OF ESSAY WRITING

The elegant part of mankind, who are not immersed in the animal life, but employ themselves in the operations of the mind, may be divided into the <learned> and <conversible>. The learned are such as have chosen for their portion the higher and more difficult operations of the mind, which require leisure and solitude, and cannot be brought to perfection, without long preparation and severe labour. The conversible world join to a sociable disposition, and a taste of pleasure, an inclination to the easier and more gentle exercises of the understanding, to obvious reflections on human affairs, and the duties of common
life, and to the observation of the blemishes or perfections of
the particular objects, that surround them. Such subjects of
thought furnish not sufficient employment in solitude, but
require the company and conversation of our fellow-creatures, to
render them a proper exercise for the mind: and this brings
mankind together in society, where every one displays his
thoughts and observations in the best manner he is able, and
mutually gives and receives information, as well as pleasure.

The separation of the learned from the conversible world
seems to have been the great defect of the last age, and must
have had a very bad influence both on books and company: for what
possibility is there of finding topics of conversation fit for
the entertainment of rational creatures, without having recourse
sometimes to history, poetry, politics, and the more obvious
principles, at least, of philosophy? Must our whole discourse be
a continued series of gossipping stories and idle remarks? Must
the mind never rise higher, but be perpetually

Stun'd and worn out with endless chat

Of Will did this, and Nan said that?[2]
This would be to render the time spent in company the most unentertaining, as well as the most unprofitable part of our lives.

On the other hand, learning has been as great a loser by being shut up in colleges and cells, and secluded from the world and good company. By that means, every thing of what we call <Belles Lettres> became totally barbarous, being cultivated by men without any taste of life or manners, and without that liberty and facility of thought and expression, which can only be acquired by conversation. Even philosophy went to wrack by this moaping recluse method of study, and became as chimerical in her conclusions as she was unintelligible in her stile and manner of delivery. And indeed, what could be expected from men who never consulted experience in any of their reasonings, or who never searched for that experience, where alone it is to be found, in common life and conversation?

'Tis with great pleasure I observe, that men of letters, in this age, have lost, in a great measure, that shyness and bashfulness of temper, which kept them at a distance from mankind; and, at the same time, that men of the world are proud of borrowing from books their most agreeable topics of
conversation. 'Tis to be hoped, that this league betwixt the learned and conversible worlds, which is so happily begun, will be still farther improved, to their mutual advantage; and to that end, I know nothing more advantageous than such <Essays> as these with which I endeavour to entertain the public. In this view, I cannot but consider myself as a kind of resident or ambassador from the dominions of learning to those of conversation; and shall think it my constant duty to promote a good correspondence betwixt these two states, which have so great a dependence on each other. I shall give intelligence to the learned of whatever passes in company, and shall endeavour to import into company whatever commodities I find in my native country proper for their use and entertainment. The balance of trade we need not be jealous of, nor will there be any difficulty to preserve it on both sides. The materials of this commerce must chiefly be furnished by conversation and common life: the manufacturing of them alone belongs to learning.

As 'twould be an unpardonable negligence in an ambassador not to pay his respects to the sovereign of the state where he is commissioned to reside; so it would be altogether inexcusable in me not to address myself, with a particular respect, to the fair
sex, who are the sovereigns of the empire of conversation. I approach them with reverence; and were not my countrymen, the learned, a stubborn independent race of mortals, extremely jealous of their liberty, and unaccustomed to subjection, I should resign into their fair hands the sovereign authority over the republic of letters. As the case stands, my commission extends no farther, than to desire a league, offensive and defensive, against our common enemies, against the enemies of reason and beauty, people of dull heads and cold hearts. From this moment let us pursue them with the severest vengeance: let no quarter be given, but to those of sound understandings and delicate affections; and these characters, 'tis to be presumed, we shall always find inseparable.

To be serious, and to quit the allusion before it be worn thread-bare, I am of opinion, that women, that is, women of sense and education (for to such alone I address myself) are much better judges of all polite writing than men of the same degree of understanding; and that 'tis a vain pannic, if they be so far terrified with the common ridicule that is levelled against learned ladies, as utterly to abandon every kind of books and study to our sex. Let the dread of that ridicule have no other
effect, than to make them conceal their knowledge before fools, who are not worthy of it, nor of them. Such will still presume upon the vain title of the male sex to affect a superiority above them: but my fair readers may be assured, that all men of sense, who know the world, have a great deference for their judgment of such books as lie within the compass of their knowledge, and repose more confidence in the delicacy of their taste, though unguided by rules, than in all the dull labours of pedants and commentators. In a neighbouring nation, equally famous for good taste, and for gallantry, the ladies are, in a manner, the sovereigns of the <learned> world, as well as of the <conversible>; and no polite writer pretends to venture upon the public, without the approbation of some celebrated judges of that sex. Their verdict is, indeed, sometimes complained of; and, in particular, I find, that the admirers of Corneille, to save that great poet’s honour upon the ascendant that Racine began to take over him, always said, that it was not to be expected, that so old a man could dispute the prize, before such judges, with so young a man as his rival. But this observation has been found unjust, since posterity seems to have ratified the verdict of that tribunal: and Racine, though dead, is still the favourite of
the fair sex, as well as of the best judges among the men.

There is only one subject, on which I am apt to distrust the judgment of females, and that is, concerning books of gallantry and devotion, which they commonly affect as high flown as possible; and most of them seem more delighted with the warmth, than with the justness of the passion. I mention gallantry and devotion as the same subject, because, in reality, they become the same when treated in this manner; and we may observe, that they both depend upon the very same complexion. As the fair sex have a great share of the tender and amorous disposition, it perverts their judgment on this occasion, and makes them be easily affected, even by what has no propriety in the expression nor nature in the sentiment. Mr. Addison’s elegant discourses of religion have no relish with them, in comparison of books of mystic devotion: and Otway’s tragedies are rejected for the rants of Mr. Dryden.

Would the ladies correct their false taste in this particular; let them accustom themselves a little more to books of all kinds: let them give encouragement to men of sense and knowledge to frequent their company: and finally, let them concur heartily in that union I have projected betwixt the learned and
conversible worlds. They may, perhaps, meet with more complaisance from their usual followers than from men of learning; but they cannot reasonably expect so sincere an affection: and, I hope, they will never be guilty of so wrong a choice, as to sacrifice the substance to the shadow.

OF SUPERSTITION AND ENTHUSIASM

<That the corruption of the best things produces the worst>, is grown into a maxim, and is commonly proved, among other instances, by the pernicious effects of <superstition> and
<enthusiasm>, the corruptions of true religion.

These two species of false religion, though both pernicious, are yet of a very different, and even of a contrary nature. The mind of man is subject to certain unaccountable terrors and apprehensions, proceeding either from the unhappy situation of private or public affairs, from ill health, from a gloomy and melancholy disposition, or from the concurrence of all these circumstances. In such a state of mind, infinite unknown evils are dreaded from unknown agents; and where real objects of terror are wanting, the soul, active to its own prejudice, and fostering its predominant inclination, finds imaginary ones, to whose power and malevolence it sets no limits. As these enemies are entirely invisible and unknown, the methods taken to appease them are equally unaccountable, and consist in ceremonies, observances, mortifications, sacrifices, presents, or in any practice, however absurd or frivolous, which either folly or knavery recommends to a blind and terrified credulity. Weakness, fear, melancholy, together with ignorance, are, therefore, the true sources of Superstition.

But the mind of man is also subject to an unaccountable elevation and presumption, arising from prosperous success, from
luxuriant health, from strong spirits, or from a bold and
confident disposition. In such a state of mind, the imagination
swells with great, but confused conceptions, to which no
sublunary beauties or enjoyments can correspond. Every thing
mortal and perishable vanishes as unworthy of attention. And a
full range is given to the fancy in the invisible regions or
world of spirits, where the soul is at liberty to indulge itself
in every imagination, which may best suit its present taste and
disposition. Hence arise raptures, transports, and surprising
flights of fancy; and confidence and presumption still
increasing, these raptures, being altogether unaccountable, and
seeming quite beyond the reach of our ordinary faculties, are
attributed to the immediate inspiration of that Divine Being, who
is the object of devotion. In a little time, the inspired person
comes to regard himself as a distinguished favourite of the
Divinity; and when this frenzy once takes place, which is the
summit of enthusiasm, every whimsey is consecrated: Human reason,
and even morality are rejected as fallacious guides: And the
fanatic madman delivers himself over, blindly, and with out
reserve, to the supposed illapses of the spirit, and to
inspiration from above. Hope, pride, presumption, a warm
imagination, together with ignorance, are, therefore, the true sources of Enthusiasm.

These two species of false religion might afford occasion to many speculations; but I shall confine myself, at present, to a few reflections concerning their different influence on government and society.

My first reflection is, <That superstition is favourable to priestly power, and enthusiasm not less or rather more contrary to it, than sound reason and philosophy>. As superstition is founded on fear, sorrow, and a depression of spirits, it represents the man to himself in such despicable colours, that he appears unworthy, in his own eyes, of approaching the divine presence, and naturally has recourse to any other person, whose sanctity of life, or, perhaps, impudence and cunning, have made him be supposed more favoured by the Divinity. To him the superstitious entrust their devotions: To his care they recommend their prayers, petitions, and sacrifices: And by his means, they hope to render their addresses acceptable to their incensed Deity. Hence the origin of Priests,[2] who may justly be regarded as an invention of a timorous and abject superstition, which, ever diffident of itself, dares not offer up its own devotions,
but ignorantly thinks to recommend itself to the Divinity, by the mediation of his supposed friends and servants. As superstition is a considerable ingredient in almost all religions, even the most fanatical; there being nothing but philosophy able entirely to conquer these unaccountable terrors; hence it proceeds, that in almost every sect of religion there are priests to be found:
But the stronger mixture there is of superstition, the higher is the authority of the priesthood.[3]

On the other hand, it may be observed, that all enthusiasts have been free from the yoke of ecclesiastics, and have expressed great independence in their devotion; with a contempt of forms, ceremonies, and traditions. The quakers are the most egregious, though, at the same time, the most innocent enthusiasts that have yet been known; and are, perhaps, the only sect, that have never admitted priests amongst them. The independents, of all the English sectaries, approach nearest to the quakers in fanaticism, and in their freedom from priestly bondage. The presbyterians follow after, at an equal distance in both particulars. In short this observation is founded in experience; and will also appear to be founded in reason, if we consider, that, as enthusiasm arises from a presumptuous pride and confidence, it thinks itself
sufficiently qualified to approach the Divinity, without any
human mediator. Its rapturous devotions are so fervent, that it
even imagines itself actually to approach him by the way of
contemplation and inward converse; which makes it neglect all
those outward ceremonies and observances, to which the assistance
of the priests appears so requisite in the eyes of their
superstitious votaries. The fanatic consecrates himself, and
bestows on his own person a sacred character, much superior to
what forms and ceremonious institutions can confer on any other.

My <second> reflection with regard to these species of false
religion is, <that religions, which partake of enthusiasm are, on
their first rise, more furious and violent than those which
partake of superstition; but in a little time become more gentle
and moderate>. The violence of this species of religion, when
excited by novelty, and animated by opposition, appears from
numberless instances; of the <anabaptists> in Germany, the
<camisars> in France, the <levellers> and other fanatics in
England and the <covenanters> in Scotland. Enthusiasm being
founded on strong spirits, and a presumptuous boldness of
character, it naturally begets the most extreme resolutions;
especially after it rises to that height as to inspire the
deluded fanatic with the opinion of divine illuminations, and
with a contempt for the common rules of reason, morality, and
prudence.

It is thus enthusiasm produces the most cruel disorders in
human society; but its fury is like that of thunder and tempest,
which exhaust themselves in a little time, and leave the air more
calm and pure than before. When the first fire of enthusiasm is
spent, men naturally, in all fanatical sects, sink into the
greatest remissness and coolness in sacred matters; there being
no body of men among them, endowed with sufficient authority,
whose interest is concerned to support the religious spirit: No
rites, no ceremonies, no holy observances, which may enter into
the common train of life, and preserve the sacred principles from
oblivion. Superstition, on the contrary, steals in gradually and
insensibly; renders men tame and submissive; is acceptable to the
magistrate, and seems inoffensive to the people: Till at last the
priest, having firmly established his authority, becomes the
tyrant and disturber of human society, by his endless
contentions, persecutions, and religious wars. How smoothly did
the Romish church advance in her acquisition of power? But into
what dismal convulsions did she throw all Europe, in order to
maintain it? On the other hand, our sectaries, who were formerly such dangerous bigots, are now become very free reasoners; and the <quakers> seem to approach nearly the only regular body of <deists> in the universe, the <literati>, or the disciples of Confucius in China.[4]

My <third> observation on this head is, <that superstition is an enemy to civil liberty, and enthusiasm a friend to it>. As superstition groans under the dominion of priests, and enthusiasm is destructive of all ecclesiastical power, this sufficiently accounts for the present observation. Not to mention, that enthusiasm, being the infirmity of bold and ambitious tempers, is naturally accompanied with a spirit of liberty; as superstition, on the contrary, renders men tame and abject, and fits them for slavery. We learn from English history, that, during the civil wars, the <independents> and <deists>, though the most opposite in their religious principles; yet were united in their political ones, and were alike passionate for a commonwealth. And since the origin of <whig> and <tory>, the leaders of the <whigs> have either been <deists> or profest <latitudnarians> in their principles; that is, friends to toleration, and indifferent to any particular sect of <christians>: While the sectaries, who
have all a strong tincture of enthusiasm, have always, without exception, concurred with that party, in defence of civil liberty. The resemblance in their superstitions long united the high church <tories>, and the <Roman catholics>, in support of prerogative and kingly power; though experience of the tolerating spirit of the <whigs> seems of late to have reconciled the <catholics> to that party.

