An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense

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Edited and with an Introduction by Aaron Garrett

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Design of the following Sections; and to explain more fully how the Moral Sense alledged to be in Mankind, must be presupposed even in these Schemes.

**SECTION I**

*Concerning the Character of Virtue, agreeable to Truth or Reason.*

Since Reason is understood to denote our *Power of finding out true Propositions*, Reasonableness must denote the same thing, with *Conformity to true Propositions, or to Truth*.

Reasonableness in an Action is a very common Expression, but yet upon inquiry, it will appear very confused, whether we suppose it the Motive to *Election*, or the Quality determining *Approbation*.

There is one sort of *Conformity to Truth* which neither determines to the one or the other; *viz.* that *Conformity which is between every true Proposition and its Object*. This sort of Conformity can never make us *choose* or *approve* one Action more than its contrary, for it is found in all Actions alike: Whatever *attribute* can be ascribed to a *generous kind Action*, the *contrary Attribute* may as *truly* be ascribed to a *selfish cruel Action*: Both Propositions are equally *true*, [216] and the two contrary *Actions*, the Objects of the two [214] Truths are equally *conformable* to their several Truths, with that sort of *Conformity* which is between a Truth and its Object. This *Conformity* then cannot make a Difference among Actions, or recommend one more than another either to *Election* or *Approbation*, since any Man may make as many Truths about Villany, as about Heroism, by ascribing to it *contrary Attributes*.

For Instance, these are *Truths* concerning the *Preservation of Property*. “It tends to the Happiness of human Society: It encours Industry: It shall be rewarded by God.” These are also *Truths* concerning *Robbery*. “It disturbs Society: It discourages Industry: It shall be punished by God.” The former *three Truths* have the *Preservation of Property* for their...
Object; the latter three have Robbery. And each Class of Truths hath that sort of Conformity to its Object, which is common to all Truths with their Objects. The moral Difference cannot therefore depend upon this Conformity, which is common to both.

The Number of Truths in both cases may be plainly the same; so that a good Action cannot be supposed to agree to more Truths than an evil one, nor can an evil Action be disagreeable to any Truth or [215] Com-
pages [217] of Truths made about it; for whatever Propositions do not agree with their Objects are not Truths.

If Reasonableness, the Character of Virtue, denote some other sort of Conformity to Truth, it were to be wished that these Gentlemen, who make it the original Idea of moral Good, antecedent to any Sense or Affections, would explain it, and shew how it determines us antecedently to a Sense, either to Election or Approbation.

They tell us, "we must have some Standard antecedently to all Sense or Affections, since we judge even of our Senses and Affections themselves, and approve or disapprove them: This Standard must be our Reason, Conformity to which must be the original Idea of moral Good."

But what is this Conformity of Actions to Reason? When we ask the Reason of an Action we sometimes mean, "What Truth shews a Quality in the Action, exciting the Agent to do it?" Thus, why does a Luxurious Man pursue Wealth? The Reason is given by this Truth, "Wealth is useful to purchase Pleasures." Sometimes for a Reason of Actions we shew the Truth expressing a Quality, engaging our Approbation. Thus the Reason of hazarding [216] Life in just War, is, that "it tends to preserve our [218] honest Countrymen, or evidences publick Spirit:" The Reason for Temperance, and against Luxury is given thus, "Luxury evidences a selfish base Temper." The former sort of Reasons we will call exciting, and the latter justifying.* Now we shall find that all exciting Reasons presuppose Instincts and Affections; and the justifying presuppose a Moral Sense.

* Thus Grotius distinguishes the Reasons of War, into the Justificae, and Suasoriae. [[See Grotius, De Jure Belli et Pacis, II.1.1. Grotius makes his distinction with ref-
As to exciting Reasons, in every calm rational Action some end is desired or intended; no end can be intended or desired previously to some one of these Classes of Affections, Self-Love, Self-Hatred, or desire of private Misery. (if this be possible) Benevolence toward others, or Malice: All Affections are included under these; no end can be previous to them all; there can therefore be no exciting Reason previous to Affection.

