morality is founded on unsafe and unsteady ground. For then there will be as many systems of ethics as there are points of view.*

*Now we can understand why even in our times there is no end to dispute and error. It proves that the greater part of humanity still fails to recognize the value of such principles. The path that can bring the world to long-lasting moral improvement, make it more possible for humans to understand one other, to oppose one another less on our highways and byways, to refute our opponents steadfastly, and to affect others successfully, appears to be this and this alone: that the importance of the higher principles be more generally acknowledged, made more vivid in their application and their consequences, and brought into more general circulation.*

*Even disputes between nations can only be resolved in this manner. While these disputes persist and make necessary systems of offense and defense, our governments' concern cannot possibly be directed where it primarily ought to be directed, toward the best possible management of domestic affairs. While these circumstances persist,*

foreign concerns must override domestic concerns and treat them as subordinated, resulting in deeds more glossy than good. Even outside this case and in interior affairs, each government will vary and make use of different Means depending on whether the ruler considers either himself or his State to be an End. Which point of view a ruler should have and may have will also depend on a ruler's ideas about humanity's purpose and what he decides to undertake on that basis, and even on what ideas he has about the nature and purpose of the highest authority. Anyone who desires to govern people desires to give a certain direction to their actions. But anyone who wants to lead others must necessarily have a goal in mind and know what he wants to achieve with that goal. Various are the things that can be created therefrom, and various are the conceivable goals to which humans can be led, and they are extremely unequal in their worth. The question is thus always what goal can a government have? What goal may a government have? The means that a government makes use of undeniably demonstrate that government's goal. Therefore, if that goal is of the highest nature, and properly selected, the government is simultaneously just, clever, and wise. It is perfect, for it is what a government can be. If the purpose is not of the highest nature but the means are suitable, then the government can be called clever without being wise. But if the Means and the End are both reprehensible, and the means have been improperly selected moreover, then such an administration is neither clever nor wise, but rather of a type that little deserves the name of government. Cleverness and Wisdom are thus very different things. The former is only found where there is a morality to politics, and there is a morality to politics only where higher principles are respected. Whoever observes the world's



events from this viewpoint and leafs through the pages of our history with this in mind, whoever pays attention to the Means currently or previously used by different governments to achieve their Ends, will have no objection to freely admitting the existence of several clever governments, but maintain that there are that much fewer wise governments, in the strictest sense of the word, than ever before.

Our knowledge is a Whole. If our first principles and ideas are flawed, this error will spread to all branches of our knowledge. They even give our individual actions their unmistakable character. So, if we remain in the dark today about certain main questions upon which our welfare or woe depends, then it is solely because there is not enough respect for the higher principles, because we are considering a subordinated Purpose to be the chief Purpose, and consequently are not unifying the varying points of view into a Highest and Final point of view, as we ought to be doing. For this reason, despite our supposed Enlightenment, we do not know with certainty whether the world is heading toward Evil or toward Improvement, and this fact is the source of the most harmful results, as I have proven above. Even more harmful, we know equally little about whether we ourselves are good or evil, what the purpose of our existence is, whether we are in fact ruined, and whether our ruin is incurable. Likewise, we know not whether Reason and Enlightenment are Good or Evil things, that ought to be encouraged or impeded. We even appear to think that a government's strength rests on the blindness and ignorance of its subjects. This leads one to the conclusion that we still have very inadequate ideas about even the foundations of the highest authority.

*Before these questions are resolved, no one can be surprised if we are the same today as we were centuries ago. But they cannot be resolved before the point of view has been fixed.*

*To place this point of view beyond doubt and thus to determine whether the world is good or evil, our ruin incurable, to determine the true foundation of the highest authority, whether ignorance is a lasting foundation for the same, whether Reason should be encouraged or suppressed—my goal in this treatise is to prove all these things.*

*This subject appears vast to me. To me, it seems the most important but also the unhappiest subject a writer could choose.*

*It seems important to me because it goes to the single and true core of the matter and grasps Evil by its roots. If anything can still be done to abet humanity's ennoblement and happiness, it can only be done in this way.*

*But I tell you it is also the most unhappy way that can be selected by a writer, and I could wish that I had erred in my judgement. Success will prove me only too right, however. This subject is an unhappy one to take up. For the examination itself is a thankless task and can do aught else but make hateful the writer.*

*It is a thankless subject. For it interests no one. Everyone already has their own system for dealing with this matter, and those who lack a system would prefer not to have one. Books of this sort are never read, or people read them to be able to refute them.*

*Men read no morals now: It was a custom.  
 But all are to their fathers' vices born  
 And in their mothers' ignorance are bred.  
 If you have children, never give them knowledge,  
 'Twill spoil their fortune, fools are all the fashion.  
 If you've religion, keep it to yourselves.  
 Atheists will else make use of toleration  
 And laugh ye out on't.  
 O t t w a y. The Orphan. Act III.*

*But it is also a dangerous subject because it cannot be dealt with without disparaging humanity's moral conceit and administering a telling blow to our own self-love. Our egoism will not refrain from exacting revenge and repayment in kind. It has more than one false ground to choose from as justification for such intentions. Such enterprises awaken the suspicion however that people consider themselves wiser and better than everyone else. People seldom reprimand the errors and transgressions of others without betraying a certain maliciousness and proud schadenfreude.*

*I must leave it to my readers to decide what they will be pleased to think about me in this regard. Any excuses on my part would only add weight to their suspicions. To this end, I have nothing better to say than what R o u s s e a u declares at the start of his C o n f e s s i o n s :*

*Je ne suis fait comme aucun de ceux que j'ai vus; J'ose croire n'être fait comme aucun de ceux qui existent. Si je ne vauX pas mieux, au moins je suis autre. Si la nature a bien ou mal fait de briser le moule, dans lequel elle m'a jetté, c'est ce dont on ne peut juger*



*qu'après m'avoir lu.*

*So much is certain: My way of seeing things is quite different from others' ways. I do not deny that my way could be false. But anyone who wishes to disregard it completely is undeniably wrong. Precisely because it deviates greatly from their ways of seeing things, my way's great contrast can enable anyone who truly desires further perfecting to uncover many an unused aspect and find results that they never would have found in any other way. My work provides provides much food for thought and for comparison. I dare to vouch for this.*

*Excutienda damus praecordia.*

*Persius. Sat. V.*

*To set oneself up as humanity's teacher,*

*Et vouloir ramener tout à son proper caractère.—*

*It is true that this sort of thing rarely occurs free of pretensions and vanity and for the most part can be interpreted to mean nothing more than that I think people are no good because they are not as I am or as I require them to be. They would be better if they were as I need them to be to further my own intentions. But should this be grounds for eliminating all instruction and leaving people to their own devices with no further guidance? Should this be grounds for all writers to fall silent? Show me the writers who would consider themselves incapable of teaching others and thus less wise than their readers. What would be their purpose in writing if they did not believe that other people were not in need of a lesson in something, a lesson that, according to the writers' personal delusion, no one would be as capable of delivering as themselves. We*

*authors are thus permitted our vanity, and we in turn allow our readers to judge our labors for themselves, according to their preferences; we only ask them to remember that the delusion that one can do without all instruction betrays no lesser an arrogance and is much more harmful.*

*Because we humans have too many reasons to wish that we never be recognized for what we in fact are; because we cannot be more painfully insulted then when someone takes the trouble to destroy the illusions in which our vanity has veiled itself, which happens when the baselessness of our virtues is demonstrated—for such reasons alone it is very easy to comprehend that a moral writer could not do more to spoil his relationship with his readers than by touching on this area they despise so much. Unfortunately, that is what occurs in this book; it is even this book's primary and most especial objective. The natural consequence is that everyone closes their minds and accuses anyone dealing with such topics of deliberate viciousness. Such people are thus feared and hated and lose any ability to successfully influence others. I concede quite freely that this is not the way to win people's hearts, and that it is even less suited for finding one's fortune in the world. No vanity could be more foolish than the wish to be known as a good judge of human nature. Everyone judges people who praise themselves, as C a e s a r praised C a s s i u s, whether rightly or no*

*He is a great observer, and he looks  
Quite through the deeds of men.—  
Such men as he be never at heart's ease.  
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves;  
And therefore are they very dangerous.*

*J u l i u s C a e s a r. Act I. Sc. 2.*

*Anyone who knows people knows their weaknesses, and these weaknesses are precisely what people least want to be known, which would force people to be rather than to merely appear. Thus not only is their self-love disturbed, but also their lethargy and laziness, which they feel is a great, irreconcilable crime. For this reason I very much understand how a practiced and clever man of the world might be obliged to feign ignorance and inexperience and create the illusion that he does not notice many a thing that is right before his eyes.*

*But what do we reap from this for mankind's true benefit? Only that our deception be everlasting, that people always act as they did before, and that humanity remain a mystery to itself forever and thus never achieves its potential. The question thus arises: Ought we to improve ourselves, or not? If yes, then it is the moralist's duty to track down the sources and discover the basis of the evil. And this basis can always be found in the driving forces motivating our actions.*

*For no matter how much we humans differ in our opinions, I do believe the more reasonable of us recognize as a general truth that our greatest good and our greatest woes on this earth all stem from people's way of acting, which in turn is based on something else, on the fundamental beliefs inspiring the actions. But because these convictions themselves are the result of certain ideas and principles, all humanity's happiness and misery thus depend the prevailing ideas and principles prevailing in each age. Which have no choice but to be false when moral decline is great and the manner of acting is*



wrong.

*Be that as it may, we now know what matters. We are going to have to keep to what is before our eyes and, as the visible portion is incontestable, to our contemporaries' manner of acting, and the reasons that motivate our contemporaries, examining the ideas and principles that produce similar behaviors.*

*So much remains undeniable: if our era is as corrupted as people say, it is impossible for our Enlightenment today to be True and of the Highest nature. Our ideas about the most important things in life cannot but be wrong, and in studying humanity we must run into results everywhere that our own self-love would very much like to hide away.*

*Consequently, if progress is to be made in the moral world, all our energies must be focused on waking people up from their dozings and stimulating them to better examination of themselves and others. To this end, we must get to know the true forces driving our actions. This cannot occur without the most rigorous examination of our prior reasons and development of our inadequate ones. For all human beings act as they do because they are firmly convinced no one could behave more reasonably. You could reliably count on them to renounce their former behavior if they could be fully convinced that it was impractical and unreliable. For this reason, it is absolutely necessary that people be neither flattered nor supported in the delusion that they have achieved culmination. This sort of behavior is high treason to human nature. People too inclined to think themselves better than they truly are absolutely have to be taught to adjust their opinion downwards, and*

consider themselves weak and imperfect. Wherever people believe they are acting for the most sublime reasons, they must become acquainted with their self-deception and be brought to the point where they can see the commonplace game of propped-up, small-minded amour propre.

For these reasons alone my readers will already have concluded that my aim in this treatise could not possibly have been to eulogize our virtues. The purpose of this treatise is in fact to expose the vanity and emptiness of our virtues. I will seek out every weakness and conceal none. But I will also in no way keep silent about the goodness in us. Even my rebukes will be in protection of the excellence of our nature. Not I, but others declare our ruination incurable; only these others believe that force is the only thing will have an effect upon us; they alone are the ones who despise and blaspheme mankind. I for my part am developing the inadequate aspects of our behavior; I look for them in my own behavior, as the closest source with which I am best acquainted, to discover the causes of these flaws; to prove that not everything has happened yet that is capable of happening; to show that despite all our persisting flaws we humans have something great and splendid at our core; that even our greatest defects have an innocent source; that it will be impossible for us to change and improve while certain conditions and causes remain in existence. I for my part shall prove that we are as good as we can be under such circumstances; that it is true that we are not what we ought to be on the strength of our destiny; but that everyone who ever requires more from us before the sources have been eliminated does not understand human nature and is demanding sheer impossibilities. People should therefore refrain from calling things malicious that are in fact the true and unfeigned love of

*mankind and the result of a more rigorous and natural observing spirit.*

*Si je suis maligne*

*C'est, que j'ai l'oeil perçant, et qu'un rien lui désigne  
Ce qu'on veut lui cacher avec le plus grand soin.—  
Car je devine un fait, dès que je l'étudie.  
L a f o r c e   d u   n a t .   A c t   I I I .   S c .   I .*

*I am malicious, if this way of being different deserves to be called malicious, because I am neither a flatterer nor blind; because I distinguish between the better driving forces and the worse ones; because no one could wish more for things to be better than they are; and because at the same time I am convinced that things cannot be better until people stop failing to recognize the true forces driving their actions. If using a higher standard to determine people's true value indicates maliciousness, then I cannot deny that I am malicious, and I believe I would be the loser if I were any other way.*

*If all those people to whose hands I will lose these pages immediately after they are published only knew how hard and bitter was their preparation, they would pity me rather than hate me. These pages are a true child of pain. They were conceived and born in pain. Their entire contents are the result of much sorrowful experience, some of it even my own. It is not easy for a writer to write a book under more adverse conditions, with less encouragement, with more distrust of his insight, overwhelmed from all sides by a more painful sense of his own weakness overwhelming from all sides, with more consideration for the inevitable disapproval, the world's censure, new enemies and persecutions, and even with*



more physical and domestic suffering, amidst the ruins of his happiness and his family, with more frequent interruptions, and thus writing, so to speak, with the medicine bottle in hand. My contemporaries have done everything possible to destroy my self-confidence from the ground up and to render me as ineffective as possible, me, who in a more effective position could without a doubt have accomplished so much more; they have misjudged me in a way that is not easy to misjudge someone.

*I shall be lov'd, when I am lack'd.*

*I have been my sole encouragement. Thus I alone know what effort it has cost me to keep up my persevering courage and believe that people can be good when they try so hard to increase my belief in their hatefulness. A world and an era in which a person like me can think and experience such a fate, an era that cannot tell whether this way of thinking is hypocrisy or truth; such an era definitely has cause to examine the worth and contents of its way of thinking.*

*For more than six years I have been collecting for, working on, and amending this treatise. Nothing satisfied me. I would begin something and then cross it out again, and in this way I have destroyed many a year's work. Many and various are the illusions I have had to work through to revive somewhat the so deeply bent confidence in my powers. As a result of which I believe from time to time, in an attack of artificially awakened arrogance, that I am of very great use, and then immediately afterward that I am of no use, or even that I am harmful. What yesterday still seemed good or bearable to me, today or perhaps tomorrow seems miserable twaddle, long known to*

*everybody, and poorly expressed to boot. Twaddle that interests and can interest no one. I am facing an army of objections on the strength of which I will be accused of contradicting myself and not seeming to know what I actually want. It is true that most of these objections have been adequately answered by the way the whole thing has turned out. But I predict that only very few people will have the necessary patience to read through to the end or reread such a work. Sometimes I think I have forgotten nothing and observed my subject from all its sides. But then, before I know what is happening, I discover a new aspect still unexploited that gives the matter a somewhat changed direction.*

*When I look out into the noise and tumult of the great world and pay attention to what is going on there and notice the tremendous contradiction between what ought to be and what is really happening; such as how little or nothing of what reason in general so charmingly designs ever comes to pass;—when I look at the indifference and contempt with which everything is treated that people consider holy and venerable, at the derision and laughter associated therewith;—I think about what reasons are available to offended self-love for glossing over and making excuses, how few people are capable of skipping over a long train of thought with one glance and finding things true that are necessitated only by that long argument;—if I listen to the world's general mood;—and then turn my gaze upon myself and become aware that I am only a single person fighting against a crowd of people, without reputation, influence, or support;—and when, finally, I heed the mood of my contemporaries, their mutability and frivolity, and explore what they expect, desire, and read — then, then, I admit, do I run out of courage and gasp for*

air, and no one could feel weaker and more powerless than I. In the midst of such attacks I am ashamed of my best, most reassuring convictions. I am ashamed to admit to such a world that I believe in a God. I want to destroy all my works forever to free myself from all laughter and rebukes, or at least to reserve myself for eras to discover in times when when I need blush no longer, because I have ceased to exist.

*Ainsi toujours douteux, chancelant et volage,  
À peine du limon, où le vice m'engage,  
J'arrache un pié timide et sors en m'agitant.  
Que l'autre m'y reporte, et s'embourbe à l'instant.  
Car si, comme aujourd'hui, quelque raïon de zèle  
Allume dans mon coeur une clarté nouvelle,  
Soudain aux yeux d'autrui s'il faut la confirmer,  
D'un geste, d'un regard je me sens allarmé,  
Et même sur ces vers que je te viens d'écrire  
Je tremble en ce moment de ce que l'on va dire.  
Boileau. Ep. III.*

Fortunately, this foul mood is only a temporary phenomenon, albeit sometimes a frequently recurring one. My confidence is soon revived when I realize that, as people and even men of the world confess, there are in this world more than enough reasons for sighs and lamentations; that everyone wishes things were better, and that despondency and desperation do not make the world better nor life more bearable;—when then I look at the people who are always dependent on others' decisions and think nothing true that is not allowed by those who set the tone, who are always in others' power and are ashamed to belong to themselves, and do not have the courage to be themselves; when I realize how precisely these weak



*people, out of blind and overexaggerated respect for the foolish opinions of those they are seeking to please, destroy themselves;—then, I feel strengthened, because there is someone else apart from me who is not ashamed to say about themselves*

*Y a-t-il donc sur la terre des grands assez grands et des puissants assez puissants, pour mériter, que nous croyions et que nous vivions à leur gré, selon leurs goûts et leurs caprices, et que nous poussions la complaisance plus loin en mourant, non de la manière qui est la plus sûre pour nous, mais de celle, qui leur plaît davantage?—Les hommes sont-ils assez bons, assez fidèles, assez équitables, pour mériter toute nôtre confiance, et ne nous pas faire désirer du moins, que Dieu existât à qui nous puissions appeller de leur jugements, et avoir recours, quand nous sommes persecutés ou trahis.*

*La Bruyère.*

*And my dejection and faintness of heart disappear even more when I find out that even the most vigorous scoffers and most open opponents of the higher principles not infrequently find themselves obligated to agitate against many an abuse I have censured, and to call upon similar principles for this purpose where their interests require it, and also to have to call upon similar principles when their philosophy considers them to have a not insignificant connection.*

*When in my thoughts I place myself in the society of the noblest and wisest men of all nations and centuries, and I have so many writers of the ancient and modern worlds before me whose worth is completely acknowledged even by*

*my enemies, when I acquaint myself with the spirit and contents of their teachings and find in their words unmistakable agreement with my principles, now become suspicious to me;—when I think that it just exactly to these ideas and principles, though eternally in dispute, to be sure, and sometimes propped up in one way or another, that human reason always returns after a period of confusion, when it wants to cope with things differently;—then I feel sufficiently strengthened to complete my day's labor. — May this book exert a similar attraction, and try its luck.*

*Since many ample volume, mighty tome,  
Must die, and die unwept, o thou minute  
Devoted page, go forth among thy foes!  
Go nobly proud of martyrdom for truth  
And die a double death.  
Y o u n g.*

*The great question upon which all the previous and so many other questions depend is a most simple question that, when it is divested of all splendor and display and brought back to its simplest sense and form of expression, no reasonable person would object to agreeing with the better manner of thinking.*

*The question is, namely: Do humans think and live in order to eat? Or do humans eat in order to think and live?*

*This leads to the so often cited but too little heeded idea of*

*Something or nothing after death,*

*The question is: Is it better to exist or not to exist at all?*

*To be, or not to be, that is the question.*

*It seems to me that this must be seen as the viewpoint from which all human activity receives its form and direction. We must therefore examine the significance and influence of this question, the differences it generates in people's behavior, and what differences even in thinking about it can be found in every single individual. How some related ideas are usually thought about in separation from the main thought, and how some other ideas that belong to it are not thought about it at all—all this seems to be not so well known by the majority of the people, and therefore it seems the source for this uncertainty about so many other matters, in addition to our differences in behavior.*

*In our day, the belief has become prevailing that resolving this question would change nothing at all in human morality. People hold themselves for completely convinced that human beings are capable of living in accordance with reason's strictest requirements and fulfilling every sort of obligation to the most exact degree, without believing that they will continue to exist. For this reason we have started to establish a morality that is completely independent of this conviction. This is not just a notion that has occurred to our men of the world, who have always had a penchant for this opinion; it is even being taught by our new philosophical schools, which believe that morality's value can be profaned and reduced by every similar consideration. My response to the latter will be found further on in this treatise where there was a more fitting occasion for its introduction. Here, I would like to*



*deal with the statements of the men of the world.*

*Our men of the world are completely correct when they claim that a person can act morally, be a very upright, generally respected, and beloved man, and still be able to deny the future. People certainly have sufficient other reasons for behaving justly and correctly. They do not require the gallows and the wheel to do so. A certain moral behavior results from the nature of the relationships under which we live. Our needs force us to fulfill certain obligations. Some of the ends we pursue with the most yearning cannot be achieved without our suppression of our own demands and self-interest. It is in every man's interest to be just and moderate. To all this comes then our greed for applause, our fear of humanity's censure, which is a source of great and laudable virtues but also the source of all foolishness and crime as soon as the knaves succeed in taking control of public opinion. There is also no lack of examples of men who denied the future and yet lived as philanthropists.*

*This may well all be probably perfectly true. A morality built on unbelief may be completely adequate for humans to become the way they currently are, but it is not adequate if people want to become more than they currently are; it is not adequate if the source of our lamentations is to be lifted. It does not suffice for making people into what they are capable of becoming, of ennobling the mind itself as the source of all behavior. It does not suffice for people to act uniformly and always in this same manner. It does not raise the mind up above all temptations and attractions, to do the opposite. There are situations in which the usual reasons for correct behavior do not pass the test. There are situations that raise people*

up above the usual considerations. There are people who could say to themselves that, to all appearances,

*What need we fear, who knows it, when none can call our power to account?*

*There are mighty and great men who rise above these laws and, rather than orienting themselves according to people's applause and judgements, take control of these, and steer them. The King can say to the Queen what Henry the Fifth says in Shakespeare, O, Kate, nice customs curtsy to great kings. Dear Kate, you and I cannot be confined within the weak list of a country's fashion: we are the makers of manners, Kate; and the liberty that follows our places stops the mouths of all find-faults. The morality of the men of the world is not a morality that covers the fundamental convictions; and every morality lacking this support is a shaky morality.*

*Therefore, if men of the world call upon the philanthropy and goodness of their actions as evidence of higher morality, they may indeed be very good, when judged by their effects, but this does not prevent the source from being dishonest and the foundation from being shaky. What is truly good is found not in the actions but in the convictions. The virtue exists not in individual deeds, because virtue is a Whole, and where it is not, there can be good deeds that are not good, and there are only too many of those. That is why the men of the world appear not to know enough about the reasons for their actions, how they come to do the things they do, the power of this or that reason, how their conduct would change as soon as such*

reasons would cease to exist. The man of the world takes too little account of the fact that many a person behaves very well because they lack temptations and have no interest in doing the opposite. They do not know themselves enough and they think too advantageously of their inner worth. They do not know the lying dormant at the back of their own souls and lurking, waiting for an auspicious occasion.

*Idem faciet, cum idem poterit. Multorum, quia imbecilla sunt, latent vitia, non minus ausura, cum illis vires suae placuerint, quam illa, quae felicitas iam apernit.*

*S e n e c a.*

How true, how well founded in experience this is, is proved by the great changes caused by overswift shifts in fortune of many a person who had been admired as a model for morality during the period of their lowness and poverty. For it is then that they show themselves publicly in the way that they have always been thinking inside.

*Well, whiles I am a begger, I will rail  
And say,—there is no sin, but to be rich;  
And being rich, my virtue then shall be  
To say—there is no vice but beggary.*  
*:K. J o h n. Act II. Sc. a.*

Humans never know what they are until the opportunities arrive and cause this fruit tree to blossom. He who has not yet experienced all situations and withstood all dangers cannot determine whether he will be unconquerable. Many people consider themselves strong because the attack on their virtue came from the wrong corner. Many people think themselves beyond all charms



and temptations because, defiant in the face of misfortune, they know how to resist praise and flattery. They would do a lot better to remember that it is actually fortune that spoils people; that you can resist flattery and succumb to contempt; that for many people it is not the enemies but the lack of enemies, the idleness and boredom, that are the cliffs on which many a solid virtue has more than once come to failure.—In short, our men of the world only appear to know those aspects of themselves that are the source of their smugness. «They know where they are strong but they hide their weaknesses from themselves. Their assessments of their own value would change in an instant if it pleased them to examine their weaknesses and make them the object of their reflection. They would concede and find that there is perhaps no virtue that withstands every test.

Ognun che vive al mondo pecca ed erra:  
Né differisce in altro il buon dal rio,  
Se non che l'uno è vinto ad ogni guerra  
Che gli vien mossa da un piccol disio:  
L'altro ricorre all'arme e si difende,  
Ma se'l nimico è forte, anco ei si rende.  
Orlando furioso. Canto XXIV. St. 30.

This would lead us to the conclusion that our virtue as it now stands still lacks a real support, and that we would be very much in the wrong if we praised ourselves for that virtue and believed ourselves beyond improvement.

Pour avoir sécoué le joug de quelque vice,  
Qu'avec peu de raison l'homme s'enorgueillit!  
Il vit frugalement, mais c'est par avarice.  
S'il fuit les voluptés, c'est qu'il vieillit.

*Pour moi, par une longue et triste expérience.  
De cette illusion, j'ai reconnu l'abus.  
Je sais, sans me flater d'une vaine apparence,  
Que c'est à mes défauts, que je dois mes vertus.  
De la fare.*

*Our vanity is what prevents us from reaching this so indispensable conviction. Because of vanity, it is nearly impossible for us to think ourselves weak and incomplete. Vanity will never concede that we have erred in any way. It is impossible for people who believe they can do no wrong, who have an excuse for each of their mistakes, to be truly moral.*

*Mihi homines non placent, qui dum malum fecere,  
purgitant.  
P l a u t u s.*

*Therefore, the reason why men of the world assume that belief in the future can be separated from morality is rooted in the deceptions of our vanity and self-love, in their inability to think themselves incomplete and weak, in the resulting lack of knowledge about themselves, in their unfamiliarity with the truly decisive reasons and driving forces behind their actions. Men of the world make too little effort to find out how they came to their way of thinking and what other fundamental principles such a manner of thinking presupposes. That is why they are equally incapable of knowing how long they will think or act a certain way. In this matter they go as far as their needs drive them. Their viewpoint is this life, the present, or, at most, what they hope to achieve through the efforts of others. Their ideal of perfection and morality is therefore a very limited, incomplete ideal that does not fit all*

situations.