The <molinists> and <jansenists> in France have a thousand unintelligible disputes, which are not worthy the reflection of a man of sense: But what principally distinguishes these two sects, and alone merits attention, is the different spirit of their religion. The <molinists> conducted by the <jesuits>, are great friends to superstition, rigid observers of external forms and ceremonies, and devoted to the authority of the priests, and to tradition. The <jansenists> are enthusiasts, and zealous promoters of the passionate devotion, and of the inward life; little influenced by authority; and, in a word, but half catholics. The consequences are exactly conformable to the foregoing reasoning. The <jesuits> are the tyrants of the people, and the slaves of the court: And the <jansenists> preserve alive the small sparks of the love of liberty, which are to be found in
the French nation.

OF THE DELICACY OF TASTE AND PASSION

/SOME\ People are subject to a certain <delicacy> of <passion>, which makes them extremely sensible to all the accidents of life, and gives them a lively joy upon every prosperous event, as well as a piercing grief, when they meet with misfortunes and adversity. Favours and good
offices easily engage their friendship; while the smallest injury provokes their resentment. Any honour or mark of distinction elevates them above measure; but they are as sensibly touched with contempt. People of this character have, no doubt, more lively enjoyments, as well as more pungent sorrows, than men of cool and sedate tempers: But, I believe, when every thing is balanced, there is no one, who would not rather be of the latter character, were he entirely master of his own disposition. Good or ill fortune is very little at our disposal: And when a person, that has this sensibility of temper, meets with any misfortune, his sorrow or resentment takes entire possession of him, and deprives him of all relish in the common occurrences of life; the right enjoyment of which forms the chief part of our happiness. Great pleasures are much less frequent than great pains; so that a sensible temper must meet with fewer trials in the former way than in the latter. Not to mention, that men of such lively passions are apt to be transported beyond all bounds of prudence and discretion, and to take false steps in the conduct of life, which are often irretrievable.
There is a <delicacy> of <taste> observable in some men, which very much resembles this <delicacy> of <passion>, and produces the same sensibility to beauty and deformity of every kind, as that does to prosperity and adversity, obligations and injuries. When you present a poem or a picture to a man possessed of this talent, the delicacy of his feeling makes him be sensibly touched with every part of it; nor are the masterly strokes perceived with more exquisite relish and satisfaction, than the negligences or absurdities with disgust and uneasiness. A polite and judicious conversation affords him the highest entertainment; rudeness or impertinence is as great a punishment to him. In short, delicacy of taste has the same effect as delicacy of passion: It enlarges the sphere both of our happiness and misery, and makes us sensible to pains as well as pleasures, which escape the rest of mankind.

I believe, however, every one will agree with me, that, notwithstanding this resemblance, delicacy of taste is as much to be desired and cultivated as delicacy of passion is to be lamented, and to be remedied, if possible. The good or ill accidents of life are very little at our disposal; but
we are pretty much masters what books we shall read, what diversions we shall partake of, and what company we shall keep. Philosophers have endeavoured to render happiness entirely independent of every thing external. That degree of perfection is impossible to be <attained>: But every wise man will endeavour to place his happiness on such objects chiefly as depend upon himself: and <that> is not to be <attained> so much by any other means as by this delicacy of sentiment. When a man is possessed of that talent, he is more happy by what pleases his taste, than by what gratifies his appetites, and receives more enjoyment from a poem or a piece of reasoning than the most expensive luxury can afford.

Whatever connexion there may be originally between these two species of delicacy, I am persuaded, that nothing is so proper to cure us of this delicacy of passion, as the cultivating of that higher and more refined taste, which enables us to judge of the characters of men, of compositions of genius, and of the productions of the nobler arts. A greater or less relish for those obvious beauties, which strike the senses, depends entirely upon the greater
or less sensibility of the temper: But with regard to the
sciences and liberal arts, a fine taste is, in some measure,
the same with strong sense, or at least depends so much upon
it, that they are inseparable. In order to judge aright of a
composition of genius, there are so many views to be taken
in, so many circumstances to be compared, and such a
knowledge of human nature requisite, that no man, who is not
possessed of the soundest judgment, will ever make a
tolerable critic in such performances. And this is a new
reason for cultivating a relish in the liberal arts. Our
judgment will strengthen by this exercise: We shall form
juster notions of life: Many things, which please or afflict
others, will appear to us too frivolous to engage our
attention: And we shall lose by degrees that sensibility and
delicacy of passion, which is so incommodious.

But perhaps I have gone too far in saying, that a
cultivated taste for the polite arts extinguishes the
passions, and renders us indifferent to those objects, which
are so fondly pursued by the rest of mankind. On farther
reflection, I find, that it rather improves our sensibility
for all the tender and agreeable passions; at the same time
that it renders the mind incapable of the rougher and more
boisterous emotions.

<Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes,

Emollit mores, nec sinit isse feros>.

For this, I think there may be assigned two very
natural reasons. In the <first> place, nothing is so
improving to the temper as the study of the beauties, either
of poetry, eloquence, music, or painting. They give a
certain elegance of sentiment to which the rest of mankind
are strangers. The emotions which they excite are soft and
tender. They draw off the mind from the hurry of business
and interest; cherish reflection; dispose to tranquillity;
and produce an agreeable melancholy, which, of all
dispositions of the mind, is the best suited to love and
friendship.

In the <second> place, a delicacy of taste is
favourable to love and friendship, by confining our choice
to few people, and making us indifferent to the company and
conversation of the greater part of men. You will seldom
find, that mere men of the world, whatever strong sense they
may be endowed with, are very nice in distinguishing
characters, or in marking those insensible differences and
gradations, which make one man preferable to another. Any
one, that has competent sense, is sufficient for their
entertainment: They talk to him, of their pleasure and
affairs, with the same frankness that they would to another;
and finding many, who are fit to supply his place, they
never feel any vacancy or want in his absence. But to make
use of the allusion of a celebrated French[2] author, the
judgment may be compared to a clock or watch, where the most
ordinary machine is sufficient to tell the hours; but the
most elaborate alone can point out the minutes and seconds,
and distinguish the smallest differences of time. One that
has well digested his knowledge both of books and men, has
little enjoyment but in the company of a few select
companions. He feels too sensibly, how much all the rest of
mankind fall short of the notions which he has entertained.
And, his affections being thus confined within a narrow
circle, no wonder he carries them further, than if they were
more general and undistinguished. The gaiety and frolic of a
bottle companion improves with him into a solid friendship:
And the ardours of a youthful appetite become an elegant
OF THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS

NOTHING is more apt to surprize a foreigner, than the extreme liberty, which we enjoy in this country, of communicating whatever we please to the public, and of openly censuring every measure, entered into by the king or his ministers. If the administration resolve upon war, it is
affirmed, that, either wilfully or ignorantly, they mistake
the interests of the nation, and that peace, in the present
situation of affairs, is infinitely preferable. If the
passion of the ministers lie towards peace, our political
writers breathe nothing but war and devastation, and
represent to pacific conduct of the government as mean and
pusillanimous. As this liberty is not indulged in any other
government, either republican or monarchical; in HOLLAND\ and VENICE\, more than in FRANCE\ or SPAIN\; it may very
naturally give occasion to a question, <How it happens that>
GREAT\ B/ITAIN\ <alone enjoys this peculiar privilege>?

The reason, why the laws indulge us in such a liberty
seems to be derived from our mixed form of government, which
is neither wholly monarchical, nor wholly republican. It
will be found, if I mistake not, a true observation in
politics, that the two extremes in government, liberty and
slavery, commonly approach nearest to each other; and that,
as you depart from the extremes, and mix a little of
monarchy with liberty, the government becomes always the
more free; and on the other hand, when you mix a little of
liberty with monarchy, the yoke becomes always the more
grievous and intolerable. In a government, such as that of France, which is absolute, and where law, custom, and religion concur, all of them, to make the people fully satisfied with their condition, the monarch cannot entertain any jealousy against his subjects, and therefore is apt to indulge them in great liberties both of speech and action.

In a government altogether republican, such as that of Holland, where there is not magistrate so eminent as to give jealousy to the state, there is no danger in intrusting the magistrates with large discretionary powers; and though many advantages result from such powers, in preserving peace and order, yet they lay a considerable restraint on men’s actions, and make every private citizen pay a great respect to the government. Thus it seems evident, that the two extremes of absolute monarchy and of a republic, approach near to each other in some material circumstances. In the first, the magistrate has no jealousy of the people: in the second, the people have none of the magistrate: Which want of jealousy begets a mutual confidence and trust in both cases, and produces a species of liberty in monarchies, and of arbitrary power in
republics.

To justify the other part of the foregoing observation, that, in every government, the means are most wide of each other, and that the mixtures of monarchy and liberty render the yoke either more easy or more grievous; I must take notice of a remark in Tacitus with regard to the Romans under the emperors, that they neither could bear total slavery nor total liberty, <Nec totam servitutem, nec totam libertatem pati possunt>. This remark a celebrated poet has translated and applied to the English, in his lively description of queen Elizabeth’s policy and government,

<Et fit aimer son joug a ’l Anglois indompte,
Qui ne peut ni servir, ni vivre en liberte>.

According to these remarks, we are to consider the Roman government under the emperors as a mixture of despotism and liberty, where the despotism prevailed; and the English government as a mixture of the same kind, where the liberty predominates. The consequences are conformable to the foregoing observation; and such as may be
expected from those mixed forms of government, which beget a mutual watchfulness and jealousy. The Roman emperors were, many of them, the most frightful tyrants that ever disgraced human nature; and it is evident, that their cruelty was chiefly excited by their <jealousy>, and by their observing that all the great men of Rome bore with impatience the dominion of a family, which, but a little before, was no wise superior to their own. On the other hand, as the republican part of the government prevails in England, though with a great mixture of monarchy, it is obliged, for its own preservation, to maintain a watchful <jealousy> over the magistrates, to remove all discretionary powers, and to secure every one's life and fortune by general and inflexible laws. No action must be deemed a crime but what the law has plainly determined to be such: No crime must be imputed to a man but from a legal proof before his judges; and even these judges must be his fellow-subjects, who are obliged, by their own interest, to have a watchful eye over the encroachments and violence of the ministers. From these causes, it proceeds, that there is as much liberty, and even, perhaps, licentiousness in Great Britain, as there
were formerly slavery and tyranny in Rome.

These principles account for the great liberty of the press in these kingdoms, beyond what is indulged in any other government. It is apprehended, that arbitrary power would steal in upon us, were we not careful to prevent its progress, and were there not an easy method of conveying the alarm from one end of the kingdom to the other. The spirit of the people must frequently be rouzed, in order to curb the ambition of the court; and the dread of rouzing this spirit must be employed to prevent that ambition. Nothing so effectual to this purpose as the liberty of the press, by which all the learning, wit, and genius of the nation may be employed on the side of freedom, and every one be animated to its defence. As long, therefore, as the republican part of our government can maintain itself against the monarchical, it will naturally be careful to keep the press open, as of importance to its own preservation.

It must however be allowed, that the unbounded liberty of the press, though it be difficult, perhaps impossible, to propose a suitable remedy for it, is one of the evils, attending those mixt forms of government.
OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

Nothing requires greater nicety, in our enquiries concerning human affairs, than to distinguish exactly what is owing to <chance>, and what proceeds from <causes>; nor is there any subject, in which an author is more liable to deceive himself by false subtleties and refinements. To say, that any event is derived from chance, cuts short all farther enquiry concerning it, and leaves the writer in the same state of ignorance with the
rest of mankind. But when the event is supposed to proceed from
certain and stable causes, he may then display his ingenuity, in
assigning these causes; and as a man of any subtilty can never be
at a loss in this particular, he has thereby an opportunity of
swelling his volumes, and discovering his profound knowledge, in
observing what escapes the vulgar and ignorant.

The distinguishing between chance and causes must depend
upon every particular man's sagacity, in considering every
particular incident. But, if I were to assign any general rule to
help us in applying this distinction, it would be the following,
<What depends upon a few persons is, in a great measure, to be
ascribed to chance, or secret and unknown causes: What arises
from a great number, may often be accounted for by determinate
and known causes>.

Two natural reasons may be assigned for this rule. <First>,
If you suppose a dye to have any bias, however small, to a
particular side, this bias, though, perhaps, it may not appear
in a few throws, will certainly prevail in a great number, and
will cast the balance entirely to that side. In like manner, when
any <causes> beget a particular inclination or passion, at a
certain time, and among a certain people; though many individuals
may escape the contagion, and be ruled by passions peculiar to themselves; yet the multitude will certainly be seized by the common affection, and be governed by it in all their actions.