We have indeed many confused Harangues on this Subject, telling us, “We have two Principles of Action, Reason, and Affection, or Passion (i.e. strong Affection): the former in common with [217] Angels, the latter with Brutes: No Action is wise, or good, or reasonable, to which we are not excited [219] by Reason, as distinct from all Affections; or, if any such Actions as flow from Affections be good, ’tis only by chance, or materially and not formally.” As if indeed Reason, or the Knowledge of the Relations of things, could excite to Action when we proposed no End, or as if Ends could be intended without Desire or Affection.

But are there not also exciting Reasons, even previous to any end, moving us to propose one end rather than another? To this Aristotle long ago answered, “that there are ultimate Ends desired without a view to any thing else, and subordinate Ends or Objects desired with a view to something else.”42 To subordinate Ends those Reasons or Truths excite, which shew them to be conducive to the ultimate End, and shew one Object to be more effectual than another: thus subordinate Ends may be called reasonable. But as to the ultimate Ends, to suppose exciting Reasons for them, would infer, that there is no ultimate End, but that we desire one thing for another in an infinite Series.

Thus ask a Being who desires private Happiness, or has Self-Love? “what [218] Reason [221] excites him to desire Wealth”? He will give this

42. See Nicomachean Ethics, I.1. See also Gilbert Burnet (ed.), Letters Between the Late Mr. Gilbert Burnet, and Mr. Hutchinson, Concerning The true Foundation of Virtue or Moral Goodness. Formerly Published in the London Journal (London: W. Wilkins, 1735), 49–50.

Reason, that “Wealth tends to procure Pleasure and Ease.” Ask his Reason for desiring Pleasure or Happiness: One cannot imagine what Proposition he could assign as his exciting Reason. This Proposition is indeed true, “There is an Instinct or Desire fixed in his Nature, determining him to pursue his Happiness;” but it is not this Reflection on his own Nature, or this Proposition which excites or determines him, but the Instinct itself: This is a Truth, “Rhubarb strengthens the Stomach;” But ’tis not a Proposition which strengthens the Stomach, but the Quality in that Medicine. The Effect is not produced by Propositions shewing the Cause, but by the Cause itself.

In like manner, what Reason can a benevolent Being give, as exciting him to hazard his Life in just War? This perhaps, “such Conduct tends to the Happiness of his Country.” Ask him, “why he serves his Country?” he will say, “His Country is a very valuable Part of Mankind.” Why does he study the Happiness of Mankind? If his Affections be really disinterested, he can give no exciting Reasons for it: The Happiness of Mankind in general, or of any valuable Part of it, is an ultimate End to that Series of Desires.

Men have many ultimate Ends.

We may transiently observe one Mistake which many fall into, who in their Philosophical Inquiries have learned to form very abstract general Ideas: They suppose, because they have formed some Conception of an infinite Good, or greatest possible Aggregate, or Sum of Happiness, under which all particular Pleasures may be included; that there is also some one great ultimate End, with a view to which every particular Object is desired; whereas, in truth, each particular Pleasure is desired without farther view, as an ultimate End in the selfish Desires. ’Tis true, the Prospect of a greater inconsistent Pleasure may surmount or stop this Desire; so may the Fear of a prepollent Evil. But this does not prove, that “all Men have formed Ideas of infinite Good, or greatest possible Aggregate, or that they have any Instinct or Desire, without an Idea of its Object.” Just so in the benevolent Affections, the Happiness of any one Person is an ultimate End, desired with no farther view: And yet the observing its Inconsistency with the Happiness of another more beloved, or with the Happiness of many, tho each one of them were but equally
beloved, may overcome the former Desire. Yet this will not prove, that in each kind Action Men do form the abstract Conception of all Mankind, or the System of Rationals. [210] The forming such large Conceptions is indeed useful, that so we may gratify either our [223] Self-Love or kind Affections in the fullest manner, as far as our Power extends; and may not content our selves with smaller Degrees either of private or publick Good, while greater are in our power: But when we have formed these Conceptions, we do not serve the Individual only from Love to the Species, no more than we desire Grapes with an Intention of the greatest Aggregate of Happiness, or from an Apprehension that they make a Part of the General sum of our Happiness. These Conceptions only serve to suggest greater Ends than would occur to us without Reflection; and by the Prepollency of one Desire toward the greater Good, either private or publick, to stop the Desire toward the smaller Good, when it appears inconsistent with the greater.

