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

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

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Contents

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part I: Why the conversations are being reported

Philocles is writing to his friend Palemon

Section 1: A warning against philosophy

Someone who hadn't been told about your character, Palemon, would never think that an intellect fitted for the greatest affairs, and formed in courts and military camps, could have such a violent turn towards philosophy and the universities ·as you have·! Who could possibly expect someone of your rank and standing in the •fashionable world to be so thoroughly at home in the •learned world, and so deeply interested in the affairs of a people ·namely, philosophers· who are so much at odds with people in general and with the mood of our times?

I really believe that you are the only well bred man who would have had a whim to talk philosophy in such a circle of good company as we had around us yesterday, when we were in your coach together in the park. [The 'good company' evidently included attractive women; this is confirmed in the next section.] How you could reconcile what you had before you in the coach with such topics as these was unaccountable. I could only conclude that either you had an extravagant passion for philosophy, leaving so many charms in order to pursue it, or that some of those tender charms had an extravagant effect on you and that you went to philosophy for relief!

Either way, I pitied you, because I thought it better to be, like me, a more tepid lover of philosophy. As I said to you, it is better to admire ·intellectual and moral· beauty and wisdom a little more moderately; to engage so cautiously as to be sure of coming away with a whole heart, and as much taste as ever for all the pretty •entertainments and •diversions of the world. ['. . . with a whole heart' = '. . . not heartbroken if one is jilted by philosophy, i.e. by one's failure to solve philosophical problems.] For •these seemed to me to be things one would not willingly part with in order to have a fine romantic passion of the sort had by one of those gentlemen called 'virtuosi' [see Glossary].

I used that word as a label for lovers and philosophers and anyone else who is in some way ·besottedly· in love with. . . well, anything: poetry, music, philosophy, pretty women. They are all in the same condition. You can see it, as I told you, in their looks, their dazed wonder, their profound thoughtfulness, their frequently waking up as though out of a dream, their always talking about one thing and hardly caring what they said about anything else. Sad symptoms!

But this warning didn't deter you because you, Palemon, are one of the adventurous people whom danger animates rather than discourages. And now you are insisting on having our philosophical adventures recorded. All must be laid before you and summed in one complete account , apparently to serve as a lasting monument to that unfashionable conversation, so opposite to the reigning spirit of gallantry [see Glossary] and pleasure.

I must admit that it has become fashionable in our nation to talk •politics in every company, and mix discussions of state affairs with conversations of pleasure and entertainment. But we certainly don't approve of any such freedom with •philosophy. And we don't regard politics as falling within philosophy or as being in any way related to her. That's a measure of how much we moderns have degraded philosophy and stripped her of her chief rights.

You must allow me, Palemon, to bemoan philosophy in this way, because you have forced me to engage with her at a time when her credit runs so low. She is no longer

active in the world, and can hardly get any benefit from being brought onto the public stage. We have walled her up, poor lady! in colleges and ·monastic· cells; and have set her to work on tasks as low-down and menial as those in the mines. Empirics [see Glossary] and pedantic logic choppers are her chief pupils. The scholastic syllogism and *essences* are the choicest of her products. She is so far from producing statesmen, as she used to do, that hardly any man with a public reputation cares to acknowledge the least debt to her. . . .

But low as philosophy has been brought, if morals is allowed to belong to her then politics *must* also be hers. For to understand the manners and constitutions of men in common, it is necessary to study man as an individual, to know the creature as he is in himself before we consider him in company through his involvement with the state or with some city or community. Plenty of people reason concerning man in his terms of how he relates to this or that state or society by birth or naturalization; but to consider him as a citizen or commoner of the world, to trace his pedigree a step higher and view his relations to nature itself, ·is something that is hardly ever done·; apparently it is regarded as involving intricate or over-refined theorising.

[Shaftesbury now has a paragraph saying that there's an excuse for the neglect of philosophy: those who have philosophised in public have done it in a way that repels the listeners or readers.]

But it must be admitted that our modern conversations suffer from one real disadvantage, namely that by fussing so much over fine details they lose the masculine helps of learning and sound reason. Even the fair sex, on whose behalf we claim to be talking down in this way, could reasonably despise us for this and laugh at us for aiming at their special softness. It's no compliment to them to adopt their manners and talk in an effeminate way. Our sense, language, and style, as well as our voice and body, should have something of the male feature and natural roughness that are marks of our sex. And whatever claim we make to being *polite* [see Glossary], making our discourse delicate in this way is more a disfigurement of it than any real refinement.

No work of wit can be judged to be perfect without the strength and boldness of hand that gives it body and proportions. A good piece, the painters say, must have good •muscling as well as •colouring and •drapery. And surely no writing or discourse of any great significance can seem other than slack and passive if it isn't accompanied by

- •strong reason,
- •antiquity,
- •the records of things,
- •the natural history of man, or
- •anything that can be called knowledge

except perhaps in some ridiculous garb that may give it an air of play and dalliance.

This brings to my mind a reason I have often looked for to explain why we moderns, who pour out treatises and essays, are so sparing with dialogues, which used to be regarded as the most civilised and best way of managing even the more solemn subjects. The reason is this: to present an hour-long conversation as proceeding steadily and coherently and full of good sense, until some one subject had been rationally examined, would be an abominable falsehood, a lie about the age in which we live!

To draw or describe against the appearance of nature and truth is a liberty that neither the painter nor the poet is permitted to take. Much less can the philosopher have such a privilege, especially on his own behalf. If he represents his philosophy as showing well in conversation—if he triumphs in the debate, and gives his own wisdom the victory over

that of the world—he may be laying himself open to justified mockery, and may possibly be made a fable of.

[Shaftesbury now tells a fable about a lion claiming to be stronger than a man, and refusing to back down when shown sculptures and pictures of men triumphing over lions.]

So we needn't wonder that the sort of moral painting that dialogue performs is so much out of fashion, and that these days we don't see any more of these philosophical portraitures. For where are the originals? And even if you or I, Palemon, happen to have come upon one and been pleased with the real thing, can you imagine it would make a good picture?

You know too that in this academic philosophy that I am to present you with there's a certain way of questioning and doubting that doesn't at all suit the spirit of our age. Men love to take sides instantly. They can't bear being kept in suspense. The examination, ·the inquiry·, torments them. They want to be rid of it as cheaply as possible. Whenever men dare trust to the current of reason they act as though they imagined they were drowning. They seem to be hurrying away, they don't know where to, and are ready to catch at the first twig. And they choose to continue hanging onto that, however insecurely, rather than trust their strength to hold them up in the water. Anyone who has grabbed hold of an hypothesis, however slight it may be, is satisfied. He can quickly answer every objection, and with the help of a few technical terms give an account of everything without trouble.

It's no wonder that in this age the philosophy of the alchemists prevails so much, because it promises such wonders and requires the labour of hands more than of brains. We have a strange ambition to be creators, a violent desire at least to know the knack or secret by which nature does everything. Something that our other philosophers aim at only •in theorising our alchemists aim to achieve •in practice. (Some alchemists have actually thought about how to make a man artificially!) Every sect has a recipe. When you know it, you are master of nature; you explain all her events; you see all her designs, and can account for all her operations. . . .

So there are good reasons for our being thus superficial, and consequently thus dogmatic [see Glossary] in philosophy. We are too lazy and effeminate, and also a little too cowardly to risk *doubt*. The decisive ·doubt free· way fits best with our style. It suits our vices as well as it does our superstition. Whatever we are fond of is secured by it. If in favour of religion we have adopted an hypothesis on which we think our faith depends, we are superstitiously careful not to be loosened in it. If through our bad morals we have broken with religion, it's still the same situation: we are just as afraid of doubting. We must be sure to say 'It can't be' and 'It's demonstrable', for otherwise ·we might have to say· 'Who knows?' and not to know is to yield!

So we'll need to •know everything and not have the labour of •examining anything. Of all ·varieties of· philosophy, the absolutely most disagreeable must the one that goes upon no established hypothesis, doesn't offer us any attractive and intellectually soothing theory, and talks only of

- •probabilities,
- •suspense of judgment,
- •inquiry,
- •search, and
- •caution not to be imposed on, i.e. deceived.

This is the academic discipline in which the youth of Athens were once trained, when not only horsemanship and military arts had their public places of exercise, but philosophy also had its renowned wrestlers. Reason and wit had their academy, and underwent this trial not in a formal way apart

from the world, but openly, among the better sort, and as an exercise of a genteel kind. The greatest men weren't ashamed to practise this in the intervals of public affairs, in the highest stations and employments, right through to the last years of their lives. That is what gave rise to the method of dialogue—the method of *patience* in debate and reasoning—of which there is hardly a trace left in any of our conversations at this stage in the world's history.

Thus, Palemon, consider what our picture is likely to be, and how it will appear, especially in the light you have unluckily chosen for it. Who ·but you· would thus have brought philosophy up against the gaiety, wit, and humour of the age? However, if you can come out of this with credit, I am content. It's your project; it's you who have matched philosophy thus unequally [i. e. against a much stronger opponent, namely fashionable wit and humour.] Leaving you to answer for its success, I begin this unpromising work that my evil stars and you have assigned to me. . . .

Section 2: Why is mankind so defective?

O wretched state of mankind! Hapless nature, thus to have erred in your chief workmanship! What was the source of this fatal weakness? What chance or destiny shall we accuse? Or shall we listen to the poets, when they sing of your tragedy, Prometheus! [see Glossary]—you who with your stolen celestial fire mixed with vile clay •mocked heaven's countenance, and in abusive likeness to the immortals •made the compound *man*, that wretched mortal, evil to himself and a cause of evil to all.

What do you say now, on second thoughts, about this rant? Or have you forgotten, Palemon, that it was in just such a romantic tone that you broke out against human kind, on a day when everything looked pleasing, and the 'kind' itself (I thought) never looked better?

You weren't quarrelling with the whole creation, and you weren't so completely displeased by all beauty. The green of the field, the distant view, the gilded horizon and purple sky formed by a setting sun, had charms in abundance and made an impression on you. You allowed me, Palemon, to admire these things as much as I pleased, while at the same time you couldn't stand my talking to you about the nearer beauties of our own kind, which I thought more natural for men at our age to admire. But your severity couldn't silence me on this subject. I continued to plead the cause of the fair, and to advance *their* charms above all those other natural beauties. And when you took my opposition as an opportunity to argue that there was very little of •nature and a great deal of •art [see Glossary] in what I admired, I made the best defence I could; and, fighting for beauty, I kept up the fight for as long as there was one fair one present. [The 'nearer beauties', 'the fair', are pretty women.]

Considering how your mind has been inclined to poetry, I was very puzzled to find you suddenly displeased with our modern poets and gallant writers. I quoted them to you, as better authorities than any ancient writer, on behalf of the fair sex and their privileges, but you brushed this off. You agreed with some recent critics that gallantry [see Glossary] is a modern growth; and you thought that this didn't bring any dishonour to the ancients, who understood truth and nature too well to permit such a ridiculous invention.

So I achieved nothing by holding up this shield in my defence. When on behalf of the fair ·sex· I pleaded all the fine things that are usually said in this romantic kind of praise of them, I did my cause no service! You attacked the very fortress of gallantry, ridiculed the notion of *honour*, with all those fussy sentiments and ceremonials belonging to it. You damned even our favourite novels—those dear sweet natural

pieces, most of them written by the fair sex themselves. In short, you absolutely condemned—as false, monstrous, and gothic—this whole literary scheme of things in which wit looms large. Quite out of the way of nature, you said, and sprung from the mere dregs of chivalry or knight errantry [see Glossary]. You preferred knight errantry itself, as being in better taste than what now reigns in place of it. At a time when •this mystery of gallantry carried along with it the notion of resolute knighthood, when •the fair ·sex·

- •were made witnesses to (and in a way participants in) feats of arms,
- •entered into all the points of war and combat, and
- •were won by means of lance and manly strength and skill,

it wasn't altogether absurd, you thought, to pay women homage and adoration, make them the standard of wit and manners, and bring mankind under their laws. But in a country where no female saints were worshipped with any authority from religion, it was as •impertinent and senseless as it was •profane to deify the sex, raise them to a height above what nature had allowed, and treat them in a manner that. . . .they themselves were the most apt to complain of. . . .

In the meanwhile our companions began to leave us. The *beau monde*, whom you had been thus severely censuring, left quickly, for it was growing late. I noticed that the approaching objects of the night were made more agreeable to you by the solitude they introduced; and that the moon and planets which began now to appear were really the only proper company for a man in your mood. For now you began to talk with much satisfaction of natural things, and of all orders of beauties—with one exception, *man*. [In what follows, 'luminaries' are things that beam light onto us: heavenly ones are stars and planets, earthly ones are pretty women.] I have never heard a finer description than the one you gave of the order of the heavenly luminaries, the circles of the planets, and their attendant satellites. And you, who wouldn't concede *anything* to the fair earthly luminaries in the circles that we had just been moving in; *you*, Palemon, who seemed to overlook the pride of that ·earthly· theatre, ·i.e. the social scene of which we were a part·, now began to look out with ecstasy at the other ·theatre· and to triumph in the new philosophical scene of unknown worlds. When you had pretty well spent the first fire of your imagination, I wanted to get you to reason more calmly with me about that other part of the creation, your own kind; to which, I told you, you revealed so much aversion that one might think you to be a complete. . . . man-hater.

'Can you then, O Philocles,' you said in a high strain, and with a moving air of passion, 'can you believe me to be like that? Can you seriously think that I who am a man and conscious of my nature would have so little humanity that I don't feel the affections of a man? Or that I have natural feelings towards my kind but don't care about their interests, and am not much interested in what affects or seriously concerns them? Am I such a bad lover of my country? Or do you find me to be such a bad friend? For. . . . what do the ties of private friendship amount to if the tie to mankind doesn't bind?. . . . O Philocles, believe me when I say that I feel my bond to mankind, and am fully aware of its power within me. [In the rest of this speech, every occurrence of—is Shaftesbury's.] Don't think that I would willingly break that chain. Don't regard me as so degenerate or unnatural that while I have human form and wear [Shaftesbury's word] a human heart, I would throw off love, compassion, kindness, and not befriend mankind.—But oh! what treacheries! what disorders! and how corrupt everything is!. . . .—What charms there are in public companies! What harmony in courts and courtly places! How pleased is every face! How

courteous and humane the general way of behaving!—What creature capable of reflection, if he saw these aspects of our behaviour and didn't see anything else, wouldn't believe our earth to be a very heaven? What foreigner (the inhabitant, suppose, of some nearby planet) when he had travelled here and seen this outward face of things, would think of what was hidden beneath the mask?—But let him stay a while. Give him time to get a closer view, and to follow the members of our assemblies to their individual lairs so that he can see them in this new aspect.—Here he may see great men of the ministry, who not an hour ago in public appeared to be such friends, now craftily plotting each other's ruin, with the ruin of the state itself as a sacrifice to their ambition. Here he may also see those of a softer kind, who aren't ambitious and follow only love. But, Philocles, who would think it?

[Philocles reports that he laughed at this, because he began to suspect that his friend was in love and had been jilted. After he had explained his laughter, and been forgiven:] We naturally began coolly reasoning about the nature and cause of evil in general: through what

- •contingency,
- •chance,
- •fatal necessity,
- •will, or
- •permission

it came upon the world; and given that it had once come, why it should still persist. . . . This gradually led us into a delicately searching criticism of nature, whom you sharply accused of many absurdities that you thought her guilty of, in relation to mankind in particular.

I wanted to persuade you to think more even-handedly about nature, and to proportion her defects a little better. I thought that the trouble didn't lie entirely in one part, ·the human part·, as you placed it; but that everything had its share of drawbacks. Pleasure and pain, beauty and ugliness, good and evil, seemed to me to be interwoven everywhere; and the resultant mixture seemed to me to be agreeable enough, in the main. I likened this to some of those rich fabrics where the flowers and background were oddly put together, with irregular work and contrary colours that looked •bad in the pattern but •excellent and natural in the fabric.

But you wouldn't have it. Nothing would serve to excuse the faults or blemishes of *this* part of the creation, mankind, even if everything else was beautiful and without a blemish. On your account of things, even storms and tempests had their beauty—except for the ones that occurred in human breasts! It was only for this turbulent race of mortals that you offered to accuse nature. And I now discovered why you had been so carried away by the story of Prometheus [see Glossary]. You wanted someone like him to be responsible for making mankind; and you were tempted to wish that the story could be confirmed in modern theology, thus clearing the supreme powers of any part in the poor workmanship and leaving you free to rail against it without offending God.

But this, I told you, was only a flimsy evasion by the ancient religious poets. It was easy to answer every objection by a Prometheus:

- •Why did mankind have so much basic folly and perverseness?
- •Why did it have so much pride, such ambition, such strange appetites?
- •Why so many plagues, and curses on the first man and his posterity?

The answer was always 'Prometheus'. The sculptor with his unlucky hand solved everything. . . . They—·the religious poets·—thought they had won something if they could. . . .

put the evil cause one step further off. If the people asked a question, they answered them with a tale and sent them away satisfied. They thought that no-one apart from a few philosophers would be such busy-bodies as to look further or ask a second question.

And in reality, I continued, it's incredible how well a tale works to amuse adults as well as mere children; and how much easier it is to pay most men with this paper money than with sterling·-silver· reason. We oughtn't to laugh so readily at the Indian philosophers who tell their people that this huge frame of the world is supported 'by an elephant'. And how is the elephant supported? A shrewd question! but one that shouldn't be answered. It's only here that our Indian philosophers are to blame. They should be contented with the elephant, and go no further. But they have in reserve a tortoise whose back, they think, is broad enough. So the tortoise must bear the new load, and the whole thing is worse than before.

The heathen story of Prometheus was, I told you, much the same as this Indian one, except that the heathen mythologists were wise enough not to go beyond the first step. A single Prometheus was enough to take the weight from Jove. They really made Jove a mere onlooker. He decided, it seems, to be neutral and to see what would come of this notable experiment; how the dangerous man-maker would proceed; and what the outcome would be of his tampering. An excellent account, to satisfy the heathen vulgar! But how do you think a philosopher would take this? It wouldn't take him long to come up with this:

> Either the gods could have hindered Prometheus's creation, or they could not. If they could, they were answerable for the consequences; if they couldn't, they were no longer gods because they were thus limited and controlled. And their omnipotence was broken, *whatever* Prometheus did, and whether 'Prometheus' was a name for chance, destiny, some creative agent, or an evil daemon.

