

Soliloquy

Advice to an Author

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type.—The breaks into Parts and Sections are Shaftesbury's; the titles of the Sections are not.—This work is the third of the five Treatises in Shaftesbury's *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*.

First launched: July 2012

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Glossary

admonitory: Giving admonitions, somewhere between advice and scolding.

apostrophise: To apostrophise x is to speak to x while knowing that x is absent.

art: In Shaftesbury's time an 'art' was any human activity that involves techniques or rules of procedure—including medicine, farming, and painting—but in this work the word is used mainly to pick out 'arts' in your and my sense. The art/nature contrast is the artificial/natural contrast, with 'art' being taken to cover anything that is man-made.

author: Shaftesbury's usual sense for this word is the same as ours; but when he writes of 'authors and poets' he presumably thinks of 'authors' as writers of works in prose.

disinterested: This did, and still does, mean 'not *self*-interested'.

education: In early modern times this word had a somewhat broader meaning than it does today. It wouldn't have been misleading to replace it by 'upbringing' on almost every occasion

gay: Light-hearted, carefree. This word came to mean 'homosexual' in the mid-20th century.

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

genius: Sometimes used to mean nothing much more than 'intellect'; more often meaning 'very high-level intellect'. In early modern times 'genius' wasn't given the very strong meaning it has today.

gothic: Barbarous, crude, uncouth. Shaftesbury uses 'gothic architect' as code for 'would-be artists whose ignorance and poverty of cultural background condemns them to producing works that are crude and unsatisfactory'.

luxurious: A 'luxurious' person was someone wholly given to the pleasures of the senses—mostly but not exclusively the pleasures of eating and drinking.

mechanic: A skilled manual worker. On page 20 Shaftesbury would have counted Michelangelo as a 'mechanic', not intending this as in any way derogatory.

moral: In early modern times, 'moral' could mean roughly what it does today, but also had a use in which it meant 'having to do with intentional human action'. To 'exercise my reason on moral subjects' [page 32] is to think about what people are like, how they behave, and how I can best relate to them.

patience: The passive virtue of uncomplainingly putting up with hardship.

prince: Until about a century ago, 'prince' could mean 'ruler'. Queen Elizabeth I referred to herself as a 'prince'.

principle: Shaftesbury mainly uses 'principle' in our sense, in which a principle is a certain kind of proposition. But on page 27 and perhaps elsewhere he uses the word only in a sense, once common but now obsolete, in which 'principle' means 'source', 'cause', 'driver', 'energizer', or the like.

Prometheus: A Titan in Greek mythology. Shaftesbury's phrase 'a just Prometheus, under Jove' on page 12 means 'someone as creative as Prometheus was' (he made man out of clay), 'but unlike him in being just and obedient to

Jove' (he stole fire from the Gods, gave it to man, and was condemned to an eternity of punishment).

raillery: Good-humoured witty ridicule or teasing, done with a light touch.

schools: On page 26 and possibly in a few other places, Shaftesbury uses 'schools' to refer to philosophy departments that are almost entirely under Aristotle's influence.

science: In early modern times this word applied to any body of knowledge or theory that is (perhaps) axiomatised and (certainly) conceptually highly organised. When Shaftesbury writes 'my science, if it be any' (page 1) he shows his awareness that his ideas about how to give advice don't constitute a 'science'. On page 26 he calls philosophy a science to emphasize that it is, when done properly, intellectually

demanding.

speculation: Any intellectual inquiry that aims to establish theories about something other than morality. Ethics is a 'practical' discipline, chemistry is a 'speculative' one.

spirits: Used on page 28 to mean 'animal spirits', stuff that was supposed to be even more finely divided than air, able to move extremely fast in the animal body.

ugly: The occurrence on page 11 is Shaftesbury's. Its other occurrences are replacements for 'deformed', which has a stronger and nastier sense today than it did in early modern times.

vulgar: Applied to people who have no social rank, are not much educated, and (the suggestion often is) not very intelligent.

Part I

Section 1: Advice to oneself

I have often heard people of good understanding say that no-one was ever helped in his private conduct by *advice*; and this has struck me as an ill-natured maxim. But after further thought I've reached the conclusion that the maxim can be accepted without any violent prejudice to mankind. The way in which advice is generally •given makes it unsurprising that it is so ungraciously •received. The situation has been upside-down—the giver •of advice• has been the only gainer •from it•: what we have called *giving* advice was really only *taking* an opportunity to show our own wisdom at someone else's expense. . . .

However able or willing a man may be to advise, it's not easy to make advice a free gift. For x to make a free gift to y, there must be nothing in the gift that takes from y and is added to x. To give anything else is an act of generosity and good-will; but to give *wisdom* is to gain a mastery that can't so easily be allowed us. Men willingly learn whatever else they are taught: they can bear someone else's being their master in mathematics, in music, or in any other science; but not in understanding and good sense.

It's incredibly difficult for an author not to be presumptuous in this respect. Every author claims, in a way, to be a *master of understanding* to his contemporaries. That is why in early days poets were looked on as authentic sages, for dictating rules of life and teaching good behaviour and good sense. How they lost their claim •to be viewed in this way• I can't say. It is their special good fortune that they don't have to make their claim openly. If while they *say* that they only aim to *please* they secretly *advise* and *instruct*, perhaps they

can still be—as they once were—rightly regarded as the best and most honourable among authors.

You may ask: 'If dictating and prescribing is such a dangerous activity in other authors, what is the situation of someone who dictates to authors themselves?' I answer that my purpose here is not so much to •give advice as to •present some thoughts about how advice should be given. My science [see Glossary], if it be any, is no better than that of a language-master or a logician. For I have become strongly convinced that in argument there's a certain knack or sleight-of-hand by which we can safely proceed to the dangerous part of advising, and make sure of having our advice accepted if it is any good.

We should think of advising as a case of surgery. We all know that what gives someone a sure **hand** is practice; but who will be practised on? who will willingly be the first to let us try our hand, giving us the required experience? Here lies the difficulty. Suppose that we had hospitals for this sort of surgery, and that certain meek patients were always available to bear any incisions, and be probed or explored at our pleasure; this would certainly be a help to those who were learning to be surgeons. They would gain some insight; and in time they might also acquire a **hand**, but it would probably be a very rough one—too rough to serve the purpose of this latter surgery, •i.e. the giving of advice•. In this •kind of 'surgery'• the main thing that is needed is a gentle hand! . . .

In any case, you may want to object:

'We won't be able to find such a meek patient, one we can freely practise on while also preserving the greatest tenderness and regard for him'

I deny this, because we can, for instance, practise on ourselves. You'll say:

'You're playing with words! Who can multiply himself into two persons, and be his own subject? Who can properly laugh at himself, or find it in his heart to be either merry or severe on such an occasion?'

Go to the dramatic poets, who will present you with many examples of this; nothing is more common with them than this sort of soliloquy. A person. . . does something wrong, and is concerned about it. He comes alone onto the stage, looks around to see if anyone is near, and then criticises himself unsparingly. . . , thoroughly going through the business of self-dissection. Through this soliloquy he becomes two distinct persons—pupil and instructor, learning and teaching. Quite seriously: if I had nothing else to plead in defence of the morals of our modern dramatic poets, I would defend them against their accusers for the sake of this very practice, soliloquy, which they have taken care to keep up in its full force. Whether or not the practice is natural by the standards of ordinary everyday life, I'm willing to assert that

- it is an honest and laudable practice, and that
- if it isn't already natural to us, we ought to *make* it so, by study and application.

You'll say:

'So we are to go to the stage for edification? Must we learn our catechism—our question-and-answer—from the poets? and copy the actors by speaking aloud whenever we debate with ourselves in private?'

Not necessarily just like that; though I can't see any harm in our. . . bestowing a little breath and clear voice purely upon ourselves. [He goes on in flowery detail, suggesting that if we talked to ourselves aloud in private we might be less noisily garrulous in company, and reporting that 'a certain nation' in the past had laws *requiring* this remedy for 'the

disease that has been called "the leprosy of eloquence".] The rest of this section is devoted to the topic of soliloquising *aloud*—which kinds of speaker or writer could gain most from it, the risk of being overheard and thought to be mad, and so on. Here are some of the better bits from these rather wearying pages (about one-sixth of the whole):]

- Why 'the writers of memoirs and essays. . . entertain the world so lavishly with what relates to themselves': It's because 'they have had no opportunity of privately conversing with themselves, or exercising their own genius [see Glossary] so as to. . . test its strength; so they immediately go to work in a wrong place, and exhibit on the stage of the world the practice that they should have kept to themselves.'

- Joke-making and child-bearing: 'Wits who conceive suddenly but can't manage the full gestation period have the misfortune that after many miscarriages and abortions they can't bring anything well-shaped or perfect into the world. But they are nonetheless fond of their offspring, which in a manner they beget in public.'

- Regarding 'candidates for authorship who are of the sanctified kind': 'Although books of this sort are commonly called "good books", the authors of them are certainly are a sorry lot. . . . A saint-author puts less value on politeness than anyone else. . . . He isn't in the least inclined to play the critic on himself, or regulate his style or language by the standards of good company and people of the better sort, and is *above* the consideration of *good manners*. . . . However good a writer's cause is, I doubt whether he'll be able to recommend it with great advantage to the world if he doesn't have good temper and moderation on his side.'

- It's the hardest thing in the world to be a good thinker without being a strong self-examiner and thorough-paced dialogist in this solitary way.'

Section 2: Self-scrutiny

Now to come a little closer still to morals. I might justifiably use this opportunity to embark on a scholarly demonstration of the antiquity of the opinion that

each of us has a daemon, angel, or guardian-spirit to whom we were strictly joined and committed at the moment of our birth or at the dawn of our individual reason.

If this were literally true, it might help greatly to establish the system and doctrine that I am defending here. It would be a kind of sacrilege or impiety to snub such a divine guest, and in a way banish him from our breast by refusing to enter with him into the secret conferences needed for him to become our adviser and guide. But it wouldn't be fair for me to argue on this basis, because when the wise ancients wrote of this daemon-companion I don't think they meant to do more than enigmatically declare:

'Each of us has *himself* as a patient. We are properly our own subjects of practice; and we'll become accredited practitioners when by digging down into ourselves we discover a certain doubleness of soul, and divide ourselves into two parties.'

One of these two parties, they supposed, will immediately show himself to be a venerable sage, and with an air of authority will set himself up as our counsellor and governor; while the other party, who has nothing in him except what's base and servile, will be contented to follow and obey.

When this is done deeply and intimately and the *two* are formed in us, we are supposed to advance in morals and true wisdom. This, the ancients thought, is the only way of composing matters in our breast and establishing the subordinacy—the authority-slope—which is essential if we are to agree with ourselves and be internally whole. They

regarded this as a more religious work than any prayers or other duty in the temple. . . . The ancients had the celebrated Delphic inscription, **Recognise yourself!**, which was tantamount to saying **Divide yourself!** or **Be two!**. For if the division is rightly made, they thought, everything within will be rightly understood and prudently managed. . . . They thought it was the special skill of philosophers and wise men to be able to talk with themselves, which provided them with the boast that 'I am never less alone than when I am by myself'. . . .

One would think there's nothing easier for us than to know our own minds—to understand what we are *up to*—what we are plainly driving at, what we are setting before ourselves as our end, in every occurrence of our lives. But the unspoken language of our thoughts is so obscure that it's the hardest thing in the world to make them speak out clearly. The right method is to give them voice and accent; and when we don't do this the moralists or philosophers try to make it easier for us. Their usual procedure is to confront us with a kind of *vocal mirror* to draw sound out of our breast, and instruct us to present ourselves in the plainest manner. . . .

A certain air of lightness and humour that prevails nowadays in the fashionable world gives a son the assurance to tell his father that he has lived too long; and gives a husband the privilege of talking about his second wife in the presence of his first. But if the casual gentleman who thus makes bold with others withdraws from company for a while, he hardly dares to *tell himself* his wishes. Still less can he endure to carry on his thought, as he must do if he thoroughly digs down into himself and works to know himself through question-and-answer. After some struggle, he may confront himself like this:

‘Tell me now, my honest heart! Am I really honest, and of some worth? Or am I only looking good while being intrinsically no better than a rascal? Am I as good a friend, compatriot, or relation as I outwardly appear to be, or as I would perhaps like to think I am? Wouldn’t I actually be glad if anyone who happened to stand between me and the least portion of an estate were hanged or broke his neck? Why not? Since it would be in my interests, shouldn’t that make me glad to help this matter forwards, and promote my interests, if it lay fairly in my power? No doubt it should, provided I were sure of not being punished for it. And what reason does the greatest rogue in the world have for not doing the same? The same reason—fear of punishment—and no other. Then aren’t I basically the same as he? . . . If self-interest points out this road to me, where would I be led by humanity and compassion? In the opposite direction. So why do I cherish such weaknesses? Why do I sympathise with others? Why please myself with the thought of having worth and honour? a character? a memory? descendants? a name? What are these but scruples in my way? Why do I in this way belie my own interests and by keeping myself half a knave show that I am a complete fool?’

We can’t endure to talk like this to ourselves, whatever raillery [see Glossary] we may use with others. We may defend villainy or praise folly in public; but to appear fools, madmen or villains to ourselves, proving to our own faces that that’s what we really are, is intolerable. Everyone has such a true reverence for himself, when he comes clearly to appear before his close companion—namely himself—that he would rather proclaim the vilest things about himself in

open company than hear his character privately from his own mouth. . . . So it’s the great skill of villainy and lewdness, as well as of superstition and bigotry, to put us upon terms of greater distance and formality with ourselves, and evade this testing method of soliloquy. . . .

Perhaps you, reader, are a lover in the more profound and solemn way of being in love. If you are, I know that you’ll be apt to conclude that you are no stranger to the procedure I am recommending, being aware of having often made vigorous sorties into the solitary regions I have been talking about, where soliloquy is conducted with most advantage. You may happen to remember how you have often addressed the woods and rocks in audible articulate sounds, and have seemingly argued with yourself as though you really had formed the needed distinction—the needed doubling of yourself—and had the power to conduct a proper conversation with yourself. But even if all that is true, it obviously falls far short of what I have been talking about. A passionate lover, however much he wants solitude, can never be truly by himself. . . . Anything he starts to think about when he is alone is interrupted by the imagined presence of his beloved; there’s not a thought, not an expression, not a sigh, that is purely for himself. . . .

It’s the same reason that keeps the imaginary saint or mystic from being capable of this entertainment. [Why ‘imaginary’ saint? Perhaps Shaftesbury doesn’t believe that sainthood is anything real.] Instead of focussing sharply on his own nature and mind, so that he’ll no longer be a mystery to himself, he is absorbed in the contemplation of other mysterious natures that he can never explain or comprehend. He has the illusions of his zeal before his eyes; he’s as familiar with his modes, essences, personages, and exhibitions of deity as the conjurer is with his different forms, species, and orders of spirits or daemons. We can be sure that

no reclusive religionist, votary, or hermit was ever truly *by himself*. And thus, since neither lover, author, mystic, or conjurer (who are the only claimants) can truly or justly be entitled to a share in this self-conversation, it remains that the only person who *is* entitled is the man of sense, the sage, or philosopher. [Why 'lover, *author*' etc.? In the original, the second part of the diagnosis here given for an imagined reader who is a lover is addressed to an imagined popular novelist who is having a romantic affair. Nothing in the content reflects this odd switch.]

However, since we are generally inclined to favour the character of a lover over all other characters, it may be relevant at this point to tell the story of an amour. [Shaftesbury's rather wooden story occupies ten pages and is full of needless detail. In brief: a virtuous (indeed, morally perfect) young prince is at war against a tyrant. Some prisoners that his troops have taken include an extremely beautiful and virtuous princess, a married woman. The prince orders a young nobleman who is a personal friend of his to take special care of the princess and see that no harm befalls her. (Having heard of her beauty, the prince chooses not to take the risk of seeing her; his friend asks whether the risk is real; and there is some conversation about how the will relates to the passions.) In the course of time, the nobleman falls in love with the princess; she turns him away, gently; he then talks of using force; she sends to the prince for help, and he has it out with the nobleman. He speaks forgivingly, saying that the test had been too severe; and he isn't willing to punish him with anything but a very short period of exile from the court during which he is to do something very useful for the prince. Shaftesbury can now take over:]

'Can you then' said the prince 'resolve to quit the charming princess?' 'O sir!' replied the young nobleman, 'I am now well satisfied that I really have within me two distinct souls. This lesson of philosophy I have learned from that villainous

trickster, Love. For it's impossible to believe that one single soul could be both good and bad, passionate for virtue and for vice, desirous of contraries. No, there *must* be two: when the good one prevails, we act handsomely; when the bad one prevails, we act basely and villainously. That was my situation. Recently the bad soul has been wholly the master; but now the good one prevails through your assistance; and I am plainly a new creature, with quite another view of things, another reason, another will.'

