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A Treatise Of Human Nature

Being An Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning Into
Moral Subjects

Of The Passions

Hume, David

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Sect. IX. Of the direct passions.

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PART
III.

Of the
evil and
direct pas-
sions.

S E C T. IX.

Of the direct passions.

S E C T. IX. **T**IS easy to observe, that the passions, both direct and indirect, are founded on pain and pleasure, and that in order to produce an affection of any kind, 'tis only requisite to present some good or evil. Upon the removal of pain and pleasure there immediately follows a removal of love and hatred, pride and humility, desire and aversion, and of most of our reflective or secondary impressions.

THE impressions, which arise from good and evil most naturally, and with the least preparation are the *direct* passions of desire and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear, along with volition. The mind by an *original* instinct tends to unite itself with the good, and to avoid the evil, tho' they be conceiv'd merely in idea, and be consider'd as to exist in any future period of time.

BUT supposing that there is an immediate impression of pain or pleasure, and *that* arising from an object related to ourselves or others,
this

this does not prevent the propensity or aver-
 sion, with the consequent emotions, but by
 concurring with certain dormant principles
 of the human mind, excites the new im-
 pressions of pride or humility, love or ha-
 tred. That propensity, which unites us to
 the object, or separates us from it, still con-
 tinues to operate, but in conjunction with
 the *indirect* passions, which arise from a
 double relation of impressions and ideas.

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THESE indirect passions, being always
 agreeable or uneasy, give in their turn ad-
 ditional force to the direct passions, and en-
 crease our desire and aversion to the object.
 Thus a suit of fine cloaths produces plea-
 sure from their beauty; and this pleasure
 produces the direct passions, or the impres-
 sions of volition and desire. Again, when
 these cloaths are consider'd as belonging to
 ourself, the double relation conveys to us
 the sentiment of pride, which is an indirect
 passion; and the pleasure, which attends
 that passion, returns back to the direct af-
 fections, and gives new force to our desire
 or volition, joy or hope.

WHEN good is certain or probable, it
 produces JOY. When evil is in the same
 situation there arises GRIEF OR SORROW.

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WHEN



PART III. WHEN either good or evil is uncertain, it gives rise to FEAR or HOPE, according to the degrees of uncertainty on the one side or the other.

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DESIRE arises from good consider'd simply, and AVERSION is deriv'd from evil. The WILL exerts itself, when either the good or the absence of the evil may be attain'd by any action of the mind or body.

BESIDE good and evil, or in other words, pain and pleasure, the direct passions frequently arise from a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly unaccountable. Of this kind is the desire of punishment to our enemies, and of happiness to our friends; hunger, lust, and a few other bodily appetites. These passions, properly speaking, produce good and evil, and proceed not from them, like the other affections.

NONE of the direct affections seem to merit our particular attention, except hope and fear, which we shall here endeavour to account for. 'Tis evident that the very same event, which by its certainty would produce grief or joy, gives always rise to fear or hope, when only probable and uncertain. In order, therefore, to understand the



the reason why this circumstance makes such a considerable difference, we must reflect on what I have already advanc'd in the preceding book concerning the nature of probability.

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PROBABILITY arises from an opposition of contrary chances or causes, by which the mind is not allow'd to fix on either side, but is incessantly tost from one to another, and at one moment is determin'd to consider an object as existent, and at another moment as the contrary. The imagination or understanding, call it which you please, fluctuates betwixt the opposite views; and tho' perhaps it may be oftner turn'd to the one side than the other, 'tis impossible for it, by reason of the opposition of causes or chances, to rest on either. The *pro* and *con* of the question alternately prevail; and the mind, surveying the object in its opposite principles, finds such a contrariety as utterly destroys all certainty and establish'd opinion.

SUPPOSE, then, that the object, concerning whose reality we are doubtful, is an object either of desire or aversion, 'tis evident, that, according as the mind turns itself either to the one side or the other, it

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must



PART must feel a momentary impressi^on of joy or
 III. sorrow. An object, whose existence we de-
 fire, gives satisfaction, when we reflect on
 those causes, which produce it; and for the
 same reason excites grief or uneasiness from
 the opposite consideration: So that as the
 understanding, in all probable questions, is di-
 vided betwixt the contrary points of view,
 the affections must in the same manner be
 divided betwixt opposite emotions.