You admitted that it wasn't wise or right for such a hazardous affair as *creation* to be undertaken by those didn't have perfect foresight as well as perfect command. But you stuck by foresight: you accepted that the consequences were understood by the creating powers when they undertook their work; and you denied that it would have been better for them not to have done that work, even though they knew what the outcome would be.

It was better that the project should be carried out, whatever might become of mankind and however hard such a creation was like to be for most members of this miserable race. For it was impossible, you thought, that heaven should have acted in any way except for the best; so that even from this misery and evil of man something good undoubtedly arose—something that outweighed all the rest and made full amends.

I wondered how I came to draw this confession from you; and soon afterwards I found you somewhat uneasy with it. For here I took up your ·previous· side against you: presenting all those villainies and corruptions of mankind in the same light that you had done a few minutes earlier, I challenged you to say what advantage or good could possibly arise from this, or what excellence or beauty could result from the horrible pictures you yourself had drawn so realistically. Perhaps there's a very strong philosophical faith to persuade one that those dismal parts that you exhibited were only the necessary shades in a fine picture, to be reckoned among the beauties of the creation. Or perhaps a maxim that I was sure you didn't at all approve •in mankind seemed to you to be very fit •for heaven—I mean the maxim 'Do evil so that good may follow'.

This, I said, made me think of the manner of our modern Prometheuses, the hucksters who perform such wonders of many kinds here on our earthly stages. They could create diseases and do harm, in order to heal and to restore. But should we assign such a practice as this to heaven? Should we dare to represent the gods as quack 'doctors' of that sort, and poor nature as their patient? Was this a reason for nature's sickliness? If not, then how *did* she come—poor innocent!—to fall ill or go awry? If she had been created healthy from the outset, she would have continued so. It was no credit to the gods to leave her destitute, or with a flaw that would be expensive to mend and would make them sufferers for their own work [Shaftesbury's phrase].

I was going to bring Homer to witness for Jove's many troubles: the death of ·his son· Sarpedon, and the frequent interference with heaven's plans by the fatal sisters—·the Fates·. But I saw that this discourse displeased you. I had by this time openly revealed my inclination to scepticism. [He goes on to say that Palemon objected to his (Philocles's) way of defending first one thing and then its opposite.] This, you said, was my constant way in all debates: I was as well pleased with one side's case as with the other's; I never troubled myself about the outcome of the argument, but still laughed, whichever way it went; and even when I convinced others, I seemed never to be convinced myself.

I admitted to you, Palemon, there was truth enough in your accusation. Above all things (I explained) I loved •ease and •the philosophers who in reasoning were most at their ease and never angry or disturbed; and you agreed that this was true of the ones called *sceptics*. I regarded this kind of philosophy as the prettiest and most agreeable exercise of the mind that could be imagined. The other kind of philosophy, I thought, was painful and laborious: to keep always in the limits of one path, to drive always at a point, and to stick exactly to what men happen to call 'the truth'—something that seems very unfixed and hard to ascertain. Besides, my way hurt nobody. . . . In matters of religion I was further from profaneness and erroneous doctrine than anyone. I could never have the competence to shock my spiritual and intellectual superiors. I was the furthest from relying on my own understanding; and I didn't exalt reason above faith, or insist much on what the dogmatic men •call 'demonstration' and •dare oppose to the sacred mysteries of religion. And to show you how impossible it is for us sceptics ever to stray from the universal catholic and established faith, I pointed out that whereas others pretend to see with their own eyes what is best and most proper for them in religion, we don't claim to see with any eyes except those of our spiritual guides. And we don't take it upon ourselves to judge those guides ourselves; they are appointed for us by our lawful superiors, so we submit to them. In short, you who are rationalists and are guided by reason in everything, claim to know everything, while you believe little or nothing; we sceptics know nothing and believe everything.

At that I stopped; and your only response was to ask me coldly: 'With that fine scepticism of yours, is your failure to distinguish truth from falsehood and right from wrong in arguments matched by a refusal to distinguish sincerity from insincerity in actions?'

I didn't dare ask what you were driving at, because I was afraid I saw that all too clearly. By my loose way of talking, which I had learned in some fashionable conversations in the ·social· world, I had led you to suspect me of the worst sort of scepticism—the sort that spares nothing and overthrows all principles, moral and divine.

'Forgive me, good Palemon', I said. 'You are offended, I see, and not without reason. But what if I try to compensate for my sceptical misbehaviour by using a known sceptical

privilege in strenuously defending the cause I previously opposed? Don't think that I dare to aim as high as defending revealed religion or the holy mysteries of the Christian faith! I am unworthy of such a task, and would profane the subject if I tried. I'll be talking of mere philosophy: my idea is only to see what I can get from that source to help me •oppose the chief arguments for atheism and •re-establish what I have offered to dismantle in the system of theism.

'Your project', you said, 'looks likely to reconcile me to your character, which I was beginning to distrust. Much as I dislike •the cause of theism, and •the name 'deist' when used in a sense that excludes revelation, I do nevertheless consider that strictly speaking theism is the root of everything, and that one can't be a settled Christian without first being a good theist—i. e. without being opposed to polytheism and to atheism. And I can't stand hearing the label 'deist' (the highest of all names ·when properly understood·) decried and set in opposition to Christianity. As if our religion were a kind of *magic* that didn't depend on believing in a single supreme being. Or as if the firm and rational belief in such a being on philosophical grounds were an improper qualification for believing anything further. Excellent assumption for •those who are naturally inclined to disbelieve revelation and •those who through vanity affect a freedom of this kind!

'But let me hear', you went on, 'whether soberly and sincerely you intend to advance anything in favour of that opinion that is fundamental to all religion; or whether you are planning only to amuse yourself with the subject, as you did previously. Whatever your thoughts are, Philocles, I'm determined to force them from you. You can no longer plead that the time or place is unsuitable for such grave subjects. The gaudy scene has closed down with the sun; our company have long since left the field; and the solemn majesty of such a night as this may very well suit the profoundest meditation or the most serious discussion.'

Thus, Palemon, you continued to urge me, until I was forcibly drawn into the following vein of philosophical enthusiasm [see Glossary].

Section 3: Philocles pulls himself together

'You'll find then', I said (adopting a grave air), 'that I *can* be serious, and that I am probably becoming permanently so. Your over-seriousness a while ago, at such an inappropriate time, may have driven me to a contrary extreme in opposition to your melancholy mood. But now I have a better idea of the melancholy that you exhibited; and. . . .I'm convinced that it has a different foundation from any of those fanciful causes that I assigned to it this afternoon. No doubt love *is* at the bottom of it, but it's a nobler love than any that can be inspired by ordinary beautiful women.'

I now began to raise my voice and imitate the solemn way ·of speaking that· you had been teaching me. [Everything from here to the asterisks on page 11 is being said by Philocles.] Knowledgeable and experienced as you are in all the degrees and orders of beauty, in all the mysterious charms of the different forms of it, you rise to a more general level; and with a larger heart and a more capacious mind you generously [see Glossary] seek the very highest beauty in mankind. Not captivated by •the features of a pretty face or •the well-drawn proportions of a human body, you view •the life itself, and embrace •the mind that adds the lustre and provides the biggest contribution to the person's being lovable.

But the enjoyment of such a single beauty doesn't satisfy an aspiring soul such as yours. It wants to know how to combine a number of such beauties and to know how to bring them together to form a beautiful society. It views communities, friendships, relations, duties; and it considers

what harmony of particular minds constitutes the general harmony and establishes the commonwealth.

Then, not satisfied even with public good in •one community of men, your soul conceives a nobler object and with enlarged affection seeks the good of •mankind. . . .

- •Laws, constitutions, civil and religious rites (whatever civilizes or polishes raw mankind!);
- •the sciences and arts, philosophy, morals, virtue;
- •the flourishing state of human affairs, and
- •the perfection of human nature

—these are its delightful prospects, and this is the charm of beauty that attracts it.

Still eager in this pursuit (such is its love of order and perfection), it doesn't stop here, settling for the beauty of a **part** ·of the universe·. . . . It seeks the good of all, and has an affection towards the interest and prosperity of the **whole**. . . . It seeks order and perfection ·at this level of generality·, wishing for the best and hoping still to find a just and wise administration.

And since all hope of this would be pointless and idle if no universal mind presided; since without such a supreme intelligence and providential care, the chaotic universe is condemned to suffer infinite calamities; it's here that the generous mind works to discover the healing cause by which the interests of the whole are securely established, and the beauty of things and the universal order are happily sustained.

This, Palemon, is the work of your soul. And this its melancholy when, unsuccessfully pursuing the supreme beauty, it meets with darkening clouds that block its sight. Monsters arise, not from Libyan **deserts** but from the more **fertile** heart of man; and with their ferocious faces cast an unseemly reflection on nature. She, helpless (as she is thought to be), and working thus absurdly, is contemned [see Glossary], the government of the world is put on trial, and God is abolished.

Much has been said to show why nature errs, and how she came impotent and erring from an unerring hand. But I deny that she errs; and when she seems most ignorant or perverse in her productions, I say that even in those she is as wise and provident as she is in her best works. ·Let us look at what does go on in nature's operations·. Various interests get mixed together and interfere with one another; various kinds of subordinate natures oppose one another, and in their different operations the higher ones are sometimes subjected to the lower. But this isn't what men complain of the world's order. . . . On the contrary, it's from this order of inferior and superior things that we admire the world's beauty, based as it is on oppositions, while from such various and disagreeing principles a universal harmony is established.

Thus at the various levels of terrestrial forms, a •resignation is required, a •sacrifice and mutual yielding of natures one to another. Plants by their death sustain the animals; and animal bodies decay and enrich the earth, enabling plants to rise again. The numbers of insects are kept down by the superior kinds of birds and beasts; and these again are checked by man, who in his turn submits to other natures and resigns his body as a sacrifice, just as all the other organisms do. And if the sacrifice of interests can appear so right in natures that are so low-down and so little above each other, how much more reasonable it is for all lower natures be subjected to the superior nature of the world! That world, Palemon, which you were recently carried away by when the sun's fading light gave way to these bright stars and left you this wide system to contemplate.

Here are the laws that can't and oughtn't to submit to anything below. The central powers that hold the lasting orbs in their right positions and movements mustn't be interfered

with to save a fleeting form—e.g. to rescue from the precipice a puny animal whose brittle body will soon dissolve, however it is protected. . . . Anything that helps to nourish or preserve this earth must operate in its natural course, and other constitutions must submit to the good habit and constitution of the all sustaining globe.

So we shouldn't wonder if earthquakes, storms, pestilential blasts, nether or upper fires, or floods often afflict animal kinds and may sometimes bring ruin to whole species. Much less should we think it strange if—either by outward shock, or by some interior wound from hostile matter—particular animals are deformed even in their first conception, when disease invades the places of generation, and seminal parts are injured and obstructed in their precise labours. It's only then that monstrous [here = 'deformed'] shapes are seen: nature is still working as before, and not perversely or erroneously; not faintly, or with feeble endeavours; but overpowered by a superior rival and by another nature's justly conquering force. [That is a tricky sentence. Shaftesbury is saying that nature—'she', the whole great big thing—is behaving as she ought to do; and that when something goes wrong with some smaller item (which he is thinking of as **a nature**, though he doesn't say so), that's because it has been overcome by some other small item, **another nature**. You'll see this double use of 'nature' more clearly at work just before the asterisks below.] And it shouldn't surprise us that the interior form—the soul and temperament—shares in this occasional deformity and often sympathizes [see Glossary] with its close partner. No-one can be surprised at the sicknesses of sense or the depravity of minds enclosed in such frail bodies and dependent on such vulnerable organs.

This, then, is the solution you require. This is the source of the seeming blemishes in nature; and everything in it is natural and good. *Good* is what predominates; and every corruptible and mortal nature, when it dies or is corrupted, is merely yielding to some better ·nature·; and all ·subordinate natures· yield to the best and highest nature, which is incorruptible and immortal.

* * * * * *

I had hardly ended these words when you broke out in astonishment, asking what had come over me to produce such a sudden change of character, and to draw me into thoughts which you supposed must have some foundation in me since I could express them with such seeming affection as I had done.

'O Palemon!', I said. 'If only it had been my fortune to have met you the other day, when I had just come back to town after a conversation with a friend who lives in the country—a conversation that had, in one day or two, made such an impression on me that I would have suited you miraculously well. You would have thought that I had indeed been cured of my scepticism and levity, so as never again to have gone in for teasing at that wild rate on any subject, let alone subjects as serious as these are.

'Truly,' you said, 'I too wish I had met you at that time, or that the good and serious impressions of your friend had stayed with you without interruption until this moment. '

'Whatever they were, I wouldn't have lost touch with them, so as to find it hard (as you saw) to revive them on occasion, if I hadn't been afraid. ' 'Afraid!' you said. 'Afraid for whose sake—mine or yours?' 'For both,' I replied. 'For although I seemed to be perfectly cured of my •scepticism, it was by what I thought worse, downright •enthusiasm. ·My friend in the country·—you never knew a more agreeable enthusiast! [see Glossary]

'If he were *my* friend,' you said, 'I wouldn't be apt to talk about him in such an outspoken way; and perhaps I

wouldn't classify as "enthusiasm" the attitude that you so freely describe in that way. I have a strong suspicion that you are unfair to your friend. But I can't know for sure until I hear more about that serious conversation for which you accuse him of being enthusiastic. '

'I must admit', I said, 'that he had nothing of the savage air of the common run of enthusiasts. All was serene, soft, and harmonious. The manner of his discourse was more like •the pleasing raptures of the ancient poets that you are often charmed with than like •the fierce unsociable way of modern zealots—those starched gruff gentlemen who guard religion as a lover guards his mistress, adoring something that he won't allow others to inspect and doesn't care to inspect for himself in a good light, so that he gives us a low opinion of his lady's merit and of his intelligence!. . . . There was nothing in the way of disguise or paint. Everything was fair, open, and genuine, as is nature herself. It was nature that he was in love with; it was nature that he sang. If anyone could be said to have a *natural mistress* my friend certainly could; that is how engaged his heart was. But I found that although the object was different, this was still *love*—like any other love. And although the object here was very fine, and the passion it created very noble, I still thought that liberty was finer than anything else (·my difficulty about love being precisely that it robs one of liberty·). I never cared to engage in more than a momentary love of anything other ·than liberty·; and I'm especially afraid of this love that had such a power with my poor friend that it made him seem to be the most perfect example of *enthusiast* in the world—except for the bad temper, ·which he doesn't have·. This was remarkable in him: he had •all of the enthusiast and •nothing of the bigot. He heard everything with mildness and delight, and put up with me when I treated all his thoughts as visionary [= roughly 'as intellectual day-dreams'] and when, sceptic-like, I unravelled all his systems.'

This is the character and description that pleased you so much that you would hardly let me finish. I found that it was impossible to give you satisfaction without reciting the gist of what happened in those two days between my friend and me in our country retreat. I warned you repeatedly: you didn't know the danger of this philosophical passion; you hadn't considered what you might be pulling down on yourself, making me the cause of it! I had gone far enough already, and it was at your own risk that you were pushing me further.

Nothing I could say made the least impression on you. But rather than proceed any further at that time I promised for your sake to turn writer, and put down a record of those two philosophical days. I was to begin with yesterday's conversation between you and me; and you see that I have done that, by way of introduction to my story. . . .

Part II: First day: Conversations among four

Philocles is still writing to Palemon

Section 1: Pleasure, love, suicide

[He begins with a flowery and mildly tiresome account of a dream that freshened his memory of the conversation he has promised Palemon to report in detail. Then:] I went to the home of Theocles, the companion and guide of my first thoughts on these deep subjects, and was told that he was roving in the fields, reading. And that is where I found him. The moment he saw me, his book vanished and he came with friendly haste to meet me. After we had embraced, I revealed my curiosity to know what he was reading, and asked if it was a secret to which I couldn't be admitted. On this he showed me: he was reading the poet Virgil. He said with a smile: 'Now tell me truly, Philocles, didn't you expect some more mysterious book than this?' I admitted that I did, considering his character, which I took to be of such a contemplative kind.

Theocles: And do you think that without being contemplative one can truly enjoy these more divine poets?

Philocles: Indeed, I never thought that to read Virgil or Horace one needed to become contemplative or retire [see Glossary] from the world.

Theocles: You have named two poets who can hardly be thought to be much alike, though they were friends, and equally good poets. . . . Do you think there's any frame of mind so fitted for reading them as that in which they wrote? I am sure they both joined heartily in love for retirement, given that for the sake of a life and habit of the sort you call 'contemplative' they were willing to sacrifice the highest advantages, pleasures, and favour of an ·imperial· court. But I'm willing to go further in defence of retirement. It's not only the best authors that require this seasoning; so does the best company. Society itself can't be rightly enjoyed without some abstinence and separate thought. Everything becomes insipid, dull, and tiresome without the help of some intervals of retirement. Haven't you, Philocles, often found this to be so? Lovers who don't want to be parted for a moment—do they understand their own interests? A couple who chose to live together on such terms—would they be courteous friends, do you think? Then what pleasure would the world have (that common world of mixed and undistinguished company) without a little solitude, without occasionally stepping aside,. . . .away from the tedious circle of noise and show that forces wearied mankind to look to every poor diversion for relief?

Philocles: By your rule there should be no such thing as happiness or good in life, since every enjoyment wears out so soon and, growing painful, is diverted by some other thing, and that again by some other, and so on. I'm sure that if solitude serves as a remedy or diversion to anything in the world, then there's nothing that can't serve as a diversion to solitude, which needs it more than anything else. So there can't be anything *good* that is regular or constant. Happiness is a remote thing that can be found only in wandering.

Theocles: O Philocles, I rejoice to find you in the pursuit of 'happiness and good', however you may 'wander'! Although you doubt whether there is any such thing, you are at least *reasoning*, and that's enough—there is still hope. But see what you have unknowingly committed yourself to! You can't think of anything that is •constantly good, from which you

have inferred that there isn't anything •good; so you must be accepting as a maxim (a true one in my opinion) that *nothing can be good but what is constant*.

Philocles: I admit that the only worldly satisfactions that I know of are inconstant. The things that provide it never stay; and the good itself, whatever it may be, depends as much on mood as on fortune. A satisfaction that isn't wiped out by •chance will often be wiped out by •time. [This contrast between chance and time is not well worded. What Shaftesbury is talking about is the contrast between •events in the outside world and •changes within the person.] Aging, change of temperament, other thoughts, a different passion, new engagements, a new turn of life or conversation—the least of these can be fatal, sufficient on its own to destroy enjoyment. Though the object remains the same, the enjoyment of it changes, and the short-lived good expires. Can you tell me of anything in life that isn't so •changeable and •subject to the same common fate of satiety and disgust?