That shows how far a lover may by his own natural strength reach the chief principle of philosophy, and understand my doctrine of two persons in a single self. I'm not supposing that the young nobleman was able, unaided, to form this distinction soundly and according to art [see Glossary]. If he could have done *that*, he could have cured himself without the assistance of his prince. But he was wise enough to see in his struggle that his independence and freedom were mere face-paint, his resolution a false nose. For however free the will is, we see that it is governed by •humour and fancy [Shaftesbury's words; they mean, roughly, 'by mood and whim']; and •these, free as we suppose them to be, are often changed—we don't know how—without asking our permission or giving us any explanation. If it's opinion that is in charge and makes the change, it is equally liable to be governed and varied in its turn. And from what I can see of the world, fancy and opinion are pretty much on a par. So if there's no trustworthy inspector or auditor established within us, to take account of these opinions and fancies and comment in detail on their various growths and habits, we're as little likely to continue for a day with the same will as a tree can keep the same shape through a summer without the gardener's assistance and the vigorous use of the pruning-knife.

The inquisition is a cruel court; but it seems that there must be an equally formidable one within ourselves, if we want to have the uniformity of •opinion that is needed if we are to stay with one •will and keep ourselves in the same mind from one day to the next. Philosophy is starting to look like persecution! A supreme judge in matters of inclination and appetite must go exceedingly against the heart. Every pretty fancy is disturbed by it, every pleasure interrupted by it. The course of good humour will hardly allow it, and the pleasantness of wit almost absolutely rejects it. Besides which it seems kind of *pedantry* to be magisterial with ourselves in this way—strict over our imaginations, carefully adopting all the airs of a schoolmaster in the sour care and tutorage of so many boyish fancies, unlucky appetites and desires, which are perpetually playing truant and need correction.

But I hope that by my method of practice, and the help of the grand arcanum [= 'the great mysterious secret'] that I have claimed to reveal, this regimen or discipline for the fancies may turn out to be less severe and mortifying than it at first seems. I hope also that my patient (for that is what I naturally suppose you, my reader, to be) will give due weight to the fact that what he endures in this operation is for a considerable purpose—to gain a will for him, and to give him a certain resolution by which he will

- know where to find himself,
- be sure of his own meaning and design, and
- as regards all his desires, opinions, and inclinations, be guaranteed to be one and the same person today as yesterday, and tomorrow as today.

For anyone who one who thinks hard about the nature of mankind, and the growth, variation, and inflection of appetite and humour, what I have just described may seem like a miracle. **Appetite** is **reason**'s older brother; and because he

is the lad of stronger growth he's sure in every contest to take the advantage of getting everyone onto his own side. And **will**, which is so highly boasted about, is at best merely a football between these mismatched youngsters; till the younger of them, instead of now and then getting in a useless kick at the ball, leaves the ball and starts to lay into his older brother. That's when the scene changes. The older brother, like an arrant coward, reacts to this treatment by immediately becoming civil, and from then on he gives the younger as fair play as he can desire.

And this is where my sovereign remedy and gymnastic method of soliloquy comes in: when by a certain powerful figure of inward rhetoric the mind apostrophises [see Glossary] its own fancies, raises them in their proper shapes and personages, and addresses them conversationally, without the least ceremony or politeness. This will soon bring it about that two organised parties will establish themselves within. When the imaginations or fancies are treated in this unceremonious way, they're forced to declare themselves and to take sides. Those on the side of the older brother, **appetite**, are strangely subtle and insinuating. They always know how to speak by nods and winks, by which they conceal half their meaning. Like modern politicians they count as deeply wise, and adorn themselves with the finest pretexts and most specious glosses imaginable; until, being confronted by their fellows of a plainer language and expression, they are forced to drop their mysterious manner and reveal themselves as mere tricksters and impostors that have absolutely nothing to do with the party of **reason** and good sense. [That sentence uses 'specious' in its old sense of 'superficially attractive or plausible'. A 'gloss' can be •an interpretation of an unclear bit of language, or •something like rouge or lipstick; you can see both meanings at work in Shaftesbury's punning sentence.]

I could now present clearly and methodically the form and manner of this test or exercise in application to •men in general. But I am instead going to start with the special case of •authors, because I think their need for it is the most urgent. It is extremely important for these gentlemen to know themselves, and to understand the natural strength and powers of a human mind as well as its weaknesses. Without this understanding, the historian's judgment will be very defective, the political writer's very narrow and chimerical, and the poet's brain, however well stocked with fiction, will be but poorly furnished, as I shall show later. Someone who deals in characters *must* know his own; otherwise he won't know anything. And someone who aims to give the world a profitable entertainment of this sort should make sure that the first profit comes to himself. They say that charity begins at home; well, wisdom also begins 'at home'. There's no way of estimating manners, or properly evaluating the various moods, fancies, passions and beliefs of others without first taking an inventory of the same kind of goods within ourselves, and surveying our domestic fund. A little of this home-practice will serve to make great discoveries.

Section 3: The greatness of true poets

Anyone who has been an observer of action and grace in human bodies must have discovered that

persons who have been taught only by **nature**
move much less gracefully than
people who through reflection with the assistance of
art have learned to move in the ways that experience
has shown to be the easiest and most **natural**.

[In this passage the word 'art'—referring to training, lessons, rules to follow—is working hard: as well as routinely contrasting art and nature, Shaftesbury is also saying that one can through art learn to move in a

way that is more natural.] Of the former kind are either •good country people who have grown up far from the developed societies of men, or •plain working people. . . .who live in cities. . . .but have had to follow mean employments and have lacked the opportunity and means to form themselves after the better models. Some people indeed are so happily formed by nature herself that they, with the greatest simplicity or roughness of education [see Glossary], have something of a natural grace and comeliness in their action: and there are others with a better education who have aimed wrongly and tried unwisely to act gracefully—and they are the least graceful of all. But it's undeniable that the perfection of grace and comeliness in action and behaviour can be found only among the people who have been brought up in the right way, and among these graceful people the *most* graceful are those who early in their youth learned their exercises and formed their motions under the best masters.

Now, the role of these masters and their lessons in relation to a fine gentleman is the same as the role of philosophers and philosophy in relation to an author. The situation is the same in **(i)** the world of fashion as it is in **(ii)** the literary world. **(i)** In the former of these we see that with merely the help of good company and the force of examples someone can come to move well enough, with apt motions and freedom of limbs that are good enough on ordinary occasions for him to behave like a gentleman. But when on some special occasion the test is more severe—when exercises of the more genteel kind are to be performed in public—it will be easy to distinguish these:

- the ones who have learned the elements, and had private tuition;
- the ones who have settled for merely imitating ·how they have seen others move·, learning their part casually and by rote.

(ii) It's easy to see what the analogue of this is on the side of writers. They have at least as much need to learn the various motions, counterpoises and balances of the mind and passions as the other students have to learn those of the body and limbs. . . .

A fashionable lover can pen a letter to his mistress—as a courtier can compliment a minister, or a minister compliment the ·royal· favourite above him—without going deeply into learning or philosophy. But for these privileged gentlemen, though they set fashions and prescribe rules for other matters, are not controllers in the commonwealth of letters, and are not presumed to be writing to their age, or for remote posterity. Their works don't entitle them to count as *authors* or to be styled 'writers' with this understood as a compliment. If they are ambitious to have such a status, they'll need different equipment. **(i)** Those who enter the public lists must come appropriately trained and exercised—expert in arms, and well trained in the use of their weapon and the management of their horse. It's not enough merely to be dressed in the right way and to have a good horse. The horse alone can never make the horseman; limbs alone can't make the wrestler or the dancer. **(ii)** Nor can genius alone make a poet, or general intelligence make a writer of any considerable kind. The skill and grace of writing is based, as our wise poet ·Horace· tells us, on knowledge and good sense; and not merely on the knowledge that could be learnt from common authors or everyday conversation of the world, but on the particular rules of skill that philosophy alone exhibits.

The philosophical writings that our poet—the Latin poet Horace—refers to in his *Art of Poetry* were in themselves a kind of poetry, like the simple dramas of early times before philosophy was in vogue, and when dramatic imitation was. . . .in many parts not yet perfected. [Shaftesbury praises

those early 'pieces' for their ability to present human beings] according to the most exact poetical truth. It wasn't just that these pieces treated morals in a fundamental way, pointing out real characters and manners; they exhibited them *alive*, putting the faces and temperaments of men plainly in view. In this way they not only taught us to know others but also—their principal and highest virtue—they taught us to know ourselves. [He is referring to Plato's Dialogues.]

The philosophical hero of these poems. . . .was in himself a perfect character; but in some respects he was so veiled, so hidden in a cloud, that to the casual spectator he seemed often to be very different from what he really was. The main reason for this was a certain refined raillery [see Glossary] that he went in for, by virtue of which he could treat the highest subjects together with the most ordinary ones, making them explain each other. In this style of writing, therefore, there appeared both the heroic and the simple, the tragic and the comic. This was all handled in such a way that despite the oddness or mysteriousness of the principal character, the secondary characters showed human nature more distinctly, and to the life. In these works, therefore, we could discover ourselves as in a mirror, seeing our minutest features precisely delineated in a manner that we could recognise and understand. . . . The really remarkable thing about these mirrors was that people who used them often and attentively would acquire a way of thinking such that they virtually carried around with them a sort of pocket-mirror, always ready and in use. In this two faces would naturally present themselves to our view: one of them, like the commanding genius, the ·philosophical· leader and chief that I have mentioned, and the other like the rough undisciplined and headstrong creature who is exactly like ourselves in our natural capacity. Whatever else we were doing or attempting, once we had acquired the habit of this

mirror we would use this double reflection to distinguish ourselves into two different parties, and in this dramatic way the work of self-inspection would proceed successfully.

It's no wonder that the early poets were so admired as sages in their times; they seem to have been practised in this improving method, and capable in it, before philosophy ever adopted it. Their plays with human characters were valued and enjoyed as much as their most regular poems; and they may be what led so many of the regular poems to be formed in such perfection. For poetry itself was defined as being mainly *an imitation of men and manners*: and poetry *was* that in an exalted and noble degree, a low degree of it being what we call mimicry. That is what. . . the father and prince of poets [Homer] is so wonderful at: his characters are more life-like than any succeeding masters were capable of; and his works, which are so full of action, are nothing but a skillful series or chain of dialogues that focus on one remarkable catastrophe or event. He doesn't *describe* any qualities or virtues; he doesn't criticise or praise any conduct; all he does is to bring the speakers into view, and they show themselves. It's they who speak in a way that distinguishes them in all things from everyone else and makes them always *like themselves*. . . The poet, instead of giving himself those dictating and masterly airs of wisdom, hardly appears and is scarcely discoverable in his poem. That's because he is truly a *master*. He paints in such a way that his figures don't need labels to tell us what they are or what he intends by them. . . After him there was nothing left for **tragedy** to do except to erect a stage and draw his dialogues and characters into scenes, again focussing on one principal action or event, with the regard to place and time that is suitable to a real spectacle. Even **comedy** was credited to this great master, because it is derived from the parodies or mock-humours of which he had given prime examples in a concealed sort of

raillery intermixed with the sublime. A dangerous stroke of art! And one that needed a masterly hand, like that of the philosophical hero whose character was represented in the dialogue-writings I have mentioned.

This may give us some idea of the resemblance that has so often been noticed between the •prince of poets and the •divine philosopher [Plato] who was said to rival him and who wrote wholly in the dialogue form that I have described (as did his contemporaries of the same school). And this may also give us an understanding of why the study of dialogue has been thought so advantageous to writers, and why this style of writing—which at first sight seems the easiest of any—was judged so difficult.

I used to wonder why a style that was familiarly used in treatises on most subjects with such success among the ancients should be so insipid, and so little admired, with us moderns. But I came to realise that this style of writing, as well as being difficult, provides not only •a mirror in which we can see ourselves but also of •a kind of mirror for our times. 'Well then,' you'll say, 'that should make it all the more agreeable and entertaining'.

So it should—if we *liked* seeing ourselves faithfully reflected! 'Why should it be more displeasing to us than it was to the ancients? If they could, with good reason, bear to see their natural faces represented, why can't we? What is there to discourage us? Aren't we as handsome as they were, at least in our own eyes?' Perhaps not! To see this, let us first consider a little further what the force is of this mirror-writing, and how it differs from the more fashionably *pleasing* way in which an author, instead of presenting us with •other natural characters, highlight •his own character, using all his skill to purchase his reader's favour by all imaginable compliances and condescensions [Shaftesbury's phrase].

An author who writes in his own person has the advantage of being who or what he pleases. He isn't one particular man, and has no certain or genuine character; he always fits himself to the fancy of his reader, whom—in the currently fashionable way—he constantly caresses and cajoles. Everything turns on these two persons. As in a love-affair or interchange of love-letters, the author has the privilege of talking eternally about himself, dressing and sprucing himself up, while also diligently courting and working on the moods of the person he is writing to. This is the *flirting* of a modern author, whose dedications, prefaces, and letters to the reader are. . . .designed to draw the attention away from his subject and towards himself. . . .

These are the airs that a neighbouring nation [he means the French] give themselves, especially in what they call their *memoirs*. Even their essays on politics, their philosophical and critical works, their comments on ancient and modern authors, *all* their treatises are memoirs! The whole writing of this age has indeed become a sort of memoir-writing. As for the real memoirs of the ancients, even when they did write concerning themselves there was no 'I' or 'thou' throughout the whole work, so that there was place for all this pretty flirting and exchange of caresses between the author and reader.

This is even more the case in dialogue. For here the author is annihilated, and the reader doesn't stand for somebody because he isn't being addressed. The two self-absorbed parties both vanish at once. The scene presents itself as though by chance and not through anyone's design. You're left to form your own cool and unbiased judgments not only about the meaning of what is delivered to you but also about the character, genius [see Glossary], voice and manner of the persons who deliver it. These two are mere strangers, with no relation to you. It isn't enough that they speak

relevant and good sense at every moment. It must be seen

- what the basis is from which they speak,
- what principle, what fund of knowledge, they are drawing from, and
- what kind of understanding they have.

For the understanding here must have its mark, its characteristic note, by which it can be distinguished, as we distinguish faces. . . . Nature has characterised temperaments and minds as individually as it has faces; and for an artist who draws naturally, it's not enough to show us merely faces that may be called men's; every face must be that of one particular man.

A painter who depicts battles or other actions of Christians, Turks, Indians, etc. must draw the various figures of his piece in their proper and real proportions, gestures, habits, arms—or at least with as much resemblance as possible. Well, in the same way, *any* modern writer who ventures to bring his fellow-moderns into dialogue must present them in their proper manners, genius, behaviour and temperament. And this is the mirror that I have been talking about.

Consider for example a dialogue in the ancient style, in which a poor philosopher poorly dressed approaches one of the most powerful, witty, handsome and wealthy noblemen of the time, as he is walking casually towards the temple. Addressing him by his plain name [i.e. without any titles or honorifics] he starts a conversation:

- 'So you're going to pay your devotions at the temple?'
- 'I am so.'
- 'But you seem to be perplexed about something.'
- 'What is there in this situation that should perplex me?'
- 'Perhaps thinking about your petitions, and the question of what vows you had best offer to the deity.'

- ‘Is that so difficult? Can anyone be so foolish as to ask heaven for anything that is not for his good?’
- ‘No—if he understands what his good is.’
- ‘Who can mistake it, if he has common sense and knows the difference between prosperity and adversity?’
- ‘So prosperity is what you intend to pray for?’
- ‘Undoubtedly.’
- ‘For instance, that absolute sovereign who commands all things by virtue of his immense treasures, and governs by his sole will and pleasure—you think him to be prosperous and his state to be happy?’

