The Principles of Action

No. 3 of *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*

Thomas Reid

Copyright © Jonathan Bennett 2017. All rights reserved

[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type.—Other philosophers are referred to by surname only; Reid also gives their titles.—The frequency of extremely short paragraphs is Reid's work.

First launched: April 2011

Contents

Part I: The Mechanical Principles of Action **1**
Chapter 1: The principles of action in general 1
Chapter 2: Instinct 3
Chapter 3: Habit 9

Part II: Animal Principles of Action **11**
Chapter 1: Appetites 11
Chapter 2: Desires 15
Chapter 3: Benevolent affection in general 19
Chapter 4: Some particular benevolent affections 22
Chapter 5: Malevolent affections 30
Chapter 6: Passion 35
Chapter 7: Disposition 41
Chapter 8: Belief 43

Part III: The Rational Principles of Action **47**
Chapter 1: There are rational principles of action in man 47
Chapter 2: Concern for our good on the whole 48
Chapter 3: The effect of this principle 51
Chapter 4: Defects of this principle 53
Chapter 5: The notion of duty, rectitude, moral obligation 56
Chapter 6: The sense of duty 60
Chapter 7: Moral approval and disapproval 63
Chapter 8: Conscience 67

Glossary

amiable: This meant 'likable', 'lovable', 'very attractive'. A good deal stronger than the word's normal meaning today.

art: In Reid's time an 'art' was any human activity that involves techniques or rules of procedure. 'Arts' in this sense include medicine, farming, and painting.

bad: This very often replaces Reid's adjective 'ill', e.g. in the phrase 'good and ill'. See also **evil**.

basic: Most occurrences of this replace Reid's 'original', which can't now carry the meaning it had at his time. In calling a human power 'original' he means that it is basic, fundamental, not derived from (or explainable in terms of) something lying deeper in the human constitution.

belief: Many occurrences of this, including the title of Part II chapter 8, replace Reid's 'opinion'. For him the two are equivalent, whereas for us their flavours are slightly different. The phrase 'belief and opinions' on page 47 seems to presuppose a difference, but Reid nowhere explains what it is.

contemn: This is not obsolete; it means 'have contempt for'.

culture: As used repeatedly in the final chapter of this work, 'culture' is to be thought of in connection with 'horticulture', 'agriculture' etc. It has nothing to do with being artistically or intellectually or socially cultured; it is all about cultivation, taking care of plants, making a good job of feeding and watering and pruning.

dignity: Excellence.

disinterested: What this meant in early modern times is what it still means when used by literate people, namely 'not *self*-interested'.

epitome: A reduced-scale model. (It nearly rhymes with 'litany'.)

evil: This replaces Reid's 'ill' when that is used as a noun. It has become fairly standard in English-language philosophy to use 'evil' to mean merely 'something bad', e.g. 'pain is an evil', and 'the problem of evil' meaning 'the problem posed by the existence of bad states of affairs'. It's just an oddity of English that 'good' works well as adjective or noun while 'bad' works only as an adjective. Don't load 'evil' in this text with all the force it has in English when used as an adjective. See also **bad**.

faculty: Your faculty of seeing (for example) is either **(i)** your ability to see or **(ii)** whatever it is about you that *gives* you the ability to see. Reid's stress on our need to trust the 'testimony' of our faculties, he seems to adopt **(ii)**, a choice that is underlined when on page 63 he speaks of faculties as 'engines'.

injury: In Reid's usage here, to do someone an injury is to hurt him *wrongly*, *unjustly*. That is why you can't believe that someone has done you an injury unless you are equipped with moral concepts—see page 34, the paragraph starting 'The very notion. . . '.

intercourse: This is used on page 20 in a context where sex is under discussion, but its meaning is not sexual. It has a very general meaning that covers conversation, business dealings, any kind of social inter-relations; 'sexual intercourse' named one species, but you couldn't drop the adjective and still refer to it.

lot: 'What is given to a person by fate or divine providence; *esp.* a person's destiny, fortune, or condition in life.' (OED)

mean: Low-down, poor, skimpy etc., in literal and metaphorical uses. Reid uses it here as a kind of intensifier—'mean or bad motives' [page 31], 'base or mean' [page 42], 'mean and despicable' [page 54].

object: In early modern usage, anything that is aimed at, wanted, loved, hated, thought about, feared, etc. is an *object* of that aim, desire, love, etc. *Anything*: it could be a physical object, but is more likely to be a state of affairs, a state of mind, an experience, etc.

principle: Of this work's 305 occurrences of 'principle', a few concern basic propositions—principles 'of false religion', 'of solid geometry', 'of the Epicurean sect', and so on. But the vast majority use 'principle' in a sense that was common then but is now obsolete, in which it means 'source', 'cause', 'driver', 'energizer', or the like. Reid sometimes speaks of a principle's 'impulse' and sometimes of its 'drawing' the person in a certain direction. He seems not to have given any thought to this choice between push and pull.

