

The Moralists
a Philosophical Rhapsody
a recital of certain conversations on natural and moral subjects

Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four point ellipsis indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal sized type.—This work is the last of the five Treatises in Shaftesbury's *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*.—Starting at page 13 each speech will be prefaced by the speaker's name in small bold type. This replaces Shaftesbury's uses of 'said he' and 'replied I' etc. When there are paragraph breaks within a speech, each paragraph starts with the speaker's initial in small bold type. The only exceptions are five speeches by Theocles—on pages 26–31, 31–35, 40–42, 51–52, and 70–72.—When an editorial note speaks of Shaftesbury's words, it is referring to the very lightly modernised text given in the edition of the work by Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge U.P. 1999), except for the Addendum starting at page 72.—The division into Parts and Sections is Shaftesbury's; their titles are not.

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Glossary

amiable: This meant 'likable', 'lovable', 'very attractive'. A good deal stronger than the word's normal meaning today.

art: In Shaftesbury's time an 'art' was any human activity involving techniques or rules of procedure. 'Arts' in this sense include medicine, farming, and painting. The art/nature contrast is the artificial/natural contrast, with 'art' being taken to cover anything that is man-made.

contemn: This was and still is a standard English verb meaning 'have contempt for'.

disinterested: What this meant in early modern times is what it still means when used by literate people, namely 'not *self*-interested'.

distributive justice: Fairness in the sharing out of benefits. It contrasts with retributive justice = fairness in the assigning of punishments and rewards.

dogmatic: Confident, free from doubt, perhaps intellectually bullying.

empiric: An empiric relies on facts about observed regularities in the world while having no interest in what explains them. Shaftesbury's use of the word on page 2 is puzzling.

enthusiasm: The word can here be roughly equated with 'fanaticism'. That is why on page 12 Palemon takes 'My friend is an enthusiast' to be an insult.

fancy: This can mean 'liking', with a suggestion of 'whimsically thoughtless liking'; it can just mean 'whim'; and it was also a standard word for imagination'. In a passage starting at page 69 Shaftesbury seems to have all three meanings at work simultaneously or in quick succession.

gallantry: Conduct and literature marked by elaborately refined courtesy towards women.

generous: It had today's sense of 'free in giving' but also the sense of 'noble-minded, magnanimous, rich in positive emotions' etc.

knight errant: Medieval knight wandering through the world in search of chivalrous adventures.

luxury: This meant something like: *extreme* or *inordinate* indulgence in sensual pleasures. A 'luxurious' person was someone wholly given to the pleasures of the senses—mostly but not exclusively the pleasures of eating and drinking.

magistrate: In this work, as in general in early modern times, a magistrate is anyone with an official role in government; and 'the magistrate' (as on page 25) refers to the executive power of the government, not necessarily to any one person.

mandrake: A plant with a forked root (comparable with a human's two legs). According to a persistent and popular fable, the plant shrieks when it is uprooted.

motion: 'An inner prompting or impulse; a desire, an inclination; a stirring of the soul, an emotion.' (OED)

polite: Our meaning for this word came in fairly late in the early modern period. What it usually meant back then was 'polished, cultivated, elegant, civilised'.

principle: Shaftesbury here uses this word mainly in our sense, in which a principle is a certain kind of proposition. But some occurrences involve the sense—common back then but now obsolete—of 'source', 'cause', 'driver', 'energizer', or the like; for example in the phrase 'the principle, source, and fountain of all beauty' on page 61.

prodigy: ‘Something extraordinary regarded as an omen’ (OED).

Prometheus: A Greek demi-god who was credited with, among other things, making the first man and woman out of clay.

retirement: Withdrawal—perhaps for only a brief period—from the busy world of everyday affairs.

sagacity: It can mean ‘intelligence’ or even ‘wisdom’; but what Shaftesbury is attributing to the lower animals under this label is what we might loosely call ‘know-how’, and it could be regarded as instinctive.

simple: The uses of this word and its cognates on pages 49–50 and later all express the idea of •not having parts or of •being able to stay in existence through any amount of exchange of parts.

sympathy: Literally ‘feeling with’, as applied to any feeling. Sympathy is at work not only when your sadness saddens me but also when your happiness makes me happy.

ugly: Neither this word nor the cognate noun occurs in this work; in the present version they replace ‘deformed’ and ‘deformity’, which have a stronger and nastier sense today than they did in early modern times. In just one place (page 60) it has seemed better to leave ‘deformity’ untouched.

virtuoso: This word had two very different meanings in early modern times. In one of them a ‘virtuoso’ is a research scientist, and Shaftesbury uses the word in that sense in this work. But on pages 1 and 59 he uses it in its other sense, in which a ‘virtuoso’ is someone who has an informed and strenuous love for the fine arts.

Part III: Second day: Conversation between two

Philocles is still writing to his friend Palemon

Section 1: Nature as evidence of God

[Early in the morning Philocles finds Theocles walking in the woods; there are lengthy jokes about Philocles jealously suspecting his friend of preferring wood-nymphs to him; and then Theocles, invited by Philocles to express himself freely ('as if I weren't here') about the natural scene, launches theatrically into a florid prose-poem in praise of nature. [The whole thing is given, undoctored, on pages 72–73.] He addresses 'Nature' as though it (or 'she') were an individual thing, and indeed a divine thing: 'O mighty Nature! Wise substitute of Providence! Empowered creatress! Or thou empowering deity, supreme creator!' Eventually he breaks off, as though 'coming out of a dream', and appeals to his friend:]

Theocles: Tell me, Philocles, how have I appeared to you in my fit? Did it seem like a sensible kind of madness, like the raptures that are permitted to our poets? Or was it downright raving?

Philocles: I only wish that you had been carried away a little more and had continued as you began, without ever attending to me. I was beginning to see wonders in Nature, and was coming to know the hand of your divine workman. But if you stop here I'll lose the enjoyment of the pleasing vision. Already I begin to find a thousand difficulties in imagining such a universal spirit as you describe.

Theocles: Why is there any difficulty in thinking of the universe as one entire thing? Given what we can see of it, how can we *not* think of it as all hanging together as a single piece? If you accept that, what follows? Only this: if it

can indeed be said of the world that it is simply [see Glossary] *one*, there should be something about it that *makes* it one. 'Make it one'—how? In the same way as everything else you see as having unity. For instance: I know you look on the trees of this vast wood as different from one another; and this tall oak—a different thing from all the other trees in the wood—is one single tree, despite the fact that its numerous spreading branches look like so many different trees. . . . You may want to ask:

'What do you think it is that makes this oneness or sameness in •the tree or in •any other plant? How does it differ from a wax effigy of the tree and from any tree-like figure accidentally made in the clouds or on the sand by the seashore?'

I answer that neither the wax, nor the sand, nor the cloud thus pieced together by our hand or imagination, has any •real relation within itself, or •any nature by which its parts correspond with one another, any more than they would if they were scattered over a wide area. But I would affirm this:

If a thing's parts work together as the parts of our tree do—all aiming at a common end of providing support, nourishment, and propagation for such a handsome form—we can't be mistaken in saying that there's a special nature belonging to this form and to all other of the same kind.

That's what makes our tree a real tree that lives, flourishes, and remains one and the same tree even when through biological processes not one particle in it remains the same.

[Philocles comments coyly on what this implies about the unity or identity of the nymphs etc. that live among the trees, and Theocles responds appropriately. Then:]

Theocles: Let us now look into the personhood that you and I share, consider how you are you and I am myself. It's empirically obvious that in each of us there's a collaboration of parts that you don't find in any marble sculpture. But our own 'marble'—our own *stuff*, whatever it is that we are made up of—wears out and is replaced in seven or at most fourteen years; even the most dense anatomist will tell us that much. Tell me, then, if that continuing *same one* lies in the stuff itself or in any part of it, *where* exactly is it? It's a challenging question because when our stuff is wholly spent and not one particle of it remains, you are still yourself and I am still myself just as much as before.

Philocles (joking): It may be hard to determine what you philosophers are! But as for the rest of mankind, few are themselves for as long as *half* of seven years. A man is lucky if he can be one and the same for as much as a day or two; a year involves him in more revolutions than can be numbered.

Theocles: It's true that such revolutions may occur in a man—especially one whose conflicting vices often set him at odds with himself—but when he comes to suffer or be punished for those vices he finds himself still one and the same. [In an elaborate and mildly joking way he says that if Philocles undergoes a radical change in his philosophical opinions he will still be 'the self-same Philocles'.] You see, therefore, that there's a strange simplicity [see Glossary] in this *you* and *me*, so that they can still be one and the same when no one atom of body, no passion, no thought remains the same. As for the poor attempt to get this sameness or identity-of-being from some self-same matter that is supposed to remain with us when everything else is changed—this is negligible if only because matter isn't capable of such simplicity. [Then the joking remark that

Philocles might deny this if he became a dedicated believer in atoms, these being by definition simple = having no parts.]

T: But whatever be thought about uncompounded matter (a difficult thing to conceive), our concern is with compounded matter made of a number of parts that are put together in such a way that they unite and work together in these bodies of ours and others like them. If compounded matter gives us countless examples of particular forms that share this simple principle [see Glossary] by which they

- are really one,
- live, act, and have a nature or spirit unique to themselves, and
- provide for their own welfare,

how could we at the same time overlook this pattern in the whole, the universe, and deny the great and general One of the world? How can we be so unnatural as to disown divine nature, our common parent, and refuse to recognize the universal and sovereign Spirit?

Philocles: Sovereigns don't require that notice be taken of them when they pass incognito. . . . They might even be displeased with us for busily trying to discover them when they are keeping themselves either wholly invisible or in very dark disguise. As for the notice we take of these invisible powers in our ordinary religious ceremonies, our visible sovereigns are responsible for that. Our lawful superiors teach us what we are to accept and to do in worship; and we dutifully obey and follow their example. But I can't find any philosophical warrant for our being such earnest recognizers of a controverted title [i.e. for insisting that we are honouring the so-called sovereign Spirit when it's a controversial question whether there *is* any such thing]. Anyway, at least let me *understand* the controversy, and know the nature of these powers that are talked about. Isn't it all right for me to ask what substance they are composed of—is it material or immaterial?

Theocles: Well then, isn't it all right for me to ask you what substance—or which of these two kinds of substance—you regard as your real individual self? Or would you rather not be substance, and prefer to call yourself a mode or accident? [= 'If you don't think you are a *thing* perhaps you would rather be a property of a thing'.]

Philocles: My life may be an accident or property, and so may the random temperament that governs it; but I don't know anything as real or substantial as *myself*. So if there is any such thing as what you call 'a substance', I take it for granted that I *am* one. As for further details—you know my sceptic principles: I have no firm opinion.

[From here until '...simplicity and excellence' on page 52, Theocles is the only speaker, though he invents contributions by Philocles.]

Theocles: [He starts by saying that any substance/mode difficulties about God are equally substance/mode difficulties about ourselves, so that:] when you have been led by philosophical arguments to conclude that there can't be any such •universal *One* as this, you must conclude by the same arguments that there can't be any such •particular *one* as yourself. But I hope that your own mind satisfies you that there is actually such a one as yourself. Regarding the nature of this mind, it's enough to say that it

- is something that acts on a body, and has something passive under it and subject to it;
- brings itself to bear not only on body or mere matter but on some aspects of itself as well;
- superintends and manages its own imaginations, appearances, fancies; correcting, working, and modelling these as it finds good; and
- adorns and accomplishes as well as it can this composite structure of body and understanding.