*The delusion that the belief in our continuing existence can be separated from morality is therefore one of the biggest obstacles to our perfecting. This belief must be weakened and destroyed. It must be demonstrated that a morality that can do without this idea will only generate spurious virtues. I intend to prove to this end that it is impossible for any system of ethics that assumes people think in order to eat to be a true one, and at the same time I hope to demonstrate that every system of ethics that denies the future is claiming that people think in order to eat. The course of my examination will show that every person who e.g. wants nothing other than to become rich or powerful either wants like a miser to make the means their end or will have to admit they work and think in order to eat.*

*For what can pow'r give more than food and drink  
To live at ease, and not be bound to think?  
D r y d e n.*

*This examination would profit the most if it were possible to prove that people who do not believe in a future even in the smallest of their actions behave completely differently than people who do believe, and believe for the correct reasons. It will therefore be necessary to demonstrate the differences produced by these systems in our behavior. The result will be that people in the comparison system can, from a certain point of view, become good, but never as good as they ought to become.')*

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\* Too black for heaven, and too white for hell.

D r y d e n.



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Consequently, there exist only two main systems of morality, and thus only two main ways to act; all others, no matter how many they are in number, are mere modifications and varieties. Better familiarizing ourselves with the nature of these two systems seems to be the pivotal point; and the objection that people who believe in a continued existence do not behave in a better fashion, and that this way of thinking thus produces no visible effect in human behavior, is meaningless. For the objectors seem to be forgetting that the passions can also usurp such fundamental teachings and abuse them to their own ends; that consequently the reason why moral ruination persists nevertheless lies not in the shortcomings of the doctrine but rather in our weakness, which cannot grasp this doctrine with the strength and vitality necessary to gain control over certain passions. The reason lies in the way in which these doctrines are thought about and the reasons from which they are derived. It depends on whether all that is necessary has been thought out in addition, and whether outside, heterogenous ideas have gotten mixed in. It proves that our ideas are never a whole, but are incomplete for the most part, and that what is supposed to be the End is conceived of as the Means, as I shall explain more elaborately and clearly below.

How now do we intend to prove that all true morals and virtues cannot do without the idea that we will continue to exist? I should think we could do so in the following way:

- 1) In morality and in deeds, everything depends on

*the end being pursued by the actors. All the means depend upon the ends, and so therefore do the actions undertaken to represent those means. All obligations depend upon the ends. Because all obligations, whether true or illusionary, are actions that become advisable and necessary according to the nature of the purpose we have in mind. All morality is therefore based on the doctrine of objectives, of the system of happiness, and varies as much as they do.*

*2) In morality, everything is based on the ideal of perfection envisioned by the actors. This must needs vary, depending on how short or long people think they will continue to exist. In any consideration, the only perfect people are those who are what they are capable of becoming on the strength of their nature and their gifts. Morality thus depends on the ideas and beliefs about whether much or little can be made of human beings. Here, it seems to depend upon what ideas people have about their final purpose; and persons with only a brief duration will certainly have different purposes than persons whose duration lasts beyond the limits of their earthly life.*

*3) No morality can be limited to mere enjoyment of the present. The concept of a future is indispensable to morality. That which is spiritual and noble in our actions thus comes from the fact that we are capable of daring to look beyond the present and of foreseeing more distant consequences. If then the concept of a future is so indispensable to morality, if the more noble of our actions depend upon our envisioning more distant consequences, then an idea that deals with the most distant consequences cannot be an indifferent sort of idea for moral philosophy.*

*If, therefore, the most essential components of every*



system of ethics and in all moral behavior are the ideas of a future and of an objective of perfection, and if they all lead to the idea that we shall continue to exist—then there is no basis for the claim that belief in immortality is indifferent or unhelpful for our morality. Were this not the case, we would have to be able to prove that the goal a person is pursuing, and everyone's ideas about perfection, are of no significance in morality. The present alone would have to contain everything people are capable of thinking or craving. And if not, all consequences would have to be inconsequential and the ability to foresee the future would have to be the most dispensable of all human characteristics.

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Firstly, on the goal every actor is pursuing. It is the key to explaining many a strange-seeming event. Anyone keeping this in mind will rescind many a rebuke as unfounded and will have to concede even in cases of the wrongest behaviors that nothing can be there found that could justly stand out and be disturbing. There exists on the whole a certain degree of reason, which is not the worst thing, for no one would find it bad if a great many things would cease to appear laughable or worthy of wonder. The more we make efforts to get to know the human being as such, the more we will become convinced that all these peculiarities and oddities in the customs and conduct of individuals and entire nations are part of the nature of such things and that naught else could in fact occur. Those to whom so much stands out in the world, who find so much worthy of criticism in it, are betraying that they do not know the generating sources of things and that they are still newcomers to the world despite all their experience.



*Only those who find that the human being was at all times and still is today that which the human being is capable of becoming under the conditions at hand—only those people and those people alone will cease being surprised and will reduce their urge to cast aspersions, thus proving themselves on the true path to wisdom.*

*Undeniably, humanity is, even in its current state, a very imperfect and deficient creation; but it is imperfect so that it can become perfect. Thinking this is wisdom, which takes the middle ground between two very dangerous extremes, and which leads neither to arrogance nor to despondency. This is shown by all its aptitudes and all its strengths; this is shown by the development of its compulsions; this is shown by the path its spirit has taken thus far both in individuals and the entire race.—Although humanity remains very small, it is still something Great.*

*Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,  
A being darkly wise and rudely great:  
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,  
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride  
He hangs between; in doubt to act or rest;  
In doubt to deem himself a God or beast;  
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;  
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;  
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,  
Whether he thinks too little or too much:  
Chaos of thought and passion, all confus'd;  
Still by himself abus'd or disabus'd;  
Greated half to rise and half to fall;  
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;  
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd,  
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!*

P o p e. *Essay on Man. Ep. 2.*

*Then say not man's imperfect, Heav'n in fault;  
Say rather, man's as perfect as he ought:  
His knowledge measur'd to his state and place.  
His time a moment, and a point his space.  
If to be perfect in certain sphere,  
What matter, soon or late, or here, or there?  
The bléss today is as completely so,  
As who began a thousand years ago.  
Heav'n from all creatures hides the book of fate,  
All but the page prescrib'd, their present state:—  
Or who could suffer being here below? — —  
Oh blindness of the future! kindly giv'n,  
That each may fill the circle mark'd by Heav'n.*  
P o p e. *Essay on Man. Ep. 1.*

*These oddities in our nature include the fact that the most active creature of all, the human being, is disposed to indolence.”) This has very great moral consequences and thus it appears undeniable that no person exists or could exist who would take action without having an interest in the matter. Our congenital indolence can only be reduced by our becoming acquainted with things that affect us favorably or adversely.*

*Every person who acts thus must necessarily have a certain point of view, an idea about something that he or she finds good or evil and desires to achieve or prevent. Whoever has this certain point of view can neither decide otherwise, nor act otherwise. People also select the means to*

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<sup>1</sup> *Mira diversitate naturae, cum idem homines sic ament inertiam et oderint quietem.*

T a c i t u s. in Germ.

their ends on the basis of their individual understandings, as well as they are able. They act in accordance with how their understanding dictates or permits for each occasion. People would have to be called not just clever but even wise if their viewpoints were above all dispute. Everything people know they know entirely in the manner that suits their existing system of ideas. Every subject their mind processes they will gradually exhaust as much as is possible. The activity of someone whose mind has a lively interest knows no limits. In every case where we lag behind in mental development, either our minds lack the necessary foundations and motivating forces or we are sensible of an opposing, more lively interest. Thus in the areas where we ought to become active something must be found that stimulates our strength and gives it the necessary momentum. This Something, this Reason, that preferably will destine us to act in a certain manner, without which there would be no virtue, is called, in its most general and most suitable appellation in our linguistic usage, Interest; and in this sense it is hard to doubt whether there could be an action that excludes all interest.

According to its further divisions, such interest can be true or false, noble or ignoble. But it is and remains the soul of our activity, and we are neither less nor more, neither worse nor better; we are in fact precisely what our interest requires. Where its interest is great, humanity will show itself in all its greatness. And when with regard to very great matters people demonstrate small thoughts or low behavior you can conclude with mathematical certainty that in their circumstances they still lack the necessary interest. For this reason, the human mind has done the most astounding things and has proven it could be capable of still greater things if only such interest existed.



*In all eras there have been great statesmen, military commanders, sailors, artists, and scholars, because an enduring, general human need has generated an enduring interest in showing oneself great in one or more of these ways. Humans have also perfected the art of pleasing, even the art of abusing others, because the interest in obtaining others' liking and collaboration or in averting disadvantages to oneself is enduring and general.*

*Thus, wherever there is a great interest, wherever one of the more noble passions has become prevailing, wherever a person is pursuing a worthy and sublime purpose seriously and emphatically and with constancy—there you will find a plan and a system in their designs, and logical consistency in their actions and thoughts, and thus also a type of perfection in their spirit. Only when people are uncertain and in disagreement with themselves, when they want to achieve now this purpose and now that purpose, or even incompatible purposes, when they vacillate without decision and without reflection from one thing to another—only then will you find inconsistency in their actions and contradiction in themselves as a whole, because character and a certain uniform interest are lacking. Generally, all human error is based either on people's having no plan at all and not pursuing a specific goal—here you find weakness of character, foolishness, contradiction, and inconsistency; or on people's pursuit of a subordinated purpose, treating it like the main purpose, as ambitious and domineering people do—here there can be the appearance of wisdom; or finally upon their overleaping all intermediate purposes and attempting thus to achieve the highest purpose—this leads to religious and political fanaticism, to that type of intolerance that is equally impossible to consider wise.*

Wherever principles, wherever character and uniformity can be discovered both in convictions and in deeds, there you will find a type of greatness simultaneously, for there there is concordance and planning; and wherever planning exists, wherever theory marches in step with execution, there you will also find an appearance of perfection and wisdom. The result of this is that even where people have undeniable weaknesses, when they strive to achieve wealth, admiration, or power, they can still display a degree of reason and prior reflection offended by nothing but the lowliness of the thing for which they exert so much reason. Moralists thus may have very good reasons for finding fault with people's addiction to conquest, but they will not have grounds to deny the fact that even the people engaged in the activities they so hate remain capable of behaving in a manner that shows true greatness of mind and kindles admiration. In another world, in a different context, the art of war might appear harmful or unnecessary; but we will have to concede, for as long as the current order of things persists, that a great conqueror and military commander can be an extraordinary person. If there is an error here, it lies in the Purpose. But, even from this point of view, circumstances in this world not infrequently are such that in some situations many a reasonable person would be incapable of having any other purpose. For self-defence demands some ends; some ends must be achieved to improve the constraints and defects of our circumstances.

All true and false human wisdom and morality thus depends, it appears, on the nature of the goal that each person is pursuing as the highest and final goal, or, it being the same thing, on what each person thinks is the highest

Good for a human being. They depend on what everyone ought to want and actually does want, and the only truly wise and great people are those who want nothing other than what they ought to want and who know and select the most suitable means to those ends.

The motivating forces behind our actions vary greatly. Each one is in pursuit of its own separate goal, and that is precisely what distinguishes it from the others. Each motivating force thus presupposes its own ideal of perfection and has its own morality. For this reason, it is possible to claim that there are as many systems of ethics as there are main motivating forces for our deeds.

The main motivating forces for our deeds, on which basis people commonly make their decisions, are love of peace and comfort, sensuous delights, greed of having and greed of gaining, ambition, vanity, the desire to stand out from the crowd, and the desire for approval; there is also the desire to rule over others, or for influence and power.

They may seem to be very different paths, but they all lead to one destination. For it is possible to think of one common Good that people are wanting to achieve in such different ways. The question arises: what do comfortable, sensuous, greedy, ambitious, domineering people want? Why do some hoard wealth? Why do others want admiration and distinction? Why influence and power? Are such things good in themselves, or merely the means to achieve a higher, common objective?

The nature of the matter in question will answer this



to a great extent. If these things are good in themselves, they cannot be craved enough. If however their value is none other than the value of a means to an end, then everything depends on the nature of the end to which they are serving as means and conditions. Accordingly, the ones will deserve preference that achieve this end the most securely and reliably, and will not themselves deserve to be desired more than is required by the nature of the objective. The question thus arises: What is this common purpose? And which of the paths cited above is the most reliable way to achieve it?

The first question can be disputed in theory but is that much more beyond doubt and uniform in practice. All these proud, vain, and arrogant people, these insatiable usurers, corrupt judges, disloyal public servants, and traitors; all these brainless hypocrites and lavish wastrels, vile flatterers, these proudly humble hypocrites, those who envy, criticize, slander, and libel everything of merit, all these people who so artificially propose and dispose;

*Ces grands faiseurs de protestations,  
Ces affables donneurs d'embrassades frivoles,  
Ces obligeants diseurs d'inutiles paroles,  
Qui de civilités avec tous font combat,  
Et traitent du même air l'honnête homme et le fat.  
Le Misanthrope. Act I. Sc. I.*

all this impressiveness, this game of ingratiating gestures;

*Quel parlar facondo e lusinghiero e scòrto,  
Pieghevoli costumi e vario ingegno  
Al finger pronto, a l'ingannare accorto:*

*E le calunnie, adorne in modi  
Novi, che sono accuse, e paion lodi.  
G i e r u s a l. Lib. Canto. II. Stanz. 58.*

*all the fools, all the villains on earth behave in this way of theirs because they are convinced that power, wealth, and admiration are humankind's greatest goods, and that no path other than the one they have selected will take them so easily and surely to this goal. They want to become powerful, rich, or admired. That is all they want. But would they desire to become powerful, rich, or admired if might, wealth, and acclaim were harmful things? If they were naught but ends in themselves and good for nothing else? What do the mighty, the wealthy, the admired want? What would be the value of all the treasures of the earth if it were impossible to use them to other ends?*

*Quid iuvat immensum te argenti pondus et auri  
furtim defossa timidum deponere terra?*

*H o r a c e. Sat. I. Lib. I.*

*What good is strength you cannot use? What good are venerability and service if no one pays them any heed?*

*All these people who seem to recognize no greater good than power, wealth, and admiration, who will stop at nothing, sneering at every hazard and obstacle, to gain these things, bringing unending turbulence into their lives to that end—these people are, fundamentally and to a man, sensual and leisurely people. They want to become powerful, rich, and admired—so that they can then sit back and do nothing, enjoy life, and relax. They are active for the*

*purpose of becoming inactive.')* They try to achieve through detours and hazards the same thing that sensuous people try to achieve directly, seeking it in such roundabout ways because experience has taught them there is no faster way to achieve this goal of their desires. They would want to enjoy life as directly as sensuous people do were it possible to enjoy life thusly, and they take advantage of every opportunity to arrange matters that way as much as possible.

*The good things in life, relaxation, activity sans exertion—that is what people want, that seems to be the purpose of all our imperatives and passions, as evidenced by all our deeds. Even the greater part of our virtues, justice, moderation, helpfulness, conscientiousness in keeping one's word, respect and love for others, have never had any basis other than*

*Nous ne sommes pas battants de peur d'être battus.*

*All people, whether acting in goodness or in evil, are trying to place themselves in a situation where they feel less displeasure and more pleasure. They long for a condition in which they are stronger than all the obstacles impeding their desires, where they can relax without hindrance and enjoy their existence, where they can arbitrarily decide to act, not to act, or to act differently.*

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\*) Ille, gravem duro terram qui vertit aratro,  
Perfidus hic caupo, miles nautaeque, per omne  
Audaces mare qui currunt: hac mente laborem  
Sese ferre, sense ut in otia tuta recedant,  
Ajunt, quam sint congesta cibaria.



*It would be difficult for their desires to extend beyond such a situation. Even those whom possession of the earth would not satisfy, even the most insatiable of all conquerors, could not deny, were they to frankly examine the true nature of their desires, the humbling thought that all their noisy deeds, and the impressiveness of their deeds, the illusions and delusions of greatness and wisdom that they have created for this purpose, do not amount to anything more than the plain and simple remarks of good-natured Sancho in Don Quixote. With Sancho, they must admit to themselves in their heart of hearts*

*Only give me the Earth as my possession, and I will do what I please, and when I do what I please I shall be living as I please, and when I live as I please I shall be living a life of pleasure; and when I am living a life of pleasure I shall have nothing more to wish for; and when a man has nothing more to wish for, he has everything. And commanded God therewith.')*

*This simplest of all naked, knavish wisdom resolves the last remaining elements of that tragicomic, world-shattering, destructive game of ambition and thirst for power that so affects our Earth; such is the end of all earthly splendor! And the greatest of all men seeks in this*

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) Non se essas filosofias, ma solo sé, que tan

Rey seria yo de mi estado, como cada uno del suyo; y siendolo, harla lo que quisiesse; y hacienda lo quisiésse haria mi gusto; y hacienda mi gusto, estaria contento, y en estando uno conteno, no tiene mas que dessèar y no teniendo mas que dessèar acabòse; y el estado venga, y a Dios, y veamonos, como dixo un ciego à otro.

D. Quixote. Part III. Lib. IV. Cap. 50.

manner nothing better than what is demanded by every day laborer in his lowly hut.

*Quali picciol, qual vano,  
Qual misero theatro ha il ###fasto humano!*

*Plutarch's account of Pyrrhus, including the quite appropriate response of Cineas, one of the worldly-wise Greeks in that conqueror's retinue, proves that all thirst for power and conquest truly has no other goal.*

*Mais de retour enfin, prétendez-vous faire?  
Alors, cher Cinéas, victorieux, contents,  
Nous pourrons rire à l'aise, et prendre du bon temps.  
Hé, Seigneur, dès ce jour, sans sortir de l'Épire  
Du matin jusqu'au soir, qui vous défend de rire?  
Le conseil étoit sage, et facile à goûter.  
Pyrrhus vivoit heureux, s'il eût pût l'écouter.  
Boileau. Ep. I*

*The most insatiable of all challengers on this earth truly can demand no more than the fulfillment of all his or her wishes. Any person who can recognize, desire, do, and enjoy whatever, whenever, and wherever they wish, for as much and as long as they wish, has certainly exhausted the ideal of all blissful happiness. This is the same ideal that every person is striving to achieve, whether they know it or not, whether they are good or evil, in every age, and each in his own fashion. Kings and beggars, wise men and fools, saints and villains have no other goal and could not act in any other way. We all want to enjoy our existence happily and without any hindrances. That is all that we want, and all the reason in the world could not provide us with anything*

*better. For this reason, morality cannot be anything but a doctrine of happiness. It is the science or art that teaches people how to enjoy life in the safest and most lasting way. Morality that teaches the most reliable means to that end is the only reasonable and true morality. This is what Nature and Reason desire, and for that reason it cannot be unsound. In every system, this goal will be the Single and Highest goal, whether there is a future or not. The question may arise: why would a person desire to become powerful or rich? You might even ask why someone would seek virtue and perfection. But is there no answer to the question of why people would want to be happy and enjoy existence? This goal is thus certainly the highest and final objective of humankind. Whoever achieves it is therefore perfect, because they have become what they are capable of becoming. It is actually impossible to be anything more. For whoever has unimpeded activity of the mind has everything. If this be not the case, I beg you will tell me what more is lacking for someone to be considered perfect.*

*Therefore it seems there is only one objective but many ways and means, and experience teaches us that they are not all equal in value.*

*Tutti siam peregrine per molti regni,  
A Roma tutti andar vogliamo, Orlando,  
Ma per motli sentier n'andiam Cercando.  
Il Morgante. Cant. II.*

*Some of these means are more attractive than the rest because they appear to lead most directly to the goal; laziness and sensuality are of this type. Others only reach the goal by roundabout ways. Wealth, power, popularity, and acclaim are of this type. Indolent, lazy, and sensuous*



manner nothing better than what is demanded by every day laborer in his lowly hut.

*Quali picciol, qual vano,  
Qual misero teatro ha il ###fasto humano!*

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*people therefore follow one path to happiness, and the greedy, ambitious, vain, and most power-hungry take another, completely opposite road.*

*Because of their primary disposition, all humans are inclined to take the first path and simply head directly for their goal. Whenever possible, we all will, on the strength of our own inertia, prefer the easy to the difficult, the immediate to the delayed, the present to the future. If ever we cease doing so, we do it because experience has taught us that this route will harm us and will not lead to the goal, but will in fact take us further away from it. This effort which has now become necessary will not extend beyond our experience and insight, however. And that is why, when conditions change, lethargy's demands are always renewed; and all human poetry and endeavor from then on is aimed at recreating the interrupted tranquility, and arranging the things around oneself to achieve this end. The lethargic and lazy man's philosophy is based on the fundamental principle that everything that interrupts idleness and tranquility is bad, and that activity itself is only good to the extent that it enables people to avoid all subsequent exertions. According to the system of the idle and sensuous, tranquility is an end in itself, and all activity is a means to achieve tranquility.*

*So if everyone were left to their natural tendencies, if they were capable of doing whatever they liked, and all external circumstances were available to them to achieve this end—no human being on earth would work. Everyone would help themselves, without a care in the world. Tranquility and sensuous pleasure would be the be-all and end-all for humanity, and work would be the greatest of all evils. This is proven by the insouciance and arbitrariness of*



savages, children, and all people with little experience. It is even proven by the carefree attitudes of great and wealthy people. Because it is exactly this that people deem the greatest advantages of power and money, that neither rich people nor powerful people need work but can purchase or force service from others.

The original system of sensuality and idleness must therefore be due for change and improvement, because its circumstances are completely available to no one. This increases our series of appetites, but the goal itself and the reason remain unchanged. Anyone who has lived some time in this world discovers to their annoyance that certain means, preparations, and institutions are necessary to achieve pleasure and tranquility. In this way, they discover good things previously unknown to them, when these things serve as means to their end, to idleness. From this point on, they understand that either they must earn the collaboration, respect, and love of their fellow human beings through appropriate conduct, or they must succeed in purchasing or forcing others' services. From this point on, acclaim, power, and wealth appear to be very great goods, and the system of ambition, greed, and the thirst for power expands and corrects the morality of lethargy to the point that everything that generates acclaim, money, or power is good and permitted, but that contempt, poverty, and helplessness are very great evils. From here on, people's inclinations are toward these means. We do not love them for their own sake. We love our own objective, unimpeded pleasure, in them, until later reversals in our appetites cause us to forget our objective and e.g. desire money or distinctions despite the fact that we have never enjoyed the consequences of them.

No matter how much acclaim, power, and wealth can act as means to unimpeded pleasure, still it is possible to conceive of a differentiation between these means. Some of them promise quick and direct gratification, and others require more effort to achieve and thus, thanks to our initial and persistent tendency toward idleness, they are sought after less often or only in the absence of all else. As a result of this system, people prefer power above all else. Next, they incline toward wealth; and inner venerability or service will be the last of their objectives.

Of all the means which humans can use to quickly reach the unimpeded enjoyment of their powers, none seems to promise as much quick and widespread gratification as power. And therein lie the apparent main advantage and desirability of high birth and origin. I said that seems to be the case. Because in actuality, upon close examination, this blinding pretense is greatly diminished.

Tous ces grands seigneurs—là ne sont jamais  
plaisants,  
Ils n'ont pas l'air joyeux, ils attristent les gens;  
Comme ils sont toujours bien, leur joye est tout usée,  
Vous ne les voyez plus jeter une risée.  
Il leur faudroit du mal et du travail par fois.  
G r e s s e t in Sidney. Act. I. Sc. 8.

Despite this, there is nothing on earth that people pursue so persistently and so universally as power. Nothing is as despised as weakness and lack of strength. There is nothing that people will lower themselves as much for, will forget their entire worth for, will try so hard to please for, as power. Babes in their cradles already give commands

through their screams. And all the deeds of our lives are nothing more than so many attempts to evade weakness and achieve some type of power. Everyone who has already won some power wants to become mightier still.

*Qui nolunt occidere quemquam,  
Posse volunt.  
L u c a n. <sup>2</sup>*

*This love of power and thirst for mastery demonstrates itself in the most varied ways. The first elements are the wishes for freedom and independence so natural to every human being—horror of oppression and slavery. Those who are free are not contented with that. They take it a step further. They want to command. Tacitus said*

*Spe libertatis et, si exuissent servitium, cupidine imperitandi.*

*Even many an agitation for the rights of man, against the arrogance and injustices of the great, against abuse of public power, many a sermon preached for tolerance and freedom of thought, are done for no more noble reason than to found one's own rule on the ruins of existing power. Cossutarius said, according to Tacitus,*

*'Ut imperium evertant, libertatem praeferunt: Si perverterint, libertatem ipsam adgredientur.*

*General, sad experience shows that those who thirst most for power are the most enthusiastic defenders of religious*

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<sup>2</sup> Translator's note: The author appears to have confused Lucan with Juvenal.



and political tolerance.

*Ils osent s'en vanter; mais leur feinte justice,  
Leur âpre austérité que rien ne peut gagner.  
N'est dans ces coeurs hautains que la soif de regner.  
Leur orgueil foule aux pieds l'orgueil du diadème,  
Ils ont brisé le joug pour l'imposer eux-mêmes.  
De notre liberté ces illustres vengeurs,  
Armés pour la défendre, en sont les oppresseurs.  
B r u t u s. Act I. Sc. 4.*

Once it has flared up, this tendency will metamorphose into all sorts of forms and know no limits. It manifests itself at every level of culture and in every class, in its own way. But it becomes louder and more impetuous the closer it comes to its goal. And how pleased these greater and lesser powers that be are with their game and the way they comport themselves produces one of the strangest spectacles. Could great men thunder as Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet. For every pelting, petty officer would use his heaven for thunder; nothing but thunder.—But man, proud man! Drest in a little brief authority; most ignorant of what he's most assur'd. His glassy essence,—like an angry ape. Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep, who, with our spleens would all themselves laugh mortal.

*M e a s u r e f o r M e a s u r e. Act II. Sc. 22.*

Thus, nothing is defended as stubbornly and with such self-sacrifice, and nothing resembles the goal of our desires, unimpeded activity, as closely as a high degree of power. Even the desire to hoard up treasure not infrequently turns out to be this other tendency.

