

The Fable of the Bees

or

Private vices, public benefits

Bernard Mandeville

1732

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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. —The work consists mainly in

- a set of 20 ‘Remarks’ on bits of a 9-page poem; preceded by
- the poem itself, presented with letters of the form of **[A]** against the bits to which Remarks are addressed;
- a longish Essay on charity and charity schools, and another on the origin of society (the black-type subheadings in these are not in the original); and
- materials attacking the first edition of this work, followed by Mandeville’s defence.

In some Remarks and in the Essay, each CROSS-HEADING in small capitals marks the start of a new topic, but no indication is given of where the topic ends.

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Glossary

connive: Used here in its proper sense: if you ‘connive at’ my doing x, you pretend not to know that I am doing it, although really you ought to stop me. From a Latin verb meaning ‘wink’.

content: In Remark V and the related part of the Poem, this noun means ‘contentment’.

cross: a small coin; ‘without a cross’ means ‘without money’.

curious: Mandeville’s uses of this seem to involve one or more of three of the OED’s senses for it: ‘exquisite, excellent, fine’, ‘interesting, noteworthy’, ‘deserving or arousing curiosity; strange, queer’.

dipped: mortgaged

emulation: competitive copying

encomium: high praise

enthusiasm: This is sometimes replaced by ‘fanaticism’. Where it is allowed to stand, it still stands for something hotter than mere ‘enthusiasm’ is taken to be today.

felicity: happiness

industry: industriousness, willingness to work hard

Leviathan: As used on page 118 this has both its role as the name of a mythical sea-monster and its meaning (derived from Hobbes’s classic work) as ‘commonwealth’.

limner: painter; especially portrait-painter

mischief: harm

mortify: humiliate; similarly ‘mortification’

operose: labour-intensive

polite: polished, civilised

politician: Mandeville often uses this word to mean something like ‘person who makes it his business to modify and manipulate our behaviour’.

presentment: An action whereby a local Grand Jury ‘presents’ to the relevant judges its considered opinion that a certain person ought to be charged with a crime.

prodigal: excessively free-spending. The idea that a prodigal is someone who leaves home and then returns comes from misunderstanding the biblical title ‘the parable of the prodigal son’.

rapine: plunder; seizing property by force

sumptuary laws: Laws enforcing frugal and simple modes of living.

temporal: Temporal happiness is happiness in this life; in contrast with eternal happiness in the after-life.

vicious: morally bad; not as intense or focussed as the word is today; Similarly ‘vice’.

voluptuous: Given to sexual pleasure

vulgar: ‘the vulgar’ are people who not much educated and not much given to thinking.

Preface

Laws and government are to the political bodies of civil societies what the vital spirits and life itself are to the natural bodies of living creatures; and just as those who study the anatomy of dead carcasses can see that

the chief organs and most precise springs more immediately required to keep our machine going are not •hard bones, strong muscles and nerves, or the smooth white skin that so beautifully covers them, but •small trifling films and little pipes that are overlooked or seen as negligible by untutored eyes,

so also those who examine the nature of man, setting aside art and education, can see that

what makes him a sociable animal consists not in •his desire for company, good-nature, pity, affability, and other graces of a fair outside, but •his vilest and most hateful qualities.

It is these that are the most necessary accomplishments to fit him for the largest and (according to the world) the happiest and most flourishing societies.

The following fable, in which what I have just said is set forth at large, was printed eight years ago in a sixpenny pamphlet called *The Grumbling Hive; or Knaves turned Honest*; and being soon after pirated, it was sold in the streets in a halfpenny sheet. I have encountered several people who, wilfully or ignorantly mistaking the design, regard it as a satire on virtue and morality, written for the encouragement of vice. This made me decide that whenever this little poem was reprinted, I would find some way to inform the reader of the real intent it was written with.

I do not want the reader to expect any poetry in these few loose lines. I dignify them with the label 'poem' only because

they are rhymed, and I am really puzzled about what to call them; for

- they are neither heroic nor pastoral, satire, burlesque nor heroicomic;
- they are not *probable* enough to be a tale; and
- the whole thing is rather too long for a fable.

All I can say of them is that they are a story told in doggerel, which—without the least design of being witty—I have tried to write in as easy and familiar a manner as I was able. You may call the 'poem' anything you like.

Someone said of Montaigne that he was pretty well versed in the defects of mankind, but unacquainted with the excellencies of human nature. If no-one says anything worse than that about me, I shall think myself well treated.

Whatever country in the universe is to be understood by the beehive represented here, it must be a large, rich and warlike nation that is happily governed by a limited monarchy; that is made clear by what the poem says about its laws and constitution, and about the glory, wealth, power and industry [see Glossary] of its inhabitants. So the poem's satire on the various professions and callings, and on almost every degree and station of people, was not made to injure and point to particular persons, but only to show the vileness of the ingredients that compose the wholesome mixture of a well-ordered society; in order to extol the wonderful power of political wisdom that enables such a beautiful machine to be raised from the most contemptible branches. For the main design of the fable (as it is briefly explained in the moral [page 12] is **(i)** to show the impossibility of enjoying all the most elegant comforts of life that an industrious, wealthy and powerful nation can provide while also being blessed with all the virtue and innocence that can be wished for in a golden age; and on that basis **(ii)** to expose the unreasonableness and folly of those who, wanting to be a

flourishing people and wonderfully greedy for all the benefits they can receive as such, are always exclaiming against the vices [see Glossary] and inconveniences that have—from the beginning of the world to this present day—been inseparable from all kingdoms and states that ever were famed for strength, riches, and politeness [see Glossary] at the same time.

To do this, I first slightly touch on some of the faults and corruptions the various professions and callings are generally accused of. Then I show that those very vices of every individual person were made, by skilful management, to be conducive to the grandeur and worldly happiness of the whole. Lastly, by setting forth what must be the consequence of general honesty and virtue, and of national temperance, innocence and content, I demonstrate that if mankind could be cured of the failings they are naturally guilty of, they would cease to be capable of being raised into such vast, potent and polite societies as they have been under the various great commonwealths and monarchies that have flourished since the creation. If you ask me why I have done all this—*Cui bono?* [Latin meaning ‘For whose benefit?’]—and what good these notions will produce, I answer ‘None at all, except the reader’s entertainment’. But if I was asked what naturally ought to be expected from them, I would answer that •those who continually find fault with others would, by reading them, be taught to look at home, examine their own consciences, and be ashamed of always railing at what they are more or less guilty of themselves; and that •those who are so fond of the ease and comforts and benefits that are the consequence of a great and flourishing nation would learn to submit more patiently to the inconveniences that no government on earth can remedy, when they see the impossibility of enjoying any great share of the former without partaking likewise of the latter.

This ought naturally to be expected from the publishing of these notions, if people could be made better by anything that might be said to them; but mankind has for so many ages remained the same despite the many instructive and elaborate writings by which their amendment has been attempted, that I am not so vain as to hope for better success from so inconsiderable a trifle ·as the present work·. Having admitted the small advantage this little whim is likely to produce, I think I am obliged to show that it cannot be prejudicial to any; for anything that is published, if it does no good, ought at least to do no harm. For this purpose I have made some explanatory notes—Remarks—to which the reader will be referred in the passages of the poem that seem most liable to objections.

Censorious people who never saw *The Grumbling Hive* will tell me that whatever I may say about the fable, it doesn’t take up a tenth part of the book and was only contrived to introduce the Remarks; that instead of clearing up the doubtful or obscure passages ·in the poem· I have only pitched on topics that I wanted to expatiate upon; and that far from striving to extenuate the errors committed before, I have made bad worse, and shown myself a more barefaced champion for vice in the rambling Remarks than I had done in the fable itself.

I shall spend no time in answering these accusations; where men are prejudiced, the best defences are lost; and I know that those who think it criminal to suppose vice is *ever* a necessity will never be reconciled to any part of the work; but if the work is thoroughly examined, all the offence it can give must result from inferences wrongly drawn from it, which I want nobody to make. When I assert that vices are inseparable from great and potent societies, and that their wealth and grandeur could not possibly subsist without vices, I do not say that the particular members of

those societies who are guilty of any vices should not be continually reprov'd, or not be punished for them when they grow into crimes.

Of people in London who are at any time forced to go on foot, there are few who would not wish its streets to be much cleaner than they generally are, when they are thinking only about their own clothes and private convenience; but when they come to consider that what offends them results from the wealth and busyness of that mighty city, if they have any concern for its welfare they will seldom wish to see its streets less dirty. For if we bear in mind

- the materials of all sorts that must supply the countless trades and handicrafts that are always going forward,
- the vast quantity of victuals, drink and fuel that are daily consumed in the city,
- the waste and superfluities that must be produced from them,
- the multitudes of horses and other animals that are always daubing the streets,
- the carts, coaches and heavier vehicles that are perpetually wearing and breaking their pavement, and above all
- the countless swarms of people that are continually harassing and trampling through every part of them,

we shall find that every moment must produce new filth; and considering how far the great streets are from the river, it is impossible—no matter what cost and care are devoted to removing the nastiness almost as fast as it is made—that London should be more clean before it is less flourishing. In the light of all this, might not a good citizen say that dirty streets are a necessary evil inseparable from the felicity [see Glossary] of London, without hindering the cleaning of shoes or sweeping of streets, and consequently without any prejudice to those who do those jobs.

But if I were asked what place I thought most pleasant to walk in, *of course* I would esteem a fragrant garden or a shady grove in the country before the stinking streets of London. In the same manner, if laying aside all worldly greatness and vainglory I were asked where I thought it most probable that men might enjoy true happiness, I would opt for •a small peaceable society in which men, neither envied nor esteemed by neighbours, were contented to live on the natural product of the spot they inhabit, rather than •a vast multitude abounding in wealth and power, always conquering others by their arms abroad and debauching themselves by foreign luxury at home.

Since the second edition of this book a violent outcry has been made against it, fulfilling the expectation I always had of the justice, wisdom, charity and fairness of those whose good-will I despaired of. It has been presented [see Glossary] by the Grand Jury, and condemned by thousands who never saw a word of it. It has been preached against before my Lord Mayor, and an utter refutation of it is daily expected from a reverend divine who has threatened to answer me 'in two months time' for more than five months in a row. In my *Vindication* ·starting on page 124· you will see •what I have to say for myself, •the Grand Jury's presentment, and •a letter to the right honourable Lord C. The author of that letter shows a fine talent for invective, and great sagacity in discovering atheism where others can find none. He is zealous against wicked books, points at the *Fable of the Bees*, and is very angry with its author.

The letter is long, but the parts of it concerning me are so interwoven with the rest that I was obliged to trouble you with the whole thing, hoping that—prolix as it is—its extravagance will be entertaining to those who have read the treatise it condemns with so much horror. [The present version will cure the prolixity somewhat.]

The Poem

The Grumbling Hive or **Knaves turned Honest**

A spacious hive well stocked with bees,
that lived in luxury and ease;
and yet as famed for laws and arms
as yielding large and early swarms;
was counted the great nursery
of sciences and industry.

No bees had better government,
more fickleness, or less content:
they were not slaves to tyranny,
nor ruled by wild democracy;
but kings, that could not wrong, because
their power was circumscribed by laws.

These insects lived like men, and all
our actions they performed in small:
they did whatever's done in town,
and what belongs to sword or gown,
though th' artful works, by nimble slight
of minute limbs, 'scaped human sight;
yet we've no engines, labourers,
ships, castles, arms, artificers,

craft, science, shop, or instrument,
but they had an equivalent:
which, since their language is unknown,
must be called as we do our own.
As grant that among other things
they lacked dice, yet they had kings;
and those had guards; from whence we may
justly conclude they had some play,
unless a regiment be shown
of soldiers that make use of none.