Theocles: I gather that the current notion of *good* isn't good enough for you. You can afford to be sceptical about something over which no-one else will even hesitate. Almost every one philosophises dogmatically on this topic. All are positive that *our real good is pleasure*.

Philocles: I might be better satisfied with that if they would tell us *which* or *what sort*, pinning down the species and distinct kind ·of pleasure· that must constantly remain the same and be equally satisfying at all times. ·This pinning down is needed, because the ordinary meaning of 'pleasure' is useless here. In everyday speech· •'will' and •'pleasure' are synonymous, everything that pleases us is called 'pleasure', and in every choice we make we choose what we please; so it is trivial to say 'Pleasure is our good', because this means no more than 'We choose what we think eligible' [= 'what we think is worth having'] and 'We are pleased with what delights or pleases us'. The question is *Are we rightly pleased?* and *Do we choose as we should do?* Children are highly pleased with trinkets, or with whatever affects their tender senses; but we can't sincerely *admire* their enjoyment or see them as possessing some extraordinary good. Yet we know that their senses are as keen and as susceptible of pleasure as our own. The same thought holds for mere animals, many of whom surpass us in the liveliness and delicacy of their sensations. ·And another point·: some of mankind's low and sordid pleasures I would never label as 'happiness' or 'good', however long they lasted and however much they were valued by their enjoyers.

Theocles: Would you then appeal from the immediate feeling and experience of someone who is pleased and satisfied with what he enjoys?

Philocles (continuing the same zeal that Theocles had stirred in me against those dogmatisers on pleasure): Most certainly I would appeal! Is there any creature on earth, however sordid, who doesn't prize his own enjoyment?. . . . Isn't malice and cruelty extremely enjoyable for some natures? Isn't a hoggish life the height of some men's wishes? You surely won't ask me to *list* all the species of sensations what men of certain tastes have adopted as their chief pleasure and delight. Some men have even found diseases to be valuable and worth preserving, merely for the pleasure found in soothing the burning of an irritating sensation. And these absurd epicures are like those who arrange to be in states of unnatural thirst and appetite and clear the way for further intake by preparing emetics to swallow as the last dessert. . . . I know that it's proverbially said that *tastes are different, and mustn't be disputed*, and I remember seeing some such motto on a picture illustrating it—a drawing of a fly feeding

on a certain lump. The food, however vile, was natural to the fly, and there was no absurdity in this. But if you show me

- a brutish or a barbarous *man* getting pleasure in such a way, or
- a sot in his solitary debauch, or
- a tyrant exercising his cruelty,

with this motto over him forbidding me to object, this wouldn't make me think better of his enjoyment. And I can't possibly suppose that a mere sordid wretch with a base abject soul and the best fortune in the world was ever capable of any real enjoyment.

Theocles: This zeal that you show in the refuting a wrong hypothesis leads me to suspect that you really do have some notion of a right, and that you are starting to think that there might possibly be such a thing as good after all.

Philocles: I'm free to admit that one thing may be nearer to good, more like good, than another, while still waiting to be told what real good is. All I know is this: either all pleasure is good, or only some; if all, then every kind of sensuality must be precious and desirable; if only some, then it's for us to try to discover what kind of pleasure is good—what it is that distinguishes one pleasure from another, making one pleasure indifferent, sorry, low-down, mean and another valuable and worthy. And it's by this stamp, this ·demarcating· character, if there is one, that we must define *good*, and not by pleasure itself, which may be very great and yet very contemptible. And no-one can truly judge the value of any immediate sensation without first judging regarding his own frame of mind. What we regard as a happiness in one frame of mind is regarded differently in another. So we have to think about which frame of mind is the soundest: how to achieve the viewpoint from which we have the best chance to see clearly; how to get ourselves into the unbiased state in which we are fittest to pronounce. [In this paragraph, 'frame of mind' replaces 'situation of mind'.]

Theocles: O Philocles, if this is sincerely your sentiment; if you can have the courage to withhold your assent in this matter, and go *in search of* what the lowest of mankind think they already *know* so certainly, you have a nobler turn of thought than what you have observed in any of the modern sceptics you have conversed with. For these days there seem to be hardly any people anywhere who •are more dogmatically confident and •less thoughtful concerning the choice of good. Those who claim to be making such a scrutiny of other evidences are the readiest to accept the evidence of the greatest deceivers in the world, namely their own passions. Having been liberated (they think) from some seeming constraints of religion, they think they are making a perfect use of this liberty by following the first motion [see Glossary] of their will, and assenting to the first dictate or report of any enticing fancy [see Glossary], any dominant opinion or conception of good. So that their privilege is merely that of being perpetually confused, and their liberty is that of being imposed on in their most important choice! I think it's safe to say that

> the greatest fool is the one who •deceives himself, and on the topic that's greatest importance to him •thinks he certainly knows that which he has least studied, that of which he is most profoundly ignorant.

He who is ignorant and knows his ignorance is much wiser. And to do justice to these fashionable men of wit—·these modern sceptics·—they aren't all so dim as not to perceive something of their own blindness and absurdity. For often when they seriously reflect on their past pursuits and engagements they freely admit that they don't know whether in the rest of their lives they will be of a piece with themselves [Shaftesbury's phrase], or whether their whim, mood, or passion

won't lead them to a quite different choice of pleasures and to disapproval of everything they have enjoyed until now. A comfortable reflection!

T: To bring the satisfactions of the mind and the enjoyments of reason and judgment under the label 'pleasure' is merely fraudulent—an obvious retreat from the common meaning of the word. Those who in their philosophical hour classify as 'pleasure' something that at an ordinary time and in everyday life is so little regarded as a pleasure are not dealing not fairly with us. The mathematician who labours at his problem, the bookish man who toils, the artist who voluntarily endures the greatest hardships and fatigues—none of these are said to 'follow pleasure', and the men of pleasure wouldn't admit them into their ranks. Satisfactions that are purely mental and depend only on the motion of a thought are very probably too refined for the understandings of our modern epicures, who are so taken up with pleasure of a more substantial kind. Those who are full of the idea of **(a)** such a sensible [here = 'perceptible'] solid good can't have more than a vanishingly thin idea of **(b)** the 'merely' spiritual and intellectual sort. But it's **(b)** the latter that they set up and magnify at times when they are trying to avoid the disgrace that may come to them from **(a)** the former. Once this ·lip-service· has been done, **(b)** can take its chance: its use is immediately at an end. When men of this sort have recommended the enjoyments of the mind under the title of 'pleasure'—when they have thus dignified the word by bringing under it whatever is mentally good or excellent—they can then comfortably allow it to slide down again into its own genuine and vulgar sense, from which they raised it only to serve a turn. The next time pleasure is called in question and •attacked, reason and virtue are again called in to her aid and made principal parts of her constitution. There arises a complex affair that includes everything that is generous, honest, and beautiful in human life. But when the •attack is over and the objection removed, the spectre vanishes and pleasure returns again to her former shape. . . . If this rational sort of enjoyment were admitted into the notion of good, how could that notion *also* include the kind of sensation whose effect is opposite to this enjoyment? ·Opposite? Yes, because· it's certain that for **(b)** the mind and its enjoyments the thrusting excitement of **(a)** mere •pleasure is as disturbing as the insistent vexation of •pain. . . .

Philocles (interrupting): By the way, sincere as I am in questioning whether pleasure is really good, I'm not such a sceptic as to doubt whether all pain is really bad.

Theocles: Whatever is •grievous can't be other than bad. But what is grievous to one person is not so much as •troublesome to another—let sportsmen, soldiers, and other such hardy folk be witnesses to this. Indeed, what is pain to one person is outright pleasure to another, as. . . .we very well know, from the fact that men vary in their apprehension of these sensations, and quite often confuse them with one another. Hasn't even nature herself in some respects blended them together, so to speak? A wise man once said that nature has joined the extremity of one so neatly into the other that it absolutely runs into it and is indistinguishable.

Philocles: Thus, if

- •pleasure and pain are thus convertible and mixed, if (as your account says)
- •what is now pleasure becomes pain when it is strained a little too far, if
- •pain, when carried far, creates again the highest pleasure merely by ceasing, and if
- •some pleasures are pains to some people, and some pains are pleasure to others,

this all supports my opinion, showing that there's nothing you can point to that can really stand as *good*. For pleasure is good if anything is. And if pain is bad (as I'm forced to take for granted) then we have

the rest of the sentence: a shrewd chance on the ill side indeed, but none at all on the better.

apparently meaning: we have an excellent chance of having more bad experiences than good ones, and no chance of having more good ones than bad.

So we can reasonably suspect that life itself is mere misery, since we can never be gainers by it and are likely to be losers every hour of our lives. Accordingly, what our English poetess says of good should be true: *It is good not to be born*. [Katherine Philips; that line is now famous from its occurrence in a work by Epicurus—as something he is criticising.] For any good we can expect in life, we might as well beg pardon of nature and return her gift without waiting for her to send for it. What should hinder us? How are we the better for living?

Theocles: That's a good question; but why be in such a hurry if the issue is doubtful? This, my good Philocles, is surely a plain transgression of your sceptical boundaries. We must be pretty dogmatic to arrive confidently at your conclusion! It involves deciding about death as much as about life—deciding what might be the case with us after death and what couldn't be. To be assured that we can't ever be concerned in anything •after our death we need to understand perfectly what it is that concerns or engages us in anything •now. We must truly know ourselves, knowing what this *self* of ours consists in. We must settle the question of pre-existence with a negative answer; and ·for that· we need a better reason for believing *We were never concerned in anything before our birth* than merely the fact that *We don't remember—or are not conscious of—any such concern*. It has often happened in the past that we have formed intentions of which we now have no memory or awareness. For all we know to the contrary, this could go on happening—for ever! All is revolution in us [meaning, perhaps: 'We are not things; we are processes']. We aren't the very same matter or system of matter from one day to the next; we live by succession, and only perish and are renewed. What successiveness there may be in the after-life, we don't know. We soothe ourselves with the assurance that our interests will come to an end when a certain shape or form does so; but that is silly. What interested us at first in it—·i.e. what initially made us care about the continuance of that shape or form·—we don't know, any more than we know how we have since held on ·to that interest or concern· and continue still to care about this assemblage of fleeting particles. As for what concerns we *will* come to have—in addition to that one or instead of it—we don't know either; and we can't tell how chance or providence may some day dispose of us. And if Providence is involved in this, we have still more reason to consider how we undertake to dispose of ourselves. A sceptic, of all people, should hesitate over decisions to exchange one condition for another. Although he acknowledges no present good or enjoyment in life, he shouldn't try to alter his condition unless he is sure of **bettering** it. But so far, Philocles, you and I haven't even settled between us whether in this present life there is any such thing as real **good**.

Philocles: Then you be my instructor, wise Theocles, and inform me:

> The good that can provide contentment and satisfaction always alike, without changing or fading—what is it? where is it?

Sometimes in some contexts the mind may be so engaged and the passion so worked up that just then no bodily suffering or pain can alter it; but this can't happen often, and is

unlikely to last long; because in the absence of pain and inconvenience the passion itself soon does the job: the mind disengages, and the temperament, tired of repetition, finds no more enjoyment and turns to something new.

Theocles: Hear then! I don't claim to tell you right now the nature of what I call 'good'; but I would like to show you something of it *in yourself*. It's something that you will acknowledge to be naturally more fixed and constant than anything you have thought of so far. Tell me, my friend: did you ever grow weary of doing good to those you loved? Tell me when you ever found it unpleasing to serve a friend? Or is it rather the case that now, after such a long experience, you feel this generous [see Glossary] pleasure as much as you ever did? Believe me, Philocles, *this* pleasure is more corrupting than any other. No soul has ever done good without •becoming readier to do the same again and •enjoying doing it more. . . . Answer me, Philocles, you who •are such a judge of beauty and •have such good taste in ·matters of· pleasure: is anything you admire as fair as friendship? Is anything as charming as a generous action? Then what would it be like if all life were in reality nothing but one continued friendship and could be made one such entire act? [From 'but one. . . ' onwards that sentence is verbatim Shaftesbury.] That would surely be the fixed and constant good you were looking for. Or would you look for anything more?

Philocles: [His opening words rather obscurely convey the suggestion that:] this 'good' of yours is chimerical, ·a mere fantasy·. Perhaps a poet might work up such a single action so as to make a **stage-play** hold together; but I can't have a robust conception of how this high strain of friendship could be so managed as to fill a **life**. And I can't imagine what could be the object of such a sublime heroic passion.

Theocles: Can any friendship be as heroic as friendship towards *mankind*? Do you think the love of friends in general, and of one's country, to be nothing? Or that friendship between individuals can flourish in the absence of such an enlarged affection and a sense of obligation to society? Try saying that you are a friend but hate your country. Try saying that you are true to the interests of a companion but false to the interests of society. Can you believe yourself? Or will you. . . .refuse to be called the 'friend' since you renounce the man? [From 'refuse. . . ' onwards that is verbatim Shaftesbury.]

Philocles: I don't think that anyone who claims the name 'friend' will deny that there is something due to mankind. Indeed, I would hardly allow the name 'man' to anyone who wasn't anyone's friend. But someone who really is a •friend is •man enough; a single friendship can acquit him. He has deserved a friend, and is man's friend—though not strictly, or according to your high moral sense, the friend of *mankind*. As for this latter sort of friendship: wiser people may see it as more than ordinarily manly, and even as heroic, as you say it is; but I have to say that I see so little worth in •mankind, and have such an indifferent opinion of [here = 'such a ho-hum attitude towards'] •the public, that I can't expect much satisfaction to myself in loving •either.

Theocles: Do you take bounty and gratitude to be among the acts of friendship and good nature?

Philocles: Undoubtedly—they are the chief ones.

Theocles: Suppose then that the obliged person discovers several failings in the obliger, ·the benefactor·—does this exclude the gratitude of the beneficiary?

Philocles: Not in the least.

Theocles: Or does it make the exercise of gratitude less pleasing?

Philocles: I think rather the contrary. For when I ·as beneficiary· don't have any other way of making a return, I might rejoice in having one sure way of showing my gratitude to my benefactor, namely putting up with his failings as a friend.

Theocles: And as for bounty: should we do good only to those who deserve it? Is it only to a good neighbour, or relative, a good father, child, or brother? Or do nature, reason, and humanity teach us to do good to one's father because he is one's father, to one's child because he is one's child, and so on with every relation in human life?

Philocles: I think this last is the most right.

Theocles: Then consider, Philocles, what you said when you •objected against the love of mankind because of human frailty and •seemed to scorn the public because of its misfortunes. See if this attitude is consistent with the humanity that you have and practise in other contexts. ·It pretty clearly isn't·.

- •Where can generosity exist if not here?
- •Where can we ever exert friendship if not in this 'chief' subject?
- •What should we be true or grateful to if not to •mankind and •the society to which we are so deeply indebted?
- •What are the faults or blemishes that can •excuse such an omission or •lessen a grateful mind's satisfaction in making a grateful kind return?

Can you then, merely out of good breeding and your natural temperament, •rejoice to show civility, courtesy, and obligingness, •seek objects of compassion, and •be pleased with every occurrence where you have power to do some service even to people you don't know? Can you delight in such episodes in foreign countries or with strangers here in England—to help. . . .all who require it, in the most hospitable, kind, and friendly manner? And can your country—or, what is more, your species—require less kindness from you, or deserve less to be considered, than even one of these chance beneficiaries? O Philocles! How little do you know the extent and power of good nature, and to what an heroic pitch it can raise a soul. . . .

Just as he had ended these words, a servant came to us in the field, to announce that some people who had come to dine with us were waiting for us to join them. So we walked homewards. On the way I told Theocles that I was afraid that I would never be a good friend or lover by his standards. As for a plain natural *love of one single person* of either sex, I could manage that well enough, I thought; but this complex universal sort ·of affection· was beyond my reach. I could love the individual, but not the species. A species was too mysterious—too metaphysical—an object for me. In short, I couldn't love anything of which I didn't have some sensible material image—·that I couldn't see in my mind's eye·.

Theocles: What? Can you never love except in that manner? But I know that you admired and loved a friend long before you knew him in person. Or was Palemon's character not at work when it engaged you in the long correspondence that preceded your recent meetings with him?

Philocles: I have to admit that. And now I think I understand your mystery and see how I must prepare for it. When I first began to love Palemon, I was forced to form a certain image of him as a kind of material object, having this ready drawn in my mind whenever I thought of him; and that's what I must try to do in the case before us. I have to see whether I can, perhaps with your help, raise ·in my mind· an image or spectre that could represent this odd being that you want me to love.

Theocles: I think you might have the same indulgence for nature or mankind as you do for the people of ancient Rome. Despite their blemishes I have known you to love them in many ways, especially when represented by ·a sculpture of· a beautiful youth called 'the genius ·or spirit· of the people'. I remember an occasion when we were viewing some pieces of antiquity where the people were represented in that way and you thought well of them.

Philocles: Indeed, if I could stamp on my mind a figure of the kind you speak of—whether it stood for •mankind or •nature—it might well have its effect, so that I could perhaps become a lover in your fashion; more especially if you could arrange for things to be reciprocal between us, bringing me into the imagination of this genius, so that it could be aware of my love and capable of returning it. Without that, I would be a poor love, even of the most perfect beauty in the world.

Theocles: That is enough. I accept the terms: if you promise to love, I'll try to show you the beauty that I regard as the most perfect and most deserving of love; and it won't fail to make a return. [In flowery language he proposes that they meet in the woods tomorrow morning and see whether, after invoking first the genius of that place they can get] at least some faint and distant view of the sovereign genius and first beauty. If you can bring yourself to contemplate this, I assure you that all those forbidding features and uglinesses—whether of nature or of mankind—will vanish in an instant, and leave you the lover I want you to be. But now, enough! Let us go to our friends, and change the topic of conversation to something more suitable for them and for our dinner-table.

Section 2: Temperance, moderation

You see here, Palemon, what a foundation is laid for the enthusiasms I told you of [page 12]—ones that I thought (and I told you this) were all the more dangerous because so very odd and out of the way. But curiosity had seized you, I perceived, as it had earlier seized me. For after this first conversation, I must admit, I longed for nothing as much as the next day and the appointed morning walk in the woods. [The walk in the woods will begin on page 49.]