*Il est tant de traitants, qu'on voit depuis la guerre  
En modernes seigneurs sortir de dessous terre,  
Qu'on ne s'étonne plus, qu'un laquais, qu'un pied-plat  
De sa vieille mantilla achète un marquisat.*  
*Le Joueur. Act IV. Sc. 5.*

*That which leads to power, secures power, and gives power a more solid foundation thus seems good and permissible to us. Increasing their influence and asserting themselves; the art of using others as so many tools; what one could call *hausser son être*—this and this alone appears to be true cleverness, perfection, and wisdom to people who believe they know the world. In their eyes, what are honor, virtue, merit, and learning, without power?*

*Ah! vive un grand seigneur! tout rit à son aspect;  
Tout flétrit devant lui; tout est pour son usage.  
Le plus sot, s'il est grand, est un grand personnage.  
Les Phil. amoureux. Sc. I. Act II.*

*But because there can only be a few who are very powerful, because there have to be subordinated people on whom the great ones can express and demonstrate their power, this pathway to unimpeded activity will always remain closed to the greater part of all humanity. On the other hand, there exist two other roads, both of which are taken more frequently. He who cannot be First tries at least to be First or Second after the person who is First. There are always people who try to become great by pleasing those who are already great.*

*Colit hic reges, calcet ut omnes  
Perdatque aliquos nullumque levet.*

*Tantum ut noceat cupit esse potens.*  
*Seneca in Herc. oet. Act II.*

*That is why every great person is flanked by vileness and flattery, and it is mostly the lower classes who spoil the higher and maintain the great ones' arbitrary usage of power so as to be able to use power arbitrarily in their own spheres. To find out what sort of people and what changes in people's moral behavior this generates, I refer my readers to Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, in the third book, fifth chapter.')* This portrait can seem that much more beyond suspicion because it was created by a man of the world whose insight and expertise are doubted by no one.

*The second route taken by an impeded love of power is the path of riches. Because wealth, too, provides a type of power. It is perhaps the first and most important component of power. Whoever is rich, very rich, can do anything.*

*Quiconque est riche, est tout. Sans sagesse il est sage.*  
*Il a, sans rien savoir, la science en partage.*  
*Il a l'esprit, le coeur, le mérite, le rang,*  
*La vertu, la valeur, la dignité, le sang.*  
*Il est aimé de grands, il est chéri des belles.*

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L'ambition dans l'oisiveté, la bassesse dans l'orgueil, le désir de s'enrichir sans travail, l'aversion pour la vérité, la flatterie, la trahison, la perfidie, l'abandon de tous ses engagements, le mépris des devoirs du citoyen, la crainte de la vertu du prince, l'espérance des ses faiblesses, et plus que tout cela, le ridicule perpétuel jeté sur la vertu, forment, je crois, le caractère du plus grand nombre des courtisans marqué dans tous les lieux et dans tous le temps. Or il est très-mal-aisé que la plupart des principaux d'un état soient mal-honnêtes gens; et que les inférieurs soient trompeurs, et que ceux-ci consentent à n'être que dupes.



*Jamais sur l'intendant ne trouva de cruelles.  
L'or même à la laideur donne un teint de beauté:  
Mais tout deviant affreux avec la pauvreté.  
B o i l e a u. Sat. VIII.*

*What a vast field this opens to human activity, how one new interest, class, trade arises after another, how more and more things acquire value, how the pathways to happiness and peaceful pleasure become more and more confused and convoluted, what a change this causes in people's beliefs and behavior; how clever these many new activities and prospects are at filling up a person's entire soul—everyone in the whole world has seen something of this, thanks to common experience. It my hope that this text will make it clearer still.*

*Wealth protects you from every future and present lack. It lets people enjoy all possible goods; in this way it puts the Lowest and the Highest into the same class; it gives every human a degree of independence and even influence and power; it creates positions of honor and high standing. Everything that people can seek and desire down here is united in the possession of money.—It is no wonder, then, that money remains to this day the world's idol and greatest driving force; that all human activity revolves around this point; that the desire to enrich oneself is so irresistibly attractive to people that poverty appears the worst of all evils to rich and poor alike. Of all the desirable things on earth, none is so clever as to gratify our remaining wishes as well. Thus nothing else appears to be the ultimate goal of all human activity so much as great riches or money.*

*The morality of those people who want to become*

rich because they see unending possibilities in the possession of wealth thus cannot be of the highest and noblest type.

*Lucri odor bonus ex qualibet re.*

This maxim seems to be the stimulating principle behind every single one of their actions. Whoever discovers so much good in money can let no opportunity pass by to acquire as much money as quickly as possible. They will uninhibitedly ignore every consideration. And thanks to the lethargy inherent in all human beings, the majority will always prefer the more ignoble but quicker paths to riches, where no other counterbalancing forces are in effect.

A mother this ugly bears even uglier children. For greed hoards treasures either with the intention of never enjoying them, which leads to miserliness, or it collects things for the purpose of pleasure and in this way becomes the wellspring of wastefulness, sensuality, vanity, and luxury; or, lastly, the rich use the fortune they have scraped together as a means to enable them to transition to a higher class, to a larger sphere of effectiveness, to increase their influence and the scope of their power.

*De ces hommes nouveaux c'est là l'ambition,  
L'avarice est d'abord leur grand passion,  
Mais ils changent d'objet, dès qu'elle est satisfaite  
Et courent les honneurs, quand la fortune est faite.  
L e g l o r i e u x.*

In any case, people who use their collected ends for nobler and more reasonable ends, who do not deteriorate as a result of the accumulation of their wealth, are a rare event in this world.

*The noblest, or at least the least damaging, route to wealth, power, and thus also to unimpeded pleasure would indisputably be the path of honor and merit, if only this path always led safely to that goal and if only the significance of that which earns honor and respect were less arbitrary and erratic; but because all respect and honor depend on the opinions of others, who judge people more by appearances, inevitably all true and reasonable desire for honor degenerates into mere appearances and vanity, and people are led astray by the mood of their contemporaries, out of respect for which they are more than inclined to distinguish themselves through frivolities and trifles and perform deeds more glittery than truly good.*

*This, then, as well as could be described in so brief a space, appears to be the centerpoint around which all human activity has revolved, up to and including the present day. The tragicomic spectacle of our lives, in part laughable, in part irritating, is put together of these ingredients. For their sake, we vie at hating, persecuting, blaspheming, slandering, murdering, and persecuting [sic] one another; we want to live sensuously and comfortably, we want to be marveled at and honored, we pile up treasures, and want to rule over others—all for the purpose of getting, one way or another, to the final common goal that we all desire, unimpeded activity.*

*Because every human being has an indubitable right to this final, common objective, indeed because we become wretched if we are unable to achieve it or find ourselves getting further away from it, one of the first and most general obligations for every person is to compete for it.*



*And if there are no other means to this end except those named above, then it is the duty of every human being to become as sensuous, lazy, greedy, ambitious, vain, and domineering as possible; and it is just as much every man's duty to act as the nature and purpose of sensuality, laziness, ambition, greed, and the thirst for power demand. And there are as many systems of ethics and obligations as there are ardent viewpoints. It follows that every human being is acting in a good and just manner, because they are acting as forced to by such an objective, they are using the means that lead to that end.*

*But, if this happens, then nothing could justifiably be deemed Right or Wrong. Instead of achieving unimpeded pleasure, the quantity and conflicting nature of the interests would create contradiction, discord, and quarrels. No one would achieve his goal, all means would become obstacles, and wherever Everyone was, to the greatest degree, enjoying life, living sensuously, standing out above the crowd, piling up wealth, and wanting to rule over the rest—there No One would live comfortably, No One would be honored, no man would be powerful or rich, fundamentally. In other words, there those Means would cease being Means because they would hamper unimpeded pleasure rather than promote it. It is thus impossible for the morality of these passions to be the true morality. Wealth, acclaim, and power can thus be great means, but not universal ones; they cannot be humankind's highest and greatest goods, cannot be the only way to achieve unimpeded activity.*

*Dieu, qui nous a rangés sous différentes lois,  
Peut faire autant d'heureux, non pas autant de Rois.  
V o l t a i r e.*

*To achieve this end, it seems absolutely necessary that all the demands made by these various passionate points of view be moderated and reduced to the degree at which they start to be more tolerable. And this is the first place where a system of ethics would in fact have first earned the right to that name, would actually begin.*

*There are however only two means to bring about this moderation without which no morality is conceivable. It happens either because people become convinced that all these good things—power, honor, wealth, sensuous pleasure and idleness—do not have high value, and appear to be of a lower type, or it happens because people must understand every time these urges express themselves that moderation is necessary because it is better to enjoy something than to enjoy nothing at all. We must be able to lose in order to be able to win from another side, to be able to enjoy what remains after our self-sacrifice that much more purely and sans distraction. All moderation and morality in this latter system would thus still be based on the craving for pleasure, but also the hazard associated with and sheer impossibility of enjoying everything. This morality would thus only be binding to the extent that this foundation continued to exist.*

*Which of these two ways of thinking could more reliably bring about true and long-lasting moderation, on which of these two paths could a system of ethics be founded that would be binding for all human beings at all times and under all circumstances? As soon as it becomes possible to name some good things, doubtless the better system will depend on which of those good things are of a higher type, which depend less on the circumstances, and,*

*in other words, which ones are of unchanging value.*

*Such good things will exist when we have a state of affairs in which no advantage can be gained through any earthly wealth, distinctions, and power; in which they deliver on none of their promises; when, I say, we have a state into which none of these goods can be brought; where entirely different things are accorded value.*

*We will have such a state of affairs when people start thinking of humanity as a creature that is going to endure.')* The concept of a future thus is the most effective means for reducing the demands of the passions, and for this reason it can never be separated from morality without disadvantage. In morality, which is founded on belief in and the conviction of our continuation, all these passionate purposes take on a very different value, via the following plain and very simple idea:

*Cela, est bon dans le monde. Mais je vais dans un pays où tout cela ne me servira guère.*

*What changes in people's ways of thinking and behaving will result in these points of view merits demonstration. This examination is the more necessary because this is the crucial point where ethics separates into its two main branches.*

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*Il y a deux mondes, l'un, où l'on séjourne peu, et dont l'on doit sortir, pour n'y plus rentrer; l'autre, où l'on doit bientôt entrer, pour n'en jamais sortir. La faveur, l'autorité, la haute réputation, les grands biens servent pour le premier monde; le mépris de toutes ces choses sert pour le second. Il s'agit de choisir.*

*La Bruyère*



*Although a human's greatest good can be no other, in any system, than the unimpeded enjoyment of his or her powers, nevertheless reason and experience demand we differentiate between these powers. Some of them the world considers to be higher in nature, and appreciates more. Others are lower in nature. The power that discovers these heavenly laws, or that draws up charitable designs to benefit entire nations and regions of the world, and the power that digests food, or generates humorous ideas, are truly powers of extremely varied type; and a person who rejoices only in his healthy digestive system certainly cannot be put on the same level as the mind of a Socrates, Leibnitz, Newton, or Friedrich II with regard to his perfection or blessedness. The question thus arises: What human powers deserve to be given precedence above the others when the urge arises for unimpeded enjoyment? The low ones or the high ones?*

*This question gives the object of my examination a new and more defined form. The question is rather: is humanity's greatest good, unimpeded enjoyment, part of a sensory or a mental enjoyment? Or, one and the same and, to our shame, already touched on above: Do humans think in order to eat, or do they eat in order to think? Which of the two is the purpose?—Here the answer must vary, depending on whether one considers a human to be a merely temporary or in fact a perennating creature.*

*If humanity is not destined for continuation, all mental enjoyment can be nothing better or more noble than a means to enjoy one's sensory existence as securely and as long as possible.*

*This earthly life, the only life there is, thus becomes the sole and highest purpose, and obviously people only think for the purpose of eating. If this supposition were true, even the wisest could demand nothing better than to care for a body on whose condition and duration all else depends. Anything opposed to this first of all purposes, anything that destroys or handicaps our physical existence, or accelerates its disintegration by even a single moment, is truly injurious and evil. Nothing can exist that is more injurious, and it appears inconceivable that any humans could exist who could believe in their own destruction and yet sacrifice their unique, priceless lives for others, or even for their homeland.*

*Ἐμοῦ θανούτος γὰρ ἀμείχθητο πυρὶ. Morto io, mort il mondo, Après moi le déluge—*

*or however else the mighty language has sounded through the ages of people impudent enough to think themselves alone the purpose of all creation. This must be the secret wish and thought of all people as soon as their existence becomes endangered. For of all the penitents on this earth, none deserve to be clapped in chains more than unbelievers who risk their own lives. \*) As soon as this life becomes the*

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\* A daring Infidel

Of all earth's madmen, most deserves a chain.—

Who tells me he denies his soul immortal,

What e'er his boast has told me

His duty 'tis to love himself alone.—

Die for thy country, thou romantic fool!

Seize, seize the plane thyself, and let her sink:

Thy country? what to thee?—The godhead, what?

(I speak with awe!) tho' he should bid thee bleed?

If, with thy blood, thy final hope is spilt,

Nor can omnipotence reward the blow,

only life, nothing is worth more than this life; and death is the greatest of all evils. All goods that serve to prolong our existence or make life more pleasant and bearable thus become goods that cannot be bought too dearly. And in contrast, poverty, illness, weakness, and contempt would be real and very great evils; every human being would have to do his utmost to avoid them. Satisfy your most urgent needs, pleasure all your senses, and spare yourself every unpleasant sensation as much as possible.—To have the greatest success in achieving this would be the only true wisdom life has to offer; anything else would be foolish. Reason and understanding are certainly human advantages and goods, but they would only have been given to us to enable us to distinguish between good and evil, notice the relationships between matters and such a sensitive nature, assert ourselves, and manipulate circumstances and people such that the latter become inclined to promote our pleasure, or be the tools of our intentions; for this reason alone would humans be reasoning creatures, with the power of imagination.

True, this does not rule out all possibility of moderation, justice, and virtue. Even within this system there exists more than one reason to be an honest and even a charitable man. For, on the strength of this system, all wisdom would lie in the art of protracted enjoyment, and only those who practice moderate enjoyment can practice protracted enjoyment. Moderation of the appetites, and the limitation of the passions, would thus be, even in the system of mortality, indispensable virtues. And where moderation exists a foundation exists on which you can build up a

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Be deaf; preserve thy being; disobey.

Young.



complete system of ethics. But all this virtue and morality when examined more closely proves to be nothing but a refined, protracted sensuality, a virtue driven by the desire for longer periods of sensory pleasure. It is true that, in this way, the coarser sensuality falls away, but the epicurean, refined system of sensuality that turns reason and virtue into means to an end, and subordinates all thought to physical sensation—this type of sensuality remains an unavoidable consequence. Here, arbitrariness and high-handedness are limited, too, and justice and respect for the rights of others must also be viewed as virtues in this system. But they are only virtues that the weak need whilst they remain weak. For all others in a position to be unjust without incurring punishment, no bonds exist that would be strong enough to limit their tyranny. There is even less reason why anyone above all consideration and obstacles would voluntarily limit their own arbitrariness, without being forced to do so. All concepts of Right and Wrong would thus, as a result of this system, remain the vain, useless inventions of the Weak. They are the result of voluntary renunciation and convention for the purpose of paralyzing the power of stronger people. People would abstain from injustice so as not to have to suffer injustice in turn. And all obligation to behave justly would immediately vanish as soon as the reason, the fruit of repayment in turn, vanished as well. In this system, the ideal of all perfection would thus be the condition in which people find themselves able to be unjust without being punished.

*Melius, pejus, prosit, obsit, nil videre, nisi quod lubet.*

*He who can do this would be the happiest and most perfect person of all.*

*In the system of epicurean sensuality, on the other hand, our reason would be able to develop to a very high degree. But why and to what purpose would we develop our minds?—Either to entertain ourselves and avoid the tortures of ennui, or to become rich, powerful, and respected, and consequently in this way to attain the means to expand our sensory pleasure. Thus, in the system of worldly men or of fine sensuality, you can twist and turn however you will. You can boast of your morality and your selflessness as much as you like, and yet the final result leads to a discovery that every person should in principle be ashamed of making, if sophistry did not come to our aid with its whitewash.—And what is this great result?—Listen to it, people, and be proud. All virtue, all science and learning, all striving for wealth, honor, and power; all human activity, everything on Earth that appears Good, Great, and Charitable;*

*Tutto, tutto in quell mondo  
Che si fa de bel et de bon  
Si fa per un piatto de' maccaron.*

*or, as the source cited above says:*

*For what can pow'r give more than food and drink,  
To live at ease and not be bound to think?  
D r y d e n.*

*Despite all this, the morality of refined sensuality, with its hundreds of levels and branches, is not solely the system of most worldly and business people; it is the system*

*of almost all people, as soon as they take action.\*) And more*

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Diess ist von den ausgebreitetsten und erstaunlichsten Folgen. Diess bestimmt 1) den Charakter und die Denkart einzelner Menschen. Denn dieser ist verschieden, nachdem diese oder jene Triebfedern die herrschenden sind. Und er bestimmt 2) den Geist und Charakter ganzer Nationen, und Zeitalter, und ertheilt den Schlüssel zur Erklärung von manchen sonderbaren Erscheinungen. Denn wie kraft einer bestimmten Leidenschaft jeder einzelne Mensch denkt oder handelt, so werden auch ganze Nationen und Generationen handeln, wenn die Majorität der gleichzeitigen Menschen von dieser Leidenschaft mehr als von einer andern belebt und ergriffen wird.

Diese Triebfedern bestimmen 1) den Charakter einzelner Menschen, ihre Denkart, ihre Art sich zu benehmen, ihren gesellschaftlichen Ton. Denn jede dieser Triebfedern hat einen eignen Gesichtspunkt; eine eigne Art die Gegenstände zu betrachten; eigene Hindernisse und Mittel; eine eigene Schätzung und Klassifikation der übrigen Güter. Was dem habstüchtigen wichtig oder gut deucht, erscheint dem ehrgeitzigen oder sinnlichen Menschen in einer entgegengesetzten Gestalt. Da folglich hier ganz andere Erfahrungen gemacht, und auf einen ganz andern Zweck bezogen werden, so können auch alle übrigen nicht anders als auf eine ganz verschiedene Art gedacht werden. Hier können aber sehr gut zwey Menschen dieselbe Handlung zu thun scheinen, ohne dass es in der That dieselbe Handlung sey. Da haben alle Tugenden und Laster, nach der Verschiedenheit der Gesichtspunkte, einen verschiedenen Grund. Die Handlungen, nach gewissen Wirkungen zu urtheilen, können gut und gemeinnützig, und der Geist welcher dieses Gute thut, kann von der schlechtesten Art seyn. Da, wo eine Leidenschaft den Ton angebt, da sind Religion, Tugend und Wahrheit nichts weiter als Mittel zu einem leidenschaftlichen Zweck, und werden insofern geschätzt, oder verlieren an unserer Achtung, sobald sie diesem entgegen sind. Aus dieser Quelle entstehen sodann alle falschen oder Scheintugenden, welche mehr schaden, als manche offenbare Laster, weil sie weniger bemerkt, und sogar nachgeahmt und bewundert werden. Diess ist es auch, was die Kirchenväter wollten, wenn sie die Tugenden der Heyden, als so viele glänzende Laster verschrien; diess ist die Lehre von der Falschheit der menschlichen Tugenden, welche in den Werken eines La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld, Helvetius, Bellegarde, Flechier, und so vieler Anderer so anschaulich dargestellt wird. Aus eben dieser Ursache hat jeder Mensch so viele dringende Veranlassungen, um misstrauisch gegen seine Tugend zu seyn, und eben darum darf es Niemand befremden, wenn unser Eifer für das Gute, nie oder selten, die ihm eigenen Früchte hervorbringt.

Die herrschenden Triebfedern bestimmen aber auch 2) die Moralität,



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den Geist und Charakter einer Nation und eines Zeitalters. Sie bestimmen sogar den Grad der jedesmaligen Aufklärung, und sind die Vorläuffer und Gründe des herannahenden Verfalles. Denn, da die Wirkungen von ihrer Ursache nicht getrennt werden können, so müssen auch die Wirkungen von jeder Leidenschaft allgemeiner werden, so bald sie selbst als die herrschende unter den Menschen erscheint. Da nun die leidenschaftlichen Triebfedern von ungleicher Art sind, und einige derselben als edler, andere als unedler betrachtet werden müssen; da die Sinnlichkeit und Liebe zur Bequemlichkeit zu den niedrigsten, die Eitelkeit und Habsucht zu den unedlern, und die Herrschsucht sammt dem Ehrgeiz zu den edlern und höhern Passionen gehören; so kann es auch auf keine Art gleichgültig seyn, welche dieser Leidenschaften in einem gegebenen Zeitalter unter den Menschen die Oberhand erhalten habe. Diess giebt einen ungleich zuverlässigern Maasstab von dem Verfall oder der Aufnahme einer Nation oder eines Jahrhunderts, als die wissenschaftliche Kultur! Dieser meiner Voraussetzung zufolge, verfällt ein Zeitalter, in welchem sich bey dem grössern Theil der Menschen die Triebfedern seiner Handlungen verschlimmern, und die Gesichtspunkte verengen. Der Verfall der wissenschaftlichen Kultur ist dann eine spätere sehr natürliche Folge. Ein Zeitalter wird daher blühend, und eine Nation in ihrem Flor und Aufnahme seyn, so lang die Unterscheidungen ihren Werth nicht verlieren, so lang es einem vernünftigen Ehrgeiz nicht an Nahrung und Ermunterung gebricht. Diess werden die Zeiten grosser Thaten und ausserordentlicher Menschen seyn. Es wird zwar in solchen Zeiten nicht an Stolz und Eigenliebe fehlen; aber in den Entwürfen und Gedanken des Ehrgeizigen, so lang der Ehrgeiz nicht in Eitelkeit ausartet, wird immer etwas Grosses und Gemeinnütziges seyn, welches Achtung verdient, und man vermag nicht, nach wahrer Ehre zu streben, ohne vorzügliche Talente und grosse Eigenschaften zu besitzen. Der, welcher im ächten Sinne ehrgeizig ist, muss seiner Leidenschaft manches Opfer bringen, manche niedrige Begierde schlachten. Der Geschmack an sinnlicher Luft, würde, wenn er in seiner Seele herrschend würde, ein Hinderniss seiner Absichten werden. Die Freuden der Sinne können daher nie der Zweck seyn, welchen ein Geist, de rim gesegneten Andenken der Menschen zu leben gedenkt, sich zum nächsten Ziel seiner Wünsche und Begierden macht. Im Gegentheile, sobald der Gesichtspunkt sich verengt, sobald jeder nur für sich denkt, der öffentliche Geist sich vermindert, wenn jeder gleichgültig gegen das Allgemeine Schätze häuft, und sich in der Sinnlichkeit verliert, wenn die Begierde, die sinnlichen Freuden des Lebens zu geniessen, sich aller Stände bemächtigt, wenn die Eitelkeit den Ton angiebt, und jeder nur scheinen, glänzen, sich durch Titel, Rang, durch die äusserliche Pracht, durch Kleider und Equipagen und andere Nichtswürdigkeiten unterscheiden will,—dann verfällt ein solches Zeitalter, und der Verfall eilt mit Riesenschritten herbey, sobald der Wuchergeist und Habsucht ihren gesammelten Vorrath verzehren, und sich in der Schwelgerey und Sinnlichkeit

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verlieren. DIess ist der Fall, sobald sich die Reichthümer vermehren, und die Begierde, zu erwerben und Schätze zu häuffen, sich des grössern Theils der Menschen bemächtigt. Tugend und Ehre sind in solchen Zeiten nichts weiter, als leere Namen, und jeder, welcher sich damit noch fernerhin befassen wollte, kann nichth anders als lächerlich erscheinen. Alle Würden und Ehrenstellen werden in solchen Zeiten nur insofern gesucht, als sie den Genuss erleichtern und vermehren. Der sinnliche Genuss wird von nun an das letzte Ziel aller Thätigkeit; alles, was unternommen werden soll, wird nach dem Ertrag und nach Geldeswerth berechnet.

Ganz andere Wirkungen erscheinen im Gegentheil, wenn die Begierde nach einem höhern Grad von Einfluss und Macht, sich der Menschen bemächtigt. Ergreift dieser Wunsch alle Stände, so ist nicht allein der Verfall, sondern die Anarchie und der Umsturz aller bestehender Ordnung, das, was zunächst bevorsteht: Sind aber deren, welche nach einer ausgedehntern Gewalt streben, nur Einige; sind es die, in deren Händen sich schon bereits ein Theil der öffentlichen Gewalt befindet,—die Geistlichkeit, oder der Adel; die Grossen eines Reichs, oder das Haus der Gemeinen:—so entsteht daraus ein Machtwechsel, oder Veränderung in der Verfassung, welche dahin abzwecken kann, das Willkührliche in der Staatsverwaltung zu beschränken.

Diess alles sollte hinlänglich beweisen, dass es auf keine Art gleichgültig sey, welche Triebfedern in jedem Zeitalter, die allgemein herrschenden sind. Nichts verdient daher so sehr die Aufmerksamkeit einer wachsamem und vernünftigen Regierung, als die jedesmalige Stimmung der Zeitgenossen, als zu wissen, wohin eigentlich der Stroh der Zeiten treibt. Diese Einsicht wird zwar nicht immer den Übergang verhindern, aber sie wird ihn zuverlässig da, wo er nicht verhindert werden kann, erleichtern und unschädlicher machen. Dass aber manche Regierungen diese Kenntniss grösstentheils vernachlässigen, erscheint theils aus den Folgen und Wirkungen, welche erscheinen, theils aus den Mitteln, deren man sich bedienen will, um gewissen Übeln zu steuern. Es erscheint noch deutlicher daraus, dass man dann erst an die Vorkehrungen denkt, wo man sich die Gegenwart des Übels nicht weiter verbergen kann, wo folglich alle Anstalten zu spät kommen.

Nous n'écoutons d'instincts que ceux qui sont les nôtres,  
Et ne croyons le mal que quand il est venu.

L a F o n t a i n e .

Ich nenne die Regierung weise, welche den Gang der Dinge zum vorhinein bestimmen kann auf ein Jahrhundert voraus, und weiter, als ihre

*than one person exists who, whether they believe themselves to be acting with the greatest perfection in accordance with Stoic morality or even with the principles of Christian morality, would upon closer examination be not the worse for it if they would instead act and think like a true Epicurean. That even religion and exalted philosophical systems are unable to rebuff this contagion of sensuality is a commonplace confirmed by the history of the different churches and the examples set by so many of the Great and Powerful.*

*They love religion, sweeted to the sense*

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Untergebene, sieht, die Ursachen kennt, das Grosse in dem Kleinen entdecken kann, und sich auf die Zeichen versteht.