Vast numbers thronged the fruitful hive;
yet those vast numbers made them thrive;
millions endeavouring to supply
each other's lust and vanity;
while other millions were employed,
to see their handiworks destroyed;
they furnished half the universe;
yet had more work than labourers.
Some with vast stocks, and little pains,
jumped into business of great gains;
and some were damned to scythes and spades
and all those hard laborious trades,
where willing wretches daily sweat

and wear out strength and limbs to eat,
while others followed mysteries,
to which few folks bind apprentices; [A]
that want no stock but that of brass,
and may set up without a cross [see Glossary]
as sharpers, parasites, pimps, players,
pick-pockets, coiners, quacks, soothsayers,
and all those that in enmity,
with downright working, cunningly
convert to their own use the labour
of their good-natured heedless neighbour.
These were called 'knaves', but bar the name,
the grave industrious were the same: [B]
all trades and places knew some cheat,
no calling was without deceit.

The lawyers, of whose art the basis
was raising feuds and splitting cases,
opposed all registers, that cheats
might make more work with dipped estates;
as wer't unlawful that one's own
without a law-suit should be known.
They kept off hearings wilfully,
to finger the refreshing fee;
and to defend a wicked cause,
examined and surveyed the laws,

as burglars shops and houses do,
to find out where they'd best break through.

Physicians valued fame and wealth
above the drooping patient's health,
or their own skill. The greatest part
studied, instead of rules of art,
grave pensive looks and dull behaviour
to gain the apothecary's favour;
the praise of midwives, priests, and all
that served at birth or funeral.
To bear with the ever-talking tribe,
and hear my lady's aunt prescribe
with formal smile and kind 'How do ye?'
to fawn on all the family;
and, which of all the greatest curse is,
to endure the impertinence of nurses.

Among the many priests of Jove,
hired to draw blessings from above,
some few were learned and eloquent,
but thousands hot and ignorant:
yet all passed muster that could hide
their sloth, lust, avarice and pride;
for which they were as famed as tailors
for cabbage, or for brandy sailors;
some, meagre-looking, and meanly clad,

would mystically pray for bread,
 meaning by that an ample store,
 yet literally received no more;
 and, while these holy drudges starved,
 the lazy ones, for which they served,
 indulged their ease, with all the graces
 of health and plenty in their faces.

The soldiers, that were forced to fight,
 if they survived, got honour by it; [C]
 though some, that shunned the bloody fray,
 had limbs shot off, that ran away:
 some valiant gen'als fought the foe;
 others took bribes to let them go:
 some ventured always where 'twas warm,
 lost now a leg, and then an arm;
 till quite disabled, and put by,
 they lived on half their salary;
 while others never came in play,
 and stayed at home for double pay.

Their kings were served, but knavishly,
 cheated by their own ministry;
 many that for their welfare slaved,
 robbing the very crown they saved:
 pensions were small, and they lived high,
 yet boasted of their honesty.

calling, whene'er they strained their right,
 the slippery trick a 'perquisite';
 and when folks understood their cant,
 they changed that for 'emolument';
 unwilling to be short or plain,
 in anything concerning gain;
 for there was not a bee but would
 get more, I won't say, than he should; [D]
 but than he dared to let them know,
 that paid for it; as your gamesters do,
 who, though at fair play, ne'er will own
 before the losers what they've won. [E]

But who can all their frauds repeat?
 the very stuff, which in the street
 they sold for dirt to enrich the ground,
 was often by the buyers found
 sophisticated with a quarter
 of good-for-nothing stones and mortar;
 though flail had little cause to mutter,
 who sold the other salt for butter.

Justice herself, famed for fair dealing,
 by blindness had not lost her feeling;
 her left hand, which the scales should hold,
 had often dropped them, bribed with gold;
 and, though she seemed impartial,
 where punishment was corporal,

pretended to a reg'lar course,
 in murder and all crimes of force;
 though some, first pilloried for cheating,
 were hanged in hemp of their own beating;
 yet, it was thought, the sword she bore
 checked but the desp'rate and the poor;
 that, urged by mere necessity,
 were tied up to the wretched tree
 for crimes, which not deserved that fate,
 but to secure the rich and great.

Thus every part was full of vice,
 yet the whole mass a paradise;
 flattered in peace, and feared in wars,
 they were the esteem of foreigners,
 and lavish of their wealth and lives,
 the balance of all other hives.
 such were the blessings of that state;
 their crimes conspired to make them great:
 and virtue, who from politics
 had learned a thousand cunning tricks, [F]
 was by their happy influence
 made friends with vice: and ever since,
 the worst of all the multitude
 did something for the common good. [G]

This was the statescraft, that maintained

the whole of which each part complained:
 this, as in music harmony,
 made jarrings in the main agree;
 parties directly opposite,
 assist each other, as it were for spite; [H]
 and temperance with sobriety,
 serve drunkenness and gluttony.

The root of evil, avarice,
 that damned ill-natured baneful vice, [I]
 was slave to prodigality,
 that noble sin; while luxury [K, L]
 employed a million of the poor,
 and odious pride a million more: [M]
 envy itself, and vanity,
 were ministers of industry; [N]
 their darling folly, fickleness,
 in diet, furniture and dress,
 that strange ridiculous vice, was made
 the very wheel that turned the trade.
 Their laws and clothes were equally
 objects of mutability;
 for what was well done for a time
 in half a year became a crime;
 yet while they altered thus their laws,
 still finding and correcting flaws,

they mended by inconstancy
faults, which no prudence could foresee.

Thus vice nursed ingenuity,
which joined with time and industry,
had carried life's conveniencies,
its real pleasures, comforts, ease, [O]
to such a height, the very poor
lived better than the rich before, [P]
and nothing could be added more.

How vain is mortal happiness!
Had they but known the bounds of bliss;
and that perfection here below
is more than gods can well bestow;
the grumbling brutes had been content
with ministers and government.
But they, at every ill success,
like creatures lost without redress,
cursed politicians, armies, fleets;
while everyone cried 'Damn the cheats!'
and would, though conscious of his own,
in others barbarously bear none.

One that had got a princely store,
by cheating master, king and poor,
dared cry aloud 'The land must sink

for all its fraud!'; and whom d'ye think
the sermonizing rascal chid?
A glover that sold lamb for kid.
The least thing was not done amiss,
or crossed the public business;
but all the rogues cried brazenly,
'Good gods, had we but honesty!'
Mercury smiled at the impudence,
and others called it lack of sense,
always to rail at what they loved:
but Jove with indignation moved,
at last in anger swore he'd rid
the bawling hive of fraud; and did.
The very moment it departs,
and honesty fills all their hearts;
there shows them, like th' instructive tree,
those crimes which they're ashamed to see;
which now in silence they confess,
by blushing at their ugliness:
like children, that would hide their faults,
and by their colour own their thoughts:
imagining, when they're looked upon,
that others see what they have done.

But oh ye gods! what consternation,
how vast and sudden was the alteration!

in half an hour, the nation round,
meat fell a penny in the pound.
The mask hypocrisy's flung down,
from the great statesman to the clown:
and some in borrowed looks well known,
appeared like strangers in their own.
the bar was silent from that day;
for now the willing debtors pay,
even what's by creditors forgot;
who quitted them that had it not.
Those that were in the wrong stood mute,
and dropped the patched vexatious suit:
on which since nothing less can thrive,
than lawyers in an honest hive,
all, except those that got enough,
with inkhorns by their sides trooped off.

Justice hanged some, set others free;
and after jail delivery,
her presence being no more required,
with all her train and pomp retired.
First marched some smiths with locks and grates,
fetters, and doors with iron plates:
next goalers, turnkeys and assistants:
before the goddess, at some distance,

her chief and faithful minister,
Squire Catch, the law's great finisher,
bore not the imaginary sword,
but his own tools, an ax and cord:
then on a cloud the hoodwinked fair,
Justice her self was pushed by air:
about her chariot, and behind,
were serjeants, bums¹ of every kind,
tipstuffs, and all those officers,
that squeeze a living out of tears.

Though physic lived while folks were ill,
none would prescribe but bees of skill,
which through the hive dispersed so wide,
that none of them had need to ride;
waved vain disputes, and strove to free
the patients of their misery;
left drugs in cheating countries grown,
and used the product of their own;
knowing the gods sent no disease
to nations without remedies.

Their clergy roused from laziness,
laid not their charge on journey-bees;
but served themselves, exempt from vice,

¹ A kind of bailiff.

the gods with prayer and sacrifice;
all those that were unfit, or knew
their service might be spared, withdrew:
nor was there business for so many,
(if the honest stand in need of any,)
few only with the high-priest stayed,
to whom the rest obedience paid:
himself employed in holy cares,
resigned to others state-affairs.
He chased no starveling from his door,
nor pinched the wages of the poor;
but at his house the hungry's fed,
the hireling finds unmeasured bread,
the needy traveller board and bed.

Among the king's great ministers,
and all the inferior officers
the change was great; for frugally
they now lived on their salary: [9]
that a poor bee should ten times come
to ask his due, a trifling sum,
and by some well-hired clerk be made
to give a crown, or ne'er be paid,
would now be called a downright cheat,
though formerly a perquisite.
All places managed first by three,

who watched each other's knavery,
and often for a fellow-feeling,
promoted one another's stealing,
are happily supplied by one,
by which some thousands more are gone.
No honour now could be content,
to live and owe for what was spent; [R]
liveries in brokers' shops are hung,
they part with coaches for a song;
sell stately horses by whole sets;
and country-houses, to pay debts.

Vain cost is shunned as much as fraud;
they have no forces kept abroad;
laugh at the esteem of foreigners,
and empty glory got by wars;
they fight but for their country's sake,
when right or liberty's at stake.

Now mind the glorious hive, and see
how honesty and trade agree.
the show is gone, it thins apace;
and looks with quite another face.
for 'twas not only that they went,
by whom vast sums were yearly spent;
but multitudes that lived on them,
were daily forced to do the same.

in vain to other trades they'd fly;
all were o'er-stocked accordingly.

The price of land and houses falls;
miraculous palaces, whose walls,
like those of Thebes, were raised by play,
are to be let; while the once gay,
well-seated household gods would be
more pleased to expire in flames, than see
the mean inscription on the door
smile at the lofty ones they bore.
The building trade is quite destroyed,
artificers are not employed;
no limner for his art is famed,
stone-cutters, carvers are not named. [S]

Those that remained, grown temperate, strive
not how to spend, but how to live,
and, when they paid their tavern score,
resolved to enter it no more:
no vintner's jilt in all the hive
could now wear cloth of gold, and thrive;
nor Torcol such vast sums advance,
for Burgundy and Ortelans;
the courtier's gone, that with his miss
sipped at his house on christmas peas;
spending as much in two hours stay,

as keeps a troop of horse a day.

The haughty Chloe, to live great,
had made her husband rob the state: [T]
but now she sells her furniture,
which the Indies had been ransacked for;
contracts the expensive bill of fare,
and wears her strong suit a whole year:
the slight and fickle age is past;
and clothes, as well as fashions, last.
Weavers, that joined rich silk with plate,
and all the trades subordinate,
are gone. Still peace and plenty reign,
and everything is cheap, though plain:
kind nature, free from gard'ners force,
allows all fruits in her own course;
but rarities cannot be had,
where pains to get them are not paid.

As pride and luxury decrease,
so by degrees they leave the seas.
Not merchants now, but companies
remove whole manufactories.
All arts and crafts neglected lie;
content, the bane of industry, [V]
makes them admire their homely store,
and neither seek nor covet more.

So few in the vast hive remain,
 the hundredth part they can't maintain
 against the insults of numerous foes;
 whom yet they valiantly oppose:
 till some well-fenced retreat is found,
 and here they die or stand their ground.
 No hireling in their army's known;
 but bravely fighting for their own,
 their courage and integrity

Then leave complaints: fools only strive
 to make a great an honest hive [X]
 to enjoy the world's conveniencies, [Y]
 be famed in war, yet live in ease,
 without great vices, is a vain
 Utopia seated in the brain.
 Fraud, luxury and pride must live,
 while we the benefits receive:
 hunger's a dreadful plague, no doubt,
 yet who digests or thrives without?
 Do we not owe the growth of wine
 To the dry shabby crooked vine?
 Which, while its shoots neglected stood,
 choked other plants, and ran to wood;

at last were crowned with victory.