Let us examine the Truths assigned as exciting to the Pursuit of publick Good, even by those, who, tho they allow disinterested Affections, and a moral Sense, yet suppose something reasonable in it antecedently. They assign such as these “publick Good is the End proposed by the Deity.” Then what Reason excites Men to concur with the Deity? Is it this, “Concurring with the Deity will make the Agent happy?” This is an exciting Reason indeed, [222] but plainly supposes Self-Love: [224] And let any one assign the exciting Reason to the Desire of Happiness. Is the Reason exciting to concur with the Deity this, “The Deity is our Benefactor?” Then what Reason excites to concur with Benefactors? Here we must recur to an Instinct. Is it this Truth, “The divine Ends are reasonable Ends?” Then what means the Word [reasonable?] Does it mean, that “the Deity has Reasons exciting him to promote the publick Good?” What are these Reasons? Why, perhaps “we do not know them particularly, but in general are sure that the Deity has Reasons for them.” Then the Question recurs, What Reason excites us to implicit Concurrence with the Ends of the Deity? The Reasons which excite one Nature may not excite another: The Tendency of an Action to the Happiness of one Agent may excite him, but will not excite another Agent.
to concur, unless there appears a like Tendency to the Happiness of that other. They may say, “they are sure the divine Ends are good.” What means Goodness? Is it moral or natural? If the divine Ends be natural Good, i.e., pleasant, or the Cause of Pleasure, to whom is this Pleasure? If to the Deity, then why do we study the Happiness or the pleasing of the Deity? What Reason excites us? All the possible Reasons must either presuppose some Affection, if they are exciting; or some moral Sense, if they are justifying.—Is the divine End naturally good to us? This is an exciting Reason, but supposes Self-Love. If we say the divine Ends are morally Good, we are just where we began. What is moral Goodness? Conformity to Reason. What are the Reasons exciting or justifying?

If any alleged as the Reason exciting us to pursue publick Good, this Truth, that “the Happiness of a System, a Thousand, or a Million, is a greater Quantity of Happiness than that of one Person: and consequently, if Men desire Happiness, they must have stronger Desires toward the greater Sum than toward the less.” This Reason still supposes an Instinct toward Happiness as previous to it: And again, To whom is the Happiness of a System a greater Happiness? To one Individual, or to the System? If to the Individual, then his Reason exciting his Desire of a happy System supposes Self-Love: If to the System, then what Reason can excite to desire the greater Happiness of a System, or any Happiness to be in the Possession of others? None surely which does not presuppose publick Affections. Without such Affections this Truth, “that an hundred Felicities is a greater Sum than one Felicity,” will no more excite to study the Happiness of the Hundred, than this Truth, “an hundred Stones are greater than one,” will excite a Man, who has no desire of Heaps, to cast them together.

The same may be observed concerning that Proposition, assigned by some as the ultimate Reason both exciting to, and justifying the Pursuit of publick Good, viz. “It is best that all should be happy.” Best is most good: Good to whom? To the Whole, or to each Individual? If to the former, when this Truth excites to Action, it must presuppose kind Affections; if it is good to each Individual, it must suppose Self-Love.
Let us once suppose *Affections, Instincts* or *Desires* previously implanted in our Nature: and we shall easily understand the *exciting Reasons* for Actions, *viz.* “These Truths which shew them to be conducive toward some *ultimate End*, or toward the *greatest End* of that kind in our Power.” He acts *reasonably*, who considers the various Actions in his Power, and forms *true Opinions* of their *Tendencies*; and then chuses to do that which will obtain the highest Degree of *that*, to which the *Instincts* of his Nature incline him, with the smallest Degree of those things to [224] which the *Affections* in his Nature make him averse.

[227] More particularly, the *exciting Reasons* to a Nature which had only *selfish Affections*, are those Truths which shewed “what Object or Event would occasion to it the greatest Quantity of *Pleasure*?” these would excite to the Prosecution of it. The *exciting Truths* about *Means*, would be only those which pointed out some Means as more certainly effectual than any other, or with less *Pain* or *Trouble* to the *Agent*. *Publrick Usefulness* of *Ends* or *Means*, or *publick Hurtfulness* would neither excite nor dissuade, farther than the *publick State* might affect *that* of the *Agent*.