We had only a couple of friends at dinner with us; and for a good while we talked about news and things that don't matter; until I, with my mind still running on the topics I had been discussing with Theocles, gladly picked up on some chance remark about friendship, and said that for my part, truly, though I used to think I had known friendship, and really regarded myself as a good friend during my whole life, I was now persuaded to believe that I was no better than a learner, because Theocles had almost convinced me that to be a friend to anyone in particular I had first to be a friend to mankind. And how to qualify myself for such a friendship was, I thought, a considerable difficulty.

Theocles: In saying this you have given us a very poor idea of your character. If you had spoken in this way about the 'difficulty' of having a friendship with a great man at court—or perhaps of a court itself—and had complained about how hard it was for you to attract the attention of people like those who governed there, we would have inferred (in your defence) that the courtier or the court had set •conditions that were unworthy of you. But to deserve well of the public, and to be rightly recognised as a 'friend of mankind', requires no more than to be good and virtuous; and that is a •condition that one would naturally want to satisfy.

Philocles: How does it come about, then, that even these good conditions themselves are so poorly received and hardly ever accepted except on further conditions? For virtue by itself is thought to be a poor bargain: and I know few, even among religious and devout people, who take up with it in any way except as children do with nasty medicine—where the potent motives are the rod and the sweetmeat.

Theocles: Those who need force or persuasion to do what is conducive to their health and welfare are children indeed, and should be treated as such. But where, please, are those forbidding circumstances that would make virtue so hard to swallow? Perhaps one of them is this: you think that virtue would keep you away from the fine tables and expensive food of our modern epicures, reducing you to always eating as badly as you are doing now, on a plain dish or two and no more!

I protested that this was unfair to me. I didn't want ever to eat otherwise than I was doing right then at his table. . . . For, if we could go by the opinion of Epicurus, the highest pleasures in the world were provided by temperance and moderate use.

Theocles: If then the merest pursuer of pleasure, even Epicurus himself, made that favourable report of temperance (so different from his modern disciples!), if he could boldly say that with such food as a lowly garden provides he could compete even with the gods for happiness, how can we say of this part of virtue—·i.e. of temperance and moderation·—that it can't be accepted except on conditions? If the practice of temperance is so harmless in itself, are its consequences harmful? Does it sap the mind's vigour, consume the body, and make both mind and body less fit for their proper uses—the ·mind's· enjoyment of reason or sense and the ·body's· employments and offices of civil life? Or does temperance put a man into worse relationships with his friends or with mankind? Is a gentleman of this kind to be pitied, as someone who is burdensome to himself, whom all men will naturally shun as a bad friend and a corrupter of society and good manners? Shall we think about our gentleman in a public trust, and see whether he is likely to succeed best with this restraining quality, ·this moderateness·, or whether he may be more relied on and thought more uncorrupt if his appetites are high and his taste strong for that which we call pleasure? Shall we consider him as a soldier in a campaign or siege and think about how we might be best defended if we had need for the service of such a one? Which officer would be best for the soldiers; which soldier best for the officers; which army best for their country? What do you think of our gentleman as a travelling companion? Would his temperance make him a bad choice? Would it be better and more delightful to have a companion who at any difficult time would be the most ravenous and eager to provide first for himself and his own delicate sensations? I don't know what to say where beauty is concerned. Perhaps the amorous ladies' men and refiners on this sort of pleasure may have so refined their minds and temperaments that, despite their accustomed indulgence, they can, when need be, renounce their enjoyment rather than violate honour, faith, or justice. So the bottom line is that little virtue or worth will be ascribed to this patient sober character. The dull temperate man is no fitter to be trusted than the elegant luxurious one. Innocence, youth, and fortune may be as well committed to the care of this latter gentleman. He would prove as good an executor, as good a trustee, as good a guardian, as he would a friend. The family that trusted him would be secure; and very probably no dishonour would come from the honest man of pleasure.

Theocles said all this with a straight face, which made it all the funnier; and it got the guests going, saying a great many good things on the same subject, in commendation of a temperate life. So that our dinner by this time being ended, and the wine (according to custom) placed before us, I found that we were still not likely to proceed to a debauch! Everyone drank only as he fancied, in no order or proportion, and with no regard to circular healths or pledges [i.e. taking turns around the table in proposing (and drinking) toasts]—something that the sociable men with a different scheme of morals would have condemned as a dreadful irregularity and corruption of good fellowship!

Philocles: I admit that I'm far from thinking that temperance is so disagreeable. As for this part of virtue, I think there is no need to take it on any 'conditions' except the advantage of its saving one from intemperance and from the desire for things one doesn't need.

Theocles: What! Have you advanced this far? And can you carry this temperance to estates and honours, by opposing it to avarice and ambition? Well, then, you really have made a good start on this journey: you have passed the channel and are more than half way to the destination. There remains no further reason for hesitation about espousing virtue—unless you will declare yourself a coward or conclude that being a born coward is a happiness! For if you can be temperate towards *life*, and think it not so great a business whether your life is long or short and are satisfied with what you have lived—rising as a thankful guest from a full liberal entertainment—isn't this the sum of all? the finishing stroke and very accomplishment of virtue? In this frame of mind, what can block us from forming for ourselves as heroic a character as we please? What is there that is good, generous, or great and doesn't naturally flow from such a modest temperance? Let us once achieve this simple plain-looking virtue, and see whether the more shining virtues won't follow. See what that country of the mind will produce when by the wholesome laws of this legislatress it has obtained its liberty! ['legislatress' = 'female legislator' = virtue, personified]. You, Philocles, who are such an admirer of civil liberty, and can represent it to yourself with a thousand different graces and advantages—can't you imagine a grace or beauty in that original native liberty which

- sets us free from so many in-born tyrannies,
- gives us the privilege of *ourselves*, and
- makes us our own, and independent?

Having this property, I think, *matters* to us as completely as does having the sort of property that consists in lands or income.

[Theocles continues with an elaborate and slightly jokey account of 'this moral dame' Virtue and 'her political sister' Liberty, in terms of how each would appear in an ancient Roman painting of her triumph—her formal victory parade—with •allied abstractions alongside her in her chariot and •defeated ones 'at the chariot wheels as captives'. This colourful passage is hard to grasp, but we don't need it for what follows. Philocles reports that the other two in the group picked up where Theocles had left off, 'designing upon the same subject after the ancient manner'. Then:]

Philocles: Gentlemen, the descriptions you have been making are no doubt the finest in the world; but after you have made Virtue as glorious and triumphant as you please, I will bring you an authentic picture of another kind, showing this triumph in reverse: Virtue herself a captive, and by a proud conqueror triumphed over, degraded, stripped of all her honours, and defaced, so as to retain hardly one single feature of real beauty.

I couldn't carry on with this because I was so violently denounced by my two fellow guests. They protested that they would never be brought to admit such a detestable picture: and one of them (a formal sort of gentleman, somewhat advanced in years) looked at me earnestly and said angrily that until now he had had some hopes of me, despite observing my freedom of thought and hearing me quoted as a passionate lover of liberty; but he was sorry to find that my principle of liberty ended up as a 'liberty from all principles'. He thought it would take a *libertine in principle* to approve of such a picture of virtue as only an atheist could have the impudence to make.

Theocles sat silent through all this; but he saw that I didn't care about my antagonists, and kept my eye fixed steadily on *him*, waiting to hear what he would say. At last, with a deep sigh, he said. . .

Theocles: O Philocles, how well you are master of the cause you have chosen to defend! How well you know the way to gain advantage for the worst of causes from the imprudent management of those who defend the best! Speaking for myself, I dare not say as my worthy friends have done that only the atheist can lay this load on virtue, and picture her thus disgracefully. No. There are other less suspect hands that may do her more injury though with more plausibility.

T: (turning towards his guests) It must have appeared strange to you to hear asserted with such assurance as has been done by Philocles that virtue could with any show of reason be made a victim. You couldn't conceive of any tolerable ground for such a spectacle. In this reversed triumph you expected perhaps to see some foreign conqueror exalted ·as the conqueror, with virtue at his chariot wheel·—perhaps vice itself, or pleasure, wit, spurious philosophy, or some false image of truth or nature. It didn't occur to you that the cruel enemy opposed to virtue should be religion itself! But you'll recall that virtue is often treated in this way—innocently, with no treacherous design—by people who want to magnify to the utmost the corruption of man's heart, and who think they are praising religion when they talk about the falsehood of human virtue. How many religious authors and sacred orators turn their swords this way and strike at moral virtue as a kind of step-dame or rival to religion! ·According to them·: Morality mustn't be spoken of; nature has no legitimate claims; reason is an enemy; common justice is folly; and virtue is misery. Who wouldn't be vicious if he had a choice? who would refrain from bad conduct for any reason except that he must? Who would value virtue if it weren't for ·the prospect of rewards or punishments in· the hereafter?

the old gentleman (interrupting him): If *this* is the triumph of religion, it's a triumph that her greatest enemy, I believe, would hardly deny her! I still think, with Philocles's leave, that it's no great sign of tenderness for religion to be so zealous in honouring her at the cost of virtue.

Philocles: Perhaps so; but you'll admit that there *are* many such zealots in the world; and you have heard Theocles accepting that there is a certain harmony between •this zeal and •what you call 'atheism'. But let us hear him out, if he will be so good as to tell us what he thinks of the general run of our religious writers and of their method of encountering their common enemy, the atheist. This is a subject that needs to be clarified. It's a notorious fact that the chief opposers of atheism disagree with one another in the principles they are arguing from, so that in a way they confute themselves. Some of them zealously defend virtue, and are realists about this [i.e. they hold that there are objective real-world *facts* about what is right and what wrong]. Others can be called 'nominal moralists': they hold that virtue is nothing

in itself; it's a mere creature of our wills, or a mere name of fashion. (It's the same in natural science: some take one hypothesis and some another.) I would be glad to discover the true foundation, and identify those who effectively refute their other antagonists as well as the atheists, and rightly assert the joint cause of virtue and religion.

Here, Palemon, I had my wish. For I gradually led Theocles to express himself fully on these subjects. This served as a prelude to the conversation we were to have the next morning—the conversation I so impatiently longed for. If •his speculations the next day were of a rational kind, this previous discourse would help me to understand them; and if •they turned out to be only pleasing fancies this would help me to get more pleasure from them.

Here, then, began his criticism of authors. It gradually turned into a continued discourse; so that if this had been at a university, Theocles might very well have passed for some grave divinity Professor or teacher of ethics reading an afternoon lecture to his pupils.

Section 3: Defending Shaftesbury's *Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit*

Theocles: It would undoubtedly be a happy cause that could have the benefit of managers who would never give their adversaries any handle of advantage against it! I could wish that the cause of religion had such defenders. But it's possible to write badly even in the best of causes, and I'm inclined to think that this great cause of religion may have been at least as much at risk as any other. Why? Because those who write in defence of religion have no reason to fear personal censure or criticism, and this encourages them to write without much caution. [The rest of this paragraph is hard to follow. Its gist is this. Someone defending religion against atheism knows that his opponent won't dare to come out in the open; he can be challenged, but he won't show up on the field of battle. So the defender of religion congratulates himself on his 'imaginary triumph'; but he may have written things that are actually harmful to religion, and his atheist adversary may in a more private and indirect way inflict hits on religion.]

Philocles (interrupting): Perhaps then there was truth in what was once said by a person who seemed zealous for religion, namely that no-one wrote well against the atheists except the clerk who drew up the warrant for their execution.

Theocles: If that joke were the sober truth, that would put an end to all dispute or reasoning about religion, for there's no work for reason to do where force is necessary. And, on the other hand, if reason is needed then force must be laid aside in the meantime, for the only way of forcing reason is through reason. If atheists are to be reasoned with at all, then, they should be reasoned with like other men; there's no other way in nature to convince them.

Philocles: I admit that this seems rational and right; but I'm afraid that most of the devout people are ready to abandon the •patient way of going about things in favour of the more •concise method. Force without reason may be thought somewhat hard, but I'm inclined to think that your approach—reason without force—would meet with fewer admirers.

Theocles: Perhaps it's a mere sound that troubles us. The word 'atheist' may create some disturbance ·in our thought· by being made to describe two very different characters—one who absolutely •denies, and one who only •doubts. The one who •doubts may lament his own unhappiness, and wish to be convinced. The one who •denies is daringly presumptuous, and defends an opinion that goes against the

interests of mankind and existence of society. It's easy to see that one of these two may have a proper respect for the magistrate [see Glossary] and laws; but the other won't, and because he is obnoxious to them he is therefore punishable. [In Shaftesbury's day 'he is obnoxious to them' (i.e. to the magistrate and laws) could mean 'he is subject to their rule' or 'he is open to criticism or punishment by them' or 'from their point of view he is odious'. None of these makes very good sense of the sentence.] It's hard to say how the former man—the one who merely doubts—is punishable by man, unless the magistrate has authority over minds as well as over actions and behaviour, and has the power to conduct an inquiry into the innermost bosoms and secret thoughts of men.

Philocles: I follow you. And by your account just as there are two sorts of people who are called 'atheists', so there are two ways of writing against them—ways that may be fitly used separately but not so well jointly. You want to set aside mere threats, and separate the philosopher's work from the magistrate's; taking it for granted that the more discreet and sober unbelievers, ·who doubt but don't deny, and· who don't come under the decisive sentencing pen of the magistrate, can be affected only by the more deliberate and gentle pen of philosophy. Well, I have to agree that the language of the magistrate has little in common with the language of philosophy. Nothing can be more unsuitable to magisterial authority than a philosophical style; and nothing can be more unphilosophical than a magisterial style. Any mixture of these must spoil both. And therefore if anyone besides the magistrate can be said to write well on the topic of religion, it is (according to your account) the person who writes in a manner suitable to philosophy, with freedom of debate and fairness towards his adversary.

Theocles: Allow it, for what can be more fair?

Philocles: Nothing. But will the world have the same opinion? And can one get away with this kind of writing in the world?

Theocles: Undoubtedly one can, and we can produce many examples from the ancient world in proof of this. Freedom understood in this philosophical way was never regarded as harmful to religion, or in any way bad for the common man. We find it to have been a practice both in writing and conversation among the great men of a virtuous and religious people; and even the magistrates who officiated at the altars and were the guardians of the public worship took part in these free debates.

Philocles: But this doesn't reach the matter we are discussing. We are to consider Christian times, such as today. You know the common fate of those who dare to write as *fair* authors. What was that pious and learned man's case—the one who wrote *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*? [It was Ralph Cudworth.] I confess to being amused by the fact that although everyone was satisfied with his ability and learning, and equally with his sincerity in the cause of deity, he was still accused of giving the upper hand to the atheists by stating their reasons and those of their adversaries fairly together! And among other writings of this kind you may remember how a certain fair *Inquiry*. . . .was received, and what offence was taken at it. [This refers to Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit*, which had been published separately, a few years before it appeared along with the present work under the title *Characteristics of*. . . etc. Theocles will describe it as written by 'a friend' of his.]

Theocles: I am sorry that it proved so. But now indeed you have found a way of forcing me to talk at length with you on this topic, by entering the fray in defence of a friend who was unfairly censured for this philosophical liberty.

I confessed to Theocles and the others that this had really been my aim, and that for this reason alone I made myself the accuser of this author. I accused him and all the other moderate calm writers of nothing less than *profaneness*, for reasoning so unconcernedly and patiently, without the least show of zeal or passion, on the subject of a deity and a future state.

Theocles: And I am in favour of this patient way of reasoning; and I'll try to clear my friend of this accusation, if you can have patience enough to hear me out, on a topic of such breadth.

We all answered for ourselves, and he began thus. [This speech ends on page 31].

Theocles: It seems to me that most of the writers engaged in the defence of religion are engaged either in •supporting the truth of the **Christian** faith in general or in •refuting particular doctrines that are thought to be innovations in the **Christian** church. There aren't thought to be many people who are sceptical about the very grounds and principles of **all religion**; and we don't find many writers who set out to confront them. Perhaps the other writers—·the vast majority·—think that it would be low-level work and beneath their dignity to argue calmly with people who are almost universally treated with detestation and horror. But we are required by our religion to have charity for all men, so we surely can't avoid having a real concern for those whom •we think to be caught in the worst of errors, and whom •we find by experience to be the hardest to reclaim. And there is also a prudential reason to pay attention to them: there aren't many of them, but their number is thought to be growing, especially among highly placed people. So it may be worthwhile for us to consider this:

(a) For trying to cure atheism, the remedies that have been tried in the past are also appropriate for the present time and this country.

(b) Some other approach should be preferred—one that is more suitable to times of less strictness in matters of religion and in places less subject to ·religious· authority.

Which?

This ·question· might be enough to start an author on a search for some way of reasoning with these deluded persons that he thinks might be more effective for their benefit than the repeated exclamations and invectives that usually accompany most of the arguments used against them. It wasn't so absurd for my friend to imagine that a quite different approach might be tried—one in which a writer might have more success in offering reason to these men if he appeared unprejudiced and willing to examine everything with the greatest unconcern and indifference. That's because to people like these atheists it will always seem that

- •what has never been questioned has never been proved, and
- •whatever subject has never been examined with perfect indifference has never been rightly examined and can't rightly be believed.

And in a treatise of this kind, offered as an essay or inquiry only, they would be far from finding the required impartiality and indifference if the author, instead of a readiness to follow the arguments wherever they led, showed a prior liking for the consequences on only one side and an abhorrence of any conclusion on the other.

Other writers in different circumstances may have found it necessary—and suitable to their characters—to express their detestation of the persons and the principles of these

men. But our author, whose character doesn't exceed that of a layman, tries to show civility and favour by dealing with the men of this ·atheist· sort as fairly as he possibly can, and arguing with perfect indifference, even on the subject of a deity. He doesn't offer any positive results, but leaves it to others to draw conclusions from his principles. His chief aim and intention was this: To reconcile these people to the principles of •virtue, which might then clear the way for them to come to •religion. ·How?· By removing the greatest if not the only obstacles to it, which arise from the vices and passions of men.

That is why he tries to establish virtue on principles that he can use in argument with people who don't yet believe in a god or a future state. If he can't do that much, he thinks, he can't do anything. For how can supreme goodness be intelligible to those who don't know what goodness itself is? Or how can someone who doesn't know the merit and excellence of virtue understand its deserving reward? When we try to prove merit by ·God's· favour, and order by a deity, we are surely beginning at the wrong end! Our friend tries to correct this. He is what you call a *realist* about virtue: he tries to show that virtue really is something in itself, something in the nature of things, not man-made, not constituted from without or dependent on custom, fancy [see Glossary], or will. He holds that virtue doesn't depend even on God's will, which can't **govern** it but, being necessarily good, **is governed by** it and always conforms to it. Thus, although he has made virtue his chief subject and in some measure independent of religion, I think he may eventually appear as high a •divine as he is a •moralist.