When clouds are seen, wise men put on their cloaks;  
When great leaves fall, then winter is at hand;  
When the sun sets, who doth not look for night?  
Untimely storms make men expect a dearth:

K. Richard III. Act II. Sc. 3.

Wie vermag eine Regierung Andere zu retten, deren Dauer selbst bedroht wird? Wie kann in Zeiten, wo das Verderben allgemein ist, eine Regierung sich schmeicheln, dass sie allien der unergriffene Theil sey? Durch welche Reskripte, durch welche Menschen will sie dem Verderben steuern, wenn die, deren Mitwirkung sid sich bedienen will, bey dem allgemeinen Verderben zu gewinnen glauben? durch welche Vorstellungen will sie auf solche Menschen wirken, wenn alles, was ehemals heilig und ehrwürdig war, was über ein niedrigeres Interesse den Geist erheben kann, ihren Untergebenen als thöricht und lacherlich erscheint? In solchen Zeiten entsteht zwar bey dem vernünftigeren Theil der Menschen das Bedürfniss nach höhern Grundsätzen, man erkennt ihren Werth, und glaubt einzusehen, dass auf diesem Weg geholfen werden könnte; aber es halt schwer und kann noch weniger mit einemal geschehen, dass ihr zu tief gesunkenes Ansehen und Einfluss wieder hergestellt werde. Es bleibt daher nichts übrig, als die Folgen seiner frühern Fahrlässigkeit zu erdulden, geduldig abzuwarten, was erfolgen wird, und für die Zukunft vorsichtiger zu werden. Denn das unzuverlässigste aller Mittel würde der Zwang seyn, welcher nie die Gesinnungen veredelt, und zu allen Zeiten nichts weiter, als Heuchler hervorgebracht hat.



*A good luxurious palatable faith.  
Thus vice and godliness a preposterous pair  
Ride cheek by jowl. But churchmen hold the reins.  
And when e'er Kings would lower Clergy greatness,  
They learn too late, what pow'r the preachers have  
And whose the subjects are.*

*The system of refined sensuality, say I, is the system of most people. For because each of our acts must be viewed as a means to reach a certain end; because each end has its own means, and precisely these means are what betrays the true nature of the end; because it becomes necessary for each person in whatever situation they find themselves to acquire an appropriate degree of honor, influence, and fortune, and in acquiring them only a very few people will not exceed the necessary limits;—thus they can claim, without running the risk of erring, that whenever any person whose deeds betray an excessive propensity toward sensuality, vanity, ambition, and greed attempts to gain more of such goods than he ought, that this person's deeds are either denying the future and his continued existence or are not in harmony with themselves with regard to this object. We can reliably make the assumption that such people do not undertake to do the best thing for the best reasons, and that consequently their morality is based on very mutable principles.*

*This cannot and should not shock anyone. The system of refined sensuality is the one every human being becomes acquainted with first. Everyone receives encouragement in it from the appearance and examples provided by so many others. So much of their experience supports this theory. That is why it is the system that appears the most proven and reliable to the most people.*

Every human being first learns via the pleasuring of the senses; these friends and companions of our youth are not like our later earthly friends; they do not abandon us, even in old age. A nature as mixed as human nature can never completely do without the sensory pleasures. The purely mental creature of reason is braggadocio, vain prattling from the ivory tower, and a deception practiced by egoism which pride introduced. It costs our minds, which want to rise above the sensory world, a degree of effort that more frequently results in fantasy than truth. And we seldom succeed in mastering one passion without calling another passion to our aid.

In contrast, all mental pleasures are a very late acquaintance. To acquire a taste for it, to know that thought itself can be your own, inexhaustible wellspring of enjoyment, a person must have done a great deal of thinking, for a long time. Add to this the fact that everyone is certain of their current existence, but they are doubtful and uncertain of their future existence. In similar situations, even reason seems to suggest that you should give more consideration to what is certain than to what is uncertain. And, finally, because sensual pleasure shows a goal that is so close, and satisfies the most impetuous of our desires; because every person, for as long as they remain here, is surrounded by sensory objects, cannot separate themselves from their bodies, and gets to know the body before getting to know the nature of that which thinks in us, and because the demands for this latter knowledge happen to be weaker and lesser; because, finally, itself appears to make an end of this mental game so dependent on the body—thus the system of refined sensuality may seem to be an erroneous system, but there

are few errors more natural and forgivable. It will take a great deal of effort to bring humanity back from it, but a great deal depends on our succeeding in doing so.

Appearance and sensory perception are certainly against it; but appearance and sensation are also against the Copernican system. When appearances are corrected by other appearances, and sensations by still other sensations, the results are results of a higher type. And every sensation must appear a deception which can contain no truth unless all our knowledge be destroyed. Appearances alone thus cannot decide, but rather the result of comparing appearances with other appearances. The reasons, the causes, the purposes of such appearances are what give us information about the nature of many matters.

This so ostensible system of sensuality, considered unshakable in the eyes of so many worldly people, is thus a false and inadequate system.

It is false because it is obvious that thinking is a higher and more noble task than eating and gorging, because it is impossible for a Higher thing to exist for the sake of something Lower without turning all order on its head and contradicting itself. For what is a Higher thing when it is worth less than something Worse? The value of sensory and physical pleasure must decrease as soon as one succeeds in convincing oneself that, in principle, every physical pleasure is a mental pleasure. For what is the most physical of pleasures, the most sensory of all joys, without sensation? And this sensation itself, what is it but an idea? Enjoyment is thus imagination, and even the biggest glutton of all wants nothing more from even the most sensual of acts than to obtain the idea of how something



tastes. Thus he is feeding his mind by feeding his body. But he is feeding his mind in the most imperfect way because it expands the range of his ideas very little.

Secondly. No human being who draws a distinction between himself and unreasoning animals can disagree that a certain type of sensuality exists that is of low worth even in the eyes of sensual people. There are urges that, though they lead to pleasure, distinguish themselves by a sort of nobility and greatness. There are other urges the unimpeded and unlimited satisfaction of which brings people disgrace, dishonor, and disaster. Therefore, that which makes ambition and the thirst for power nobler than avarice, what elevates even greed itself above the tendency to gluttony, must also be considered the reason why ambition and the thirst for power are not the highest and noblest of all the impulses. For why are they better than avarice or gluttony? Surely it is because they require a greater usage of reason, because they are the product of a more complete mental development. Reason and mental development thus determine the value; and any system in which the mind can develop the most will appear truer and more worthy of humanity than systems in which the mind develops less.

This system appears without a doubt to be the one whose point of view is mental enjoyment, the system that considers mankind a creature that is going to endure, that sets no limits to our development, by extending our existence beyond the limits of this life. For where perfection or development are unlimited, doubtless there development will be greater than anywhere where everything is merely begun without ever being finished, where there even is no reason why development is begun but not brought to

completion.

*Thirdly, this can be seen even more clearly when we consider the changes that belief in the future causes in our behavior, when we see the spirit and the nature of the actions that show consideration for the future, and when we run across actions that, without a connection to the future, are either quite simply impossible or are undertaken with incomparably less dignity.*

*There are many people who make their outward efficacy the goal of their desires and judge the measure of their true perfection by it. Their peace and happiness depend more on others, on circumstances, than on themselves. So they are often frustrated, and their state of mind becomes an inexhaustible source of their misery. On the other hand, to limit all efficacy to one's inner state, to the ennoblement of one's fundamental convictions—to convince oneself that all outward efficacy could have no other purpose—to realize that this is a purpose that can survive in every one of life's situations, in a dungeon or upon a throne—to become convinced that virtue, the perfections of the mind, are everything, that happiness and misery are based upon them, that all other coincidences concern a body linked to us, not us ourselves. Though through this body they can for a time be a burden to us, slow us down, because it is our tool, they cannot make us unhappier if they have not caused any deterioration in the mind.—To believe that every opportunity for expressing or exercising virtue is a happy thing*

for humankind.)

—calmly enduring pain, enduring difficult work, recognizing dauntlessness in the face of danger as a virtue, and being able, in the midst of the inevitable feeling of aversion, to be happy that you have this virtue and are able to exercise it now—to feel that patience and steadfast courage are virtues, that all who endure will prove themselves better, more perfect people.)—to enjoy all the earth's bounty, and to be able calmly to do without it when you must—to limit yourself to your status in life, to recognize the lowliness of it, and, like the snail, be able to convince yourself that all those beautiful and splendidly adorned butterflies are nothing better, and, because of their caterpillar descent, are in no way to be envied.)—while observing how all this so envied splendor ends, and how whining then, just like

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) What the world call misfortunes and affliction,  
These are not ills; else would they never fall,  
On heaven's first favorites and the best of men;  
The gods, in bounty, work up storms about us,  
That give mankind occasion to exert  
Their hidden strength, and throw out into practice  
Virtues, that shun the day, and lie conceal'd  
In the smooth seasons, and the calms of life.

C a t o. Act 2.

Carve's notes on Cicero.

) I own my humble life, good friend,  
Snail was I born, and snail shall end,  
And what's a butterfly? at best  
He's but a caterpillar drest.  
And all thy race, a numerous feed  
Shall prove a caterpillar breed.

G a y. fab. [ill.]



*overexuberance now, knows no moderation—to do nothing for fame or for vanity, and to strive more for good deeds than glorious ones—to never become dejected over the adverse results of a defeat, but rather to believe that you never acted to disadvantage if you were improved by your actions—to finally be able to say to yourself, with consolation and confidence:*

*Je reste sans désirs sur tout ce qui doit être.  
Dans le brillant fracas où j'ai longtemps veçu  
J'ai tout vu, tout goûté, tout revu, tout connu.  
J'ai rempli pour ma part le theatre frivole.  
Si chacun n'y restoit que le temps de sa role,  
Tout seroit à sa place, et l'on ne verroit pas  
Tant de gens éternels, dont le Public est las.  
Le monde usé pour moi, n'a plus rien qui me touché,  
Et c'est pour lui sauver un rêveur si farouche  
Qu' étranger désormais à la société  
Je viens de mes deserts chercher l'obscurité.*

*S i d n e y. Act II. Sc. 2.*

*to be capable of this, while always remaining the same person—this requires a mental attitude that cannot exist without the belief in our continued existence; and it certainly would be hard to prove that such a mental attitude would be more tolerable for our peace of mind, and thus more desirable and better, than its opposite.*

*I may be wrong, but that at least has been my experience. Nothing raises the human mind above all of life's dangers and disagreeable circumstances, nothing eases the transition to another system of things, as much as the conviction that this life is the preparation and practice for a better and higher life. Let no one say that unbelievers too*

are capable of tearing asunder the shackles of this life and thus proving that unbelief also has its heroes. Quite the contrary. This "strength" is merely impotence and weakness.

*Rebus in augustis, facile est contemnere vitam  
Fortius ille facit, qui miser esse potest.  
M a r t i a l. Lib. XI. Ep. 56.*

But this world seems to have been made for *C a e s a r*. And if power is indeed the greatest thing humanity can strive for, then to most people this world must appear futile, and of the lowest nature. On the other hand, if humanity's purpose is the development of its higher powers, if human beings have to suffer through many an evil and deprivation for the purpose of achieving this end; if the greatness of our minds can only be demonstrated by our steadfast endurance of these evils, and considers them to be just so many means to this end:—then this world is not for *C a e s a r* alone. This world is for every human being, without exceptions. And plentiful material would exist for every human being's mental development; for those who steadfastly endure trouble would be behaving more reasonably and better than the weaklings who desert their posts to avoid its effects. This strength, so important in this world, thus gives the system of refined sensuality to none of its confessors.—This system provides no solid reasons for practicing the arts of patience and imperturbability, and yet these are the two virtues that cost us so much, that are so little noticed and appreciated, that show the most greatness of mind, and are absolutely essential for peaceful and happy enjoyment of life.

*And these virtues, so essential to humanity, these*

wellsprings of genuine, unflinching courage, the world to all appearances has branded as disgraceful, and declared cowardice! That alone should be enough to prove Vanity's share in that which we call good or virtuous. That is precisely what makes it so hard to practice these virtues: that people stand out so little while doing so and can reap only contempt. And so, no man on earth suffers as much or as hard than he who suffers without any witnesses.

*Ille dolet vere, qui sine teste dolet.*

He who suffers the worst, the king robbed of his throne who dies an unjust death, can count on the world's sympathy, and this alone elevates his mind in a not usual manner and causes his suffering to be reduced. For great undeserved misfortune can in fact fill one's soul with pride. And sufferers who can count on having sympathizers will find their miseries reduced by half.

In contrast, there is another type of woe which is incomparably more sensitive. No one experiences it more than the man who cares more for others than for himself, whose emotion is too warm for virtue and human welfare—the man who can realize naught in this world of his compassionate heart's demands, of what his better convictions tell him about the way the world and humanity ought to be. Seeing the hordes of people who think themselves great for the most worthless of reasons and have not the slightest notion, not even remotely, of what they ought to be—experiencing the pride and arrogance of the most despicable people—and, for things that would generate respect and admiration in the eyes of reasonable judges, being misjudged and maliciously spoken of for one's most charitable acts, being mocked and ridiculed for one's most



*elevated and truest convictions—Finding no one to share one's sorrows, into whose soul one could pour the compulsions of one's heart—seeing that no one has ears to hear and eyes to see, that all hearts are filled with self-interest alone, and that wisdom calls out in the streets without being heard, that every type of foolishness now sets the tone and attracts heaps of wondering admirers—seeing how everything seems to be aimed at attaining and perpetuating the empire of arrogance, malice, and blindness—experiencing how unceasing disapproval, the sophistries of what appears wisdom, and a general, contagious example set by all classes of society will in the end shake the foundations of the best convictions and make them appear laughable and useless—and for these reasons having to say to oneself in the end*

*À quoi me sert ma triste probité,  
Qu'à mieux sentir, que j'ai tout mérité?*

*and thus running the risk of becoming a traitor and deserter to one's convictions and virtue—let no one claim to be virtuous who has not urgently felt the torments of this grief and, during them, the need for higher principles. And what especially is a person supposed to do who, of the thousand millions of people on this planet, belongs to no one? (More than one person on this planet finds himself in this position.) Who must say to himself, more than once, the birds and beasts of the field know where they are going to rest, and I alone do not know who is going to take me up?')*

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Ce garçon si frais, si fleuri et d'une si bele santé est seigneur d'une abbaye et de dix autres benefices. Tous ensemble lui rapportent 26000 Liv. de revenues, dont il n'est payé qu'en médailles d'or. Il y a ailleurs six vingt familles qui n'ont point d'habit pour se couvrir, et qui manquent souvent de pain. Leur pauvreté est extrême, et honteuse:—Quel partage! Et cela ne

*"I am myself alone."—To be sure, these are situations in which all the ethics of refined sensuality fall mute, where all earthly sources of reassurance are exhausted, where, thus, one would say in justice and reason:*

*Lift up our hands!  
And seek for help and pity from above  
For earth and faithless men will give us none.  
R o w e. L. Jeanne Gray. Act 4.*

*Anyone in such a situation who nevertheless remains happy to be alive and true to his primary convictions, and can believe that even on this rough path he will not miss his goal—who demands nothing more than the wish*

*Magne pater Divum, saevos punire tyrannos  
Haut alia ratione velis, cum dira libido  
Moverit ingenium ferventi tincta veneno,  
Vertutem videant, intabescantque relicta.  
P e r s i u s. Sat. 3.*

*Anyone, say I, who has reached this great mental height in their convictions must truly know more lasting goods than this Earth is capable of providing. Only the belief in one's continuing existence can produce this.*

*The soul, secur'd in her existence, smiles  
At the drawn dagger, and defies its point.  
The stars shall fade away, the sun himself  
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years;  
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,*

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prouve-t-il clairement un avenir?

La Bruyère.

*Unhurt amidst the wars of elements,  
The wrecks of matter and the crush of worlds.  
Cato. Act V. Sc. 1.*

*Yes! It is the prospect of a better future alone that gives our minds this strength. Anyone who thinks or speaks otherwise does not recognize his heart's secret workings. He does not know that every human being has his or her own system of happiness, and that even the strongest among us can only remain strong and unshakable until the last basis for their wishes and hopes begins to teeter and sway. He does not know that in such situations all heroes will change their nature, and the most courageous will grow faint of heart. Wherever courage exists, there too you will always find a prospect of support and aid. And all greatness and perseverance depend on the nature of this support. Therefore nothing is less deserving of our admiration than many an unflinching courage. Perhaps nothing is less worthy of being boasted about. Many who persevere will find themselves, should they ever examine the situation impartially, forced to admit that their weak and sensitive side has not yet been affected at all. They will discover the still unconquered idea that keeps their courage alive. Only when this support starts to totter, when all prospects disappear, when a person's best convictions dissolve into illusions and appear as such, when you can find no aspect of hope or help anywhere—that is when despair will storm the gates, and the greatest hero will appear the smallest, most everyday sort of person.*

*None of this is speculation. What I am writing here comes from the innermost basis of my soul. Perhaps circumstance and necessity have enabled me to experience the benefits of such principles more than other people have.*



*In the times when people were slandering me, clamoring about me, denying me, and misjudging me, when so many who did not even know me like village dogs began to howl in chorus as soon as one of them started to howl, and even today when they still do not seem to tire of it, I have indeed felt most deeply the injustice that has been my fate. And yet it seemed bearable to me, because I could say to myself that there is a God who knows you better than these people do. They are judging you on the basis of their understanding and their interests. A time will come when they will fall silent and be ashamed of what they do. It may come here and now, or it may occur elsewhere.')*

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Zur Beruhigung so vieler Anderer, welche sich aus ähnlichen Ursachen mit mir in einer Lage befinden, mögen vielleicht nachstehende Gründe aus *L a B r u y e r e s C h a r a k t e r e n*, ihre Wirkung nicht ganz verfehlen.

Ceux, qui sans nous connoître assez, pensent mal de nous, ne nous font pas de tort. Ce n'est pas nous qu'ils attaquent, c'est le fantôme de leur imagination.—

Ce qui me soutient et me rassure contre les petits dédains que j'essuie quelquefois des grands et de mes égaux. C'est que je me dis à moi-même: ces gens ne veulent peut-être qu'à ma fortune, et ils sont raison: elle est bien petite. Ils m'adoreroient, si j'étois ministre.

Les deux tiers de ma vie sont écoulées; pourquoi tant m'enquêter sur ce qui me reste? la plus brillante fortune, ne mérite point le tourment que je me donne, ni les petites hontes, où je me surprends, ni les humiliations, ni les hontes, que j'essuie. Trente ans détruiront ce colosse de puissance, qu'on ne voyoit bien qu'à force de lever la tête. Nous disparaîtrons, moi, qui je suis si peu de chose, et ceux que je contempnois si avitement, et de qui j'espérois toute ma grandeur. Le meilleur de tous les biens, c'est le repos, la retraite et un endroit qui soit son domaine.—

Dans cent ans le monde subsistera encore en son entier. Ce sera le même théâtre et les mêmes décorations. Ce ne seront plus les mêmes acteurs. Tout ce qui se réjouit sur une grâce reçue, ou ce qui se attriste et se désespère sur un refus—tous auront disparus de dessus la terre. Il s'avance déjà sur le

*There are moments in which my mind dares to take a bolder flight above humanity's usual way of thinking. In such moments, I entertain the belief that I have discovered a different and better system of things. I, together with others, appear to myself to be destined for greater things than wallowing down here with those of my kind, piling up folly upon idiocy and error upon error, only to putrefy and disappear forever. In such moments, I believe that I have discovered how the present arises from the past, and how a series of incalculable consequences arises from the present and presses forward towards a common goal. In seeing myself at such a height and gazing in all directions—how utterly different do all things appear to me? How small all that greatness down below now becomes. As I soar higher and higher, one unknown country after another appears before me. My horizons expand as I rise, and I breathe more freely. For my confessions and cares remain below, in the depths where their objects lie.*

*These moments are the happiest of my life. Here is where I become aware of how much a certain spirit of mind can accomplish, and thus how crucial it is that it be genuine and the best. At such times I do not just comprehend certain higher teachings, I believe that I feel them. Their object lies before me and penetrates my being,*

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théâtre d'autres hommes; qui vont jouer dans une même pièce les mêmes rôles. Ils évanouiront à leur tour, et ceux, qui ne sont pas encore, un jour ne seront plus. De nouveaux acteurs ont pris leur place. Quel sont à faire sur une personnage de Comédie?—

S'il arrive, que les mechants vous haïssent et vous persécutent, les gens de bien vous conseillent, de vous humilier devant Dieu, pour vous mettre en garde centre la vanité qui pourroit vous venir de déplaire à des gens de ce caractère etc. etc.

and I feel the existence of a God and the necessity of my continuing existence, as much as I feel that I myself exist. When I am in this mood, nothing seems wiser and more reasonable than this system of things. I can rejoice in my fate and convince myself that this path is the only one leading to my happiness.

But alas! I think like this only for moments at a time. And then my mind sinks from its higher flight back down to Earth. I become flesh and blood and am no better than others, think and act just like them, and marvel and quake before things I had just convinced myself were inane.—That is the nature of humanity! That is how much we need the outlook into the future, to diminish our conceit, to feel ourselves weak, small, and imperfect. For nothing is more unbearable and impetuous than a person who is too pleased with himself.

All moral infirmities come from underestimating or overestimating one's own worth. Nothing forgets its common origin so completely; nothing is so arrogant and impertinent, nothing has so much difficulty coming to moral consciousness and a genuine understanding of one's self, than a person who is only aware of his strengths, before whom everything bends, who only lives among his own kind or people more lowly than he; who never finds out by comparison with Higher and Better things what and how much he still lacks. Such people, people never repulsed by bad luck, absolutely have to be brought into proximity with such things that they are forced to say to themselves, and admit, that they lose by comparison. These giants must be placed next to a tower, and this tower must itself be built at the foot of a high mountain. He who thinks himself great must be brought into the presence of someone



Greater. He before whom all bow must see himself forced to bow to someone Higher. To this end, morality must acquaint people with objects that make them feel small; it must ask them to fall down in order to stand up the greater; it must confront them, as they are, with what they are capable of becoming, their lifetime versus Eternity, and their fancied splendor versus God and Nature; it must use contrasts to shake their self-confidence; people must experience and become convinced by deed that things exist incomparably stronger and mightier than themselves. This proud king of nature must meet the thousand lords mightier than he. Thus

*Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer.  
Que le sage l'annonce, et que les rois le craignent.  
Rois, si vous m'opprimez, si vos grandeurs  
dédaignent  
Les pleurs de l'innocent, que vous faites couler,  
Mon vengeur est au ciel; apprenez à trembler.  
Tel est au moins le fruit d'une utile croyance.—  
Ah! laissons aux humains la crainte et l'espérance!*  
V o l t a i r e. Ep. 97.

Nothing is more salubrious to humans than the feeling of one's own weakness. And nothing stimulates this feeling more vigorously than comparison with the greatest of all—with Eternity and with God.

These ideas contain a magic, creative power. Through it, our entire system of desires is forced to change, because the nature of everything changes. The great becomes small, and the small becomes great. For nothing can seem great when the contemplor for it is even greater. Thus the only things that will have value will be what

accompanies us into the unknown country from which no mortal ever returns—they are the inner characteristics, the state and nature of our mind, its education, and the convictions that betray its majesty and excellence. That is when the body exists for the sake of the mind, and the material world for the sake of the spirit. That is when our thinking about humanity must needs be revised, for it will not be deeds or their consequences that determine our value but rather the mind behind these deeds. That is when every excessive endeavor for external good will appear, though crowned with the happiest of successes, nothing more than shortsighted idiocy that has missed the real objective. Only then will it be possible to make the great sacrifices that in the system of epicurean wisdom appear to be both unreasonable and the greatest of all irrelevancies.

The greatness and majesty of the mind that on the strength of its nature, sacrificing one's own advantages, rises above all lower interests and rushes to the aid of others, truly are characteristics that the world cannot do without, that even the most selfish person would be most reluctant to miss in his fellow creatures. But without the point of view that rises above the narrow boundaries of this life, no contempt for great dangers and no devotion and self-sacrifice are possible without idiocy and inconsequence. This greatness is thus the result of illusion and stupefaction, or of a temperament suitable thereto, of a situation full of desperation.—It loses all value because it is not the result of principles, from a higher spirit of mind brought about by them, as C i c e r o says:

*Necesse est, qui fortis sit, eundem esse magni animi, qui magni animi invictum, qui invictus sit, eum res humanas despiciere atque infra se positas arbitrari.*

Cicero.

To win this grandeur of mind, people must be put in a position where they are capable of desiring less all the goods that the greater portion of humanity demands so immoderately. To be able to do this, humanity must, as I have already proven above, become acquainted with more lasting goods and steadfastly pursue this objective. All experience shows that nothing is more able to diminish the impact of the present than the prospect of a better future. The system of genuine morality and virtue thus absolutely cannot do without this so fruitful manner of thinking.

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2) Morality is just as unable to do without this concept of Perfection as it is able to do without an objective. But this concept is dependent on what purpose one thinks humanity has. A person who is going to disappear tomorrow will certainly have a different purpose than a being of his kind whose existence is thought to continue on.

In every human being, there is an unremitting drive toward the improvement of their inner and outer conditions—toward perfecting. All human beings want to become better, according to their concept of better, than they are at this moment. But this drive cannot become effective whilst people still lack a goal that they want to achieve. This goal is an *id e a l*; for since it is to be achieved and turned into reality, it cannot be anything already in existence. Thus at this time it cannot have any reality outside human imagination. If for this reason we would desire to ban the ideal or find it foolish, all human activity



would either cease or drift about aimlessly in misconceptions; no one would be able to determine what they are working toward and what they ought to become. People would believe themselves everything, and all progress, all development of our strengths, would come to a standstill.

Thus, every person has to know what they want to become. They must have an ideal. And there is no one who does not have one. Though this ideal everyone has in mind is not always the best possible of its type, it remains nevertheless the Highest and Best thing that such a person is thinking at the moment. It is clear that this will generate a great variety of ideals, and that in different people they will contradict each other in the most striking ways and not be of the same worth. Nevertheless, all these ideals are and remain, without exception, behavioral archetypes that different people have in mind. And these models will operate as such.

However, whilst this variation in and contradiction of our ideals persist, with the result that we use them to determine very little, for everything depends on the truth and accuracy of our ideals; because, too, no one will be able to comprehend and refute one other:—therefore the first and primary obligation of reason and morality is to make unmistakable progress in correcting the varying ideals and even morality and public taste. The successful completion of this business must necessarily result in the instant and permanent elimination of the greatest impediments for both. The fact that this business remains incomplete in our day is proven by the persistence of contradiction. The contradictions seem even to multiply rather than diminish.