If there is any Nature with *publick Affections*: The Truths exciting to any *End* in this Order, are such as shew, “that any Event would promote the Happiness of others.” That *End* is called *most reasonable*, which our Reason discovers to contain a greater Quantity of *publick Good*, than any other in our power.

When any Event may affect both the *Agent* and *others*, if the Agent have both *Self-Love* and *publick Affections*, he acts according to that *Affection* which is *strongest*, when there is any *Opposition* of *Interests*; [228] if there be no Opposition, he follows both. If he discovers this *Truth*, that “his constant [228] pursuit of *publick Good* is the most probable way of promoting his *own Happiness*,” then his Pursuit is truly reasonable and constant; thus both *Affections* are at once gratify’d, and he is consistent with himself. Without knowledge of that *Truth* he does not act *reasonably* for his own Happiness, but follows it by *Means* not tending effectually to this *End*, and must frequently, from the Power of *Self-Love*, neglect or counteract his other *End*, the *publick Good*. If there
be also a moral Sense in such an Agent, while yet he is inadvertent to the Connexion of private Happiness with the Study of the publick; he must be perpetually yet more uneasy, either thro’ the apprehended Neglect of private Interest when he serves the Publick; or when he pursues only private Interest, he will have perpetual Remorse and Dissatisfaction with his own Temper, thro’ his moral Sense. So that the Knowledge of this Connexion of private Interest, with the Study of publick Good, seems absolutely necessary to preserve a constant Satisfaction of Mind, and to prevent an alternate Prevalence of seemingly contrary Desires.

Should any one ask even concerning these two ultimate Ends, private Good [226] and publick, is not the latter more reasonable than the former?—What means the Word reasonable in this Question? If we [229] are allowed to presuppose Instincts and Affections, then the Truth just now supposed to be discoverable concerning our State, is an exciting Reason to serve the publick Interest, since this Conduct is the most effectual Means to obtain both ends. But I doubt if any Truth can be assigned which excites in us either the Desire of private Happiness or publick. For the former none ever alledged any exciting Reason: and a benevolent Temper finds as little Reason exciting him to the latter; which he desires without any view to private Good. If the meaning of the Question be this, “does not every Spectator approve the Pursuit of publick Good more than private?” The Answer is obvious that he does: but not for any Reason or Truth, but from a moral Sense.

This leads to consider Approbation of Actions, whether it be for Conformity to any Truth, or Reasonableness, that Actions are ultimately approved, independently of any moral Sense? Or if all justifying Reasons do not presuppose it?

If Conformity to Truth, or Reasonable, denote nothing else but that “an Action is the Object of a true Proposition,” ’tis [227] plain, that all Actions should be approved [230] equally, since as many Truths may be made about the worst, as can be made about the best. See what was said above about exciting Reasons.

But let the Truths commonly assigned as justifying be examined.
Here 'tis plain, “A Truth shewing an Action to be fit to attain an End,” does not justify it; nor do we approve a subordinate End for any Truth, which only shews it to be fit to promote the ultimate End; for the worst Actions may be conducive to their Ends, and reasonable in that Sense.

The justifying Reasons then must be about the Ends themselves, especially the ultimate Ends. The Question then is, “Does a Conformity to any Truth make us approve an ultimate End, previously to any moral Sense?” For example, we approve pursuing the publick Good. For what Reason? or what is the Truth for Conformity to which we call it a reasonable End? I fancy we can find none in these Cases, more than we could give for our liking any pleasant Fruit.*

The Reasons assigned are such as these; “Tis the End proposed by the Deity.” But why do we approve concurring with [231] the divine Ends? This Reason is given, “He is our Benefactor.” But then, for [228] what Reason do we approve Concurrence with a Benefactor? Here we must recur to a Sense. Is this the Reason moving to Approbation, “Study of publick Good tends to the Advantage of the Approver?” Then the Quality moving us to approve an Action, is its being advantageous to us, and not Conformity to a Truth. This Scheme is intelligible, but not true in fact. Men approve without Perception of private Advantage; and often do not condemn or disapprove what is plainly pernicious; as in the Execution of a just Sentence, which even the Criminal may approve.