They triumphed not without their cost,
 for many thousand bees were lost.
 Hardened with toils and exercise,
 they counted ease itself a vice;
 which so improved their temperance;
 that, to avoid extravagance,
 they flew into a hollow tree,
 blest with content and honesty.

* * * * *

The Moral

but blest us with its noble fruit,
 as soon as it was tied and cut:

So vice is beneficial found,
 when it's by justice lopped and bound;
 nay, where the people would be great,
 as necessary to the state,
 as hunger is to make them eat.
 Bare virtue can't make nations live
 in splendour; they, that would revive
 a golden age, must be as free,
 for acorns, as for honesty.

Introduction

One of the greatest reasons why so few people understand themselves is that most writers are always teaching men what they should be, and hardly ever bother to tell them what they really are. For my part, without any compliment to you or me, I believe that man is—besides skin, flesh, bones, etc. that are obvious to the eye—a compound of various passions that govern him by turns, whether he will or no, the turns being decided by which passions are provoked and come uppermost at a give time. Though we all claim to be ashamed of these qualities, they are the great support of a

flourishing society, this being the subject of the foregoing poem. But because some passages in it seem paradoxical, I have in the Preface promised some explanatory remarks on it; and to make them more useful I have thought fit to offer a preliminary article, in which I enquire into how a man with only these qualities might be taught by his own imperfections to distinguish virtue from vice. I ask you here to take notice, once for all, that when I speak of 'men' I mean neither Jews nor Christians, but mere *man*, in the state of nature and ignorance of the true deity.

An enquiry into the origin of moral virtue

All untaught animals are solicitous only of pleasing themselves, and naturally follow the bent of their own inclinations without considering the good or harm this will do to others. This is why in the wild state of nature the creatures that are fittest to live peaceably together in great numbers are the ones that reveal the least understanding and have the fewest appetites to gratify; so that no species of animals is (without the curb of government) less capable of agreeing long together in multitudes than that of *man*. He is an extraordinarily selfish, headstrong, *cunning* animal; so, however he may be subdued by superior strength, it is impossible by force alone to make him tractable and receive the improvements he is capable of.

So the chief endeavour of lawgivers and other wise men who have laboured for the establishment of society has been to make their people believe that for each person it was more beneficial to conquer his appetites than to indulge them, and much better to mind the public than to mind what seemed to be his private interest. This has always been a very difficult task, and no wit or eloquence has been left untried to succeed in it; and the moralists and philosophers of all ages employed their utmost skill to prove the truth of this useful assertion. But whether mankind would ever have believed it or not, it is not likely that anybody could have persuaded them to disapprove of their natural inclinations, or prefer the good of others to their own, unless he had also showed them some equivalent that they could enjoy as a reward for the violence they must commit upon themselves by self-denial. Those who have undertaken to civilise mankind knew this; but being unable to give enough *real* rewards to satisfy everyone for every individual action, they were forced to invent an

imaginary one that would be found acceptable as a general all-purpose equivalent for the trouble of self-denial, without costing them or anyone else anything.

They thoroughly examined all our strengths and weaknesses, saw that none were •so savage as not to be charmed with praise or •so despicable as patiently to bear contempt, and rightly concluded that *flattery* must be the most powerful argument to use on human creatures. Using this bewitching engine, they extolled the excellence of our nature above other animals, gave unbounded praise to the wonders of our sagacity and vastness of our understanding, and to the rationality of our souls by the help of which we were able to perform the most noble achievements. Having thus insinuated themselves into the hearts of men, they began to instruct them in the notions of honour and shame; representing the one as the worst of all evils, and the other as the highest good mortals could aspire to. Then they laid before men that it was unworthy of the dignity of such sublime creatures to •care about gratifying appetites that they had in common with brutes while •neglecting the higher qualities that made them pre-eminent over all visible beings. They admitted that those impulses of nature were very pressing; that it was troublesome to resist them and very difficult to subdue them entirely. But they used this to show on the one hand how glorious the conquest of them was, and on the other how scandalous it was not to attempt it.

Moreover, to introduce emulation [see Glossary] among men, they divided the species into two classes. (i) One consisted of abject, low-minded people who were always hunting after immediate enjoyment and were wholly incapable of self-denial. They had no concern with the good

of others, had no higher aim than their private advantage, were enslaved by voluptuousness [see Glossary] and yielded without resistance to every gross desire, making no use of their rational faculties except to heighten their sensual pleasure. These vile groveling wretches, they said, differed from brutes only in their outward shape. **(ii)** The other class was made up of lofty high-spirited creatures who, free from sordid selfishness, regarded the improvements of the mind as their fairest possessions. They despised whatever they had in common with irrational creatures, opposed by the help of reason their most violent inclinations, and made continual war with themselves to promote the peace of others, aiming to promote the public welfare by the conquest of their own passion. They were the true representatives of their sublime species, exceeding class **(i)** in worth by more degrees than **(i)** was superior to the beasts of the field.

The finest and most beautiful and valuable animals of their kind generally have the greatest share of pride (if the kind is capable of pride at all). So it is with man. Pride is so inseparable from his very essence (however cunningly some may learn to hide or disguise it) that without it the compound he is made of would lack one of its chief ingredients; so it is only to be expected that lessons and remonstrances skilfully adapted to the good opinion man has of himself will when scattered among a multitude not only •get the assent of most of them as a matter of theory but also •induce many of them—especially the fiercest, most resolute, and best—to endure a thousand inconveniences and undergo a thousand hardships in order to have the pleasure of counting themselves as members of class **(ii)** and thereby claiming for themselves all the excellences they have heard of it.

All this would lead us to expect two things. **First**, the heroes who took such extraordinary pains to master some of their natural appetites and put the good of others ahead

of any visible interest of their own would stick to the fine notions they had received concerning the dignity of rational creatures; and—with the authority of the government always on their side—would vigorously assert the superiority of those of class **(ii)** over the rest of their kind. **Second**, those who had not enough pride or resolution to support them in mortifying [see Glossary] what was dearest to them, and who thus followed the sensual dictates of nature, would yet be ashamed to confess themselves to be despicable wretches—generally reckoned to be so little removed from brutes—belonging to the inferior class **(i)**. This would lead them to hide their imperfections as well as they could, and in self-defence they would join in the general praise of self-denial and public-spiritedness; for it is highly probable that •some of them, convinced by the real proofs of fortitude and self-conquest they had seen, would admire in others what they found lacking in themselves; that •others would be afraid of the resolution and prowess of those of class **(ii)**; and that •all of them would be kept in awe by the power of their rulers. So it is reasonable to think that none of them (whatever they thought in themselves) would dare to openly contradict something that everybody else thought it was criminal to call into question.

This was (or at least might have been) the way savage man was tamed; from which it is evident that the first rudiments of morality—unlimbered by skilful politicians [see Glossary] to make men useful to each other as well as tractable—were designed so that ambitious people might govern and reap more benefit from vast numbers of them with greater ease and security. Once this foundation of politics had been laid, man could not have remained uncivilised for long. Even those who only wanted to gratify their appetites, being continually at odds with others of the same sort, could not help seeing that whenever they checked their inclinations (or

merely followed them more cautiously) they often escaped many of the calamities that generally came with the too eager pursuit of pleasure.

For one thing, actions that were done for the good of the whole society brought benefits to them as well as to others, so they were bound to look with favour on those of class **(ii)** who performed them. Also, the more intent they were in seeking their own advantage without regard to others, the more they were hourly convinced that those who stood most in their way were those who were most like themselves.

So it was in the interests of the very worst of them, more than of anyone else, to preach up public-spiritedness, so that they could reap the fruits of the labour and self-denial of others while indulging their own appetites with less disturbance. Consequently, they agreed with the rest to call

- ‘vice’ everything a man does to gratify any of his appetites without regard to the public, if that action shows the faintest prospect of being injurious to any member of the society or of making the man himself less serviceable to others; and to call
- ‘virtue’ every performance by which a man, contrary to the impulse of nature, tries to benefit others or to conquer his own passions out of a rational wish to be good.

It will be objected that no society was ever civilised in any way before the majority had agreed on some worship of an over-ruling power, and thus that the notions of good and evil, and the distinction between virtue and vice, were not the contrivance of politicians but the pure effect of religion. Well, the idolatrous superstitions of all other nations, and their pitiful notions of the supreme being, were incapable of arousing man to virtue and were good for nothing but to awe and trick a rough and unthinking multitude. It is evident from history that •in all considerable societies—however

stupid or ridiculous their accepted notions of the deities they worshipped—*human* nature has always exerted itself in all its branches, and that •every earthly wisdom and moral virtue is something men have excelled in at one time or another in all monarchies and commonwealths that have been at all remarkable for riches and power.

[After a brief paragraph on the Egyptians’ eminence in the arts and sciences and stupidity in religion, he looks further north.] No states or kingdoms have yielded more or greater patterns in all sorts of moral virtues than the Greek and Roman empires, especially the latter; and yet how loose, absurd and ridiculous were their views on sacred matters? Their religion, far from teaching men the conquest of their passions and the way to virtue, seemed rather to be designed to justify their appetites and encourage their vices [see Glossary]. To learn what made them excel in fortitude, courage and magnanimity, we should look at

- the pomp of their triumphs,
- the magnificence of their monuments and arches,
- their trophies, statues, and inscriptions,
- the variety of their military crowns,
- their honours decreed to the dead,
- public encomiums [see Glossary] on the living, and other imaginary rewards they bestowed on men of merit;

and we shall find that what carried so many of them to the utmost pitch of self-denial was their politic use of the most effective means that human pride could be flattered with.

Clearly, then, what started man on checking his appetites and subduing his dearest inclinations was not any heathen religion or other idolatrous superstition, but skilful management by wary politicians. The more closely we search into human nature, the more we shall be convinced that the moral virtues are the political offspring that flattery begot upon pride.

No man, however able and intellectually sharp, is wholly proof against the witchcraft of flattery if artfully performed and suited to his abilities. Children and fools will swallow personal praise; but abler people must be managed with greater care, and the more general the flattery is, the less it is suspected by those it is levelled at. What you say in commendation of a whole town is received with pleasure by all the inhabitants: commend letters in general and every man of learning will be flattered. You may safely praise a man's trade or profession, or the country he was born in, because this lets him screen the joy he feels on his own account under the esteem he pretends to have for others.

When the incomparable Sir Richard Steele, in the usual elegance of his easy style, praises his sublime species and elaborately sets forth the excellence of human nature, one must be charmed with his happy turns of thought and the politeness [see Glossary] of his expressions. But though I have often been moved by the force of his eloquence, I could never avoid being prompted by his artful encomiums to think about the tricks used by women aiming to teach children to be mannerly. When an awkward girl, before she can either speak or go, begins after many entreaties to make the first crude attempts to curtsy, the nurse falls into an ecstasy of praise:

'There's a delicate curtsy! O fine miss! There's a pretty lady! Mama! Miss can make a better curtsy than her sister Molly!'

This is echoed by the maids, while Mama almost hugs the child to pieces; only miss Molly, who being four years older knows how to make a very handsome curtsy, wonders at the perverseness of their judgment; till it is whispered in her ear that it is only to please the baby, and that she is a woman. She is proud of being let into the secret, and rejoices at the superiority of her understanding. . . . Anyone above the

capacity of an infant would regard these extravagant praises as abominable lies, yet experience teaches us that young misses will be brought to make pretty curtsies, and act like women much sooner (and with less trouble) by the help of such gross encomiums than they would without them. It is the same with boys, whom they'll work to persuade that all fine gentlemen do as they are told, and that none but beggar boys are rude or dirty their clothes. [He goes into details.]