While I am copying this (for it’s merely a sketch borrowed from one of the ancient originals) I see a thousand ridicules arising from the manner, the circumstances and action itself, compared with modern breeding and civility. So let us mend the matter, if we can, by having the same philosopher addressing himself in a more obsequious manner to ‘your grace’, ‘your excellency’, or ‘your honour’, without failing in the least detail of the ceremonial. Or let us make the case more favourable still for our man of letters who is to write this dialogue. Let us suppose the philosopher to be incognito, without the least appearance of a ‘character’, because these days there’s no advantage in being seen as a ‘character’. Let his clothing and his conduct be of the more fashionable sort, so as to present him better and get him listened to. With these advantages and precautions, *now* imagine in what manner he must approach this pageant of state if he ever finds him at leisure, walking in the fields alone and without his servants. Consider how many bows, and simpering faces! how many preludes, excuses, compliments! Now put compliments and ceremony into a dialogue, and see what the effect will be!

This is the plain dilemma against that ancient style of writing, which we can’t properly imitate or translate, whatever pleasure or profit we may get from reading the originals. . . . What happens if we decide to try the experiment using modern people? If we avoid ceremony, we are unnatural; if we use it, and appear as we naturally are when we greet and meet and speak with one another, we hate the sight. And what is that but hating our own faces? Is that the painter’s fault? Ought he to paint falsely, or affectedly; mix modern with ancient, join shapes preposterously and betray his art? If not, how is he to go about it? What remains for him but to throw away the brush? No more designing after the life; no more mirror-writing; no more representation of persons of any kind whatever.

So dialogue is at an end. The ancients could see their own faces, but we can’t see ours. And why not? Because we have less beauty, for so our mirror can inform us. Ugly instrument! detestable! Our inter-relations and manner of conversation, which we think the most polished imaginable, are apparently such that we ourselves can’t bear to see them represented in a life-like way. [Shaftesbury adds that a similar problem confronts the modern painter of portraits, especially full-length ones.]

So much for antiquity, and those rules of art—those philosophical sea-charts—by which the adventurous geniuses of those times steered their courses and governed their impetuous muse. These were the texts of our Roman master-poet ·Horace·; these were the pieces of art, the mirrors, the exemplars that he tells us to place before our eyes: ‘Thumb your Greek patterns by night and by day’.

That leads to yet another way in which poetry and the writer’s art resembles the sculptor’s and the painter’s, namely that it has its original drafts and models for study and practice—not for ostentation, to be shown abroad or

copied for public view. These are the ancient busts, the trunks of statues, the pieces of anatomy, the masterly rough drawings that are kept out of sight as the secret learning, the mystery, the fundamental knowledge of the art. But there's one crucial difference however between the two kinds of artists: those who merely portray bodies and exhibit bodily graces can never, with all their accuracy or correctness of design, reform themselves or become the least bit more shapely in their persons. But the artists who copy from another life, who work at the graces and perfections of minds and are real masters of the rules that establish this latter science, can't possibly fail to be improved themselves. . . .

I must admit that there's hardly any more insipid race of mortals than the people that we moderns call 'poets' because they are capable of rhyming and perpetrating an injudicious random use of wit and fancy. But someone who really deserves the name of 'poet' in the best sense—the true sense—of the word, someone who is a real master or architect of poetry, can describe both men and manners, and can give to an action its true content and shape—he will be found to be a very different creature from a modern so-called 'poet'. Such a real poet is indeed a second *creator*; a just Prometheus [see Glossary], under Jove. Like that sovereign artist. . . ., he forms something that is a coherent whole, properly proportioned and with the right subordinations of some parts to others. He notes the boundaries of the passions, and knows the exact pitch and rhythm of each, by which he accurately represents them, marks the high

points of sentiments and action, and distinguishes the beautiful from the ugly, the amiable from the odious. A moral artist who can in this way imitate the Creator, and must therefore know the inward form and structure of his fellow-creatures, surely won't be found to be ignorant about himself or at a loss regarding the tunes that make the harmony of a mind. For knavery is mere dissonance and disproportion. Villains may have strong notes and natural capacities for action, but it's impossible for them to have true judgment and thought, which can't exist in the absence of harmony and honesty.¹

But having entered seriously into the concerns of authors, and shown their chief foundation and strength, and the method of self-examination that prepares and qualifies them for their task, I shouldn't go any further with that topic until I have discussed the advantages or disadvantages our authors may get from others, and how far their genius may be depressed or raised by external causes arising from the mood or judgment of the world.

Any influence of this sort must come either from **(1)** grandees and men in power or **(2)** critics and men of art or **(3)** the people themselves, the common vulgar [see Glossary] audience. Those three groups will be the topics of the three sections of Part II. I'll begin with the grandees, the supposed masters of the world, taking the liberty of giving these high persons some advice—in favour of authors—if they are willing to accept it when it is given in this casual manner.

¹ This maxim will hardly be disproved by fact or history, in relation either to philosophers or to others who were the great geniuses or masters in the liberal arts. The characters of the two best Roman poets [Virgil and Horace] are well known. Those of the ancient tragedians no less. And the great epic master [Homer], though from a more obscure and remote time, was always assumed to be far enough from a vile or knavish character. The Roman orator was true to his country, as was the Greek one, and he similarly died a martyr for its liberty [Cicero and Demosthenes]. And the best historians were noted as good men in their private lives or their public actions. As for poets, the learned and wise Strabo was right about them: 'Can we possibly imagine that the genius, power, and excellence of a real poet consists in anything but the accurate imitation of life. . . .? But how could someone accurately imitate life without knowing. . . .how to guide himself by judgment and understanding?. . . . It's impossible for someone to be a great and worthy poet who isn't first a worthy and good man.'

Part II

Section 1: Grandees and men in power

Although men usually act purely by will and pleasure, without following any strict rules and without asking for advice, it must be admitted that the good and laudable custom of asking for advice *is* still upheld and kept in fashion as something that is needed for a good reputation and an honourable appearance: so much so that even monarchs and absolute princes [see Glossary] aren't above asking for advice.

I suppose that is why royal persons choose on public occasions to use the noted style of 'we' and 'us'. It's *not* that they are supposed to consult with themselves and in that way acquire the privilege of being plural and enlarging their capacity, in the way I have been describing. I'm aware that single and absolute persons in government can hardly be considered as anything but single and absolute in morals. They have no inmate-controller to criticise them or dispute their pleasure. Nor have their inter-relations with other people ever given them any practice in free and familiar conversation, a style that they might have adopted in conversation with themselves. With men like these, inclination and will aren't restrained or blocked in private meditation any more than they are in public company. The social-world, which serves as a tutor to persons of lower rank, is submissive to these royal pupils who from their earliest days •see even their instructors bow down to them and •hear applause for everything they do.

When they reach the age of princely discretion and come to take the helm of government, there has been a fear that they might act on the basis merely of their mood at the

moment, or the whim of some favourite; so it has been thought to be a necessary decency [Shaftesbury's phrase] to summon certain professional advisers to attend on the single person and be joined with him in his written edicts, proclamations, letters-patent, and other instruments of regal power. For this purpose the position of *Privy Counsellor* has been established. The people who hold it, being persons of considerable stature and wise appearance, can't be suspected of standing around like statues and leaving the royal acts to be falsely ascribed to 'us' (plural) when basically a single will or fancy was the sole spring and motive.

Most foreign princes have the unhappy prerogative of acting unadvisedly and willfully in their national affairs; but nothing like that is true of the legal and just princes of our island. They are surrounded with the best of counsellors, namely *the laws*. They administer civil affairs through legal officers whose role is to direct the prince's public will and conscience; and they annually get advice and aid, in the most effective manner, from the populace. It's fair to say that we owe this wise genius of our constitution to our wisest and best princes. The latter's good qualities can't be attributed solely to high birth or royal education [see Glossary], because by experience we find the very princes whose conduct has done most good for foreigners and for us at home were the ones who had the most disputed titles to the throne, and who in their youth had stood at the outer edges of regal power, and the nearest to a private life.

We have had other princes who, though not very willing receive counsel, have been foremost in giving it to others. They have openly taken on the role of advisers; and by

publishing their admonitory [see Glossary] works, have put themselves into the group whom I have presumed to criticise in this treatise. But since my criticism is also a defence of authors, it can't be thought amiss in me to join the royal writers with the plebeian ones in this common cause.

It would be very hard if the princes of our nation refused to permit the industrious race of authors to do their work; since their royal ancestors and predecessors have had so much honour brought to them from their *being* writers. It's to authorship that they owe •that bright jewel of their crown, purchased by a warlike prince who took on the role of *author* and tried his strength in the polemical writings of the scholastic theologians, and thought it was an honour on this account to retain •the title of *Defender of the Faith*.

[The preceding paragraph is about Henry VIII who was given this 'title' by the Pope in recognition of a theological book that Henry wrote, defending the sanctity of marriage and the supremacy of the Pope. That was before he broke with Rome for reasons connected with his ending his first marriage. The next paragraph concerns James VI of Scotland, who succeeded Elizabeth I on the English throne and became, also, James I of England (hence 'the recently completed union' of 'the British nations'). James did make peace where Elizabeth had made war. He was scholarly and artistic, encouraged writers and composers, and wrote several instructional books himself. The next king, his son Charles I, lost a civil war and was beheaded by the victors, hence acquiring the titles 'saint' and 'martyr'. After his death a pious and meditative book was published that was plausibly ascribed to him. Both paragraphs, then, are based on facts; but the tone is sarcastic and ironical—perhaps more in the original than in this version. Judge that for yourself; the original two paragraphs are given on page 44.]

Another prince, with a more peaceful nature and fluent thought, put scholarship ahead of arms and military discipline. Putting his trust in his princely knowledge and profound learning, he made his style and speech the nerve

and sinew of his government. He gave us his works full of •wise exhortation and advice to his royal son as well as of •instruction to his good people. . . . At that time one might have seen our nation growing young and teachable, with the simplicity of heart that qualified them to profit like a scholar-people under their royal teacher. For with abundant eloquence he graciously gave lessons to his parliament, tutored his ministers, and edified the greatest churchmen and divines themselves. . . . The British nations learned to have a Solomon for their joint sovereign, the founder of their recently completed union. And it can't be doubted that the pious treatise of self-discourse ascribed to the succeeding monarch contributed in a great measure to his glorious and never-fading titles of 'saint' and 'martyr'.

Be that as it may, I wouldn't willingly take it upon me to recommend that our future princes become authors. Whatever crowns or laurels their renowned predecessors •on the throne• may have gathered in this field of honour [i.e. from their role as authors], I think that it would be better if, from now on, the speculative [see Glossary] province were committed to private people. It would be a sufficient encouragement to the learned world. . . .if our sovereigns would •settle for being the *patrons* of wit [here = 'intelligence'], and •be so good as to look graciously on the able pupils of art. Of if their prime ministers were to adopt that attitude •to learning and the arts•, that would of itself be sufficient to change the face of affairs. A small degree of •official• favour would ensure the fortunes of a distressed and ruined tribe, whose forlorn condition has helped to bring disgrace down on arts and sciences, and kept them far off from the polish and beauty that they would soon acquire if the aspiring genius of our nation were helped along by the least care or culture [= 'cultivation' as practised by the farmer and the gardener].

You'd think that there was no need for courtship or persuasion to get our grandees to be patrons of arts and letters. As things stand in our nation, as they are likely to continue, improvements *will* be made in every art and science. The muses *will* have their turn and—with or without highly placed patrons—will grow in credit and esteem as they achieve greater perfection and excel in every way. Talents will arise that would have done credit to their court patrons, if any patrons had been wise enough to seek them out *early* and contribute to their rising greatness.

It's barely a quarter-century since our prince and our people reached such a good balance of power that our previously fragile liberties are now firmly secured, and we are freed from the fear of civil commotions—and of wars and violence—over disputes arising from

- religion and worship,
- the property of the subject, or
- factions contending to get the crown.

But the greatest advantages of this world can't be bought at easy prices, and accordingly we are still at this moment spending our blood and our treasure on securing for ourselves this priceless free government and national constitution that we have purchased. And though we are happy in this establishment at home, we are still continually alarmed by the look of foreign affairs, and by our terror of the power that has—before mankind has properly recovered from the misery of those ages made barbarous by the yoke of Rome—again threatened the world with a universal monarchy and a new abyss of ignorance and superstition. [The phrases 'the yoke of Rome' and 'a universal monarch' both refer to the Roman Catholic Church.]

The British muses may well lie abject and obscure in this clash of weapons, especially given that they are still in their mere infancy and have hardly arrived at any kind of

shapeliness. They use baby-talk as though they were in their cradles; and their stammering tongues, which nothing but their youth and rawness can excuse, have until now talked in wretched puns and word-play. Our dramatic Shakespeare, our Fletcher, Jonson, and our epic Milton preserve this style. And more recent authors, who are hardly free of this infirmity and aim at a false sublimity with the aid of crowded similes and mixed metaphors (the hobby-horse and rattle of the ·childish· muses!) entertain our raw fancy and our unpractised ear that hasn't yet had leisure to form itself and become truly musical.

But those reverend bards, rough as they were because of when they lived, have provided us with the richest ore. To their eternal honour they have been the first of Europeans to . . . throw off the horrid discord of jingling rhyme. They have asserted ancient poetic liberty, and have happily broken the ice for those who are to follow them. Treading in their footsteps, their successors can at their own pace polish our language, lead our ear to finer pleasures. . . .

[Shaftesbury now writes that 'our natural genius' surpasses that of the French, but that the French have worked harder to make polished and perfect literary works, with great success in comedy. In tragedy they have succeeded less well, because what is best in tragedy 'consists in the lively representation of the disorders and misery of the great, so that people of a lower condition may be taught the better to content themselves with privacy, enjoy their safer state, and prize the equality and justice of their guardian laws'; and this doesn't work in France, where no-one at any level believes in any sort of equality.]

On the other hand, it is easy to see the advantages our Britain has in this respect, and what effect its established liberty will produce in everything relating to art, when peace returns to us. . . . It was Rome's fate to have almost no

intermediate age—no single period of time—between the •rise of arts and the •fall of liberty. No sooner had that nation begun to lose the roughness and barbarity of their manners, and to learn from Greece to shape their heroes and orators and poets on a right model, than by their unjust attack upon the liberty of the world they justly lost their own liberty. Along with their liberty they also lost not only their force of eloquence but even their style and language itself. The poets who afterwards arose among them were mere unnatural and forced plants. Their two most accomplished—Virgil and Horace—who came last and drew down the curtain, were plainly men who had seen the days of liberty and felt the sad effects of the loss of it. And these two wouldn't have had careers if it weren't for the friendship of the famous Maecenas, who turned a naturally cruel and barbarous prince—the emperor Augustus—to the love and courtship of •the muses. These •tutoreses gave their royal pupil a new nature. They taught him how to charm mankind. They were more to him than his arms or military virtue; and . . . assisted him in his greatness, making the domination he had achieved by force so enchanting to •the world that •it could see without regret its chains of bondage being firmly riveted. The corrupting sweets of such a poisonous government didn't last long. The bitter soon took their place, and eventually the world was forced to bear with patience [see Glossary] the natural and genuine tyrants who followed this glittery organisation of arbitrary and universal power.

. . . After the end of those tyrants, i.e. after the extinction of (i) the Caesarean and Claudian family, and a brief period in which (ii) a series of princes sprang up and were destroyed with much disorder and public ruin, the Romans regained their failing empire and retrieved their sinking state through (iii) a series of wise and able princes who were selected and taken from a private state to rule the empire of the world.

(i) Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero (27 BCE to 68 CE);
 (ii) Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, **Domitian** (69–96);
 (iii) Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius (96–180).
 After Marcus Aurelius the role of emperor was taken by his appalling natural son **Commodus**.

In the third chapter of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon writes: 'If a man were called upon to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would without hesitation name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus.'

