A Treatise Of Human Nature

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

Of Morals - With An Appendix ; Wherein some Passages of the foregoing Volumes are illustrated and explain'd

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appearance of the objects; ſometimes from ſympathy, and an idea of their utility. In like manner, whenever we ſurvey the actions and characters of men, without any particular intereſt in them, the pleaſure, or pain, which ariſes from the ſurvey (with ſome minute differences) is, in the main, of the ſame kind, tho' perhaps there be a great diverſity in the cauſes, from which it is deriv'd. On the other hand, a convenient houſe, and a virtuous character, cauſe not the ſame feeling of approbation; even tho' the ſource of our approbation be the ſame, and flow from ſympathy and an idea of their utility. There is ſomething very inexplicable in this variation of our feelings; but 'tis what we have experience of with regard to all our paſſions and ſentiments.

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Some farther conſiderations concerning the natural virtues.

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THUS upon the whole I am hopeful, that nothing is wanting to an accurate proof of this ſyſtem of ethics. We are certain, that ſympathy is a very powerful principle in human nature. We are alſo

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certain, that it has a great influence on our ſenſe of beauty, when we regard external objects, as well as when we judge of morals. We find, that it has force ſufficient to give us the ſtrongeſt ſentiments of approbation, when it operates alone, without the concurrence of any other principle; as in the caſes of juſtice, allegiance, chaſtity, and good-manners. We may obſerve, that all the circumſtances requiſite for its operation are found in moſt of the virtues; which have, for the moſt part, a tendency to the good of ſociety, or to that of the perſon poſſeſs'd of them. If we compare all theſe circumſtances, we ſhall not doubt, that ſympathy is the chief ſource of moral diſtinctions; eſpecially when we reflect, that no objection can be rais'd againſt this hypotheſis in one caſe, which will not extend to all caſes. Juſtice is certainly approv'd of for no other reaſon, than becauſe it has a tendency to the public good: And the public good is indifferent to us, except ſo far as ſympathy intereſts us in it. We may preſume the like with regard to all the other virtues, which have a like tendency to the public good. They muſt derive all their merit from our ſympathy with thoſe, who reap any advantage from them: As the virtues, which have a

tendency to the good of the perſon poſſeſs'd of them, derive their merit from our ſympathy with him. SECT. VI.

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MOST people will readily allow, that the uſeful qualities of the mind are virtuous, becauſe of their utility. This way of thinking is ſo natural, and occurs on ſo many occaſions, that few will make any ſcruple of admitting it. Now this being once admitted, the force of ſympathy muſt neceſſarily be acknowledg'd. Virtue is conſider'd as means to an end. Means to an end are only valued ſo far as the end is valued. But the happineſs of ſtrangers affects us by ſympathy alone. To that principle, therefore, we are to aſcribe the ſentiment of approbation, which ariſes from the ſurvey of all thoſe virtues, that are uſeful to ſociety, or to the perſon poſſeſs'd of them. Theſe form the moſt conſiderable part of morality.

WERE it proper in ſuch a ſubject to bribe the readers aſſent, or employ any thing but ſolid argument, we are here abundantly ſupplied with topics to engage the affections. All lovers of virtue (and ſuch we all are in ſpeculation, however we may degenerate in practice) muſt certainly be pleas'd to ſee

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moral distinctions deriv'd from so noble a source, which gives us a just notion both of the *generosity* and *capacity* of human nature. It requires but very little knowledge of human affairs to perceive, that a sense of morals is a principle inherent in the soul, and one of the most powerful that enters into the composition. But this sense must certainly acquire new force, when reflecting on itself, it approves of those principles, from whence it is deriv'd, and finds nothing but what is great and good in its rise and origin. Those who resolve the sense of morals into original instincts of the human mind, may defend the cause of virtue with sufficient authority; but want the advantage, which those possess, who account for that sense by an extensive sympathy with mankind. According to their system, not only virtue must be approv'd of, but also the sense of virtue: And not only that sense, but also the principles, from whence it is deriv'd. So that nothing is presented on any side, but what is laudable and good.

THIS observation may be extended to justice, and the other virtues of that kind. Tho' justice be artificial, the sense of its morality is natural. 'Tis the combination of men, in a system of conduct, which renders any

any act of justice beneficial to society. But when once it has that tendency, we *naturally* approve of it; and if we did not so, 'tis impossible any combination or convention cou'd ever produce that sentiment.

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MOST of the inventions of men are subject to change. They depend upon humour and caprice. They have a vogue for a time, and then sink into oblivion. It may, perhaps, be apprehended, that if justice were allow'd to be a human invention, it must be plac'd on the same footing. But the cases are widely different. The interest, on which justice is founded, is the greatest imaginable, and extends to all times and places. It cannot possibly be serv'd by any other invention. It is obvious, and discovers itself on the very first formation of society. All these causes render the rules of justice stedfast and immutable; at least, as immutable as human nature. And if they were founded on original instincts, cou'd they have any greater stability?

THE same system may help us to form a just notion of the *happiness*, as well as of the *dignity* of virtue, and may interest every principle of our nature in the embracing and cherishing that noble quality. Who indeed does not feel an accession of alacrity in

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his pursuits of knowledge and ability of every kind, when he considers, that besides the advantage, which immediately result from these acquisitions, they also give him a new lustre in the eyes of mankind, and are universally attended with esteem and approbation? And who can think any advantages of fortune a sufficient compensation for the least breach of the *social* virtues, when he considers, that not only his character with regard to others, but also his peace and inward satisfaction entirely depend upon his strict observance of them; and that a mind will never be able to bear its own survey, that has been wanting in its part to mankind and society? But I forbear insisting on this subject. Such reflections require a work a-part, very different from the genius of the present. The anatomist ought never to emulate the painter; nor in his accurate dissections and portraitures of the smaller parts of the human body, pretend to give his figures any graceful and engaging attitude or expression. There is even something hideous, or at least minute in the views of things, which he presents; and 'tis necessary the objects shou'd be set more at a distance, and be more cover'd up from sight, to make them engaging to the eye and imagination. An anatomist,

anatomiſt, however, is admirably fitted to give advice to a painter; and 'tis even impracticable to excel in the latter art, without the aſſiſtance of the former. We muſt have an exact knowledge of the parts, their ſituation and connexion, before we can deſign with any elegance or correctneſs. And thus the moſt abſtract ſpeculations concerning human nature, however cold and unentertaining, become ſubſervient to *practical morality*; and may render this latter ſcience more correct in its precepts, and more perſuaſive in its exhortations.

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APPEN-