When we are thus forced by our drive toward perfection to move beyond the Usual and the Actual, because in the midst of the Usual and the Actual we do not find the models we require; when we thus find ourselves forced to seek something better in everything good, in every type and class:—who can hold it against us when we do not stop there but but continue comparing ideals until we have discovered something that is Best, beyond which our imagination is unable to travel. For even something that is merely Better will not pacify our drive toward perfection, whilst flaws remain visible.

*Non est bonitas, esse meliorem pessimo.*  
*L a b e r i u s.*<sup>3</sup>

Whoever knows a man's ideal knows the whole man and understands his moral value in its entirety. This ideal contains the scrupulous index by whose prices everyone will buy or sell.—If you know a man's ideal, you can reliably predict the way in which he will behave upon certain occasions, and what he will crave or ignore. For in a person's ideal are concentrated all his ideas about what is unique, superb, and good, that, in this world, regarding certain matters, a person has himself seen, experienced, and discovered through comparisons with other things. One's ideal expresses the entire scope of one's knowledge, one's more or less refined taste, including the highest objective of one's desires. This ideal enables us to understand things that we would otherwise understand quite differently or not at all. Our ideal, if not improved,

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<sup>3</sup> Translator's note: The source of this quote would appear to be Publilius Syrus, in fact.

also contains the grounds for our rebelliousness against all more reasonable convictions, against reason's most plausible proofs, and against many an institution and plan that would serve the common good. Certain things, especially certain higher moral truths, are simply incomprehensible for very large numbers of people, who, whilst they continue to lack the necessary key, the suitable ideal, can do naught but see them as mere foolishness. What we currently consider great, the greatest, will appear to us impossible, small, lowly, insignificant, and unworthy of our efforts, while we yet lack something greater. While we still lack this knowledge, it will remain equally impossible for us to act accordingly.

When, thus, a person does not comprehend great truths, or has no understanding thereof, he may say to himself with mathematical certainty that his ideal is not the best and that he himself is not that which he ought to be and could become. He may be convinced that even the best of his deeds do not stem from the purest of sources; all of our deeds and opinions, every judgement, every praise or rebuke, every joy or sadness, every anger and dissatisfaction; our associations, the people we cling to above others, the subjects we love most to discuss, the enthusiasm or coldness with which we listen to certain propositions; our interest in well-written texts; the selections we make to these ends;—all this reveals our ideal and consequently our true moral value, despite all artificial pretense and hypocrisy.

But all this applies only for the period of time in which a person has such an ideal. This ideal must necessarily vary from person to person because every person sees and experiences new things every single day.



*Our entire life passes in a sort of correction of our ideals. At least, we think that every change is a correction. This business is dependent on the greater or lesser goodness of the circumstances and matters surrounding us. Thus, every human being's primary duty is to choose good companions and to keep to the better ones only. For as soon as your company worsens, depend on it, your ideal will also worsen, though imperceptibly. But your ideal will also be ennobled when your company becomes better and nobler than you are yourself. Although the company one keeps will never cause a person to have an ideal that thoroughly matches others' ideals, it will nevertheless cause them to grow more similar. And this similarity is the basis for all love and friendship. Thus, the more enlightened and reasonable people become, the more agreement there will be between their points of view, and the more they will find themselves in a position to understand and love one another.*

*Contrastingly, too much dissimilarity in ideals is what separates people, generates intolerance and even hatred, leading in the end to hyperbole and despair. Here, alas! a prospect opens up that is ruinous for Reason and the cause of Virtue. On one hand, people who want to improve cannot do without a sublime ideal. But on the other hand, nothing is more likely to embitter one's enjoyment of this life, make one useless for this world, and laughable or hated in the eyes of his contemporaries, than making use of such an ideal.*

*'Unhappy, thrice unhappy seems the man who acts or thinks according to such an ideal!*

*Le maitre d'Épicure en fit l'apprentissage,  
Son país le crut fou.*

*L a F o n t a i n e.*

*And everyone whose way of thinking, whether true or false, is not sufficiently in step with that of his contemporaries is going to experience this. Whoever has a very high ideal in mind will find and discover throughout this wide, wide world nothing but problems, in comparison with this ideal. To him, everything must appear far beneath his ideal, and thus poor and imperfect. He can do naught but discover flaw after flaw in what people think the best things of all<sup>(\*)</sup>). What a source of discontentment and*

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\* Tout vous paroît charmant, c'est le sort de votre âge.

Quelqu'un pourtant m'écrit, et j'en crois son suffrage,  
Que de tout ce qu'on voit on est fort ennuyé,  
Que les arts, les plaisirs, les esprits font pitié;  
Qu'il ne nous reste plus que des superficies;  
Des pointes, du jargon, de tristes faceties,  
Et qu'à force d'esprit et de petits talents  
Dans peu nous pourrions bien n'avoir plus le bon sens.  
Comment, vous qui voyez si bien les ridicules,  
Ne m'en dites-vous rien? tenez-vous aux scrupules?  
Toujours bon, toujours dupe.—  
Je ne vous fais pas un fort grand sacrifice,  
En m'éloignant d'un monde à qui je rends justice.  
Tout ce qu'on est forcé d'y voir et d'endurer  
Passe bien l'agrément qu'on peut y rencontrer.  
Trouver à chaque pas des gens insupportables,  
Des flatteurs, des valets, des plaisants détestables  
Des jeunes gens d'un ton, d'une stupidité!....  
Des femmes d'un caprice et d'une fausseté!....  
Des prétendues esprits souffrir la suffisance  
Et la grosse gayeté de l'épaisse opulence,  
Tant de petits talents où je n'ai pas de foi;  
Des réputations, on ne sçait pas pourquoi;  
Des protégés si bas! des protecteurs si bêtes!..  
Des ouvrages vantés qui n'ont ni pieds, ni têtes;  
Faire des soupers fins où l'on périt d'ennui  
Vieiller par air, enfin se tuer pour autrui;  
Franchement, des plaisirs, des biens de cette sorte  
Ne font pas, quand on pense, une chaîne bien forte,

*torment!*

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Et, pour vous parler vrai, je trouve plus sensé  
Un homme sans projets, dans sa terre fixé,  
Qui n'est ni complaisant, ni valet de personne.  
Que tous ces gens brillants qu'on mange, qu'on friponne,  
Qui, pour vivre à Paris avec l'air d'être heureux,  
Au fonds n'y sont pas moins ennuyés qu'ennuyeux.

Le Mechant. de Gresset. Act II. Sc. 3 & 7.



*Though he knows what is better, he would be happier if he did not know it. For everywhere he finds nothing but contradictions, and no suitable antidote against them. This situation is agonizing and cannot be separated from the idea of a better possible condition. What remains but the idea of using reforms to rid oneself of such ugly prospects? The wish and the effort to force this randomly drifting world into a more pleasing shape?*

*The fact that the world needs such reform is proven by people's general dissatisfaction. But what would become of the world if everyone who felt called to do so would succeed in forcing the world into a shape that pleased him?*

*Here, it is true, passion and imagination have a great deal of scope for occupying themselves with dreams and fabrications. And sad experience shows that a great deal has been dreamt about this sort of thing, in every age. But even the territory of dreams and speculation has its limits. And so, like everywhere, here too we can differentiate between truth, and dreams and folly. Unless it destroys itself, Reason can never go beyond the nature of an object. But this nature includes the purpose of any given thing, or the reason why it has been created thus and not in some other way. If you know this purpose, you know the nature as well. For you know exactly what characteristics are essential, and what are non-essential, for an object to achieve such a purpose.*

*Reason that wishes to devise the ideal for any given thing will thus have to adhere to that thing's purpose in order not to get lost in dreams. It will have to maintain that a thing's ideal be perfection in its type. This reason will call a thing p e r f e c t whose various characteristics*

*all function without exception as means for achieving its purpose, that is everything that thing can be on the strength of its disposition and purpose. Reason's ideal for everything will be that thing's developmental maximum.*

*Thus, when we are talking about the ideal for human perfection, here too we run into the doctrine of humanity's purpose. And we will have to concede that humanity's perfection must be assumed to differ based on the different purposes one considers humanity to have, and whether one thinks humans transitory or enduring creatures. For the limits of our development contract in one case and expand in the other.*

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*3) Even more indispensable to Morality is the concept of a future. But there can be no true future if human beings are not enduring beings. Morality therefore, for this reason as well, cannot dispense with the doctrine of our continuing existence.*

*People normally cling to the Present. But the idea that can elevate them above all beings of a lower nature, though they do not always do so, is the idea of a future, or of what may yet come to pass. Without the help of this idea there is no true perfection of the mind. Without it even morality is impossible. Therefore this idea cannot be recommended enough to people. And the prospect of the future, once opened, cannot be expanded enough.*

*When our concerns are limited to the present, is that really supposed to indicate profundity and greatness of mind? For millennia the present has been the source of*

great results. And yet even at this very hour we still act as if Nature is going to come to a standstill after this moment, as if what is happening now is the only thing that will ever be, and will have no consequences. Will these children never mature into men? Is Nature capable only of starting things, but not completing them?

*The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yes, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind: We are such stuff,  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.*

*The Tempest. Act 4.*

Memories of so much that is no more are so sad and dispiriting; all that is left to us is uncertainty, regret, and shame, and worry about what is still to come. The best and most reasonable thing that we have gained on this path is the belief in the emptiness and vanity of all human things. Is, then, this thought of falling from so much greatness to complete nothingness—the thought of not existing at all—the thought about the correctness of all greatness, the belief in the frailty and pointless mutability of all things, without the prospect of something that is real, great, and immutable, is this a pleasurable, uplifting thought for beings whose nature requires them to strive so hard for pleasurable, lasting sensations? What is all this present-day folderol? What value can it have if it leads to nothing in the end? The only value there is to everything that has happened, and has yet to happen, is in its consequences. What value can a life have if it has no consequences? The thought of Nothing is the most unbearable, unthinkable



thought, the most outright enemy of all peace, all greatness, all value, all human desires, all mental activities.

O, how different it all looks when, after the death of a conqueror covered in glory, his life is read backwards! Everything that led one to expect great deeds suddenly appears aborted and incomplete. Now at last we realize and accept that this game had an end, that nothing more will come. And we marvel, and wonder if it was worth the hubbub and the trouble, to make such plans, awaken such expectations, satisfy none of them, and lie down to rot? Suddenly, everything has taken on a completely new meaning. We think completely differently about it. Everything we once expected occurred very differently. The most deed-filled life of a *C a e s a r* or an *A l e x a n d e r*, what is it after all at the end of their track? All that remains and descends down to us seems orphaned, abandoned. We read about the deeds of a person who no longer exists. They are like a building once occupied that has now fallen in. Though the shell still exists, the spirit has departed. All these resplendent buildings of past human deeds now turn into ruins. It is a little embarrassing to wander through these ruins, to read one's own fate, knowing that we ourselves can expect nothing better.

Who here does not feel the desire for things that are more lasting and in more perfect accord with our reasonable expectations? We all wish it, and must wish it; but we do not find it on this Earth, among the things we become aware of here. Thus we seek it outside this world, outside Life. Who can blame us? Who, in the delirium of his happiness or his vanity, would be so cruel as to snatch away a deeply bowed spirit's sole support, which it is using to stand erect? It is simply impossible to enjoy life; and to

*believe that everything is empty, pointless, random, evil, vain, and temporary.*

*For this reason, no human being can do without the future. If there is no future, our lives are the most pathetic of comedies. And the more a person has achieved in his life, the more pathetic it appears. The more the human mind develops, the more it lives in the future, the more it anticipates its existence, so to speak. The Present is nothing more than a moment. The Past touches the Present, but it awakens sad memories. The Future alone is constantly starting afresh, and extends all the way into Infinity. Every one of our desires is evidence for the Future and presupposes belief in it. Our best and most useful plans will always extend beyond our own lifetimes; they start to provide their benefits after we are no more. We plant trees whose shade not we but our descendants will enjoy.*

*Des siècles à venir je m'occupe sans cesse  
Ce qu'ils diront de moi, m'agite et m'intéresse.  
Je veux m'éterniser, et dans ma vanité  
J'apprends, que je suis fait pour l'immortalité.  
R a c i n e. Poème sur la Reliq.*

*Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow!—What dissimilar children of one father—Time! When a deed is germinating, how different it looks from when it bursts into blossom; and how disfigured, how stripped of its splendor does the dead deed appear in its winding sheet! It is true that the Future is covered by a veil that no mortal hand can remove entirely. But Reason is sharp-sighted enough to peek through its gaps and quite justifiably expect quite significant things. There is something great in the fact that of all known creatures, humans are the only ones who know*

*they are going to die. We are also the only ones who are compensated for this with the hope of a new existence.*

*To each unthinking being, Heav'n a friend,  
Gives not the useless knowledge of its end:  
To man imparts it, but with such a view  
As, while he dreads it, makes him hope it too:  
The hour conceal'd and so remote the fear,  
Death still draws nearer, never seeming near.  
Great standing miracle! that Heav'n as sign'd  
Its only thinking thing, this turn of mind.  
P o p e. Essay on man. Ep. 5.*

*This hope is the result of humanity's higher, reasonable belief. It teaches us that it is impossible that Everything could exist to no end, that our time on earth would be the most ridiculous theater of all if there were no spectators, or if species were maintained at the expense and the exclusion of individuals.*

*If without consequences the entire Past and Present are pointless and in vain, and thus cannot have value, still that which occurs Today will not and must not necessarily be without consequences. But if every Today, like Yesterday, has consequences, then they contain reason enough to explain why everything today happens the way it does and not otherwise. The Future is thus the key and commentary to the text of the Present and Past, without which this auxiliary makes no sense and is completely incomprehensible. What happens before our eyes, whatever nature it be, big or small, is thus neither random, nor pointless, nor in vain. The proof of its necessity and appropriateness can be found in its later consequences. What happens today happens so that consequences can*



*appear to serve as the causes of even more distant effects. The entire Present thus occurs for the sake of the Future. And, for precisely this reason, as soon as every event must have a reason in order to have a value, there must exist an infinite, for us immeasurable, future.*

*Even the most sensual of all human beings thus cannot do without the idea of a future. Show me the person who has no desires at all? But the objects of all desires lie in the future. Enjoyment itself, if it is not to tire, if it is to provide true pleasure, must necessarily awaken new desires and consequently new prospects in the future. Anyone who wants to become active or happy must hope or fear, must crave or loathe, or else all his activity will cease. If there is no future, no further consequences, all prospects vanish, and all activity ends with Nothingness. Then nothing becomes the highest and final objective of our efforts and our powers. Then, everything that is past is gone forever. But if there is a future, the Past lives on in the Present and generates the Present, and nothing is lost in this world. All strengths, all insights, all modifications of the prior world are united in the Present to generate a future state.—O! the Future is the greatest of all ideas. It is the life of all action and cognition. When this spirit fails, everything around us becomes vain and dead; thus it cannot be an empty concept dreamt up by our vanity or self-love.*

*Even the most virtuous, selfless person cannot do without the Future. For the more virtuous and moral a person is, the more reasonable and moderate his desires. Every moderation of the desires presupposes an accurate estimation of the goods in question, however. A person who is to moderate his desires must be strong enough to resist the power and weight of the Present. To this end, he must*

*be more or less able to see the consequences that will arise. The idea of the Future is therefore the fundamental requirement for all wisdom, cleverness, temperance, justice, and all conceivable usages of Reason.*

*This goes so far that anyone too weak to rise above the nearest and most immediate consequences, or predict in advance what might happen, himself degrades into a villain and is unfit. Shame and shyness, emotions natural to a yet unspoiled soul, expressed by every deed for which people must admit to themselves that they cannot reckon with their fellow human beings' acclaim but are much more likely to become the object of their contempt—shame and shyness, say I, though they cannot themselves arise without a look into the future, will always give away while effective the fact that a person is a newcomer and a neophyte at the School of Malice. And importunity and impertinence are the marks of the advances made, the skills and expertise acquired in that school. People conscious of having performed an unjust and disgraceful deed know from experience what judgements and reproaches await them. If they now follow the first and most natural of their feelings, they will avoid the society of other human beings in order to avoid all blame and reproaches, to not hear others' judgements about themselves, or to be able to convince themselves that people are not making judgements about them. People like that, who crawl away for the disgrace's sake, are not lost for Virtue. But he who has learned all his lessons from the School of Vice, and finished his degree, sees further than this and discovers the other consequences beyond these that are more favorable to himself. He knows the people he is dealing with. He knows that his judges are either not much better or are people who can very easily overlook the worst in someone who is able*

to entertain them with his wit, frighten them with his might, blind them with his display, or purchase their approval with his fortune. He understands the art of becoming indispensable to people in another way, and he knows only too well that thousands of fools and villains die in this world without ever having found out that they were recognized as such. He knows, too, that even in the worst cases people will, sooner or later, tire of their yelling and their blame, and that everything in this world depends on who first succeeds in fatiguing the other man. Such people know exactly what persistence is capable of, and that in the end persistence will remove all obstacles, tone down all judgements. They know that all the attacks in this world are nothing more than attempts to make your opponent yield, and to find out who will be the first to run away. Such people know very well that to be respected and feared you must make people feel that they are not respected and that they are considered worthless. People aware of their superiority over their opponents will step forward without fear, and with their presence command malicious gossip to cease.

A quite different way to disarm opponents of their courage is the one used by villains who feel themselves weak. Experience has taught them that to achieve their objectives they must spare no accusations, they must use combat composure with their own heat and vehemence, and that to achieve their own ends they must dwell in

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\* Tout le monde dit d'un fat qu'il est un fat. Personne n'ose le lui dire à lui même. Il meurt sans le savoir et sans que personne s'en soit vengé.

La Bruyère

\* Nihil in vulgo modicum. Terrere, ni paveant. Ubi pertimuerint, impune contemni.

Tacitus



shadow for periods of time. People like that thus expect the best from Time and know that with it even the worst things will be forgotten"), Or they make an appeal to people's self-love and vanity, giving them the most desirable, fullest opportunity for self-satisfaction, and to feel themselves superior by comparison to some uglier thing. This type of person knows too well that people are unable to hate that which illuminates their own advantages. They therefore achieve all their ends by using patience, voluntary submission, and persistent, repeated humiliation to conquer all their opponents' contumacy. For the sake of their goal and its consequences, they put up with everything. And they are never thrown out the front door without immediately re-appearing from the side. No debasement, no low treatment, no insult can defeat their courage. No matter what happens to them, they manage to appear penitent, or like a client who believes he receives only good treatment. This lasts until they finally succeed in awakening the thought decisive for them, that a person of their type could not possibly be so evil and depraved, be so remorseful for his errors, and endure so much in order to regain the lost respect of his fellow human beings. This therefore is the great secret of expert evil: that it is importunate and impertinent; that it can with the greatest precision calculate and predict the true reasons for and duration of every rejection and contumacy; that even the latter have their limits; that no man will resist forever; and that every person is invincible from one side only, and even from that side they are invincible only to a certain degree. Modesty, Shyness, and Timidity do not know this. They

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\* Relinquendum etiam rumoribus tempus, quo senescant. Plerumque innocentes recenti invidiae imparis.

think too well of other people. Thus they lag behind on every front in questions of revenge, while the villain, whose heart is filled with contempt for them, who ridicules their simplicity and short-sightedness, goes swiftly and surely to his goal.—We are all such experts on people, such friends and promoters of Virtue. This is the way we are welcoming the fact that modesty is becoming rarer, and impertinence more widespread. Our blindness and short-sightedness are what is unifying and maintaining the Empire of Evil.

*S'il avoit moins des dupes, il y auroit moins de ce qu'on appelle des hommes fins ou entendus et de ceux, qui tirent autant de vanité, que de distinction, d'avoir su, pendant tout le cours de leur vie, tromper les autres. Comment voulez-vous, qu'un homme, à qui le manque de parole, les mauvais offices, la fourberie, bien loin de nuire, ont mérité des grâces et des bienfaits de ceux même à qui il manqué de servir ou désobligés, ne présume pas infiniment de soi et de son industrie?*

*La Bruyère.*

Even vice cannot exist in the absence of a future. How much more important then is the concept of the future for Virtue, which lives only in the future and which is impossible without one? Here, the idea of a future is so significant that it alone has the power to give our minds the strength that Virtue actually is. There is no more unmistakable sign of animal-like weakness than the inability to rise above the influences of immediately pleasant or unpleasant consequences, than the inability to envisage the consequences of a consequence. Such people find themselves, during their lives' duration, in a state of mere suffering, and in the power of others, their own minds

*Inactive. This inability to picture the consequences of the consequences, and to desire and act accordingly, generates the weakness of character that is, despite oh-so-deceptive appearances of kind-heartedness and goodwill, the source of falseness that in turn will become pretense and itself be the source of many vices. This is the source of all false shame and unseasonable human awe, that dangerous cliff for all true virtue'). This weakness renders us incapable of refusing requests and forces us to make promises we are neither able nor willing to carry out. In the end, it multiplies the evil we were attempting thus to avoid'). This*

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Des superbes mortels le plus affreux lien

N'en doutons point, Arnauld, c'est la honte du bien.  
Des plus nobles vertus, cette adroite ennemie  
Peint l'honneur à nos yeux des traits de l'infamie;  
Asservit nos esprits sous un joug rigoureux,  
Et nous rend l'un et l'autre esclaves malheureux.  
Par elle la vertu devient lâche et timide.  
Vois-tu ce libertin en public intrépide,  
Que prêche contre un Dieu que dans son âme il croit?  
Il irait embrasser la vérité qu'il voit:  
Mais des ses faux amis il craint la raillerie,  
Et ne brave ainsi Dieu que par poltronnerie.  
C'est là de tous nos maux le fatal fondement:  
Des jugements d'autrui nous tremblons follement,  
Et chacun l'un de l'autre adorant les caprices,  
Nous cherchons hors de nous nos vertus et nos vices.

B o i l e a u. Ep. 3.

Id est genus hominum pessimum,

In denegando modo quis pudor paullum adest:  
Post ubi iam tempus est promissa perfici,  
Tum coacti necessario se aperiunt, et timent.  
Et tamen res cogit denegare. Ibi  
Tum eorum impudentissima oratio est:  
Quis tu es? quis mihi es? cur meam tibi? heus,  
Proxumus sum egomet mihi. Attamen, ubi fides?  
Si roges, nihil pudet: hic, ubi opus est,  
Non verentur: illic, ubi nihil opus est, ibi verentur. [sic]

T e r e n c e in Andria. Act IV. Sc. I



incapacity to predict certain consequences in advance renders us incapable of resisting unjust demands; it induces us against our will to do disgraceful, criminal favors for people; it generates shyness and timidity and is the reason why people never belong to themselves. It also renders us incapable of bearing insults and slights with decency and dignity, forcing us to resort to duplicity and pretence. All sensuality, which lives only in the present, has no other basis than this weakness, this inability to see beyond the most direct consequences and keep more distant goodnesses in mind. Many a strength, even, becomes nothing more than a weakness when it starts to dwell on a subordinate consequence and does not look beyond it.

If everything has a consequence—and every thing must have one, otherwise all would be incomplete, because there would be no adequate reason why anything should have been started and that which has been started have progressed as far as it has done, because it is impossible for something to end with Nothing, without losing all value and appearing superfluous, pointless, and imperfect—if, as I say, everything has a consequence, then every consequence has a consequence as well. Thus, a future exists, because there exists a series of consequences that have yet to occur. This series either progresses on into the Infinite or, if there is a consequence we can consider the final consequence of this long sequence, it cannot be arbitrarily assigned to this or that consequence. Whether nature's activity comes to a standstill or progresses even further onwards cannot depend on our interest or our arbitrary will. If in this process we dwell on one consequence or effect that can be considered the final activity and the goal of all natural activity, we cannot lack more immediate reasons justifying such a statement. This effect must be of such a type that it

lack's not one single characteristic necessary for making this conclusion a necessity and an obligation for all humankind. In short, it must be of such a type that no one could reasonably expect a further consequence to result, and its discovery should entirely satisfy our reason and our thirst for knowledge.

Anyone who thinks that an endless series of causes and effects exists can go on thinking that way if he likes. But he is thinking more than is necessary, or more than I am requiring here. It remains possible that even the consequence our reason considers to be the final one may yet generate additional consequences. But because we do not know it, it is as much for us as if it did not exist at all. The nature of our mind, which must reduce all diversity to unity and thus to a First and Last, which requires a fixed point of view in order to make long-lasting, uniform, and concordant judgments, to bring concordance and uniformity even unto deeds—our reason which strives for a solid, immutable objective—this reason of ours is what truly and urgently requires and needs to dwell by one of these consequences, for us to be able to make judgments and take action. Our reason needs this as much as a counting master, if he is to do his arithmetic, cannot infinitely subdivide the numbers but must stay with one sort of unit and recognize this unit as indivisible. Although this unit may very well be even more divisible, for his intents and purposes any more efforts in this direction will not produce any better results. Of the same type is that effect that perfectly satisfies our more reasonable expectations for us, as long as we have this nature, satisfying them as much as the last one, even though it may not in fact be the last one.

*Though the circle of our ideas is small and limited,*



that which is available to us suffices to make us expect even more, to suspect the existence of an even greater, still undiscovered country. As we navigate through this life, searching for this country, we run across unmistakable indications of its proximity to us. The tides bear to us from a certain region plants not belonging to one of the known species on this earth. Though at a great distance, at certain times at the end of our field of vision occasional peaks of very high mountains will tower up, beyond that which is immeasurable in Space, showing us the way along which we are to seek and discover this Promised Land. I consider these peaks to include all higher points of view and ideals. Although we ourselves are finite, on all sides and in all directions we run into and verge on the Infinite. We are swimming in this ocean of waves like individual, scattered islands. The sight is great and stupefying. Unending is the Entirety of which we are but parts. Unending too are the parts of which this Entirety is comprised. Unending is the Space in which we find ourselves, and just as unending is the Time in which effects result from effects.

—A time without beginning or end, an unending divisibility of the material, an unending expansion.— Beyond every single Cause lie further Causes, and the consequences too are not any less lost in an abyss of consequences. Everything bears the stamp of the Unending. Nothing can be found whereof another member, a higher degree, or a lower level cannot be conceived. All the things we know are but individual, incoherent bits and pieces; we are convinced that they belong to a greater Entirety of which they are parts.