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Now if we consider the human mind,
 we shall find, that with regard to the pas-
 sions, 'tis not of the nature of a wind-
 instrument of music, which in running o-
 ver all the notes immediately loses the sound
 after the breath ceases; but rather resembles
 a string-instrument, where after each stroke
 the vibrations still retain some sound, which
 gradually and insensibly decays. The ima-
 gination is extreme quick and agile; but the
 passions are slow and restive: For which
 reason, when any object is presented, that
 affords a variety of views to the one, and
 emotions to the other; tho' the fancy may
 change its views with great celerity; each
 stroke will not produce a clear and distinct
 note of passion, but the one passion will
 always be mixt and confounded with the
 other.

other. According as the probability inclines SECT.
 to good or evil, the passion of joy or sorrow IX.
 predominates in the composition: Because Of the
 the nature of probability is to cast a supe- direct pas-
 rior number of views or chances on one sions.
 side; or, which is the same thing, a superior
 number of returns of one passion; or since
 the dispers'd passions are collected into one,
 a superior degree of that passion. That is,
 in other words, the grief and joy being in-
 termingled with each other, by means of
 the contrary views of the imagination, pro-
 duce by their union the passions of hope
 and fear.

UPON this head there may be started a
 very curious question concerning that con-
 trariety of passions, which is our present
 subject. 'Tis observable, that where the ob-
 jects of contrary passions are presented at
 once, beside the encrease of the predomi-
 nant passion (which has been already ex-
 plain'd, and commonly arises at their first
 shock or rencounter) it sometimes happens,
 that both the passions exist successively,
 and by short intervals; sometimes, that they
 destroy each other, and neither of them
 takes place; and sometimes that both of
 them remain united in the mind. It may,

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therefore,



PART therefore, be ask'd, by what theory we can
 III. explain these variations, and to what general
 principle we can reduce them.

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WHEN the contrary passions arise from objects entirely different, they take place alternately, the want of relation in the ideas separating the impressions from each other, and preventing their opposition. Thus when a man is afflicted for the loss of a law-suit, and joyful for the birth of a son, the mind running from the agreeable to the calamitous object, with whatever celerity it may perform this motion, can scarcely temper the one affection with the other, and remain betwixt them in a state of indifference.

IT more easily attains that calm situation, when the same event is of a mixt nature, and contains something adverse and something prosperous in its different circumstances. For in that case, both the passions, mingling with each other by means of the relation, become mutually destructive, and leave the mind in perfect tranquility.

BUT suppose, in the third place, that the object is not a compound of good or evil, but is consider'd as probable or improbable in any degree; in that case I assert,
 that

that the contrary passions will both of them SECT.
be present at once in the soul, and instead IX.
of destroying and tempering each other, Of the
will subsist together, and produce a third direct pas-
impression or affection by their union. sions.

Contrary passions are not capable of destroying each other, except when their contrary movements exactly rencounter, and are opposite in their direction, as well as in the sensation they produce. This exact rencounter depends upon the relations of those ideas, from which they are deriv'd, and is more or less perfect, according to the degrees of the relation. In the case of probability the contrary chances are so far related, that they determine concerning the existence or non-existence of the same object. But this relation is far from being perfect; since some of the chances lie on the side of existence, and others on that of non-existence; which are objects altogether incompatible. 'Tis impossible by one steady view to survey the opposite chances, and the events dependent on them; but 'tis necessary, that the imagination shou'd run alternately from the one to the other. Each view of the imagination produces its peculiar passion, which decays away by degrees, and is follow'd



PART follow'd by a sensible vibration after the
 III. stroke. The incompatibility of the views
 keeps the passions from shocking in a di-
 rect line, if that expression may be allow'd ;
 and yet their relation is sufficient to mingle
 their fainter emotions. 'Tis after this man-
 ner that hope and fear arise from the diffe-
 rent mixture of these opposite passions of
 grief and joy, and from their imperfect u-
 nion and conjunction.

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UPON the whole, contrary passions suc-
 ceed each other alternately, when they a-
 rise from different objects: They mutually
 destroy each other, when they proceed from
 different parts of the same: And they sub-
 sist both of them, and mingle together, when
 they are deriv'd from the contrary and in-
 compatible chances or possibilities, on which
 any one object depends. The influence of
 the relations of ideas is plainly seen in this
 whole affair. If the objects of the contrary
 passions be totally different, the passions are
 like two opposite liquors in different bottles,
 which have no influence on each other. If
 the objects be intimately connected, the pas-
 sions are like an *alkali* and an *acid*, which,
 being mingled, destroy each other. If the
 relation be more imperfect, and consists in
 the

the contradictory views of the same object, SECT.
the passions are like oil and vinegar, which, IX.
however mingled, never perfectly unite and
incorporate.