These were men who not only had the military virtues and supported that sort of discipline in the highest degree, but also cared about the world's interest, and did what they could to restore liberty and restore the perishing arts and the decayed virtue of mankind. But the time for that was gone! The fatal form of government had become too natural; and the world, which had bent under it and become slavish and dependent, had neither the power nor the will to help itself. The only deliverance it could expect was from •the merciless hands of the barbarians and •a total dissolution of that enormous empire and despotic power which the best hands couldn't preserve from being destructive to human nature. . . . All the advantage that a lucky and almost miraculous series of good princes could procure for their highly favoured arts and sciences was no more than to preserve during their own time those perishing remains that had barely managed to survive after the decline of liberty. Not a statue, not a medal, not a tolerable piece of architecture could show itself afterwards. Philosophy, wit and learning, in which some of those good princes had themselves been so renowned, fell with them; and ignorance and darkness spread over the world prepared it for the chaos and ruin that followed.

We are now in an age when •liberty is once again on the rise, and we are ourselves the happy nation who not only

enjoy •it at home but through our greatness and power give life and vigour to •it abroad. . . . And there's no good reason to fear that we will lose this noble ardour, or faint under the glorious toil, even if like ancient Greece we should have to spend ages contending with a foreign power and trying to reduce the excessive demands of a grand monarch. It's the same with us as it was with the Roman people in those early days, when to apply themselves to the improvement of arts and scholarship all they needed was a rest from war. [He quotes the poet Horace as saying something like that.] Given *that*, we wouldn't need an ambitious monarch to . . . give pensions abroad as well as at home, and purchase flattery from every profession and science. We would find a better fund within ourselves, and could without such assistance be able to excel by our own virtue and desire to do well.

Still, it would be much to the honour of our nobles and princes if they did freely help in this, and by a judicious application of their wealth assist in this happy birth that I have ventured to speak of in a prophetic style. It would be a considerable advantage to them during their life, and would do more than all their other labours to procure for them an immortal memory. They should remember that their fame is in the hands of writers, and that the greatest actions lose their force and perish in the custody of writers who are low-down incompetents.

[Shaftesbury has a further four pages on several related topics. **(a)** Even a barbarous nation needs to 'have its poets, rhapsoders, historiographers and antiquaries'. Military achievements, especially, will fade unless they are well written up, and 'we have few modern heroes who, like Xenophon or Caesar, can write their own' military histories. **(b)** A statesman who didn't care about his posthumous reputation would still need writers and painters during his lifetime. If he didn't make himself available as a subject of

good writing and portraiture, the work would be done by incompetents—e.g. the sort of painter who does bill-boards for freak-shows. **(c)** Because writers can do rulers much good or much harm, a ruler should confront the profession of author in one of two ways: •utterly destroying it, •generously helping it. Half-measures—e.g. saying *who in particular* is allowed to write about the king—have no chance of succeeding. **(d)** Somewhat in passing, Shaftesbury writes about Julius Caesar's tolerance of writers, even of one who often lampooned him; and he expresses a regret that Caesar took that attitude, rather than harshly suppressing such critics. The intolerant attitude, Shaftesbury says, would have been a weakness in the 'traitor' Caesar, a weakness that would have been enough to prevent his 'rising to greatness and enslaving his native country'. **(e)** A grandee who wants on general grounds to be a patron of the arts, should make sure that the people he helps are the ones who deserve it, not those who most flatteringly ask for it. 'There can be no excuse for making a bad choice, because merit in every kind ·of art· is easily discovered when looked for', 'and the public gives sufficient indication, pointing out those geniuses who need only recognition and encouragement to become considerable'.]

Section 2: Critics and men of art

Given how freely I have criticised these men of power, you can see that authors aren't entitled to blame *them* for any failure in the improvement of their art and talent. In a free country such as ours, no category of men are more free than the writers: if they have real ability and merit, they can fully right themselves when injured [= 'harmed' or 'insulted'], and are equipped with everything they need to make themselves considered by the men in highest power.

Our writers display a certain low-spiritedness; but I wouldn't suspect their genius [see Glossary], or accuse them of feeble cowardice, if it weren't for another sort of fear by which they more obviously betray themselves and seem to be conscious of their own defects. Apparently they find the critics to be formidable: the critics are the dreadful spectres, the giants, the enchanters, who cross their path and disturb them in their works. These are the persecutors for whose sake they are ready to hide their heads—begging for rescue and protection from all good people, and especially flying to the great, the grandees, by whose favour they hope to be defended from this merciless examining race. What can be more cruel (they think) than to be forced to submit to the rigorous laws of wit, and write under severe judges who are deaf to all courtship and can't be persuaded by any insinuation or flattery to overlook faults and pardon any transgression of art?

[Shaftesbury now offers about twenty pages regarding writers' attitude to literary critics. Their main theme is that a self-respecting author should want his work to be attended to carefully by readers who know something about what good writing is. He sums it up here:] From these considerations, I take upon me absolutely to condemn the fashionable and prevailing custom of railing against critics as the common enemies, the pests, the arsonists of the commonwealth of wit and letters. I assert on the contrary that the critics are the props and pillars of this building, and that without their encouragement and propagation we would still be as much *gothic architects* [see Glossary] as ever.

[The next theme is a speculative account of the development of artistic standards and sensualities. There's no room for them, Shaftesbury says, in primitive societies that need all their energies just to survive; or in more developed societies held together by tyrannical governments. The

switch comes when a society is governed in some way that requires at least some of its citizens to persuade others of the wisdom of this or that political proposal. Shaftesbury concludes from that:] The goddess *Persuasion* must have been in some way the mother of poetry, rhetoric, music, and the other related arts. It's clear that where chief men and leaders had the strongest reasons for persuading, they did their best to please; so that, in a state of the kind I have been describing, not only the best order of thought and turn of fancy, but also the most soft and inviting tones and rhythms, must have been used to charm the public ear and incline the heart. . . .

[In the course of time there came to be people who had those persuasive skills but were not interested in political influence. They used their skills in producing artistic works that would give pleasure and win applause. And others used *their* skills in becoming better at reading these works, hearing this music, thus getting more pleasure from them; and:] these geniuses, who were in a way the artists' interpreters to the people, set an example which taught the public to discover what was just and excellent in each performance.

[In the remaining dozen pages of the section Shaftesbury presents a conjectural history of literary standards and criticism. He connects 'the natural and gradual refinement of styles and manners among the ancients, particularly in theatrical works' with various social and political changes. He quotes with apparent approval Aristotle's statement that Sophocles and Euripides had brought tragedy to the highest peak that it *could* achieve, whereas comedy still had some way to go. He also cites Aristotle at length in support of Shaftesbury's own dislike of metaphors. He compares comic and non-comic styles in literature and in philosophy. The section ends with reflections on style *in* criticism, kicking off from some thoughts about Aristotle:]

This methodical or scholastic manner naturally befitted an author who, though endowed with a comprehensive and strong genius, was not in himself of a refined temperament, blessed by the graces, or favoured by any muse; one whose imagination wasn't fruitful but rather dry and rigid; and yet acute and piercing, detailed and clear. The chief nerve and sinew of this style consists in the clear separating and classifying of the subjects. There's nothing uplifting in the manner, but it is naturally powerful and commanding. . . . It's from this kind of mind that firm conclusions and steady maxims are best formed. . . .

[Shaftesbury compares this 'methodical' style of critical writing with two others: the 'sublime' [here = 'elevated, grand', perhaps 'grandiose'] and the 'comic'. He approves of the methodical style because it is:] so far from making any show of method that it conceals the artifice as much as possible, trying only to express the effect of art under the appearance of the greatest ease and casualness. Even when it comes to censuring or reproving something, it does this in the most concealed and gentle way.

These days people in general have little liking for real simplicity, so that our authors can't give advice in this way any more than they can receive it. As for the sublime—it can often be the subject of criticism, but it can never be the style of criticism. . . . What is usually practised amongst us these days is the way of form and method—the manner that teaches us and commands us—and we have heard so much of it that it can't do much to win our attention; it is indeed more apt to tire us than the metre of an old ballad. We no sooner hear the theme propounded—the subject divided and subdivided. . . .and so forth—than we instantly begin a struggle not to fall asleep, which would offend the orator and scandalise the other members of the audience. The only manner left in which criticism can have its proper force

among us is the *ancient comic* manner. The first Roman 'miscellanies' or satirical works were of that kind. This sort of writing started with them, and was later refined by the best genius and most polished poet of that nation; who nevertheless admits that this manner of writing was taken from the Greek comedy that I have mentioned. If our English wits were to take this pattern of writing and refine it, they might meet with considerable success.

In our own nation the most successful negative criticism is the one that comes closest to the manner of the earliest Greek comedy. The highly-rated burlesque poem about our religious controversies in recent years [namely Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*] is a sufficient token of this kind. And the rightly admired piece of comic wit that an author of the highest quality gave us some time later [namely *The Rehearsal* by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham] has equipped our best wits with the most effective and entertaining method of exposing folly, pedantry, false reason, and bad writing—not only in affairs of wit and learning but even in religion and politics. If we weren't allowed any such manner of criticism as this, how grossly might we have been imposed on, now and in the future, by many pieces of dogmatic rhetoric and pedantic 'wit'? That is easily answered by those who know anything about the state of letters in our nation, or are even slightly equipped to judge today's common poets or formal authors.

Whatever form or manner criticism may take—in whatever form or manner critics choose to exercise their talent—only grossly superstitious or ignorant people will be alarmed by this critical spirit. When it is done badly and with little wit, it will be destroyed by something wittier of the same sort; and when it is witty itself, it must of necessity advance wit.

Thus, from the consideration of ancient as well as modern times it appears that the cause and interest of critics is the same as that of wit, learning, and good sense.

Section 3: The people in general

I have surveyed the state of authors as they are influenced from outside themselves by (1) the frowns or favour of the great or by (2) the applause or censure of the critics. It remains only to consider how (3) the people—the world in general—feel about our modern •writers, and what reason these •adventurers may have to complain or boast about their encounter with the public.

There is nothing more certain than this:

If someone has a fine intellect and thorough command of some art [see Glossary] of whatever kind, he will never be induced to act below his character without the greatest unwillingness and shame. He will never out of mere self-interest be led to prostitute his art or science by acting contrary to its known rules.

If you know anything of the lives of famous sculptors, architects, or painters, you'll remember many instances of this nature—i.e. instances of an artist refusing to 'prostitute' his art. If you have known any of the better sort of mechanics [see Glossary]—ones that are real lovers of their art, and masters in it—you must have observed this natural fidelity in them. They may be idle or dissolute; they may have no regard for other rules; but they loathe any transgression in their art, and would rather •lose customers and starve than •adjust themselves to the market by acting against what they regard as the justness and truth of their line of work.

A poor fellow of this kind says to his rich customer:

'Sir, you are mistaken in coming to me for such a piece of workmanship. You may find someone who will make it for you, but I know it to be wrong. Everything I have made up to now has been true work. and neither for your sake nor for anyone else's will I put my hand to anything that isn't.'

This is virtue!— real virtue and love of truth, independent of opinion and above the world. When this attitude is carried over into the whole of life, it •rounds out a character and •creates the honesty and worth that the learned are often at such a loss to explain. Isn't there a workmanship and a truth in actions? Or is the workmanship of this kind less becoming—or less worth attending to—so that we shouldn't be as haughty about it as is the honest artisan whose only philosophy is what nature and his trade have taught him?

Given this zeal and honesty of artists who are lower down in the scale, it's amazing to see those who claim to have skill and science of a higher kind having so little regard for truth and for the perfection of their art. If our writers had real ability, we would expect them to draw the world to them rather than basely adjusting themselves to fit the feeble world. It would be fair for us to make allowances for the simplicity of the early geniuses of our nation, who, after so many barbarous ages when literature still lay in ruins, boldly invaded a vacant field to seize the posts of honour that weren't yet possessed by the wits of their own country. But things have changed since then:

- learning is established;
- the rules of writing have been stated; and
- the truth of art is well understood and everywhere admitted and proclaimed;

so it's strange to see our writers still appearing in their works as shapeless monsters. The performance of our poets is utterly ridiculous: in their prefaces they talk about art and structure; while in their poems they perform as badly as ever, and with as little regard for those professed rules of art their predecessors had. The latter, honest bards, had never heard of any such rules or at least had never admitted their justice or validity.

The early poets of Greece didn't 'compliment' their nation by catering to its first relish and appetite. Rather, they had did their countrymen a great service and brought honour to themselves by conforming to truth and nature. The generous [see Glossary] spirits who first opened up that path didn't always have the world on their side; but before long they attracted •the best judgments, and soon after that they attracted •the world itself. They forced their way into it, and by weight of merit turned its judgment on their side. They

- formed their audience,
- brought polish to society,
- refined the public ear, and framed it right,

so that in return they might be rightly and lastingly applauded. And they weren't disappointed in their hopes: the applause soon came, and was lasting because it was sound. They have justice done to them even today. They have •survived their nation, and are alive though in a dead language. The more enlightened an age is, the more they shine in it. Their fame must last as long as literature does, and posterity will always admit their merit.

Our modern authors, on the other hand, *admit* that they are shaped and modeled by •what the public likes and by •the current mood of the times. They regulate themselves by the irregular whims of the world; and they try to fit in with the spirit of the times by frankly admitting that they are preposterous and absurd. These days

- the audience makes the poet; and
- the bookseller makes the author •of prose•.

If you have any judgment at all, you can imagine how much good this does for the public and what prospect it gives the writer of lasting fame and honour!

Our writers openly blame the public for their faults; but in many cases that's not how things stand, because the absurdities that they are most apt to commit are far from

being delightful or entertaining •to the public•. We are glad to go along with what our language can provide for us; and in an attempt to copy other nations we're forced to praise the writers of our own that best serve us for comparison. But when we aren't in this mood, it must be admitted, we aren't apt to show any great fondness or admiration for our authors. And we don't have any writers whom we all agree to set the standard. We go to plays or to other shows; and we read epics and dramatics as well as satires and lampoons—because we *must* know what •wit as well as what •scandal is stirring. Read we must, however untalented our writers are; and this may contribute to the laziness and negligence of our authors. Observing this need that our curiosity gives us, and making an exact commercial calculation of the quality and quantity of the public demand, they feed us thus from hand to mouth—resolving not to overstock the market or take the trouble to provide more correctness or wit than is absolutely necessary to carry on the traffic.

So our satires are scurrilous, buffooning, and without the morals or instruction that are the majesty and life of this kind of writing. Our praise or panegyric is made oily and displeasing by its debased and extravagant manner of praise. The worthy persons who are praised in that manner can fairly be regarded as *sufferers* from the praise. And the public, whether or not it wants to, is forced to think *worse* of them when introduced to them by such satirising panegyrists. •Satirising? Yes•, because the nerve and sinew of modern panegyric really consists in a dull kind of satire. Its author intends to turn this to the advantage of his subject, but I'm sure it will turn out to have a very contrary effect.

When any of our authors wants to commend

- a fellow author,
- a wit,
- a hero,

- a philosopher, or
- a statesman,

he looks around the small field that he knows anything about, to find some eminent names of persons who were in their day wits or heroes or etc. He then lashes them (so he thinks) with some sharp strokes of satire; and when he has stripped these reverend personages of all their share of merit, he begins to clothe the person he is praising with the spoils. Such is the sterility of these praisers! The only way they know of praising someone is to pull someone else down. If a fair one is to be celebrated, Helen ·of Troy· must in comparison be made ugly, Venus herself degraded. For a modern to be honoured, some ancient must be sacrificed. If a poet is to be extolled, down with Homer or Pindar! If an orator or philosopher, down with Demosthenes, Cicero, Plato! If a general of our army, down with any hero of any time past—‘The Romans knew no discipline! The Greeks never learned the art of war!’

[Shaftesbury devotes several ponderously jocose pages to criticising the writers of his time for lack of talent, lack of energy, and (above all) lack of a properly appreciative attitude to the achievements of the ancient world. Eventually he gets back to the supposed topic of this whole section of the work, namely the inter-relations between contemporary writers and the general public, ‘the world’.] However much our authors and poets complain about the intellectual level of our people, it’s obvious that we aren’t quite as barbarous or gothic [see Glossary] as they claim. We are not naturally poor soil ·in which to plant cultural seeds·; we have musical skills that might be developed with great advantage if only these gentlemen would use the art of masters in their composition. They have the power to work upon our better inclinations, and can know by certain •signs that their audience is disposed to receive nobler subjects and enjoy a better manner

than the one that they generally *choose*—out of indulgence to themselves rather than to the world.