<Secondly>, Those principles of causes, which are fitted to operate on a multitude, are always of a grosser and more stubborn nature, less subject to accidents, and less influenced by whim and private fancy, than those which operate on a few only. The latter are commonly so delicate and refined, that the smallest incident in the health, education, or fortune of a particular person, is sufficient to divert their course, and retard their operation; nor is it possible to reduce them to any general maxims or observations. Their influence at one time will never assure us concerning their influence at another; even though all the general circumstances should be the same in both cases.

To judge by this rule, the domestic and the gradual revolutions of a state must be a more proper subject of reasoning and observation, than the foreign and the violent, which are commonly produced by single persons, and are more influenced by whim, folly, or caprice, than by general passions and interests. The depression of the lords, and rise of the commons in England, after the statutes of alienation and the encrease of trade and
industry, are more easily accounted for by general principles, than the depression of the Spanish, and rise of the French monarchy, after the death of Charles V. Had Harry IV, Cardinal Richlieu and Louis XIV been Spaniards; and Philip II, III, and IV, and Charles II been Frenchmen, the history of these two nations had been entirely reversed.

For the same reason, it is more easy to account for the rise and progress of commerce in any kingdom, than for that of learning; and a state, which should apply itself to the encouragement of the one, would be more assured of success, than one which should cultivate the other. Avarice, or the desire of gain, is an universal passion, which operates at all times, in all places, and upon all persons: But curiosity, or the love of knowledge, has a very limited influence, and requires youth, leisure, education, genius, and example, to make it govern any person. You will never want booksellers, while there are buyers of books: But there may frequently be readers where there are no authors. Multitudes of people, necessity and liberty, have begotten commerce in Holland: But study and application have scarcely produced any eminent writers.

We may, therefore, conclude, that there is no subject, in
which we must proceed with more caution, than in tracing the
history of the arts and sciences; lest we assign causes which
never existed, and reduce what is merely contingent to stable and
universal principles. Those who cultivate the sciences in any
state, are always few in number: The passion, which governs them,
limited: Their taste and judgment delicate and easily perverted:
And their application disturbed with the smallest accident.
Chance, therefore, or secret and unknown causes, must have a
great influence on the rise and progress of all the refined arts.

But there is a reason, which induces me not to ascribe the
matter altogether to chance. Though the persons, who cultivate
the sciences with such astonishing success, as to attract the
admiration of posterity, be always few, in all nations and all
ages; it is impossible but a share of the same spirit and genius
must be antecedently diffused throughout the people among whom
they arise, in order to produce, form, and cultivate, from their
earliest infancy, the taste and judgment of those eminent
writers. The mass cannot be altogether insipid, from which such
refined spirits are extracted. 'There is a God within us,' says
OVID, 'who breathes that divine fire, by which we are
animated.'[2] Poets, in all ages, have advanced this claim to
inspiration. There is not, however, any thing supernatural in the case. Their fire is not kindled from heaven. It only runs along the earth; is caught from one breast to another; and burns brightest, where the materials are best prepared, and most happily disposed. The question, therefore, concerning the rise and progress of the arts and sciences, is not altogether a question concerning the taste, genius, and spirit of a few, but concerning those of a whole people; and may, therefore, be accounted for, in some measure, by general causes and principles.

I grant, that a man, who should enquire, why such a particular poet, as Homer for instance, existed, at such a place, in such a time, would throw himself headlong into chimaera, and could never treat of such a subject, without a multitude of false subtilties and refinements. He might as well pretend to give a reason, why such particular generals, as Fabius and Scipio, lived in Rome at such a time, and why Fabius came into the world before Scipio. For such incidents as these, no other reason can be given than that of Horace:

<Scit genius, natale comes, qui temperat astrum,
Naturae Deus humanae, mortalis in unum...
But I am persuaded, that in many cases good reasons might be
given, why such a nation is more polite and learned at a
particular time, than any of its neighbours. At least, this is so
curious a subject, that it were a pity to abandon it entirely,
before we have found whether it be susceptible of reasoning, and
can be reduced to any general principles.

My first observation on this head is, <That it is impossible
for the arts and sciences to arise, at first, among any people
unless that people enjoy the blessing of a free government>.

In the first ages of the world, when men are as yet
barbarous and ignorant, they seek no farther security against
mutual violence and injustice, than the choice of some rulers,
few or many, in whom they place an implicit confidence, without
providing any security, by laws or political institutions,
against the violence and injustice of these rulers. If the
authority be centered in a single person, and if the people,
either by conquest, or by the ordinary course of propagation,
encresce to a great multitude, the monarch, finding it
impossible, in his own person, to execute every office of
sovereignty, in every place, must delegate his authority to inferior magistrates, who preserve peace and order in their respective districts. As experience and education have not yet refined the judgments of men to any considerable degree, the prince, who is himself unrestrained, never dreams of restraining his ministers, but delegates his full authority to every one, whom he sets over any portion of the people. All general laws are attended with inconveniencies, when applied to particular cases; and it requires great penetration and experience, both to perceive that these inconveniencies are fewer than what result from full discretionary powers in every magistrate; and also to discern what general laws are, upon the whole, attended with fewest inconveniencies. This is a matter of so great difficulty, that men may have made some advances, even in the sublime arts of poetry and eloquence, where a rapidity of genius and imagination assist their progress, before they have arrived at any great refinement in their municipal laws, where frequent trials and diligent observation can alone direct their improvements. It is not, therefore, to be supposed, that a barbarous monarch, unrestrained and uninstructed, will ever become a legislator, or think of restraining his <Bashaws>, in every province, or even
his <Cadis> in every village. We are told, that the late Czar,
though actuated with a noble genius, and smit with the love and
admiration of European arts; yet professed an esteem for the
Turkish policy in this particular, and approved of such summary
decisions of causes, as are practised in that barbarous monarchy,
where the judges are not restrained by any methods, forms, or
laws. He did not perceive, how contrary such a practice would
have been to all his other endeavours for refining his people.

Arbitrary power, in all cases, is somewhat oppressive and
debasing; but it is altogether ruinous and intolerable, when
contracted into a small compass; and becomes still worse, when
the person, who possesses it, knows that the time of his
authority is limited and uncertain. 'Habet subjectos tanquam
suos; viles, ut alienos.'[3] He governs the subjects with full
authority, as if they were his own; and with negligence or
tyranny, as belonging to another. A people, governed after such a
manner, are slaves in the full and proper sense of the word; and
it is impossible they can ever aspire to any refinements or taste
of reason. They dare not so much as pretend to enjoy the
necessaries of life in plenty or security.

To expect, therefore, that the arts and sciences should take
their first rise in a monarchy, is to expect a contradiction.

Before these refinements have taken place, the monarch is ignorant and uninstructed; and not having knowledge sufficient to make him sensible of the necessity of balancing his government upon general laws, he delegates his full power to all inferior magistrates. This barbarous policy debases the people, and for ever prevents all improvements. Were it possible, that, before science were known in the world, a monarch could possess so much wisdom as to become a legislator, and govern his people by law, not by the arbitrary will of their fellow-subjects, it might be possible for that species of government to be the first nursery of arts and sciences. But that supposition seems scarcely to be consistent or rational.

It may happen, that a republic, in its infant state, may be supported by as few laws as a barbarous monarchy, and may entrust as unlimited an authority to its magistrates or judges. But, besides that the frequent elections by the people, are a considerable check upon authority; it is impossible, but, in time, the necessity of restraining the magistrates, in order to preserve liberty, must at last appear, and give rise to general laws and statutes. The Roman Consuls, for some time, decided all
causes, without being confined by any positive statutes, till the people, bearing this yoke with impatience, created the <decemvirs>, who promulgated the <twelve tables>; a body of laws, which, though, perhaps, they were not equal in bulk to one English act of parliament, were almost the only written rules, which regulated property and punishment, for some ages, in that famous republic. They were, however, sufficient, together with the forms of a free government, to secure the lives and properties of the citizens, to exempt one man from the dominion of another; and to protect every one against the violence or tyranny of his fellow-citizens. In such a situation the sciences may raise their heads and flourish: But never can have being amidst such a scene of oppression and slavery, as always results from barbarous monarchies, where the people alone are restrained by the authority of the magistrates, and the magistrates are not restrained by any law or statute. An unlimited despotism of this nature, while it exists, effectually puts a stop to all improvements, and keeps men from attaining that knowledge, which is requisite to instruct them in the advantages, arising from a better police, and more moderate authority.

Here then are the advantages of free states. Though a
A republic should be barbarous, it necessarily, by an infallible operation, gives rise to Law, even before mankind have made any considerable advances in the other sciences. From law arises security: From security curiosity: And from curiosity knowledge. The latter steps of this progress may be more accidental; but the former are altogether necessary. A republic without laws can never have any duration. On the contrary, in a monarchical government, law arises not necessarily from the forms of government. Monarchy, when absolute, contains even something repugnant to law. Great wisdom and reflection can alone reconcile them. But such a degree of wisdom can never be expected, before the greater refinements and improvements of human reason. These refinements require curiosity, security, and law. The growth, therefore, of the arts and sciences can never be expected in despotic governments.

There are other causes, which discourage the rise of the refined arts in despotic governments; though I take the want of laws, and the delegation of full powers to every petty magistrate, to be the principal. Eloquence certainly springs up more naturally in popular governments: Emulation too in every accomplishment must there be more animated and enlivened: And
genius and capacity have a fuller scope and career. All these causes render free governments the only proper <nursery> for the arts and sciences.

The next observation, which I shall make on this head, is, <That nothing is more favourable to the rise of politeness and learning, than a number of neighbouring and independent states, connected together by commerce and policy>. The emulation, which naturally arises among those neighbouring states, is an obvious source of improvement: But what I would chiefly insist on is the stop, which such limited territories give both to <power> and to <authority>.

Extended governments, where a single person has great influence, soon become absolute; but small ones change naturally into commonwealths. A large government is accustomed by degrees to tyranny; because each act of violence is at first performed upon a part, which, being distant from the majority, is not taken notice of, nor excites any violent ferment. Besides, a large government, though the whole be discontented, may, by a little art, be kept in obedience; while each part, ignorant of the resolutions of the rest, is afraid to begin any commotion or insurrection. Not to mention, that there is a superstitious
reverence for princes, which mankind naturally contract when they
do not often see the sovereign, and when many of them become not
acquainted with him so as to perceive his weaknesses. And as
large states can afford a great expence, in order to support the
pomp of majesty; this is a kind of fascination on men, and
naturally contributes to the enslaving of them.

In a small government, any act of oppression is immediately
known throughout the whole: The murmurs and discontents,
proceeding from it, are easily communicated: And the indignation
arises the higher, because the subjects are not apt to apprehend
in such states, that the distance is very wide between themselves
and their sovereign. 'No man,' said the prince of Cond., 'is a
hero to his <Valet de Chambre>.' It is certain that admiration
and acquaintance are altogether incompatible towards any mortal
creature. Sleep and love convinced even Alexander himself that he
was not a God: But I suppose that such as daily attended him
could easily, from the numberless weaknesses to which he was
subject, have given him many still more convincing proofs of his
humanity.

But the divisions into small states are favourable to
learning, by stopping the progress of <authority> as well as that
Reputation is often as great a fascination upon men as sovereignty, and is equally destructive to the freedom of thought and examination. But where a number of neighbouring states have a great intercourse of arts and commerce, their mutual jealousy keeps them from receiving too lightly the law from each other, in matters of taste and of reasoning, and makes them examine every work of art with the greatest care and accuracy. The contagion of popular opinion spreads not so easily from one place to another. It readily receives a check in some state or other, where it concurs not with the prevailing prejudices. And nothing but nature and reason, or, at least, what bears them a strong resemblance, can force its way through all obstacles, and unite the most rival nations into an esteem and admiration of it.

Greece was a cluster of little principalities, which soon became republics; and being united both by their near neighbourhood, and by the ties of the same language and interest, they entered into the closest intercourse of commerce and learning. There concurred a happy climate, a soil not unfertile, and a most harmonious and comprehensive language; so that every circumstance among that people seemed to favour the rise of the
arts and sciences. Each city produced its several artists and philosophers, who refused to yield the preference to those of the neighbouring republics: Their contention and debates sharpened the wits of men: A variety of objects was presented to the judgment, while each challenged the preference to the rest: and the sciences, not being dwarfed by the restraint of authority, were enabled to make such considerable shoots, as are, even at this time, the objects of our admiration. After the Roman <christian>, or <catholic> church had spread itself over the civilized world, and had engrossed all the learning of the times; being really one large state within itself, and united under one head; this variety of sects immediately disappeared, and the Peripatetic philosophy was alone admitted into all the schools, to the utter depravation of every kind of learning. But mankind, having at length thrown off this yoke, affairs are now returned nearly to the same situation as before, and Europe is at present a copy at large, of what Greece was formerly a pattern in miniature. We have seen the advantage of this situation in several instances. What checked the progress of the Cartesian philosophy, to which the French nation shewed such a strong propensity towards the end of the last century, but the
opposition made to it by the other nations of Europe, who soon
discovered the weak sides of that philosophy? The severest
scrutiny, which Newton's theory has undergone, proceeded not from
his own countrymen, but from foreigners; and if it can overcome
the obstacles, which it meets with at present in all parts of
Europe, it will probably go down triumphant to the latest
posterity. The English are become sensible of the scandalous
licentiousness of their stage, from the example of the French
decency and morals. The French are convinced, that their theatre
has become somewhat effeminate, by too much love and gallantry;
and begin to approve of the more masculine taste of some
neighbouring nations.