I *know* that there is such a mind and governing somewhere

in the world. Let Pyrrho [the earliest radical sceptic] contradict me if he pleases; but if he does so, he is relying on another such mind, •his own! He and I have our different understandings and thoughts, however we came by them. Each of us understands and thinks as well as he can for his own purpose—he for himself, I for another self. And who thinks for the whole?—No-one? Nothing at all?—You may think that the world is mere •body, a mass of matter with its properties. So the bodies of men are part of this •body. Men's imaginings, sensations and understandings are included in this body and inherent in it, produced out of it and brought back again into it; though the body, it seems, never dreams of it! The world itself is none the wiser for all the wit and wisdom it breeds! It has no grasp at all of what it is doing; no thought kept to itself for its own particular use or purpose; not a single imagining or reflection through which to discover or be conscious of the various imaginings and inventions that it sets going and hands around with such an open hand! The generous great big *lump* that is so prolific, kind, and yielding for everyone else has nothing left at last for its own share; having unhappily given it all away!

I would like to understand what brings this about. How does it happen? By what necessity? Who gives the law? Who orders and distributes things in this way?

'Nature', you say.

And what is nature? Is it sense? Is it a person? Does she have reason or understanding? [The 'it'/'she' switch is Shaftesbury's.]

'No.'

Then who understands for her, or is interested or concerned in her behalf?

'No-one; not a soul. It's everyone for himself.'

Come on then. let us hear further: isn't this *nature* still a self? Please tell me what makes *you* a self? What are the

signs that you are a self? By virtue of *what* are you a self?

'By a principle [see Glossary] that joins certain parts, and that thinks and acts harmoniously for the use and purpose of those parts.'

Tell me, then, what is your whole system a part of? Or is it indeed not a part of anything but a whole—by itself, absolute, independent, and unrelated to anything else? If it is a part and is really related to something else, what can that 'something else' be except the whole of nature? Then is there such a uniting principle in nature? If there is, how is that you are a self while nature isn't? How is it that you have something to understand and act for you while nature—who gave you this understanding—has nothing at all to understand for her, advise her, or help her out—poor thing!—on any occasion, whatever need she may have? Is the world as a whole so badly off? Are there so many particular understanding active principles everywhere, and yet nothing that thinks, acts, or understands for all? Nothing that administers or looks after all?

'No', says a modern philosopher, 'because the world has existed from eternity in the condition it is in now; there's no more to it than what you see: matter with qualities, a lump in motion, with here and there a thought, i.e. a scattered portion of dissoluble intelligence.'

'No', says a more ancient philosopher, 'because the world was once without any intelligence or thought at all: mere matter, chaos, and a play of atoms, until thought came into play *by chance* and made up a harmony that was never designed, or thought of.'

What an admirable theory! Believe it if you can. For my own share (thank Providence) I have in my possession a mind that serves, such as it is, to keep my body and its affections—and also my passions, appetites, imaginings and the rest—in tolerable harmony and order. But I'm still

convinced that the order of the universe is much better than mine. Let Epicurus think that his is better; and believing that no intelligence or wisdom is above his own, let him tell us •by what chance it was given to him and •how atoms came to be so wise!

Thus, the effect of scepticism itself is to convince me even more of my own existence and of this self of mine—that it is a real self, copied from another principal and original self (the great one of the world); so I try to be really united with it—i.e. with the great self of the world—and in conformity with it as far as I can. My train of thought on this matter goes as follows: **(a)** There is *one* general mass, *one* body of the whole universe; and **(b)** this body is ordered in some way; and **(c)** this order is the work of a mind, the mind of the universe or of its governor; and **(d)** each particular mind must resemble this general mind in several respects. What respects? Well, they are

- of like substance (as far as we can understand *substance*);
- alike in acting on body and being the source of motion and order;
- alike in being simple, uncompounded, individual;
- alike in energy, effect, and operation;

and a particular mind is even more like the general mind if it co-operates with it in working for the general good, and tries to will according to the best of wills, namely that of the general mind. So that it's only natural that a particular mind should •seek its happiness in conformity with the general one, and •try to resemble it in its highest simplicity and excellence.

Philocles: Well, then, good Theocles, return to being the enthusiast by letting me hear anew the divine song that you charmed me with not long ago. [This refers to the prose poem that this version mercifully omitted on page 49]. I have already recovered

from my qualms and am starting to get a better sense of the nature that you speak of; I find myself very much *on its side* and concerned that all should go well with it. Though it often goes so fast that I can hardly help being anxious on its account.

Theocles: Don't be afraid, my friend. Every particular nature certainly and constantly produces what is good for itself unless something disturbs or hinders it either by •overpowering and corrupting it within, or by •violence from outside. Thus, nature in a sick person struggles to the last, trying to throw off the disease. And even in the plants we see around us, every particular nature thrives and reaches its perfection unless something from outside it obstructs it or something foreign has already impaired or wounded it (and even then it does its utmost still to recover). All weaknesses, distortions, sicknesses, imperfect births, and the seeming contradictions and perversities of nature are of this sort. You'd have to be very ignorant about natural causes and operations to think that any of these disorders came from a mishap in the particular nature rather than by the force of some foreign nature that overpowers it. Therefore: if every particular nature is thus constantly and unerringly true to itself, and certain to produce only what is good for itself, . . . the general one, the nature of the whole ·universe·, will surely do as much. Could *it* be the only nature that goes wrong or fails? Is there anything external to it that might do violence to it or force it off its natural path? If not, then everything it produces is to its own advantage and good—the good of all in general—and what is for the good of all in general is just and good.

Philocles: I admit that that is right.

Theocles: Then you ought to be satisfied. and indeed to be pleased and rejoice at what happens, knowing where it

comes from and what perfection it is contributing to.

Philocles: Bless me! Theocles, what superstition you are likely to lead me into! I thought it was the mark of a superstitious mind to search for providence in the common mishaps of life, and ascribe to divine power the common disasters and calamities that nature has inflicted on mankind. But now you tell me that I must. . . •view things through a kind of magical glass that will show me the worst of evils transformed into good, and •admire equally everything that comes from that one perfect hand. Never mind—I can surmount all this. So go on, Theocles, *now*: having rekindled me, you shouldn't delay and give me time to cool again.

Theocles: Listen: I'm not willing to sink to the level of •taking advantage of a warm fit and •getting your assent through appeals to your temperament or imagination. So I'm not willing to a step further until I have entered again into cool reason with you. Do you accept as proof what I advanced yesterday concerning a universal union, and the coherence or sympathizing [see Glossary] of things?

Philocles: You won me over by force of probability. Being convinced of a sympathy and correspondence in everything we can see of things, I thought it would be unreasonable not to allow the same throughout!

Theocles: Unreasonable indeed! For if there were no principle of union in the infinite part of the universe that we don't see, it would seem next to impossible for things within our sphere to keep their order. What was infinite would be predominant.

Philocles: It seems so.

Theocles: Well, then, after accepting this union how can you refuse the label 'demonstration' for the remaining arguments, the ones that establish the government of a perfect mind?

Philocles: Your explanations of the bad appearances are not perfect enough to qualify as demonstration. And whatever seems vicious or imperfect in the creation has to be explained before we can move on to any further conclusions.

Theocles: Didn't you then agree with me when I said that the appearances *must* be as they are and things *must* seem as imperfect as they do, even on the supposition that there exists a perfect supreme mind?

Philocles: I did so.

Theocles: And isn't the same reason still good, namely that in an infinity of inter-related things a mind that doesn't see infinitely can't see anything fully, and must therefore often see as imperfect things that are really perfect.

Philocles: The reason is still good.

Theocles: Are the appearances, then, any objection to my hypothesis?

Philocles: None, while they remain appearances only.

Theocles: Can you prove them to be any more? If you can't, you don't prove anything; and you must see that the onus of proof is on you, not on me. The appearances don't merely agree with my hypothesis—they're a necessary consequence of it. So in this situation to demand proof from me is, in a way, to demand that I be infinite, for only what is infinite can see infinite connections.

Philocles: I have to agree that this argument shows that the presumption is wholly on your side. But, still, it's only a presumption.

Theocles: Take demonstration then, if you can stand my reasoning in that abstract and dry manner. The appearances of evil, you say, are not necessarily the evil that they represent to you.

Philocles: I accept that.

Theocles: So what they represent may possibly be good

Philocles: It may.

Theocles: And therefore it's possible that there's no real evil in things; it may be that everything perfectly tends towards one interest—the interest of the universal *one*.

Philocles: It may be so.

Theocles: If it *may* be so then it *must* be so. That's because of that great and simple self principle [see Glossary] that you have agreed is at work in the whole universe. This principle, namely the nature or mind of the whole, will take anything that •possible in the whole and •put it into operation for the whole's good; and it will exclude any evil that it's possible to exclude. Therefore, since despite the appearances it's •possible that evil may be excluded, depend on it that it •actually is excluded. Nothing merely passive can oppose this universally active principle. If anything active opposes it, it's another principle.

Philocles: I accept that.

Theocles: And this is impossible. If there were two or more principles in nature, either they agree or they don't. If they don't agree, all must be confusion until one comes to be predominant. If they do agree, there must be some natural reason for their agreement; and this natural reason can't be chance, and must be •some particular design, contrivance, or thought. And that brings us again to •one principle, with the other two subordinate to it. So there it is. When we lay out each of the three opinions—

- that there is no designing active principle,
- that there is more than one,
- that there is only one,

we'll see that the only consistent opinion is the third; and since one of the three must be true, that proves the third. . . .

Philocles: Enough, Theocles! My doubts are vanished. Malice and chance (vain phantoms!) have capitulated to the all-prevalent wisdom that you have established. You have conquered in the cool manner of reason, and can now with honour grow warm again in your poetic [Shaftesbury's word] vein. So please return to that perfect Being, addressing it as you did before. . . . I shan't now be in danger of imagining either magic or superstition in the case, because you invoke only one power, the single *One* that seems so natural.

Theocles: Thus I continue then, addressing myself—as you requested—to the guardian Deity and inspirer whom we are to imagine as being present here: 'O mighty Genius! Sole animating and inspiring Power!'. . . . [The rest of this Section is an even more exhausting prose poem, with occasional interruptions. What will be given here is a greatly compressed version of each paragraph. [The whole thing, undoctored, is given on pages 73–79, along with brief reports on the interruptions. Paragraphs are numbered to aid comparisons.]]

1 [God is addressed as the power behind everything. Lesser beings such as humans come and go; when they go, the materials they were made of are taken up and re-used in other creatures. Some kinds of decay and death strike us as horrible, but if we knew enough we might realize that they were very good.

2 [It's pointless for us to try to discover how big the material world is, or how small its smallest parts are.

3 [Motion is wonderful. A body can get it only from another body, and can lose it only to another body.

4 [We can't properly comprehend time: it is too vast and its smallest parts are too small for our grasp. God is addressed as 'thou ancient cause! older than time yet young with fresh eternity'.

5 [Space is too much for us also. There is no empty space.

6 [We can't understand what causes thought: it seems to

come from motion but it's so different that we can't conceive how motion could cause thought or vice versa. Our thought it is in some way copied from the thought of God—you have communicated yourself more immediately to us, so as in a way to inhabit our souls'.

7 [Nature's marvels arouse our idea of God, their author, and perfect it. It's through them that he enables us to see him, and even have conversation with him.

8 [We can see countless stars, and don't know how many more there may be. It may be that each of them is, like our sun, the centre of a planetary system—our sun that each morning 'gives us new life, exalts our spirits, and makes us feel divinity more present'.

9 [Our beautiful sun produces heat and light in enormous quantities; we don't know what fuels it, enabling it to maintain its 'continual expense of vital treasures'.

10 [The planets move around the sun, as though wanting to join up with it, but something keeps them at their proper distances.

11 [God in some wonderful way keeps the planets in their regular motions. We may guess that he gives them •spirits or souls, or •an in-built bias towards movement, or. . . But we don't know.

12 [More of the same.

13 [Our own globe is small compared with other planets in our system, let alone with the sun. And yet it is enormous compared with our human bodies, which are made up of stuff from its surface, though with a spirit that lets us relate to and think about God. We relate to God somewhat as the planets do to the sun, but not in such an orderly way. But God can use our disorders in such a way that they 'contribute to the good and perfection of the universe'.