The meanest wretch puts an incalculable value on himself, and the highest wish of the ambitious man is to have all the world share his opinion of himself; so that the most insatiable thirst after fame that any hero was ever inspired with was never more than an ungovernable greed to attract the esteem and admiration of others in future ages as well as his own. The great reward for which the most exalted minds have with so much alacrity sacrificed their quiet, health, sensual pleasures and every inch of themselves has never been anything but *the breath of man*, the airy coin of *praise*. Who can forbear laughing. . . .when he compares •the fine things great men have said about that Macedonian madman Alexander with •the goal he proposed to himself for his vast exploits, as can be proved from his own mouth, when the great trouble he took to cross the river Hydaspes forced him to cry out, 'Oh you Athenians! Could you believe what dangers I expose myself to, so as to be praised by you!' So the reward of glory—putting it at its highest, the most that can be said of it—is a superlative felicity [see Glossary] that a man who is conscious of having performed a noble action enjoys in self-love, while he is thinking of the applause he expects from others.

But you may say:

'Besides the noisy toils of war and public bustle of the ambitious, some noble and generous actions are performed in silence. Virtue is its own reward; so

those who are really good have a satisfaction in their awareness of being so, which is all the reward they expect from the most worthy performances. Among the heathens there have been men who, when they did good to others, were so far from coveting thanks and applause that they took great care to be forever concealed from those on whom they bestowed their benefits. So pride has no part in spurring man on to the highest pitch of self-denial.

In answer to this I say that we cannot judge a man's performance unless we are thoroughly acquainted with the principle and motive from which he acts. Although pity is the most gentle and the least mischievous of all our passions, it is as much a frailty of our nature as anger, pride or fear. The weakest minds generally have the greatest share of it, which is why the most compassionate people are women and children. Admittedly, of all our weaknesses pity is the most amiable and has the greatest resemblance to virtue; indeed, without a considerable mixture of it the society could hardly survive; but it can produce evil as well as good, because it is a natural impulse that consults neither the public interest nor our own reason. It has helped to destroy the honour of virgins, and corrupted the integrity of judges; and whoever is driven by it, whatever good he may bring to the society, has nothing to boast of except that he has indulged a passion that *happened* to be beneficial to the public. There is no merit in saving an innocent baby from dropping into the fire:

the action is neither good nor bad, and whatever benefit the infant receives, we only obliged ourselves; for if we had seen it fall and not tried to save it, that would have caused a pain that self-preservation compelled us to prevent. . . .

But men who, without being led by any weakness of their own, can part from what *they* value and perform in silence a worthy action, moved only by their love for goodness; these men, I confess, have more refined notions of virtue than those I have been speaking of. Yet even in these (and the world has never swarmed with them) we may discover considerable symptoms of pride. The humblest man alive must confess that the reward of a virtuous action, namely the satisfaction that it brings, consists in a certain pleasure he gets for himself by contemplating his own worth; and this pleasure together with the cause of it are signs of pride, as certainly as pallor and trembling in face of danger are signs of fear.

If the too-scrupulous reader should at first view condemn these views about the origin of moral virtue, perhaps thinking them offensive to Christianity, I hope he'll forbear his censures when he considers that nothing can make the unsearchable depth of the divine wisdom more conspicuous than the fact that man, whom providence had designed for society, should not only be led by his own frailties and imperfections onto the road to •temporal [see Glossary] happiness, but likewise receive from a seeming necessity of natural causes a little of the knowledge he was later to be made perfect in by the true religion, to his •eternal welfare.

Remarks A through L

Remark A

'while others followed mysteries, to which few folks bind apprentices'

In educating youth for earning a living when they reach maturity, most people look out for some respectable employment, of which there are whole bodies or companies in every large human society. In this way all arts and sciences, as well as trades and handicrafts, are perpetuated in the commonwealth as long as they are found useful, with the young folk who are daily brought into them continually making up for the loss of the old ones who die. But some of these employments are vastly more creditable than others because of how much they vary in the cost of entering into them; so all prudent parents in the choice of them chiefly consult their own abilities and the circumstances they are in. . . .

There are plenty of well brought-up men who have very small incomes but are forced by their reputable callings to make a greater figure than ordinary people with twice their income. If they have children, it often happens that as their poverty makes them incapable of bringing them into creditable occupations, so also their pride makes them unwilling to put them into any of the mean laborious trades; and then—hoping for an alteration in their fortune—they keep putting off the disposing of them, until they come to be of age and are at last brought up to nothing. I shall not determine whether this neglect is more barbarous to the children or prejudicial to the society. At Athens all children were forced to assist their parents if they came to be in need; but Solon made a law that no son should be obliged to relieve his father who had not bred him up to any calling.

Some parents put their sons into good trades that are very suitable to their abilities, but happen to die or fail in business before their children have finished their apprenticeships and been made fit for the business they are to follow; many young men are handsomely provided for and set up for themselves, but are reduced to poverty and cannot maintain themselves by the business they were brought up to; this happens to some for lack of industry [see Glossary] or of sufficient knowledge in their callings, to others from indulging their pleasures, and to a few by misfortunes. Such neglects, mismanagements and misfortunes must happen often in populous places, so many people must be daily flung into the wide world unprovided for, however rich and potent a commonwealth may be and whatever care a government may take to stop this from happening. How are these people to be disposed of? I know that the sea will take off some and so will armies, which the world is seldom without. Those who are honest drudges and not averse to work will become journeymen to the trades they belong to or enter into some other service; such of them as studied and were sent to the university may become schoolmasters, tutors, and a few of them will get into some office or other; but what is to become of the lazy ones who care for no manner of working, and the footloose ones who hate to be confined to anything?

[With a crescendo of mockery, he speaks of these people as becoming actors, cooks, pimps, card-sharpers, pick-pockets, forgers, until:] Others again, who have noticed the credulity of simple women and other foolish people, if they have impudence and a little cunning, either set up as doctors or pretend to tell fortunes. Everyone turning the vices and frailties of others to his own advantage, tries to

pick up a living the easiest and shortest way his talent and abilities will let him.

These are certainly the bane of civil society. But only fools storm at the laxity of the laws that allow them to live, while wise men content themselves with taking care not to be circumvented by them, without quarrelling at what no human prudence can prevent.

Remark B

these were called 'knaves', but bar the name, the grave industrious were the same

This is admittedly a poor compliment to all the trading part of the people. But if the word 'knave' is understood as applying to everyone who is not sincerely honest and does to others what he would dislike having done to himself, I am sure I shall make good the charge. Setting aside the countless tricks by which buyers and sellers outwit one another, that are practised among the fairest of dealers, show me the tradesman who has always revealed the defects of his goods to those who were bidding for them, indeed, who has not sometimes industriously concealed them.

[He describes two traders haggling over the price at which one was to buy sugar from the other, each having information that the other lacked. Trickery all the way, with this summing up:] This is called 'fair dealing'; but neither would have wanted to be treated as he treated the other.

Remark C

the soldiers that were forced to fight, if they survived, got honour by it

So unaccountable is men's desire to be thought well of that though they are dragged into the war against their will (sometimes as criminal punishments), and are compelled

to fight with threats and often blows, they want to be praised for conduct that they would have avoided if it had been in their power to do so; whereas if man's reason was of equal weight with his pride, he could never be pleased with praises that he is conscious of not deserving.

By 'honour', in its proper and genuine signification, we mean nothing but the good opinion of others, which is counted more or less substantial depending on how much noise or bustle is made in displaying it; and when we say the sovereign is the fountain of honour, it means that he has the power to stamp on anyone he pleases a mark that will be as good currency as his coin, and will procure for the owner the good opinion of everybody, whether he deserves it or not. The stamping may be done by titles or ceremonies or both.

The reverse of honour is dishonour, or ignominy, which consists in the bad opinion and contempt of others; and as honour is counted a reward for good actions, so dishonour is taken to be a punishment for bad ones; and how much a person is degraded by his dishonour depends on how publicly or how heinously the contempt of others is shown. This ignominy is likewise called 'shame', from the effect it produces; for though the good and evil of honour and dishonour are imaginary, shame is real.

·THE NATURE OF SHAME·

It is a passion that has its own symptoms, overrules our reason, and requires as much labour and self-denial to be subdued as any of the other passions; and since many of the most important actions of life are regulated according to the influence this passion has on us, a thorough understanding of it must help to illustrate the world's notions of honour and ignominy. I shall therefore describe it in full.

I think shame may be defined as **a sorrowful reflection on our own unworthiness, coming from a realisation that others**

deservedly despise us or would do so if they knew all. The only objections of weight that can be raised against this definition are **(a)** that innocent virgins are often ashamed and blush when they are guilty of no crime and can give no reason for this frailty; and **(b)** that men are often ashamed for others for (or with whom) they have neither friendship nor affinity. To answer **(a)**, I would have it first considered that the modesty of women is a result of custom and education, by which all unfashionable denudations and filthy expressions are made frightful and abominable to them; and that nevertheless the most virtuous young woman alive will often unwillingly have thoughts and confused ideas of things arise in her imagination that she would not reveal to some people for a thousand worlds. When obscene words are spoken in the presence of an inexperienced virgin, she is afraid that someone will think she understands what they mean, and consequently understands this and that and several things that she wishes to be thought ignorant of. Reflecting on this, and on thoughts that are forming to her disadvantage, brings on her the passion we call ‘shame’.

That we are often ashamed and blush for others—which was **(b)** the second objection—is merely the fact that sometimes we make the case of others too nearly our own, as when we shriek at seeing others in danger. When we reflect too earnestly on the effect such a blameworthy action would produce in us if it was ours, our spirits and consequently our blood are moved in the way they would be if the action *was* our own, and so the same symptoms appear.

Raw, ignorant, ill-bred people show shame when in the presence of their betters, seemingly without a cause. But this shame always comes from a consciousness of their weakness and inabilities; and the most modest man—however virtuous, knowing, and accomplished he might be—has never been ashamed without some guilt or something he is shy about.

Those whose social awkwardness and lack of education make them unreasonably subject to this passion, overcome by it at every turn, we call ‘bashful’; and those who out of disrespect to others and a false opinion of their own sufficiency have learned not to be affected with it when they should be are called ‘impudent’ or ‘shameless’.

What strange contradictions man is made of! The reverse of **a** shame is **b** pride (see Remark M), yet nobody can be touched with the former who has never felt the latter; for the source of **a** our extraordinary concern with what others think of us is simply **b** the vast esteem we have for ourselves.

[Mandeville now describes some of the physical upshots of bouts of shame or of pride, as evidence that ‘these two passions are realities in our frame and not imaginary qualities’. Then his focus switches.]

It is incredible how necessary an ingredient shame is to make us sociable; it is a frailty in our nature; whenever people have it they submit to it with regret and would prevent it if they could; yet the happiness of human converse depends on it, and no society could be polished if mankind in general were not subject to it. Because the sense of shame is troublesome, one might expect that a man trying to avoid this uneasiness would mainly conquer his shame by time he was an adult; but this would be detrimental to the society, and therefore from his infancy throughout his upbringing we try to *increase* his sense of shame. The only remedy prescribed is a strict observance of certain rules to avoid things that might bring shame on him. But as for ridding or curing him of it—the politician [see Glossary] would rather take away his life!

The rules I speak of consist in a dextrous management of ourselves, a stifling of our appetites, and hiding the real sentiments of our hearts before others. Those who are not instructed in these rules long before they come to years of

maturity, seldom make any progress in them afterwards. To acquire and bring to perfection the accomplishment I hint at, nothing helps more than pride and good sense. Our greed for the esteem of others, and our raptures at the thought of being liked and perhaps admired, are more than adequate for the conquest of the strongest passions, and consequently keep us at a great distance from words or actions that can bring shame on us. The passions we chiefly ought to hide for the happiness and embellishment of our society are **lust**, **pride** and **selfishness**; and accordingly the word ‘modesty’ has three different meanings that vary with the passions modesty conceals. I shall start discussing the first now, and will reach the other two on page 24.