I am not willing to affirm this:

> Anyone for whom virtue is only a name will regard God as only a name also, and can't without pretence defend the principles of religion;

but I do venture to assert this:

> Anyone who sincerely defends virtue and is a realist in morality *must*. . . .by the same scheme of reasoning be a realist also in theology.

I regard all pretence as unpardonable, especially in philosophy. And you, Philocles, who have no mercy on bad reasoning and can't endure any unsound or inconsistent hypothesis—I think you will be so honest as to •reject our modern **deism**, and •challenge those who give themselves a name to which their philosophy can never in the least entitle them.

My compliments to honest Epicurus, who raises his deities aloft in the imaginary spaces and, setting them apart from the universe and the nature of things, makes nothing of them except a word. This is honest and plain dealing, because anyone who philosophises can easily understand ·what is going on here·.

The same honesty belongs to the philosophers whom you seem inclined to favour, Philocles. When a sceptic questions whether a real theology can be constructed out of philosophy alone, with no help from revelation, all he is doing is paying a handsome compliment to authority and the received religion. He can't mislead anyone who reasons deeply, because any such person will easily see that if he is right then theology can't have any foundation at all. For revelation itself, as we know, is based on the acknowledgment of God's existence, and it's the business of philosophy alone to •prove what revelation only presupposes.

So I regard it as a most unfair procedure when those who want to be builders, and to undertake this task of •proving, lay a foundation that is insufficient to carry the load. Supplanting and undermining may be fair war in other contexts, but in philosophical disputes it's not permissible to work underground. . . . Nothing can be more unbecoming

than to talk magisterially and in solemn terms of a 'supreme nature', an 'infinite being', and a 'deity', without meaning anything about a providence and without accepting anything like order or the government of a mind. For when these are understood and *real* divinity is acknowledged, the notion ·of a deity· is not dry and barren; on the contrary, consequences are necessarily drawn from it that must set us in action and find employment for our strongest affections. All the duties of religion evidently follow from this, and no objection remains against any of the great maxims that revelation has established.

Is our friend straightforwardly and sincerely a theologian of this latter sort? You can answer that best by looking at the consequences of his hypothesis. You will see that instead of ending in mere •speculation his hypothesis leads to •practice; and that will surely satisfy you, when you see a structure raised that most people would regard as at least •high religion and some would probably regard it as downright enthusiasm [see Glossary].

For I appeal to you, Philocles, whether there's anything in divinity that you think has more the air of enthusiasm than that notion of divine love? It is love that

- •separates ·itself· from everything worldly, sensual, or meanly ·self·-interested;
- •is simple, pure, and unmixed;
- •has as its only object the excellency of the loved being itself; and
- •has as its only thought of happiness ·the thought of· the enjoyment of that being.

I think you'll take it as a substantial proof of my friend's being far enough from irreligion if I can show that he has espoused this notion ·of divine love·, and aims to base this high point of divinity on arguments that are familiar even to those who oppose religion.

The first thing he would want to tell you is precautionary. although the disinterested [see Glossary] love of God is the most excellent principle, ·it has to be protected on two flanks·. **(a)** The indiscreet zeal of some devout and well-meaning people has stretched it too far, perhaps even to extravagance and enthusiasm, as did the mystics of the ancient church. . . . **(b)** Others who have opposed this devout mystic way, and everything they call 'enthusiasm', have so completely exploded everything of this ecstatic kind that they have in a way given up *devotion*, and have left so little zeal, affection, or warmth in their 'rational religion', as they call it, they are often suspected of not sincerely having any religion. It may be natural enough (•my friend would tell you) for a mere political writer to base his great argument for religion on the need for some belief like that of a future reward and punishment; but •he thinks that it's a very poor sign of sincerity in religion—especially in the Christian religion—to reduce it to a philosophy that •makes no place for the principle of love, and •treats as 'enthusiasm' anything aiming at disinterestedness or teaching the love of God or virtue for God's or virtue's sake.

So here we have two sorts of people (according to my friend's account) who at these opposite extremes expose religion to the insults of its adversaries. On one hand, **(a)** it will be found difficult to defend the notion of that high-raised love that is espoused with such warmth by devout mystics; and on the other hand **(b)** it will be found equally difficult, on the principles of these cooler men, to guard religion from the charge of being mercenary and slavish. For how can we deny that to serve God by compulsion, or merely out of ·self·-interest, is servile and mercenary? Isn't it obvious that the only true and liberal service paid to that supreme being—or to any other superior—is service that comes from

- an esteem or love of the person one serves,
- a sense of duty or gratitude, and
- a love of the path of duty and gratitude as good and amiable [see Glossary] in itself?

And what harm does religion suffer from making such a concession as this? And how does it detract from the belief in reward and punishment in the after-life to admit that the service caused by this belief isn't equal to service that is willingly rendered but is insincere and slavish? Isn't it still for the good of mankind and of the world that obedience to the rule of right should be rewarded in one way or another, if not in the better way then at least in this imperfect one? And can't it be shown that however low or base this service of fear is admitted to be, because religion is a discipline to bring the soul towards perfection **(i)** the motive of reward and punishment is primary and of the greatest importance for us until we are capable of learning better and are led from this servile state to **(ii)** the generous service of affection and love?

In our friend's opinion we ought all to aim at the **(ii)** kind of service, so as to be motivated by the excellence of the object and not the reward or punishment; but where the corruption of our nature prevents affection and love from having enough power to arouse us to virtue, the **(i)** motive should be brought in to help, and should on no account be undervalued or neglected.

Once this has been established, how can religion still be accused of being mercenary? But we know that this accusation is often made. Godliness, say they, is a great gain, and God isn't devoutly served for nothing. Is this a reproach? Is it claimed that there may be a better service, a more generous love? Enough! There's no need to say any more about this. On this basis our friend thinks it is easy to defend religion, including even the devoutest part that is regarded as such a great paradox of faith. If there is in nature any such service as that of affection and love, the only remaining question concerns the object ·of such service·, whether there really is the supreme One that we believe in. If there is divine excellence in things—if there is in nature a supreme mind or deity—then we have a perfect object, which includes all that is good or excellent. And this object *must* be the most amiable, the most engaging, and ·productive· of the highest satisfaction and enjoyment. That there *is* such a principal object as this in the world is proved *by* the world through its wise and perfect order. If this order is indeed perfect then it excludes everything bad. And that it really does so is what our author so earnestly maintains by explaining as well as he can those awkward phenomena and signs of something bad. . . .in the seemingly unfair lot [see Glossary] of virtue in this world.

It's true that however strongly the appearances hold against virtue and in favour of vice, the argument from that to the non-existence of God can easily be removed. . . .by the supposition of an after-life. To a Christian, or to anyone already convinced of that great point, it is sufficient to clear every dark cloud away from providence, for someone who is sure of the after-life doesn't need to be specially solicitous about the fate of virtue in *this* world. But that's not how things stand with the people we are confronting here. They're at a loss for providence, and look for it in the world. They'll hardly be helped to see it in •the seeming disorders in worldly affairs and •the blackest representation of society and human nature! From such an unhandsome face of things here **below** they'll presume to think unfavourably of everything **above**—judging the cause by the effects that they see, and judging whether there is a providence by how virtue fares in the world. But once they are convinced that this world is orderly, and indeed ordered by a providence,

perhaps they'll soon be satisfied even regarding a future state. For if virtue is in itself a considerable reward, and vice is to a large extent its own punishment, we have solid ground under our feet. The plain foundations of distributive [see Glossary] justice and proper order in this world may lead us to conceive of a further building. We intellectually see a larger system, and can easily explain for ourselves why things weren't completed in this state ·of things here below·, their completion being reserved for later on. If the good and virtuous people had been wholly prosperous in this life, if goodness had never met with opposition,. . . .where would virtue have had a trial, a victory, a ·winner's· crown?. . . . Where would temperance or self denial have been? Where patience, meekness, magnanimity? What could have brought these ·virtues· into existence except hardship? What could have given them merit except hardship? What virtue could there be without a conflict?. . . .

Virtue has to encounter many difficulties in this world, but her force is superior to them. Exposed though she is here ·below·, she isn't abandoned or left miserable. She does well enough to raise herself above our pity, though not so well as to leave us no room to hope that she will eventually do better. Her present welfare is good enough to show that providence is already engaged on her side. And since she is so well provided for here, with so much happiness and so many advantages even in this life, doesn't it seem very probably this providential care will carry through into an after-life and be perfected there?

This is what our friend thinks can be said on behalf of a future state, to those who question revelation. This is what is needed to make revelation probable, and to secure that first step to it—namely the belief in a deity and providence. A providence must be proved from whatever order we see in things in this world. We must contend for order—·i.e. we must defend the thesis that *there is* order·—especially where virtue is concerned. It won't do to relegate the whole virtue matter to a hereafter. Why not? Because a disordered state in which all present care of things is given up, vice uncontrolled and virtue neglected, represents a downright chaos, and reduces us to the atoms, chance, and confusion so beloved by the atheists.

Some zealous people exaggerate the misfortunes of virtue, representing it as an unhappy choice with respect to this world; their plan is to turn men to thoughts of a better world ·after death· by making them think poorly of this one. What strategy on behalf of a deity could be *worse* than this? If in addressing people whose faith is loose you declaim in this way against virtue ·in this state·, wanting to make them believe in a future state ·where all this will be put right·, what you will actually achieve is to weaken their belief in a deity ·in our present state·! And it can't be sincerely thought that any man, by having the most elevated opinion of virtue and of the happiness it creates, was ever *less* inclined to believe in a future state. It will always be found that those who favour vice are the least willing to hear of a future existence; while those who love virtue are the readiest to accept that opinion that makes virtue so illustrious and makes its cause triumphant.

That was the situation among the ancients: many of the wisest of them were led to believe this doctrine ·about an after-life·, a doctrine that hadn't been revealed to them, purely by the love of virtue in their great men—the founders and preservers of societies, the legislators, patriots, deliverers, heroes—whose virtues they wanted to live and be immortalized. And in our own time there's nothing that can make this doctrine more attractive to good and virtuous people than the love of •friendship, which gives them a desire not to be wholly separated by death and rather to enjoy the

same •blessed society hereafter. So how *could* an author be regarded as an enemy to a future state merely because he exalts virtue? How could our friend be judged false to religion because he defends a principle on which the very notion of God and goodness depends? What he says is just this: By building a future state on the ruins of virtue you betray religion in general and the cause of a deity; and by making rewards and punishments the principal motives for duty, you overthrow the Christian religion, and reject and leave undefended its greatest principle [see Glossary], that of love. . . .

Thus I have made my friend's defence. Perhaps I have shown you that he is a good moralist and—I hope—no enemy to religion. If you still think that the divine hasn't appeared in his character as much as I promised it would, I don't think I can satisfy you in conversation. If I offered to go further, I might be engaged deeply in spiritual affairs, and be forced to make some new kind of *sermon* on his system of divinity! But now that things have come—and they really have—so close to *preaching*, I hope you'll let me off and be satisfied with what I have already performed.

Section 4: Order and purpose in nature

Just as he finished speaking, some visitors arrived. . . . When they had gone (all except the old gentleman and his ·young· friend, who had dined with us) we laid claim to Theocles's 'sermon', urging him again and again to let us hear his theological ideas in full.

He complained that we were persecuting him—'as you have often seen people persecute a reputed singer, not •out of any liking for the music but •to satisfy a malicious sort of curiosity that often ends in censure and dislike.' Be that as it may, we told him, we were resolved to persist. And I assured our companions that if they would back me up heartily when I pressured him we would easily get the better.

Theocles: In revenge then, I'll comply. But there's a condition: since I am to play the part of the theologian and preacher, this will be at Philocles's cost—he must play the part of the infidel who is being preached to.

the old gentleman: The role you have proposed for him is so natural and suitable that I'm sure he won't have any trouble acting it. I'd have liked it better if you had spared yourself the trouble of telling him what part he was to play, because even without that he would have been apt enough to interrupt your discourse by his perpetual complaints. Therefore, since we have now entertained ourselves enough with dialogue, I ask that the *law of sermon* be strictly observed, with no answering whatever is argued or proposed. . . .

Theocles then proposed we should walk outside, because the evening was fine, and the free air would suit our topic better than a room.

Accordingly we took our evening walk in the fields, from which the weary farm-hands were now retiring. We fell naturally into the praises of country life, and talked for a while about farming and the nature of the soil. Our friends began to admire some of the plants that grew here to great perfection; and I, relying on my having some knowledge of herbal remedies, said something about this that they mightily approved of. Theocles immediately turned to me, and said:

[This speech by Theocles ends on page page 35.]

Theocles: O my ingenious friend! whose reason is in other ways so clear and satisfactory: how is it possible that with such insight and precise judgment regarding •the details of natural things and operations you aren't a better judge of •the structure of things in general and of the order and frame of nature? Who better than yourself can show the structure

of each plant and animal body, describe the function of every part and organ, saying what their uses, ends, and advantages are? So how can you turn out to be such a poor naturalist of this *whole*, with so little understanding of the anatomy of the world and nature that you don't see the same relation of parts, the same consistency and uniformity •in the universe, ·as you see •in individual animals·!

There may be some men whose thought is so confused—who have something so seriously *wrong* with them—that it's merely natural for them to find fault and imagine a thousand inconsistencies and defects in this wider constitution. We can assume that it wasn't the absolute aim or interest of universal nature to make every individual person infallible and free of every defect. It wasn't nature's intention to leave us without some pattern of imperfection such as we see in minds like these, tangled in perverse thoughts. But your mind, my friend, is nobler than that. You are conscious of a better order within ·yourself·, and can see workmanship and exactness in yourself and in countless other parts of the creation. Can you justify to yourself allowing this much but not allowing all? Can you get yourself to believe that although there are parts so variously united and working together, the whole itself has no union or coherence; and that although smaller individual natures are often found to be perfect, the universal nature lacks perfection and should be likened to whatever can be thought of that is most monstrous, crude, and imperfect?

Strange that there should be in nature the idea of an order and perfection that nature herself doesn't have! That beings arising from nature should be so perfect that they can discover imperfection in her constitution, and be wise enough to correct the wisdom by which they were made!

Surely nothing is more strongly imprinted on our minds, or more closely interwoven with our souls, than the idea or sense of •order and •proportion. That's why there is so much force in numbers, and in the powerful arts [see Glossary] based on their management and use. What a difference there is

- •between harmony and discord,
- •between rhythm and a jerky sequence of violent sounds,
- •between composed and orderly motion and motion that is ungoverned and accidental,
- •between the regular and uniform work of some noble architect and a heap of sand or stones,
- •between an organic body and a mist or cloud driven by the wind!

This difference is immediately perceived by a plain internal •sensation, and in •reason we find this explanation of it: Anything that has order and has (or contributes to) a unified design is a constituent part of one whole (or is itself ·a whole·, an entire system). For example, a tree with all its branches; an animal with all its limbs and organs; a building with all its exterior and interior ornaments. Indeed, what is. . . .any excellent piece of music but a certain system of proportioned sounds?

Now in this ·thing· that we call 'the universe', whatever perfection particular systems have, and however many single parts have proportion, unity, or form within themselves, if they aren't all united in one general system—but relate to one another like wind-driven sands or clouds or breaking waves—then there's no coherence in the universe as a whole, so there's no basis for inferring that

- •the universe manifests order and proportion,

and therefore there's no basis for inferring that

- •the universe was created deliberately, with a design.

But if none of these parts is independent of the rest—and all are apparently united—then the whole system is complete, and conforms to one simple, consistent, and uniform design.

Here then is our main subject, insisted on: that however complete a system of parts a man or other animal is, considered just in itself, it's a further question whether it is in the same way complete considered in relation to things outside it—starting with

- the man's or animal's relation to the system of his species.

And then there is

- the relation of this species to the system of the animal kingdom,
- the relation of the animal kingdom to the earth, and
- the relation of the earth to the universe.

All things in this world are united. Just as the branch is united with the tree, so is the tree immediately united with the earth, air, and water that feed it. The fertile mould is fitted to the tree ·it grows on·, the strong and upright trunk of the oak or elm is fitted to the twining branches of the vine or ivy ·that grow on it·, the leaves, seeds, and fruits of these trees are fitted to the various animals ·that eat them·; the animals are fitted to one another ·as predators and prey· and to the elements in which they live and to which they are. . . .fitted and joined—by wings for the air, fins for the water, feet for the earth, and by other corresponding inner parts that are even more intricately structured. Thus, when we are thinking about everything on earth, we are forced to regard them all as *one*, as belonging to one common stock. And in the system of the bigger world: see there the mutual dependence of things! The relation of one to another, of the sun to this inhabited earth, and of the earth and other planets to the sun! The order, union, and coherence of the whole! And know, my ingenious friend, that this survey will require you to admit that the universal system and coherent scheme of things has been established on abundant proof that could convince any fair contemplator of the works of nature. ·I emphasize that I'm talking about someone who has surveyed the facts·, because someone who hadn't yet done so would hardly believe in ·the existence of· this union that is so clearly demonstrable by such numerous and powerful instances of mutual correspondence and relation, from the tiniest ranks and orders of beings to the remotest stars.

It isn't surprising that in this mighty union some relations between parts aren't easily discovered, so that the goal and role of things isn't everywhere apparent. This was bound to be the case; supreme wisdom couldn't have ordered things differently. For in an infinity of inter-related things, a mind that doesn't see infinitely can't see anything fully, because each particular thing is related to all the others.

It's like that with any dissected animal, plant, or flower: someone who isn't an anatomist or knowledgeable in natural history can see that the many parts have a relation to the whole, for even a quick view shows that much; but it's only someone like you, my friend, who has explored the works of nature and has been admitted to a knowledge of the animal and vegetable worlds, who can accurately describe the relations of all these parts to one another, and describe their various functions.

[He illustrates the point by supposing someone who knows nothing about ships, the sea, or the movements of water, and is suddenly placed on a ship lying at anchor in a calm sea. He would think he saw a great tangle and confusion of 'useless and cumbersome' stuff. Theocles compares •that man in the ship with •us in the universe:] Instead of seeing to the highest pendants, we see only some lower deck, and are in this dark case of flesh—·our bodies·—confined even to the hold, the lowest place in the vessel.

Now having recognized this uniform consistent fabric and accepted ·the existence of· the •universal system, we must in consequence of this accept also that there is a •universal

mind. No intelligent man can be tempted to deny this unless he imagines that there in some disorder in the universe where the mind resides. Think about this:

> Someone is in a desert far from men. He hears there a perfect symphony of music, or sees a good building arising gradually from the earth in all its orders and proportions.