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As the hypothesis concerning hope and fear carries its own evidence along with it, we shall be the more concise in our proofs. A few strong arguments are better than many weak ones.

THE passions of fear and hope may arise when the chances are equal on both sides, and no superiority can be discover'd in the one above the other. Nay, in this situation the passions are rather the strongest, as the mind has then the least foundation to rest upon, and is toss'd with the greatest uncertainty. Throw in a superior degree of probability to the side of grief, you immediately see that passion diffuse itself over the composition, and tincture it into fear. Encrease the probability, and by that means the grief, the fear prevails still more and more, till at last it runs insensibly, as the joy continually diminishes, into pure grief. After you have brought it to this situation, diminish the grief, after the same manner that you encreas'd it; by diminishing the probability on that side, and you'll



PART you'll see the passion clear every moment,

III. 'till it changes insensibly into hope; which
 again runs, after the same manner, by slow
 degrees, into joy, as you encrease that part
 of the composition by the encrease of the
 probability. Are not these as plain proofs,
 that the passions of fear and hope are mix-
 tures of grief and joy, as in optics 'tis a
 proof, that a colour'd ray of the sun pas-
 sing thro' a prism, is a composition of two
 others, when, as you diminish or encrease
 the quantity of either, you find it prevail
 proportionably more or less in the composi-
 tion? I am sure neither natural nor moral
 philosophy admits of stronger proofs.

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PROBABILITY is of two kinds, either
 when the object is really in itself uncertain,
 and to be determin'd by chance; or when,
 tho' the object be already certain, yet 'tis
 uncertain to our judgment, which finds a
 number of proofs on each side of the ques-
 tion. Both these kinds of probabilities cause
 fear and hope; which can only proceed
 from that property, in which they agree,
viz. the uncertainty and fluctuation they
 bestow on the imagination by that contra-
 riety of views, which is common to both.

'TIS

'TIS a probable good or evil, that commonly produces hope or fear; because probability, being a wavering and unconstant method of surveying an object, causes naturally a like mixture and uncertainty of passion. But we may observe, that wherever from other causes this mixture can be produc'd, the passions of fear and hope will arise, even tho' there be no probability; which must be allow'd to be a convincing proof of the present hypothesis.

WE find that an evil, barely conceiv'd as *possible*, does sometimes produce fear; especially if the evil be very great. A man cannot think of excessive pains and tortures without trembling, if he be in the least danger of suffering them. The smallness of the probability is compensated by the greatness of the evil; and the sensation is equally lively, as if the evil were more probable. One view or glimpse of the former, has the same effect as several of the latter.

BUT they are not only possible evils, that cause fear, but even some allow'd to be *impossible*; as when we tremble on the brink of a precipice, tho' we know ourselves to be in perfect security, and have it in our choice whether we will advance a step farther.

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PART ther. This proceeds from the immediate
 III. presence of the evil, which influences the
 imagination in the same manner as the cer-
 tainty of it wou'd do; but being encoun-
 ter'd by the reflection on our security, is
 immediately retracted, and causes the same
 kind of passion, as when from a contrariety
 of chances contrary passions are produc'd.

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EVILS, that are *certain*, have sometimes
 the same effect in producing fear, as the pos-
 sible or impossible. Thus a man in a strong
 prison well-guarded, without the least means
 of escape, trembles at the thought of the
 rack, to which he is sentenc'd. This hap-
 pens only when the certain evil is terrible
 and confounding; in which case the mind
 continually rejects it with horror, while it
 continually presses in upon the thought.
 The evil is there fix'd and establish'd, but
 the mind cannot endure to fix upon it; from
 which fluctuation and uncertainty there ar-
 rises a passion of much the same appearance
 with fear.

BUT 'tis not only where good or evil is
 uncertain, as to its *existence*, but also as to its
kind, that fear or hope arises. Let one be
 told by a person, whose veracity he cannot
 doubt of, that one of his sons is suddenly
 kill'd,

kill'd, 'tis evident the passion this event
 wou'd occasion, wou'd not settle into pure
 grief, till he got certain information, which
 of his sons he had lost. Here there is an
 evil certain, but the kind of it uncertain:
 Consequently the fear we feel on this occa-
 sion is without the least mixture of joy,
 and arises merely from the fluctuation of
 the fancy betwixt its objects. And tho' each
 side of the question produces here the same
 passion, yet that passion cannot settle, but
 receives from the imagination a tremulous
 and unsteady motion, resembling in its
 cause, as well as in its sensation, the mix-
 ture and contention of grief and joy.