If any allege, that this is the justifying Reason of the Pursuit of publick Good, “that it is best all be happy,” then we approve Actions for their Tendency to that State which is best, and not for Conformity to Reason. But here again, what means best? morally best, or naturally best? If the former, they explain the same Word by itself in a Circle: If they mean the latter, that “it is the most happy State where all are happy;” then, most happy, for whom? the System, or the Individual? If for the former, what Reason makes us approve the Happiness of a System? Here we must

*This is what Aristotle so often asserts that the προαιρετόν or βουλετόν is not the End, but the Means.

[[This note was added in the third edition. See Nicomachean Ethics, 1111b27.]]
recur to a Sense or kind Affections. Is [232] it most happy for the Individual? Then the Quality moving Approbation is [229] again Tendency to private Happiness, not Reasonableness.

There are some other Reasons assigned in Words differing from the former, but more confused, such as these: "Tis our Duty to study publick Good. We are obliged to do it. We owe Obedience to the Deity. The whole is to be preferred to a Part.” But let these Words Duty, Obligation, Owing, and the meaning of that Gerund, is to be preferred, be explained; and we shall find our selves still at a Loss for exciting Reasons previously to Affections, or justifying Reasons without recourse to a moral Sense.

When we say one is obliged to an Action, we either mean, 1. That the Action is necessary to obtain Happiness to the Agent, or to avoid Misery: Or, 2. That every Spectator, or he himself upon Reflection, must approve his Action, and disapprove his omitting it, if he considers fully all its Circumstances. The former Meaning of the Word Obligation presupposes selfish Affections, and the Senses of private Happiness: The latter Meaning includes the moral Sense. Mr. Barbeyrac, in his Annotations upon Grotius,* [230/233] makes Obligation denote an indispensable Necessity to act in a certain manner. Whoever observes his Explication of this Necessity, (which is not natural, otherwise no Man could act against his Obligation) will find that it denotes only “such a Constitution of a powerful Superior, as will make it impossible for any Being to obtain Happiness, or avoid Misery, but by such a Course of Action.” This agrees with the former Meaning, tho sometimes he also includes the latter.

Many other confused Definitions have been given of Obligation, by no obscure Names in the learned World. But let any one give a distinct Meaning, different from the two above-mentioned. To pursue them all would be endless; only let the Definitions be substituted in place of the Word Obligation, in other parts of each Writer, and let it be observed whether it makes good Sense or not.†

† The common Definition, Vinculum Juris que necessitate astringimur alicujus rei
Before we quit this Character *Reasonableness*, let us consider the Arguments brought to prove that there must be some Standard of moral Good antecedent to any Sense. Say [234] they, "*Perceptions of Sense* are deceitful, we must have some Perception or Idea of *Virtue* more stable and certain; this must be *Conformity to Reason: Truth* discovered by our *Reason* [231] is certain and invariable: *That then alone is the Original Idea of Virtue, Agreement with Reason.*" But in like manner our *Sight* and *Sense of Beauty* is deceitful, and does not always represent the true *Forms* of Objects. We must not call that *beautiful* or *regular*, which pleases the *Sight*, or an *internal Sense*; but Beauty in external Forms too, consists in *Conformity to Reason*. So our *Taste* may be vitiated: we must not say that *Savour* is perceived by *Taste*, but must place the original Idea of *grateful Savours* in *Conformity to Reason*, and of *ungrateful* in *Contrariety to Reason*. We may mistake the real *Extent* of Bodies, or their *Proportions*, by making a Conclusion upon the first sensible Appearance: Therefore *Ideas of Extension* are not originally acquired by a *Sense*, but consist in *Conformity to Reason*.

If what is intended in this *Conformity to Reason* be this, "That we should call no Action *virtuous*, unless we have some *Reason* to conclude it to be virtuous, or some *Truth* shewing it to be so." This is very true; but then in like manner we should count no Action *vicious*, unless we [235] have some *Reason* for counting it so, or when 'tis *Truth* "that it is vicious." If this be intended by *Conformity to Truth*, then at the same rate we may make *Conformity to Truth* the original Idea of *Vice* [232] as well as *Virtue*; nay, of every Attribute whatsoever. That *Taste* alone is *praestandae*, is wholly metaphorical, and can settle no Debate precisely.