·What •signs? Well·, in recent years there have been some laudable attempts to write better, in both the heroic and the familiar styles, and these have met with tolerable success. And we have older evidence that our people are favourably disposed towards the moral and instructive way ·of writing·. Our old dramatic poet [he means Shakespeare] may stand witness for our good ear and manly tastes. Despite

- his natural roughness,
- his unpolished style,
- his antiquated phrase and wit,
- his lack of method and coherence, and
- his deficiency in almost all the graces and ornaments of this kind of writing;

yet by the rightness of his moral ·message·, the aptness of many of his descriptions, and the plain and natural turn of several of his characters, he pleases his audience and often gains their ear, without a single bribe from luxury or vice. The play of his [he means *Hamlet*] that appears to have most affected English hearts, and may have been acted more often than any other on our stage, is almost one continued moral ·message·—a series of deep reflections, drawn from one mouth, on the subject of one single event and calamity, naturally fitted to create horror and compassion. It can be properly said of this play, I think, that it has only one character or principal part. It contains no adoration or flattery of the ·female· sex, no ranting at the gods, no blustering heroism, and nothing of that curious mixture of the fierce and tender that makes the hinge of modern tragedy and precisely varies it between the points of love and of honour.

On the whole, since in the two great poetic stations, the epic and dramatic, we can observe the moral insight so

naturally prevalent; and since our most approved heroic poem [he means Milton's *Paradise Lost*] has neither the softness of language nor the fashionable turn of wit, but merely solid thought, strong reasoning, noble passion, and a continued thread of moral doctrine, piety, and virtue to recommend it, we can fairly conclude that what needs to be fixed is not so much the public ear as the clumsy hand and debased manner of our poets.

And so at last I come back to what I was recommending earlier—that essential preliminary of *self-study* and inward converse that has been so lacking in the authors of our time. They should add •the wisdom of the heart to •the task and exercise of the brain, in order to bring proportion and beauty into their works. To make their composition and style of writing natural and free, they should first settle matters with themselves. When they have gained a mastery in that, they can easily—with the help of their talent and a right use of art—command their audience and establish a good taste.

It all depends on *them*. We have considered their other subjects of excuse. We have acquitted **(1)** the great men,

their presumptive patrons, whom we have left to their own discretion. We have shown that **(2)** the critics are not only an inoffensive race but a highly useful one. And as for **(3)** the audience, we have found it to be not so bad as one might at first think.

So now we pass sentence on our authors, after having blocked off their last way of escape. I condemn them for their lack not of wit or fancy but of judgment and correctness; which can only be attained by through diligence, study, and impartial censure of themselves. . . . Only a proper sentiment of morals can. . . .give us the right tone and measure of human passion.

The poet must borrow enough from the philosopher to be master of the common topics of morality. He must at least be apparently honest, and in all appearances a friend to virtue, throughout his poem. Good and wise people will demand this, and the people—the world—will also be best satisfied with this conduct, corrupt though they mostly are in themselves. . . .

Part III

Section 1: Philosophy of the human condition

When a writer comes out with a new work, it's thought to be the highest compliment you can pay to him to say 'You have undoubtedly **surpassed yourself**'. Observing how well this compliment is received, one might think it contained some wonderful extravagance of praise; it certainly isn't one of those commonplace lies that are accepted these days as sufficiently polite tributes to any work with an ordinary level merit. Now, we all know that the gentlemen whose merit lies towards authorship aren't willing to settle for any but the strongest praise; so it's surprising to find them so entirely satisfied with a form of praise which, taken strictly and literally, is merely the assertion that they have in some way *differed from themselves* and have become somewhat better *or worse* than their common rate. If a dreadful writer produces something even worse than usual. . . ., he is rightly said to 'exceed himself' or 'go beyond himself'.

And there's no expression more generally used as a compliment to great men and princes than that they have **acted like themselves**, and suitably to their own genius and character. This plain statement is often verified and can safely be called true on most occasions! The compliment admittedly *sounds* good. No-one suspects it. Consider:

Whenever something is said that makes a person think about himself and consider *who he is*, he in his imagination joins •something worthy and deserving with •his true and native self.

Is there anyone of whom that isn't true? Mankind are naturally so attracted by moral beauty and perfection that they always make the presumption on their own behalf that

By nature they have something estimable and worthy in respect to others of their kind; and their genuine, true, and natural *self* is of real value in society, and justly honourable for the sake of its merit and good qualities.

So when anyone assures them that they have done nothing below themselves, or that in some particular action they have risen above the ordinary level of their character, they hear this as the highest praise.

That's how everyone becomes convinced of the reality of a better self, and of the worship or homage that is due to it. Unfortunately, though, we are seldom taught to comprehend •this self by viewing it *alongside* •its representative or counterfeit. [Shaftesbury here supposes that the fantasy 'I have a real better self' is enriched by the fantasy 'The version of myself that people encounter in everyday life is just a copy, and not a very good one, of my real self'.] In our holy religion, which is mostly fitted for the lowest levels of intelligence, it's not to be expected that a theory of this kind should be openly advanced. All we need are *hints* of a self nobler than the one that is commonly supposed to be the source of our actions. . . . On the other side we get, in the most sacred characters, examples of the highest contempt of all such self-interested views, of a willingness to suffer without recompense for the sake of others, and of a desire to part even with life and being itself, on account of what is generous and worthy. But just as the sacred volumes treat the celestial phenomena—such as shooting stars and eclipses—

according to common imagination and the then-current system of astronomy and natural science, so also the moral [see Glossary] phenomena are often preserved,

without alteration,

according to vulgar prejudice and the common conception of interest and good-for-oneself.

Our real and genuine self is sometimes supposed to be •the ambitious one that is fond of power and glory; sometimes •the childish one that is attracted by empty show, and is to be invited to obedience by the promise of finer habitations, precious stones and metals, shining garments, crowns, and other such dazzling beauties by which another earth—or another material city—is represented.

It must be admitted that even at the time when a greater and purer light disclosed itself in the chosen nation, their natural gloominess could still be seen in how hard they found it to *know themselves*, or learn their real interests, after such long tutorage and instruction from above. The *simplicity* of that people—the ancient Hebrews—must have been very great; when the best doctrine could not be swallowed without a treat, and the best disciples had their heads so full of thoughts of loaves that they were apt to construe every divine saying as aimed at •the belly, and thought that nothing contributed more to who a person *is* than •that inferior receptacle. Their taste in morals was, inevitably, suitable to this extraordinary estimation of themselves. It's not surprising that the better and nobler self was left as a mystery to a people who of all human kind were the most grossly selfish, crooked and perverse. We have to grant, in honour of their divine legislators, patriots, and instructors, that *they* were supremely good and generous [see Glossary], given that they could •so truly love their nation and brethren, such as they were, and could •have such a generous and disinterested [see Glossary] regard for people who were in themselves so sordidly self-interested and undeserving.

[In the next sentence, 'teach us ourselves' is to be understood as parallel to 'teach us mathematics'.] But whatever may be the

proper effect or operation of religion, we all know that it is the role of philosophy to teach us *ourselves*, to keep us the self-same persons, and to regulate our governing fancies, passions, and moods in such a way as to make us comprehensible to ourselves and knowable by more features than merely facial ones. It's certainly not our faces that make us who we are; when our complexion or shape changes, *we* don't change. But there is something such that when *it* is wholly metamorphosed and converted, *we* are thereby transformed and lost.

If an intimate friend of ours, after many sicknesses and much travel in equatorial regions, was so altered in his outward appearance that it took us some time to be sure he was the same person, we could take this in our stride. But if someone looking just as our friend used to look turned out to have thoughts and moods of a strange and foreign kind—with passions, affections, and opinions wholly different from anything we had formerly known—we would say in earnest, and with great amazement and concern, that this was not the friend whom we once knew personally, but someone else. . . .

When someone's character changes in this way, even if not so totally—when the passion or temperament of a known person changes remarkably from what it once was—that's when we appeal to philosophy.

Shaftesbury's next sentence: It is either the want or weakness of this principle, which is charged on the delinquent.

What he seems to be getting at: What we accuse this person of is a lack of, or weakness in, the principle [see Glossary] that keeps one's character steady through time,

And it's on that basis that we *challenge ourselves* when we •find such variation in our manners and observe that our self-interest doesn't always involve the same self or the same

interest as we had before, but a directly contrary one that we serve with the same passion and ardour that we used to bring to our former concerns. When we change

—from •being notably free with our money to •being just as notably mean with it,

—from •laziness and love of rest to •plunging into business,

—from •a severe character that shrinks from gentle relations with the fair sex to •the contrary passion of an amorous lover or husband,

we acknowledge the weakness ·of our *selves*·. Blaming this defect in ourselves on our lack of philosophy, we say with a sigh: ‘Really, no-one truly knows himself.’ In saying this we are recognizing philosophy’s authority and its proper object, at least to this extent: without claiming to be complete philosophers we acknowledge that

•the extent to which we are truly men, and

•the extent to which we can be depended on in friendship, society, and everyday doings,

is determined by

•how much of this knowledge or understanding of *ourselves* we have.

The fruits of this science are indeed the fairest imaginable, and when people try them they like the taste. But when we’re invited to engage in abstract philosophical thinking, and we look towards the tree on which we suppose the fruit grew, and ask ourselves ‘How did *that* tree ever produce *this* fruit?’ we regard the answer as mysterious but not interesting. It’s no wonder if we don’t admire the gardening, and think the manner of culture a very contemptible mystery. There’s a saying: ‘Grapes aren’t gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles.’ And in the whole world of letters there’s probably no better candidate for the label ‘choking weed’ or ‘thorn’ or ‘thistle’ than the kind of plant that stands for Philosophy

in some famous schools [see Glossary]. It would be utterly ridiculous to expect that good behaviour or understanding to grow from such a stock. It claims to have something to do with good behaviour in its defining of the natures, essences, and properties of spirits; and something to do with reason, in its descriptions of the shapes and forms of certain instruments that are used in the art [see Glossary] of reasoning. But if the craftiest of men had worked for centuries trying to develop a method for confounding reason and degrading the human understanding, they could hardly have succeeded better than by the establishment of such a mock-science.

[Shaftesbury describes at length the events in which someone was imprisoned by the Roman Catholic Inquisition and spent ‘several months where he saw no manner of light’ investigating the physical details of tongue, lips, etc. involved in producing various sounds. (This was F. M. van Helmont (1618–99), though Shaftesbury doesn’t say so.) After his release he wrote a book presenting his results, and Shaftesbury comments:] He prided himself on being the only master of voice and language because of his radical science and fundamental knowledge of sounds. But those—if there were any—who looked to him to improve their voice, or teach them an agreeable or correct manner of accent or delivery, will have found themselves considerably deluded, I think.

I don’t condemn as useless this speculative science of articulation. It doubtless has its place among the other sciences, and may be a help to grammar, as grammar is a help to rhetoric and to other arts of speech and writing. Astrologers, horoscopers, and their like are pleased to honour themselves with the title ‘mathematicians’; but ·*real*· mathematics is solid and advantageous to mankind, as is proved by what it does for the beneficial arts and sciences that depend on it. As for metaphysics, and what the schools teach as logic and as ethics—I’ll willingly allow all that to count as

philosophy when it is shown to *do* anything to refine our spirits, improve our understandings, or mend our manners. But if •delimiting material and immaterial substances, and distinguishing their properties and modes, is recommended to us as •the right way to go for the discovery of our own natures, I'll suspect that the grandiosity of its claims makes this study all the more delusive and infatuating.

The study of triangles and circles doesn't interfere with the study of minds. And the student ·of mathematics· doesn't think that in this work he is advancing in wisdom or knowledge of himself or of mankind. All he wants is not to do any damage to his mind. He looks to other studies and activities for increased knowledge of human nature or society. Such is the mathematician's modesty and good sense. But the philosopher claims to be purely engaged in considering his higher faculties and examining the powers and principles [see Glossary] of his understanding—what are we to say about him?· If his philosophy doesn't do what it claims to do—if it is irrelevant to its professed aim and reaches nothing we really value or care about—then it must be rather worse than mere ignorance or stupidity. The most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by ·accepting· a system. And the surest method to prevent good sense is to set up something in place of it. The more *like* wisdom something is, if it's not plainly the real thing, the more directly it becomes its opposite.

One would expect that these natural philosophers and searchers of modes and substances, being so exalted in their understandings and enriched with knowledge above other men, would be as much above them in their passions and sentiments. One would expect that their sense of being admitted into the secret recesses of nature and the inner resources of a human heart would give these gentlemen a sort of magnanimity that marked them off from the ordinary race of mortals. But if their supposed knowledge of the

machine of this world and of themselves can't produce anything beneficial to either the world or themselves, I can't see what purpose such a philosophy can serve except to shut the door against better knowledge and put a face of authority on irrelevance and pig-headedness.

Someone who studies. . . •ideas and offers a scientific account of •the passions will almost inevitably imagine himself to be more wiser and more knowledgeable about his own character and about the human intellect. But our experience show us that he is wrong about this, and that no-one is

- more impotent in himself,
- less in control of his passions,
- less free from superstition and vain fears, or
- less safe from common imposture and delusion,

than the noted intellectuals of this kind. And no wonder! . . . We may be able to throw light on this matter in a more entertaining way by confronting •this super-theoretical philosophy with •a more practical sort of philosophy that mainly has to do with our acquaintance, friendship, and good inter-communication with ourselves.

For a while now I am going to set aside you (my reader) and attend chiefly to myself, taking good opportunities to engage in the *conversation with myself* that I have claimed to disclose. We should both profit from this, and I hope you won't be offended if I lose my usual regard for your presence. . . .

Picture this:

A passer-by drops in on a watchmaker's shop, wanting to learn about watches. He asks what metal is used in making this or that part, what gave the parts the colours, what made the sounds; but he *doesn't* look into what a watch is used for, or what movements best enable it to serve its purpose.

This man is obviously not going to get any understanding of the real nature of a watch. Now a second picture:

A philosopher engages in a study of human nature, and *all* he learns are things like this: •how each passion affects the body, •what change of expression or gesture they produce, and •how different passions have different effects on the limbs and muscles.

This may qualify him to advise an anatomist or portraitist, but it won't give him anything ·useful· to say to mankind or to himself. In his survey ·of the human condition· he hasn't attended to the real operation or energy of his subject; he has seen man not as a man but as a watch, not as a human agent but as a common machine.

A modern philosopher [he means Descartes] informs me that 'the passion of fear sends the spirits [see Glossary] to the muscles of the knees, which are instantly ready to perform their motion; by taking up the legs with matchless speed, in order to get the body out of harm's way.' Excellent mechanism! But I'm not going to investigate whether the knocking together of the knees is any more the cowardly symptom of flight than the chattering of the teeth is the stout symptom of resistance. In this whole subject of inquiry I shan't find anything that *matters* to me in any way; and I'm sure that the most refined speculation of this kind won't teach me to lessen my fears or increase my courage.

·What *will* make a difference to the role of fear in my life is a study of a different kind, based on two evident facts·. [**input**] It's the nature of fear, as well as of other passions, to have its increase and decrease fed by opinions and influenced by custom and practice. [**output**] These passions, according as they have the ascendancy in me and differ in proportion with one another, affect my character and how I relate to myself and others. So I am certain to find ways of improving myself when I make an accurate study of how

my conduct is guided by feelings that depend so much on what I understand and how I think. By examining the various turns, inflections, declensions, and inward revolutions of the passions, I am bound to reach a better understanding of a human breast, and make better judgments about others and about myself. I couldn't possibly get anywhere in such a study without acquiring some benefit regarding my control of the passions on which the conduct of a life depends.

For example: if superstition is the sort of fear that most oppresses me, it won't *help* me much to be told what parts or districts of the body the blood or spirits are sent to ·by a surge of superstitious fear·, or where they are made to rendezvous. These are events that I don't control and can't change, and it doesn't matter to me to understand them. But when •this superstitious fear is seen as an effect of opinions, and the things I am afraid of are thoroughly investigated, my fear must necessarily diminish as I discover more and more its fraudulent nature.

Similarly, if •vanity comes from opinion, then I'm bound to get some relief from •this illness when I *think* about my vanity, and take in the trivial grounds I have for it and the fictional nature of the advantages it looks to. This will be relief from my vanity in its excessive height as well as in its contrary depression.