In China, there seems to be a pretty considerable stock of
politeness and science, which, in the course of so many
centuries, might naturally be expected to ripen into some thing
more perfect and finished, than what has yet arisen from them.
But China is one vast empire, speaking one language, governed by
one law, and sympathizing in the same manners. The authority of
any teacher, such as Confucius, was propagated easily from one
corner of the empire to the other. None had courage to resist the
torrent of popular opinion. And posterity was not bold enough to
dispute what had been universally received by their ancestors. This seems to be one natural reason, why the sciences have made so slow a progress in that mighty empire.[4]

If we consider the face of the globe, Europe, of all the four parts of the world, is the most broken by seas, rivers, and mountains; and Greece of all countries of Europe. Hence these regions were naturally divided into several distinct governments. And hence the sciences arose in Greece; and Europe has been hitherto the most constant habitation of them.

I have sometimes been inclined to think, that interruptions in the periods of learning, were they not attended with such a destruction of ancient books, and the records of history, would be rather favourable to the arts and sciences, by breaking the progress of authority, and dethroning the tyrannical usurpers over human reason. In this particular, they have the same influence, as interruptions in political governments and societies. Consider the blind submission of the ancient philosophers to the several masters in each school, and you will be convinced, that little good could be expected from a hundred centuries of such a servile philosophy. Even the Eclectics, who arose about the age of Augustus, notwithstanding their professing
to chuse freely what pleased them from every different sect, were
yet, in the main, as slavish and dependent as any of their
brethren since they sought for truth not in nature, but in the
several schools; where they supposed she must necessarily be
found, though not united in a body, yet dispersed in parts. Upon
the revival of learning, those sects of Stoics and Epicureans,
Platonists and Pythagoricians, could never regain any credit or
authority; and, at the same time, by the example of their fall,
kept men from submitting, with such blind deference, to those new
sects, which have attempted to gain an ascendancy over them.

The <third> observation, which I shall form on this head, of
the rise and progress of the arts and sciences, is, <That though
the only proper Nursery of these noble plants be a free state;
yet may they be transplanted into any government; and that a
republic is most favourable to the growth of the sciences, a
civilized monarchy to that of the polite arts>.

To balance a large state or society, whether monarchical or
republican, on general laws, is a work of so great difficulty,
that no human genius, however comprehensive, is able, by the mere
dint of reason and reflection, to effect it. The judgments of
many must unite in this work: Experience must guide their labour:
Time must bring it to perfection; And the feeling of inconveniencies must correct the mistakes, which they inevitably fall into, in their first trials and experiments. Hence appears the impossibility, that this undertaking should be begun and carried on in any monarchy; since such a form of government, ere civilized, knows no other secret or policy, than that of entrusting unlimited powers to every governor or magistrate, and subdividing the people into so many classes and orders of slavery. From such a situation, no improvement can ever be expected in the sciences, in the liberal arts, in laws, and scarcely in the manual arts and manufactures. The same barbarism and ignorance, with which the government commences, is propagated to all posterity, and can never come to a period by the efforts or ingenuity of such unhappy slaves.

But though law, the source of all security and happiness, arises late in any government, and is the slow product of order and of liberty, it is not preserved with the same difficulty with which it is produced; but when it has once taken root, is a hardy plant, which will scarcely ever perish through the ill culture of men, or the rigour of the seasons. The arts of luxury, and much more the liberal arts, which depend on a refined taste or
sentiment, are easily lost; because they are always relished by a few only, whose leisure, fortune, and genius fit them for such amusements. But what is profitable to every mortal, and in common life, when once discovered, can scarcely fall into oblivion, but by the total subversion of society, and by such furious inundations of barbarous invaders, as obliterate all memory of former arts and civility. Imitation also is apt to transport these coarser and more useful arts from one climate to another, and make them precede the refined arts in their progress; though perhaps they sprang after them in their first rise and propagation. From these causes proceed civilized monarchies; where the arts of government, first invented in free states, are preserved to the mutual advantage and security of sovereign and subject.

However perfect, therefore, the monarchical form may appear to some politicians, it owes all its perfection to the republican; nor is it possible, that a pure despotism, established among a barbarous people, can ever, by its native force and energy, refine and polish itself. It must borrow its laws, and methods, and institutions, and consequently its stability and order, from free governments. These advantages are
the sole growth of republics. The extensive despotism of a
barbarous monarchy, by entering into the detail of the
government, as well as into the principal points of
administration, for ever prevents all such improvement.

In a civilized monarchy, the prince alone is unrestrained in
the exercise of his authority, and possesses alone a power, which
is not bounded by any thing but custom, example, and the sense of
his own interest. Every minister or magistrate, however eminent,
must submit to the general laws, which govern the whole society,
and must exert the authority delegated to him after the manner,
which is prescribed. The people depend on none but their
sovereign, for the security of their property. He is so far
removed from them, and is so much exempt from private jealousies
or interests, that this dependence is scarcely felt. And thus a
species of government arises, to which, in a high political rant,
we may give the name of <Tyranny>, but which, by a just and
prudent administration, may afford tolerable security to the
people, and may answer most of the ends of political society.

But though in a civilized monarchy, as well as in a
republic, the people have security for the enjoyment of their
property; yet in both these forms of government, those who
possess the supreme authority have the disposal of many honours and advantages, which excite the ambition and avarice of mankind. The only difference is, that, in a republic, the candidates for office must look downwards, to gain the suffrages of the people; in a monarchy, they must turn their attention upwards, to court the good graces and favour of the great. To be successful in the former way, it is necessary for a man to make himself <useful>, by his industry, capacity, or knowledge: To be prosperous in the latter way, it is requisite for him to render himself <agreeable>, by his wit, complaisance, or civility. A strong genius succeeds best in republics: A refined taste in monarchies. And consequently the sciences are the more natural growth of the one, and the polite arts of the other.

Not to mention, that monarchies, receiving their chief stability from a superstitious reverence to priests and princes, have commonly abridged the liberty of reasoning, with regard to religion, and politics, and consequently metaphysics and morals. All these form the most considerable branches of science. Mathematics and natural philosophy, which only remain, are not half so valuable.

Among the arts of conversation, no one pleases more than
mutual deference or civility, which leads us to resign our own inclinations to those of our companion, and to curb and conceal that presumption and arrogance, so natural to the human mind. A good-natured man, who is well educated, practises this civility to every mortal, without premeditation or interest. But in order to render that valuable quality general among any people, it seems necessary to assist the natural disposition by some general motive. Where power rises upwards from the people to the great, as in all republics, such refinements of civility are apt to be little practised; since the whole state is, by that means, brought near to a level, and every member of it is rendered, in a great measure, independent of another. The people have the advantage, by the authority of their suffrages: The great, by the superiority of their station. But in a civilized monarchy, there is a long train of dependence from the prince to the peasant, which is not great enough to render property precarious, or depress the minds of the people; but is sufficient to beget in every one an inclination to please his superiors, and to form himself upon those models, which are most acceptable to people of condition and education. Politeness of manners, therefore, arises most naturally in monarchies and courts; and where that
flourishes, none of the liberal arts will be altogether neglected or despised.

The republics in Europe are at present noted for want of politeness. <The good-manners of a Swiss civilized in Holland>,[5] is an expression for rusticity among the French. The English, in some degree, fall under the same censure, notwithstanding their learning and genius. And if the Venetians be an exception to the rule, they owe it, perhaps, to their communication with the other Italians, most of whose governments beget a dependence more than sufficient for civilizing their manners.

It is difficult to pronounce any judgment concerning the refinements of the ancient republics in this particular: But I am apt to suspect, that the arts of conversation were not brought so near to perfection among them as the arts of writing and composition. The scurrility of the ancient orators, in many instances, is quite shocking, and exceeds all belief. Vanity too is often not a little offensive in authors of those ages;[6] as well as the common licentiousness and immodesty of their stile, <Quicunque impudicus, adulter, ganeo, manu, ventre>, pene, <bona patria laceraverat>, says Sallust in one of the gravest and most
moral passages of his history. <Nam fuit ante Helenam Cunnus tettirma belli Causa>, is an expression of Horace, in tracing the origin of moral good and evil. Ovid and Lucretius[7] are almost as licentious in their stile as Lord Rochester; though the former were fine gentlemen and delicate writers, and the latter, from the corruptions of that court, in which he lived, seems to have thrown off all regard to shame and decency. Juvenal inculcates modesty with great zeal; but sets a very bad example of it if we consider the impudence of his expressions.

I shall also be bold to affirm, that among the ancients, there was not much delicacy of breeding, or that polite deference and respect, which civility obliges us either to express or counterfeit towards the persons with whom we converse. Cicero was certainly one of the finest gentlemen of his age; yet I must confess I have frequently been shocked with the poor figure under which he represents his friend Atticus, in those dialogues, where he himself is introduced as a speaker. That learned and virtuous Roman, whose dignity, though he was only a private gentleman, was inferior to that of no one in Rome, is there shewn in rather a more pitiful light than Philalethe's friend in our modern dialogues. He is a humble admirer of the orator, pays him
frequent compliments, and receives his instructions, with all the
deferece which a scholar owes to his master.[8] Even Cato is
treated in somewhat of a cavalier manner in the dialogues <de
finibus>.

One of the most particular details of a real dialogue, which
we meet with in antiquity, is related by Polybius;[9] when
Philip, king of Macedon, a prince of wit and parts, met with
Titus Flaminius, one of the politest of the Romans, as we learn
from Plutarch,[10] accompanied with ambassadors from almost all
the Greek cities. The Aetolian ambassador very abruptly tells the
king, that he talked like a fool or a madman (lhrein). 'That's
evident,' says his majesty, 'even to a blind man'; which was a
raillery on the blindness of his excellency. Yet all this did not
pass the usual bounds: For the conference was not disturbed; and
Flaminius was very well diverted with these strokes of humour. At
the end, when Philip craved a little time to consult with his
friends, of whom he had none present, the Roman general, being
desirous also to shew his wit, as the historian says, tells him,
'that perhaps the reason, why he had none of his friends with
him, was because he had murdered them all'; which was actually
the case. This unprovoked piece of rusticity is not condemned by
the historian; caused no farther resentment in Philip, than to excite a Sardonian smile, or what we call a grin; and hindered him not from renewing the conference next day. Plutarch[11] too mentions this raillery amongst the witty and agreeable sayings of Flaminius.

Cardinal Wolsey apologized for his famous piece of insolence, in saying, 'Ego et Rex meus', <I and my king>, by observing, that this expression was conformable to the Latin idiom, and that a Roman always named himself before the person to whom, or of whom he spake. Yet this seems to have been an instance of want of civility among that people. The ancients made it a rule, that the person of the greatest dignity should be mentioned first in the discourse; insomuch, that we find the spring of a quarrel and jealousy between the Romans and Aetolians, to have been a poet's naming the Aetolians before the Romans, in celebrating a victory gained by their united arms over the Macedonians.[12] Thus Livia disgusted Tiberius by placing her own name before his in an inscription.[13]

No advantages in this world are pure and unmixed. In like manner, as modern politeness, which is naturally so ornamental, runs often into affectation and foppery, disguise and
insincerity; so the ancient simplicity, which is naturally so amiable and affecting, often degenerates into rusticity and abuse, scurrility and obscenity.

If the superiority in politeness should be allowed to modern times, the modern notions of <gallantry>, the natural produce of courts and monarchies, will probably be assigned as the causes of this refinement. No one denies this invention to be modern:[14] But some of the more zealous partizans of the ancients, have asserted it to be foppish and ridiculous, and a reproach, rather than a credit, to the present age.[15] It may here be proper to examine this question.

Nature has implanted in all living creatures an affection between the sexes, which, even in the fiercest and most rapacious animals, is not merely confined to the satisfaction of the bodily appetite, but begets a friendship and mutual sympathy, which runs through the whole tenor of their lives. Nay, even in those species, where nature limits the indulgence of this appetite to one season and to one object, and forms a kind of marriage or association between a single male and female, there is yet a visible complacency and benevolence, which extends farther, and mutually softens the affections of the sexes towards each other.
How much more must this have place in man, where the confinement of the appetite is not natural; but either is derived accidentally from some strong charm of love, or arises from reflections on duty and convenience? Nothing, therefore, can proceed less from affectation than the passion of gallantry. It is <natural> in the highest degree. Art and education, in the most elegant courts, make no more alteration on it, than on all the other laudable passions. They only turn the mind more towards it; they refine it; they polish it; and give it a proper grace and expression.