[[This note was added in the third edition. This definition of obligation derives from Justinian, *Institutes*, III.1—“De Obligationibus." Cumberland renders it "That bond of the Law, by which we are tied with the necessity of paying any thing" (Richard Cumberland, *De Legibus Naturae*, V §11). It is commonly cited by the natural lawyers. For a discussion, see Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*, I.vi.4, and Barbeyrac's n. 2. It seems likely that Hutcheson is deriving this from Cumberland's discussion, as Cumberland dismisses Justinian's definition in favor of Papinianus's definition (which rests not on the particular laws of a polity—Rome—but on “the bond of equity” and remarks “it breeds obscurity, that he uses *Metaphorical* words, which are generally of *doubtful* meaning,” Ibid.]]

Arguments for some Standard of Morals prior to a Sense considered.
sweet, which there is Reason to count sweet; that Taste alone is bitter, concerning which 'tis true that it is bitter; that Form alone is beautiful, concerning which 'tis true that it is beautiful; and that alone deformed, which is truly deformed. Thus Virtue, Vice, Sweet, Bitter, Beautiful, or Deformed, originally denote Conformity to Reason, antecedently to Perceptions of any Sense. The Idea of Virtue is particularly that concerning which 'tis Truth, that it is Virtue; or Virtue is Virtue; a wonderful Discovery!

So when some tell us, “that Truth is naturally pleasant, and more so than any sensible Perception; this must therefore engage Men more than any other Motive, if they attend to it.” Let them observe, that as much Truth is known about Vice as Virtue. We may demonstrate the publick Miseries which would ensue upon Perjury, Murder, and Robbery. These Demonstrations would be attended with that Pleasure which is peculiar to Truth; as well as the Demonstrations of the publick Happiness to ensue from Faith, Humanity and Justice. There is equal Truth on both sides.

Whence it is that Virtue is called reasonable and not Vice. [233] We may transiently observe what has occasioned the Use of the Word reasonable, as an Epithet of only virtuous Actions. Tho we have Instincts determining us to desire Ends, without supposing any previous Reasoning; yet 'tis by use of our Reason that we find out the Means of obtaining our Ends. When we do not use our Reason, we often are disappointed of our End. We therefore call those Actions which are effectual to their Ends, reasonable in one Sense of that Word.

Again, in all Men there is probably a moral Sense, making publickly useful Actions and kind Affections grateful to the Agent, and to every Observer: Most Men who have thought of human Actions, agree, that the publickly useful are in the whole also privately useful to the Agent, either in this Life or the next: We conclude, that all Men have the same Affections and Senses: We are convinced by our Reason, that 'tis by publickly useful Actions alone that we can promote all our Ends. Whoever then acts in a contrary manner, we presume is mistaken, ignorant of, or inadvertent to, these Truths which he might know; and say he acts unreasonably. Hence some have [237] been led to imagine, some Reasons
either exciting or [234] justifying previously to all Affections or a moral Sense.

Two Arguments are brought in defense of this Epithet, as antecedent to any Sense, viz. “That we judge even of our Affections and Senses themselves, whether they are morally Good or Evil.”

The second Argument is, that “if all moral Ideas depend upon the Constitution of our Sense, then all Constitutions would have been alike reasonable and good to the Deity, which is absurd.”

As to the first Argument, ’tis plain we judge of our own Affections, or those of others by our moral Sense, by which we approve kind Affections, and disapprove the contrary. But none can apply moral Attributes to the very Faculty of perceiving moral Qualities; or call his moral Sense morally Good or Evil, any more than he calls the Power of Tasting, sweet, or bitter; or of Seeing, strait or crooked, white or black.