The same must hold for anger, ambition, love, desire, and the other passions that generate my different notions of what my interests are. For as these passions veer around, my interests veer with them—the course I set varies and I aim first for this harbour and then for that. The angry man has a different happiness from the man in love; the man who recently became greedy for money has a different idea of satisfaction from what he had at earlier times when he was generous. Even the man in a good mood thinks about interests and advantage differently from the man in a bad

mood. So the study of my moods and passions *must* draw along with it •an examination of my opinions and •a sincere consideration of my scope and end [= 'of what the range of my life can be, and of what I am *for*']. So the study of human feelings can't fail to lead me towards knowledge of *human nature* and of *myself*.

[In this paragraph, the phrases between quotation marks are all quoted from the King James Bible's New Testament.] This is the philosophy that naturally has pre-eminence over all other science or knowledge; and it can't be called 'vain or deceitful' because it's the only means by which I can discover vanity and deceit. It doesn't depend on 'genealogies or traditions', or 'minister questions' or 'vain jangling'. It doesn't get its reputation, as other philosophies do, •from the mere subtlety and precision of the speculation, but •from its excellence, its being superior to all other speculations; •from its presiding over all other sciences and occupations, setting the standards for each and assigning the just value of everything in life. By this science religion itself is judged, spirits are searched, prophecies tested, miracles identified: all this being done by the standard of moral rectitude and of the discernment of what is sound and right in the affections. For if 'the tree is known only by its fruits', my first task must be to refine my palate and learn to recognise the true taste of 'fruits'. . . . To tell me to judge authority by morals, while the rule of morals is supposed to depend on mere authority and will, is like telling me to see with my eyes shut, measure without a standard, and count without arithmetic.

Thus philosophy, which judges concerning herself and everything else, discovers her own province and chief command; teaches me to distinguish what she is from how she looks, showing me her real self; and does all this purely by having the job of teaching me to know •myself and •what belongs to me. She puts each of the lesser sciences at

its proper level: leaves some to measure sounds, others to scan syllables, others to weigh vacuums and define spaces and extensions. And she reserves to herself her rightful authority and majesty: keeps her status and ancient titles—'guide of life', 'investigator of virtue', and all the other titles that she was rightly given in days of old. Back then she merited being apostrophised [see Glossary], as she was by Cicero: 'You found out laws, you were the teacher of character and method. . . One day spent well under your rules is better than an eternity of error.' Excellent mistress! But easy to mistake, when so many •mere• handmaids dress as gorgeously, and some of them are made to outshine her in dress and ornament.

What an impressive kind of study, what a solemn pastime, we get into if we engage in what we call 'philosophical speculations'!—the formation of ideas!—their compositions, comparisons, agreements and disagreements!

What can look better, or offer more promise of being genuine and true philosophy?

Come on then! Let me philosophise in this manner if this is indeed the way for me to grow wise. Let me examine my ideas of space and substance, let me investigate matter and its modes, if this is a way of looking into myself, improving my understanding, and enlarging my mind. It shouldn't take long to find out. So let me diligently observe what's going on here—what connection and consistency I find, and what agreement or disagreement.

'What do my present ideas say about the following questions? Given that I approve of something right now, how likely is it that I will still approve of it in an hour's time? And if it turns out that I don't, what am I to do about this discrepancy? How can I ascertain my ideas, and become steady in my opinions, likings and admirations?

If these aren't answered—if I am the same mystery to myself as ever—what is the point of all this reasoning and sharpness of mind? Why do I admire my philosopher, or work to become like him?

Today things have gone well for me, so my ideas are raised: 'It's a fine world! All is glorious! Everything delightful and entertaining! Mankind, conversation, company, society—how could they be better?' Tomorrow comes disappointment—I am thwarted, disgraced. And what follows? 'O miserable mankind! wretched state! Who would live with other people? Who would write or act for such a world?' Philosopher! Where are your ideas? Where is there so much talk about truth, certainty, evidence? It's *here*, surely, if anywhere. It's *here* that I am to preserve some sound distinctions and adequate ideas. But if that is *all* that such a philosophy can teach me, then this philosophy is in this respect false and deceitful. Whatever its other virtues are, it doesn't tell me anything about myself; it doesn't concern the man; its only effect on the mind is to produce •an illusion of knowledge and •a false confidence caused by that supposed improvement.

Again, what are my ideas of the world, of pleasure, riches, fame, life? What judgment am I to make of mankind and human affairs? What feelings am I to develop? What opinions? What maxims? If none at all, then why do I concern myself with theories about my ideas? What is it to me, for instance, to know what kind of idea I can form of space? 'Divide a solid body of whatever size,' says a renowned modern philosopher [Locke], 'and it will be impossible for the parts to move within the bounds of its surface unless there is left in it an empty space as big as the smallest part into which the body has been divided.'

Thus the atomist or epicurean, pleading for a vacuum. The anti-vacuum theorist [Descartes] on the other side brings

his 'fluid' into the discussion and joins the ideas of body and extension.

'Of this', says one, 'I have clear ideas'.

'Of this', says the other, 'I can be certain'.

'And what', say I, 'if there's no way to be certain about this issue? Mathematicians are divided, and mechanics can proceed equally well on either hypothesis. And I'm sure that my mind can proceed on either hypothesis, because it isn't involved on either side. [The next two paragraphs are also within the scope of 'say I'.]

'Philosopher! Let me hear about something that matters to me. Let me hear about life, what the right notion is; and what is to hold me steady when there's a need for that, so that when life seems to be running down, or has run itself out to the very dregs, I don't cry "Vanity!" and condemn the world, while at the same time complaining that "life is too short!" Why does the brevity of life matter if it isn't found to be sweet? Why do I complain both ways? Is vanity, mere vanity, a happiness? Can misery pass away too soon?

'This is something that it's worth my while to examine. [In several very obscure sentences Shaftesbury continues his theme of the unimportance to him of the sort of philosophy typified by Descartes and Locke (he doesn't name them). Then:] If I have a right idea of •life when I think slightly of •it and decide that it can easily be laid down on any honourable occasion of service to my friends or country, teach me how to preserve this idea; or at least teach me how I can safely get rid of it so that it doesn't trouble me any more or lead me into dangerous undertakings. Teach me how I came by an opinion of worth and virtue that sometimes raises virtue high and at other times reduces it to nothing. What brings about these disturbances and fluctuations? . . . If *this* is the subject of the philosophical art, I readily embrace the study of it. . . . But I have no more desire to know how I form or

compound the ideas that are marked by words than I have to know by what movements of my tongue or palate I form those articulate sounds, which I can pronounce just as well without any such science or speculation.

Section 2: Pleasure and self-control

[This section starts with a couple of jokey pages in which Shaftesbury responds to an imagined reader who asks him why he is laying this intellectual pastime before the public. He replies that there's nothing special about being in print, that he doesn't pride himself on it or make any money out of it, and so on. He slides from this into criticism of the way in which young people were *drilled* into the elements of philosophy, ending with:] and though the metaphysical points of our belief are by this method, with admirable care and caution, instilled into tender minds, yet the *manner* of this early preparation for philosophy may make the follow-up work of reason and the inward exercise of the mind, in later years, proceed the more heavily and with greater reluctance.

It has to be hard for us, after such a learned childhood in which we were instructed in our own and other higher natures, essences, incorporeal substances, personalities and the like, to approach this lesson as adults, studying and thinking about it a second time. After having—through so many philosophical catechisms and snap-back answers—declared who we are and what we are, it isn't easy to come in a more relaxed way to approach these questions from a different angle, asking about our real self, our end, the judgment we should make of interest, and the opinion we should have of advantage and good—which is what must necessarily determine our conduct and prove to be the leading principle of our lives.

[In this paragraph, think of 'my interest' as meaning 'whatever is in my interests'.] Can we bear to take a fresh look at these mysteries? Can we endure a new schooling, after having once learnt our lesson from the world? Hardly, I presume. For by the lesson of the world, and according to the sense I get in conversation with 'top' people, if at any time I ask myself 'What governs me?', I would promptly answer 'My interest'. 'But what is interest? And how is *it* governed?' 'By opinion and fancy.' 'Then is everything that I fancy to be my interest really my interest? Or can my fancy possibly be wrong?' 'It can.' 'If my fancy about interest is wrong, can my pursuit or aim be right?' 'Hardly so.' 'Then can I be expected to hit when I don't even know how to aim?'

So it seems that my chief interest must be to get an aim, i.e. to know certainly where my happiness and advantage lies. 'Where can it lie except in my pleasure? My advantage and good must always be pleasing, and what is pleasing can't be other than my advantage and good.' 'Excellent! Let fancy govern, and interest be what we please. For if what pleases us is our good because it pleases us, anything can be our interest or good. Nothing can come amiss. What we fondly make our happiness at one time we may as readily un-make at another. No-one can learn what real good is. Nor can anyone on this basis be said to understand his interest.'

... Let us try to deal more openly with ourselves, and frankly admit that pleasure is no rule of good. When we follow pleasure merely, we become disgusted and change from one sort to another, condemning at one time what at another time we earnestly approve, and never judging consistently about our happiness while we follow passion and mood. [This theme is developed in a paragraph about someone who repeatedly expects bliss from love-affairs and doesn't find it, and eventually pulls himself together and 'hearkens to ambition. . . and seeks authority and fame'.]

So as not to be like that, let me see whether I can control my fancy, and fix it on something that may hold good.—When I exercise my reason on moral [see Glossary] subjects, when I employ my affection in friendly and social actions, I find I can sincerely enjoy myself. If there's a pleasure of *this* kind, why not indulge it? And if indulging it led it to increase, where's the harm in that? If I am lazy, and indulge myself in the pleasure of sloth, I know the harm in that, and can foresee the •drone. If I am luxurious, I know the harm of this also, and have a clear prospect of the •sot. If avarice is my pleasure, I know where that leads—to being a •miser. But if honesty is my delight, the only consequence I can see from indulging such a passion is my becoming better natured and enjoying more and more the pleasures of society. And if this honest pleasure is lost through knavish indulgence and immorality, there can hardly be any kind of satisfaction left, because good nature and social affection are so essential even to the pleasures of an orgy.

If the only pleasure I can freely and fully indulge is that of the honest and moral kind—if the rational and social enjoyment is so constant in itself and so essential to happiness—why shouldn't I bring my other pleasures to correspond and be friends with it, rather than give myself other pleasures that are destructive of this foundation and don't harmonise with one another?

On this basis, let me see how I can bear the assault of fancy, maintaining myself in my moral fortress against the attacks that are raised on the side of corrupt interest and a wrong self. When the idea of pleasure strikes, I ask myself: 'Before I was struck by this idea, was anything wrong with me?' 'No.' 'Then remove the idea, and I am well.' 'But as long as I have this idea, I can't lack the thing without regret.' 'Then see which is better: •to suffer from this lack until the idea is removed, or •to get the wanted thing that you lack,

thereby confirming not only this idea but all of the same type!'

If any *one* fancy is admitted on its own authority, doesn't that give *every* fancy a door-pass? And what will the outcome be of letting in the whole fantastic crew? Isn't it just this management that leads to the most dissolute and profligate of characters? And what is it that raises us to any degree of worth or steadiness except the practice and conduct that is directly opposite to this 'admit-them-all' policy? Can there be strength of mind or self-control if the ideas of pleasure, the suggestions of fancy, and the strong pleadings of appetite and desire are not often withstood, and the imaginations soundly reprimanded and brought under subjection?

[We are now given two pages that we needn't go through in detail. Shaftesbury describes the various 'fancies' as women who try to seduce the 'corrupt self'. He stresses one of them who is 'in no way amiable or attractive', namely the fear of death. This, he says, encourages 'the whole fantastic tribe of wanton, gay [see Glossary], and foolish desires'. It does this because 'the abhorrence of an insensible state [= 'state in which one has no feeling' = 'death'] makes mere being-alive and animal sensation highly cherished'. 'All the nobler opinions and sentiments of honest good and virtuous pleasure fly before this queen of terrors'. Shaftesbury associates the bad and destructive fancies and desires with some of the Muses of ancient Greek mythology, and introduces Calliope—the muse of heroic poetry—as coming to draw us away from our corrupt selves. She borrows from Clio (the muse of history) and Urania (the muse of astronomy) a presentation of what has been best in the history of nations and heroes, and of what is most sublime in the laws of nature. She] represents to us the rightness of going along with this amiable administration of the universe. She shows us that by doing this. . . . we are made happiest; and that the

measure of a happy life isn't based on how many sunsets we see, how many breaths we draw, or how many meals we eat; but on our having lived well, acted our part handsomely, and made our exit cheerfully and in a fitting manner.

Every man who isn't out of his mind *must* hold his fancies under some kind of discipline and management. The stricter this discipline is, the more rational and sane the man is. The looser it is, the more fantastical he must be and the nearer to the madman's state. This is a business that can never stand still. I must always be winner or loser at the game. Either I work on my fancies or they work on me. If I give quarter [= 'have mercy'] they won't. There can be no truce, no armistice between us. One or the other must win and take command. If the fancies are left to themselves, the government must of course be theirs; and then what's the difference between that state and madness?

Someone who on a plain imagines precipices at his feet and threatening rocks over his head; fears bursting clouds in a clear sky; cries 'Fire!', 'Deluge!', 'Earthquake!' or 'Thunder!' when all is quiet—isn't he raving? But one whose eyes see flashes when he has had a blow on the head; or one whose head is giddy from the motion of a ship just after he has been set ashore; or one who from a malfunction of his ear hears thundering noises—any of these can readily correct these different appearances and by this means be saved from madness.

Trouble in my eye may make me see the strangest kind of figures; and when cataracts and other impurities are gathering in my eye, I seem to see flies, insects, and other various forms playing in the air before me. But however wrong my senses are, I am not on this account out of my mind while there is still within me a person who has the power to dispute the appearances and correct the imagination.

I am accosted by ideas and striking illusions, but I don't

trust their report. I hear their story, and answer them as they deserve. •Fancy and I are not all one. The disagreement between us makes me my own. But if instead I have no debate with •her, no controversy, and take her word on what makes for happiness or misery, for good or ill, then I must join voices with her and cry 'Precipice!', 'Fire!'

[Shaftesbury now tells a longish story about 'a Greek prince who had the same madness as Alexander, and was deeply struck with the fancy of conquering worlds'. A friend gently asked him what he planned to do first, then next, then next etc., with the territorial ambition steadily growing. Then:] 'And what shall we do', asked the friend, 'when we have become thus happy and obtained our highest wish?' 'Why then we'll sit down peaceably and be good company over a bottle.' 'Alas, sir! What stops us from doing the same right now? Will our humour or our wine grow better? Shall we be more secure, or at heart's ease?'. . . .

Section 3: The education of taste

[The preparer of this version is defeated by this final section; some of it is too obscure for him, and much of it is wordy and exhibitionist to a degree that wears him down. The section is flashy, free-swinging, jocular, colourful, clever, but not very interesting. What follows is the section as Shaftesbury wrote it, with no help.]

We are now arrived to that part of our performance where it becomes us to cast our eye back on what has already passed. The observers of Method generally make this the place of recapitulation. Other artists have substituted the practice of apology or extenuation. For the anticipating manner of prefatory discourse is too well known to work any surprising effect in the author's behalf, 'preface' being become only another word to signify excuse. Besides that the

author is generally the most straitened in that preliminary part which on other accounts is too apt to grow voluminous. He therefore takes the advantage of his corollary or winding-up, and ends pathetically by endeavouring in the softest manner to reconcile his reader to those faults which he chooses rather to excuse than to amend.

General practice has made this a necessary part of elegance, hardly to be passed over by any writer. 'Tis the chief stratagem by which he engages in personal conference with his reader, and can talk immoderately of himself with all the seeming modesty of one who is the furthest from any selfish views or conceited thoughts of his own merit. There appears such a peculiar grace and ingenuity in the method of confessing laziness, precipitancy, carelessness, or whatever other vices have been the occasion of the author's deficiency, that it would seem a pity had the work itself been brought to such perfection as to have left no room for the penitent party to enlarge on his own demerits. For from the multiplicity of these he finds subject to ingratiate himself with his reader, who doubtless is not a little raised by this submission of a confessing author, and is ready, on these terms, to give him absolution and receive him into his good grace and favour.