·SEXUAL MODESTY·

The branch of modesty that aims at a general claim to chastity consists in a sincere and painful endeavour to stifle and conceal before others the inclination nature has given us to propagate our species. The lessons of it, like those of grammar, are taught to us long before we have occasion for them or understand their usefulness; so that children are often ashamed, and blush out of modesty, before the relevant impulse of nature makes any impression on them. A modestly educated girl may, before she is two years old, begin to observe how carefully the women around her cover themselves in the presence of men; and because the same caution is inculcated into her by precept and example, by the age of six she’ll probably be ashamed of showing her leg, without knowing any reason why such an act is blameable or what the tendency of it is.

To be modest, we ought in the first place to avoid all *unfashionable* barings of the body. [He goes into some detail—e.g. a country’s rules may allow a woman to display her breasts but not to show her ankles.] In the second

place, our language must be chaste—not only free from obscenities but *remote* from them. Nothing that relates *however distantly* to the multiplication of our species is to be spoken of. Thirdly, all postures and motions that can in any way sully the imagination, i.e. put us in mind of obscenities (as I have called them), are to be avoided with great caution.

Moreover, a young woman who wants to be thought well-bred ought to be guarded in all her behaviour in the presence of men, and never be known to receive favours from them—much less to bestow favours on them—unless she can plead in her defence that the man is very old, a near relative, or of a much higher or much lower rank than she has. A young lady of refined upbringing keeps a strict guard over her looks as well as her actions, and we may read in her eyes an awareness that she has a treasure which is not out of danger of being lost but which she is resolved not to part with on any terms.

This strict reservedness is to be complied with by all young women, especially virgins, if they value the esteem of the polite and knowing world. Men may take greater liberty because in them the *sexual* appetite is more violent and ungovernable. If equal harshness of discipline been imposed on both *sexes*, neither could have made the first advances, and propagation must have stood still among all the fashionable people. This was far from the politician’s aim, so it was advisable to ease and indulge the sex that suffered most by the severity, and make the rules relax their rigour where the passion was the strongest and the burden of strict restraint would have been the most intolerable.

For this reason, the man is allowed openly to profess the veneration and great esteem he has for women, and show more mirth and gaiety in their company than he usually does out of it. He may not only be obliging and serviceable to them on all occasions, but it is reckoned his duty to protect

and defend them. He may praise their good qualities and extol their merit with as many exaggerations as he can think of and are consistent with good sense. He may talk of love, he may sigh and complain of the rigours of the fair sex, and what his tongue must not utter he has the privilege to speak with his eyes, and in *that* language to say what he pleases as long as it is done with decency. [He explains that it is thought 'unmannerly' to look long and hard at a woman because this 'makes her uneasy' through the fear 'that she may be seen through'.] This staring impudence flings an inexperienced woman into panic fears; it keeps her on a perpetual rack that commands her to reveal her secret wishes and seems designed to extort from her the grand truth which modesty bids her to deny.

The difference of modesty between men and women is generally ascribed to nature, but in fact it is entirely a result of early instruction:

- Miss is scarcely three years old when she is told every day to hide her leg, and rebuked in good earnest if she shows it; while
- little Master at the same age is told to take up his coats and piss like a man.

Shame and education contain the seeds of all politeness [see Glossary], and he that has neither and offers to speak the truth of his heart is the most contemptible creature on earth even if he committed no other fault. If a man told a woman that he could like nobody so well to propagate his species upon as herself, and that he had a violent desire at that moment to go about it and accordingly offered to lay hold of her for that purpose, the woman would run away, and he would be called a brute and never be admitted into any civil company. Whereas a man with some sense of shame would conquer the strongest passion rather than be so served. But a man need not conquer his passions; he needs only to

conceal them. Virtue tells us to subdue our appetites, but good breeding only requires us to hide them. [He then talks about the process through which a 'fashionable gentleman' wins a wife, the absolutely free sexual conduct they indulge in after they are married, and the fact that on the next day neither they nor anyone else even hints at any such thing's having taken place. He explains:] My point is to demonstrate that by being well bred we suffer no abridgement in our sensual pleasures, but only labour for our mutual happiness and assist each other in the luxurious enjoyment of all worldly comforts. . . . A man who gratifies his appetites in the way the custom of his country allows has no censure to fear. . . . He can safely laugh at the wise men who would reprove him; all the women and more than nine in ten of the men are on his side. . . .

Impudence is a vice, but it does not follow that modesty is a virtue; it is built on shame—a passion in our nature—and may be good or bad according to the actions performed from that motive. Shame may hinder a prostitute from yielding to a man when there are others present, and the same shame may cause a bashful good-natured creature who has been overcome by frailty to do away with her infant. Passions may *happen* to do good, but there can be no merit except in the conquest of them.

If there was virtue in modesty, it would have the same force in the dark as in the light, which it goes not. Men of pleasure know this very well. They never trouble their heads about a woman's virtue, as long as they can conquer her modesty; so seducers don't make their attacks at noon, but cut their trenches at night.

·INFANTICIDE CAUSED BY MODESTY·

People of substance can sin without being exposed for their stolen pleasure; but servants and the poorer sort of women

seldom have any chance of concealing a big belly or at least the consequences of it. An unfortunate girl of good parentage may be left destitute, and know no way of earning a living except by becoming a nurse or chambermaid; she may be diligent, faithful and obliging, have abundance of modesty, and may even be religious; she may resist temptations and preserve her chastity for years together, yet at last comes to an unhappy moment when she gives up her honour to a powerful deceiver who then neglects her. If she has a child, her sorrows are unspeakable and she can't be reconciled with the wretchedness of her condition; the fear of shame attacks her so vigorously that every thought distracts her. All the family she lives in have a great opinion of her virtue, and her last mistress took her for a saint. How will her enemies—who envied her character—rejoice! How will her relations detest her! The more modest she is now, and the more violently the dread of coming to shame hurries her away, the more wicked and cruel will be her resolutions against herself or against what she bears.

It is commonly thought that anyone who can destroy her child, her own flesh and blood, must have a vast stock of barbarity and be a savage monster unlike other women; but this is the thought of someone who does not understand the force of passions. If the woman who murders her bastard in the most execrable manner is married afterwards, she may take care of, cherish and feel all the tenderness for her infant [infants?] that the fondest mother can be capable of.

All mothers naturally love their children; but because this is a passion and therefore centres in self-love, it can be subdued by any passion catering more strongly to that same self-love, which if nothing had intervened would have bid her fondle her offspring. Common whores, whom all the world knows to be whores, hardly ever destroy their children; even those who assist in robberies and murders are seldom

guilty of this crime. It is not because they are less cruel or more virtuous, but because they have lost their modesty to a greater degree, and the fear of shame makes hardly any impression on them.

Our love for what never was within reach of our senses is poor and inconsiderable, and therefore women have no natural love for the child they are bearing. Their affection begins after the birth; what they feel before is the result of reason, education, and thoughts of duty. [The real affection, he goes on to say, expresses itself in ferocious efforts to protect the child,] prompted by a natural inclination, with no consideration of the injury or benefit the society receives from it. Even the offspring is irreparably ruined by the excessive fondness of parents; for two or three years infants may be the better for this indulgent care of mothers, but later on if it is not moderated it may totally spoil them, and has brought many to the gallows.

·MODESTY AS 'GOOD BREEDING'·

If you think I have spent too long on the branch of modesty by the help of which we try to appear chaste [the account began on page 22], I shall make amends by how briefly I shall treat of the remaining part, by which we would make others believe that we have more esteem for them than for ourselves, and that our own interests don't concern us in the slightest. This laudable quality is commonly known as 'manners' and 'good breeding', and consists in a fashionable habit—acquired by precept and example—of **flattering the pride and selfishness of others while skillfully concealing our own**. This applies only to **a** our dealings with our equals and superiors, and only **b** while we are in peace and amity with them; for our affability must never interfere **b** with the rules of honour or with **a** the homage that is due to us from servants and others who depend on us.

With this caution, I believe that the definition squares with everything that can be alleged as showing either good breeding or bad manners. . . . A man who asks for considerable favours from someone who is a stranger to him is called 'impudent', because he openly shows his own selfishness without having any regard to the other person's. For the same reason a man ought to speak of his wife and children and everything dear to him as sparingly as possible, and hardly ever of himself. A well-bred man may be greedy for praise and the esteem of others, but to be praised to his face offends his modesty. Here is why. All human creatures in their unpolished state get extraordinary pleasure from hearing themselves praised; we are all conscious of this, and therefore when we see a man openly feast on this delight in which we have no share, it arouses our selfishness and immediately we begin to envy and hate him. So the well-bred man conceals his joy and utterly denies that he feels any, avoiding the envy and hatred that otherwise he would have justly to fear. When from our childhood we see how those who calmly hear their own praises are ridiculed, we may try so strenuously to avoid that pleasure that in the course of time we become uneasy at the ·mere· *approach* of it; but this is not following nature but warping it by education and custom; for if mankind in general took no delight in being praised, there could be no modesty in refusing to hear it.

[He writes at some length about how 'the man of manners' will pick the worst thing from the dish, leaving he rest to others, implying that he regards them as superior to himself. He says that 'it is *custom* that makes this modish deceit familiar to us, without our being shocked at the absurdity of it', elaborates on the absurdity, and then:] Yet it is certain that this behaviour makes us more tolerable to one another than we could be otherwise.

It is very advantageous to our knowledge of ourselves to

distinguish accurately between •good qualities and •virtues. The bond of society demands from everyone a certain regard for others, including the highest in the presence of the lowest, even in an empire. But when we are by ourselves, out of sight and sound of any company, the words 'modesty' and 'impudence' lose their meaning. A person who is alone may be wicked but he cannot be immodest, and a thought cannot be impudent if it is not communicated to anyone else. A man of exalted pride may hide it so well that nobody can discover that he has any, and yet get more satisfaction from that passion than someone else who indulges himself in declaring it before all the world. Good manners have nothing to do with virtue or religion; instead of extinguishing the passions, they inflame them. The man of sense and education never exults more in his pride than when he hides it with the greatest dexterity; and in feasting on the applause that he is sure all good judges will pay to his behaviour, he enjoys a pleasure unknown to the short-sighted, surly alderman who shows his haughtiness glaringly in his face, doffs his hat to nobody, and hardly deigns to speak to an inferior.

A man can carefully avoid everything that the world thinks to be the result of pride, without mortifying himself or making the least conquest of his passion. He may be only sacrificing •the insipid outward part of his pride, which only silly ignorant people take delight in, to •that inner part that men of the highest spirit and most exalted genius feed on with so much ecstasy—in silence.

Remark D

'there was not a bee but would get more, I won't say, than he should; but than' etc.

Our vast esteem for ourselves and the small value we have for others make us unfair judges in our own cases. Few men

can be persuaded that those they sell to are paying too much, however great their profits are, while they'll grudge almost any profit, however trivial, to those they buy from. Since the smallness of the seller's advantage is the greatest incentive to the buyer, tradesmen are generally forced to tell lies in their own defence, and invent a thousand improbable stories, rather than reveal what they really get by their commodities.

Some old hands who claim to have more honesty than their neighbours—but probably only have more pride—are accustomed to saying little to their customers and refusing to sell at a lower price than what they ask at first. But these are commonly cunning foxes who know that those who have money often get more by being surly than others get by being obliging. The vulgar [see Glossary] think they can find more *sincerity* in the sour looks of a grave old fellow than in the submissive air and inviting obligingness of a young beginner. But this is a great mistake; and if they are mercers, drapers or others that have many sorts of the same commodity, you may soon be satisfied; look at their goods and you'll find each of them—the old and the young—has his private mark, which is a certain sign that both are equally careful in concealing the cost to them of what they sell.