FROM these principles we may account
 for a phænomenon in the passions, which
 at first sight seems very extraordinary, *viz.*
 that surprize is apt to change into fear, and
 every thing that is unexpected affrights us.
 The most obvious conclusion from this is,
 that human nature is in general pusilani-
 mous; since upon the sudden appearance of
 any object we immediately conclude it to
 be an evil, and without waiting till we can
 examine its nature, whether it be good or
 bad, are at first affected with fear. This I
 say is the most obvious conclusion; but up-

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PART on farther examination we shall find that
 III. the phænomenon is otherwise to be ac-
 counted for. The suddenness and strange-
 ness of an appearance naturally excite a
 commotion in the mind, like every thing
 for which we are not prepar'd, and to which
 we are not accusom'd. This commotion,
 again, naturally produces a curiosity or in-
 quisitiveness, which being very violent, from
 the strong and sudden impulse of the ob-
 ject, becomes uneasy, and resembles in its
 fluctuation and uncertainty, the sensation of
 fear or the mix'd passions of grief and joy.
 This image of fear naturally converts into
 the thing itself, and gives us a real apprehension of evil, as the mind always forms its judgments more from its present disposition than from the nature of its objects.

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THUS all kinds of uncertainty have a strong connexion with fear, even tho' they do not cause any opposition of passions by the opposite views and considerations they present to us. A person, who has left his friend in any malady, will feel more anxiety upon his account, than if he were present, tho' perhaps he is not only incapable of giving him assistance, but likewise of judging of the event of his sickness. In
 this



this case, tho' the principal object of the SECT passion, *viz.* the life or death of his friend, IX. be to him equally uncertain when present as when absent; yet there are a thousand little circumstances of his friend's situation and condition, the knowledge of which fixes the idea, and prevents that fluctuation and uncertainty so near ally'd to fear. Uncertainty is, indeed, in one respect as near ally'd to hope as to fear, since it makes an essential part in the composition of the former passion; but the reason, why it inclines not to that side, is, that uncertainty alone is uneasy, and has a relation of impressions to the uneasy passions.

'TIS thus our uncertainty concerning any minute circumstance relating to a person encreases our apprehensions of his death or misfortune. *Horace* has remark'd this phenomenon.

*Ut assidens implumibus pullus avis
Serpentium allapsus timet,
Magis relictis; non, ut adsit, auxili
Latura plus presentibus.*

BUT this principle of the connexion of fear with uncertainty I carry farther, and

PART observe that any doubt produces that passion, even tho' it presents nothing to us on any side but what is good and desirable. A

III. *Of the will and direct passions.* A virgin, on her bridal-night goes to bed full of fears and apprehensions, tho' she expects nothing but pleasure of the highest kind, and what she has long wish'd for. The newness and greatness of the event, the confusion of wishes and joys, so embarrass the mind, that it knows not on what passion to fix itself; from whence arises a fluttering or unsettledness of the spirits, which being, in some degree, uneasy, very naturally degenerates into fear.

THUS we still find, that whatever causes any fluctuation or mixture of passions, with any degree of uneasiness, always produces fear, or at least a passion so like it, that they are scarcely to be distinguish'd.

I HAVE here confin'd myself to the examination of hope and fear in their most simple and natural situation, without considering all the variations they may receive from the mixture of different views and reflections. *Terror, consternation, astonishment, anxiety,* and other passions of that kind, are nothing but different species and degrees

degrees of fear. 'Tis easy to imagine how a different situation of the object, or a different turn of thought, may change even the sensation of a passion; and this may in general account for all the particular subdivisions of the other affections, as well as of fear. Love may shew itself in the shape of *tenderness, friendship, intimacy, esteem, good-will*, and in many other appearances; which at the bottom are the same affections, and arise from the same causes, tho' with a small variation, which it is not necessary to give any particular account of. 'Tis for this reason I have all along confin'd myself to the principal passion.

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THE same care of avoiding prolixity is the reason why I wave the examination of the will and direct passions, as they appear in animals; since nothing is more evident, than that they are of the same nature, and excited by the same causes as in human creatures. I leave this to the reader's own observation; desiring him at the same time to consider the additional force this bestows on the present system.