Would anyone in the world, in that situation, think that there was no design accompanying this, no secret spring of thought, no active mind? Would anyone, just because he saw no hand, deny the handiwork and suppose that each of these complete and perfect systems was brought about—with its unity, symmetry, and order—by the accidental blowing of the winds or rolling of the sands?

[When in this paragraph Theocles speaks of something's being destroyed, ruined or overthrown he means that it is ruined etc. *in our minds*.] Then what *is* it that disturbs our view of nature so much that it destroys the unity of design and order of a mind that otherwise would be so obvious? All we can see of the heavens and the earth demonstrates order and perfection, offering the noblest subjects of contemplation to minds that are enriched with sciences and learning, as yours is. Everything is delightful, amiable, rejoicing, except in relation to man and his circumstances, which seem unfair and unsatisfactory. This is where the trouble—the calamity—has its source; it's this that leads to the ruin of this handsome structure. For this reason everything perishes, and the whole order of the universe—elsewhere so firm, entire, and immovable—is here overthrown by this one view in which we relate everything to ourselves, putting the interests of this little part ·of the universe, namely the human race· ahead of the interests of the universe as a whole.

But what's the basis for your complaining of •the unsatisfactory and unfair state of man and of •how few advantages he is allowed above what the beasts have? What claims can be made by a creature differing so little from the beasts, with not much merit above the beasts except in wisdom and virtue, which very few men have. Man can be virtuous, and his being so makes him happy. . . . He deserves a reward for being virtuous, and he gets his reward—happiness—*in* being virtuous. But if even virtue itself isn't provided for, and vice is more prosperous and thus the better choice—if this is, as you suppose, in the nature of things—then all order in reality is inverted, and supreme wisdom vanishes, because the picture you have drawn makes imperfection and irregularity all too apparent in the moral world.

Have you before pronouncing this sentence thought about the state of virtue and of vice in this life (leave out the after-life) so as to say confidently

- •when,
- •to what extent,
- •in what respects, and
- •in what situations

either of them is good or bad? You are skilled in other structures and compositions, both of art and of nature, but have you thought about

- •the structure of the mind,
- •the constitution of the soul, and
- •how its passions and affections are inter-related.

so as to know •the order and symmetry of the part [i.e. of a human being, this little *part* of the universe], •what makes it better or worse, •what powers it has when naturally preserved in its sound state, and •what becomes of it when it is corrupted and abused? Until this is examined and understood, how can we judge either the force of virtue or power of vice, or how each can contribute to our happiness or our undoing?

So this is the inquiry we should make first, but who

can afford to make it as he ought? If we are born with a good nature, if a liberal education has given us a generous temperament and disposition, well-regulated appetites and worthy inclinations, that is all good and is generally regarded as being so. But who tries to give these to himself, or to increase his share of happiness of this kind? Who thinks of improving—or even merely *preserving*—his share in a world where it is bound to be greatly at risk, and where we know that an honest nature is easily corrupted? All other things relating to us are preserved with care; we have rules and procedures for taking care of them. But *this*, which is the most closely related to us and on which our happiness depends, is the only thing we leave to chance. Our temperament is the only thing left ungoverned, while it governs all the rest.

Thus we inquire into what is good and suitable for our appetites, but we don't look into what appetites are good and suitable for us. We investigate what is in accordance with interests, policy, fashion, vogue, but it seems wholly strange and off-centre to investigate what is in accordance with nature. The balance of Europe, of trade, of power, is strictly sought after, but few people have even *heard of* the balance of their passions, or thought of holding these scales even. . . . If we paid more attention to these matters we would then see beauty and fittingness here ·in human nature· as well as elsewhere in nature, and the order of the moral [here = 'human'] world would equal that of the natural world. In this way the beauty of virtue would become apparent, and that would make apparent (as I said before) the supreme and sovereign beauty—·the beauty of the deity·—which is the source of everything good or amiable.

I don't want to appear as too like an enthusiast, so I shall express my view and conclude this philosophical sermon in the words of one of the ancient philologists whom you admire, ·Maximus Tyrius·. He says:

> 'Divinity itself is surely beautiful, and the brightest of all beauties. Though not itself a beautiful body, it is that from which the beauty of bodies is derived; not a beautiful plain, but that from which the plain looks beautiful. The beauty of the river, the sea, the stars, all flow from this, as from an eternal and incorruptible spring. As beings partake of this ·divinity· they are fair and flourishing and happy; as they are lost to it, they are ugly, dead, and lost.'

When Theocles had said all this he was formally complimented by our two companions. I was going to add a compliment of my own, but he immediately stopped me by saying that he would be scandalised if I commended him rather than—according to the character I had been assigned to play—criticising some part or other of his long discourse.

Philocles: If I must, then let me start by expressing surprise that instead of the •many arguments commonly brought to prove the existence of God you make your whole case on the basis of just •one. I expected to hear from you in the usual order about

- •a first cause, a first being, and a beginning of motion;
- •how clear the idea is of an immaterial substance; and
- •how obvious it is that at some time matter must have been created.

But you are silent about all this. As for the popular thesis that a material unthinking substance couldn't produce an immaterial thinking one: I readily grant this, but only on the condition that I am allowed, as my adversary is, to appeal to the great maxim about *nothing ever being made from nothing*. And then I suppose that while the world endures he'll be at a loss to say how matter began or how it can be annihilated. The spiritual men [a sarcastic reference to the defenders of religion] can go on as long as they like eloquently defending the thesis

that

> matter considered in a thousand different shapes, joined and disjoined, varied and modified to eternity, can never on its own provide one single thought, can never occasion or cause anything like sense or knowledge.

Their argument will hold good against a Democritus, an Epicurus, or any of the atomists, early or late. But it will be turned against them by a critical academist [= 'follower of Plato'], ·who will say·: 'When the two ·kinds of· substances are fairly set aside and considered separately as different kinds, it will be just as good an argument to say of the immaterial kind as of the material kind that

> Do with it what you please—modify it in a thousand ways, purify it, exalt it, sublime it, torture it ever so much, or rack it (as they say) with thinking—you'll never be able to produce or force the contrary substance (·matter·) out of it. The poor dregs of sorry matter can no more be made out of the simple pure substance of immaterial thought than the high spirits of thought or reason can be extracted from the gross substance of heavy matter.

Let the ·pro-religion· dogmatists make what they can of this argument.

P: But *your* way of stating the issue isn't about •what came first but •what is the case now. For if God does really exist, if any good evidence shows that there is right now a universal mind, everyone will agree that there always was one. This is your argument. You base your argument on *fact*: you want to prove that things actually are now in a state and condition such that, if you were right about it, there would be no dispute left ·about the existence of a universal mind·. Your main support is ·your thesis about· **union**. But how do you prove it? What demonstration have you given? What have you even *tried* to present beyond bare probability? A measure of how far you are from demonstrating anything is the fact that if this **uniting** thesis is the chief argument for deity (as you tacitly admit ·by not presenting any others·), you seem to have demonstrated only that *the question can't be answered by demonstration*. You say [page 33]*How can a narrow mind see everything?* But if it doesn't see everything, it might as well see nothing. . . . Even if you are right in supposing that **all that lies within our view or knowledge** is orderly and united, this mighty **all** is a mere point—a very *nothing* compared with what lies outside it. We can say: 'This is only a separate by-world—·one small world·—there may in the wide waste be millions of other by-worlds that are as horrible and ugly as ours is regular and proportioned. It may be that in the course of time, amidst the infinite hurry and shock of beings,

- •this single odd-world-out of ours was banged into existence and given some form (anything may happen, given infinite chances), whereas
- •the rest of matter is of a different colour; old Father Chaos (as the poets call him) reigns absolute in those wild spaces, and upholds his realms of darkness.

He presses hard on our frontier, and it may happen that some day he will by a furious invasion recover his lost right, conquer his rebel State, and bring us back to primitive discord and confusion.

P: This is all I dare offer in opposition to your philosophy, Theocles. I had expected you to give me more scope [i.e. given me more to criticise]: but you have pulled back into narrower territory. To tell you truth, I see your theology as less fair and open than that of our theologians in general. It's true that they are strict about •names, but they are more permissive about •things. They will hardly tolerate a central attack, a downright questioning of the existence of God; but they

give always fair play against •nature and allow •her to be challenged for her failings: she may freely err, and we as freely may criticise. God, they think, is not responsible for nature; she is answerable for herself. But you are tighter and more precise on this point. You have unnecessarily brought nature into the controversy, and taken it on yourself to defend her honour so highly that I don't know whether it's safe for me to question her.

Theocles: Don't let that trouble you; be free to censure nature, whatever the consequences may be. The only thing that may be harmed is my hypothesis. If I defend it badly, my friends needn't be scandalised. No doubt they are armed with stronger arguments than mine for a deity, and can make good use of those metaphysical weapons whose edge you seem so unafraid of. I leave them to dispute this ground with you, whenever they think fit. As for my own arguments, if they are to be regarded as making any part of this defence, it could be as distant lines or outworks—defensive posts that may be easy to conquer but without any danger to the body of the place.

Philocles: Although you are willing for me to launch a frontal attack on nature, I choose to spare her in all subjects except *man*. How does it come about that in this noblest of creatures—the one most worthy of her care—she should appear so very weak and impotent, whereas in mere brutes and the unthinking species she acts with so much strength and exerts such hardy vigour? Why does she run out of energy so soon in feeble *man*, who has more diseases and lives less long than many of the wild creatures? They move around safely, proof against all the injuries of seasons and weather; they don't need help from art [see Glossary], but live in carefree ease, freed from the need for labour, and from the cumbersome baggage of a needy human life. More helpful In infancy, more vigorous in age, with more alert senses and more natural sagacity [see Glossary], they pursue their interests, joys, recreations; They cheaply purchase their food and accommodation, clothed and armed by nature herself, who provides them with a bed and a roof over their head. That is what nature has arranged for other creatures, such is their hardiness, robustness and vigour. Why not the same for man?

Theocles: Do you stop there in your protest? Once you have started in this way, I'd have thought it was easy to go further: as well as laying claim to a few advantages that other creatures have, you might as well strengthen the attack and complain that man is anything less than a consummation of all the advantages and privileges that nature can provide. Don't stop at asking

> Why is man naked? Why is he unhoofed? Why is he slower-footed than the beasts?

Go on and ask:

> Why doesn't man have wings for the air, fins for the water, and so on, so that he could take possession of each element and reign in all of them?

Philocles: Oh no—this would be to rate man high indeed! As if he were, by nature, lord of all; which is more than I could willingly allow.

Theocles: If you concede that much, your attack fails. . . . If nature herself is not for man—if man is for nature—then man must politely submit to the elements of nature, and not ·expect· the elements to submit to him. Few of them are at all fitted to him, and none fit perfectly. If he is left in the air, he falls headlong, because he wasn't provided with wings. In water he soon sinks. In fire he is burned up. Within earth he suffocates.

Philocles: As for what dominion man can naturally have in

elements other than air I'm not greatly concerned on his behalf, because by art [see Glossary] he can even exceed the advantages nature has given to other creatures—except in the air! It would have been wonderfully obliging in nature to have given man wings.

Theocles: And what would he have gained by that? Think about what an alteration of form it would have involved. Observe in one of those winged creatures how the whole structure is made subservient to this purpose, and all other advantages sacrificed to this single operation ·of flying·. The anatomy of the creature shows it to be—in a way—*all wing*: its main bulk is a pair of enormous muscles, which exhaust the strength of all the other muscles and take over the whole economy of the bird's body. That is how the aerial racers are capable of such rapid and strong motions, beyond comparison with any other kind ·of animal· and far exceeding the small strength of the rest of their bodies, because their flying mechanism has been made on such a scale that it starves the body's other parts. Man's architecture is of a different order from this. If the flying mechanism were added to it, wouldn't the other members have to suffer, and the multiplied parts starve one another? How do you think the brain would fare in this partition [i.e. in this distribution of energy to the different parts of the body]? Wouldn't it be likely to be starved along with the rest? Or would want it to be maintained at the same high rate, and draw the chief nourishment to itself and away from all the rest. . .

Philocles (interrupting him): I understand you, Theocles. The brain certainly is a great starver, where it abounds; and the thinking people of the world—the philosophers and virtuosos especially—must be contented, I find, with a moderate share of bodily advantages, for the sake of what they call parts [see Glossary] capacity in another sense. . . . ·But this cuts both ways·: what shall we say of our fine-bred athletic gentlemen—our riders, fencers, dancers, tennis players, and such like? It's the body surely that is the starver here; and if the brain is such a terrible devourer in the philosophers and virtuosos, the body and bodily parts seem to have had their revenge in the athletes!

Theocles: If that's how things stand between man and man, how must they stand between man and a creature of a quite different species? If the balance is so delicate that the least thing breaks it, even in creatures of the same frame and order—·e.g. even between philosophers and tennis players·—what fatal effects there would have to be if nature made some change in the order itself, making some essential alteration in the frame? Consider, then, what we are doing in censuring nature in such matters. 'Why wasn't I made by nature strong as a horse? as hardy and robust as this brute creature? as nimble and active as that other?' And yet when uncommon strength, agility, and feats of body are combined, even in our own species, see what the results are! A person who is in love with an athletic constitution ought to voice his complaint by saying 'Why wasn't I made a brute animal?' That would be better, more modest, more suitable.

[Philocles agrees, and decorates the point a little. Theocles compliments him on his courage and intelligence in being willing to 'improve' what his opponent says. Then:]

Theocles: So that is the admirable distribution of nature. She adapts and adjusts

- the stuff or matter to the shape and form,
- the shape and form to the circumstances—time, place, and element [i.e. whether earth, air, fire or water], and also
- the affections, appetites and sensations to each other and to the matter, form, action, and everything else.

All managed for the best, with no waste, and a sensible

amount kept in •reserve; generous to all but not overdoing it with any; pulling back when something is superfluous, and adding force to what is *principal* in a thing. And aren't *thought* and *reason* principal in man? Would he have no •reserve for these? No saving for this part of his engine? Or would he have the same stuff or matter, the same instruments or organs, serving alike for different purposes?. . . .

[This paragraph is given exactly as Shaftesbury wrote it.] It cannot be. What wonders, then, can he expect from a few ounces of blood in such a narrow vessel, fitted for so small a district of nature? Will he not rather think highly of that nature which has thus managed his portion for him to best advantage with this happy reserve (happy indeed for him, if he knows and uses it!) by which he has so much a better use of organs than any other creature, by which he holds his reason, is a man and not a beast?

Philocles: But beasts have instincts that man lacks.

Theocles: True: they have indeed perceptions, sensations, and pre-sensations (if I may use the expression) which man doesn't have to anything like the same extent. Their females, newly pregnant for the first time, have a clear prospect or pre-sensation of what is going to happen to them; they know what to provide, and how, knowing all this in detail without having had any relevant experience. . . . 'Why not this in human kind?' you ask. I prefer a different question: 'Why this?' What need is there for men to have this sagacity? Don't they have something different and better? Don't they have *reason* and *speech*? Doesn't this instruct them? What need, then, for the other? Where would the prudent management be at this rate?. . . .

T: The young of most other species are instantly helpful to themselves, sensible, vigorous, known to shun danger and seek their good; a human infant is the most helpless, weak, and infirm of all. Why shouldn't things have been ordered in this way?. . . . How is man the worse for this defect when he has such large supplies? Doesn't this defect draw him the more strongly to society, and force him to accept that •it's no accident that he is rational and sociable, and that •he can't. . . .survive except in the social intercourse and community that is his natural state? Isn't it the case that

- •conjugal affection,
- •natural affection to parents,
- •duty to magistrates [see Glossary],
- •love of a common city, community, or country, and
- •all the other duties and social parts of life

are based on these lacks [i.e. on man's *not* having the kind of 'sagacity' that lower animals have]? What can be better than such a 'deficiency' when it leads to so much good?. . . . [In a difficult sentence, Theocles refers to people who coolly declare that they aren't naturally sociable; if nature had provided them with something that served them in the way that lower animals are served by intincts, they would be even further from any sense of duty or obligation.] What respect or reverence would they have for parents, magistrates, their country, or their species? Wouldn't their full and self sufficient state have determined them more strongly than ever to throw off nature, and deny the purposes and the Author of their creation?

While Theocles argued in this way about nature, the old gentleman—my adversary—expressed great satisfaction in hearing me (as he thought) refuted, and my opinions exposed (he insisted on believing that propositions that I had presented on one side of the debate expressed my own strong opinions). He tried to reinforce Theocles's argument with many details from the common topics of the scholastics and scholars of Roman civil law. He added that it would be

better if I would declare my sentiments openly; for he was sure that I had completely swallowed the principle that *the state of nature was a state of war*.

Philocles: You agree that it wasn't a state of government or public rule.

the old gentleman: I do so.

Philocles: Was it then a state of fellowship or society?

the old gentleman: No: for when men entered first into society they passed *from* the state of nature into the new one based on a contract.

Philocles: And was the previous state a tolerable one?

the old gentleman: If it had been absolutely intolerable, it couldn't have existed. We can't properly label as a 'state' something that couldn't last for even a short period of time.

Philocles: Well, then, if man could endure to live without society, and if he actually did live in that way when in the state of nature, how can it be said that he is by nature sociable?

The old gentleman seemed a little disturbed at my question. But then he recovered himself:

the old gentleman: It may indeed have been •some particular circumstances that led man into society, rather than •his own natural inclination.

Philocles: His nature then wasn't very good, it seems. Having no natural affection or friendly inclination of his own, he was forced into a social state against his will. And what forced him was not any necessity involving external things (for you have allowed him a tolerable subsistence), but probably from difficulties that arose chiefly from himself and his own malignant temperament and principles. It's no wonder if creatures who were in this way naturally unsociable were also naturally mischievous and troublesome. If their nature allowed them to live out of society, with so little affection for one another's company, it's not likely that they would spare one another's persons if the question came up. If they were so solitary and anti-social that they didn't *meet for love*, it's highly likely that they would *fight for ·self·-interest*. So your own reasoning leads to the conclusion that the state of nature must in all likelihood have been little different from a state of war.

I could see from his looks that he was going to answer me with some sharpness; but Theocles intervened. As he had occasioned this dispute, he said, he would like to be allowed to try to end it by putting the question in a better light.