But gallantry is as <generous> as it is <natural>. To correct such gross vices, as lead us to commit real injury on others, is the part of morals, and the object of the most ordinary education. Where <that> is not attended to, in some degree, no human society can subsist. But in order to render conversation, and the intercourse of minds more easy and agreeable, good-manners have been invented, and have carried the matter somewhat farther. Wherever nature has given the mind a propensity to any vice, or to any passion disagreeable to others, refined breeding has taught men to throw the biass on the opposite side, and to preserve, in all their behaviour, the
appearance of sentiments different from those to which they naturally incline. Thus, as we are commonly proud and selfish, and apt to assume the preference above others, a polite man learns to behave with deference towards his companions, and to yield the superiority to them in all the common incidents of society. In like manner, wherever a person's situation may naturally beget any disagreeable suspicion in him, it is the part of good-manners to prevent it, by a studied display of sentiments, directly contrary to those of which he is apt to be jealous. Thus, old men know their infirmities, and naturally dread contempt from the youth: Hence, well-educated youth redouble the instances of respect and deference to their elders. Strangers and foreigners are without protection: Hence, in all polite countries, they receive the highest civilities, and are entitled to the first place in every company. A man is lord in his own family, and his guests are, in a manner, subject to his authority: Hence, he is always the lowest person in the company; attentive to the wants of every one; and giving himself all the trouble, in order to please, which may not betray too visible an affectation, or impose too much constraint on his guests.[16] Gallantry is nothing but an instance of the same generous
attention. As nature has given <man> the superiority above <woman>, by endowing him with greater strength both of mind and body; it is his part to alleviate that superiority, as much as possible, by the generosity of his behaviour, and by a studied deference and complaisance for all her inclinations and opinions. Barbarous nations display this superiority, by reducing their females to the most abject slavery; by confining them, by beating them, by selling them, by killing them. But the male sex, among a polite people, discover their authority in a more generous, though not a less evident manner; by civility, by respect, by complaisance, and, in a word, by gallantry. In good company, you need not ask, Who is the master of the feast? The man, who sits in the lowest place, and who is always industrious in helping every one, is certainly the person. We must either condemn all such instances of generosity, as foppish and affected, or admit of gallantry among the rest. The ancient Muscovites wedded their wives with a whip, instead of a ring. The same people, in their own houses, took always the precedency above foreigners, even[17] foreign ambassadors. These two instances of their generosity and politeness are much of a piece.

Gallantry is not less compatible with <wisdom> and
<prudence>, than with <nature> and <generosity>; and when under proper regulations, contributes more than any other invention, to the <entertainment> and <improvement> of the youth of both sexes. Among every species of animals, nature has founded on the love between the sexes their sweetest and best enjoyment. But the satisfaction of the bodily appetite is not alone sufficient to gratify the mind; and even among brute-creatures, we find, that their play and dalliance, and other expressions of fondness, form the greatest part of the entertainment. In rational beings, we must certainly admit the mind for a considerable share. Were we to rob the feast of all its garniture of reason, discourse, sympathy, friendship, and gaiety, what remains would scarcely be worth acceptance, in the judgment of the truly elegant and luxurious.

What better school for manners, than the company of virtuous women; where the mutual endeavour to please must insensibly polish the mind, where the example of the female softness and modesty must communicate itself to their admirers, and where the delicacy of that sex puts every one on his guard, lest he give offence by any breach of decency.

Among the ancients, the character of the fair-sex was
considered as altogether domestic; nor were they regarded as part of the polite world or of good company. This, perhaps, is the true reason why the ancients have not left us one piece of pleasantry that is excellent, (unless one may except the Banquet of Xenophon, and the Dialogues of Lucian) though many of their serious compositions are altogether inimitable. Horace condemns the coarse railleries and cold jests of Plautus: But, though the most easy, agreeable, and judicious writer in the world, is his own talent for ridicule very striking or refined? This, therefore, is one considerable improvement, which the polite arts have received from gallantry, and from courts, where it first arose.

But, to return from this digression, I shall advance it as a <fourth> observation on this subject, of the rise and progress of the arts and sciences, <that when the arts and sciences come to perfection in any state, from that moment they naturally, or rather necessarily decline, and seldom or never revive in that nation, where they formerly flourished>. It must be confessed, that this maxim, though conformable to experience, may, at first sight, be esteemed contrary to reason. If the natural genius of mankind be the same in all ages, and in
almost all countries, (as seems to be the truth) it must very much forward and cultivate this genius, to be possessed of patterns in every art, which may regulate the taste, and fix the objects of imitation. The models left us by the ancients gave birth to all the arts about 200 years ago, and have mightily advanced their progress in every country of Europe: Why had they not a like effect during the reign of Trajan and his successors; when they were much more entire, and were still admired and studied by the whole world? So late as the emperor Justinian, the Poet, by way of distinction, was understood, among the Greeks, to be Homer; among the Romans, Virgil. Such admiration still remained for these divine geniuses; though no poet had appeared for many centuries, who could justly pretend to have imitated them.

A man's genius is always, in the beginning of life, as much unknown to himself as to others; and it is only after frequent trials, attended with success, that he dares think himself equal to those undertakings, in which those, who have succeeded, have fixed the admiration of mankind. If his own nation be already possessed of many models of eloquence, he naturally compares his own juvenile exercises with these, and being sensible of the
great disproportion, is discouraged from any farther attempts,
and never aims at a rivalship with those authors, whom he so much
admires. A noble emulation is the source of every excellence.
Admiration and modesty naturally extinguish this emulation. And
no one is so liable to an excess of admiration and modesty, as a
truly great genius.

Next to emulation, the greatest encourager of the noble arts
is praise and glory. A writer is animated with new force, when he
hears the applauses of the world for his former productions; and,
being roused by such a motive, he often reaches a pitch of
perfection, which is equally surprizing to himself and to his
readers. But when the posts of honour are all occupied, his first
attempts are but coldly received by the public; being compared to
productions, which are both in themselves more excellent, and
have already the advantage of an established reputation. Were
Molière and Corneille to bring upon the stage at present their
eyearly productions, which were formerly so well received, it would
discourage the young poets, to see the indifference and disdain
of the public. The ignorance of the age alone could have given
admission to the <Prince of Tyre>; but it is to that we owe <The
Moor>: Had <Every man in his humour> been rejected, we had never
seen <Volpone>.

Perhaps, it may not be for the advantage of any nation to have the arts imported from their neighbours in too great perfection. This extinguishes emulation, and sinks the ardour of the generous youth. So many models of Italian painting brought into England, instead of exciting our artists, is the cause of their small progress in that noble art. The same, perhaps, was the case of Rome, when it received the arts from Greece. That multitude of polite productions in the French language, dispersed all over Germany and the North, hinder these nations from cultivating their own language, and keep them still dependent on their neighbours for those elegant entertainments.

It is true, the ancients had left us models in every kind of writing, which are highly worthy of admiration. But besides that they were written in languages, known only to the learned; besides this, I say, the comparison is not so perfect or entire between modern wits, and those who lived in so remote an age. Had Waller been born in Rome, during the reign of Tiberius, his first productions had been despised, when compared to the finished odes of Horace. But in this island the superiority of the Roman poet diminished nothing from the fame of the English. We esteemed
ourselves sufficiently happy, that our climate and language could produce but a faint copy of so excellent an original.

In short, the arts and sciences, like some plants, require a fresh soil; and however rich the land may be, and however you may recruit it by art or care, it will never, when once exhausted, produce any thing that is perfect or finished in the kind.

Of the Standard of Taste

The great variety of Taste, as well as of opinion, which
prevails in the world, is too obvious not to have fallen under
every one's observation. Men of the most confined knowledge are
able to remark a difference of taste in the narrow circle of
their acquaintance, even where the persons have been educated
under the same government, and have early imbibed the same
prejudices. But those, who can enlarge their view to contemplate
distance nations and remote ages, are still more surprised at the
great inconsistence and contrariety. We are apt to call barbarous
whatever departs widely from our own taste and apprehension: But
soon find the epithet of reproach retorted on us. And the highest
arrogance and self-conceit is at last startled, on observing an
equal assurance on all sides, and scruples, amidst such a contest
of sentiment, to pronounce positively in its own favour.

As this variety of taste is obvious to the most careless
enquirer; so will it be found, on examination, to be still
greater in reality than in appearance. The sentiments of men
often differ with regard to beauty and deformity of all kinds,
even while their general discourse is the same. There are certain
terms in every language, which import blame, and others praise;
and all men, who use the same tongue, must agree in their
application of them. Every voice is united in applauding
elegance, propriety, simplicity, spirit in writing; and in blaining fustian, affectation, coldness and a false brilliancy: But when critics come to particulars, this seeming unanimity vanishes; and it is found, that they had affixed a very different meaning to their expressions. In all matters of opinion and science, the case it opposite: The difference among men is there oftener found to lie in generals than in particulars; and to be less in reality than in appearance. An explanation of the terms commonly ends the controversy; and the disputants are surprised to find, that they had been quarreling, while at bottom they agreed in their judgment.

Those who found morality on sentiment, more than on reason, are inclined to comprehend ethics under the former observation, and to maintain, that, in all questions, which regard conduct and manners, the difference among men is really greater than at first sight it appears. It is indeed obvious, that writers of all nations and all ages concur in applauding justice, humanity, magnanimity, prudence, veracity; and in blaming the opposite qualities. Even poets and other authors, whose compositions are chiefly calculated to please the imagination, are yet found, from HOMER down to FENELON, to inculcate the same moral precepts, and

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to bestow their applause and blame on the same virtues and vices.

This great unanimity is usually ascribed to the influence of
plain reason; which, in all these cases, maintains similar
sentiments in all men, and prevents those controversies, to which
the abstract sciences are so much exposed. So far as the
unanimity is real, this account may be admitted as satisfactory:

But we must also allow that some part of the seeming harmony in
morals may be accounted for from the very nature of language. The
word virtue, with its equivalent in every tongue, implies praise;
as that of vice does blame: And no one, without the most obvious
and grossest impropriety, could affix reproach to a term, which
in general acceptation is understood in a good sense; or bestow
applause, where the idiom requires disapprobation. HOMER's
general precepts, where he delivers any such will never be
controverted; but it is obvious, that, when he draws particular
pictures of manners, and represents heroism in ACHILLES and
prudence in ULYSSES, he intermixes a much greater degree of
ferocity in the former, and of cunning and fraud in the latter,

than FENELON would admit of. The same ULYSSES in the GREEK poet
seems to delight in lies and fictions; and often employs them
without any necessity of even advantage: But his more scrupulous
son, in the FRENCH epic writer, exposes himself to the most imminent perils, rather than depart from the most exact line of truth and veracity.

The admirers and follows of the ALCORAN insist on the excellent moral precepts interspersed throughout that wild and absurd performance. But it is to be supposed, that the ARABIC words, which correspond to the ENGLISH, equity, justice, temperance, meekness, charity, were such as, from the constant use of that tongue, must always be taken in a good sense; and it would have argued the greatest ignorance, not of morals, but of language, to have mentioned them with any epithets, besides those of applause and approbation. But would we know, whether the pretended prophet had really attained a just sentiment of morals? Let us attend to his narration; and we shall soon find, that he bestows praise on such instances of treachery, inhumanity, cruelty, revenge, bigotry, as are utterly incompatible with civilized society. No steady rule of right seems there to be attended to; and every action is blamed or praised, so far only as it is beneficial or hurtful to the true believers.

The merit of delivering true general precepts in ethics is indeed very small. Whoever recommends any moral virtues, really
does no more than is implied in the terms themselves. That people, who invented the word charity, and use it in a good sense, inculcated more clearly and much more efficaciously, the precept, be charitable, than any pretended legislator or prophet, who should insert such a maxim in his writings. Of all expressions, those, which, together with their other meaning, imply a degree either of blame or approbation, are the least liable to be perverted or mistaken.

It is natural for us to seek a Standard of Taste; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision, afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another.

There is a species of philosophy, which cuts off all hopes of success in such an attempt, and represents the impossibility of ever attaining any standard of taste. The difference, it is said, is very wide between judgment and sentiment. All sentiment is right; because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, wherever a man is conscious of it. But all determinations of the understanding are not right; because they have a reference to something beyond themselves, to wit, real matter of fact; and are not always conformable to that
standard. Among a thousand different opinions which different men
may entertain of the same subject, there is one, and but one,
that is just and true; and the only difficulty is to fix and
ascertain it. On the contrary, a thousand different sentiments,
excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment
represents what is really in the object. It only marks a certain
conformity or relation between the object and the organs or
faculties of the mind; and if that conformity did not really
exist, the sentiment could never possibly have being. Beauty is
no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind
which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different
beauty. One person may even perceive deformity, where another is
sensible of beauty; and every individual ought to acquiesce in
his own sentiment, without pretending to regulate those of
others. To seek in the real beauty, or real deformity, is as
fruitless an enquiry, as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet
or real bitter. According to the disposition of the organs, the
same object may be both sweet and bitter; and the proverb has
justly determined it to be fruitless to dispute concerning
tastes. It is very natural, and even quite necessary to extend
this axiom to mental, as well as bodily taste; and thus common
sense, which is so often at variance with philosophy, especially
with the skeptical kind, is found, in one instance at least, to
agree in pronouncing the same decision.

But though this axiom, by passing into a proverb, seems to
have attained the sanction of common sense; there is certainly a
species of common sense which opposes it, at least serves to
modify and restrain it. Whoever would assert an equality of
genius and elegance between OGILBY and MILTON, or BUNYAN and
ADDISON, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than
if he had maintained a mole-hill to be as high as TENERIFFE, or a
pond as extensive as the ocean. Though there may be found
persons, who give the preference to the former authors; no one
pays attention to such a taste; and we pronounce without scruple
the sentiment of these pretended critics to be absurd and
ridiculous. The principle of the natural equality of tastes is
then totally forgot, and while we admit it on some occasions,
where the objects seem near an equality, it appears an
extravagant paradox, or rather a palpable absurdity, where
objects so disproportioned are compared together.