14 [Interruption. What follows is structured in terms of the four 'elements' in ancient Greek physics.

15 [Earth] is cultivated by farmers. It was a bad thing when men rejected these ‘gentle rural tasks’, preferring lives of luxury and using the earth only to mine for minerals.

16 [The simplicity of some minerals testify to ‘the divine art’ as well as do complex organisms. Minerals differ greatly from one another, and some of their properties are surprising. But no-one can stay long in a mineral-mine because of the poisonous fumes that the earth gives off.

17 [Air]: It’s a good experience to come up from a mine into the open air and daylight. When the noxious fumes come out, the sun transforms them into materials that are good for life-processes. And the earth, though always breeding, goes on looking as fresh and charming as a new bride.

18 [Water] plays a number of helpful roles in our earth—clouds, rain, rivers etc.

19 [Fire]: We don’t know where light comes, or where in the scheme of things to fit fire. The sun’s fire gives us warmth, keeps living things alive, and pleases and cheers us; unless it gets out control, and then it is powerfully destructive.

20 [Interruption

21 [In winter in the far north the sun brings little warmth, and everything is nasty and dangerous. But in time the sun melts the snow and releases everything from its ‘icy fetters’—another evidence of God’s power and wisdom.

22 [Near the tropics the problem is the other way around: dangerously intense light and heat. But God sometimes sends gentle cooling breezes, clouds, or dews and showers; these refresh men and beasts and plants, making them fit for the next bout of high heat.

23 [As we move around the world, new wonders open up: gems, spices. . . . and elephants! These can be tamed, and fight alongside us in our battles, as allies rather than slaves. Then there are insects—complex in structure and

life, beautiful, productive of ‘subtle threads’ with which we make beautiful clothing. How beautiful the plants are, ‘from the triumphant palm down to the humble moss’.

24 [Then countries where precious gums and balsams flow from trees, which also bear delicious fruits. And there’s the camel, which is so well fitted to serve men’s needs. One could become more aware of one’s needs and of God’s generosity in meeting them—by thinking of camels.

25 [The most fertile land [apparently meaning Egypt] is served by a river which breaks up into a delta so as to spread its ‘rich and nitrous manure’ over a wider area. The slimy depths contain ‘dubious forms and unknown species’, perhaps escaped from the desert, perhaps engendered there in the slime by the sun’s heat. The terrifying crocodile is ‘cruel and deceitful’, using hypocritical tears to bring people within reach. It’s a symbol of the superstition that grew in this soil, the first where religion bred enmity and hatred and then carried them to other nations.

26 [The deserts seem hideous at first sight, but they are beautiful in their own special way. We have no good reason to doubt that the fierce mammals, snakes and insects that they contain have a good place in God’s benevolent plans.

27 [High mountains fill us with awe, and even fear; but they cause even thoughtless people to think about the earth’s age and current state of disrepair, a ‘noble ruin’; and when one is high on a mountain ‘various forms of deity seem to present themselves’ in real or imagined voices.—And now we rejoin Philocles’s narrative.]

Here he paused awhile, and began to look around (his eyes had seemed fixed during his speech). He looked calmer, with an open countenance and an air of freedom, and it was clear to me that we had reached the end of our descriptions and that Theocles had decided to take his leave of the sublime [Shaftesbury’s word], whether or not I wanted him to.

Section 2: Beauty

Theocles (changing to a familiar voice): I think we had better leave these unsociable places that our imagination has taken us to, and return to our more friendly woods and temperate climates. . . .

Philocles: [Yet another joke about wood-nymphs. Then:] I can't help being concerned for your breaking off just when we were half-way around the world and needed only to take in America on our way home. I can excuse you from making any great tour of Europe: it wouldn't offer us much variety; and also it would be hard for us to get a view of it that didn't include political matters that would disturb us in our philosophical flights. But I can't imagine why you should neglect such noble subjects as the western world provides—unless you were scared off by a place whose soil is so full of the gold and silver to which you seem to be such a bitter enemy! If those ·western· countries had been as bare of those metals as ancient Sparta was, we might have heard more of the Perus and the Mexicos than of all Asia and Africa. We might have had creatures, plants, woods, mountains, rivers, more extraordinary than any of those we have looked at so far. How sorry am I to lose the noble Amazon! How sorry. . .

[He interrupts himself because he sees Theocles smiling. Theocles asked him to continue, remarking that 'Philocles, the cold indifferent Philocles, has become a pursuer of the same mysterious beauty ·that I was concerned with·'.]

Philocles: It's true, Theocles. . . . I shall no longer resist the passion growing in me for things of a natural kind; where neither art nor men's ideas or whims have spoiled their genuine order by breaking in on that primeval state. . . . But how does it come about that—apart from a few philosophers of your sort—the only people who love in this way and seek the

woods, the rivers, or sea-shores are ordinary run-of-the-mill lovers?

Theocles: Don't say this only of lovers. Isn't it the same with poets, and with all the others who occupy themselves with nature and the arts that copy nature? In short, isn't this how things stand with anyone who loves either the Muses or the Graces [i.e. the goddesses of literature and of visual beauty and nature].

Philocles: But you know that all those who are deep in this romantic way are looked on as either •out of their wits or •overwhelmed by melancholy and enthusiasm [see Glossary]. We always try to recall them from these solitary places. And I have to admit that often when I have found my own mind running in this direction and have been passionately struck by objects of this kind, I have pulled myself up, not knowing what had come over me.

Theocles: It's not surprising that we are at a loss when we pursue the •shadow instead of the •substance. If we can trust what our reasoning has taught us: whatever is beautiful or charming in nature is only the faint shadow of that first beauty, ·the beauty of God·. . . . How can the rational mind be satisfied with the absurd enjoyment of beauty that reaches the sense alone?

Philocles: So from now on I'll shan't have any reason to fear the beauties that create a sort of melancholy, like the places you have been talking about, or like the solemn forest that we are in now. I shan't again avoid the moving accents of soft music, or fly from the enchanting features of the fairest human face.

Theocles: If you're so proficient in this new kind of love that you are sure never •to admire representative beauty except for the sake of the original, or •to aim at any enjoyment except the rational kind, you can be sure of yourself.

Philocles: I am so. . . . But I would like it if you explained a little further what this mistake of mine is that you seem to fear.

Theocles: Would it be any help to tell you that the absurdity lay in seeking the enjoyment elsewhere than in the subject loved?

Philocles: I must say that the matter is still a mystery to me.

Theocles: Well then, good Philocles, suppose you were taken with the beauty of the ocean that you see yonder at a distance, and it came into your head to wonder how you could command it and, like some mighty admiral, ride master of the sea—wouldn't that thought be a little absurd?. . . . The enjoyment it involved would be very different from the enjoyment that would naturally follow from contemplating the ocean's beauty. The Venetian leader who each year ceremonially 'weds' the sea by throwing a consecrated ring into it is further from possessing it than is the poor shepherd who relaxes on a cliff-top and forgets his flocks while he admires the sea's beauty. But to come nearer home and make the question even more familiar: suppose that when viewing a tract of country like the lovely valley we see down there, you wanted to •enjoy the view by •owning the land.

Philocles: That covetous fancy would be just as absurd as the ambitious one.

Theocles: Will you again follow me as I bring this a little nearer still? Suppose that being charmed (as you seem to be) with the beauty of these trees under whose shade we are resting, you were to long for nothing as much as to taste some delicious fruit of theirs; and having obtained from nature a certain taste for these acorns or berries of the woods so that they became as palatable as the figs or peaches of the garden; and every time you revisited this place you wanted to *satiate* yourself with these new delights.

Philocles: This would be sordidly luxurious [see Glossary]; I think it would be as absurd as either of the former [i.e. as the desire to rule the sea or own the valley].

Theocles: Then can't you now call to mind some other forms of a fair kind among us, where the admiration of beauty is apt to lead to as irregular a consequence? [He is talking about pretty women and the male behaviour they elicit. The 'living architecture' of the next paragraph is a beautiful female body.]

Philocles: I was afraid this was where you were heading, and that you were going to force me to think about certain powerful human forms that draw after them a set of eager desires, wishes, and hopes—none of which, I must confess, are in harmony with your rational and refined contemplation of beauty. The proportions of this living architecture, wonderful as they are, don't inspire anything of a studious or contemplative kind. The more they are viewed, the further they are from satisfying by mere view! Perhaps what *does* satisfy is out of proportion to its cause; censure it as you please; but you must agree that it's natural. So that you, Theocles, as far as I can see, are accusing nature by condemning a natural enjoyment.

Theocles: Far be it from each of us to condemn a joy that comes from nature. But when we spoke of the enjoyment of these woods and views, we were talking about a very different kind of enjoyment from that of the lower animals who prowl through these places looking for their favourite food. Yet we too live by tasty food; and we feel those other sensual joys in common with the animals. But, Philocles, this isn't where •in ourselves• we had agreed to place our good or, therefore, our enjoyment. We who are rational and have minds, I thought, should place it rather *in those minds*, which were indeed abused and cheated of their real good when drawn into an absurd search for the enjoyment of their good in the objects

of sense rather than in what could properly be called objects of the mind. And I think I remember that we included among those everything that is truly fair, generous, or good.

Philocles: So I see, Theocles, that for you beauty and good are still one and the same.

Theocles: That is so, and this brings us back to the topic of our conversation yesterday morning. I don't know whether I have kept my promise to show you the true good [see page 20]. But I would have had good success in that if I had been able—through my poetic ecstasies or in some other way—to lead you to look *deeply* into •nature and •the sovereign Spirit. Then we *would* have seen the force of divine beauty, and formed in ourselves an object capable of producing real enjoyment and worthy of it.

Philocles: I remember now the terms we agreed on when you undertook to make me love this mysterious beauty. You have indeed kept your side of the bargain, and can now claim me as a convert. If this ever seems to involve me in extravagance [= 'in overdoing it'], I must comfort myself as best I can with the thought that *all* sound love and admiration is enthusiasm [see Glossary]. The transports of poets, the sublime of orators, the rapture of musicians, the high strains of the virtuosi; all are mere enthusiasm! Even learning itself—the love of arts and curiosities, the spirit of travellers and adventurers, gallantry, war, heroism—all, all enthusiasm! It's enough: I am content to be this new enthusiast of a kind I didn't know before.

Theocles: And I am content that you should call this love of ours 'enthusiasm', allowing it the privilege of its fellow-passions. We allow that enthusiasm, ecstasy, being-carried-away can be fair, plausible, reasonable when their object is architecture, painting, music or the like; are we going to deny the same thing here? Can it be that there are senses by

which all those other graces and perfections are perceived yet none by which this higher perfection and grace is grasped? Is it so preposterous to bring that enthusiasm over to where we are now, transferring it from •those secondary and narrow objects to •this basic and comprehensive one? Notice how things stand in all those other subjects of art or science. How hard it is to be even slightly knowledgeable! How long it takes to achieve a true taste! How many things are initially shocking and offensive but come in time to be known and acknowledged as the highest beauties! We don't *instantly* acquire the sense by which these beauties are discoverable; it takes hard work and trouble, even if we start with a precocious natural talent for such things. But who ever gives a single thought to •cultivating *this* soil—the soil from which mature moral judgments grow—or to •improving any sense or faculty that nature may have given us for this purpose? ·Hardly anyone!· So it's not surprising that we should be so dull, confused and at a loss in these ·moral· affairs, blind to this higher scene, these nobler representations. How can we come to understand better? How can we become knowledgeable about these beauties? Can it really be the case that study, science, or learning is needed to understand every other kind of beauty while no skill or science is needed for the sovereign beauty, ·the beauty of right conduct and virtue·? In the fine arts there are many things that the vulgar don't understand and don't like: in painting there are dark passages and skillful brush-work; in architecture there's the rustic ·style, with rough surfaces·; in music there's the chromatic kind and the skillful mixing of dissonances. Is there nothing corresponding to these in the ·universe as a whole?