Theocles: (to the old gentleman) You see how skillfully Philocles went about getting you to agree that the state of nature was perfectly distinct from that of society. But now let us question him in his turn, and see whether he can demonstrate to us that there can be naturally any human state that isn't social.

the old gentleman: What is it then that we call 'the state of nature'?

Theocles: Not the imperfect rough condition of mankind that some imagine. If anything like that ever existed in nature, it couldn't have •continued for any length of time, or •been any way tolerable, or •been sufficient for the support of human race. Such a condition cannot indeed properly be called a 'state'. Suppose I speak of the 'state' of a newborn baby, at the moment of its birth—would that be proper?

the old gentleman: Hardly so, I confess.

[Theocles's next speech ends on page 42.]

Theocles: Well, *that* is the kind of 'state' that we suppose man to have been in before he entered into society and became in truth a human creature. Before societies were formed, there was the rough draught ·or preliminary sketch· of man,

nature's trial run or first effort; a species just newborn, a kind still unformed—not in its natural state but restless and violent until it achieved its natural perfection.

That's what must have been the case if men were ever in a condition or state in which they were not yet associated or acquainted, and consequently had no language or form of art. That it was their *natural* state to live thus separately—that is simply absurd! You have a better chance of •divesting the creature of any other feeling or affection than of •divesting him of his feeling towards society and his species. Supposing that you could,. . . .would you transform him in that way—enclosing him like some solitary insect in a shell—and still call him a *man*? You might as well call a human egg or embryo a *man*. The bug that breeds the butterfly is more properly a wingless *fly* than this imaginary creature is a *man*. His outward shape may be human, but his passions, appetites, and organs must be wholly different. . . .

To explain this a little further, let us examine this pretended state of nature to see what its foundation must be. •If man has existed from eternity, there can't have been any primitive or original state, any state of nature, except the state we see at present before our eyes. ·Why not? Because the state of nature is by definition *first* or *early*, and there is no first or early state of something that didn't ever begin.· •If man hasn't existed from eternity, and arose all at once ·rather than in a series of steps·, then he was at the very first as he is now, ·so that again he was never in a state of nature different from his present state·. So we are left with this: •man hasn't existed from eternity but came into existence by degrees, ·stepwise·, going through several stages and conditions to reach the condition he is now settled in and has been in for many generations.

For instance, suppose he sprang from a big-bellied oak (as the old poets used to say); in that case he might at first be more like a mandrake [see Glossary] than a man. Let's suppose that at first he has little more life than we find in the so-called 'sensitive' plants ·such as the Venus flytrap'·. The mother oak gave birth; through some odd accident it was a false birth ·in that the offspring wasn't an oak·; and over a period of time the false-birth offspring was shaped into a human form. The limbs were then fully displayed, and the organs of sense began to unfold themselves. Here sprang an ear; there peeped an eye. Perhaps a tail too,. . . .though we can't tell what superfluous parts nature may have provided at first. Whatever they were, they seem to have dropped off, leaving things, at last in a good shape and (to a wonder!) just as they should be.

This surely is the lowest view of the original affairs of human kind. If man came into existence through Providence rather than chance, that strengthens the argument for his social nature. But if his origin was as I have described it—which is what a certain sort of philosophers, ·the Epicureans·, insist that it was—then nature then had no intention at all, no meaning or design in this whole matter. In that case, I can't see how anything can be called 'natural', how any state can be picked out from other states as 'a state of nature' or 'according to nature'.

However, let us continue with their hypothesis and consider which state we can best call nature's own ·if Epicureanism is right·. Nature has by accident, through many changes and chances, raised a creature which sprang at first from rough seeds of matter and •proceeded until it became what it is now—a state that it has been in for many generations. I ask: *Where* in this long •procession (for I allow it any length whatever) did the state of nature begin? The creature must have endured many changes, and each

change while he was thus growing up was as natural as any other. So either •there were a hundred different states of nature or •there was just one, the state in which nature was perfect and her growth complete. Where she rested, having achieved her end—that must be *her* state, or nothing is.

Do you think she could rest in that desolate state before society? Could she maintain and propagate the ·human· species, such as it now is, without fellowship or community? [Theocles repeats at some length his theme about how humans' individual weakness *requires* them to associate for mutual help. He mentions] . . . man's long and helpless infancy, his feeble and defenceless body which fits him more to be a prey himself than live by preying on others. But he can't live like any of the grazing species. He must have better. . . .food than the raw herbage; a better couch and covering than the bare earth and open sky. . . . Is it possible that man should pair, and live in love and fellowship with his partner and offspring, while still being wholly wild and speechless, and without the arts of storing, building, and other life-arrangements that are. surely, as natural to him as they are to the beaver, the ant, or the bee?. . . . Given that he began on society by forming a household, where and how would he stop this from going any further? Mustn't his household soon have grown soon a tribe? And this tribe into a nation? And even if it remained merely as a tribe, wasn't *that* a society for mutual defence and common interest? [This passage, which Shaftesbury italicised, is given in his undoctored words.] *In short, if generation be natural, if natural affection and the care and nurture of the offspring be natural, things standing as they do with man, and the creature being of that form and constitution he now is; it follows, That society must be also natural to him; and That out of society and community he never did, nor ever can subsist.*

To conclude, I'll venture to add a word on behalf of Philocles. Since learned people have such a fancy for this notion, and love to talk of this imaginary 'state of nature', I think it is downright charitable to speak as ill of it as we possibly can. Let it be a state of war, plundering and injustice. Because it is unsocial, let it be as uncomfortable and as frightful as possible. To speak well of it is to make it inviting and tempt men to become hermits. At least let it be seen as many degrees worse than the worst government in existence. The greater dread we have of anarchy, the better citizens we'll be, and the more we'll value the laws and constitution under which we live and by which we are protected from the outrageous violences of such an *unnatural* state ·as the so-called 'state of nature'·. In this I agree heartily with the transformers of •human nature who, considering •it abstractedly and apart from government or society, represent it through monstrous visages of dragons, leviathans, and I don't know what other devouring creatures. But their great maxim that **man is naturally to man as a wolf** fails absurdly to express their disparagement of man. Wolves are very kind and loving to wolves; the sexes strictly join in the care and nurture of the young; and this union is continued still between them. They howl to one another to bring company—to hunt, or attack their prey, or come to share in a good carcass. . . . If this famous sentence means anything it must be that **man is naturally to man as a wolf is to a sheep**. But it's impossible to assent to this ill-natured proposition even when we have done our best to make tolerable sense of it. All we get from it is this: there are different kinds or characters of men; they don't all have this wolfish nature, and at least half of them are naturally innocent and mild. . . .

Section 5: Believing in miracles

....We returned home from our walk. At supper and afterwards for the rest of the evening Theocles said little, the conversation being now managed chiefly by the two companions, who directed it to a new sort of philosophy. Forgive me, Palemon, if I deal with it more quickly.

They spoke learnedly and at length about the nature of spirits and apparitions.... Nothing was so charming with them as what was out of line and odd; nothing so soothing as what produced horror. They had no taste for anything rational, plain, and easy, and they welcomed everything that was contrary to nature, in no proportion or harmony with the rest of things. Monstrous births, prodigies [see Glossary], enchantments, wars between the elements, and convulsions were our chief entertainment. One would have thought that in a rivalry between •Providence and •Nature •the latter lady was made to appear as homely as possible so that her ugly features might recommend and set off the beauties of •the former. To do our friends justice, I thought their intention to be sincerely religious, but this wasn't a face of religion I was likely to be enamoured with. It wasn't from this direction that I risked becoming enthusiastic or superstitious. If ever I became so, it would be in Theocles's way. The monuments and churchyards weren't such powerful scenes with me as the mountains, the plains, the solemn woods and groves....

You may imagine, Palemon, that the scepticism with which you so often reproach me couldn't forsake me here; nor could it fail to upset our companions, especially the grave gentleman who had clashed with me some time before. He put up with me for a while, till having lost all patience...

the old gentleman: You must certainly have command of a large share of assurance, to hold out against the common opinion of the world, and deny things that are known by the report of the most considerable part of mankind.

Philocles: That is far from being my case. You have never yet heard me *deny* anything, though I have questioned many things. If I suspend my judgment, it's because I have less confidence than others. There are people, I know, who have so much regard for every fancy [see Glossary] of their own that they can believe their *dreams*. I could never pay any such deference to my sleeping fancies, and I'm apt sometimes to question even my waking thoughts and consider whether they aren't dreams too, because men have a capacity for dreaming sometimes with their eyes open. You'll admit that it's a great pleasure for mankind to make their dreams pass for realities; and that the love of truth is really much less prevalent than this passion for novelty and surprise, joined with a desire to make an impression and be admired. Still, I'm charitable enough to think there's more •innocent delusion than •deliberate imposture [= 'deceit'] in the world; and that those who have most imposed on mankind have had the advantage of being able to impose on themselves first. This provides a kind of salve for their consciences, and makes them more successful in imposing on others because it lets them act their part more naturally. There's nothing puzzling in the fact that men's dreams sometimes have the good fortune of being taken to be truth, when we bear in mind that sometimes something that was never so much as dreamed of or reported as truth eventually comes to be believed by someone who has often told it.

the old gentleman: So that on your account the greatest impostor in the world can be regarded as sincere.

Philocles: As regards his main imposture, perhaps he can; despite some pious frauds that he perpetrates from time to time on behalf of a belief that he thinks to be good and wholesome. And I take this to be so very natural that in all

religions except the true one I see the greatest zeal being accompanied by the strongest inclination to deceive. When the design and •end is the truth, it's not usual to hesitate or be scrupulous about the choice of •means. For the truth of this, look at the experience of the last age, in which it won't be hard to find very remarkable examples of imposture and zeal, bigotry and hypocrisy, living together in a single character.

the old gentleman: Be that as it may, I am sorry on the whole to find you with such an incredulous temperament.

Philocles: It's fair that you should pity me for losing the pleasure that I see others enjoy. What stronger pleasure is there for mankind, and what do they learn earlier or retain longer than the love of hearing and passing on strange and incredible things? What a wonderful thing the love of wondering and of creating wonder is! It's a delight for children to hear tales they shiver at, and the vice of old age to be full of strange stories of times past. We come into the world wondering at everything; and when our wonder about common things is over, we look for something new to wonder at. Our last scene [on our death-beds?] is to tell wonders of our own to anyone who will believe them. Given all this, it's well if truth escapes only moderately tainted!

the old gentleman: It's well if with this 'moderate' faith of yours you can believe in any miracles whatever.

Philocles: It doesn't matter how incredulous I am about modern miracles if I have a proper faith in miracles of former times by paying the deference due to •the Bible. It's •there that I am warned so strongly against credulity, and instructed never to believe even the greatest miracles that may be performed in opposition to what I have already been taught. And I am so well fitted to obey this command that I can safely •undertake to stay in the same faith and •promise never to believe amiss [= 'wrongly'].

the old gentleman: But is this something you can *promise*?

Philocles: If it isn't, because my belief doesn't wholly depend upon myself, how am I accountable for what I believe? I can justly be punished for actions in which my will is free; but what justice is there in challenging me over my belief if I am not at my liberty about what to believe? If credulity and incredulity are defects only in the •judgment, and the best-meaning person in the world may err on either side while a much worse man—by having a better •intellect—makes much better judgments concerning the evidence of things, how can you *punish* the one who errs. Or are you willing to punish weakness, and to say that it's just for men to suffer for defects that aren't their fault?

[The old gentleman says something that unclearly introduces 'weakness' into the conversation. Philocles unclearly sets that aside and then returns to his theme.]

Philocles: If we can't command our own belief, how are we secure against the false prophets—with their deluding miracles—that we have been so sternly warned against? How are we safe from heresy and false religion? Credulity is what delivers us up to all impostures of this sort, and what right now imprisons the pagan and Moslem world in error and blind superstition. So, either

- •there is no punishment for wrong belief because we can't choose what to believe, or
- •we can choose what to believe, in which case why shouldn't we promise never to believe amiss?

Now in respect of future miracles the surest way never to believe amiss is never to believe at all. If we are satisfied by past miracles of the truth of our religion, the belief in a new one may do us harm and can't do us any good. So the truest mark of a believing Christian is to seek after no future

sign or miracle; the safest position in Christianity is that of a person who can't be moved by anything of this kind, and is thus miracle-proof. For if a miracle is on the side of his faith, it's superfluous, and he doesn't need it; and if it's against his faith, he won't pay it any attention or believe it to be anything but an imposture—even if it's very powerful and is performed by an angel. So: with all the 'incredulity' for which you reproach me so severely, I think I'm a better and more orthodox Christian than you are. At least I am more sure of remaining a Christian than you are, because your credulity exposes you to being imposed on by people who are far short of angels! Given your ready-to-believe disposition, the odds are that you will some day come to believe in miracles by one or more of the different sects—we know that they all claim to produce miracles! I'm convinced that the best maxim to go by is the common one that *Miracles have ceased*; and I'm ready to defend this opinion of mine as being the most probable in itself as well as the most suitable to Christianity.

As the discussion continued, the issue divided our two companions.

the old gentleman: Giving up miracles for the time present would be a great help to the atheists.

the younger gentleman: Mightn't allowing them be as much of a help to the enthusiasts and cult-followers against the national church? And *that* threat, I think, is the greatest danger both to religion and the state. I have decided from now on to be as cautious in examining these modern miracles as I used to be eager in seeking them.

He gave us an amusing account of what an adventurer he had been in pursuit of miracles. . . . Eventually he found that he had had enough of this visionary chase, and would give up rambling in blind corners of the world in the company of spirit-hunters, witch-finders, and buyers of hellish stories and diabolical transactions! There was no need, he thought, for such news from hell to prove the power of heaven and the existence of a god. And now at last he began to see how ridiculous it was to lay so much stress on these matters, as if when any of these wild feats were questioned religion was at stake. He was aware that many good Christians were strong partisans in this cause ·of attending to hellish apparitions etc.·, but he couldn't help wondering why, once he had begun to think about it and to look back.

the younger gentleman: The heathens, who lacked scripture, might appeal to miracles, and Providence may have allowed them their oracles and prodigies as an imperfect kind of revelation. The Jews, with their hard hearts and harder understandings, were also allowed miracles when they stubbornly asked for signs and wonders. But Christians had a far better and truer revelation; they had their plainer oracles, a more rational law, and clearer scripture that carried its own force and was so well attested as to admit of no dispute. If I were asked to assign the exact time when miracles ceased, I would be tempted to imagine it was when the Bible was completed.

the old gentleman: This is imagination indeed! And one that is very dangerous to the scripture that you claim is of itself so well attested. The testimony of •men who are dead and gone concerning •miracles that are past and at an end surely can't have as much force as miracles that are present; and I maintain that there are quite enough contemporary miracles to show the existence of God. If there were no miracles nowadays people would be apt to think that there never were any. The present must answer for the credibility of the past. This is *God* witnessing for himself, not men witnessing for God. For who will witness for men if on religious matters they have no testimony from Heaven on their behalf?

the younger gentleman: What is to make men's reports credible is another question. But as for miracles, it seems to me that they can't properly be said to witness either for God or for men. For who will witness for the miracles themselves? And even if a miracle is ever so certain, what guarantee do we have that it isn't produced by daemons or by magic? How can we trust anything—above or below—if the signs are only of power and not of goodness?

'And are you so far improved then', replied his severe companion, 'under your new sceptical master (pointing to me) that you can thus readily discard all miracles as useless?'

The young gentleman, I saw, was somewhat daunted by this rough usage from his friend, who was going on with his invective until I interrupted.

Philocles: I'm the one who should answer for this young gentleman, whom you regard as my disciple. And since his modesty, I see, won't allow him to pursue what he has so handsomely begun, I will try to take over if he'll allow me to.

The young gentleman agreed; and I went on, presenting his fair intention of establishing a rational and sound foundation for our faith, so as to protect it from the reproach of having no immediate miracles to support it.

Philocles: He would have continued his argument, no doubt, by showing what •good proof we already have for our sacred oracles, namely •the testimony of the dead, whose characters and lives are reasons to accept the truth of what they reported to us from God. But this was by no means 'witnessing for God', as the zealous gentleman hastily put it. For this was above the reach of men and of miracles. And God couldn't 'witness for himself' or assert his existence to men except by

- •revealing himself to their reason,
- •appealing to their judgment, and
- •submitting his ways to their cool evaluation.

The contemplation of the universe, its laws and government, was the only thing that could solidly establish the belief in a deity. Suppose that innumerable miracles from all directions assailed our senses and gave the trembling soul no rest; suppose that the sky suddenly opened and all kinds of prodigies [see Glossary] appeared, voices were heard or characters read; this would show only that there are certain powers that can do all this. But

- •what powers?
- •one or more?
- •superior or subordinate?
- •mortal or immortal?
- •wise or foolish?
- •just or unjust?
- •good or bad?

All this would remain a mystery, as would the true intention of these powers, the trustworthiness of whatever they said. Their word couldn't be taken on their own behalf! They might •silence men indeed, but not •convince them, because power can never serve as proof of goodness, and goodness is the only guarantee of truth. It's only through goodness that trust is created; superior powers can win belief by goodness. They must allow their works to be examined, their actions criticized; the only way they can be trusted is by giving repeated signs of their benevolence, establishing their character of sincerity and truthfulness. To anyone to whom the laws and government of this universe appear just and orderly—they speak to *him* of the government of a single Just One; to *him* they reveal and witness a god; and by laying in him the foundation of this first faith, they fit him to accept a subsequent one. He can then listen to historical revelation [i.e. to a revelation that occurs at some particular time, rather than the non-historical 'revelation' of God in the excellence of the natural world]. It is then and only then that he is equipped

to receive any message or miraculous notice from above, knowing in advance •that whatever comes from above is just and true. But •that knowledge can't be given to him by any power of miracles, or by any power besides his reason.

P: But having been the defendant for so long, I want now to take up offensive arms and be aggressor in my turn—provided Theocles isn't angry with me for borrowing material from his scheme of things.

the old gentleman: Whatever you borrow from him you are pretty sure to spoil. As it passes through your hands, you had better beware of seeming to reflect on him rather than on me.