It is evident that none of the rules of composition are
fixed by reasonings a priori, or can be esteemed abstract
conclusions of the understanding, from comparing those habitudes and relations of ideas, which are eternal and immutable. Their foundation is the same with that of all the practical sciences, experience; nor are they any thing but general observations, concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages. Many of the beauties of poetry and even of eloquence are founded on falsehood and fiction, on hyperboles, metaphors, and an abuse or perversion of terms from their natural meaning. To check the sallies of the imagination, and to reduce every expression to geometrical truth and exactness, would be the most contrary to the laws of criticism; because it would produce a work, which, by universal experience, has been found the most insipid and disagreeable. But though poetry can never submit to exact truth, it must be confined by rules of art, discovered to the author either by genius or observation. If some negligent or irregular writers have pleased, they have not pleased by their transgressions of rule or order, but in spite of these transgressions: They have possessed other beauties, which were conformable to just criticism; and the force of these beauties has been able to overpower censure, and give the mind a satisfaction superior to the disgust arising from the
blemishes. ARIOSTO leases; but not by his monstrous and improbable fictions, by his bizarre mixture of the serious and comic styles, by the want of coherence in his stories, or by the continual interruptions of his narration. He charms by the force and clearness of his expression, by the readiness and variety of his inventions, and by his natural pictures of the passions, especially those of the gay and amorous kind: And however his faults may diminish our satisfaction, they are not able entirely to destroy it. Did our pleasure really arise from those parts of his poem, which we denominate faults, this would be no objection to criticism in general: It would only be an objection to those particular rules of criticism, which would establish such circumstances to be faults, and would represent them as universally blameable. If they are found to please, they cannot be faults; let the pleasure, which they produce, be ever so unexpected and unaccountable.

But though all the general rules of art are founded only on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature, we must not imagine, that, on every occasion the feelings of men will be conformable to these rules. Those finer emotions of the mind are of a very tender and delicate nature,
and require the concurrence of many favourable circumstances to make them play with facility and exactness, according to their general and established principles. The least exterior hindrance to such small springs, or the least internal disorder, disturbs their motion, and confounds the operation of the whole machine. When we would make an experiment of this nature, and would try the force of any beauty or deformity, we must choose with care a proper time and place, and bring the fancy to a suitable situation and disposition. A perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object; if any of these circumstances be wanting, our experiment will be fallacious, and we shall be unable to judge of the catholic and universal beauty. The relation, which nature has placed between the form and the sentiment will at least be more obscure; and it will require greater accuracy to trace and discern it. We shall be able to ascertain its influence not so much from the operation of each particular beauty, as from the durable admiration, which attends those works, that have survived all the caprices of mode and fashion, all the mistakes of ignorance and envy.

The same HOMER, who pleased at ATHENS and ROME two thousand years ago, is still admired at PARIS and at LONDON. All the
changes of climate, government, religion, and language, have not
been able to obscure his glory. Authority or prejudice may give a
temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator, but his reputation will
never be durable or general. When his compositions are examined
by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated, and
his faults appear in their true colours. On the contrary, a real
genius, the longer his works endure, and the more wide they are
spread, the more sincere is the admiration which he meets with.
Envy and jealousy have too much place in a narrow circle; and
even familiar acquaintance with his person may diminish the
applause due to his performances. But when these obstructions are
removed, the beauties, which are naturally fitted to excite
agreeable sentiments, immediately display their energy and while
the world endures, they maintain their authority over the minds
of men.

It appears then, that, amidst all the variety and caprice
of taste, there are certain general principles of approbation or
blame, whose influence a careful eye may trace in all operations
of the mind. Some particular forms or qualities, from the
original structure of the internal fabric, are calculated to
please, and others to displease; and if they fail of their effect
in any particular instance, it is from some apparent defect or
imperfection in the organ. A man in a fever would not insist on
his palate as able to decide concerning flavours; nor would one,
affected with the jaundice, pretend to give a verdict with regard
to colours. In each creature, there is a sound and a defective
state; and the former alone can be supposed to afford us a true
standard of a considerable uniformity of sentiment among men, we
may thence derive an idea of the perfect beauty; in like manner
as the appearance of objects in daylight, to the eye of a man in
health, is denominated their true and real colour, even while
colour is allowed to be merely a phantasm of the senses.

Many and frequent are the defects in the internal organs,
which prevent or weaken the influence of those general
principles, on which depends our sentiment of beauty or
deformity. Though some objects, by the structure of the mind, be
naturally calculated to give pleasure, it is not to be expected,
that in every individual the pleasure will be equally felt.
Particular incidents and situations occur, which either throw a
false light on the objects, or hinder the true from conveying to
the imagination the proper sentiment and perception.

One obvious cause, why many feel not the proper sentiment
of beauty, is the want of that delicacy of imagination, which is
requisite to convey a sensibility of those finer emotions. This
delicacy every one pretends to: Every one talks of it; and would
reduce every kind of taste or sentiment to its standard. But as
our intention in this essay is to mingle some light of the
understanding with the feelings of sentiment, it will be proper
to give a more accurate definition of delicacy, than has hitherto
been attempted. And not to draw our philosophy from too profound
a source, we shall have recourse to a noted story in DON QUIXOTE.

It is with good reason, says SANCHO to the squire with the
great nose, that I pretend to have a judgment in wine: this is a
quality hereditary in our family. Two of my kinsmen were once
called to give their opinion of a hogshead, which was supposed to
be excellent, being old and of a good vintage. One of them tastes
it; considers it; and after mature reflection pronounces the wine
to be good, were it not for a small taste of leather, which he
perceived in it. The other, after using the same precautions,
gives also his verdict in favour of the wine; but with the
reserve of a taste of iron, which he could easily distinguish.
You cannot imagine how much they were both ridiculed for their
judgment. But who laughed in the end? On emptying the hogshead,
there was found at the bottom, an old key with a leathern thong tied to it.

The great resemblance between mental and bodily taste will easily teach us to apply this story. Though it be certain, that beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects, but belong entirely to the sentiment, internal or external; it must be allowed, that there are certain qualities in objects, which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings. Now as these qualities may be found in a small degree, or may be mixed and confounded with each other, it often happens, that the taste is not affected with such minute qualities, or is not able to distinguish all the particular flavours, amidst the disorder, in which they are presented. Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them; and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: This we call delicacy of taste, whether we employ these terms in the literal or metaphorical sense. Here then the general rules of beauty are of use; being drawn from established models, and from the observation of what pleases or displeases, when presented singly and in a high degree: And if the same qualities, in a continued composition and in a small degree,
affect not the organs with a sensible delight or uneasiness, we exclude the person from all pretensions to this delicacy. To produce these general rules or avowed patterns of composition is like finding the key with the leathern thong; which justified the verdict of SANCHO's kinsmen, and confounded those pretended judges who had condemned them. Though the hogshead had never been emptied, the taste of the one was still equally delicate, and that of the other equally dull and languid: But it would have been more difficult to have proved the superiority of the former, to the conviction of every by-stander. In like manner, though the beauties of writing had never been methodized, or reduced to general principles; though no excellent models had ever been acknowledged; the different degrees of taste would still have subsisted, and the judgment of one man had been preferable to that of another; but it would not have been so easy to silence the bad critic, who might always insist upon his particular sentiment, and refuse to submit to his antagonist. But wen we show him an avowed principle of art; when we illustrate this principle by examples, whose operation, from his own particular taste, he acknowledges to be conformable to the principle; when we prove, that the same principle may be applied to the present
case, where he did not perceive or feel its influence: He must conclude, upon the whole, that the fault lies in himself, and that he wants the delicacy, which is requisite to make him sensible of every beauty and every blemish, in any composition or discourse.

It is acknowledged to be the perfection of every sense or faculty, to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation. The smaller the objects are, which become sensible to the eye, the finer is that organ, and the more elaborate its make and composition. A good palate is not tried by strong flavours; but by a mixture of small ingredients, where we are still sensible of each part, notwithstanding its minuteness and its confusion with the rest. In like manner, a quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity must be the perfection of our mental taste; nor can a man be satisfied with himself while he suspects, that any excellence or blemish in a discourse has passed him unobserved. In this case, the perfection of the man, and the perfection of the sense or feeling, are found to be united. A very delicate palate, on many occasions, may be a great inconvenience both to a man himself and to his friends: But a delicate taste of wit or
beauty must always be a desirable quality; because it is the
source of all the finest and most innocent enjoyments, of which
human nature is susceptible. In this decision the sentiments of
all mankind are agreed. Wherever you can ascertain a delicacy of
taste, it is sure to meet with approbation; and the best way of
ascertaining it is to appeal to those models and principles,
which have been established by the uniform consent and experience
of nations and ages.

But though there be naturally a wide difference in point of
delicacy between one person and another, nothing tends further to
increase and improve this talent, than practice in a particular
art, and the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular
species of beauty. When objects of any kind are first presented
to the eye or imagination, the sentiment, which attends them, is
obscure and confused; and the mind is, in a great measure,
incapable of pronouncing concerning their merits or defects. The
taste cannot perceive the several excellences of the performance;
much less distinguish the particular character of each
excellency, and ascertain its quality and degree. If it pronounce
the whole in general to be beautiful or deformed, it is the
utmost that can be expected; and even this judgment, a person, so
unpracticed, will be apt to deliver with great hesitation and reserve. But allow him to acquire experience in those objects, his feeling becomes more exact and nice: He not only perceives the beauties and defects of each part, but marks the distinguishing species of each quality, and assigns it suitable praise or blame. A clear and distinct sentiment attends him through the whole survey of the objects; and he discerns that very degree and kind of approbation or displeasure, which each part is naturally fitted to produce. The mist dissipates, which seemed formerly to hang over the object: the organ acquires greater perfection in its operations; and can pronounce, without danger of mistake, concerning the merits of every performance. In a word, the same address and dexterity, which practice gives to the execution of any work, is also acquired by the same means in the judging of it.

So advantageous is practice to the discernment of beauty, that, before we can give judgment of any work of importance, it will even be requisite, that that very individual performance be more than once perused by us, and be surveyed in different lights with attention and deliberation. There is a flutter or hurry of thought which attends the first perusal of any piece, and which
confounds the genuine sentiment of beauty. The relation of the parts is not discerned: The true characters of style are little distinguished: The several perfections and defects seem wrapped up in a species of confusion, and present themselves indistinctly to the imagination. Not to mention, that there is a species of beauty, which, as it is florid and superficial, pleases at first; but being found incompatible with a just expression either of reason or passion, soon palls upon the taste, and is then rejected with disdain, at least rated at a much lower value.

It is impossible to continue in the practice of contemplating any order of beauty, without being frequently obliged to form comparisons between the several species and degrees of excellence, and estimating their proportion to each other. A man, who has had no opportunity of comparing the different kinds of beauty, is indeed totally unqualified to pronounce an opinion with regard to any object presented to him. By comparison alone we fix the epithets of praise or blame, and learn how to assign the due degree of each. The coarsest daubing contains a certain lustre of colours and exactness of imitation, which are so far beauties, and would affect the mind of a peasant or Indian with the highest admiration. The most vulgar ballads
are not entirely destitute of harmony or nature; and not but a person, familiarized to superior beauties, would pronounce their numbers harsh, or narration uninteresting. A great inferiority of beauty gives pain to a person conversant in the highest excellence of the kind, and is for that reason pronounced a deformity: As the most finished object, with which we are acquainted, is naturally supposed to have reached the pinnacle of perfection, and to be entitled to the highest applause. One accustomed to see, and examine, and weigh the several performances, admired in different ages and nations, can only rate the merits of a work exhibited to his view, and assign its proper rank among the productions of genius.

But to enable a critic the more fully to execute this undertaking, he must preserve his mind free from all prejudice, and allow nothing to enter into his consideration, but the very object which is submitted to his examination. We may observe, that every work of art, in order to produce its due effect on the mind, must be surveyed in a certain point of view, and not be fully relished by persons, whose situation, real or imaginary, is not conformable to that which is required by the performance. An orator addresses himself to a particular audience, and must have
a regard to their particular genius, interests, opinions, passions, and prejudices; otherwise he hopes in vain to govern their resolutions, and inflame their affections. Should they even have entertained some prepossessions against him, however unreasonable, he must not overlook this disadvantage; but, before he enters upon the subject, must endeavour to conciliate their affection, and acquire their good graces. A critic of a different age or notion, who should peruse this discourse, must have all these circumstances in his eye, and must place himself in the same situation as the audience, in order to form a true judgment of the oration. In like manner, when any work is addressed to the public, though I should have a friendship or enmity with the author, I must depart from this situation; and considering myself as a man in general, forget, if possible, my individual being and my peculiar circumstances. A person influenced by prejudice, complies not with this condition; but obstinately maintains his natural position, without placing himself in that point of view, which the performance supposes. If the work be addressed to persons of a different age or nation, he makes no allowance for their peculiar views and prejudices; but, full of the manners of his own age and country, rashly condemns what seemed admirable in
the eyes of those for whom alone the discourse was calculated. If the work be executed for the public, he never sufficiently enlarges his comprehension, or forgets his interest as a friend or enemy, as a rival or commentator. By this means, his sentiments are perverted; nor have the same beauties and blemishes the same influence upon him, as if he had imposed a proper violence on his imagination, and had forgotten himself for a moment. So far his taste evidently departs from the true standard; and of consequence loses all credit and authority.