Remark E

'as your gamesters do, who, though at fair play, ne'er will own before the losers what they've won'

This being a well known general practice, there must be something in the human make-up that causes it. But looking for it will seem very trivial to many, so I desire the reader to skip this Remark unless he is in perfect good humour and has nothing at all to do.

That gamesters generally try to conceal their gains before the losers seems to me to come from a mixture of gratitude,

pity, and self-preservation. [Mandeville traces these out in rather wearying detail, helping his prediction that the enquiry 'will seem very trivial'. His account may not fit gaming where special motivations are at work, he says, but he claims that it covers 'ordinary play for money in which men try to get and risk losing what they value', and adds a methodological comment that is more interesting than the rest of this Remark.] Even here I know it will be objected by many that though they have been guilty of concealing their gains they never observed 'in themselves' the passions that I allege as the causes of that frailty. That is not surprising, because few men take the time, and even fewer know how, to examine themselves as they should do. It is with the passions in men as it is with colours in cloth: it is easy to know a red, a green, a blue, a yellow, a black etc. in as many different places; but only an artist can unravel all the various colours and their proportions that make up the compound of a well-mixed cloth. Similarly, the passions can be discovered by everybody while they are distinct and a single one takes over the whole man; but it is very difficult to trace every motive of actions that result from a mixture of passions.

Remark F

'and virtue, who from politics had learned a thousand cunning tricks, was, by their happy influence, made friends with vice'

Virtue can be said to make friends with vice when industrious good people—ones who maintain their families and bring up their children handsomely, pay taxes, and are in various ways useful members of the society—make their living by something that chiefly depends on or is very much influenced by the vices of others, without themselves being involved in them in any way except through trade, as a druggist may be in poisoning or a sword-maker in bloodshed.

Thus the merchant who sends corn or cloth into foreign parts to purchase wines and brandies

- encourages the growth or productivity of his own country,
- is a benefactor to navigation,
- increases the customs, and
- is many ways beneficial to the public;

but it can't be denied but that his greatest dependence is on lavishness and drunkenness. If no-one drank wine who didn't *need* it, and no-one drank more than was good for his health, the multitude of wine-merchants, vintners, coopers etc. who make such a considerable show in this flourishing city of London would be in a miserable condition. The same may be said not only of card- and dice-makers, who are the immediate servants of a legion of vices, but also of mercers, upholsterers, tailors and many others who would be starved in half a year's time if pride and luxury were banished from the nation.

Remark G

'The worst of all the multitude did something for the common good'

This will strike many as a strange paradox; I shall be asked what benefit the public receives from thieves and house-breakers. They are, I agree, very pernicious to human society, and every government should take all imaginable care to destroy them; but if all people were strictly honest and nobody wanted to interfere with pry into anything that was not his own, half the smiths of the nation would be unemployed; and we would not have all the fine workmanship (which now serves for ornament as well as defence) that would not have been thought of except to defend us against the efforts of pilferers and robbers.

If you think this far-fetched, and my assertion still seems a paradox, please look at the *consumption* of things, and you'll find that the laziest and most inactive, the profligate and most mischievous, are all forced to do something for the common good, and while their mouths are not sewed up and they continue to wear and otherwise destroy what the industrious are daily employed in making, fetching and procuring, they are obliged to help maintain the poor and the public charges, though it goes against their grain to do so. The labour of millions would soon be at an end if there were not other millions, as I say in the Fable, 'employed / to see their handiworks destroyed'. But men are not to be judged by the consequences of their actions, but by the facts themselves and the motives they acted from. Suppose that an ill-natured miser, who is extremely wealthy but spends only fifty pounds a year though he has no relation to inherit his wealth, is robbed of a thousand guineas; it is certain that as soon as this money comes to circulate, the nation will be the better for the robbery, and receive the same benefit—and as *real* a benefit—from it as if an archbishop had left a thousand guineas to the public; yet justice and the peace of the society require that those who robbed the miser should be hanged, even if there were half a dozen of them concerned.

Thieves and pick-pockets steal for a livelihood. Either what they can honestly earn is not sufficient to support them, or they have an aversion to steady work—they want to gratify their senses, have victuals, strong drink, lewd women, and to be idle when they please. The victualler who entertains them and takes their money, knowing how they come by it, is nearly as great a villain as his guests. . . . And the wealthy brewer who leaves all the management to his servants knows nothing of the matter, but keeps his coach, treats his friends, and enjoys his pleasure with ease and a good conscience. He gets an estate, builds houses, and brings his children up in

affluence, without ever thinking about the labour wretches perform, the shifts fools make, and the tricks knaves play to get the commodity by the vast sale of which he amasses his great riches.

A highwayman after making a considerable haul gives a poor common harlot whom he fancies ten pounds to new-rig herself from top to toe; is any mercer so conscientious that he will refuse to sell her a thread satin while knowing who she was? She must have shoes, stockings and gloves, and those who sell these must all get something by her; and a hundred different tradesmen dependent on those she spent her money with may touch part of it before a month is over. In the meantime the generous gentleman, his money being nearly all spent, ventured again on the highway; but after committing a robbery near Highgate he was taken with one of his accomplices; at their trial both were condemned, and suffered the law. The money due on their conviction went to three country fellows on whom it was admirably well bestowed. [Details are given of the merits, and the extreme financial difficulties, of the three. Then:] They received more than 80 pounds each, which extricated each of them from the difficulties he laboured under, and made them in their opinion the happiest people in the world.

·THE EVILS OF GIN·

Nothing is more destructive of the health or the vigilance and industry of the poor than *gin*, the infamous liquor whose name—derived from ‘junipera’ in Dutch—has by frequent use and the laconic spirit of the nation shrunk from middling length to a monosyllable. Intoxicating gin, that charms the inactive, the desperate and the crazy of either sex, and makes the starving sot behold his rags and nakedness with dull indolence, or ridicule both in senseless laughter and more insipid jests. It is a fiery lake that sets the brain in flame,

burns up the entrails, and scorches every part within; and at the same time a Lethe of oblivion in which the immersed wretch drowns his most pinching cares and all anxious reflection on brats that cry for food, hard winters, frosts, and a horrid empty home.

In hot and desiccated temperaments it makes men quarrelsome, renders them brutes and savages, sets them fighting for nothing, and has often been the cause of murder. It has broken and destroyed the strongest constitutions, thrown them into wasting diseases, and been the fatal and immediate cause of apoplexies, frenzies and sudden death. These latter troubles do not happen often, and might be overlooked and connived at [see Glossary], but this cannot be said of the many diseases that are daily and hourly produced by gin, such as loss of appetite, fevers, black and yellow jaundice, convulsions, stone and gravel and dropsies.

Among the dotting admirers of this liquid poison, many of the meanest rank, from a sincere affection for the stuff, become dealers in it, and delight in helping others to what they love themselves; . . . but as these starvelings commonly drink more than their gains, selling gin does not mend the wretchedness of condition that they laboured under while they were only buyers. On the outskirts of the town and in all places of the vilest resort, gin is sold in some part of almost every house—often in the cellar, sometimes in the garret. The small-scale traders in this Stygian comfort are supplied by others in somewhat higher station, who keep so-called ‘brandy shops’ and are as little to be envied as the end-of-the-line retailers. Among the middling people I don’t know a more miserable way to earn a living than keeping a brandy shop. For a man to do well at that, he must **(i)** be watchful and suspicious as well as bold and resolute, so as not to be imposed on by cheats and sharpers or out-bullied by the oaths and imprecations of hackney-coachmen and

foot-soldiers; and **(ii)** be handy with gross jokes and loud laughter, have all the winning ways to allure customers and draw out their money, and be well versed in the low jests the mob use to ridicule prudence and frugality. He must be affable and obsequious to the most despicable people; always ready to help a porter down with his load, shake hands with a basket-woman, pull off his hat to an oyster-wench, and be familiar with a beggar; he must be able to endure with patience and good humour the filthy actions and viler language of nasty drabs and the lewdest rakehells, and endure, without a frown or the least aversion, all the stench and squalor, noise and impertinence that the utmost indigence, laziness and drunkenness, can produce in the most shameless and abandoned vulgar.

The vast number of the shops I speak of throughout the city and suburbs are astonishing evidence of the many seducers who in a lawful occupation are accessories to the introduction and increase of all the sloth, sottishness, need and misery that the abuse of strong waters is the immediate cause of. Their activities lift above the middling level perhaps a dozen men who deal in the same commodity by wholesale. As for the retailers: though qualified in the ways I have said they need to be, far more than a dozen of them are bankrupted and ruined because they do not abstain from the Circean cup they hold out to others, and the more fortunate are obliged throughout their whole lifetime to take the uncommon pains, endure the hardships, and swallow all the ungrateful and shocking things I named, for little or nothing beyond a bare sustenance and their daily bread.

·THE GOOD ARISING FROM ALCOHOLIC SPIRITS·

The short-sighted vulgar can seldom see further than one link along the chain of causes; but those who *can* enlarge their view, and are willing to take time to look further along

the chain, may see in a hundred places good spring up and sprout from evil as naturally as chickens do from eggs. The money from the duties on malt is a considerable part of the national revenue; if no spirits were distilled from it, the public treasure would suffer enormously. But if we want to set in a true light the many advantages—the large catalogue of solid blessings—that arise from the evil I have been discussing, we must consider

- the rents received,
- the ground tilled,
- the tools made,
- the animals used, and above all
- the multitude of poor maintained by their labour in husbandry, malting, transport and distillation,

before we can have the malt product called 'low wine', which is merely the beginning from which the various spirits are afterwards to be made.

Besides this, a sharp-sighted good-humoured man might pick up plenty of good from the rubbish I have flung away as evil. He would tell me •that whatever sloth and sottishness might be caused by the abuse of malt spirit, the moderate use of it was of inestimable benefit to the poor, who could not afford cordials at higher prices; •that it was a universal comfort in cold and weariness and also in most of the other troubles that afflict the needy, and for the most destitute had often stood in for meat, drink, clothes and lodging; and •that the dull indolence in the most wretched condition caused by those draughts that I complained of was a blessing to thousands, because the happiest are those who feel the least pain. As for diseases, he would say that just as it caused some, so it cured others; that if the excess in those liquors had been sudden death to a few, the habit of drinking them daily prolonged the lives of many. ·He would also say· that the losses we suffered from the insignificant quarrels

alcohol created at home were thoroughly outweighed by the advantage we received from it abroad, by upholding the courage of soldiers and animating the sailors to the combat; and that in the two last wars every considerable victory was obtained with help from alcohol.

To the dismal account I have given of what the retailers are forced to submit to, he would answer that not many people acquired more than middling riches in *any* trade, and that what I had regarded as so offensive and intolerable in that trade was trifling to those who were used to it; that what seemed irksome and calamitous to some was delightful and often ravishing to others, depending on differences in men's circumstances and upbringing. He would remind me that the profit of an employment always makes amends for the toil and labour that belonged to it, and that *dulcis odor lucri e re qualibet* [Juvenal; 'The smell of gain is good, whatever its source'].

If I should ever urge to him that to have a few great and eminent distillers was a poor equivalent for the vile means, the certain want, and lasting misery of so many thousand wretches as were needed to raise them to their level of affluence, he would answer that I could be no judge of this because I don't know what vast benefit they might afterwards bring to the commonwealth. Perhaps, would he say, the man made wealthy in this way will exert himself in the commission of the peace or other station, with vigilance and zeal against the dissolute and disaffected, and be as industrious in spreading loyalty and the reformation of manners throughout every cranny of the wide populous town as he once was in filling it with spirits; until at last he becomes the scourge of whores, vagabonds and beggars, the terror of rioters and discontented rabbles, and a constant plague to Sabbath-breaking butchers. Here my good-humoured antagonist would exult and triumph over me, especially if he could point me to an actual example. 'What an uncommon

blessing this man is to his country! he would cry, 'how shining and illustrious his virtue!'