Philocles: I'll risk it while I am maintaining that most of the maxims you build upon are no good for anything except to betray your own cause. For while you are

- •labouring to unhinge nature,
- •searching heaven and earth for prodigies, and
- •studying how to miraculize [Shaftesbury's word] everything,

you bring confusion on the world, break its uniformity, and destroy the admirable simplicity of order from which we know the one infinite and perfect principle [see Glossary]. Perpetual strifes, convulsions, violences, breach of laws, variation and unsteadiness of order—all this shows that either •there is no control in nature or •there are several uncontrolled and unsubordinate powers in nature. We have before our eyes either the chaos and atoms of the atheists, or the magic and daemons of the polytheists. Yet *this* tumultuous system of the universe is asserted with the greatest zeal by some people who want to maintain that there is a god. They represent divinity by this face of things, by these features. The eyes of our more curious and honest youth are carefully steered so that they'll see everything in this tangled and amazing way; as if atheism were the most natural inference that could be drawn from a regular and orderly state of things! But it often happens that after all this mangling and disfigurement of nature the amazed disciple comes to himself, searches slowly and carefully into nature's ways, and finds more order, uniformity, and constancy in things than he suspected. When he does so, he is of course driven into atheism—merely by the impressions he received from the preposterous system that taught him to •look for deity in confusion and to •discover providence in an irregular disjointed world.

the old gentleman: And when you with your newly espoused system have brought all things to be as uniform, plain, regular, and simple as you could wish—I suppose you'll send your disciple to seek for deity in •mechanism, i.e. in some •exquisite system of self-governed matter. For don't you naturalists see the world as a mere machine?

Philocles: Nothing else, if you allow the machine to have a mind. For in that case it's not a self-governed machine, but a God-governed one.

the old gentleman: And what are the indications that should convince us? What signs should this speechless machine give of its being thus governed?

Philocles: The present ·signs· are sufficient. It—·the world-machine·—can't possibly give stronger signs of life and steady thought ·than it does already·. Compare •our own machines with this great one, and see whether •their order, management and motions indicate as perfect a life or as complete an intelligence. [By ' our own machines' he means 'our own bodies'. He is comparing •my bodily behaviour as evidence for you about my mind with •nature's behaviour as evidence for you about a universal mind. His emphasis is less on •how strong the evidences are than on •how good the minds are.]

- One is regular, steady, permanent; the others are irregular, variable, inconstant.
- In one there are signs of wisdom and determination; in the others signs of whimsy and conceit.
- In one judgment appears, in the other only imagination.
- In one ·we see evidence of· will, in the other merely whims.
- In one truth, certainty, and knowledge, in the other, error, folly, and madness.

But to be convinced that there is something above us that thinks and acts, we seem to want the 'in-the-other' signs, as though we held that there can't be thought or intelligence except what is like our own. We get tired and bored with the orderly and regular course of things;. . . .it doesn't work on us or fill us with amazement. We demand riddles, prodigies, matter for surprise and horror! Harmony, order and concord turn us into atheists; irregularity and discord convince us that God exists! The world is a mere chance happening if it unrolls in an orderly way, but it's an effect of wisdom if it runs mad!

So I took upon me the part of a convinced theist while trying to refute my antagonist and show that his principles favour atheism. The zealous gentleman was highly offended, and we continued debating heatedly until late at night. But Theocles moderated the tone, and we retired at last to our beds all calm and friendly. Still, I was glad to hear that our companions were to leave early the next morning, leaving Theocles to me alone.

My narrative is now approaching the morning for which I so much longed. I'm not sure what *you* will be longing for by now! You may well have had enough to blunt the edge of your curiosity about this matter. Could it be that after my recital of two such days already past—·the one with you and the one with Theocles and his friends·—you can patiently put up with a third that is more philosophical than either of the other two? But you made me promise, so now you have to listen, whatever it costs you!

Part III: Second day: Conversation between two

Philocles is still writing to his friend Palemon

Section 1: Nature as evidence of God

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

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

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

Theocles: Why is there any difficulty in thinking of the universe as one entire thing? Given what we can see of it, how can we *not* think of it as all hanging together as a single piece? If you accept that, what follows? Only this: if it can indeed be said of the world that it is simply [see Glossary] *one*, there should be something about it that *makes* it one. 'Make it one'—how? In the same way as everything else you see as having unity. For instance: I know you look on the trees of this vast wood as different from one another; and this tall oak—a different thing from all the other trees in the wood—is one single tree, despite the fact that its numerous spreading branches look like so many different trees. . . . You may want to ask:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Nature', you say.

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

'No.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What an admirable theory! Believe it if you can. For my own share (thank Providence) I have in my possession a mind that serves, such as it is, to keep my body and its affections—and also my passions, appetites, imaginings and the rest—in tolerable harmony and order. But I'm still convinced that the order of the universe is much better than mine. Let Epicurus think that his is better; and believing that no intelligence or wisdom is above his own, let him tell us •by what chance it was given to him and •how atoms came to be so wise!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Philocles: I admit that that is right.

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

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

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

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

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

Philocles: It seems so.

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

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

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

Philocles: I did so.

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

Philocles: The reason is still good.

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

Philocles: None, while they remain appearances only.

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

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

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

Philocles: I accept that.

Theocles: So what they represent may possibly be good

Philocles: It may.

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

Philocles: It may be so.

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

Philocles: I accept that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

12 [More of the same.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 [Interruption

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

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

23 [As we move around the world, new wonders open up: gems, spices. . . . and elephants! These can be tamed, and fight alongside us in our battles, as allies rather than slaves. Then there are insects—complex in structure and life, beautiful, productive of 'subtle threads' with which we make beautiful clothing. How beautiful the plants are, 'from the triumphant palm down to the humble moss'.

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

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

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

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

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

Section 2: Beauty

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Philocles: How?

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

Philocles: Right.

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

Philocles: Right again.

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

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

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

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

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

Philocles: It seems so.

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

Philocles: True.

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

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

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

Philocles: You mean my sentiments?

Theocles: Certainly, and also

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Philocles: Content.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

T: Ridiculous indeed!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Theocles: Why?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Philocles: Not so.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 3: Goodness

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

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

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

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

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

themselves nor directly any cause or means of good?'

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

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

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

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

Philocles: You would be surprised at how well I am acquainted with it! I saw that the good lady, your celebrated *Beauty*, was about to turn up again, and I had no trouble recognising the fair face of Liberty that I had seen only once in the picture you drew yesterday of that moral dame [page 22]. I assure you, I think as highly of her as possible; and I find that if I don't have her help in •rising about these seemingly essential goods and •taking a relaxed view of life and of fortune, it will be the hardest thing in the world to enjoy either life or fortune. Solicitude, cares, and anxiety will be multiplied; and in this unhappy dependency ·on the trashy 'pleasures' of fame or fortune or the like·, one has to be servile. To flatter the great, to bear insults, to stoop, and fawn, and abjectly surrender one's sense and manhood—all this must be bravely endured, and gone through with as casually and cheerfully as possible, by anyone who. . . .knows •the general way of courts, and •how to fix unsteady fortune. I need not mention the envyings, the mistrusts, and jealousies. . .

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

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

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

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

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

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

Theocles: Then why do we act at any time? Why choose, preferring one thing to another? I suppose you'll tell me that it's because we fancy it, or fancy good in it. Are we therefore to follow every present fancy, opinion, or imagination of good? if so, then we must follow at one time something that we decline at another; approve at one time what we disapprove at another; be perpetually at odds with ourselves. But if we are not to follow all fancy or opinion alike—if it's allowed that some fancies are true and some false—then we are to examine every fancy, and there's some rule or other by which to judge amongst them. It was the fancy of one man to set fire to a beautiful temple so as to obtain immortal fame. It was the fancy of another man to conquer the world, for just about the same reason. [Erostratus burned down a temple so as to get his name into history-books; and on that same day Alexander the Great was born.] If this really was the man's good, why are we amazed at his conduct? If his fancy was wrong; say plainly *how* it was wrong, *why* the subject wasn't good for him as he fancied. So there are the options: either

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—what is this but philosophising?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

. . . .Tell me positively:

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

Or am I to set everything loose? Are the passions to take their swing, with no attention being paid to •them but only to •the outward things they aim at? And if some attention to them is needed, tell me plainly: How much to one, and how much to the other? How far are the appetites to be minded, and how far outward things? Give us the measure and rule.—Isn't this philosophising? And doesn't everyone do it, whether willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly, directly or indirectly?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * * *

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

THE END

* * * * *

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

The prose poem omitted at page 49

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

O glorious Nature! supremely Fair, and sovereignly Good! All-loving and All-lovely, All-divine! Whose Looks are so becoming, and of such infinite Grace; whose Study brings such Wisdom, and whose Contemplation such Delight; whose every single Work affords an ampler Scene, and is a nobler Spectacle than all which ever Art presented! O mighty Nature! Wise Substitute of Providence! impower'd Creatress! Or Thou impowering Deity, supreme Creator! Thee I invoke, and Thee alone adore. To thee this Solitude, this Place, these Rural Meditations are sacred; whilst thus inspir'd with Harmony of Thought, tho unconfin'd by Words, and in loose Numbers, I sing of Nature's Order in created Beings, and celebrate the Beautys which resolve in Thee, the Source and Principle of all Beauty and Perfection.

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

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

Yet since by Thee (O Sovereign Mind!) I have been form'd such as I am, intelligent and rational; since the peculiar Dignity of my Nature is to know and contemplate Thee; permit that with due freedom I exert those Facultys with which thou hast adorn'd me. Bear with my venturous and bold Approach. And since nor vain Curiosity, nor fond Conceit, nor Love of aught save Thee alone, inspires me with such Thoughts as these, be thou my Assistant, and guide me in this Pursuit; whilst I venture thus to tread the Labyrinth of wide Nature, and endeavour to trace thee in thy Works.

The prose poem omitted at pages 55–56

1 O mighty Genius! Sole animating and inspiring Power! Author and Subject of these Thoughts! Thy Influence is universal: and in all Things, thou art inmost. From Thee depend their secret Springs of Action. Thou mov'st them with an irresistible unweary'd Force, by sacred and inviolable Laws, fram'd for the Good of each particular Being; as best may sute with the Perfection, Life, and Vigour of the Whole. The vital Principle is widely shar'd, and infinitely vary'd: dispers'd thro'out; nowhere extinct. All lives; and by Succession still revives. The temporary Beings quit their borrow'd Forms, and yield their elementary Substance to New-Comers. Call'd, in their several turns, to Life, they view the Light, and viewing pass; that others too may be Spectators of the goodly Scene, and greater numbers still enjoy the Privilege of Nature. Munificent and Great, she imparts herself to most; and makes the Subjects of her Bounty infinite. Nought stays her hastning Hand. No Time nor Substance is lost or unimprov'd. New Forms arise: and when the old dissolve, the Matter whence they were compos'd is not left useless, but wrought with equal Management and Art, even in Corruption, Nature's seeming Waste, and vile Abhorrence. The abject State appears merely as the Way or Passage to some better. But cou'd we nearly view it, and with Indifference, remote from the Antipathy of Sense; we then perhaps shou'd highest raise our Admiration: convinc'd that even the Way itself was equal to the End. Nor can we judg less favourably of that consummate Art exhibited thro' all the Works of Nature; since our weak Eyes, help'd by mechanick Art, discover in these Works a hidden Scene of Wonders; Worlds within Worlds, of infinite Minuteness, tho as to Art still equal to the greatest, and pregnant with more Wonders than the most discerning Sense, join'd with the greatest Art, or the acutest Reason, can penetrate or unfold.

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 All Nature's Wonders serve to excite and perfect this Idea of their Author. 'Tis here he suffers us to see, and even converse with him, in a manner sutable to our Frailty. How glorious is it to contemplate him, in this noblest of his Works apparent to us, The System of the bigger World!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 Yet is this Mansion-Globe, this Man-Container, of a much narrower compass even than other its Fellow-Wanderers of our System. How narrow then must it appear, compar'd with the capacious System of its own Sun? And how narrow, or as nothing, in respect of those innumerable Systems of other apparent Suns? Yet how immense a Body it seems, compar'd with ours of human Form, a borrow'd Remnant of its variable and oft-converted Surface? tho animated with a sublime Celestial Spirit, by which we have Relation and Tendency to Thee our Heavenly Sire, Center of Souls; to whom these Spirits of ours by Nature tend, as earthly Bodys to their proper Center. O did they tend as unerringly and constantly! But Thou alone composest the Disorders of the corporeal World, and from the restless and fighting Elements raisest that peaceful Concord, and conspiring Beauty of the ever-flourishing Creation. Even so canst thou convert these jarring Motions of intelligent Beings, and in due time and manner cause them to find their Rest; making them contribute to the Good and Perfection of the Universe, thy all-good and perfect Work.

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 How beautiful is the Water among the inferior Earthly Works! Heavy, liquid, and transparent: without the springing Vigour and expansive Force of Air; but not without Activity. Stubborn and un-yielding, when compress'd; but placidly avoiding Force, and bending every way with ready Fluency! Insinuating, it dissolves the lumpish Earth, frees the intangled Bodys, procures their Intercourse, and summons to the Field the keen terrestrial Particles; whole happy Strifes soon ending in strict Union, produce the various Forms which we behold. How vast are the Abysses of the Sea, where this soft Element is stor'd; and whence the Sun and Winds extracting, raise it into Clouds! These soon converted into Rain, water the thirsty Ground, and supply a-fresh the Springs and Rivers; the Comfort of the neighbouring Plains, and sweet Refreshment of all Animals.

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

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

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

21 How oblique and faintly looks the Sun on yonder Climates, far remov'd from him! How tedious are the Winters there! How deep the Horrors of the Night, and how uncomfortable even the Light of Day! The freezing Winds employ their fiercest Breath, yet are not spent with blowing. The Sea, which elsewhere is scarce confin'd within its Limits, lies here immur'd in Walls of Chrystal. The Snow covers the Hills, and almost fills the lowest Valleys. How wide and deep it lies, incumbent o'er the Plains, hiding the sluggish Rivers, the Shrubs, and Trees, the Dens of Beasts, and Mansions of distress'd and feeble Men!-See! where they lie confin'd, hardly secure against the raging Cold, or the Attacks of the wild Beasts, now Masters of the wasted Field, and forc'd by Hunger out of the naked Woods. Yet not dishearten'd (such is the Force of human Breasts) but thus provided for, by Art and Prudence, the kind compensating Gifts of Heaven, Men and their Herds may wait for a Release. For at length the Sun approaching, melts the Snow, sets longing Men at liberty, and affords them Means and Time to make provision against the next Return of Cold. It breaks the icy Fetters of the Main; where vast Sea-Monsters pierce thro' floating Islands, with Arms which can withstand the Chrystal Rock: whilst others, who of themselves seem great as Islands, are by their Bulk alone arm'd against all but Man; whose Superiority over Creatures of such stupendous Size and Force, shou'd make him mindful of his Privilege of Reason, and force him humbly to adore the great Composer of these wondrous Frames, and Author of his own superior Wisdom.

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

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

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

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

25 But see! not far from us, that fertilest of Lands, water'd and fed by a friendly generous Stream, which, ere it enters the Sea, divides itself into many Branches, to dispense more equally the rich and nitrous Manure, it bestows so kindly and in due time, on the adjacent Plains. Fair Image of that fruitful and exuberant Nature, who with a Flood of Bounty blesses all things, and, Parent-like, out of her many Breasts sends the nutritious Draught in various Streams to her rejoicing Offspring!-Innumerable are the dubious Forms and unknown Species which drink the slimy Current: whether they are such as leaving the scorch'd Desarts, satiate here their ardent Thirst, and promiscuously engendring, beget a monstrous Race; or whether, as it is said, by the Sun's genial Heat, active on the fermenting Ooze, new Forms are generated, and issue from the River's fertile Bed. See there the noted Tyrant of the Flood, and Terror of its Borders! when suddenly displaying his horrid Form, the amphibious Ravager invades the Land, quitting his watry Den, and from the deep emerging, with hideous rush, sweeps o'er the trembling Plain. The Natives from afar behold with wonder the enormous Bulk, sprung from so small an Egg. With Horror they relate the Monster's Nature, cruel and deceitful: how he with dire Hypocrisy, and false Tears, beguiles the Simple-hearted; and inspiring Tenderness and kind Compassion, kills with pious Fraud. Sad Emblem of that spiritual Plague, dire Superstition! Native of this Soil; where first Religion grew unsociable, and among different Worshipers bred mutual Hatred, and Abhorrence of each others Temples. The Infection spreads: and Nations now profane one to another, war fiercer, and in Religion's Cause forget Humanity: whilst savage Zeal, with meek and pious Semblance, works dreadful Massacre; and for Heaven's sake (horrid Pretence!) makes desolate the Earth.

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

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

27 But behold! thro' a vast Tract of Sky before us, the mighty Atlas rears his lofty Head, cover'd with Snow above the Clouds. Beneath the Mountain's foot, the rocky Country rises into Hills, a proper Basis of the ponderous Mass above: where huge embody'd Rocks lie pil'd on one another, and seem to prop the high Arch of Heaven. See! with what trembling Steps poor Mankind tread the narrow Brink of the deep Precipices! From whence with giddy Horror they look down, mistrusting even the Ground which bears 'em; whilst they hear the hollow Sound of Torrents underneath, and see the Ruin of the impending Rock; with falling Trees which hang with their Roots upwards, and seem to draw more Ruin after 'em. Here thoughtless Men, seiz'd with the Newness of such Objects, become thoughtful, and willingly contemplate the incessant Changes of this Earth's Surface. They see, as in one instant, the Revolutions of past Ages, the fleeting Forms of Things, and the Decay even of this our Globe; whose Youth and first Formation they consider, whilst the apparent Spoil and irreparable Breaches of the wasted Mountain shew them the World itself only as a noble Ruin, and make them think of its approaching Period. But here mid-way the Mountain, a spacious Border of thick Wood harbours our weary'd Travellers: who now are come among the ever-green and lofty Pines, the Firs, and noble Cedars, whose towring Heads seem endless in the Sky; the rest of Trees appearing only as Shrubs beside them. And here a different Horror seizes our shelter'd Travellers, when they see the Day diminish'd by the deep Shapes of the vast Wood; which closing thick above, spreads Darkness and eternal Night below. The faint and gloomy Light looks horrid as the Shade itself: and the profound Stillness of these Places imposes Silence upon Men, struck with the hoarse Echoings of every Sound within the spacious Caverns of the Wood. Here Space astonishes. Silence itself seems pregnant; whilst an unknown Force works on the Mind, and dubious Objects move the wakeful Sense. Mysterious Voices are either heard or fansy'd: and various Forms of Deity seem to present themselves, and appear more manifest in these sacred Silvan Scenes; such as of old gave rise to Temples, and favour'd the Religion of the antient World. Even we our-selves, who in plain Characters may read Divinity from so many bright Parts of Earth, chuse rather these obscurer Places, to spell out that mysterious Being, which to our weak Eyes appears at best under a Veil of Cloud."-