Philocles: I must confess that until now I have been one of the vulgar, who could never enjoy the dark passages, the rustic style, or the dissonances that you speak of. I have

never dreamed of such masterpieces in nature. It was my way to censure freely on the first view. But I now see that I'm obliged to go far in the pursuit of beauty, which lies deeply hidden; and if that's right, then my enjoyments until now must have been very shallow. It seems that all these years I have dwelt on the surface, and enjoyed only slight superficial beauties, having never gone in search of beauty itself, but only of what I fancied to be such. Like the rest of the unthinking world, I took for granted that what I liked was beautiful, and what I rejoiced in was my good. I had no worries about loving what I fancied; and, aiming only at the enjoyment of what I loved, I never bothered to examine what the fancied things *were* and never hesitated to choose them.

Theocles: Begin then, and choose. See what the subjects are, and which you would prefer—which of them you would honour with your admiration, love and esteem. For by these you will be honoured in return. [He develops this at some length, in flowery language, until Philocles protests, and asks him to ‘talk in a more familiar way’. Then:]

Theocles (smiling): Thus then: Whatever passion you may have for other beauties, Philocles, I know that you don't admire wealth of any sort kind enough to credit it with much beauty, especially when it's in a rough heap or lump. [He is thinking of gold.] But in medals, coins, engravings, statues, and well-made pieces of any sort you can discover beauty and admire the kind.

Philocles: True, but not for the metal's sake.

[We now have a single paragraph that Shaftesbury wrote as thirteen short statements, each agreed to by Philocles in one to three words.]

Theocles: So it's not the metal or matter that you find beautiful, but the art. So the art is the beauty. And the art is that which beautifies. So what is really beautiful in all this is not the beautified thing but the beautifying of

it—not the gold disc but the form that its face has been given by the engraver. That's because the thing that is beautified [the disc] is beautiful only by the addition to it of something beautifying, namely the engraving; and if that is withdrawn the thing stops being beautiful. In respect of bodies, therefore, beauty comes and goes. And it's not the body itself that causes the coming or the staying of what beautifies it. So that there is no principle of beauty in anybody. For a body can't be the cause of beauty to itself. Or govern or regulate itself. Or mean or intend itself. So mustn't its principle of beauty be whatever it is that means and intends for it, regulates and orders it? And what must that be?

Philocles: Mind, I suppose; for what else could it be?

Theocles: Well, then, here's the whole of what I was trying to explain to you before. It is that *the beautiful, the fair, the comely, were never in the matter, but in the art and design; never in body itself, but in the form or forming power*. Doesn't the beautiful form tell you this, speaking of the beauty of the design every time you look at it? . . . What you admiring each time is *mind*, or an effect of mind; mind is the only thing that gives something form. Take away mind and what you are left with is rough and crude; formless matter is deformity itself.

Philocles: On your view, then, most amiable [see Glossary] forms—and the ones in the top rank of beauty—are the forms that have the power to make other forms themselves; I suppose we could call them the ‘forming forms’. [In this context, ‘form’ is being used to mean ‘thing that has a form (or structure or ordered complexity)’. So when (for example) a mind designs a medal, this is a case of a form making another form.] Up to this point I can easily go along with you, and gladly put the human form on a higher level than the beauties that man has formed. The palaces, uniforms, carriages and estates will never in my

account be brought in competition with—i.e. placed on a level with—the original living forms of flesh and blood. As for the other forms—the *dead* forms—of nature, the metals and stones: I am resolved •to resist their splendour, however precious and dazzling they are, and to •regard them as low-down things when in their highest pride they claim to enhance human beauty. . . .

Theocles: Don't you see then that you have established three degrees or orders of beauty?

Philocles: How?

Theocles: Why first, **the dead forms**, as you properly have called them, which. . . .are formed by man or nature but have no forming power, no action, or intelligence.

Philocles: Right.

Theocles: Then the second kind, **the forms which form**, i.e. which have intelligence, action, and operation.

Philocles: Right again.

Theocles: So here is double beauty: •the form that is the effect of mind and •mind itself; the first kind low and despicable by comparison with the other, from which the dead form receives its lustre and force of beauty. For what is a mere body, even a perfectly fashioned human body, if it doesn't have inward form because its mind is monstrous or imperfect, as in an idiot or a savage?

Philocles: This too I can grasp; but where is the third order •of beauty•?

Theocles: Be patient! See first whether you have discovered the whole force of this second beauty. . . . When you first named these the 'forming forms', were you thinking only of their production of dead forms—palaces, coins, bronze or marble figures of men—or did you think of something nearer to life?

Philocles: I could easily have added that these forms of ours had a virtue [= 'power'] of producing other living forms like themselves •by begetting or bearing children•. But I saw this virtue of theirs as coming from another form above them; it couldn't properly be called *their* virtue or art, I thought, if a superior art or something artist-like is what guided their hand and made tools of them in this glittering work.

Theocles: Happily thought! You have prevented a criticism that I thought you could hardly escape. Without being aware of it, you have discovered **the third order of beauty, which forms not only •mere 'dead' forms but also •the forms that form**. For we ourselves are notable architects in matter, and can show lifeless bodies given form and fashioned by our own hands; but that which fashions even minds themselves contains in itself all the beauties fashioned by those minds and is consequently the principle, source, and fountain of all beauty.

Philocles: It seems so.

Theocles: So any beauty that appears in our second order of forms, and any beauty that is derived or produced from that, is *all* basically derived from this last order of supreme and sovereign beauty.

Philocles: True.

Theocles: Thus architecture, music, and everything that humans invent, resolves itself into [Shaftesbury's phrase] this last order.

Philocles: Right, and thus all the enthusiasms of other kinds resolve themselves into ours. The fashionable kinds borrow from us, and are nothing without us: we undoubtedly have the honour of being originals.

[In a tiresomely teasing passage, Theocles gets his friend to think about items that he forms and that are superior to the 'dead forms' spoken about earlier. Eventually:]

Philocles: You mean my sentiments?

Theocles: Certainly, and also

- your resolutions, principles, decisions, actions—whatever is handsome and noble of that kind;
- whatever flows from your good understanding, sense, knowledge and will;
- whatever is engendered in your heart, or derives itself from your parent-mind, which is unlike other parents in never being worn out or exhausted, but gains strength and vigor by producing.

You have illustrated that, my friend, by many works and by not allowing that fertile part to remain idle and inactive. . . . [He adds that he expects the output of his friend's mind always to be beautiful.]

I took the compliment, and told him that I wished I really were as he had described me, so that I might deserve his esteem and love. From then on (I told him) I would work to become beautiful by his standard of beauty, and to propagate a lovely race of mental children, the offspring of high enjoyment and a union with what was fairest and best. I continued:

Philocles: But it is you, Theocles, who must help my labouring mind, and be as it were the midwife to those conceptions. Otherwise I am afraid they'll turn out to be abortive.

Theocles: You do well to give me only the midwife's role; for the mind can only be *helped* in the birth. Its pregnancy is from its nature. It couldn't have been thus impregnated by any mind except the one that formed it at the beginning—the one we have already shown to be origin of all beauty, mental and otherwise.

Philocles: Do you maintain then that these mental children—the notions and principles of *fair, just, honest* and so on are innate?

Theocles: Anatomists tell us that the eggs that are principles [see Glossary] in body are innate, being formed already in the fetus before the birth. But as for

- the principles we are discussing now, and
- our organs of sensation, and indeed
- our sensations themselves,

whether they are first formed in us before, or at, or after our birth—and if after, *how long* after—is no doubt an interesting question to theorize about, but it's of no great importance. The important question is whether these principles are from art [see Glossary] or from nature? If purely from nature, it doesn't matter *when*. If you were to deny that *life* is innate because you thought it followed rather than preceded the moment of birth, you would get no argument from me. What I am sure of is that life and the sensations that come with it, no matter *when* they come, are from mere nature and nothing else. So if you dislike the word 'innate', let us change it for 'instinctive', and call anything 'instinct' if nature teaches it with no input from art, culture, or discipline.

Philocles: Content.

Theocles: Leaving those other questions to the various experts, we can safely say—with no dissent from them—that the various organs, especially the organs of generation, are formed by nature. Does nature provide us with any instinct for using them later on? Or must learning and experience show us the use of them?

Philocles: . . . In the case of generation, the impression or instinct is so strong that it would be absurd not to think it natural, in our own species and in others. Many other creatures, as you have taught me, know in advance of experience not only •how to engender their young but also •the various and almost infinite means and methods of providing for them. We can see this in the preparatory

labours and arts of these wild creatures, which demonstrate their anticipating fancies, pre-conceptions or pre-sensations, if I may use a word you taught me yesterday [page 39].

Theocles: I allow your expression, and will try to show you that the same pre-conceptions, at a higher level, occur in human kind.

Philocles: Please do! I'm so far from finding these pre-conceptions of *fair* and *beautiful* in myself (in your sense of these terms) that until recently I have hardly known of anything like them in nature.

Theocles: If you really didn't have any such pre-conceptions, how would you have recognized any human beings as outwardly fair and beautiful? If such an object (a beautiful woman) had for the first time appeared to you this morning in these woods, how would you have recognised her as beautiful? Or do you think that if you hadn't had instruction about this you would have been unmoved, and have found no difference between this form and any other?

Philocles: I have hardly any right to offer this last opinion, after what I have owned just before.

Theocles: Well then, so that I don't seem to take advantage of you I'll leave the dazzling form of the beautiful woman, which is such a complex array of simpler beauties, and settle for considering each of those simple beauties separately. I take it that you'll agree that in respect of bodies—whatever is commonly said of the 'inexpressible', the 'unintelligible', the I-know-not-what of beauty—there can't be any mystery here that doesn't plainly belong to •shape, •colour, •motion or •sound. Let's set aside the last three of those along with the charms that depend on them, and attend to the charm in what is the simplest of all, namely shape. And we don't need to rise to the heights of sculpture, architecture, or the other fine arts. It's enough if we consider the simplest of

figures—

- a sphere and a cube,
- a ball or a die.

Why is even an infant pleased with its first view of these proportions? Why is a sphere or globe (or a cylinder or obelisk) preferred to irregular shapes?

Philocles: I admit that there is in certain shapes a natural beauty that the eye finds as soon as the object is presented to it.

Theocles: So there's a natural beauty of figures; isn't there also an equally natural beauty of actions? No sooner does the eye open on shapes, the ear to sounds, than right away *the beautiful* results, and grace and harmony are known and acknowledged. No sooner are actions viewed, no sooner are the human affections and passions discerned (and they are most of them as soon discerned as felt), than right away an inward eye sees the fair and shapely, the amiable and admirable, setting them apart from the foul, the odious, or the despicable. So how can one *possibly* deny that as these distinctions have their foundation in nature the discernment itself is natural and comes from nature alone?

Philocles: If this were as you represent it, I don't think there could ever be any disagreement among men concerning actions and behaviour—which was base and which worthy, which handsome and which ugly. But we find that there *is* perpetual disagreement among mankind, with their differences arising mainly from this disagreement in moral-opinion, one affirming and another denying that such-and-such was fit or decent.

Theocles: Even this brings out the fact that there is fitness and decency in actions, because the fit and decent is always presupposed in this controversy; the thing [i.e. the moral quality] itself is universally agreed, and men disagree only about

which actions have it. There are also disagreements about other beauties. It's a matter of controversy *Which is the finest building? . . . the loveliest shape? . . . the loveliest face?* But it is uncontroversially agreed that *there is* a beauty of each kind. No-one teaches this; no-one learns it; but everyone accepts it. Everyone accepts the standard (the rule, the measure) for beauty; but when we apply it to things, disorder arises, ignorance prevails, self-interest and passion create disturbances. And it is bound to be like that in the affairs of life, while what interests and engages men as good is thought to be different from what they admire and praise as honest. But with you and me, Philocles, it's better settled, because we have already decreed that *beauty and good are the same* [page 59].