This idea, accompanying us always and everywhere, this idea that no one can possibly exhaust, this idea with



irresistible force pulls our minds beyond the mundane and informs us, in a way leaving few doubts, that we exist for greater things than to eat, or to suffer, and to die. The idea of the Unending, to the extent that we are capable of thinking it, appears to instruct us that what we become aware of here may be something, but it is not everything. More exists than that which such limited powers are capable of understanding. This idea challenges us to learn and to do everything that will enable us to abstain after our elementary instruction. To learn the language in which the Unending is written. We are all parts of an Entirety measurable neither on its large scale nor on its small scale, an entirety about which it is doubtful whether it is greater and more wonderful in its largeness or in its smallness. Thus we ourselves can do naught other than be wonderful and great, for we bear the stamp of the Whole of which we are a part. We have with it a single Purpose, a single Nature. Our minds detest all limitations. An unimpeded, limitless activity is the highest goal of our desires; insatiable are our cravings; inexhaustible is our knowledge's territory; infinite are the combinations of our ideas and our cravings; everything in us strives for expansion, improvement of our conditions; no goal that we have achieved can satisfy us; every satisfied craving opens new vistas in the distance. And so ideas arise from ideas, desires from desires, plans from plans, with no end in sight.

Thus in every human being there exists a considerable, restless striving for Infinity. And nevertheless that son of yesterday and today, the human who does not wish to belong to a tomorrow and yet has experienced so many tomorrows, rather than sit down at this richly set table, this son, like the beggar who lives from the kindnesses of a single day, satisfies himself with taking from his scanty

*supplies the most indigestible of all thoughts, the idea of his own total destruction, the idea of a half existence, incomplete. He chews and gnaws on this idea, and is pleased, and boasts about discovering that everything is an approximation, without order or coherence, not leading to a goal. That there are causes that are not causes, effects that have no effects, and purposes that are purposeless. This son speaks about goods and evils in a world where nothing has any value because it lacks a common point to which everything can refer. He believes that, in a world where everything is superfluous, accidental, purposeless, small, and insignificant, where all great things end in nothing, nothing could possibly ever be great and desirable, and human beings could not possibly ever be happy to be in existence. He believes himself wise either because he accepts no sources, effects, and purposes, or because in these examinations he never goes beyond the step that his passionate desires perceive as the last step. He does not consider that such causes, effects, and purposes are not causes, effects, and purposes, that he is thus denying these, without exception, that he is thinking the greatest of all inconsistencies, and that he destroys his own entire activity, or obtains it only by denying his own convictions.*

*Yes! Truly, we never reach a real limit. We never reach that which is truly the Highest and the Last. And the reason we do not is so that our will never lacks desires and our minds never lack activity. Equally, we never get to a complete Nothingness, to the limit where reality ceases to be. To think of yourself as not existing when you do exist is the most self-contradictory and thankless of all thoughts, denied by sensation. Yes, we discover no goal; but at the same time we discover that enormously more exists and is real than we knew. This truth shows us the weakness of our*

organs. Informed and challenged by the senses, our reason pursues these gigantic thoughts, so elevating to our souls. It tries to find a goal. It goes from one cause, one effect, one purpose, to another, and another. But these endeavors fatigue and overcome our reason. If every year of every human's life were united into one single life, still this life would not suffice to achieve clarity. All human activity would cease over this eternal, restless exploration and amazement. Anyone wanting to lose himself in this examination would metamorphose into a mind created for activity, into a being lost in pure observation, were this restless reason, striving for infinity, not given a resting point and a finger pointing the way to the hand before which it should stop and linger until the hour sounds in which the curtain is raised; or the sign be given to set forth into the interior of this country.

This resting point for fatigued reason is a maximum, a first and last of the type beyond which it cannot and may not go without destroying itself and losing itself in inconsistencies, speculations, and contradictions. Though these two points, the Highest and the Last, the circle is drawn enclosing the field cultivated and processed by human knowledge. What lies within this circle is knowable for us and something that humans more or less cannot live without. What lies beyond that is for us partly useless, and partly harmful.

Trace science then, with modesty thy guide  
First strip of all her equipage of pride;  
Deduct, what is but vanity, or dress,  
Or learning's luxury, or idleness,  
Or tricks to shew the stretch of human brain.  
Mere curious pleasure, or ingenious pain;



*Expunge the whole, or lop th' excrescent parts  
Of all our vices have created arts  
Then see how little the remaining sum,  
Which serv'd the past, and must the times to come!*  
P o p e. *Essay on Man. Ep. II.*

*Without a doubt, like unto our solar system, this circle extends even further into a more general orbit and takes this direction from there. But for us who live here and must act accordingly, for whom only that which we know can serve as the guidelines for our deeds—for us this fragment, ripped from the Infinite, remains our modest inheritance. And, as such, it is for us the only thing and the best thing. We need nothing more to be able to act as the Entirety's further arrangements, unknown to us, require. This Maximum, this Highest and Last, now are all the highest points of view, all ideals, the idea of the existence of a god, of a general world purpose, of our unending continuation and development. They are the surrogate which is to compensate for the weakness of finite beings until their powers have grown sufficiently and greater matters become conceivable for them. They are types of imperatives that appear to have to be accepted without proof and that cannot be proven by other, higher sets of imperatives because they themselves are the highest. And yet, they are even more than this. Rather, there is no other truth so strongly proven. For their proof lies in the fact that without their help no thought, no deeds, and no certainty would be possible. Their proof lies in the Whole. It lies in the entirety of human knowledge.*

*Consider man as an immortal being,  
Intelligible all, and all is great.  
A crystalline transparence prevails*

*and stricken full luster throo the human sphere.  
Consider man as mortal, all is dark  
And wretched. Reason weeps at the survey.—  
The whole  
Conveys the sense, and god is understood  
Who not in fragments writes to human race.  
Read the whole volume, sceptic, then reply.  
Young.*

*Thus, no other truth is so very proven. These, the greatest of all truths, appear doubtful to most people only because very few people exist who feel the air and feel their calling enough to o'erspring the entire range of human knowledge with a single glance, and to discover that nothing is knowable and nothing desirable as soon as these capstones to our knowledge fall into place. Indeed, the proof of these truths lies even more in our hearts. What human nature forces us to wish for, the reality without which we would be miserable and unhappy—this cannot but be true.*

*To prove this, I pose the following very simple question to all friends of speculation: Does our knowledge have a general value? Or does it have no value at all? Is it better for humans to know something or nothing at all?*

*If knowledge has a value, how can it be determined? In the same way as all other things—through the utility and the benefit that it brings to humanity. But if our knowledge has no value at all, then I do not understand why we strive for it. Nor do I understand why ignorance and stupidity are not accorded the same value. Even the idea of duty alone cannot explain this. For how do I know*



that something is my duty, unless through the relationship of a deed with a purpose I am to achieve? But what is any purpose if not a goal that has yet to be turned into reality?

If, however, utility is the measure of the value of all knowledge, then the greatness and generality of the utility determines the value of each insight. Then there exists a hierarchy of knowledge and sciences, a hierarchy which may not be disarranged. Then, all insights have their value as long as they do not go beyond their limits. But it would be unjust to enforce the lower insights at the cost of the higher ones. The human being would be the middle point to which all conceivable insights would make reference, which would give them a value; and the science that had humans themselves as its object would therefore have to be the first of all knowledges.

I do not want to explore here what individual people are seeking on the road to their knowledge. These things do not always measure up to their true honor. Instead, I want to explore what Nature had in mind when it gave humanity its cognitive powers.

We can assume with certainty that this did not occur without a reason. Nature gave us eyes to see, feet to walk, hands to feel and to work. It is thus credible that it gave us this knowledge as well for us to use to induce certain effects that would not otherwise be possible. A human being without any knowledge at all, if he deserves the name of human being, would with certainty act either not at all or not as we act. Therefore, by setting this Cause, Nature appears to have intended the effects of this Cause, the consequences of Knowledge. Now, knowledge itself no longer appears a purpose but rather a means. It itself must



*work in accordance with a purpose, is complete or incomplete, and has a greater or lesser value according to whether or not it impedes or promotes this purpose.*

*But, to be able to discover the consequences and effects of this knowledge, we must be able to imagine a person who has little or no knowledge. What we do not find in this person will be the knowledge's effect. Or are what and how much a person knows equally important? Can erroneous knowledge ever have the value of truth? Why not? Answering these questions will lead us to the purpose of all knowledge.*

*If human beings did not have the ability to think or cogitate, or if they had naught but erroneous ideas, they would either be able to differentiate nothing at all or they would conceive of these matters as different from the way they are. In the first case they would foresee no consequences at all, and in the second case they would foresee the wrong consequences. Thus they would do nothing at all, or they would do the wrong things, because they would crave either nothing at all or else things that only appear to be good. For this reason, they would either remain completely inactive and be as good as not present at all, or their activities would take them in directions disadvantageous to themselves. Their powers would never develop, or these people would never become that which they were capable of becoming.*

*Consequently, it appears that humans have been given knowledge to enable them to discern between things, and know these things' characteristics and interrelationships; to enable us to know what is good or harmful for us, necessary or unnecessary; to enable us to*

*know what we should do or refrain from doing, loathe or crave—to give humans, who seem to have been created for activity, reasons and guidelines for our activity, so that through our activity we achieve our destiny, i.e. become more perfect or complete, and the completion making us happier.*

*Therefore, human beings do not think merely for the purpose of thinking. We think so that we can act. All thinking and knowledge are but a means, not an end. And knowledge itself is a condition for our own happiness that we ignore to our peril. Whatever makes people unhappy, contemptuous, dissatisfied with themselves, can never be a true idea, worthy of us.*

*The criterium for all truth therefore lies in our hearts. All truth originates there. We do not know anything we are forced to desire. Therefore, our hearts correct all our knowledge, which cannot deny this source. Although it is true there is no knowledge without a certain degree of attention, it is also true that there is no attention where there is no interest. All knowledge must, if we are to strive to attain it, fulfill the conditions prescribed and demanded by our appetites. The busiest appetites are the drive to expand, the drive for happiness and pleasure. Thanks to the first of these drives, our knowledge must be true, clear, manifold and multiple. Thanks to the latter drive, our knowledge must be calming, certain, applicable and usable in life. And because of this, neither reason nor humanity is the poorer.*

*Or can we resist this influence? Can we be indifferent as to which result will appear after a given examination? Do we win or lose by this? Is it not our nature that forces*

*us to be this way? Can we deny or change our nature? Are we capable of craving evil and loathing good? Thus, can it be unreasonable to do what our entire nature and an irresistible inner power require of us? Is the hunger of the soul less fierce than the hunger of the body? Can human beings abstain from all activity? Can we act without wanting to do so ahead of time? Can we want without matters being good or bad in our eyes? And a person who can only crave Good—can this person act or think without consideration of happiness? That is why the heart is the only and also the safest guide for our knowledge, once our drives have found their proper place; and human beings only respect those drives that are the highest and most general.*

*Because in principle philosophy is only the highest, most fundamental, and most satisfying knowledge, and the purpose of all knowledge is action and our happiness, then worldly wisdom too can have no other purpose, and its value must lie equally in the whole as well as its individual parts, must be determined according to its usability and applicability to life's events and occasions; all its discoveries must be of the sort that causes us to become better and happier. It is impossible for them to destroy the purpose of all thought and philosophy. Only what fulfills this condition—that alone is true philosophy, or life's wisdom.*

*What is't to hear a sophister, that pleads  
Who by the ear the deceiv'd audience leads?  
If we were wise, those things we should not mind  
But more delight in easy matter find;  
Learn to live well, thou may'st die so too.  
To live and die is all we have to do.*



*Then seek to know those things which make us blest,  
And having found them, lock them in thy breast.  
D e n h a m.*

*P[ra]ctical truths, preferably those that give our will the necessary direction and provide the antecedents for our actions, are therefore the first and most important objects of all knowledge and philosophizing.*

*Thoughts were giv'n for action's government  
Where action ceases, thought's impertinent.  
Our sphere of action is life's happiness.  
The Earl of Rochester.*

*All theory and speculation, indeed even all learning, are only objects worthy of our knowledge because practical truths and disciplines cannot be clearly and completely known without them. All sciences, theories, speculations, and even learned examinations are, together with the entire body of learning itself, nothing more than the scaffolding for the greatest of all buildings—for life's wisdom, for the science of living and dying. This scaffolding is very useful, and necessary in itself, while the main building yet remains unfinished.) But it will become superfluous, and even harmful, after we have found the necessary results on this path, and the majestic Whole stands, complete. In the end, these rivers must empty into a sea in which everything unites.*

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\* ) Je haïs seulement

La science et l'esprit qui gâtent les personnes.  
Ce sont choses de soi, qui sont belles et bonnes.  
Mais j'aimerois mieux être au rang des Ignorans  
Que de me voir savant comme certains gens.

Les femmes S a v a n t e s. Act IV. Sc 5.

Thus, whoever makes theory, speculation, or learning the ultimate goal of his examinations, valuing them more than practice, not applying them to action, or even forgetting to act, is confusing the means with the end and sowing a seed from which he will only be able to harvest bad fruits. The purpose of all theory and speculation consists of the fact that they take us to the boundary but not beyond the boundary. All theory and speculation that destroy, hinder, or deteriorate practice, by narrowing points of view, entangling people in self-contradiction, or reducing human value to too low a degree, are, for this reason alone, purely and simply, false, or useless and reprehensible.

Of all matters that are knowable, the first matter of all, the first human object is—humanity. This is the central point toward which all the scattered beams of our reason are pushing and crowding. And yet

*De ce sublime esprit dont ton orgueil se pique,  
Homme, quel usage fais-tu?  
Des plantes, des métaux tu connois la vertu;  
Des differents païs les moeurs, la politique;  
La cause des frimats, de la foudre, du vent;  
Des asters le pouvoir suprême:  
Et sur tant de choses sçavant,  
Tu ne le connois pas toi-même.  
M. Deshoulières.*

Therefore, nothing is more the philosophers' responsibility than knowledge about their own nature and determination. All parts of our knowledge must unite in this, the greatest of all points of view. Or else they have no true value. We

accomplish this by means of self-knowledge and knowledge about other people. Self-knowledge is therefore the only true philosophy and the highest philosophy. It is the most difficult knowledge of all. And the knowledge that one is acting in accordance with one's determination is the first of all sciences, to which everything else that is knowable is, without exception, merely a means to an end.

*La raison ferme et lumineuse  
Vous montrera les Cieux décrits,  
Et d'une main audacieuse  
Vous montrera les replis  
De la nature ténébreuse.  
Mais sans le secret d'être heureux  
Elle ne vous aura rien appris.  
V o l t a i r e. Ep. 33.*

Human beings must relate everything to themselves. Everything that is on and is found on the earth thus has for us only one value. It can, therefore, be seen as a demonstrated truth that all philosophy, all certainty and reassurance, originate in our hearts and our hearts alone. We can stand up for this without blushing or being ashamed for it:

*Expedit esse Deos, et ut expedit esse putemus.  
O v i d.*

And in this regard C i c e r o voiced a very great truth, a truth fully appropriate to our nature, when he maintained

*Nisi Deus homini placuerit, Deus non est.  
C i c e r o.*



*That which fills our hearts or our sensibilities with indignation, that which no human being could reasonably desire, must be discarded as a fallacy, without any other evidence. The heart alone is capable of correcting our reason's aberrances when our reason wishes to step beyond the boundary. Our heart does this by commanding our reason to know nothing, explore nothing, that is disadvantageous to action. This is the reason why S o c r a t e s moved philosophy down from the heavens and onto earth and among the people.*

*Thus people are not acting foolishly but rather as wisely as their wisdom permits when they relate everything to themselves and imagine the world to exist for their sakes. They can do naught else but think this way. And whoever thinks this way thinks correctly. The object of human philosophy, which teaches us to act as humans, can be no other. If all matters outside ourselves had no relationship to us at all, then nothing would attract our attention, nothing would be known or examined by us; we could neither act nor desire.*

*Nothing is more certain than this; and yet there is an elegant type of philosophizing that boasts of its rather unsophisticated thinking process and to which this raisonnement thus appears short-sighted, malignant, selfish, and unworthy of the name of reason. These people are holding forth on quite different, elevating matters when they tell us*

*'Un jour quelques souris se disaient l'une à l'autre:  
Que ce monde est charmant! quel empire est le nôtre!  
Ce palais si superbe est élevé pour nous;  
De toute éternité D i e u nous fit ces grand trous.*

Vois-tu ces gras jambons sous cette voûte obscure?  
 Ils y furent créés des mains de la nature.  
 Ces montagnes de lard, éternels aliments  
 Sont pour nous eu ces lieux jusqu'à la fin des temps  
 Oui, nous sommes, grand Dieu, si l'on en croit nos  
 sages,  
 Le chef-d'oeuvre, la fin, le but de les ouvrages.  
 Les chats sont dangereux et prompts à nous manger;  
 Mais c'est pour nous instruire et pour nous corriger.  
     Plus loin, sur le duvet d'une herbe renaissante,  
 Près des bois, près des eaux, une troupe innocente,  
 De canards nasillands, de dindons rengorgés,  
 De gros moutons bëlants, que leur laine à charges,  
 Disaient: tout est à nous, bois, près, étangs,  
 montagnes;  
 Le ciel pour nos besoins fait verdîr les campagnes.  
 L'âne paissait auprès, et se mirands dans l'eau,  
 Il rendait grâce au ciel, en se trouvant si beau.  
 Pour les ânes, dit-il, le ciel a fait la terre:  
 L'homme est né mon esclave, il me panse, il me ferre,  
 Il m'étrille, il me lave, il prévient mes désirs,  
 Il bâtit mon séraîl, il conduit mes plaisirs.  
 Respectueux témoin de ma noble tendresse,  
 Ministre de mon joie, il m'amène une ânesse;  
 Et je ris, quand je vois cet esclave orgueilleux  
 Envier l'heureux don que j'ai reçu des Cieux.  
 V o l t a i r e.

This is more about appearances than truth, more  
 about humor than reason, and here we have new proof of  
 how much people's enterprises are more about results more  
 brilliant-looking than true; here, the facts are what  
 convince us how much influence vanity and the urge to  
 belittle others' ideas do exert upon our opinions.

—Let us therefore assume that mice have the same right we do to reference everything in the world to themselves. What now should be the consequences of this discovery? Because if it is to have any value, these consequences must be apparent in its application to life's events. The consequence would follow that our reason is mouse reason; that all reason is incapable of discovering anything better than that we should think and act just like mice; and since we do not seem to want mice to be the sole arbiters of truth, this entire line of reasoning appears to say nothing more but that in all manners of human and mouse thinking no truth will be found, or that we lack reasons from which it could be proven that humans judge things more correctly than mice do.—And now let anyone try to find pleasure in his or her reason, and act in accordance with this conviction.

Do these sublime, unsophisticated thinkers even know that this example itself proves their claim wrong? That you can concede their antecedent and still get the opposite conclusion? It is quite certain that, the minute they ceased lacking the capacity to think about their situation in this world, all animals would be incapable of concluding otherwise, and they would be, to the extent that they do reach conclusions in this manner, in the right; for in this world there is a great deal that they could apply to themselves with every reason, about what is useful or harmful to them. Seen this way, there is a mouse world just as there is a human world; for there are as many worlds as there are points of view and of reference. Only, the mouse world appears to be of less scope than the human one. All animals think and act in accordance with their nature. And thinking on that basis they will conceive of a highest



thing which is not a highest thing for others. In this way, every portion of the world completes its day's work and acts in accordance with the position it has been assigned; in the end, though, all these individual engines nevertheless will interlock and function together. And presumably someday a time will come when everyone realizes that they were acting in accordance with their location and their purpose. So if humans make the error of referencing everything to themselves, then please explain to me how we ought to behave, to what should we reference that which we see, hear, and feel? ### Or whether it is possible for us to abstain from all reference? What other object do humans know better and more precisely? What else would hold more interest for us? What would become of the world and of ourselves if people would forget themselves and want to pay more consideration to the interests of animals than to their own interests?—This seeming unsophistication and modesty appears to be nothing more than a theoretical philosophical grimace, or vanity and dogmatism. No human can live in accordance with such a conviction. This theory is refuted by every single one of our actions. For, if we wanted to act in the spirit of this theory, it would be necessary for us to harness ourselves before our carriages, rather than the horses, to remove them from this position.

*Pourquoi subtiliser, et faire le capable  
À chercher des raisons pour être misérable?*

Therefore, let us continue to allow the rats and mice to enjoy this world in their way, and think themselves the purpose of creation. If you will, there may even be a philosophy for mice, just as there is one for humans. Human philosophy is not endangered by it; for either the animals will be able to compare their system with the

systems of others, or they will be unable to do so. In the latter case, their insight and manner of thinking will be reliably limited and can thus in the event of an argument decide absolutely nothing to our disadvantage. In the first case, on the other hand, even these animals will realize that the human point of view is incomparably higher and richer and deserves preference for precisely that reason.

*Or this must be enough, or to mankind  
On equal way to bless is not design'd  
For though some more may know and some know less  
Yet all must know enough for happiness.  
The Indian Emp. Act V. Sc. 2.*

Consequently, even skepticism has its limits which it cannot go beyond. Skepticism—

*This busy, puzzling stirrer up of doubt  
That frames deep mysteries, then finds them out,  
Filling, with frantic crowds of thinking fools,  
The reverend Bedlams, colleges, and schools,  
Borne on whose wings each heavy sot can pierce  
The limits of the boundless universe.  
The Earl of Rochester.*

This skepticism, including the speculative spirit, is like the centrifugal force of bodies, which would lose themselves in the infinities of space if they were not held back by attractions forcing them to describe the path and line laid out for them. This attracting force of the intellectual and moral world is our Heart—our determination—the purpose of all thought—the purpose of the world, which cannot as a whole be destroyed by any thinking or doubting, against which no theory, no web of

sophistries and arbitrary concepts, has ever or will ever prevail, as long as this world prevails. Even the most dedicated believer of the most finely spun theory cannot completely deny the tempestuous calling of his inner voices.

*Ces hommes tout fiers qu'ils sont de leur science, ils ont quelquefois des moments où la vérité leur échappe d'abondance de coeur, et où ils se sentent si las de leur présomption, qu'ils la quittent, pour respirer en francs ignorants, comme ils sont. Cela les soulage.*

Even idealists cannot do this, which requires proof for the real existence of exterior things.—The proof of all this lies in the idealist's heart, in the entire context of his knowledge, and if it is also true that the entire existence of exterior things cannot be proved in any way, so what? Since when do we prove bare facts and sensations? To what end should we prove things that no one doubts, which all the evidence in the world will not make more certain than they already are, or, if their untruth could be proven, it would eliminate and destroy the use of all reason. Who requires proof that hot is not cold and cold is not hot, or that green is not red? Thus

*Nous leur permettons d'être sages  
Qu'ils nous permettent d'être heureux.*

We are creatures of a mixed nature. We are neither pure spirits nor animals. Our way of thinking and reaching conclusions must therefore also be of mixed nature. As

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Nous tenons le milieu entre les pures intelligences et les brutes; Ne soyons ni tout l'un, ni tout l'autre. Le terme de la Philosophie c'est de connoître notre condition, et d'être assez sages pour nous tenir sans orgueil et sans bassesses à la place qui nous est assignée. Nous avons une raison et des passions; en riant



creatures of a higher type we cannot be permitted to mistake our more noble determination, but because the stage for our present activity is the sensory world, because we are surrounded by sensory matters on all sides, and our knowledge is acquired by means of the senses, thus humans cannot deny humanity, and this world of the senses with all its goods cannot be valueless for us.

*The friend of virtue and morality will therefore never become an enemy of humanity. He will himself*

*Unter Tugend und Wein  
Kein Störer der Freuden, kein  
Sonderling seyn.  
Hagedorn.*

*He too will want to enjoy, and Nature will not spread the wealth of her treasures before his eyes in vain. He will not spurn even the sensory pleasures. The wise man, too, will strive to improve his outer condition. Power and wealth, influence, applause, and honor, will in his estimation not be lowly things worthy of contempt. But he will not crave and make use of them as an end, but rather as a means. He will convince himself that these rivers will flow into an ocean in the end, or else endanger all land. That these ends themselves are means to a higher end. Wise and perfect people will therefore do and want everything that less perfect people want and do, but they will not want anything to an excessive degree. No other people know as*

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du chagrin de ces Philosophes farouches qui voudroient détacher notre âme de tous les liens de nos sens, ne tombez pas dans l'erreur mille fois plus dangereuse de ces hommes sans moeurs qui me vous invitent à vous salir dans la fange de vos passions, et se repentant sans cesse de s'être laissé tromper par les faux biens qu'elles présentent.

*precisely where the boundary lies between pleasure and pain. By forming themselves for eternity, wise people will become not useless for this world. In all their actions there will be an independent spirit, a quite different independent manner, but the main thing will be the same. For there nothing will be calculated on the basis of vivaciousness and mere appearance; everything will be calculated for reality and the long term. Wise people will enjoy, for the purpose of enjoying eternally. No one will understand as well as they do, the art of enjoying everything.*

*If however only this sensory world is the stage assigned to humankind for its activities and knowledge, the extrasensory world nevertheless also belongs in part to our territory, because without such a thing the entire sensory world would appear empty, meaningless, and not much better than a dream, because our heart's most urgent need is the striving for real, stand-alone objects; because it is impossible for people to be pleased and satisfied by mere empty deception, which misses the purpose for which it was given us as soon as we become capable of recognizing the deception as a deception.*

*This knowledge of an extrasensory world cannot go any further, however, than the extent necessitated by our reason's requirements. We will know all we need to know as soon as we have convinced ourselves of the existence and the reality of extrasensory phenomena foundations. Our reason and our hearts require them. Because phenomena that have no foundation are nothing for Reason. They are like a chain hanging freely in the air. And phenomena about which it is uncertain whether they have a real foundation have only a problematical reality which likewise is not better than deception. As regards these*

phenomena foundations, whosoever wants to go beyond merely convincing himself of their existence, whoever demands to know what they are, where they are, how they work, will be stepping beyond the prescribed boundary. The resolution of such questions does not act as a condition for our thoughts, desires, and deeds. Only our inquisitiveness, not our spirit's real need, can be wounded by the irresolubility of such questions. We must someday accept the existence of extrasensory phenomena foundations as established, or the entire sensory world is a dream. It may be that in addition to our way of imagining the world there happens to be another, better way; but there is definitely no way that completely contradicts our own, in which even everything that is would appear to be something that is not. There is no other way of thinking more suitable for our nature and our location, and more necessary for our situation. Even if all things apart from ourselves are in themselves not that which they appear to be to us, they are nevertheless real, and we most certainly imagine them in the way necessary for us to become more noble, more perfect, to become that which we ought to become.