To justify his exclamation he would demonstrate to me that it was impossible to give a fuller evidence of self-denial in a grateful mind than to see him, at the expense of his quiet and hazard of his life and limbs, always harassing and even persecuting the very class of men to whom he owes his fortune, purely because of his aversion to idleness and his great concern for religion and the public welfare.

Remark H

'parties directly opposite, assist each other, as it were for spite'

Nothing did more to forward the Reformation than the sloth and stupidity of the Roman clergy, yet that same Reformation has roused them from their earlier laziness and ignorance; and the followers of Luther, Calvin and others may be said to have reformed not only those who came to their side but likewise those who remained their greatest opposers. The clergy of England, by being severe on the schismatics and scolding them for their lack of learning, have raised such formidable enemies for themselves as are not easily answered; and the dissenters, by prying into the lives of their powerful antagonists and diligently watching all their actions, make the clergy of the established church more wary of giving offence than they would be if they had no malicious supervisors to fear. It is because there are so many Protestants in France. . . .that it has a less dissolute and more learned clergy than any other Roman Catholic country. The clergy of the Roman church are nowhere more sovereign than in Italy, and therefore nowhere more debauched; nor anywhere more ignorant than they are in Spain, because their doctrine is nowhere less opposed.

Who would imagine that virtuous women might unknowingly be instrumental in promoting the advantage of prostitutes? or (the greater paradox) that incontinence [here = 'sexual promiscuity'] might be made serviceable to the preservation of chastity? Yet nothing is more true. A vicious [see Glossary] young fellow, after an hour or two at church, a ball or any other assembly where there are many handsome women dressed to the best advantage, will have his imagination more fired than if he had been voting at Guildhall or walking in the country among a flock of sheep. The result is that he'll try to satisfy the appetite that is raised in him; and it is very natural to think that when he finds honest women obstinate and uncompliant, he'll hasten to others who are more willing. Who would even have guessed that this is the fault of the virtuous women? They have no thoughts of men in dressing themselves, poor souls, and try only to appear clean and decent.

·THE BENEFITS OF PROSTITUTION·

I am far from encouraging vice, and think it would be a wonderful thing for a state if the sin of uncleanness could be utterly banished from it. But I am afraid this is impossible: the passions of some people are too violent to be curbed by any law or precept, and it is wisdom in all governments to put up with lesser inconveniences to prevent greater. If courtesans and strumpets were to be prosecuted with as much rigour as some silly people want, what locks or bars would be sufficient to preserve the honour of our wives and daughters? . . . Where several thousand sailors arrive at once, as often happens in Amsterdam—men who have seen none but their own sex for many months—how could honest women walk the streets unmolested if there were no harlots to be had at reasonable prices? That is why the wise rulers of that well-ordered city allow there to be houses where women

are hired as publicly as horses at a livery-stable. There is a great deal of prudence and economy to be seen in this toleration, so a short account should be given.

(i) The houses I speak of are allowed only in the most slovenly and unpolished part of the town, where seamen and strangers of no repute chiefly lodge and resort. The street where most of them stand is regarded as scandalous, and its infamy is extended to all the neighbourhood around it. **(ii)** They are only places to meet and bargain in, to make appointments for interviews of greater secrecy, and no sort of lewdness is ever allowed to be transacted in them. Apart from the ill manners and noise of the company that frequent them, you'll meet with no more indecency in those houses, and generally less lasciviousness there, than are to be seen at a playhouse in England. **(iii)** The female traders who come to these evening exchanges are always the scum of the people, and generally such as in the day-time carry fruit and other eatables about in wheelbarrows. The clothes they appear in at night are very different from their ordinary ones; but they are commonly so ridiculously gay that they look more like the Roman dresses of strolling actresses than like gentlewomen's clothes; if you add in the awkwardness, the hard hands and coarse breeding of the damsels who wear them, there is no great reason to fear that many of the better sort of people will be tempted by them.

The music in these temples of Venus is performed by organs, not out of respect to the deity that is worshipped in them but because of •the frugality of the owners, whose business it is to procure as much sound for as little money as they can, and •the policy of the government, who try to discourage the breed of pipers and scrapers. All sea-faring men, especially the Dutch, are like the sea in being much given to loudness and roaring, and the noise of half a dozen of them, when they call themselves 'merry', is sufficient to

drown a dozen flutes or violins; whereas with one pair of organs the owners can make the whole house ring, this being done by one scurvy musician wo cannot cost them much. Despite the good rules and strict discipline that are observed in these markets of love, the police officers are always vexing, fining and (on the least complaint) removing their miserable keepers; a policy that has two great uses. **(i)** It gives a large number of officers, who are indispensably useful to the magistrates on many occasions, a chance •to squeeze a living out of the immoderate gains coming from the worst of employments, and at the same time •punish those necessary profligates, the pimps and madams, whom they abominate but do not wish wholly to destroy. **(ii)** For several reasons it might be dangerous to let the multitude into the secret that those houses and the trade that is pursued in them are connived [see Glossary] at by the authorities; so the magistrates' policing practice keeps them in the good opinion of the weaker sort of people, who imagine that the government is always trying but failing to suppress what it actually tolerates, whereas if they *wanted* to rout them out, their power in the administration of justice is so sovereign and extensive, and they know so well how to use it, that they could send them all packing in a week, indeed in one night.

In Italy the toleration of strumpets is even more barefaced, as is evident from their public brothels. [He gives further details of the openness.] The reason why so many good politicians tolerate lewd houses is not their irreligion but their desire to prevent a worse evil, an impurity of a more execrable kind, and to provide for the safety of women of honour. About 250 years ago, says Monsieur de St. Didier, Venice needed courtesans and had to procure a great number from foreign parts. Doglioni, who wrote the memorable *Affairs of Venice*, highly extols the wisdom of the republic in this point, which secured the chastity of women of honour

daily exposed to public violences, because the churches and consecrated places are not a sufficient asylum for their chastity.

Remark I

'the root of evil, avarice, that damned ill-natured baneful vice, was slave to prodigality'

In attaching so many odious epithets to the word 'avarice', I have been going along with the vogue of mankind, who generally bestow more ill language on this than on any other vice. This is not undeserved, for there is hardly a mischief [see Glossary] to be named that it has not produced at one time or another. But the real reason why everybody exclaims so much against avarice is that almost everybody suffers by it; for the more the money is hoarded up by some people the scarcer it must become among the rest; so when men rail very much at misers there is generally self-interest at bottom.

There is no living without money; so those who are not provided with any, and have nobody to give them any, are obliged to do some service to the society before they can get it. But everyone overrates his labour as he overrates himself, so that most people who need money for immediate consumption imagine that they do more for it than it is worth. Men can't help looking at the necessities of life as their due, whether they work or not, because they find that nature bids them eat whenever they are hungry, without inquiring whether they have victuals or not. For this reason, everybody tries to get what he wants with as much ease as he can; and therefore when men find that it is harder or easier for them to get money depending on the tenacity of those they hope to get it from, they are naturally angry at covetousness in general. . . .

Although avarice is the occasion of so many evils, it is necessary to the society to glean and gather what has been dropped and scattered by the contrary vice. If it were not for avarice, spendthrifts would soon lack materials; and if none acquired and laid up faster than they spent, very few could spend faster than they acquired. That avarice is a slave to prodigality [see Glossary] is evident from how many misers we see toil and labour, pinching and starving themselves to enrich a lavish heir. Though these two vices appear opposite, they often assist each other. Florio is an extravagant young blade, the only son of a very rich father, who wants to live high, keep horses and dogs, and throw his money about as he sees some of his companions do; but the stingy old man will part with no money, and hardly allows him necessities. Florio would have borrowed money on his own credit long ago, but no prudent man would lend him any because all would be lost if he died before his father. At last he meets with the greedy Cornaro, who lends him money at 30%, and now Florio thinks himself happy, and spends a thousand a year. Where would Cornaro ever have got such a prodigious interest if it weren't for such a fool as Florio, who will give such a great price for money to fling it away? And how would Florio get it to spend if he had not encountered such a greedy usurer as Cornaro, whose excessive greed makes him overlook the great risk he runs in venturing such great sums on the life of a wild debauchee?

Avarice is the reverse of profuseness only when it signifies the sordid love of money and narrowness of soul that hinders misers from parting with what they have, and makes them covet it only to hoard up. There is also a sort of avarice that consists in a greedy desire for riches in order to spend them, and this often meets with prodigality in the same persons, as is evident in most courtiers and great officers, both civil and military. . . . Their gallantry is displayed with the greatest

profusion, while the. . . the many frauds and impositions they are guilty of reveal the utmost avarice. This mixture of contrary vices exactly fits the character of Catiline, who was said to be *appetens alieni* and *sui profusus*—greedy after the goods of others and lavish with his own.

Remark K

'that noble sin'

The prodigality [see Glossary] that I call a 'noble sin' is not •the one that has avarice for its companion, and makes men unreasonably profuse in spending some of what they unjustly extort from others, but •the agreeable good-natured vice that makes the chimney smoke and all the tradesmen smile. I mean the *unmixed* prodigality of heedless and pleasure-loving men who have grown up amid wealth, regard the thought of mere *money* as low and abhorrent, and freely spend only what others took pains to scrape together. These men indulge their inclinations at their own expense, have the continual satisfaction of bartering old gold for new pleasures, and from the excessive largeness of a diffusive soul are made guilty of despising too much what most people over-value.

When I treat this vice with as much tenderness and good manners as I do, I have at heart the same thing that made me give so many ill names to the reverse of it, namely the interest of the public; for as the avaricious man does no good to himself and is injurious to everyone else except his heir, so the prodigal man is a blessing to the whole society and injures nobody but himself. It is true that just as most avaricious people are knaves, so all prodigal people are fools; yet they are delicious morsels for the public to feast on. . . . If it were not for prodigality, nothing could reimburse us for the rapine [see Glossary] and extortion of avarice in power. After the death of a covetous statesman who spent his life

fattening himself with the spoils of the nation, and had heaped up an immense treasure by pinching and plundering, every good member of the society should rejoice to behold the uncommon profuseness of his son. This is refunding to the public what was robbed from it. The son's goods should not be seized; that would be barbarous, and it is ignoble to ruin a man faster than he does it himself when he sets about it so earnestly! Does he not feed countless dogs of all sorts and sizes, though he never hunts? keep more horses than any nobleman in the kingdom, though he never rides them? give to an ill-favoured whore—though he never lies with her—as large an allowance as would keep a Duchess? . . . As long as the nation gets its own back again, we ought not to quarrel with *how* the plunder is repaid.

Many moderate men who are enemies to extremes will tell me •that *frugality* might happily fill the place of the two vices I speak of; •that if men did not have so many profuse ways of spending wealth, they would not be tempted to so many evil practices to scrape it together, and consequently •that the same number of men might, by avoiding both extremes, make themselves happier and be less vicious without them than they could be with them. Anyone who argues thus shows himself to be a better man than he is a politician. Frugality is like honesty, a mean starving virtue, that is fit only for small societies of good peaceable men who are contented to be poor as long as they are easy; but in a large stirring nation you may soon have enough of frugality. It is an idle dreaming virtue that employs no hands and is therefore useless in a trading country where vast numbers of people must be set to work somehow. Prodigality has a thousand inventions to keep people from sitting still, ones that frugality would never think of; and as this must consume a prodigious wealth, so avarice can rake it together by countless tricks that frugality would scorn to employ.