Philocles: I remember that you forced me to acknowledge this more than once before. And now that I have become such a willing disciple, good Theocles, what I think I need is not so much to be convinced as to be confirmed and strengthened. And I hope this last may prove to be your easiest task.

Theocles: Not unless you help me in it. For this is necessary, as well as appropriate. [He explains that when we have fairly arrived at a new opinion it is reasonable for us to look for confirmation of it, for us 'honestly to persuade ourselves'].

Philocles: Then show me how I can best persuade myself.

Theocles (raising his voice): Have courage. Don't be offended that I say 'Have courage!' Cowardice is the only thing that betrays us. What can false shame come from except cowardice? To be ashamed of something that one is sure can't be shameful must result from a lack of resolution. We seek the right and wrong in things; we examine what is honourable, what shameful; and having at last reached a conclusion we don't dare to stand by our own judgment, and are ashamed to admit there is really a shameful and an

honourable. Someone who claims to value Philocles and to be valued by him says:

'Listen! There can't be any such thing as real value-ability or worth; nothing is in itself estimable or amiable, odious or shameful. It's all a matter of opinion; it's opinion that makes beauty and unmakes it. The graceful or ungraceful in things, the fittingness and its contrary, the amiable and unamiable, vice, virtue, honour, shame—all this is based on nothing but opinion. It is the law and measure. And opinion itself isn't regulated by anything besides mere chance, which varies it as custom varies. Chance makes now this, now that, to be thought worthy, according to the reign of fashion and the power of education.'

What shall we say to such a man? How can we represent to him his absurdity and extravagance? If we do, will that stop him? Or shall we ask 'Aren't you ashamed?', putting this challenge to someone who denies that anything is shameful?

T: Yet he derides, and cries 'Ridiculous!'

T: What gives him a right to make that accusation? If I were Philocles, I would defend myself by asking: 'Am I ridiculous? how? what is ridiculous? everything? or nothing?'

T: Ridiculous indeed!

T: So there is such a thing as being ridiculous. The notion of a *shameful* and a *ridiculous* in things seems to be right.

T: Then how are we to apply this notion? To apply it wrongly would have to be ridiculous. Or will the man who cries 'Shame!' refuse to admit that *he* is ever ashamed? Does he *ever* blush or seem embarrassed? If he does, then what we are dealing with here is quite distinct from mere grief or fear. The disorder that he feels when he is embarrassed comes from his sense of what is shameful and odious in itself, not of what is harmful or dangerous in its consequences.

The greatest danger in the world can't generate shame; and the opinion of all the world can't compel us to be ashamed if that opinion isn't one that we share. We may put on a show of modesty for fear of appearing impudent; but we can't really blush for anything except what we •think to be shameful and •would still blush for even if it didn't represent the slightest threat to our interests.

T: That is how I could defend myself in advance against those who say that virtue is nothing real, a mere matter of opinion. By looking closely •into men's lives and •at what influenced them on all occasions, I would collect enough evidence to make me think:

'Whoever opposes me on this question, I'll find that he is in some way adhering to the moral ideas that he wants to deprive me of. If he is grateful or expects gratitude, I ask Why? Grateful for what? If he is angry and seeks revenge, I ask What's going on here? Revenge on what? On a stone? On a madman? Who would be so mad as to want that? And revenge for what? A chance hurt? An accident that wasn't intended or even thought about? Who would be so unjust as to want revenge for that?' [Theocles develops this at some length, contending that gratitude, resentment, pride and shame are all saturated in thoughts about what is just or unjust.]

Thus as long as I find men either angry or revengeful, proud or ashamed, I am safe: for they conceive an honourable and dishonourable, a foul and fair, as well as I do. No matter how mistaken they are about *what* is foul or fair, that doesn't block the conclusion I am arguing for: That •the thing—i.e. a real, objective distinction between right and wrong—exists and is acknowledged by everyone; and that •nature impresses it on us, and it can't be eradicated or destroyed by any art or counter-nature.

T: And now what do you say, Philocles, to this defence I have been making for you? As you can see, I have based it on the supposition that you are deeply engaged in this philosophical cause, but perhaps you aren't so, yet. Perhaps you see many difficulties in the way of your being so much on •beauty's side that you can make •it your good.

Philocles: I have no difficulty that can't be easily overcome. My inclinations lead me strongly this way: for I'm ready to concede that there is no real good except the enjoyment of beauty.

Theocles: And I am as ready to concede that there is no real enjoyment of beauty except what is good.

Philocles: Excellent! But upon reflection I fear that your concession doesn't give me much.

Theocles: Why?

Philocles: Because if I tried to contend for any enjoyment of beauty that doesn't square with your concession, I'm sure you would call such enjoyment of mine 'absurd', as you did once before.

Theocles: Undoubtedly I would. What is capable of enjoyment except *mind*? Or shall we say that *body* enjoys?

Philocles: With the help of the senses, perhaps; not otherwise.

Theocles: If beauty is the object of the senses, we need to be told *how* and *by which* of the senses; otherwise it doesn't help us in our present situation to bring in the senses. And if unaided body can't apprehend or enjoy beauty, and if the senses can't help it to do so, there remains only the mind that can either apprehend or enjoy it.

Philocles: That is true, but show why 'the senses can't help it to do so', i.e. why beauty can't be the object of the senses.

Theocles: Show me first, please, why, where, or in what you think it may be so?

Philocles: Isn't it beauty that first activates the senses and then feeds them in the passion we call 'love'?

Theocles: Say in the same manner that it's beauty that first activates the senses and then feeds them in the passion we call 'hunger'. You won't say that; I can see that it displeases you. Great as the pleasure of good eating is, you won't call the dishes that create the pleasure 'beautiful'. . . . You will describe as 'beautiful in their way' many of the things from which the dishes are made; and you won't deny beauty to the wild field, or to these flowers that grow around us. Yet lovely as these forms of nature are—the shining grass, or moss, the flowery thyme, wild rose, or honeysuckle—it's not their beauty that draws the neighbouring herds, delights the browsing fawn, and spreads the joy we see in the feeding flocks. What *they* rejoice over is not the form but what lies beneath it, what satisfies their hunger and their thirst. The form—the beauty—doesn't amount to anything unless it is contemplated, judged of, examined, and not merely taken as an accidental sign of what appeases appetite and satisfies the brutish part. Are you convinced of this, Philocles? Or will you maintain that if the brutes are to have the advantage of enjoyment they must also have a rational part?

Philocles: Not so.

Theocles: Well, then, if brutes can't know and enjoy beauty precisely because they have only senses (the brutish part), it follows that man can't conceive or enjoy beauty through his senses, i.e. through *his* brutish part; and all the beauty and good he enjoys is of a nobler kind and is enjoyed by the help of what is noblest *in him*., namely his mind and reason. [He goes on at some length about the superiority of true beauty to anything that merely tickles the senses, edging his way

towards the conclusion:] When you think about how one enjoys

- friendship, honour, gratitude, open honesty, kindness, and all internal beauty,
- all the social pleasures, and society itself,
- and everything that constitutes the worth and happiness of mankind,

you will surely allow beauty in the *·virtuous·* act, and think it worthy to be viewed and re-viewed by the glad mind that is happily conscious. . . .of its own advancement and growth in beauty.

T: (after a short pause): So, Philocles, that's how I have presumed to talk about *•beauty* to as great a judge and skillful admirer of *•it* as you are. Starting from nature's wonderful beauty, I gladly ventured further in the chase, and have accompanied you in search of beauty as it relates to us and constitutes our highest good when we enjoy it sincerely and naturally. And if we haven't been wasting our time, it should appear from our strict search that there's nothing as divine as beauty. Because it doesn't belong to *body* and exists only in *mind and reason*, beauty discovered and acquired only by this more divine part *·of us·* when it inspects itself, the only object worthy of itself. *·The only one?* Yes., for whatever is void of mind is void and darkness to the mind's eye. This languishes and grows dim whenever it is made to linger on foreign subjects, but thrives and has its natural vigour when it contemplates anything that is like itself. That's how *the improving mind*, glancing at other objects and passing over bodies and common forms that have only a shadow of beauty, ambitiously presses onward to its source, and views the origin of form and order in that which thinks. That, Philocles, is how we can improve and become artists in the kind [Shaftesbury's phrase], learning to know ourselves and to know what the item x

is such that by improving x we can be sure to advance our worth, and real self-interest. This knowledge can't be acquired by studying bodies or outward forms, pageantries, estates and honours; and there's nothing admirable about the self-improving 'artist' who makes a fortune out of these. Our esteem should go to the wise and able man who •cares little about these things and •applies himself to cultivating another soil, building with a material different from stone or marble; and, having better models to steer by, becomes the architect of his own life and fortune, laying within himself the lasting and sure foundations of order, peace, and concord.

[Theocles now says that it's time to 'leave these uncommon subjects' and walk back home. Philocles expresses anxiety that, although Theocles had convinced him of his doctrine, when he (Philocles) was absent from the idyllic countryside they had been walking and talking in he 'would be apt to relapse, and weakly yield to that all-too-powerful charm, the world'. He continues:]

Philocles: How is it possible to hold out against it, and withstand the general opinion of mankind who have such a different notion of what we call good? Truthfully now, Theocles, can anything be more odd or out of tune with the common voice of the world, than the conclusions we have reached in this matter?

Theocles: Whom shall we follow then? Whose judgment or opinion shall we take concerning what is good and what bad? If all mankind, or any *part* of mankind, agree in some consistent view about this, I am content to leave philosophy and follow them. But if not—i.e. if there's nothing out there to follow—why shouldn't we stick with what we have chosen?

T: Let us then, in another view, consider how this matter stands.

Section 3: Goodness

We then walked gently homewards, it being almost noon; and he continued his discourse.

Theocles: •One man presents himself as a hero, and thinks it the highest advantage of life to have seen war and been in action in the field. •Another laughs at this attitude, regarding it as extravagance and folly; he values his own intelligence and prudence, and would take it for a disgrace to be thought adventurous. •One person works hard and tirelessly to get a reputation as a man of business. •Another thinks that this is absurd; he doesn't care about fame or reputation, and would cheerfully live in a continuous debauch, never leaving the brothels and taverns where he enjoys (he thinks) his highest good. •One values wealth, but only as a means to indulge his palate and eat finely. •Another loathes this, and goes for popularity and a name. •One admires music and paintings, display-case curiosities and indoor ornaments. •Another. . . [and so on and so on.] All these go different ways. Each censures the others and regards them as despicable. And each of them from time to time is despicable in his own eyes, falling out of favour with himself every time his mood changes and his passions change direction. What is there in all this that I should be concerned about? Whose censure do I fear? Who will guide me?

T: If I ask 'Are riches good when they are only stored, not used?', one answers Yes and the others No.

T: To those who answered No, I put the question: 'How must riches be used in order to be good?' There's no agreed answer; they all tell me different things.

T: Then a further question: 'Since riches are not good in themselves (as most of you agree), and since there's no agreement among you about how they can become good, what's wrong with my holding that they are neither good in

themselves nor directly any cause or means of good?’

T: If some people despise fame, and if among those who want fame he who desires it for one thing despises it for another, he who seeks it with some men despises it with others, what’s wrong with my saying that I don’t know how any fame can be called a good?

T: If some of the pleasure-seekers admire one kind of pleasure and look down on another, while for others the rank-ordering is reversed, what’s wrong with my saying that I don’t know which of these pleasures is good, or how *any* pleasure can be called good?

T: If among those who care so much about staying alive regard as eligible and amiable a kind of life that others of them regard as despicable and vile, what’s wrong with my saying that I don’t know how life itself can be thought a good?