In the galante world, indeed, we easily find how far a humility of this kind prevails. They who hope to rise by merit are likeliest to be disappointed in their pretensions. The confessing lover, who ascribes all to the bounty of the fair one, meets his reward the sooner for having studied less how to deserve it. For merit is generally thought presumptuous, and supposed to carry with it a certain assurance and ease with which a mistress is not so well contented. The claim of well-deserving seems to derogate from the pure grace and favour of the benefactrice, who then appears to herself most sovereign in power, and likeliest to be obeyed without reserve, when she bestows her bounty where there is least title or

pretension.

Thus a certain adoration of the sex which passes in our age without the least charge of profaneness or idolatry, may, according to vulgar [see Glossary] imagination, serve to justify these galant votaries in the imitation of the real religious and devout. The method of self-abasement may perhaps be thought the properest to make approaches to the sacred shrines; and the entire resignation of merit, in each case, may be esteemed the only ground of well-deserving. But what we allow to Heaven or to the fair should not, methinks, be made a precedent in favour of the world. Whatever deference is due to that body of men whom we call readers, we may be supposed to treat them with sufficient honour if with thorough diligence and pains we endeavour to render our works perfect, and leave them to judge of the performance as they are able.

However difficult or desperate it may appear in any artist to endeavour to bring perfection into his work, if he has not at least the idea of perfection to give him aim he will be found very defective and mean in his performance. Though his intention be to please the world, he must nevertheless be, in a manner, above it, and fix his eye upon that consummate grace, that beauty of Nature, and that perfection of numbers which the rest of mankind, feeling only by the effect whilst ignorant of the cause, term the *Je ne sais quoi*, the unintelligible or the 'I know not what', and suppose to be a kind of charm or enchantment of which the artist himself can give no account.

But here I find I am tempted to do what I have myself condemned. Hardly can I forbear making some apology for my frequent recourse to the rules of common artists, to the masters of exercise, to the academies of painters, statuaries, and to the rest of the virtuoso tribe. But in this I am so fully satisfied I have reason on my side, that let custom be ever

so strong against me, I had rather repair to these inferior schools to search for Truth and Nature than to some other places where higher arts and sciences are professed.

I am persuaded that to be a virtuoso (so far as befits a gentleman) is a higher step towards the becoming a man of virtue and good sense than the being what in this age we call a scholar.² For even rude Nature itself, in its primitive simplicity, is a better guide to judgment than improved sophistry and pedantic learning. The *faciunt nae intellegendo, ut nihil intellegant* will be ever applied by men of discernment and free thought to such logic, such principles, such forms and rudiments of knowledge as are established in certain schools of literature and science. The case is sufficiently understood even by those who are unwilling to confess the truth of it. Effects betray their causes. And the known turn and figure of those understandings, which sprout from nurseries of this kind, give a plain idea of what is judged on this occasion. 'Tis no wonder if after so wrong a ground of education there

appears to be such need of redress and amendment from that excellent school which we call the world. The mere amusements of gentlemen are found more improving than the profound researches of pedants; and in the management of our youth we are forced to have recourse to the former, as an antidote against the genius peculiar to the latter. If the formalists of this sort were erected into patentees with a sole commission of authorship, we should undoubtedly see such writing in our days as would either wholly wean us from all books in general, or at least from all such as were the product of our own nation under such a subordinate and conforming government.

However this may prove, there can be no kind of writing which relates to men and manners where it is not necessary for the author to understand poetical and moral truth, the beauty of sentiments, the sublime of characters, and carry in his eye the model or exemplar of that natural grace which gives to every action its attractive charm. If he has naturally

² It seems indeed somewhat improbable that according to modern erudition, and as science is now distributed, our ingenious and noble youths should obtain the full advantage of a just and liberal education by uniting the scholar-part with that of the real gentleman and man of breeding. Academies for exercises, so useful to the public, and essential in the formation of a genteel and liberal character, are unfortunately neglected. Letters are indeed banished, I know not where, in distant cloisters and unpractised cells, as our poet has it, confined to the commerce and mean 'fellowship' of 'bearded boys'. The sprightly arts and sciences are severed from philosophy, which consequently must grow dronish, insipid, pedantic, useless, and directly opposite to the real knowledge and practice of the world and mankind. Our youth accordingly seem to have their only chance between two widely different roads: either that of pedantry and school-learning, which lies amidst the dregs and most corrupt part of ancient literature, or that of the fashionable illiterate world, which aims merely at the character of the fine gentleman, and takes up with the foppery of modern languages and foreign wit. The frightful aspect of the former of these roads makes the journey appear desperate and impracticable. Hence that aversion so generally conceived against a learned character, wrong turned, and hideously set out under such difficulties, and in such seeming labyrinths and mysterious forms. As if a Homer or a Xenophon imperfectly learnt, in raw years, might not afterwards, in a riper age, be studied as well in a capital city and amidst the world as at a college or country-town! Or as if a Plutarch, a Tully, or a Horace, could not accompany a young man in his travels, at a court, or (if occasion were) even in a camp! The case is not without precedent. Leisure is found sufficient for other reading of numerous modern translations and worse originals, of Italian or French authors, who are read merely for amusement. The French indeed may boast of some legitimate authors of a just relish, correct, and without any mixture of the affected or spurious kinds: the false tender, or the false sublime; the conceited jingle or the ridiculous point. They are such geniuses as have been formed upon the natural model of the ancients, and willingly own their debt to those great masters. But for the rest, who draw from another fountain, as the Italian authors in particular, they may be reckoned no better than the corrupters of true learning and erudition, and can indeed be relished by those alone whose education has unfortunately denied them the familiarity of the noble ancients, and the practice of a better and more natural taste.

no eye or ear for these interior numbers, 'tis not likely he should be able to judge better of that exterior proportion and symmetry of composition which constitutes a legitimate piece.

Could we once convince ourselves of what is in itself so evident, 'That in the very nature of things there must of necessity be the foundation of a right and wrong taste, as well in respect of inward characters and features as of outward person, behaviour, and action,' we should be far more ashamed of ignorance and wrong judgment in the former than in the latter of these subjects. Even in the Arts, which are mere imitations of that outward grace and beauty, we not only confess a taste, but make it a part of refined breeding to discover amidst the many false manners and ill styles the true and natural one, which represents the real beauty and Venus of the kind. 'Tis the like moral grace and Venus which, discovering itself in the turns of character and the variety of human affection, is copied by the writing artist. If he knows not this Venus, these graces, nor was ever struck with the beauty, the decorum of this inward kind, he can neither paint advantageously after the life nor in a feigned subject where he has full scope. For never can he, on these terms, represent merit and virtue, or mark deformity and blemish. Never can he with justice and true proportion assign the boundaries of either part, or separate the distant characters. The schemes must be defective and the draughts confused where the standard is weakly established and the measure out of use. Such a designer, who has so little feeling of these proportions, so little consciousness of this excellence or these perfections, will never be found able to describe a perfect character; or, what is more according to art, 'express the effect and force of this perfection from the result of various and mixed characters of life.' And thus the sense of inward numbers, the knowledge and practice

of the social virtues, and the familiarity and favour of the moral graces, are essential to the character of a deserving artist and just favourite of the Muses. Thus are the Arts and Virtues mutually friends; and thus the science of virtuosi and that of virtue itself become, in a manner, one and the same.

One who aspires to the character of a man of breeding and politeness is careful to form his judgment of arts and sciences upon right models of perfection. If he travels to Rome, he inquires which are the truest pieces of architecture, the best remains of statues, the best paintings of a Raphael or a Caraccio. However antiquated, rough, or dismal they may appear to him at first sight, he resolves to view them over and over, till he has brought himself to relish them, and finds their hidden graces and perfections. He takes particular care to turn his eye from everything which is gaudy, luscious, and of a false taste. Nor is he less careful to turn his ear from every sort of music besides that which is of the best manner and truest harmony.

'Twere to be wished we had the same regard to a right taste in life and manners. What mortal being, once convinced of a difference in inward character, and of a preference due to one kind above another, would not be concerned to make his own the best? If civility and humanity be a taste; if brutality, insolence, riot, be in the same manner a taste, who, if he could reflect, would not choose to form himself on the amiable and agreeable rather than the odious and perverse model? Who would not endeavour to force Nature as well in this respect as in what relates to a taste or judgment in other arts and sciences? For in each place the force on Nature is used only for its redress. If a natural good taste be not already formed in us, why should not we endeavour to form it, and cultivate it till it become natural? . . . 'I like ! I fancy! I admire!' 'How? By accident, or as I please?' No.

But I learn to fancy, to admire, to please, as the subjects themselves are deserving, and can bear me out. Otherwise, I like at this hour but dislike the next. I shall be weary of my pursuit, and, upon experience, find little pleasure in the main, if my choice and judgment in it be from no other rule than that single one, because I please. Grotesque and monstrous figures often please. Cruel spectacles and barbarities are also found to please, and, in some tempers, to please beyond all other subjects. But is this pleasure right? And shall I follow it if it presents? not strive with it, or endeavour to prevent its growth or prevalency in my temper? . . . How stands the case in a more soft and flattering kind of pleasure? . . . Effeminacy pleases me. The Indian figures, the Japan work, the enamel strikes my eye. The luscious colours and glossy paint gain upon my fancy. A French or Flemish style is highly liked by me at first sight,

and I pursue my liking. But what ensues? . . . Do I not for ever forfeit my good relish? How is it possible I should thus come to taste the beauties of an Italian master, or of a hand happily formed on nature and the ancients? 'Tis not by wantonness and humour that I shall attain my end and arrive at the enjoyment I propose. The art itself is severe, the rules rigid.³ And if I expect the knowledge should come to me by accident, or in play, I shall be grossly deluded, and prove myself, at best, a mock-virtuoso or mere pedant of the kind.

Here therefore we have once again exhibited our moral science in the same method and manner of soliloquy as above. To this correction of humour and formation of a taste our reading, if it be of the right sort, must principally contribute. Whatever company we keep, or however polite and agreeable their characters may be with whom we converse or

³ Thus Pliny speaking with a masterly judgment of the dignity of the then declining art of painting (*de dignitate artis morientis*) shows it to be not only severe in respect of the discipline, style, design, but of the characters and lives of the noble masters; not only in the effect, but even in the very materials of the art, the colours, ornaments, and particular circumstances belonging to the profession. 'Antidotus, a pupil of Euphranor, was more painstaking than prolific, and was austere in his colouring. . . . Athenion of Maronea is compared with Nicias, but greatly preferred to him. He was a pupil of Glaucion the Corinthian, rather gloomy in colouring, yet pleasant in his gloom, so that his cultivation comes out in his very painting. . . . Had he not died young, no-one could be compared with him. . . . Aristolaus, son and pupil of Pausias, was one of the most austere of painters. . . . Lately too we had Amulius, a severe and serious painter. . . . He used only to paint a few hours a day, but that very seriously, for he always wore full dress, even on his scaffolding.' (Pliny, *Natural History* bk.5) One of the mortal symptoms upon which Pliny pronounces the sure death of this noble art, not long survivor to him, was what belonged in common to all the other perishing arts after the Fall of Liberty: I mean the luxury of the Roman Court, and the change of taste and manners naturally consequent to such a change of government and dominion. This excellent, learned, and polite critic represents to us the false taste springing from the Court itself, and from that opulence, splendour, and affectation of magnificence and expense proper to the place. Thus in the statuary and architecture then in vogue nothing could be admired beside what was costly in the mere matter or substance of the work. Precious rock, rich metal, glittering stones, and other luscious ware, poisonous to art, came every day more into request, and were imposed as necessary materials on the best masters. 'Twas in favour of these Court beauties and gaudy appearances that all good drawing, just design, and truth of work began to be despised. Care was taken to procure from distant parts the most gorgeous splendid colours, of the most costly growth or composition; not such as had been used by Apelles and the great masters, who are justly severe, loyal and faithful to their art. This newer colouring our critic calls 'the florid kind'. The materials were too rich to be furnished by the painter, but were bespoke or furnished at the cost of the person who employed him (*quos dominus pingemi praestat*). The other he calls 'the austere kind'. And thus, says he, 'The cost, and not the life and art, is studied.' He shows, on the contrary, what care Apelles took to subdue the florid colours by a darkening varnish. And he says just before, of some of the finest pieces of Apelles, that 'they were wrought in four colours only'. So great and venerable was simplicity held among the ancients, and so certain was the ruin of all true elegance in life or art where this mistress was once quitted or contemned!

correspond, if the authors we read are of another kind, we shall find our palate strangely turned their way. We are the unhappier in this respect for being scholars if our studies be ill chosen. Nor can I, for this reason, think it proper to call a man well-read who reads many authors, since he must of necessity have more ill models than good, and be more stuffed with bombast, ill fancy, and wry thought than filled with solid sense and just imagination.

But notwithstanding this hazard of our taste from a multiplicity of reading, we are not, it seems, the least scrupulous in our choice of subject. We read whatever comes next us. What was first put into our hand when we were young, serves us afterwards for serious study and wise research when we are old. We are many of us, indeed, so grave as to continue this exercise of youth through our remaining life. The exercising authors of this kind have been above described in the beginning of this treatise. The manner of exercise is called meditation, and is of a sort so solemn and profound, that we dare not so much as thoroughly examine the subject on which we are bid to meditate. This is a sort of task-reading, in which a taste is not permitted. How little soever we take of this diet, 'tis sufficient to give full exercise to our grave humour, and allay the appetite towards further research and solid contemplation. The rest is holiday, diversion, play, and fancy. We reject all rule, as thinking it an injury to our diversions to have regard to truth or nature, without which, however, nothing can be truly agreeable or entertaining, much less instructive or improving. Through a certain surfeit taken in a wrong kind of serious reading, we apply ourselves, with full content, to the most ridiculous. The more remote our pattern is from anything moral or profitable, the more freedom and satisfaction we find in it. We care not how Gothic or barbarous our models are, what ill-designed or monstrous figures we view, or what false

proportions we trace or see described in history, romance, or fiction. And thus our eye and ear is lost. Our relish or taste must of necessity grow barbarous, whilst barbarian customs, savage manners, Indian wars, and wonders of the *terra incognita*, employ our leisure hours and are the chief materials to furnish out a library.

These are in our present days what books of chivalry were in those of our forefathers. I know not what faith our valiant ancestors may have had in the stories of their giants, their dragons, and St. Georges. But for our faith indeed, as well as our taste in this other way of reading, I must confess I cannot consider it without astonishment.

It must certainly be something else than incredulity which fashions the taste and judgment of many gentlemen whom we hear censured as atheists, for attempting to philosophise after a newer manner than any known of late. For my own part, I have ever thought this sort of men to be in general more credulous, though after another manner, than the mere vulgar. Besides what I have observed in conversation with the men of this character, I can produce many anathematised authors who, if they want a true Israelitish faith, can make amends by a Chinese or Indian one. If they are short in Syria or the Palestine, they have their full measure in America or Japan. Histories of Incas or Iroquois, written by friars and missionaries, pirates and renegades, sea-captains and trusty travellers, pass for authentic records and are canonical with the virtuosi of this sort. Though Christian miracles may not so well satisfy them, they dwell with the highest contentment on the prodigies of Moorish and Pagan countries. They have far more pleasure in hearing the monstrous accounts of monstrous men and manners than the politest and best narrations of the affairs, the governments, and lives of the wisest and most polished people.

'Tis the same taste which makes us prefer a Turkish

history to a Grecian or a Roman, an Ariosto to a Virgil, and a romance or novel to an Iliad. We have no regard to the character or genius of our author, nor are so far curious as to observe how able he is in the judgment of facts, or how ingenious in the texture of his lies. For facts unably related, though with the greatest sincerity and good faith, may prove the worst sort of deceit; 1 and mere lies, judiciously composed, can teach us the truth of things beyond any other manner.⁴ But to amuse ourselves with such authors as neither know how to lie nor tell truth, discovers a taste which, methinks, one should not be apt to envy. Yet so enchanted we are with the travelling memoirs of any casual adventurer, that be his character or genius what it will, we have no sooner turned over a page or two, than we begin to interest ourselves highly in his affairs. No sooner has he taken shipping at the mouth of the Thames, or sent his baggage before him to Gravesend or Buoy in the Nore, than straight our attention is earnestly taken up. If in order to his more distant travels, he takes some part of Europe in his way, we can with patience hear of inns and ordinaries, passage-boats and ferries, foul and fair weather, with all the particulars of the author's diet, habit of body, his personal dangers and mischances on land and sea. And thus, full of desire and hope, we accompany him till he enters on his great scene of action, and begins by the description of some enormous fish or beast. From monstrous brutes he proceeds to yet more monstrous men. For in this race of authors he is ever completest and of the first rank who is able to speak of things the most unnatural and monstrous.