Authors are always allowed to liken small things to great ones, especially if they ask permission first. But to liken great things to mean trivial ones is intolerable except in burlesque; otherwise I would use a very low simile to liken the body politic to a bowl of punch. Avarice would be **what sours it** and prodigality **what makes it sweet**. I would call the ignorance, folly and credulity of the floating insipid multitude the **water** in the punch; and the wisdom, honour, fortitude and the rest of the sublime qualities of men—separated by art from the dregs of nature, and exalted and refined by the fire of glory into a spiritual essence—would be an equivalent to **brandy**. If a newcomer to this drink were to taste the different ingredients separately, he would, no doubt, think it impossible they should make any tolerable liquor. The lemons would be too sour, the sugar too luscious, the brandy he'll say is too strong ever to be drunk in any quantity, and the water he'll call a tasteless liquor fit only for cows and horses. Yet experience teaches us that when the ingredients I have named are judiciously mixed, they make an excellent liquor that is liked and admired by men with fine palates.

[He develops this comparison further, bringing avarice and prodigality into it (a bit obscurely), apologising for pursuing this low comparison so far, and concluding:] Avarice and prodigality in the society are like two contrary poisons in physic which can by mutual mischief cancel one another out, and often make a good medicine between them.

Remark L

'while luxury employed a million of the poor, and' etc.

Strictly speaking, anything is a *luxury* if it is not immediately necessary for man's survival as a living creature, and by this standard there are luxuries to be found everywhere in the world; even among the naked savages, who by this time have

improved their former manner of living—in the preparation of their food, the ordering of their huts, or whatever—thus adding something to what once sufficed them. Everybody will say that this definition is too rigorous; I agree; but if we relax its severity by one inch, I am afraid we shan't know where to stop. When people tell us they only want to keep themselves 'sweet' and 'clean', there is no understanding what they would be at. If they used these words in their genuine proper literal sense, they could soon be satisfied without much cost or trouble, as long as they had water; but these two little adjectives are so comprehensive—especially in the dialect of some ladies—that nobody can guess how far they may be stretched. Also, the comforts of life are so various and extensive that nobody can tell what people mean by them unless he knows what sort of life they lead. The words 'decency' and 'convenience' are similarly obscure: I never understand them unless I am acquainted with the quality of the persons who use them. However much people go to church together and are all of one mind, I am apt to believe that when they pray for their 'daily bread' the bishop includes in that petition several things that the sexton does not think of.

Thus, once we depart from calling a 'luxury' everything that is not absolutely necessary to keep a man alive, nothing is a luxury; for if the wants of men are innumerable, then what is needed to meet them has no bounds; what some degree of people would regard as •superfluous to will be thought •requisite to those higher up the scale; and nothing could be too curious [see Glossary] or extravagant for some gracious sovereign to count it as a necessity of life—not meaning everybody's life, but that of his sacred person.

It is generally believed that luxury is as destructive to the wealth of the whole body politic as it is to the wealth of every individual person who is guilty of it, and that national

frugality enriches a country in the same way that more restricted frugality increases the estates of private families. Although I have found men of much better understanding than myself who have this opinion, I cannot help disagreeing with them about it. They argue thus:

Every year we send to Turkey £1,000,000 worth of woollen goods and other things of our own growth, for which we bring back silk, mohair, drugs, etc. to the value of £1,200,000 that are all spent in our own country. By this we get nothing; but if most of us would be content with our own growth, and so consume only half the quantity of those foreign commodities, then people in Turkey who would still want the same quantity of our manufactures would be forced to pay ready money for the rest, and so just by the balance of that trade the nation would get £600,000 per annum.

In examining this argument, let us start by supposing

- that the silk etc. consumed in England is only half of what it is now; and
- that the Turks, though we refuse to buy more than half as much of their commodities as we used to do, either cannot or will not be without the same quantity of our manufactures they had before, and
- that they'll pay the balance in money, giving us as much gold or silver as the value of what they buy from us exceeds the value of what we buy from them.

Though that might happen for one year, it could not possibly last. Buying is bartering, and no nation can buy goods of others if it has no goods of its own to purchase them with. Spain and Portugal, which are annually supplied with new gold and silver from their mines, can go on buying for ready money as long as their yearly increase of gold or silver continues; but for them money is the country's commodity.

·For Turkey the situation is different. . . . If the Turks did not have money fall from the skies, the £600,000 in silk, mohair etc. that are left on their hands in the first year must make ·the market value of· those commodities fall considerably; the Dutch and French will get the benefit of this as much as ourselves; and if we continue to refuse to take their commodities in payment for our manufactures, they can no longer trade with us, but must content themselves with buying what they want from nations that are willing to take what we refuse, even if their goods are much worse than ours. In this way our commerce with Turkey is certain to be lost.

They may say that to prevent the ill consequence I have showed we should take the Turkish merchandise as formerly, and be so frugal as to consume only half of it ourselves, sending the rest abroad to be sold to others. Let us see what this will do, and whether it will enrich the nation by the balance of that trade with £600,000. [He argues in detail that this re-export policy would not work, for various reasons involving costs and risks.]

It is also held against luxury that **(i)** it increases avarice and rapine [see Glossary]; and where they are reigning vices, offices of the greatest trust are bought and sold; the ministers who should serve the public are corrupted, and the countries constantly in danger of being betrayed to the highest bidders; and **(ii)** that it effeminates and enervates the people, so that nations become an easy prey to the first invaders. These are indeed terrible things; but what is charged against luxury here really holds against maladministration, and is the fault of bad politics. [He meets point **(i)** by going into details of how a good, responsible government would handle trade. He will come to **(ii)** soon.]

Trade is the principal thing that makes a nation great, but there are other things to be taken care of besides. The *meum*

and *tuum* [Latin for 'mine and yours'] must be secured, crimes punished, and all other laws concerning the administration of justice wisely designed and strictly enforced. Foreign affairs must also be prudently managed, and the ministry of every nation ought to have good foreign intelligence and be familiar with the public transactions of all the countries that may—through nearness, strength or interest—be hurtful or beneficial to them, to take the necessary measures accordingly. . . . The multitude must be awed, no man's conscience forced, and the clergy allowed no greater share in state affairs than our Saviour has bequeathed them in his testament. These are the arts that lead to worldly greatness. Any sovereign power that makes a good use of them and has a considerable nation to govern—whether it be a monarchy, a commonwealth or a mixture of both—can never fail to make it flourish despite all the other powers on earth, and no luxury or other vice can ever shake their constitution. . . . Of all the famous states and empires the world has had to boast of, none has ever come to ruin whose destruction was not principally owing to the bad politics, neglects or mismanagements of the rulers.

[Now he takes up accusation (ii).] There is no doubt that more health and vigour is to be expected among a people and their offspring from temperance and sobriety than there is from gluttony and drunkenness; but as for luxury's effeminating and enervating a nation, I confess that I don't now have such frightful notions of this as I used to have. When we hear or read of •things that we have never encountered, they commonly bring to our imagination ideas of things we have encountered that we think must be nearest to •them. When I have read of the luxury of Persia, Egypt and other countries where it has been a reigning vice, and that were effeminated and enervated by it, it has sometimes put me in mind of

- the cramming and swilling of ordinary tradesmen at a city feast, and the beastliness that often accompanies their over-gorging themselves,

and at other times it has made me think of

- the distraction of dissolute sailors, as I had seen them in company of half a dozen lewd women roaring along with fiddles before them.

If I were brought into one of the great Persian or Egyptian cities, I would have expected to find one third of the people sick in bed with surfeits; another third laid up with the gout or crippled by a more ignominious illness; and the remainder, who could walk without assistance, going along the streets in petticoats.

For as long as our *reason* is not strong enough to govern our appetites, it is good for us to have *fear* as a guardian; and I believe that my fear focussed on the word 'enervate', and some consequent thoughts about the etymology of it, did me a great deal of good when I was a schoolboy; but now that I have seen something of the world, the consequences of luxury to a nation seem less dreadful to me than they did. As long as men have the same appetites, the same vices will remain. In all large societies, some will love whoring and others drinking. The lustful that can get no handsome clean women will content themselves with dirty drabs; and those who cannot purchase true hermitage or pontack will be glad of more ordinary french claret. Those who can't reach wine take up with worse liquors, and a foot soldier or a beggar may make himself as drunk with stale beer or malt spirits as a lord with burgundy, champaign or tockay. The cheapest and most slovenly way of indulging our passions does as much harm to a man's constitution as the most expensive.

The greatest excesses of luxury are shown in buildings, furniture, equipages and clothes. [He develops this point, saying that intelligent people given to luxury are careful

not to eat or drink too much, and take care of their health. Then:] But let us once suppose that the ease and pleasures of the grandees and rich people of every great nation make them unfit to endure hardships and undergo the toils of war. I'll allow that most of the common council of the city would make very indifferent foot-soldiers; and a cavalry composed of aldermen would be routed by a small artillery of squibs. But the aldermen, the common council, indeed people of any substance have nothing to do with the war except to pay taxes. The hardships and fatigues of war that are personally suffered fall on those who bear the brunt of everything, the lowest poor part of the nation, the working slaving people; for however excessive the plenty and luxury of a nation may be, somebody must do the work, houses and ships must be built, merchandise must be moved, and the ground tilled. This requires a vast multitude of workers, among whom there are always enough loose, idle, extravagant fellows to spare for an army; and those who are robust enough to hedge and ditch, plough and thrash, or else not too enervated to be smiths, carpenters, sawyers, cloth-workers, porters or car-men, will always be strong and hardy enough in a campaign or two to make good soldiers; and in that role, when good orders are kept, they won't often have an amount of plenty and superfluity that will do them any hurt.

So the harm to be feared from luxury among the people of war cannot extend beyond the officers. The greatest of them are either men of high birth and princely upbringing or else extraordinary abilities and no less experience; and a wise government should choose to command its armed forces someone who has

- a consummate knowledge of martial affairs,
- intrepidity to keep him calm in danger, and
- many other qualifications that are bound to come, through time and application, to anyone who has

quick penetration, a distinguished intellect and a world of honour.

Strong sinews and supple joints are trifling advantages that don't count in persons of their reach and grandeur, who can destroy cities before getting out of bed in the morning and ruin whole countries while they are at dinner. As they are usually men of great age, it would be ridiculous to expect a hale constitution and agility of limbs from them; as long as their heads are active and well furnished, it matters little what the rest of their bodies are like. If they cannot bear the fatigue of being on horseback, they can ride in coaches or be carried in litters. Men's conduct and sagacity are never less for their being cripples. [He goes on to say that most men in an army have expenses—going up in step with advances in rank and pay—which leave them unable to afford luxuries that would damage their health.]

Nothing refines mankind more than love and honour. Those two passions are equivalent to many virtues, so the greatest schools of breeding and good manners are courts and armies, the former to accomplish the women, the latter to polish the men. [He writes about how 'the rules of honour' keep military men (officers) decent and self-controlled, and adds that even those of whom this is not true can still acquit themselves well in battle. He appeals to experience:]

Those who have such dismal fears that luxury will enervate and effeminate people should look at our battles in

Flanders and Spain. They would see embroidered beaux with fine laced shirts and powdered wigs stand as much fire, and lead up to the mouth of a cannon with as little concern, as it was possible for the most stinking slovens to have done not wearing wigs but in their own hair that had not been combed in a month; and encounter an abundance of wild rakes who had actually impaired their health with excesses of wine and women yet conducted themselves bravely against their enemies. Robustness is the least thing required in an officer, and if sometimes strength is of use, a firm resolution of mind—inspired by hopes of preferment, competitiveness, and the love of glory—will at a push supply the place of bodily force. . . .

I think I have proved **(a)** that in one sense everything can be called 'luxurious' and in another sense nothing can; **(b)** that with a wise administration all people may swim in as much foreign luxury as their product can purchase, without being impoverished by it; and **(c)** that where military affairs are handled properly and the soldiers well paid and well disciplined, a wealthy nation can live in ease and plenty while still being formidable to their neighbours, matching the character of the bees in the fable, of which I said, that 'flattered in peace, and feared in wars, / they were the esteem of foreigners, / and lavish of their wealth and lives, / the balance of all other hives.'

See what is also said about luxury in Remarks M and Q.