T: In the meantime, I do know *one* thing for sure: If anyone puts a high value on any of these things, that will make him a slave, and consequently make him miserable. But perhaps, Philocles, you are not yet enough acquainted with this odd kind of reasoning.

Philocles: You would be surprised at how well I am acquainted with it! I saw that the good lady, your celebrated *Beauty*, was about to turn up again, and I had no trouble recognising the fair face of Liberty that I had seen only once in the picture you drew yesterday of that moral dame [page 22]. I assure you, I think as highly of her as possible; and I find that if I don’t have her help in •rising about these seemingly essential goods and •taking a relaxed view of life and of fortune, it will be the hardest thing in the world to enjoy either life or fortune. Solicitude, cares, and anxiety will be multiplied; and in this unhappy dependency •on the trashy ‘pleasures’ of fame or fortune or the like, one has to be servile. To flatter the great, to bear insults, to stoop, and fawn, and

abjectly surrender one’s sense and manhood—all this must be bravely endured, and gone through with as casually and cheerfully as possible, by anyone who. . . knows •the general way of courts, and •how to fix unsteady fortune. I need not mention the envyings, the mistrusts, and jealousies. . .

Theocles (interrupting): No truly, you don’t need to! But given how aware you are of this unhappy state, and of the suffering it involves (however splendid it may look from the outside), how can you possibly *not* find the happiness of that other state, the opposite one? Don’t you remember what we resolved concerning Nature? Can anything be more desirable than to follow her? Isn’t it through this freedom from our passions and low interests that we are reconciled to the good order of the universe, harmonize with nature, and live in friendship with both God and man?

T: Let us compare the goods of the two states. On one side, the ones we found were uncertainly good, depending on luck, age, circumstances, and mood; on the other side we found goods that are certain themselves, and based on regarding those others as negligible.

- Manly liberty, generosity, magnanimity—aren’t those goods?
- The self-enjoyment arising from a consistency of life and manners, a harmony of affections, a freedom from the reproach of shame or guilt, and a consciousness of being on good moral terms with all mankind, our society, district, and friends—all based purely on virtue—can’t we regard that as happiness?
- A mind governed by reason, a temperament humanized and fitted to all natural affections, an uninterrupted exercise of friendship, a thorough openness, kindness and good nature, along with constant security, tranquility, peacefulness of soul. . . —aren’t these *always* good?

- Could one ever dislike these, having grown tired of them?
- Does their agreeableness depend on some particular age, season, place, circumstances?
- Are they variable and inconstant?
- Does an ardent love and desire for them ever do harm to anyone?
- Can they ever be *overvalued*?
- Can they be ever taken from us, or can we ever be hindered in the enjoyment of them unless we do it ourselves?

·That last clause is crucial:· How can we better praise the goodness of providence than by saying that it has placed our happiness and good in things we can give to ourselves?

Philocles: If this is so, I can't see that we have reason accuse providence of *anything*. But I'm afraid that men won't easily be brought into that frame of mind while their fancy [see Glossary] is so strong, as it naturally is, towards those other movable goods. In short, if we can depend on what is said commonly, *All good is merely as we fancy it. It's ways of thinking that make it. Everything is just opinion and fancy.*

Theocles: Then why do we act at any time? Why choose, preferring one thing to another? I suppose you'll tell me that it's because we fancy it, or fancy good in it. Are we therefore to follow every present fancy, opinion, or imagination of good? if so, then we must follow at one time something that we decline at another; approve at one time what we disapprove at another; be perpetually at odds with ourselves. But if we are not to follow all fancy or opinion alike—if it's allowed that some fancies are true and some false—then we are to examine every fancy, and there's some rule or other by which to judge amongst them. It was the fancy of one man to set fire to a beautiful temple so as to obtain immortal fame. It

was the fancy of another man to conquer the world, for just about the same reason. [Erostratus burned down a temple so as to get his name into history-books; and on that same day Alexander the Great was born.] If this really was the man's good, why are we amazed at his conduct? If his fancy was wrong; say plainly *how* it was wrong, *why* the subject wasn't good for him as he fancied. So there are the options: either

- (i) What any man fancies is his good, because he fancies it and isn't content without it; or
- (ii) There is that in which the nature of man is satisfied, and which alone must be his good.

[The point is that your fancy is a shallow and unstable basis for your choice, whereas your nature is a deeper and more durable one.] If a man's only good is that in which his nature is satisfied and can rest contented, then someone who earnestly follows as his good something that a man can be satisfied and contented **without** is a fool, and so is the man who earnestly tries to avoid as bad for him something that a man can be easy and contented **with**. Now, a man who hasn't burned down a temple may be contented; and a man who hasn't conquered the world may be easy and contented; as he may without having *any* of those advantages of power, riches, or fame as long as his fancy doesn't block him. In short, we'll find that without any of what are commonly called 'goods' a man can be contented, and on the other side he can have them all and still be discontented. If so, it follows that *happiness is from within, not from without*. A good fancy is the main. And thus, you see, I agree with you that opinion is all in all. [Those last three sentences ('If so... to the end) are exactly as Shaftesbury wrote them.]

T: But what has come over you, Philocles? You seem to have suddenly become deeply thoughtful.

Philocles: To tell you truth, I was considering what would become of me if your work turned me into a philosopher.

Theocles: That would indeed be an extraordinary change! But don't worry—the danger is not so great. Experience shows us every day that people can talk or write philosophy without coming any nearer to being philosophers.

Philocles: But the very name is a kind of reproach. The word 'idiot' used to be the opposite of 'philosopher', but people who talk about 'idiots' nowadays are usually referring to philosophers.

Theocles: Yet isn't philosophising what we all do all the time? We take philosophy to be *the study of happiness*; and if that's what it is, mustn't everyone engage in it in some manner or other, whether skillfully or unskillfully? Shouldn't every deliberation concerning our main interests, every correction of our taste, every choice and preference in life, be counted as philosophising? If happiness doesn't come purely from within one's self, then it comes either from outward things alone or from self and outward things together. If it's from outward things alone, show us what things they are—things that all men are happy to have, and everyone who has them is happy.

Philocles: No-one is going to accept that challenge!

Theocles: So if happiness comes partly from self and partly from outward things, then each must be considered separately, and a certain value set on the inward concerns, the ones that depend on self alone. If so—and if I consider

- how and in what are these to be preferred?
- when and on what occasions are they appropriate, and when inappropriate?
- when are they properly to take place, and when to yield?

—what is this but philosophising?

[After Philocles's next sentence we have an uninterrupted speech by Theocles, running almost to the end of the work. Its apparent oddity

can be explained. Theocles has said that 'happiness is from within', but he is here exploring where you get to if you reject that and say that happiness comes partly from without. It is in that context that he says that values relating to 'practical affairs and the world' have to be considered. The spirit of 'Everything has a price' comes from the premise that Theocles doesn't accept but is here exploring in a manner that becomes increasingly sardonic, almost savage.—But instead of the expected final fierce crescendo, the passage—and the work—tails off by returning to the question of what is involved in philosophising.]

Philocles: But even this takes one far away from the ordinary way of thinking, and isn't much of a preparation for practical affairs and the world.

Theocles: Right! for this also is to be considered and well weighed. And therefore this is still philosophy. To inquire where and in what respect one may be most a loser; which are the greatest gains, the most profitable exchanges—because everything in this world goes by exchange. Nothing is had for nothing. Favour requires courtship; friendship with influential people is made by begging them for it; honours are acquired through risk; riches through work and trouble; learning and accomplishments through study and application. The prices for security, rest, and idleness are different, and it may be thought that the prices for them are low. What hardship or harm does one have to undergo to get those goods? It's only to forgo fame and fortune, to do without honours, and to have a somewhat smaller share of influential friendships. If this is easy, all is well. Some patience, you see, is needed in the case. Privacy must be endured, and even obscurity and neglect.—Those are the conditions. and thus everything has its condition. Power and promotions are to be had at one rate; pleasures at another; liberty and honesty at another. A good mind must be paid for too, just as other things must.

But let's be wary, and not pay too high a price for it. Let's be assured that we are getting a good bargain.

Come on then, let us do the sums. What is a mind worth? What allowance may one handsomely make for it? What can one well afford it for? [He is ironically asking, in effect, about the buying price and selling price of a good mind.]

If I part with it, or cut it back, I don't do that for nothing. I must set *some* value on my liberty, some on my inward character. And there's something *of value* in what we call 'worth'; something in sincerity, and a sound heart. Orderly affections, generous thoughts, and a commanding reason are good things to own and not slightly to be given up.

I have to consider first what may be their equivalent. Will I do best by letting these inward concerns run as they please, or would I be better secured against bad luck by *adjusting* matters at home, rather than by *making* alliances abroad, becoming a friend of one great man after another, steadily adding to my estate or my social rank? [In that sentence, 'at home'/'abroad' is a metaphor for the distinction between re-arranging my mind and re-arranging the outside world.]

... Tell me positively:

- How far I am to go, and why no further?
- What is a moderate fortune, 'enough to be comfortable', and those other degrees *of wealth* that are commonly talked of?
- Where is my anger to stop? How high may I allow it to rise?
- How far can I commit myself in love?
- How far shall I give way to ambition?
- How far to other appetites?

Or am I to set everything loose? Are the passions to take their swing, with no attention being paid to *them* but only to *the* outward things they aim at? And if some attention to them is needed, tell me plainly: How much to one, and how much to

the other? How far are the appetites to be minded, and how far outward things? Give us the measure and rule.—Isn't this philosophising? And doesn't everyone do it, whether willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly, directly or indirectly?

You'll want to know: 'Where is the difference? Which manner is the best?'

That is exactly the question that I want you to weigh and examine.

You'll complain: 'But the examination is troublesome, and I would be better off without it.'

Who tells you this? Your reason, you say, whose force you *must* yield to.

Then tell me: have you properly cultivated that reason of yours, polished it, taken the necessary trouble with it, and exercised it on this subject? Or do you expect it to work fully as well when it hasn't been exercised as when it has and is thoroughly expert? Think about mathematics: whose is the better reason of the two and more fit to be relied on—the practised mathematician or the reason of someone who is unpractised? And when it comes to the conduct of

- war,
- policy,
- civil affairs,
- marketing,
- law,
- medicine,

which is better, the practised intellect or the unpractised one? And in questions about morality and life, the question still stands: whose? Mightn't we agree that the best judge of living is the person who studies life and tries to shape it according to some rule? Or should we regard as the most knowing in this matter the person who slightly examines it and accidentally and unknowingly philosophises?

That is how philosophy is established, Philocles. Everyone *must* reason concerning his own happiness; what is good for him, and what bad. There's no question of a choice between reasoning and not reasoning. The only question is Who reasons best? For even someone who rejects this reasoning or deliberating activity does it for a certain *reason* and from

a conviction that this is *best*.

* * * *

At this time we suddenly realised that we had got back home. With our philosophy ended, we returned to the common affairs of life.

THE END

* * * * *

Shaftesbury was certainly serious about the content of the two passages given below, but he may have meant their 'poetic' and 'sublime' form satirically. His friends hope so.

The prose poem omitted at page 49

Ye Fields and Woods, my Refuge from the toilsome World of Business, receive me in your quiet Sanctuaries, and favour my Retreat and thoughtful Solitude. Ye verdant Plains, how gladly I salute ye! Hail all ye blissful Mansions! Known Seats! Delightful Prospects! Majestick Beautys of this Earth, and all ye Rural Powers and Graces! Bless'd be ye chaste Abodes of happiest Mortals, who here in peaceful Innocence enjoy a Life un-envy'd, tho Divine; whilst with its bless'd Tranquillity it affords a happy Leisure and Retreat for Man; who, made for Contemplation, and to search his own and other Natures, may here best meditate the Cause of Things; and plac'd amidst the various Scenes of Nature, may nearer view her Works.