What would this Man? Now upward will he soar,  
And little less than Angel, would be more;  
Now looking downwards, just as griev'd appears  
To want the strength of bulls, the fur of bears.—  
The bliss of man (could pride that blessing find).  
Is not to act or think beyond mankind;  
No pow'rs of body or of soul to share,  
But what his nature and his state can bear.  
Why has not man a microscopic eye?  
For this plain reason, man is not a fly,  
Say what the use, were finer optic's giv'n,  
T'inspect a mile, not comprehend the Heav'n?



Or touch, if tremblingly alive all o'er,  
To smart and agonize at ev'ry pore?  
Or quick effluvia darting thro' the brain,  
Die of a rose in aromatic pain?  
If nature thunder'd in his op'ning ears,  
And stunn'd him with the music of the spheres,  
How would he wish that Heav'n had left him still  
The whisp'ring Zephyr, and the purling rill?  
Who finds not providence all good and wise  
Alike in what it gives and what denies?  
P o p e. *Essay on Man. Ep. I.*

*Without knowing it, we imagine things in a way required by a higher order of which our current manner of thinking is a part and a condition; this portion is linked to the general whole, and we on our part do what is our part, without knowing it. We play the role assigned to us and are like the soldier or lieutenant commander who follows an order given to him without knowing how it relates to the plan for the entire campaign, and whose blind obedience does more to promote the cause than a rebellious action expressed at the wrong time. In this way, an uncertainty exists which is insurmountable and yet at the same time better than many an apparent knowledge that only leads us into errors and misconceptions and even makes things that are certain, uncertain.*

*Man does with dangerous curiosity  
These unfathom'd wonders try.  
With fancied rules and arbitrary laws  
Matter and motion he restrains,  
And studied lines and fictious ceriles draws.  
Then with imagin'd sovereignty,  
Lord of his new hypothesis he reigns.*

*He reigns.—How long? till some usurper rise,  
And he too mighty, thoughtful, wise,  
Studies new lines and other circles feigns;  
From this last toil again what knowledge flows?  
Just as much perhaps, as shows.  
That all his predecessor's rules  
Were empty cant, all jargon of the schools  
That he on t'other's ruin rears his throne  
And shows his friend's mistake and thence confirms  
his one.  
P r i o r.*

*Let us therefore hold to that which to us is a given and undeniable. The fact that we are here cannot be contradicted. Experience has proven that none of us will remain here. That not every mode of behavior makes this visit a pleasurable one for us is no less certain. So it comes down to determining which mode is best. Indisputably, it appears to be the mode in which every rival can make it to the goal, where humanity's interests combat each other the least, where the means are more general, more available, more intellectual, more diverse, more long-term, more inexhaustible, and more compatible with the welfare of others, where no person can become too much and through his greatness pose a threat to others with equal rights, where the bigger and greater everyone becomes the better and more useful they are for others. No argument can dispute that this will happen to a more advantageous degree in a system that makes its final purpose the development of mental perfectioning and the development of our higher powers. This development and perfectioning can only happen, however, where their use is indispensable. And their use is indispensable nowhere if not where all appearances and grandeur have left us, where everything*

*depends on what we ourselves are. Their value is nowhere greater than where humanity is destined to endure.*

*Since every man who lives is born to die,  
And none can boast sincere felicity,  
With equal mind, what happens, let us bear,  
Nor joy nor grieve too much for things beyond our  
care.*

*Like pilgrims to th'appointed place we tend;  
The world's an Inn, and death the journey's end.  
Even kings but play, and when their part is done,  
Some other, worse or better, mount the throne.  
D r y d e n.*

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*Belief in our continuing existence can, therefore, as I believe I have proven, not be separated from moral philosophy without disadvantage. For every system of ethics must have a goal that it wants to achieve. It cannot do without the ideal of perfection and the idea of a future. And all this leads to thoughts of our continuation, and without it it has no true meaning. People who believe in their continuing existence also are incapable of acting as do people who deny it. People who deny this continuation cannot rise any higher in their morality than the reasons that motivate them. These motivating reasons are taken from current life and conditions, and will cause little or no fundamental change to their holders' convictions, which form the actual foundation of all morality. Because these motivations and conditions are changeable, then so too is the morality built upon them. And no person will be able to guarantee for themselves what they will be, how they will*



act, when the conditions change. In this system, people believe they can become everything, because their moral ideals are of the lowest type. Some sins and imperfections are greater and more spiritually destructive than others that are punished with the gallows and the wheel; the morality of people who believe in their own destruction does not envision this. This includes all dissatisfaction and grumbling while suffering; all untimely shame and human reverence; all denial of one's friends, and a better conviction as soon as one's own well-being is threatened; all crawling around and humiliation before evil and bad men whose hands hold a higher degree of violence; all undignified praise and flattery; all faulty knowledge and false estimation of one's self; all associated conceit, arrogance, contempt, and injustice to service from others; all indifference toward higher purposes and points of view; the ridiculousness heaped thereupon; the lassitude, sensuality, destructive tendencies, greed, vanity, lust for fame and power; all weaknesses which do not combat injustice where they might and should do so; all unifications of slavery, idiocy, and blindness for the purpose of unifying one's own influence, and a thousand other flaws which are the necessary results of erroneous beliefs and a low point of view.

If human beings are not created to endure, then every sufferer must necessarily believe that his suffering is unearned and has no purpose. He must necessarily envy those in more fortunate circumstances. He must curse a creation in which so little care has been taken for himself.

If human beings do not endure, then there is no pleasure on earth that cannot be troubled by prospects very dark indeed. True happiness is preposterous. It is a

*phantom that can be a thought of the moment, but will be destroyed by the next moment to arrive.*

*For, if human beings are not destined to endure, then everything has been begun and nothing ended. Then, all greatness and splendor ends in nothing; we lack only a reason; nothing is good; our cravings lack objects worth craving; and there is even less of a plan because then there will exist only fragments and no Whole. All human activity is dispersed and does not come together anywhere at any point. People will act as the advantage of the moment dictates, and people will do the opposite as soon as the momentary advantage alters. There will thus be no consequences beyond the present, or those still noticed beyond that point will also end in nothing, just like the current moment. Where no continuing existence is assumed, there can be no consequences to the consequences, because if there were there would be a series of consequences, and there would thus also be a type of plan in existence. But this plan would be the strangest of all plans, because it would have been drawn up to generate nothing.*

*Where no plan exists, there is no wisdom either. Everything happens through the power of the approximate. There, the wisest of all has no advantage over any of the fools. There, nothing can be reasonably predicted, nothing created, nothing prepared. The present moment alone deserves to be given consideration. But the present moment itself is like a river whose waters do not pour out into a larger body of water.*

*What remains left to us but that, where the present moment is all, everyone would snatch the moment and seek to become only as great as this permits? Whoever stands*

out above the others will be everything in this system. Power would be the highest goal that human beings could achieve and crave. People would necessarily have to hate, weaken, and repress their rivals. Whoever possessed power would have to do everything in their power to maintain themselves in their position. Every human being would fear the others, or hate them; no one could truly and enduringly respect or love anyone else. On this Earth, as a result, there could be only violence or deception, hypocrisy and pretence, discord and strife, and never love and harmony. In a world where unbelief was the ruling system, self-interest and selfishness would rule as well. The state in which all human beings would find themselves with regard to each other would be the state of open or secret warfare, and the characteristics required to wage this war most successfully would be the ones most appreciated. For this reason, bravery, cleverness, and the art of deception, together with a good outward seemliness in the eyes of all the worldly people, and most educated people, would be the highest ideals of all human perfection. And every other, more real virtue which glittered less would, when compared to the former, be despised as stupid, cowardly, uncouth, or foolish.

The school of pure sensuality can therefore very well produce great regents, great statesmen and heroes, men of wide-ranging erudition, candid and faithful businessmen, pleasant and charming companions, and quiet, benign people, in quantity. But the moral heroes who follow their path undaunted toward the goal to which they are destined, quietly taking the middle road without attracting notice, without displaying vanity and pretension;—people who would work on the foundation of the current ruination, reduce moral evil in the world, increase interest



*in morality;—people whose efforts and insights would drive the sluggish human species forward on its way to perfectioning, who lay the foundation for a better world and higher morality;—people who feel the world's misery and ruination like their own, who worry and become anxious about it, who prefer to discuss this with others above all things, pondering with them about useful means, to whom the conclusions and insights useful to this end are the most urgent of their requirements, who catch fire at every tip given, who search everywhere for people who feel similar requirements, and when they find one they consider him a priceless gift from Heaven, never separate from him, and mutually give one another new courage and strength against the seductions of the world and foolish opinions of society;—people who hide none of their faults from one another, nor seek out any sophisticated whitewash to explain them, who are strong enough to assume an ignoble motivating force behind even their best and most demonstrable acts, who use every tip to examine themselves, who convince themselves of the vanity of our virtues;*

*Qui tentant in sese descendere.*

*In quos manca ruit semper fortuna.*

## *People*

*Who counsel can bestow,  
Still pleas'd to teach, and yet not proud to know;  
Unbias'd, or by favour, or by spite,  
Not dully prepossess'd, nor blindly right,  
Tho' learn'd, well-bred; and tho' well-bred, sincere;  
Modestly bold, and humanly severe:  
Who to a friend his faults can freely show,  
And gladly praise the merit of a foe,*

*Blest with a taste exact, yet unconfin'd;  
A knowledge both of books and human kind;  
Gen'rous converse, a soul exempt from pride;  
And love to praise, with reason on his side.  
P o p e. Essay on Critic.*

*(Or people such as Lucan described his Cato:*

*Servare modum, finemque tenere,  
Naturamque sequi, patriaeque inpendere vitam;  
Nec sibi, sed toti genitum se credere mundo,  
Huic epulae vicisse famem: magnique penates,  
Submovisse hiemem tecto: pretiosaque vestis,  
Hirtam membra super, Romani more Quiritis,  
Induxisse togam: Venerisque huic maximus usus.  
Progenies: Urbi pate rest, Urbique maritus:  
Iustitiae cultor, rigidi servitor honesti:  
In commune bonus, nullosque Catonis in actus.  
Subrepsit, partemque tulit sibi nata voluptas.  
L u c a n.*

*People who are not satisfied with any progress they have achieved, and increase their demands upon themselves—such people, I say it plainly, come from the school of Epicureanism and unbelief either not at all or only by luckily forgetting their principles.*

*Y no penséis señor que yo llamo<sup>4</sup> aquí vulgo solamente a la gente plebeya y humilde; que todo aquel que no sabe, aunque sea señor y príncipe, puede*

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Translator's Note:        Among my corrections to the author's misquotation of this Cervantes text: changing "que yo Uomo" to "que yo llamo."

*y debe entrar en el número del vulgo.*

*To bring things back to their true value and call them by their own names, all the worldly people's conscience seems founded on their feeling of their own honor, and only to reach as far as this does. This, however, can restrict the range of morality so much that nothing in the end is truer than the words of La Bruyère. In the eyes and the opinions of the world, and according to the principles of refined sensuality.*

*L'honnête homme est celui qui ne vole pas sur les grands chemins<sup>5</sup>, et qui ne tue personne; dont les vices enfin ne sont pas scandaleux.*

*Under such conditions, consequently, only those people will thrive who are satisfied with the usual degree of morality, to whom the world seems good as long as their status remains unchallenged, who care little about anything else that happens and has yet to happen, and who leave the world and humanity to their own devices, who even enjoy their foolishness and silliness, and esteem it.*

*Que c'est une folie à nulle autre seconde,  
De vouloir se mêler de corriger le monde.  
Le Misantrope. Act 1. Sc. 1.*

*This school therefore produces, when the possible occurs, people who are either too involved in certain affairs to have the time to be evil, or pay attention to the world—or people lacking both outstanding vices and excellent*

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<sup>5</sup> Translator's Note: The author's original citation: "*qui ne vole pas les grands chemins*"



virtues:

*Magis extra vitia quam cum virtutibus.*

or, as *Cicero* described the consuls *Hirtius* and *Pansa*:<sup>6</sup>

*Homines boni quidem, sed duntaxat boni.*

Or they are people who lack either the energy, opportunity, or interest to be evil, who do not feel the need to take ignoble paths because luck and outward conditions automatically fulfil each of their needs, or, finally, the virtues of people from this school are nothing more than temperamental virtues—they avoid evil to which they feel no inclination, and for this reason are strong where better people are weak.

If, then, even the greater portion of moral people are not of a more noble type, if all the morality of better people is based on the lawbook of *honor*, and this honor is a very wonderful reason, dependent on human reason and judgement, and highly arbitrary, not infrequently demanding the strangest and most contradictory things:

*Ce n'est pas ce qui est criminel qui coûte le plus [...] C'est ce qui est ridicule [...].*

Then, then, many an event in this world becomes very understandable, and seems less strange. The rapid changes in the behavior of so many people will have less power to astonish us, and we will be deceived less often, if we place

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<sup>6</sup> Translator's Note: Hirtius and Pansa?

less confidence in this mutable virtue. What an expert on humanity was *La Bruyère*, whom I have quoted so often but who cannot be quoted enough, when he wrote:

*Commençons par excepter ces âmes nobles et courageuses, s'il en reste encore sur la terre, secourables, ingénieuses à faire du bien, que nuls besoins, nulle disproportion, nuls artifices ne peuvent séparer de ceux qu'ils se sont une fois choisis pour amis; et après cette précaution, disons hardiment une chose triste et douloureuse à imaginer: Il n'y a personne au monde si bien liée avec nous de société et de bienveillance, qui nous aime, qui nous goûte, qui nous fait mille offres de services et qui nous sert quelquefois, qui n'ait en soi, par l'attachement à son intérêt, des dispositions très proches à rompre avec nous, et à devenir nôtre ennemi.*

*If, on the other hand, people could succeed in making the thought of their continuing existence their soul's ruling idea; if they had enough strength of mind to rise above the sway and power of all present impressions, with the aid of this idea—what different creatures these people would become, what a gathering-place of delight this Earth would be, if this manner of thinking would only become the primary one for all humanity? For people of this type there would be no discontent. All would more reliably and assuredly obtain that which they sought.*

*For what do all human beings seek?—An unimpeded activity of the mind, and an associated, pain-free life.—To this end they require that no evil exists; that nothing is bad, contrary to their purposes, or superfluous; that no person misuses another; that all hurry to one another's aid;*

that people believe that even their suffering serves a purpose; and that they even believe no one be happier than themselves. But all of these things are only achievable for people who think of themselves as beings destined to endure.

For what, then, is the greatest crime in the world, that awakens so much displeasure in all people?—Let us be honest, and admit that it is when we think that we are not getting what we believe we have earned. The world is not falling into line with our arrangements and desires, and not taking the path indicated by our passions and prejudices.

But who is telling us to want to conceive of things that we are unable to conceive of? What is fairer: that the part arranges itself to suit the whole, or that the whole arrange itself to suit the part? What would become of the world, what would become of ourselves, if everyone were lord and master of creation? If all human beings have the right to have this particular desire, whose desires should be satisfied?—The wishes of all humans? Or the wishes of a few of nature's special favorites?

The former is simply impossible, and the latter would be dreadful and unjust.

There must, therefore, be a middle road. And it can only exist in everyone's becoming that which, and as much as he or she is capable of, becoming, without causing people with equal rights to suffer; that there be a happiness for individuals which is compatible with the happiness of all.

But this happiness will become possible for everyone



*as soon as they all learn to feel more sensitive to pleasure and less sensitive to displeasure.*

*That will happen as soon as all the maliciousness, ugliness, and pointlessness of so many things are eliminated.*

*They will be eliminated as soon as someone comes up with a plan for the world whose purpose is the highest development of all beings to whom all occurrences serve as means.*

*This highest development, however, can only succeed if humans are beings destined to endure; the opposite of all this will occur as soon as one thinks about one's destruction.*

*Is it really so illogical to think that everything has a cause, a consequence, a purpose? Does thinking nothing of it make this world more bearable? If this is so illogical, then let us think of no cause at all, but rather of a consequence or purpose.*

*For if there is a cause, a consequence, a purpose, then every cause has its subsequent cause, every consequence its subsequent consequence, every purpose its subsequent purpose. Either purposes exist that have no purpose, or there exists a series of purposes. Therefore, a plan exists. And all things in this world maintain their position in accordance with this plan. Which makes everything rational and good, and the sources of our discontent are eliminated.*

*All our discontent results from our inability to see into the future. If we could become better at this than we*

are now, we would necessarily and would have to become aware of consequences desirable and beneficial for us; in everything that happens we would discover so many means to bring about this great, communal consequence; we would and would have to find the Whole good, and the Parts not less; we would find nothing but connections, concordance, convenience, and exigency; we would convince ourselves that even evil could only result in good for us; we would thus become fond of all things, and see them as nothing more than their worth; we would get to know good things that are subordinated to one another; this would expand our point of view, and all desires that currently fall so impetuously upon lesser goods would thus be moderated and reduced. This would result in our interests' colliding less often with the interests of others. The Earth's treasures would be sufficient for all humanity; for no one would demand more of them than necessary for his or her own self-preservation; everyone would limit themselves more to their mental education; no one would consider themselves unhappy if they lacked something; everyone without exception would arrive at an objective achievable for all; none of our ideas, none of our desires would contradict others'; within us, there would be no dispute or discord, but rather peace, unimpeded enjoyment, free usage of our powers, and, consequently, unimpeded activity would be our desires' final objective. Every human being would be capable of everything, because in such an order of things he would not want anything impossible and unachievable. God and Heaven would gain infinitely more in human respect. For, even if this world be filled with as many problems and crimes as people claim, they would thus nevertheless be completely in accordance with their purpose, and perfect. For precisely this would give the world the characteristic of generating in us thoughts of and desires for a better order

of things, and for just this reason it would teach people to direct their concern away from themselves and toward the future. Its very imperfection would be the greatest proof of its perfection.

Because, then, all earthly activity would have to revolve around a goal which would be either closer or farther away, present here or there, or lying entirely in the future; because on the strength of this all manner of human behavior would be divisible into two main branches; because as has been proven the manner of acting that pursues a more distant goal has undeniable advantages;—if, consequently, all earthly havoc and misery always originates from the fact that people purchase at too high a price, place too much confidence in the present, and cannot raise themselves with enough strength above the power of their impressions;—if therefore it is impossible it not to matter which motivating forces are the driving ones in each era:—thus it is also impossible for it not to matter whether the greater portion of human beings believes in their continuing existence or denies it. For

*Tolle periculum,  
Iam vaga prosiliet frenis natura remotis.<sup>7</sup>*  
H o r a c e. Sermon. Lib. II. Sat. 7.

For these reasons, the famous question now answers itself: whether a state of atheists could exist, and whether such a state would be able to maintain itself in the long term. This question is accompanied by another question which is disproportionately more important and therefore

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Translator's Note:  
"frenis natura relictis"

The author originally wrote



deserves closer examination. The question: Are people mature enough today to be able to do without the positive religions? Is it good and appropriate to enlighten the common man and our youth about this, and teach them about their lack of foundation?

This question is a most delicate one, and its resolution of the sort that could very easily ruin things with all the parts, because it is impossible to satisfy the overexaggerated demands of the two parties in the dispute. The requirements of our times very naturally lead us to this question. Unfortunately, however, it is to be expected that here, too, humans will not keep to the middle road. And the too swift zeal of the one part will so confuse and worsen conditions that the opponents of reason will not lack ostensible reasons, lifted from current events, to, rather than help elevate religion, instead promote the old-fashioned rule of priests, including the old superstitions. Thus would all means remain contrary to the end, and human beings move inexorably from one extreme condition to another, without improving the foundation; they would believe that others race about because they race themselves, such that in the end even the most reasonable thing would become doubtful, what we actually ought to wish for, because for every old evil to be eliminated a new and worse evil would appear, so that in the end we would have to say to ourselves, in consolation,

*Contentons-nous de celui-ci  
De peur d'en rencontrer un pire.\**

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Translator's Note:

La Fontaine wrote "*De celui-ci*

*La Fontaine.*

*The positive religions that, in accordance with their primary purpose, ought to become a bonding agent between humans, and fill in the chasm created by the formation of so many countries— history has taught us that these positive religions have frankly become a new, even worse separating agent. And for this reason they have disseminated unspeakable misery throughout the world and humankind. Closer inspection proves that they have even failed to eliminate the foundation of immorality. And human beings are, even today, despite all religions, not much better than they were millennia ago. Thus they have awakened the idea in many a thinking man, and made it credible, that all these ideas in which religion and reason place so much trust, from which they expect such great results—the idea of God and immortality—are for life and human interaction dispensable, or of little use. The positive religions from time immemorial have been, and still are,*

*A thing thought young  
In age ill practis'd, yet our prop in Death  
D r y d e n. in D. Sebast.*

*Frankly, the higher ideas and principles do not appear in their purest form in every positive religious instruction, and they are distorted by many a harmful side-idea. Positive religious instruction not infrequently is less concerned with the main issue, affects the reason more than the heart, and frequently degenerates in our schools into useless hairsplitting and the most laughable*

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*contentez-vous/De peur d'en rencontrer un pire."*

exaggerations. And they deviate even more from their purpose when, rather than affecting people's fundamental convictions, they limit themselves more to the observation of certain customs').

Thanks to their behavior, self-interest, thirst for power, and the bad example set by so many instructors, the positive religions have lost infinite ground in the respect of the greater masses.

*These gossellers have had their golden days  
And lorded it at will.###  
Rowe. in Ian. Gray.<sup>9</sup>*

*All of this is quite true, and fully in accordance with  
the history and experience of all time. But—*

*Corrige le valet, mais respecte le maître;  
Dieu ne doit point pâtir des sottises du prêtre  
Reconnaissons ce Dieu, quoique très mal servi.  
V o l t a i r e. Ep. 97*

*On me rests the spirit of a hundredweight of slander  
which, despite my repeated public and private pleadings,*

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Lire ou parler un jargon inconnu aux premiers siècles; circonstancier à confesse les défauts d'autrui, y pallier les siens; s'accuser de ses souffrances, de sa patience; dire comme un péché son peu de progrès dans l'héroïsme; être en liaison secrète avec de certaines gens contre certains autres; n'estimer que soi et sa cabale, avoir pour suspecte la vertu même; goûter, savourer la prospérité et la faveur, n'en vouloir que pour soi, ne point aider au mérite, l'aire servir la piété à son ambition, aller à son salut par le chemin de la fortune et des dignités: c'est du moins jusqu'à ce jour le plus bel effort de la dévotion du temps.

L a B r u y è r e.

<sup>9</sup> Translator's Note : The author presumably means Nicholas Rowe's 1715 tragedy, *Lady Jane Grey*.



*no tribunal on Earth wants to eliminate by a lawful inquest. This spirit of slander charges me with threatening the destruction of both religion, and the highest authorities, and the welfare of states. And it is precisely this spirit that has turned in that direction the meaning of some few of my words that were capable of containing a more noble sense.*

*—I did not want any of that. Not since today alone, but for as long as I have lived, I have considered the highest authority and religion as important, inevitable human needs. And the reasons for this my conviction I have set out for the world to see in precisely these pages. But I wanted, in a time when there was no end to games and abuses in secret societies, for this human weakness to be used to further more real and more dignified aims, to the benefit of mankind.—I wanted us to build upon this foundation, taking advantage of the existing mood.—I wanted spiritual and worldly powers to be less abused, and to be better used in accordance with its sublime purpose for humanity's happiness and well-being, to which end they both actually exist; the latter is something I still wish and desire, and I will never cease wanting it.*

*—I wanted the more reasonable and better people to, in order to save themselves, withstand the seductions and laughter of this world, and not be permitted to become disloyal to their beliefs. To hold together\*), strengthen one*

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\* Que les philosophes véritables fassent une confrérie comme les francs-maçons, qu'ils s'assemblent, qu'ils se soutiennent, qu'ils soient fidèles à la confrérie, et alors je me fais brûler pour eux. Cette académie d'Athènes, et toutes celles de Paris; mais chacun ne songe qu'à soi.

Par quelle fatalité se peut-il que tant de fanatiques imbéciles aient fondé des sectes de fous, et que tant d'esprits supérieurs puissent à peine venir à bout de fonder une petite école de raison? c'est peut-être parce qu'ils sont

*other in their convictions, educate within their circles, and then to authorize to educate, to produce people who abuse religion and power less. I wanted some of the better people to develop an urgent need for both a more precise understanding of humanity and for an independent inner perfection, by means of my placing them into a dangerous situation where they either miss their goal entirely, to their own disadvantage, or are forced to make the study of themselves and of other human beings their lives' primary concern. Educators and all others who influence people were to first educate themselves, and gather the necessary experience in this school.*

*—To this end, I wanted to influence entire generations, and wanted the transition for all classes and people to a more reasonable general conviction, absolutely inexorable due to the course of nature and our destiny, to be quietly prepared, step-by-step, and to take place without any violent upheavals. I wanted what the representatives of ecclesiastical and worldly power ought to be doing and wanting on the strength of their offices, and I wanted this because they are neglecting it.—I wanted all these things, and I believe to this hour, despite all persecutions already suffered and still lying before me, that this idea is a great*

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sages; il leur manque l'enthousiasme, l'activité. Tous les philosophes sont trop tièdes; ils se contentent de rire des erreurs des hommes, au lieu de les écraser. Les missionnaires courent la terre et les mers, il faut au moins que les philosophes courent les rues, il faut qu'ils aillent semer le bon grain de maisons en maisons.

V O L T A I R E. Ep. à d'Alembert.

Si les honnêtes gens s'avisent de faire cause commune, leur ligne seroit bien forte. Quand les gens d'esprit et d'honneur s'entendent, les sots et les fripons joueroient un bien petit rôle. Il n'y a malheureusement que les fripons, qui fassent des ligues. Les honnêtes gens se tiennent isolés.

D U C L O S. Considérations.

one, albeit too premature for such times and thus unluckily calculated. If my contemporaries happen to be of another opinion, to me this appears to prove that their enthusiasm for virtue is capable of growth.