This humour our old tragic poet (Shakespeare) seems to have discovered. He hit our taste in giving us a Moorish hero, full-fraught with prodigy, a wondrous story-teller! But for the

attentive part, the poet chose to give it to womankind. What passionate reader of travels, or student in the prodigious sciences, can refuse to pity that fair lady, who fell in love with the miraculous Moor? Especially considering with what suitable grace such a lover could relate the most monstrous adventures, and satisfy the wondering appetite with the most wondrous tales: Wherein, says the hero-traveller,

Of antres vast and deserts idle. . . ,
It was my hint to speak. . . ;
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline.

Seriously, 'twas a woeful tale! unfit, one would think, to win a tender fair one. It is true, the poet sufficiently condemns her fancy, and makes her (poor lady!) pay dearly for it in the end. But why, amongst his Greek names, he should have chosen one which denoted the lady superstitious, I cannot imagine: unless, as poets are sometimes prophets too, he should figuratively, under this dark type, have represented to us that about a hundred years after his time, the fair sex of this island should, by other monstrous tales, be so seduced as to turn their favour chiefly on the persons of the tale-tellers, and change their natural inclination for fair, candid, and courteous knights, into a passion for a mysterious race of black enchanters, such as of old were said to 'creep into houses', and 'lead captive silly women'.

'Tis certain there is a very great affinity between the passion of superstition and that of tales. The love of strange narrations, and the ardent appetite towards unnatural objects, has a near alliance with the like appetite towards the

⁴ The greatest of critics says of the greatest poet, when he extols him the highest, 'that above all others he understood how to lie', Aristotle, *Poetics* 24.18.

supernatural kind, such as are called prodigious and of dire omen. For so the mind forebodes on every such unusual sight or hearing. Fate, destiny, or the anger of Heaven seems denoted, and as it were delineated, by the monstrous birth, the horrid fact, or dire event. For this reason the very persons of such relators or tale-tellers, with a small help of dismal habit, suitable countenance and tone, become sacred and tremendous in the eyes of mortals who are thus addicted from their youth. The tender virgins, losing their natural softness, assume this tragic passion, of which they are highly susceptible, especially when a suitable kind of eloquence and action attends the character of the narrator. A thousand Desdemonas are then ready to present themselves, and would frankly resign fathers, relations, country-men, and country itself, to follow the fortunes of a hero of the black tribe.

But whatever monstrous zeal or superstitious passion the poet might foretell, either in the gentlemen, ladies, or common people of an after age, 'tis certain that as to books the same Moorish fancy, in its plain and literal sense, prevails strongly at this present time. Monsters and monster-lands were never more in request; and we may often see a philosopher, or a wit, run a tale-gathering in those idle deserts as familiarly as the silliest woman or merest boy.

One would imagine that our philosophical writers, who pretend to treat of morals, should far out-do mere poets in recommending virtue, and representing what was fair and amiable in human actions.⁵ One would imagine that if they turned their eye towards remote countries (of which they affect so much to speak) they should search for that simplicity of manners and innocence of behaviour which has been often

known among mere savages, ere they were corrupted by our commerce, and, by sad example, instructed in all kinds of treachery and inhumanity. It would be of advantage to us to hear the causes of this strange corruption in ourselves, and be made to consider of our deviation from nature, and from that just purity of manners which might be expected, especially from a people so assisted and enlightened by religion. For who would not naturally expect more justice, fidelity, temperance, and honesty from Christians than from Mahometans or mere pagans? But so far are our modern moralists from condemning any unnatural vices or corrupt manners, whether in our own or foreign climates, that they would have vice itself appear as natural as virtue, and from the worst examples would represent to us " that all actions are naturally indifferent; that they have no note or character of good or ill in themselves; but are distinguished by mere fashion, law, or arbitrary decree. Wonderful philosophy ! raised from the dregs of an illiterate mean kind, which was ever despised among the great ancients and rejected by all men of action or sound erudition; but in these ages imperfectly copied from the original, and, with much disadvantage, imitated and assumed in common both by devout and undevout attempters in the moral kind.

Should a writer upon music, addressing himself to the students and lovers of the art, declare to them 'that the measure or rule of harmony was caprice or will, humour or fashion', 'tis not very likely he should be heard with great attention or treated with real gravity. For harmony is harmony by nature, let men judge ever so ridiculously of music. So is symmetry and proportion founded still in nature, let men's fancy prove ever so barbarous, or their fashions ever

⁵ Considering what has been so often said on this subject of philosophy, learning, and the sister arts, after that ancient model which has since been so much corrupted, it may not be amiss perhaps to hear the confession of one of the greatest and most learned of moderns upon this head. [Then follows a long quotation in Latin from Isaac Casaubon's Preface to his edition of Persius, *Satires*.]

so Gothic in their architecture, sculpture, or whatever other designing art. 'Tis the same case where life and manners are concerned. Virtue has the same fixed standard. The same numbers, harmony, and proportion will have place in morals, and are discoverable in the characters and affections of mankind; in which are laid the just foundations of an art and science superior to every other of human practice and comprehension.

This, I suppose therefore, is highly necessary that a writer should comprehend. For things are stubborn and will not be as we fancy them, or as the fashion varies, but as they stand in nature. Now whether the writer be poet, philosopher, or of whatever kind, he is in truth no other than a copyist after nature. His style may be differently suited to the different times he lives in, or to the different humour of his age or nation; his manner, his dress, his colouring may vary; but if his drawing be uncorrect or his design contrary to nature, his piece will be found ridiculous when it comes thoroughly to be examined. For Nature will not be mocked. The prepossession against her can never be very lasting. Her decrees and instincts are powerful and her sentiments inbred. She has a strong party abroad, and as strong a one within ourselves; and when any slight is put upon her, she can soon turn the reproach and make large reprisals on the taste and judgment of her antagonists.

Whatever philosopher, critic, or author is convinced of this prerogative of nature, will easily be persuaded to apply himself to the great work of reforming his taste, which he will have reason to suspect, if he be not such a one as has deliberately endeavoured to frame it by the just standard of nature. Whether this be his case, he will easily discover by appealing to his memory; for custom and fashion are powerful seducers; and he must of necessity have fought hard against these to have attained that justness of taste

which is required in one who pretends to follow nature. But if no such conflict can be called to mind, 'tis a certain token that the party has his taste very little different from the vulgar. And on this account he should instantly betake himself to the wholesome practice recommended in this treatise. He should set afoot the powerfulest faculties of his mind, and assemble the best forces of his wit and judgment, in order to make a formal descent on the territories of the heart; resolving to decline no combat, nor hearken to any terms, till he had pierced into its inmost provinces and reached the seat of empire. No treaties should amuse him; no advantages lead him aside. All other speculations should be suspended, all other mysteries resigned, till this necessary campaign was made and these inward conflicts learnt; by which he would be able to gain at least some tolerable insight into himself and knowledge of his own natural principles.

It may here perhaps be thought that notwithstanding the particular advice we have given in relation to the forming of a taste in natural characters and manners, we are still defective in our performance whilst we are silent on supernatural cases, and bring not into our consideration the manners and characters delivered us in Holy Writ. But this objection will soon vanish when we consider that there can be no rules given by human wit to that which was never humanly conceived, but divinely dictated and inspired.

For this reason 'twould be in vain for any poet or ingenious author to form his characters after the models of our sacred penmen. And whatever certain critics may have advanced concerning the structure of a heroic poem of this kind, I will be bold to prophesy that the success will never be answerable to expectation.

It must be owned that in our sacred history we have both leaders, conquerors, founders of nations, deliverers, and patriots who, even in a human sense, are no way behind the

chief of those so much celebrated by the ancients. There is nothing in the story of Aeneas which is not equalled or exceeded by a Joshua or a Moses. But as illustrious as are the acts of these sacred chiefs, 'twould be hard to copy them in just heroic. 'Twould be hard to give to many of them that grateful air which is necessary to render them naturally pleasing to mankind, according to the idea men are universally found to have of heroism and generosity.

Notwithstanding the pious endeavours which, as devout Christians, we may have used in order to separate ourselves from the interests of mere heathens and infidels, notwithstanding the true pains we may have taken to arm our hearts in behalf of a chosen people against their neighbouring nations of a false religion and worship, there will be still found such a partiality remaining in us towards creatures of the same make and figure with ourselves, as will hinder us from viewing with satisfaction the punishments inflicted by human hands on such aliens and idolaters.

In mere poetry, and the pieces of wit and literature, there is a liberty of thought and easiness of humour indulged to us in which, perhaps, we are not so well able to contemplate the divine judgments, and see clearly into the justice of those ways which are declared to be so far from our ways and above our highest thoughts or understandings. In such a situation of mind we can hardly endure to see heathen treated as heathen, and the faithful made the executioners of the divine wrath. There is a certain perverse humanity in us which inwardly resists the divine commission, though ever so plainly revealed. The wit of the best poet is not sufficient to reconcile us to the campaign of a Joshua, or the retreat of a Moses by the assistance of an Egyptian loan. Nor will it be possible, by the Muses art, to make that royal hero appear amiable in human eyes who found such favour in the eye of Heaven. Such are mere human hearts that they can hardly

find the least sympathy with that only one which had the character of being after the pattern of the Almighty's.

'Tis apparent, therefore, that the manners, actions, and characters of sacred writ are in no wise the proper subject of other authors than divines themselves. They are matters incomprehensible in philosophy; they are above the pitch of the mere human historian, the politician, or the moralist, and are too sacred to be submitted to the poet's fancy when inspired by no other spirit than that of his profane mistresses the Muses.

I should be unwilling to examine rigorously the performance of our great poet (Milton), who sung so piously the Fall of Man. The War in Heaven and the catastrophe of that original pair from whom the generations of mankind were propagated are matters so abstrusely revealed, and with such a resemblance of mythology, that they can more easily bear what figurative construction or fantastic turn the poet may think fit to give them. But should he venture farther into the lives and characters of the patriarchs, the holy matrons, heroes and heroines of the chosen seed; should he employ the sacred machine, the exhibitions and interventions of divinity according to Holy Writ to support the action of his piece; he would soon find the weakness of his pretended orthodox Muse, and prove how little those divine patterns were capable of human imitation, or of being raised to any other majesty, or sublime, than that in which they originally appear.

The theology or theogony of the heathens could admit of such different turns and figurative expressions as suited the fancy and judgment of each philosopher or poet. But the purity of our faith will admit of no such variation. The Christian theology, the birth, procedure, generation, and personal distinction of the Divinity, are mysteries only to be determined by the initiated or ordained, to whom the.

State has assigned the guardianship and promulgation of the divine oracles. It becomes not those who are uninspired from heaven and uncommissioned from earth, to search with curiosity into the original of those holy rites and records by law established. Should we make such an attempt, we should in probability find the less satisfaction the further we presumed to carry our speculations. Having dared once to quit the authority and direction of the law, we should easily be subject to heterodoxy and error when we had no better warrant left us for the authority of our sacred symbols than the integrity, candour, and disinterestedness of their compilers and registers. How great that candour and disinterestedness may have been, we have no other histories to inform us than those of their own licensing or composing. But busy persons, who officiously search into these records, are ready even from hence to draw proofs very disadvantageous to the fame and character of this succession of men. And persons moderately read in these histories are apt to judge no otherwise of the temper of ancient councils than by that of later synods and modern convocations.

When we add to this the melancholy consideration of what disturbances have been raised from the disputes of this kind; what effusion of blood, what devastations of provinces, what shock and ruin of empires have been occasioned by controversies founded on the nicest distinction of an article relating to these mysteries, 'twill be judged vain in any poet or polite author to think of rendering himself agreeable or entertaining whilst he makes such subjects as these to be his theme.

But though the explanation of such deep mysteries and religious duties be allotted as the peculiar province of the sacred order, 'tis presumed, nevertheless, that it may be lawful for other authors to retain their ancient privilege of instructing mankind in a way of pleasure and entertainment.

Poets may be allowed their fictions and philosophers their systems. 'Twould go hard with mankind should the patentees for religion be commissioned for all instruction and advice relating to manners or conversation. The stage may be allowed to instruct as well as the pulpit. The way of wit and humour may be serviceable as well as that of gravity and seriousness; and the way of plain reason as well as that of exalted revelation. The main matter is to keep these provinces distinct and settle their just boundaries. And on this account it is that we have endeavoured to represent to modern authors the necessity of making this separation justly and in due form.

'Twould be somewhat hard, methinks, if Religion, as by law established, were not allowed the same privilege as Heraldry. 'Tis agreed on all hands that particular persons may design or paint, in their private capacity, after what manner they think fit; but they must blazon only as the public directs. Their lion or bear must be figured as the science appoints, and their supporters and crest must be such as their wise and gallant ancestors have procured for them. No matter whether the shapes of these animals hold just proportion with Nature. No matter though different or contrary forms are joined in one. That which is denied to painters or poets is permitted to heralds. Naturalists may, in their separate and distinct capacity, inquire as they think fit into the real existence and natural truth of things; but they must by no means dispute the authorised forms. Mermaids and griffins were the wonder of our forefathers, and, as such, delivered down to us by the authentic traditions and delineations above mentioned. We ought not so much as to criticise the features or dimensions of a Saracen's face, brought by our conquering ancestors from the holy wars; nor pretend to call in question the figure or size of a dragon, on which the history of our national champion and the

establishment of a high order and dignity of the realm depends.

But as worshipful as are the persons of the illustrious heralds, Clarencieux, Garter, and the rest of those eminent sustainers of British honour and antiquity, 'tis to be hoped that in a more civilised age, such as at present we have the good fortune to live in, they will not attempt to strain their privileges to the same height as formerly. Having been reduced by law or settled practice from the power they once enjoyed, they will not, 'tis presumed, in defiance of the magistrate and civil power, erect anew their stages and lists, introduce the manner of civil combat, set us to tilt and tournament, and raise again those defiances and moral frays of which their Order were once the chief managers and promoters.

To conclude: the only method which can justly qualify us for this high privilege of giving advice, is in the first place to receive it ourselves with due submission where the public has vouchsafed to give it us by authority. And if in our private capacity we can have resolution enough to criticise ourselves, and call in question our high imaginations, florid desires, and specious sentiments, according to the manner of soliloquy above prescribed, we shall, by the natural course of things, as we grow wiser, prove less conceited, and introduce into our character that modesty, condescension, and just humanity which is essential to the success of all friendly counsel and admonition. And honest home-philosophy must teach us the wholesome practice within ourselves. Polite reading, and converse with mankind of the better sort, will qualify us for what remains.

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·THE TWO PARAGRAPHS DISCUSSED IN THE NOTE ON PAGE 14·

'Twould be a hard case indeed should the princes of our nation refuse to countenance the industrious race of authors, since their royal ancestors and predecessors have had such honour derived to them from this profession. 'Tis to this they owe that bright jewel of their crown, purchased by a warlike prince, who having assumed the author, and essayed his strength in the polemic writings of the school-divines, thought it an honour on this account to retain the title of DEFENDER OF THE FAITH.

Another prince, of a more pacific nature and fluent thought, submitting arms and martial discipline to the gown, and confiding in his princely science and profound learning, made his style and speech the nerve and sinew of his government. He gave us his works full of wise exhortation and advice to his royal son, as well as of instruction to his good people, who could not without admiration observe their author-sovereign thus studious and contemplative in their behalf. 'Twas then one might have seen our nation growing young and docile, with that simplicity of heart which qualified them to profit like a scholar-people under their royal preceptor. For with abundant eloquence he graciously gave lessons to his parliament, tutored his ministers, and edified the greatest churchmen and divines themselves, by whose suffrage he obtained the highest appellations which could be merited by the acutest wit and truest understanding. From hence the British nations were taught to own in common a Solomon for their joint sovereign, the founder of their late completed union. Nor can it be doubted that the pious treatise of self-discourse ascribed to the succeeding monarch contributed in a great measure to his glorious and never-fading titles of Saint and Martyr.