O glorious Nature! supremely Fair, and sovereignly Good! All-loving and All-lovely, All-divine! Whose Looks are so becoming, and of such infinite Grace; whose Study brings such Wisdom, and whose Contemplation such Delight;

whose every single Work affords an ampler Scene, and is a nobler Spectacle than all which ever Art presented! O mighty Nature! Wise Substitute of Providence! impower'd Creatress! Or Thou empowering Deity, supreme Creator! Thee I invoke, and Thee alone adore. To thee this Solitude, this Place, these Rural Meditations are sacred; whilst thus inspir'd with Harmony of Thought, tho unconfin'd by Words, and in loose Numbers, I sing of Nature's Order in created Beings, and celebrate the Beautys which resolve in Thee, the Source and Principle of all Beauty and Perfection.

Thy Being is boundless, unsearchable, impenetrable. In thy Immensity all Thought is lost; Fancy gives o'er its Flight: and weary'd Imagination spends itself in vain; finding no Coast nor Limit of this Ocean, nor in the widest Tract thro' which it soars, one Point yet nearer the Circumference than the first Center whence it parted. Thus having oft essay'd, thus sally'd forth into the wide Expanse, when I return again

within myself, struck with the Sense of this so narrow Being, and of the Fulness of that Immense-one; I dare no more behold the amazing Depths, nor sound the Abyss of Deity.

Yet since by Thee (O Sovereign Mind!) I have been form'd such as I am, intelligent and rational; since the peculiar Dignity of my Nature is to know and contemplate Thee; permit that with due freedom I exert those Facultys with

which thou hast adorn'd me. Bear with my venturous and bold Approach. And since nor vain Curiosity, nor fond Conceit, nor Love of aught save Thee alone, inspires me with such Thoughts as these, be thou my Assistant, and guide me in this Pursuit; whilst I venture thus to tread the Labyrinth of wide Nature, and endeavour to trace thee in thy Works.

The prose poem omitted at pages 55–56

1 O mighty Genius! Sole animating and inspiring Power! Author and Subject of these Thoughts! Thy Influence is universal: and in all Things, thou art inmost. From Thee depend their secret Springs of Action. Thou mov'st them with an irresistible unwear'd Force, by sacred and inviolable Laws, fram'd for the Good of each particular Being; as best may sute with the Perfection, Life, and Vigour of the Whole. The vital Principle is widely shar'd, and infinitely vary'd: dispers'd thro'out; nowhere extinct. All lives; and by Succession still revives. The temporary Beings quit their borrow'd Forms, and yield their elementary Substance to New-Comers. Call'd, in their several turns, to Life, they view the Light, and viewing pass; that others too may be Spectators of the goodly Scene, and greater numbers still enjoy the Privilege of Nature. Munificent and Great, she imparts herself to most; and makes the Subjects of her Bounty infinite. Nought stays her hastning Hand. No Time nor Substance is lost or unimprov'd. New Forms arise: and when the old dissolve, the Matter whence they were compos'd is not left useless, but wrought with equal Management and Art, even in Corruption, Nature's seeming Waste, and vile

Abhorrence. The abject State appears merely as the Way or Passage to some better. But cou'd we nearly view it, and with Indifference, remote from the Antipathy of Sense; we then perhaps shou'd highest raise our Admiration: convinc'd that even the Way itself was equal to the End. Nor can we judg less favourably of that consummate Art exhibited thro' all the Works of Nature; since our weak Eyes, help'd by mechanick Art, discover in these Works a hidden Scene of Wonders; Worlds within Worlds, of infinite Minuteness, tho as to Art still equal to the greatest, and pregnant with more Wonders than the most discerning Sense, join'd with the greatest Art, or the acutest Reason, can penetrate or unfold.

2 But 'tis in vain for us to search the bulky Mass of Matter: seeking to know its Nature; how great the Whole itself, or even how small its Parts.

3 If knowing only some of the Rules of Motion, we seek to trace it further, 'tis in vain we follow it into the Bodys it has reach'd. Our tardy Apprehensions fail us, and can reach nothing beyond the Body itself, thro' which it is diffus'd. Wonderful Being, (if we may call it so) which Bodys never receive, except from others which lose it; nor ever lose,

unless by imparting it to others. Even without Change of Place it has its Force: And Bodys big with Motion labour to move, yet stir not; whilst they express an Energy beyond our Comprehension.

4 In vain too we pursue that Phantom Time, too small, and yet too mighty for our Grasp; when shrinking to a narrow point, it scapes our Hold, or mocks our scanty Thought by swelling to Eternity, an Object unproportion'd to our Capacity, as is thy Being, O thou Antient Cause! older than Time, yet young with fresh Eternity.

5 In vain we try to fathom the Abyss of Space, the Seat of thy extensive Being; of which no Place is empty, no Void which is not full.

6 In vain we labour to understand that Principle of Sense and Thought, which seeming in us to depend so much on Motion, yet differs so much from it, and from Matter itself, as not to suffer us to conceive how Thought can more result from this, than this arise from Thought. But Thought we own pre-eminent, and confess the realest of Beings; the only Existence of which we are made sure, by being conscious. All else may be only Dream and Shadow. All which even Sense suggests may be deceitful. The Sense itself remains still; Reason subsists; and Thought maintains its Eldership of Being. Thus are we in a manner conscious of that original and eternally existent Thought, whence we derive our own. And thus the Assurance we have of the Existence of Beings above our Sense, and of Thee, (the great Exemplar of thy Works) comes from Thee, the All-True, and Perfect, who hast thus communicated thyself more immediately to us, so as in some manner to inhabit within our Souls; Thou who art Original Soul, diffusive, vital in all, inspiring the Whole.

7 All Nature's Wonders serve to excite and perfect this Idea of their Author. 'Tis here he suffers us to see, and even converse with him, in a manner suitable to our Frailty. How

glorious is it to contemplate him, in this noblest of his Works apparent to us, The System of the bigger World!

[Philocles writes: Here I must own, 'twas no small Comfort to me, to find that, as our Meditation turn'd, we were likely to get clear of an entangling abstruse Philosophy. I was in hopes Theocles, as he proceeded, might stick closer to Nature, since he was now come upon the Borders of our World. And here I wou'd willingly have welcom'd him, had I thought it safe at present to venture the least Interruption.

8 [Theocles continues 'in his rapturous Strain': What Multitudes of fix'd Stars did we see sparkle, not an hour ago, in the clear Night, which yet had hardly yielded to the Day? How many others are discover'd by the help of Art? Yet how many remain still, beyond the reach of our Discovery! Crouded as they seem, their Distance from each other is as unmeasurable by Art, as is the Distance between them and us. Whence we are naturally taught the Immensity of that Being, who thro' these immense Spaces has dispos'd such an Infinite of Bodys, belonging each (as we may well presume) to Systems as compleat as our own World: Since even the smallest Spark of this bright Galaxy may vie with this our Sun; which shining now full out, gives us new Life, exalts our Spirits, and makes us feel Divinity more present.

9 Prodigious Orb! Bright Source of vital Heat, and Spring of Day! Soft Flame, yet how intense, how active! How diffusive, and how vast a Substance; yet how collected thus within itself, and in a glowing Mass confin'd to the Center of this planetary World!-Mighty Being! Brightest Image, and Representative of the Almighty! Supreme of the corporeal World! Unperishing in Grace, and of undecaying Youth! Fair, beautiful, and hardly mortal Creature! By what secret ways dost thou receive the Supplies which maintain Thee still in such unweary'd Vigour, and un-exhausted Glory; notwithstanding those eternally emitted Streams, and that

continual Expense of vital Treasures, which inlighten and invigorate the surrounding Winds?

10 Around him all the Planets, with this our Earth, single, or with Attendants, continually move; seeking to receive the Blessing of his Light, and lively Warmth! Towards him they seem to tend with prone descent, as to their Center; but happily controul'd still by another Impulse, they keep their heavenly Order; and in just Numbers, and exactest Measure, go the eternal Rounds.

11 But, O thou who art the Author and Modifier of these various Motions! O sovereign and sole Mover, by whose high Art the rolling Spheres are govern'd, and these stupendous Bodys of our World hold their unrelenting Courses! O wise Oeconomist, and powerful Chief, whom all the Elements and Powers of Nature serve! How hast thou animated these moving Worlds? What Spirit or Soul infus'd? What Biass fix'd? Or how encompass'd them in liquid Aether, driving them as with the Breath of living Winds, thy active and unwear'd Ministers in this intricate and mighty Work?

12 Thus powerfully are the Systems held intire, and kept from fatal interfering. Thus is our ponderous Globe directed in its annual Course; daily revolving on its own Center: whilst the obsequious Moon with double Labour, monthly surrounding this our bigger Orb, attends the Motion of her Sister-Planet, and pays in common her circular Homage to the Sun.

13 Yet is this Mansion-Globe, this Man-Container, of a much narrower compass even than other its Fellow-Wanderers of our System. How narrow then must it appear, compar'd with the capacious System of its own Sun? And how narrow, or as nothing, in respect of those innumerable Systems of other apparent Suns? Yet how immense a Body it seems, compar'd with ours of human Form, a borrow'd Remnant of its variable and oft-converted Surface? tho

animated with a sublime Celestial Spirit, by which we have Relation and Tendency to Thee our Heavenly Sire, Center of Souls; to whom these Spirits of ours by Nature tend, as earthly Bodys to their proper Center. O did they tend as unerringly and constantly! But Thou alone compest the Disorders of the corporeal World, and from the restless and fighting Elements raisest that peaceful Concord, and conspiring Beauty of the ever-flourishing Creation. Even so canst thou convert these jarring Motions of intelligent Beings, and in due time and manner cause them to find their Rest; making them contribute to the Good and Perfection of the Universe, thy all-good and perfect Work.

14 [The prose-poem is interrupted by some conversation in which Theocles urges Philocles to watch for, and speak up against, anything in this that he thinks is questionable. Philocles agrees, and asks him to 'begin anew and lead me boldly through your elements'. Theocles then resumes:]

Let us begin with this our Element of Earth, which yonder we see cultivated with such Care by the early Swains now working in the Plain below.

15 Unhappy restless Men, who first disdain'd these peaceful Labours, gentle rural Tasks, perform'd with such Delight! What Pride or what Ambition bred this Scorn? Hence all those fatal Evils of your Race! Enormous Luxury, despising homely Fare, ranges thro' Seas and Lands, rifles the Globe; and Men ingenious to their Misery, work out for themselves the means of heavier Labour, anxious Cares, and Sorrow: Not satisfy'd to turn and manure for their Use the wholesom and beneficial Mould of this their Earth, they dig yet deeper, and seeking out imaginary Wealth, they search its very Entrails.

16 Here, led by Curiosity, we find Minerals of different Natures, which by their Simplicity discover no less of the Divine Art, than the most compounded of Nature's Works. Some are found capable of surprizing Changes; others as

durable, and hard to be destroy'd or chang'd by Fire, or utmost Art. So various are the Subjects of our Contemplation, that even the Study of these inglorious Parts of Nature, in the nether World, is able itself alone to yield large Matter and Employment for the busiest Spirits of Men, who in the Labour of these Experiments can willingly consume their Lives. But the noisom poisonous Steams which the Earth breathes from these dark Caverns, where she conceals her Treasures, suffer not prying Mortals to live long in this Search.

17 How comfortable is it to those who come out hence alive, to breathe a purer Air! to see the rejoicing Light of Day! and tread the fertile Ground! How gladly they contemplate the Surface of the Earth, their Habitation, heated and enliven'd by the Sun, and temper'd by the fresh Air of fanning Breezes! These exercise the resty Plants, and scour the unactive Globe. And when the Sun draws hence thick clouded Steams and Vapours, 'tis only to digest and exalt the unwholesom Particles, and commit 'em to the sprightly Air; which soon imparting its quick and vital Spirit, renders 'em again with improvement to the Earth, in gentle Breathings, or in rich Dews and fruitful Showers. The same Air, moving about the mighty Mass, enters its Pores, impregnating the Whole: And both the Sun and Air conspiring, so animate this Mother-Earth, that tho' ever breeding, her Vigour is as great, her Beauty as fresh, and her Looks as charming, as if she newly came out of the forming Hands of her Creator.