Every one judges the Affections of others by his own Sense; so that it seems not impossible that in these Senses Men might differ as they do in Taste. A Sense approving Benevolence would disapprove [235] that Temper, [238] which a Sense approving Malice would delight in. The former would judge of the latter by his own Sense, so would the latter of the former. Each one would at first view think the Sense of the other perverted. But then, is there no difference? Are both Senses equally good? No certainly, any Man who observed them would think the Sense of the former more desirable than of the latter; but this is, because the moral Sense of every Man is constituted in the former manner. But were there any Nature with no moral Sense at all observing these two Persons, would he not think the State of the former preferable to that of the latter? Yes, he might: but not from any Perception of moral Goodness in the one Sense more than in the other. Any rational Nature observing two Men thus constituted, with opposite Senses, might by reasoning see, not moral Goodness in one Sense more than in the contrary, but a Tendency to the Happiness of the Person himself, who had the former Sense in the one Constitution, and a contrary Tendency in the opposite Consti-
Natures have seen something reasonable in one Constitution more than in another? They might no doubt have reasoned about the various 
Constitutions, and foreseen that the present one would tend to the Happiness of Mankind, and would evidence Benevolence in the Deity: So also they might have reasoned about the contrary Constitution, that it would make Men miserable, and evidence Malice in the Deity. They would have reasoned about both, and found out Truths: are both Constitutions alike reasonable to these Observers? No, say they, “the benevolent one is reasonable, and [247] the malicious unreasonable.” And yet these Observers reasoned and discovered Truths about both: An Action then is called by us reasonable when ’tis benevolent, and unreasonable when malicious. This is plainly making the Word reasonable denote whatever is approved by our moral Sense, without Relation to true Propositions. We often use that Word in such a confused Manner: But these antecedent Natures, supposed without a moral Sense, would not have approved one Constitution of the Deity as morally better than another.

Had it been left to the Choice of these antecedent Minds, what manner of Sense [242] they would have desired for Mankind; would they have seen no difference? Yes they would, according to their Affections which are presupposed in all Election. If they were benevolent, as we suppose the Deity, the Tendency of the present Sense to the Happiness of Men would have excited their Choice. Had they been malicious, as we suppose the Devil, the contrary Tendency of the contrary Sense would have excited their Election of it. But is there nothing preferable, or eligible antecedently to all Affections too? No certainly, unless there can be Desire without Affections, or superior Desire, i.e. Election antecedently to all Desire.

[248] Some do farther perplex this Subject, by asserting, that “the same Reasons determining Approbation, ought also to excite to Election.” Here, 1. We often see justifying Reasons where we can have no Election; viz. when we observe the Actions of others, which were even prior to our Existence. 2. The Quality moving us to Election very often cannot excite Approbation; viz. private usefulness, not publickly pernicious. This both does and ought to move Election, and yet I believe few will say, “they approve as virtuous the eating a Bunch of Grapes, taking a Glass of Wine,
or sitting down when [243] one is tired." Approbation is not what we can voluntarily bring upon our selves. When we are contemplating Actions, we do not choose to approve, because Approbation is pleasant; otherwise we would always approve, and never condemn any Action; because this is some way uneasy. Approbation is plainly a Perception arising without previous Volition, or Choice of it, because of any concomitant Pleasure. The Occasion of it is the Perception of benevolent Affections in our selves, or the discovering the like in others, even when we are incapable of any Action or Election. The Reasons determining Approbation are such as shew that an Action evidenced kind Affections, and that in others, as often as in our [249] selves. Whereas, the Reasons moving to Election are such as shew the Tendency of an Action to gratify some Affection in the Agent.

The Prospect of the Pleasure of Self-Approbation, is indeed often a Motive to choose one Action rather than another; but this supposes the moral Sense, or Determination to approve, prior to the Election. Were Approbation voluntarily chosen, from the Prospect of its concomitant Pleasure, then there could [244] be no Condemnation of our own Actions, for that is unpleasant.

As to that confused Word [ought] 'tis needless to apply to it again all that was said about Obligation.

**Section II**

*Concerning that Character of Virtue and Vice,*

*The Fitness or Unfitness of Actions.*

[245/250] We come next to examine some other Explications of Morality, which have been much insisted on of late.* We are told, "that there are eternal and immutable Differences of Things, absolutely and antecedently: that there are also eternal and unalterable Relations in the Natures of the Things themselves, from which arise Agreements and Dis-

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* See Dr. Samuel Clarke's Boyle's Lectures; and many late Authors.
[[This is a synoptic description of Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse Concerning the* ]]