It is well known, that in all questions, submitted to the understanding, prejudice is destructive of sound judgment, and perverts all operations of the intellectual faculties: It is no less contrary to good taste; nor has it less influence to corrupt our sentiment of beauty. It belongs to good sense to check its influence in both cases; and in this respect, as well as in many others, reason, if not an essential part of taste, is at least requisite to the operations of this latter faculty. In all the nobler productions of genius, there is a mutual relation and correspondence of parts; nor can either the beauties or blemishes be perceived by him, whose thought is not capacious enough to comprehend all those parts, and compare then with each other, in

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order to perceive the consistence and uniformity of the whole.

Every work of art has also a certain end or purpose, for which it is calculated; and is to be deemed more or less perfect, as it is more or less fitted to attain this end. The object of eloquence is to persuade, of history to instruct, of poetry to please by means of the passions and the imagination. These ends we must carry constantly in our view, when we peruse any performance; and we must be able to judge how far the means employed are adapted to their respective purposes. Besides, every kind of composition, even the most poetical, is nothing but a chain of propositions and reasonings; not always, indeed, the justest and most exact, but still plausible and specious, however disguised by the colouring of the imagination. The persons introduced in tragedy and epic poetry, must be represented as reasoning, and thinking, and concluding, and acting, suitably to their character and circumstances; and without judgment, as well as taste and invention, a poet can never hope to succeed in so delicate an undertaking. Not to mention, that the same excellence of faculties which contributes to the improvement of reason, the same clearness of conception, the same exactness of distinction, the same vivacity of apprehension, are essential to the
operations of true taste, and are its infallible concomitants. It seldom, or never happens, that a man of sense, who has experience in any art, cannot judge of its beauty; and it is no less rare to meet with a man who has a just taste without a sound understanding.

Thus, though the principles of taste be universal, and, nearly, if not entirely the same in all men; yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty. The organs of internal sensation are seldom so perfect as to allow the general principles their full play, and produce a feeling correspondent to those principles. They either labour under some defect, or are vitiated by some disorder; and by that means, excite a sentiment, which may be pronounced erroneous. When the critic has no delicacy, he judges without any distinction, and is only affected by the grosser and more palpable qualities of the object: The finer touches pass unnoticed and disregarded. Where he is not aided by practice, his verdict is attended with confusion and hesitation. Where no comparison has been employed, the most frivolous beauties, such as rather merit the name of defects, are the object of his admiration. Where he lies under the
influence of prejudice, all his natural sentiments are perverted. Where good sense is wanting, he is not qualified to discern the beauties of design and reasoning, which are the highest and most excellent. Under some or other of these imperfections, the generality of men labour; and hence a true judge in the finer arts is observed, even during the most polished ages, to be so fare a character; Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can along entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty.

But where are such critics to be found? By what marks are they to be known? How distinguish them from pretenders? These questions are embarrassing; and seem to throw us back into the same uncertainty, from which, during the course of this essay, we have endeavoured to extricate ourselves.

But if we consider the matter aright, these are questions of fact, not of sentiment. Whether any particular person be endowed with good sense and a delicate imagination, free from prejudice, may often be the subject of dispute, and be liable to great discussion and enquiry: but that such a character is
valuable and estimable will be agreed in by all mankind. Where
these doubts occur, men can do no more than in other disputable
questions, which are submitted to the understanding: They must
produce the best arguments, that their invention suggests to
them; they must acknowledge a true and decisive standard to exist
somewhere, to wit, real existence and matter of fact; and they
must have indulgence to such as differ from them in their appeals
to this standard. It is sufficient for our present purpose, if we
have proved, that the taste of all individuals is not upon an
equal footing, and that some men in general, however difficult to
be particularly pitched upon, will be acknowledge by universal
sentiment to have a preference above others.

But in reality the difficulty of finding, even in
particulars, the standard of taste, is not so great as it is
represented. Though in speculation, we may readily avow a certain
criterion in science and deny it in sentiment, the matter is
found in practice to be much more hard to ascertain in the former
case than in the latter. Theories of abstract philosophy, systems
of profound theology, have prevailed during one age: In a
successive period, these have been universally exploded: Their
absurdity has been detected: Other theories and systems have
supplied their place, which again gave place to their successors:

And nothing has been experienced more liable to the revolutions of chance and fashion than these pretended decisions of science.

The case is not the same with the beauties of eloquence and poetry. Just expressions of passion and nature are sure, after a little time, to gain public applause, which they maintain for ever. ARISTOTLE, and PLATO, and EPICURUS, and DESCARTES, may successively yield to each other: But TERENCE and VIRGIL maintain an universal, undisputed empire over the minds of men. The abstract philosophy of CICERO has lost its credit: The vehemence of his oratory is still the object of our admiration.

Though men of delicate taste be rare, they are easily to be distinguished in society, by the soundness of their understanding and the superiority of their faculties above the rest of mankind. The ascendant, which they acquire, gives a prevalence to that lively approbation, with which they receive any productions of genius, and renders it generally predominant. Many men, when left to themselves, have but a faint and dubious perception of beauty, who yet are capable of relishing any fine stroke, which is pointed out to them. Every convert to the admiration of the real poet or orator is the cause of some new conversion. And though
prejudices may prevail for a time, they never unite in
celebrating any rival to the true genius, but yield at last to
the force of nature and just sentiment. Thus, though a civilized
nation may easily be mistaken in the choice of their admired
philosopher, they never have been found long to err, in their
affection for a favorite epic or tragic author.

But notwithstanding all our endeavours to fix a standard of
taste, and reconcile the discordant apprehensions of men, there
still remain two sources of variation, which are not sufficient
indeed to confound all the boundaries of beauty and deformity,
but will often serve to produce a difference in the degrees of
our approbation or blame. The one is the different humours of
particular men; the other, the particular manners and opinions of
our age and country. The general principles of taste are uniform
in human nature: where men vary in their judgments, some defect
or perversion in the faculties may commonly be remarked;
proceeding either from prejudice, from want of practice, or want
of delicacy; and there is just reason for approving one taste,
and condemning another. But where there is such a diversity in
the internal frame or external situation as is entirely blameless
on both sides, and leaves no room to give one the preference
above the other; in that case a certain degree of diversity in judgment is unavoidable, and we seek in vain for a standard, by which we can reconcile the contrary sentiments.

A young man, whose passions are warm, will be more sensibly touched with amorous and tender images, than a man more advanced in years, who take pleasure in wise, philosophical reflections concerning the conduct of life and moderation of the passions. At twenty, OVID may be the favourite author; HORACE at forty; and perhaps TACITUS at fifty. Vainly would we, in such cases, endeavour to enter into the sentiments of others, and divest ourselves of those propensities, which are natural to us. We choose our favourite author as we do our friend, from a conformity of humour and disposition. Mirth or passion, sentiment or reflection; whichever of these most predominates in our temper, it gives us a peculiar sympathy with the writer who resembles us.

One person is more pleased with the sublime; another with the tender; a third with raillery. One has a strong sensibility to blemishes, and is extremely studious of correctness: Another has a more lively feeling of beauties, and pardons twenty absurdities and defects for one elevated or pathetic stroke. The
ear of this man is entirely turned towards conciseness and energy; that man is delighted with a copious, rich, and harmonious expression. Simplicity is affected by one; ornament by another. Comedy, tragedy, satire, odes, have each its partisans, who prefer that particular species of writing to all others. It is plainly an error in a critic, to confine his approbation to one species or style of writing, and condemn all the rest. But it is almost impossible not to feel a predilection for that which suits our particular turn and disposition. Such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because there is no standard, by which they can be decided.

For a like reason, we are more pleased, in the course of our reading, with pictures and characters, that resemble objects which are found in our own age or country, than with those which describe a different set of customs. It is not without some effort, that we reconcile ourselves to the simplicity of ancient manners, and behold princesses carrying water from the spring, and kings and heroes dressing their own victuals. We may allow in general, that the representation of such manners is no fault in the author, nor deformity in the piece; but we are not so
sensibly touched with them. For this reason, comedy is not easily transferred from one age or nation to another. A FRENCHMAN or ENGLISHMAN is not pleased with the ANDRIA of TERENCE, or CLITIA of MACHIAVEL; where the fine lady, upon whom all the play turns, never once appears to the spectators, but is always kept behind the scenes, suitably to the reserved humour of the ancient GREEKS and modern ITALIANS. A man of learning and reflection can make allowance for these peculiarities of manners; but a common audience can never divest themselves so far of their usual ideas and sentiments, as to relish pictures which in no wise resemble them.

But here there occurs a reflection, which may, perhaps, be useful in examining the celebrated controversy concerning ancient and modern learning; where we often find the one side excusing any seeming absurdity in the ancients from the manners of the age, and the other refusing to admit this excuse, or at least, admitting it only as an apology for the author, not for the performance. In my opinion, the proper boundaries in this subject have seldom been fixed between the contending parties. Where any innocent peculiarities of manners are represented, such as those above mentioned, they ought certainly to be admitted; and a man,
who is shocked with them, gives an evident proof of false
delicacy and refinement. The poet's monument more durable than
brass, must fall to the ground like common brick or clay, were
men to make no allowance for the continual revolutions of manners
and customs, and would admit of nothing but what was suitable to
the prevailing fashion. Muse we throw aside the pictures of our
ancestors, because of their ruffs and fardingales? But where the
ideas of morality and decency alter from one age to another, and
where vicious manners are described, without being marked with
the proper characters of blame and disapprobation; this must be
allowed to disfigure the poem, and to be a real deformity. I
cannot, nor is it proper I should, enter into such sentiments;
and however I may excuse the poet, on account of the manners in
his age, I never can relish the composition. The want of humanity
and of decency, so conspicuous in the characters drawn by several
of the ancient poets, even sometimes by HOMER and the GREEK
tragedians, diminishes considerably the merit of their noble
performances, and gives modern authors an advantage over them. We
are not interested in the fortunes and sentiments of such rough
heroes: We are displeased to find the limits of vice and virtue
so much confounded: And whatever indulgence we may give to the
writer on account of his prejudices, we cannot prevail on ourself
to enter into his sentiments, or bear an affection to characters,
which we plainly discover to be blameable.

The case is not the same with moral principles, as with
speculative opinions of any kind. These are in continual flux and
revolution. The son embraces a different system from the father.
Nay, there scarcely is any man, who can boast of great constancy
and uniformity in this particular. Whatever speculative errors
may be found in the polite writings of any age or country, they
detract but little from the value of those compositions. There
needs but a certain turn of thought or imagination to make us
enter into all the opinions, which then prevailed, and relish the
sentiments or conclusions derived from them. But a very violent
effort is requisite to change our judgment of manners, and excite
sentiments of approbation or blame, love or hatred, different
from those to which the mind from long custom has been
familiarized. And where a man is confident of the rectitude of
that moral standard, by which he judges, he is justly jealous of
it, and will not pervert the sentiments of his heart for a
moment, in complaisance to any writer whatsoever.

Of all speculative errors, those, which regard religion,
are the most excusable in compositions of genius; nor is it ever permitted to judge of the civility or wisdom of any people, or even of single persons, by the grossness or refinement of their theological principles. The same good sense, that directs men in the ordinary occurrences of life, is not harkened to in religious matters, which are supposed to be placed altogether above the cognizance of human reason. On this account, all the absurdities of the pagan system of theology must be overlooked by every critic, who would pretend to form a just notion of ancient poetry; and our posterity, in their turn, must have the same indulgence to their forefathers. No religious principles can ever be imputed as a fault to any poet, while they remain merely principles, and take not such strong possession of his heart, as to lay him under the imputation of bigotry or superstition. Where that happens, they confound the sentiments of morality, and alter the natural boundaries of vice and virtue. They are therefore eternal blemishes, according to the principle above mentioned; nor are the prejudices and false opinions of the age sufficient to justify them.

It is essential to the ROMAN catholic religion to inspire a violent hatred of every other worship, and to represent all
pagans, mahometans, and heretics as the objects of divine wrath and vengeance. Such sentiments, though they are in reality very blameable, are considered as virtues by the zealots of that communion, and are represented in their tragedies and epic poems as a kind of divine heroism. This bigotry has disfigured two very fine tragedies of the FRENCH theatre, POLIEUCTE and ATHALIA; where an intemperate zeal for particular modes of worship is set off with all the pomp imaginable, and forms the predominant character of the heroes. 'What is this,' says the sublime JOAD to JOSABET, finding her in discourse with MATHAN, the priest of BAAL, 'Does the daughter of DAVID speak to this traitor? Are you not afraid, lest the earth should open and pour forth flames to devour you both? Or lest these holy walls should fall and crush you together? What is his purpose? Why comes that enemy of God hither to poison the air, which we breath, with his horrid presence?' Such sentiments are received with great applause on the theatre of PARIS; but at LONDON the spectators would be full as much pleased to hear ACHILLES tell AGAMEMNON, that he was a dog in his forehead, and a dear in his heart, or JUPITER threaten JUNO with a sound drubbing, if she will not be quiet.

RELIGIOUS principles are also a blemish in any polite
composition, when they rise up to superstition, and intrude themselves into every sentiment, however remote from any connection with religion. It is no excuse for the poet, that the customs of his country had burthened life with so many religious ceremonies and observances, that no part of it was exempt from that yoke. It must for ever be ridiculous in PETRARCH to compare his mistress LAURA, to JESUS CHRIST. Nor is it less ridiculous in that agreeable libertine, BOCCACE, very seriously to give thanks to GOD ALMIGHTY and the ladies, for their assistance in defending him against his enemies.