18 How beautiful is the Water among the inferior Earthly Works! Heavy, liquid, and transparent: without the springing Vigour and expansive Force of Air; but not without Activity. Stubborn and un-yielding, when compress'd; but placidly avoiding Force, and bending every way with ready Fluency! Insinuating, it dissolves the lumpish Earth, frees the intangled Bodys, procures their Intercourse, and summons to the

Field the keen terrestrial Particles; whole happy Strifes soon ending in strict Union, produce the various Forms which we behold. How vast are the Abysses of the Sea, where this soft Element is stor'd; and whence the Sun and Winds extracting, raise it into Clouds! These soon converted into Rain, water the thirsty Ground, and supply a-fresh the Springs and Rivers; the Comfort of the neighbouring Plains, and sweet Refreshment of all Animals.

19 But whither shall we trace the Sources of the Light? or in what Ocean comprehend the luminous Matter so wide diffus'd thro' the immense Spaces which it fills? What Seats shall we assign to that fierce Element of Fire, too active to be confin'd within the Compass of the Sun, and not excluded even the Bowels of the heavy Earth? The Air itself submits to it, and serves as its inferior Instrument. Even this our Sun, with all those numerous Suns, the glittering Host of Heaven, seem to receive from hence the vast Supplies which keep them ever in their splendid State. The invisible ethereal Substance, penetrating both liquid and solid Bodys, is diffus'd thro'out the Universe. It cherishes the cold dull massy Globe, and warms it to its Center. It forms the Minerals; gives Life and Growth to Vegetables; kindles a soft, invisible, and vital Flame in the Breasts of living Creatures; frames, animates, and nurses all the various Forms; sparing, as well as employing for their Use, those sulphurous and combustible Matters of which they are compos'd. Benign and gentle amidst all, it still maintains this happy Peace and Concord, according to its stated and peculiar Laws. But these once broken, the acquitted Being takes its Course unrul'd. It runs impetuous thro' the fatal Breach, and breaking into visible and fierce Flames, passes triumphant o'er the yielding Forms, converting all into itself, and dissolving now those Systems which itself before had form'd. 'Tis thus. . .

20 [Theocles stops because he thinks that Philocles has something to say. There is a tiresomely arch interchange on the topics:

- Theocles thinks he has become ‘too warm’.
- He could go on about the ‘soft flames of love’, but thinks that Philocles is the wrong audience for that.
- An ancient doctrine says that there are periodical conflagrations in which everything is consumed; Theocles has no patience with that.
- Philocles wants Theocles to continue, not flying high but staying on earth.
- Theocles agrees, but insists on resuming his poetic mode, his ‘wings of fancy’ that he needs to fly all over the world.

21 How oblique and faintly looks the Sun on yonder Climates, far remov’d from him! How tedious are the Winters there! How deep the Horrors of the Night, and how uncomfortable even the Light of Day! The freezing Winds employ their fiercest Breath, yet are not spent with blowing. The Sea, which elsewhere is scarce confin’d within its Limits, lies here immur’d in Walls of Chrystal. The Snow covers the Hills, and almost fills the lowest Valleys. How wide and deep it lies, incumbent o’er the Plains, hiding the sluggish Rivers, the Shrubs, and Trees, the Dens of Beasts, and Mansions of distress’d and feeble Men!-See! where they lie confin’d, hardly secure against the raging Cold, or the Attacks of the wild Beasts, now Masters of the wasted Field, and forc’d by Hunger out of the naked Woods. Yet not dishearten’d (such is the Force of human Breasts) but thus provided for, by Art and Prudence, the kind compensating Gifts of Heaven, Men and their Herds may wait for a Release. For at length the Sun approaching, melts the Snow, sets longing Men at liberty, and affords them Means and Time to make provision against the next Return of Cold. It breaks the icy Fetters of the Main;

where vast Sea-Monsters pierce thro’ floating Islands, with Arms which can withstand the Chrystal Rock: whilst others, who of themselves seem great as Islands, are by their Bulk alone arm’d against all but Man; whose Superiority over Creatures of such stupendous Size and Force, shou’d make him mindful of his Privilege of Reason, and force him humbly to adore the great Composer of these wondrous Frames, and Author of his own superior Wisdom.

22 But leaving these dull Climates, so little favour’d by the Sun, for those happier Regions, on which he looks more kindly, making perpetual Summer; How great an Alteration do we find? His purer Light confounds weak-sighted Mortals, pierc’d by his scorching Beams. Scarce can they tread the glowing Ground. The Air they breathe cannot enough abate the Fire which burns within their panting Breasts. Their Bodys melt. O’ercome and fainting, they seek the Shade, and wait the cool Refreshments of the Night. Yet oft the bounteous Creator bestows other Refreshments. He casts a veil of Clouds before ’em, and raises gentle Gales; favour’d by which, the Men and Beasts pursue their Labours; and Plants refresh’d by Dews and Showers, can gladly bear the warmest Sun-beams.

23 And here the varying Scene opens to new Wonders. We see a Country rich with Gems, but richer with the fragrant Spices it affords. How gravely move the largest of Land-Creatures on the Banks of this fair River! How ponderous are their Arms, and vast their Strength, with Courage, and a Sense superior to the other Beasts! Yet are they tam’d, we see, by Mankind, and brought even to fight their Battels, rather as Allies and Confederates, than as Slaves. But let us turn our Eyes towards these smaller, and more curious Objects; the numerous and devouring Insects on the Trees in these wide Plains. How shining, strong, and lasting are the subtile Threds spun from their artful Mouths!

Who, beside the All-wise, has taught 'em to compose the beautiful soft Shells; in which recluse and bury'd, yet still alive, they undergo such a surprizing Change; when not destroy'd by Men, who clothe and adorn themselves with the Labours and Lives of these weak Creatures, and are proud of wearing such inglorious Spoils? How sumptuously apparel'd, gay, and splendid, are all the various Insects which feed on the other Plants of this warm Region! How beautiful the Plants themselves in all their various Growths, from the triumphant Palm down to the humble Moss!

24 Now may we see that happy Country where precious Gums and Balsams flow from Trees; and Nature yields her most delicious Fruits. How tame and tractable, how patient of Labour and of Thirst, are those large Creatures; who lifting up their lofty Heads, go led and loaden thro' these dry and barren Places! Their Shape and Temper show them fram'd by Nature to submit to Man, and fitted for his Service: who from hence ought to be more sensible of his Wants, and of the Divine Bounty, thus supplying them.

25 But see! not far from us, that fertilest of Lands, water'd and fed by a friendly generous Stream, which, ere it enters the Sea, divides itself into many Branches, to dispense more equally the rich and nitrous Manure, it bestows so kindly and in due time, on the adjacent Plains. Fair Image of that fruitful and exuberant Nature, who with a Flood of Bounty blesses all things, and, Parent-like, out of her many Breasts sends the nutritious Draught in various Streams to her rejoicing Offspring!-Innumerable are the dubious Forms and unknown Species which drink the slimy Current: whether they are such as leaving the scorch'd Desarts, satiate here their ardent Thirst, and promiscuously engendring, beget a monstrous Race; or whether, as it is said, by the Sun's genial Heat, active on the fermenting Ooze, new Forms are generated, and issue from the River's fertile Bed. See there

the noted Tyrant of the Flood, and Terror of its Borders! when suddenly displaying his horrid Form, the amphibious Ravager invades the Land, quitting his watry Den, and from the deep emerging, with hideous rush, sweeps o'er the trembling Plain. The Natives from afar behold with wonder the enormous Bulk, sprung from so small an Egg. With Horror they relate the Monster's Nature, cruel and deceitful: how he with dire Hypocrisy, and false Tears, beguiles the Simple-hearted; and inspiring Tenderness and kind Compassion, kills with pious Fraud. Sad Emblem of that spiritual Plague, dire Superstition! Native of this Soil; where first Religion grew unsociable, and among different Worshipers bred mutual Hatred, and Abhorrence of each others Temples. The Infection spreads: and Nations now profane one to another, war fiercer, and in Religion's Cause forget Humanity: whilst savage Zeal, with meek and pious Semblance, works dreadful Massacre; and for Heaven's sake (horrid Pretence!) makes desolate the Earth.

26 Here let us leave these Monsters (glad if we cou'd here confine 'em!) and detesting the dire prolifick Soil, fly to the vast Desarts of these Parts. All ghastly and hideous as they appear, they want not their peculiar Beautys. The Wildness pleases. We seem to live alone with Nature. We view her in her inmost Recesses, and contemplate her with more Delight in these original Wilds, than in the artificial Labyrinths and feign'd Wildernesses of the Palace. The Objects of the Place, the scaly Serpents, the savage Beasts, and poisonous Insects, how terrible soever, or how contrary to human Nature, are beauteous in themselves, and fit to raise our Thoughts in Admiration of that Divine Wisdom, so far superior to our short Views. Unable to declare the Use or Service of all things in this Universe, we are yet assur'd of the Perfection of all, and of the Justice of that Oeconomy, to which all things are subservient, and in respect of which, Things seemingly

deform'd are amiable; Disorder becomes regular; Corruption wholesom; and Poisons (such as these we have seen) prove healing and beneficial.

27 But behold! thro' a vast Tract of Sky before us, the mighty Atlas rears his lofty Head, cover'd with Snow above the Clouds. Beneath the Mountain's foot, the rocky Country rises into Hills, a proper Basis of the ponderous Mass above: where huge embody'd Rocks lie pil'd on one another, and seem to prop the high Arch of Heaven. See! with what trembling Steps poor Mankind tread the narrow Brink of the deep Precipices! From whence with giddy Horror they look down, mistrusting even the Ground which bears 'em; whilst they hear the hollow Sound of Torrents underneath, and see the Ruin of the impending Rock; with falling Trees which hang with their Roots upwards, and seem to draw more Ruin after 'em. Here thoughtless Men, seiz'd with the Newness of such Objects, become thoughtful, and willingly contemplate the incessant Changes of this Earth's Surface. They see, as in one instant, the Revolutions of past Ages, the fleeting Forms of Things, and the Decay even of this our Globe; whose Youth and first Formation they consider, whilst the apparent Spoil and irreparable Breaches of the wasted Mountain shew them the World itself only as a noble Ruin, and make them think of its approaching Period. But here

mid-way the Mountain, a spacious Border of thick Wood harbours our weary'd Travellers: who now are come among the ever-green and lofty Pines, the Firs, and noble Cedars, whose towering Heads seem endless in the Sky; the rest of Trees appearing only as Shrubs beside them. And here a different Horror seizes our shelter'd Travellers, when they see the Day diminish'd by the deep Shapes of the vast Wood; which closing thick above, spreads Darkness and eternal Night below. The faint and gloomy Light looks horrid as the Shade itself: and the profound Stillness of these Places imposes Silence upon Men, struck with the hoarse Echoings of every Sound within the spacious Caverns of the Wood. Here Space astonishes. Silence itself seems pregnant; whilst an unknown Force works on the Mind, and dubious Objects move the wakeful Sense. Mysterious Voices are either heard or fancy'd: and various Forms of Deity seem to present themselves, and appear more manifest in these sacred Silvan Scenes; such as of old gave rise to Temples, and favour'd the Religion of the antient World. Even we our-selves, who in plain Characters may read Divinity from so many bright Parts of Earth, chuse rather these obscurer Places, to spell out that mysterious Being, which to our weak Eyes appears at best under a Veil of Cloud."-