That mistakes occurred cannot be denied, that I erred exquisitely, that I was simple enough to imagine human beings better, less self-serving, and more receptive for that which is good and great than they in fact are, and as I unfortunately have experienced them only too well in the course of this matter. That here, too, humanity's passions would play their well-known game can surprise us the less because it is precisely these passions that are unashamed enough to disfigure institutions despite the fact that these institutions have received support from all sides through habit, long experience, age, and every conceivable outer compulsion. Whoever wishes to place the blame for this on my cause alone, on me or my subscribers, proves how little thought he has given to the nature of a business quite new for everyone, where everyone first had to gather the necessary experience, and before this had been accumulated, a cause, where all compulsion ceased, where those in high places had to fear their subordinates, where the first participants needed first to be trained, and with all the faults which they brought with them from the public world were not very willing to let themselves be educated; where everyone wanted to assert their insights, and when prevented from so doing cried despotism and pondering revenge and destruction; where, say I, before the experience could be accumulated, the cause itself received so many and such incurable wounds that downfall and collapse were inevitable. —If this were the place, and if one had had to deal less with preconceived opinions and passions, then even greater things could be said here,



*providing conclusions and tips of the highest significance for human management. But I have made even this explanation against my will, and I would have completely and utterly refrained from it had I not foreseen that many a reader of mine would notice and necessarily see it as hypocrisy or base self-interest if they saw here statements issuing from my pen with regard to religion and government that they did not at all expect on the strength of the portrait of me painted by my enemies—and now I am steering things back to my subject, and will allow myself no more satisfaction except to say that I am ashamed of those who are ashamed of me.*

*Now thou hast seen me, art thou satisfy'd?  
For, if a friend, thou hast beheld enough;  
And, if a foe, too much.  
D r y d e n. All for love.*

*Yes! The different positive religions have disturbed human peace and happiness more than once, but they have also promoted it in many different ways. To all appearances, and judging by the declamations against our current state of ruin, human beings have greatly not improved themselves by this route; but they would certainly be even worse had there not been any positive religions. These religions can themselves be misused, and they serve and indulge people's passions as soon as they start to brew; but this does not prevent the religions from having influence. We have the positive religions to thank for the fact that a larger portion of humanity has in its own way retained belief in our continuing existence and in a higher world government, including the lessons associated therewith. These, the most important of all lessons, would not have been retained so generally in human memory*

*without the assistance of these religions, and without their contributions humanity would already have exterminated itself from the earth. Because positive religion is the reason of the greater masses, and takes the place of pure reason for these people, all positive religions must therefore, in accordance with their purpose, approach the human powers of comprehension, and cannot all start right away with the fruits and the realest ideas. The higher principles, even with their advanced progress and growth, cannot be quite clearly developed and traced back to their final source. Here, to a great extent, authority takes the place of such reasons that are not understood by the masses; therefore they are, for everyone (and there are more than you think), therefore they are, say I, for everyone incapable of locating the genuine and sole reasons for just behavior at their source, a beneficial, extremely necessary surrogate, and simply indispensable. This was the unanimous opinion of all ancient and modern lawmakers, and even the heathens acknowledged this truth\*). This was even the opinion of M a c h i a v e l l i, whose testimonial is certainly above suspicion\*\*).*

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\* Nondum haec, quae nunc tenet saeculum, negligentia Deum venerat; nec interpretando sibi quisque jusjurandum et leges aptas faciebat.

\* Véritablement, il n'y a jamais eu chez aucun peuple de fondateurs des loix nouvelles, qui n'ayent eu recours à Dieu, parce que sans cela, l'on ne seroit jamais venu à bout de les faire recevoir; car il y a des biens connus par un homme sage qui ne sont pas appuyé par des raisons assez évidentes, pour qu'il soit facile de les persuader aux autres: ainsi, un homme prudent, pour se tirer de cet embarras, a recours à la Divinité. C'est ce qui a été pratiqué par Licurgue, par Solon et par plusieurs autres, qui ont eu les mêmes intentions qu'eux.

Les États qui voudront se bien conserver et ne point tomber dans la corruption doivent, sur toutes choses, maintenir la religion dans sa pureté, et faire toujours avoir pour elle une grande vénération. Car, il n'y a point de

*Now, because completely reasonable people are one of the rarest things on earth, it follows that there are also very few people whose weakness does not require support of this nature. The positive religions therefore are for kings as they are for beggars; they alone are perhaps capable, where reason falls silent, of setting effective limits both to the arbitrariness of the great and to the anarchy of the rabble. 'Religion is thus, even in all the oriental despotic states, the sole bastion against arbitrary power'). A prince who does not want to recognize any power over his own would be running the risk of opening the eyes of his subjects, and that they might cast his power into doubt too and lay claim to it, by saying or thinking*

*Since, then, no pow'r above your own you know,  
Mankind should use you like a common foe;  
You should be hunted like a beast of prey:  
By own your law I take your life away.  
D r y d e n. The Conquest of Granada.*

*On the other hand, can it be good or advisable that in times*

*'Ubi corrumpere et corrumpi seculum vocatur.*

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pronostic plus assuré de la ruine prochaine d'un État, que lorsqu'on y voit le service de Dieu méprisé.

M a c h i a v e l l i. Disc. Pol. L. 12 et 12.

Autant que le pouvoir du clergé est dangereux dans une république, autant est-il convenable dans une monarchie, surtout dans celles qui vont au despotisme. Où en seraient l'Espagne et le Portugal depuis la perte de leurs lois, sans se pouvoir qui arrête seul la puissance arbitraire? Barrière toujours bonne, lorsqu'il n'y en a point d'autre: car, comme le despotisme cause à la nature humaine des maux effroyables, le mal même qui le limite est un bien.

M o n t e s q u i e u. Esp. des Lois. Liv. II. Chup. 4.



*when the reputation of laws and public power have suffered to such a degree that, say I, in such times, the sole support for the morality of the common man and our youth, the belief in the future and the existence of a deity, is constantly being weakened and eroded?*

*Those that have once great buildings undermin'd  
Will prove too weak to prop them in their fall.  
D r y d e n. The Indian Queen.*

*The decay of the positive religions is always evidence of that decay of morals, and encourages them to decay even more; and where morals decay you can expect anything to happen. Is then anarchy, which destroys all order, threatens all property, puts even life itself at risk;—the state in which people's passions can be held back by no limitations whatsoever, such an enviable state?*

*Chi vuol provar dell'Inferno il suplicio,  
Vada sotto il villan posto in ufficio.  
F o l e n g o.*

*Why, if this life is all we have, should not even the lowest among us seek, just like the first among us, to assert his existence more, and to make his existence more enjoyable, and see how far he can take this? What hinders him from seeing all existing ownership as usurpation, and demanding his own portion? What should become of all the oaths through which, in the imperfection of our judicial processes, many a dispute concerning property and honor has to be decided? And what lies beyond the ugly, unpredictable results, and could be cited.*

*For this reason, the positive religions are not a means of deception, are not leading reins used by the dominance-dependent nature of the powerful to steer the greater masses of the people. There is a type of politics that would like to convince itself of this, and uses it in fact. But the consequences have always proven that this point of view is dishonorable and false. The positive religions are the only reason of which the greater portion of humanity is capable at this time, and this applies above all to the positive religions that do not openly ruin morality, that are based on the belief in God and in immortality, without exception, only some more or less than others. Their main business all aims for the same thing, and they spare the people the more profound proofs. They merely use different means, and bear the stamp of the time and the genii of the peoples among whom they arose. They are all arranged in accordance with humanity's greater and lesser susceptibility, and as soon as this changes they too are modified to better correspond to it. The fundamental teachings are the same on all sides, only the drapery and presentation vary, just as the languages will vary in which they are first taught. Truths necessary for all human beings to act, in situations where none of the best proofs are proven due to human incapacity, must at the very least be believed. All the higher principles of reason are of this nature. The positive religions can therefore absolutely correctly be viewed as philosophy, and every true philosophy can be viewed as a religion, and the one or other of these two, philosophy or religion, must necessarily be false when they are in contradiction to one other. Both can be misunderstood and abused, and unfortunately both are abused.*

*Let us therefore make the conclusion that derives from this. Every religion in a country deserves to be*

*protected and maintained, and may even less be subjected to violent upheaval. Every one of them deserves the protection and respect of reasonable philosophers, even when they do not profess that faith. The philosophers will not fail to recognize their religious flaws and wish they could be purified in a gentle, unnoticeable way. Philosophers will honor the maintenance within the existing state religion of public order, public safety, themselves. It will be as valuable to them as their own peace and safety.*

*Therefore, it is and will always be a strange occurrence when one is forced to see with one's own eyes and experience that in our times, under such conditions, when so many great people have become small, so many small people great, so many rich people poor, and so many poor people rich, when for this reason all passions are in the most complete uproar, when all human beings live in fear and in hope of so much, when everyone is too concerned with themselves to have the time or space to think about others, when the people have almost completely lost the communal spirit, and people need restraints more than ever;—that, I repeat, in such times, philosophy itself joins the side of its opponents, offering them new weapons, removing Reason's most powerful support, and seeking to prove to people who do not heed exterior compulsion, to whom nothing on Earth is holy or venerable, that morality can do very well without the idea of our continuing existence, that a morality built on that foundation is ignoble and reprehensible.*

*Doubtless, this is done with better intentions than results.*



*Pour les spéculatifs ce discours fait merveilles  
Il enchante d'abord l'esprit et les oreilles.  
Veut-on le pratiquer, on voit incontinent,  
Que ce discours si sage est fort impertinent.*

*I am tempted to say, with Volt a i r e,*

*C'est dommage, qu'il n'y ait plus d'enfer ne de paradis. C'étoit un objet intéressant. On serat réduit à aimer Dieu pour lui même, sans crainte et sans espérance, comme on aime une vérité mathématique. Cet amour n'est pas de la plus grande véhémence. On aime froidement la vérité.*

*These teachings, which appear elevated, simply cannot be applied in practice however. And lessons never followed even by those who espouse them, betraying such imperfect insight into the driving forces behind and secret workings of our hearts, even with the best intentions will produce no consequence more certain than this: They will offer people who already apparently find the idea of their continuing existence burdensome new reasons to discard it completely; in the end the result will be that the World and the Schools will agree on one thing: that there is no future.*

*Ainsi un esprit gauche dans sa simplicité,  
Croyant faire le bien, fait le mal par bonté.*

*This fact alone, that teachings that describe humanity's primary and most effective drive as sinful and dangerous, which consider all human regard for happiness a crime;—this fact alone, say I, that such a strange doctrine can be so generally taken up, defended with such heat, and circulated with so much success even throughout the most*

varied social classes:—this alone should awaken the suspicion that here a passion is secretly at work under the guise of reason, for it is not humanity's most usual custom to detour around sensual things and reach instead for matters purely of the mind.

Thus it appears more credible that people believe in this way that they will escape more easily and comfortably by ridding themselves of the burdensome examination of the forces that drive them. And convince themselves with a torrent of artificially ordered phrases that they act the way they do and not differently for no other reason than because it is their duty, and consider everything they do to be their duty.

*Begreifst du aber*

*Wie viel andächtig schwärmen leichter, als  
Gut handeln ist? Wie gern der schwächste Mensch  
Andächtig schwärmt, um nur—ist er zu Zeiten  
Sich schon der Absicht deutlich nicht bewusst—  
Um nur gut handeln nicht zu dürfen.  
L e s s i n g in Nathan. Act I. Sc. 2.*

Because even the schools, without meaning to, are in agreement with the claims of the worldly people and have declared humanity's continuing existence to be a dispensable, if not dangerous idea, the true friend of virtue has been caught in a truly agonizing position. Because of his convictions, he sees himself subjected to general disapproval or scornful laughter, and he finds No One whose approval would enable him to stand erect and would compensate him. This is more or less the situation which *Rousseau* describes so well in his new *Heloise*, which applies so well to our times, and in which I have

even found myself, more than once, and in part still find myself today.

*Chaque jour en sortant de chez moi, j'enferme mes sentiments sous en clef, pour en prendre d'autres, qui se prêtent aux frivoles objets qui m'attendent. Insensiblement je juge et raisonne comme j'entends juger et raisonner tout le monde. Si quelquefois j'essaye de secouer les préjugés et de voir les choses comme elles sont, à l'instant, je suis écrasé d'un certain verbiage qui ressemble beaucoup à du raisonnement. On me prouve avec évidence qu'il n'y a que le demi-philosophe qui regarde à la réalité des choses; que le vrai sage ne les considère que par des apparences; qu'il doit prendre le préjugés pour principes, les bienséances pour loix, et que la plus sublime sagesse<sup>10</sup> consiste à vivre comme les fous.*

*Let us examine then to this end what be true or false in this standard set by such elevated, completely unselfish virtue, that does good for no other reason than because it is good, because it is duty.*

*I say firstly: Philosophy has no reason whatsoever to be pleased with this discovery. For in this way it is making precisely the same claims as our men of the world. They are denying our continuing existence for this very reason: because they believe they do not require this prospect to fulfill their duties faithfully and conscientiously. And the worldly people also believe that they are doing good because it is good, because it is duty.*

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<sup>10</sup>

Translator's Note: The author originally wrote "...les bienséances pour vertu, et que la sublime sagesse...".



*I say secondly: In this manner, philosophy is taking the same road as the other extreme, with the system of belief of the strict theologians who demand that we humans love God for His sake alone, that for every action the will of the Deity must be taken into consideration either clearly or silently; and who declare all deeds in which this consideration is not apparent to be sinful and punishable. And one even must admit that this latter system of ideas even deserves preference because it shows a characteristic of Good that, though not beyond all doubt, nevertheless is more knowable and effective for the greater portion of human beings.*

*I say thirdly: In the system of our philosophers and in the system of the strict theologians, it is still possible for the enthusiasm for virtue to flare up. But in both cases these flare-ups do not come from clearly developed ideas and principles. People do catch fire, but more for a mere word, for an idea, than for a true, clearly understood cause. Before a person can do good because it is good, because it is duty, because it is God's will, he must already hold the conviction that such a deed is good and dutiful, that it is God's will. This conviction requires other, additional reasons. The person must know what is good, what God requires from humans; if this is not precisely known, then passion and sophistry will insert their own desires and leave God and Duty naught other than what they desire; and this, I would think, has been proven by more than one sad experience. This is proven by religious intolerance, the auto-da-fés of the Inquisition, and many a throne whose foundations would be shaken the very minute the monarch raised any objections to religious intolerance.*

*But meanwhile, this way of thinking too is not entirely without truth. Every true, virtuous deed really does contain its own source of pleasure, making it attractive without consideration of reward and punishment. But to be able to sample this pleasure requires something more than the usual human mood. To be able to experience this, a person must have made very great advances in exercising virtue; and even when this happens, no person would ever make it so far without pre-existing considerations of happinesses. This pleasure itself is founded on principles that pre-suppose the drive toward happiness.*

*If, therefore, the above-mentioned requirements brought to people by our schools are to have a rational meaning, not leading to fantasy but being useful in life, then the following series of conclusions occurs to me. And this series appears to be the only true one, toward which, without knowing or desiring it, all other ways of thinking will lead in the end.*

*Every human being wants to be happy. This at least is an undeniable fact, and I feel sorry for any philosopher who has never expressed this wish.*

*Malheur à qui toujours raisonne  
Et ne s'attendrit jamais.  
V o l t a i r e.*

*People of this type do not belong to a race of which I am a member. I am a human being, and write and think and act like a human being. I at least want to be happy, i.e. during the period of my existence I want to enjoy as much pleasure as possible and as little displeasure as possible.*

*I challenge every thinker to name a pleasure or displeasure that would not be the result of a more or less promoted or hindered activity of the mind. Human beings that are capable of thinking, acting, and craving as and as much as they will—for these people, as I have proven above, you can reliably say that there exists no displeasure of any sort.*

*This activity of the mind is impeded, however, by contradictions within the inner self and by every resistance from the outside.*

*Anyone, therefore, who strives for happiness is striving for a state in which none of their strengths, their inclinations, drives, cravings, and ideas cancel each other out. Inside themselves, there must be complete agreement, and thus truth. Where there is agreement, there too is perfection, because all the variety unifies to form the highest unity. People who want to become happy must therefore strive for truth, insight, and perfection. Anything that brings this about is good; anything that impedes this, divides a person, and puts them in contradiction with themselves,—is bad. This is done by every unilateral development of our powers, every low point of view, every idea, every inclination, that does not fit in with all the others. Everything immoderate about him, that stands out too much among the rest, impedes this general agreement, creates contradictions, disunity, and interior agitation, and thus displeasure.*

*The true, last, highest, most reasonable reason, therefore, why e.g. a person should behave justly, is—because this way of acting, among the thousands of other*



ways that are equally possible, is the only one that does not put people in contradiction with themselves, is the least obstructive to total agreement, perfection, and their consequences: happiness and spiritual peace. Doing a good deed because it is good, because it is duty, therefore means nothing other than acting in this way. It is the safest way, and the only way, leading to the main goal. This reason offers this way for everyone who has this goal, for every nature that must have it. This way becomes duty for this reason. At the same time, it is the most fitting of all deeds, because no other one is so in agreement with the nature of such a transaction, with the nature of human beings, with their predestination, with the nature of the goal for which the deed is being enacted, even with the purpose of all action and existence, because no other deed is a means that better suits all this, because this generates the least amount of disharmony and the greatest agreement among our thoughts, emotions, cravings, and actions. The pleasure in exercising virtue or duty in and for itself is therefore none other than our pleasure in harmony, agreement, and truth, than our horror at everything that reveals contradiction and disorder. And virtue itself is what brings about the greatest possible agreement. This makes it an inexhaustible source of pleasure, and even depraved people must necessarily take a liking to it, because even depraved people must necessarily appreciate and honor everything wherein they find agreement. The feeling of virtue, for this reason, cannot be driven out of human beings; and people can only remove themselves from it to the extent that they consider something virtue that is not, think they find agreement where it is actually not existent at all or not of the highest quality, or because they are unable to clearly and completely convince themselves of the more general

*agreement of one deed with the whole.*

*This driving force for our moral actions is therefore, most certainly, the purest and highest. But for that reason it does not necessarily rule out consideration of our continuing existence as much as people appear to believe. The fact that we continue to exist is the first thing that manages to organize all scattered, half-complete, in part pointless, unsatisfactory matters to a common center point, to a more complete whole, to a total agreement. Striving for perfection, virtue, agreement, happiness therefore appears to be a thing known by different names.*

*Nevertheless, we would be very much in error if we wanted to believe that this insight and conviction are for everyone. Convincing oneself that such a way of acting is the only way and the best way requires, if you do not want to fool and undermine yourself with empty words, great understanding of the overall situation, and thus a very highly developed mind. It presupposes that you first know how many ways of acting exist, which effects result from each of them, how every deed, emotion, and idea behaves in relation to what has already happened. It requires you to be able to prove the agreement and the contradictions of yourself and others, and to be able to distinguish the apparent agreement or contradiction from the real. All of these are great and unusual prerequisites and characteristics.*

*For this reason, though, the main thing remains true, and you cannot deny that virtue is its own best reward. But at the same time it is more than probable that anyone who wants to convince himself that he is acting solely from purely mental motivation is lying to himself, and more*

vain and proud than truly virtuous. In general, acting in accordance with the purest of motivations and highest principles is such an equivocal thing, associated with so many difficulties, that in reality it is one of the rarest of occurrences. I, at least, after more than thirty years of self-examination, with all my thinking about the forces driving my deeds, have not been able to discover any that did not bear the stamp of earthly origin. And I think that anyone else who thought about himself as much as I have about myself would find no nobler source.

*Diess ist die Kunst der strengen  
Moralisten:*

*Bekannt mit dem System, und von  
Grundsätzen voll,  
Beweisen sie das, was man lassen  
soll.*

*So froh, als ob sie nichts von den  
Begierden wüssten.*

*Sie sind von besserm Thon als wir.  
Sie bändigen ihr Herz durch die  
Gewalt der Schlüsse.*

*Uns Armen ist die Thorheit süsse."  
Doch ihnen eckelt nur dafür.*

*Wir lassen sie, wenn wir sie  
unternehmen,*

*Aus gutem Herzen Andern sehn,  
Und denken nicht daran, dass wir  
uns so vergehn.*

*Sie aber, die gelehrt, sich aller  
Thorheit schämen,*

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" Translator's Note: The author originally wrote "*Uns Armen schmeckt die Thorheit süsse.*"



*Begeh'n die That, die sie uns übel  
nehmen,  
Aus Tugend eher nicht, als—bis wir  
es nicht sehen.  
Gellert.*

*Let us therefore admit without timidity that we are human beings and, as such, weak and imperfect. Virtue is a great thing, and it is humanity's greatest good; but it is an ideal that human beings can only approach without ever reaching it, at least while we live down here below. Human beings cannot distance themselves from this goal without feeling the consequences. But pure, undisturbed pleasure is equally not for the human beings roaming around on this Earth, because our perfection exists only in approximation, and can be and be called more perfecting than perfection.*

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*And with this I conclude this treatise, asking my readers to consider it as an introduction to more important examinations. Doubtless, with it I have generated disgust and boredom in more than one reader, or disappointed their expectations. But I ask for patience and forbearance for that which is to come: The application I will make of these teachings in deciding the great main questions, the perfection of the world, the value of human beings, and the value of human reason, shall show the importance and usefulness of my doctrine. These teachings will be the key to explaining life's meanest occurrences. We shall convince ourselves that these teachings are the foundation of all practical worldly wisdom, ability to judge human nature, politics, and*

education, that all errors in politics are errors of imperfect morality and the consequences of a too low point of view. We shall be astonished at how much beyond our expectations all human deeds and thoughts do form a cohesive whole, how the most general principles broadcast themselves in the ignorant and the learned alike through these people's simplest and most concrete actions, and give them via the overall thought-desire-and-action-system an ongoing harmful direction as soon as they themselves become erroneous or faulty. In accordance with this, I shall find opportunity to prove that our knowledge of human nature, and consequently everything related to the education, leadership, and training of human beings, is necessarily incapable of generating the effect one expects of it; and we shall be reassured to see that not all means to our ennoblement have yet been attempted, and that we are thus wrong to despair of our perfecting.

I shall explain as much as is possible why everything, as it currently is, cannot be otherwise. I shall put down where all this comes from, where it is headed, what it is good for. I shall try to make people aware of the true sources of events. I shall give them a guide for better understanding the signs that come before.

*There is a history in all men's lives  
Figuring the nature of the times deceas'd  
The which observ'd, a man may prophesy,  
With a near aim, of the main chance of things  
As yet not come to life; which in their seeds,  
And weak beginnings, lie entreasur'd.  
Such things become the hatch and brood of time.  
K. H e n r y. Act III. Sc. I.*

*I hope that people will recognize the beneficial, even in what appears to be bad. I will make men small and require them to feel their previous weaknesses, so that they can be made more and greater than they presently are.*

*For this reason and for no less noble a reason, I have in this book of teachings said things not in line with today's tastes. I have not done this with the intention of calming my persecutors' fury, begging favor from the great, or creating an easier situation for myself. I am far from that, because it is too late anyway.*

*'Tis much too late for me new ways to take  
Who have but one short step of life to make.*

*This book is not suited to bring about such a reconciliation. It contains too many positions that could never please the passions of many an individual and social class. I have spoken heedlessly. No interest, no reputation blinded me in the examination of a matter where every hypocrisy is so dangerous. I know as well as my readers do that people hate truth to a very high degree, and nobody hates truth as much those who are forced to it in front of others.*

*I know that people do not like it when their weaknesses are put on display, and they themselves are disturbed in their delusion of their own perfection. But I also know that despite all this the human heart contains an indestructible seed of respect for virtue and truth, that people consequently hate more the manner than the thing itself. And that a writer, with the appropriate consideration, whose emotions and confidence are disposed*



to discuss a great matter, can allow himself many a frank judgement, and candidly say things that under other circumstances would be foolhardy presumption.

*Qu'il est des vertus, que forces d'estimer  
Même en les détestant, nous tremblons d'opprimer.  
I r e n e . Act IV. Sc. 6.*

*This experience reconciles one to human rebelliousness and proves that there are truths of a higher type that defeat all human malevolence, because all efforts against them can do naught else but reveal an evil will supported by forces that are not righteous. It proves*

*That there's a pow'r  
Unseen, that rules th'illimitable world,  
That guides his motions from the brightest star  
To the least dust of this sin—tainted mold;  
While man, who madly deems himself the Lord  
Of all, is nought but weakness and dependence.  
This sacred truth, by sure experience taught  
Thou must have learnt, when, wandering all alone  
Each bird, each insect flittering thro' the sky  
Was more sufficient for itself, than thou.  
T h o m s o n ' s Coriol. Act II. Sc. 5.*

*I have, therefore, dealt with this subject primarily because it is the foundation of all examinations, because for me it simplifies the path and the proofs for all that which is to come, because this subject for people who want to judge things dispassionately is the most urgent requirement of our time, because I know of no more effective means for preventing evil occurrences which otherwise seem inevitable. Whether people will misunderstand, misuse, or*

even pay any attention at all to the principles I have listed,—I am not counting on it, and cannot even expect it, in view of humanity's mood these days. The reason for this may lie in part in the way I have behaved, in the way I have handled my subject, whereby I myself alas! am only too lacking, but was incapable of doing any better. Furthermore, it would certainly have to be counted as one of the worst omens if a treatise dealing with such a topic would have a disdainful or indifferent reception; if no one could be found who would feel motivated or encouraged by it to do good. So let happen what will; I for my part have done my utmost; for making use of the unshakable will is in the end all that the world and humanity have left to me, and even this little bit is a great deal.

*The purpose firm is equal to the deed,  
Who does the best, his circumstance allow,  
Does well, acts nobly. Angels could no more.  
Our outward act indeed admits restraint.  
'Tis not in things o'er thought to domineer.  
Guard well thy thought, our thoughts are heard in  
heav'n.  
Y o u n g.*

In this treatise I have frequently spoken in foreign words, though this may not be in keeping with the taste of our arbiters of art. They will therefore call it "ostentation" or boasting of wide reading, which, actually, could not be more useful in such a treatise. This particularly holds for the points that I have borrowed from the poets.

*Well sounding verses are the charm, we use  
Heroic thoughts and virtues to infuse.  
Things of deep sense, we may in prose unfold,*

*But they move more in lofty numbers told.  
By the loud trumpet, which our courage aids.  
We learn that sound, as well as sense, persuades.*  
W a l l e r.

*In dealing with a subject that arouses the disgust of my contemporaries, blocks the interests of so many passions, where people are so pleased to decry every judgement as one-sided, it was necessary to use prestige to protect myself and thus prove that, if the thing be foolish, I at least am not the only fool upon this Earth, that I sedulously share this weakness with the greatest minds of all nations and every era.*

*Si Virgile, le Tasse et Ronsard sont des ânes,  
Sans perdre en ce discours le temps que nous perdons,  
Allons comme eux aux champs, et mangeons des  
chardons.*  
V o l t a i r e.

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Sulzbach,  
*printed with Kommerzienrath Seidlischen Schriften.*