OF TRAGEDY
It seems an unaccountable pleasure, which the spectators of a well-written tragedy receive from sorrow, terror, anxiety, and other passions, that are in themselves disagreeable and uneasy. The more they are touched and affected, the more are they delighted with the spectacle; and as soon as the uneasy passions cease to operate, the piece is at an end. One scene of full joy and contentment and security is the utmost, that any composition of this kind can bear; and it is sure always to be the concluding one. If, in the texture of the piece, there be interwoven any scenes of satisfaction, they afford only faint gleams of pleasure, which are thrown in by way of variety, and in order to plunge the actors into deeper distress, by means of that contrast and disappointment. The whole heart of the poet is employed, in rousing and supporting the compassion and indignation, the anxiety and resentment of his audience. They are pleased in proportion as they are afflicted, and never are so happy as when they employ tears, sobs, and cries to give vent to their sorrow,
and relieve their heart, swoln with the tenderest sympathy and compassion.

The few critics who have had some tincture of philosophy, have remarked this singular phenomenon, and have endeavoured to account for it.

L'Abbé Dubos, in his reflections on poetry and painting, asserts, that nothing is in general so disagreeable to the mind as the languid, listless state of indolence, into which it falls upon the removal of all passion and occupation. To get rid of this painful situation, it seeks every amusement and pursuit; business, gaming, shews, executions; whatever will rouze the passions, and take its attention from itself. No matter what the passion is: Let it be disagreeable, afflicting, melancholy, disordered; it is still better than that insipid languor, which arises from perfect tranquillity and repose.

It is impossible not to admit this account, as being, at least in part, satisfactory. You may observe, when there are several tables of gaming, that all the company run to those, where the deepest play is, even though they find not there the best players. The view, or, at least, imagination of high passions, arising from great loss or gain, affects the spectator.

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by sympathy, gives him some touches of the same passions, and
serves him for a momentary entertainment. It makes the time pass
the easier with him, and is some relief to that oppression, under
which men commonly labour, when left entirely to their own
thoughts and meditations.

We find that common liars always magnify, in their
narrations, all kinds of danger, pain, distress, sickness,
deaths, murders, and cruelties; as well as joy, beauty, mirth,
and magnificence. It is an absurd secret, which they have for
pleasing their company, fixing their attention, and attaching
them to such marvellous relations, by the passions and emotions,
which they excite.

There is, however, a difficulty in applying to the present
subject, in its full extent, this solution, however ingenious and
satisfactory it may appear. It is certain, that the same object
of distress, which pleases in a tragedy, were it really set
before us, would give the most unfeigned uneasiness; though it be
then the most effectual cure to languor and indolence. Monsieur
Fontenelle seems to have been sensible of this difficulty; and
accordingly attempts another solution of the phaenomenon; at
least makes some addition to the theory above mentioned.[2]
'Pleasure and pain,' says he, 'which are two sentiments so different in themselves, differ not so much in their cause. From the instance of tickling, it appears, that the movement of pleasure, pushed a little too far, becomes pain; and that the movement of pain, a little moderated, becomes pleasure. Hence it proceeds, that there is such a thing as a sorrow, soft and agreeable: It is a pain weakened and diminished. The heart likes naturally to be moved and affected. Melancholy objects suit it, and even disastrous and sorrowful, provided they are softened by some circumstance. It is certain, that on the theatre, the representation has almost the effect of reality; yet it has not altogether that effect. However we may be hurried away by the spectacle; whatever dominion the senses and imagination may usurp over the reason, there still lurks at the bottom a certain idea of falsehood in the whole of what we see. This idea, though weak and disguised, suffices to diminish the pain which we suffer from the misfortunes of those whom we love, and to reduce that affliction to such a pitch as converts it into a pleasure. We weep for the misfortune of a hero, to whom we are attached. In the same instant we comfort ourselves, by reflecting, that it is nothing but a fiction: And it is precisely that mixture of
sentiments, which composes an agreeable sorrow, and tears that delight us. But as that affliction, which is caused by exterior and sensible objects, is stronger than the consolation which arises from an internal reflection, they are the effects and symptoms of sorrow, that ought to predominate in the composition.'

This solution seems just and convincing; but perhaps it wants still some new addition, in order to make it answer fully the phaenomenon, which we here examine. All the passions, excited by eloquence, are agreeable in the highest degree, as well as those which are moved by painting and the theatre. The epilogues of Cicero are, on this account chiefly, the delight of every reader of taste; and it is difficult to read some of them without the deepest sympathy and sorrow. His merit as an orator, no doubt, depends much on his success in this particular. When he had raised tears in his judges and all his audience, they were then the most highly delighted, and expressed the greatest satisfaction with the pleader. The pathetic description of the butchery, made by Verres of the Sicilian captains, is a masterpiece of this kind: But I believe none will affirm, that the being present at a melancholy scene of that nature would
afford any entertainment. Neither is the sorrow here softened by fiction: For the audience were convinced of the reality of every circumstance. What is it then, which in this case raises a pleasure from the bosom of uneasiness, so to speak; and a pleasure, which still retains all the features and outward symptoms of distress and sorrow?

I answer: This extraordinary effect proceeds from that very eloquence, with which the melancholy scene is represented. The genius required to paint objects in a lively manner, the art employed in collecting all the pathetic circumstances, the judgment displayed in disposing them: the exercise, I say, of these noble talents, together with the force of expression, and beauty of oratorial numbers, diffuse the highest satisfaction on the audience, and excite the most delightful movements. By this means, the uneasiness of the melancholy passions is not only overpowered and effaced by something stronger of an opposite kind; but the whole impulse of those passions is converted into pleasure, and swells the delight which the eloquence raises in us. The same force of oratory, employed on an uninteresting subject, would not please half so much, or rather would appear altogether ridiculous; and the mind, being left in absolute
calmness and indifference, would relish none of those beauties of imagination or expression, which, if joined to passion, give it such exquisite entertainment. The impulse or vehemence, arising from sorrow, compassion, indignation, receives a new direction from the sentiments of beauty. The latter, being the predominant emotion, seize the whole mind, and convert the former into themselves, at least tincture them so strongly as totally to alter their nature. And the soul, being, at the same time, roused by passion, and charmed by eloquence, feels on the whole a strong movement, which is altogether delightful.

The same principle takes place in tragedy; with this addition, that tragedy is an imitation; and imitation is always of itself agreeable. This circumstance serves still farther to smooth the motions of passion, and convert the whole feeling into one uniform and strong enjoyment. Objects of the greatest terror and distress please in painting, and please more than the most beautiful objects, that appear calm and indifferent. The affection, rousing the mind, excites a large stock of spirit and vehemence; which is all transformed into pleasure by the force of the prevailing movement. It is thus the fiction of tragedy softens the passion, by an infusion of a new feeling, not merely
by weakening or diminishing the sorrow. You may by degrees weaken 
a real sorrow, till it totally disappears; yet in none of its 
graduations will it ever give pleasure; except, perhaps, by 
accident, to a man sunk under lethargic indolence, whom it rouzes 
from that languid state.

To confirm this theory, it will be sufficient to produce 
other instances, where the subordinate movement is converted into 
the predominant, and gives force to it, though of a different, 
and even sometimes though of a contrary nature.

Novelty naturally rouzes the mind, and attracts our 
attention; and the movements, which it causes, are always 
converted into any passion, belonging to the object, and join 
their force to it. Whether an event excite joy or sorrow, pride 
or shame, anger or good-will, it is sure to produce a stronger 
affectation, when new or unusual. And though novelty of itself be 
agreeable, it fortifies the painful, as well as agreeable 
passions.

Had you any intention to move a person extremely by the 
narration of any event, the best method of encreasing its effect 
would be artfully to delay informing him of it, and first to 
excite his curiosity and impatience before you let him into the
secret. This is the artifice practised by Iago in the famous scene of Shakespeare; and every spectator is sensible, that Othello's jealousy acquires additional force from his preceding impatience, and that the subordinate passion is here readily transformed into the predominant one.

Difficulties encrease passions of every kind; and by rouzing our attention, and exciting our active powers, they produce an emotion, which nourishes the prevailing affection.

Parents commonly love that child most, whose sickly infirm frame of body has occasioned them the greatest pains, trouble, and anxiety in rearing him. The agreeable sentiment of affection here acquires force from sentiments of uneasiness.

Nothing endears so much a friend as sorrow for his death. The pleasure of his company has not so powerful an influence.

Jealousy is a painful passion; yet without some share of it, the agreeable affection of love has difficulty to subsist in its full force and violence. Absence is also a great source of complaint among lovers, and gives them the greatest uneasiness: Yet nothing is more favourable to their mutual passion than short intervals of that kind. And if long intervals often prove fatal, it is only because, through time, men are accustomed to them, and
they cease to give uneasiness. Jealousy and absence in love compose the <dolce peccante> of the Italians, which they suppose so essential to all pleasure.

There is a fine observation of the elder Pliny, which illustrates the principle here insisted on. <It is very remarkable>, says he, <that the last works of celebrated artists, which they left imperfect, are always the most prized, such as the Iris of Aristides, the Tyndarides of Nicomachus, the Medea of Timomachus, and the Venus of Apelles. These are valued even above their finished productions: The broken lineaments of the piece, and the half-formed idea of the painter are carefully studied; and our very grief for that curious hand, which had been stopped by death, is an additional encrease to our pleasure>.'[4]

These instances (and many more might be collected) are sufficient to afford us some insight into the analogy of nature, and to show us, that the pleasure, which poets, orators, and musicians give us, by exciting grief, sorrow, indignation, compassion, is not so extraordinary or paradoxical, as it may at first sight appear. The force of imagination, the energy of expression, the power of numbers, the charms of imitation; all these are naturally, of themselves, delightful to the mind: And
when the object presented lays also hold of some affection, the pleasure still rises upon us, by the conversion of this subordinate movement into that which is predominant. The passion, though, perhaps, naturally, and when excited by the simple appearance of a real object, it may be painful; yet is so smoothed, and softened, and mollified, when raised by the finer arts, that it affords the highest entertainment.

To confirm this reasoning, we may observe, that if the movements of the imagination be not predominant above those of the passion, a contrary effect follows; and the former, being now subordinate, is converted into the latter, and still farther encreases the pain and affliction of the sufferer.

Who could ever think of it as a good expedient for comforting an afflicted parent, to exaggerate, with all the force of elocution, the irreparable loss, which he has met with by the death of a favourite child? The more power of imagination and expression you here employ, the more you encrease his despair and affliction.

The shame, confusion, and terror of Verres, no doubt, rose in proportion to the noble eloquence and vehemence of Cicero: So also did his pain and uneasiness. These former passions were too
strong for the pleasure arising from the beauties of elocution;
and operated, though from the same principle, yet in a contrary
manner, to the sympathy, compassion, and indignation of the
audience.

Lord Clarendon, when he approaches towards the catastrophe
of the royal party, supposes, that his narration must then become
infinitely disagreeable; and he hurries over the king's death,
without giving us one circumstance of it. He considers it as too
horrid a scene to be contemplated with any satisfaction, or even
without the utmost pain and aversion. He himself, as well as the
readers of that age, were too deeply concerned in the events, and
felt a pain from subjects, which an historian and a reader of
another age would regard as the most pathetic and most
interesting, and, by consequence, the most agreeable.

An action, represented in tragedy, may be too bloody and
atrocious. It may excite such movements of horror as will not
soften into pleasure; and the greatest energy of expression,
bestowed on descriptions of that nature, serves only to augment
our uneasiness. Such is that action represented in the <Ambitious
Stepmother>, where a venerable old man, raised to the height of
fury and despair, rushes against a pillar, and striking his head
upon it, besmears it all over with mingled brains and gore. The English theatre abounds too much with such shocking images.

Even the common sentiments of compassion require to be softened by some agreeable affection, in order to give a thorough satisfaction to the audience. The mere suffering of plaintive virtue, under the triumphant tyranny and oppression of vice, forms a disagreeable spectacle, and is carefully avoided by all masters of the drama. In order to dismiss the audience with entire satisfaction and contentment, the virtue must either convert itself into a noble courageous despair, or the vice receive its proper punishment.

Most painters appear in this light to have been very unhappy in their subjects. As they wrought much for churches and convents, they have chiefly represented such horrible subjects as crucifixions and martyrdoms, where nothing appears but tortures, wounds, executions, and passive suffering, without any action or affection. When they turned their pencil from this ghastly mythology, they had commonly recourse to Ovid, whose fictions, though passionate and agreeable, are scarcely natural or probable enough for painting.

The same inversion of that principle, which is here insisted
on, displays itself in common life, as in the effects of oratory and poetry. Raise so the subordinate passion that it becomes the predominant, it swallows up that affection which it before nourished and encreased. Too much jealousy extinguishes love: Too much difficulty renders us indifferent: Too much sickness and infirmity disgusts a selfish and unkind parent.

What so disagreeable as the dismal, gloomy, disastrous stories, with which melancholy people entertain their companions? The uneasy passion being there raised alone, unaccompanied with any spirit, genius, or eloquence, conveys a pure uneasiness, and is attended with nothing that can soften it into pleasure or satisfaction.