reflection: Reid sometimes uses this in a sense popularised by Locke, meaning 'looking in at the events in one's own mind'. But quite often he uses it in a sense that comes more naturally to us, in which reflection is just calmly thinking things over.

sagacity: Lively intelligence.

sated: utterly satisfied, glutted, full.

science: In early modern times this word applied to any body of knowledge or theory that is (perhaps) axiomatised and (certainly) conceptually highly organised. That is why on page 61 Reid implies that there is a 'science' of morals.

second cause: For those with certain theological views, God is the first cause of everything that happens in the world; a 'second cause' is an ordinary down-to-earth cause such as heat causing butter to melt. It is a 'second' cause because God causes the butter to melt *through* bringing heat to bear on it. In Reid's single use of this phrase in the present work [page 67] he seems—a bit surprisingly—to be saying that the most fundamental aspects of the human constitution are produced by God *directly* and not through any manipulation of created mental or physical realities.

self-control: This replaces Reid's 'self-government' throughout.

social: In contrast to 'selfish', meaning 'motivated by a concern for the welfare of other people'.

speculative: This means 'having to do with non-moral propositions'. Ethics is a 'practical' discipline, chemistry is a 'speculative' one. When Reid speaks of 'speculation' he means 'disciplined study of some factual material that isn't immediately concerned with how anyone should behave'.

sympathy: Literally 'feeling with', as applied to any feeling. Sympathy is at work not only when your sadness saddens me but also when your happiness makes me happy. When on page 65 Reid says that if your friend acts badly that will give you 'a very painful sympathy indeed' in the form of a feeling like that of guilt, he is evidently assuming that your friend knows he has acted badly and is ashamed, and it's his shame that your sympathy locks onto.

uneasy: Locke turned this into a kind of technical term for some later writers, through his theory that every intentional human act is the agent's attempt to relieve his state of 'uneasiness'. It covers pain but also many much milder states—any unpleasant sense of something's being wrong.

vice, vicious: Morally wrong conduct, not necessarily of the special kind that we reserve 'vice' for these days, or the different special kind that we label as 'vicious'.

Part I: The Mechanical Principles of Action

Chapter 1: The principles of action in general

Nothing can be called an *action* by a man, in the strict philosophical sense, unless it's something that he previously conceived and willed or determined to do. In morals we commonly employ the word in this sense, and never impute anything to a man as *done by him* unless his will was involved. But when moral criticism isn't concerned, we call many things actions of the man though he hadn't previously conceived or willed them. Hence the actions of men have been divided into three classes—voluntary, involuntary, and mixed. By 'mixed' are meant actions that are under the command of the will but are commonly performed without any interposition of will. ['He didn't decide to do it, but he could have decided not to.']

We can't avoid using the word 'action' in this popular sense, without deviating too much from the common use of language; and it is in this sense that I am using it when I enquire into the principles [see Glossary] of action in the human mind.

By 'principles of action' I understand everything that incites us to act. If there were no incitements to action—·if nothing ever spurred us to act·—our active power would be useless. Having no motive to direct our active exertions, the mind would always be in a state of perfect indifference over whether to do this or do that or do nothing at all. Either •the active power wouldn't exercised at all or •its activities would be perfectly unmeaning and frivolous—not wise or foolish, not good or bad. To every action that is of smallest importance, there must be some incitement, some motive, some reason.

So it's a most important part of the philosophy of the human mind to •have a clear and accurate view of the various principles of action that the Author of our being has planted in our nature, to •arrange them properly, and to •assign to every one its rank.

It's through this that we can discover the purpose of our existence, and the part we are to play on life's stage. In this part of the human constitution, the noblest work of God that we know anything about, we can clearly see the character of him who made us, and how he wants us to employ the active power that he has given us.

I can't embark on this subject without great diffidence, observing •that almost every author of reputation who has attended to it has a system of his own, and •that no man has been so happy as to give general satisfaction to those who came after him.

There's a branch of knowledge that is rightly much valued, which we call knowledge of the world, knowledge of mankind, knowledge of human nature. I think that this consists in knowing from what principles men generally act; and it is commonly the fruit of natural sagacity [see Glossary] joined with experience.

A man of sagacity who has had occasion to deal in interesting matters with a great variety of persons of different age, sex, rank and profession, learns to judge what can be expected from men in given circumstances, and how to be most effective in getting them to act as he wants them to. Knowing this is so important to men in active life that it is called 'knowing men' and 'knowing human nature'.

This knowledge can be very useful to a man who wants to theorize about the subject I have proposed, but it's not by

itself sufficient for that purpose.

A man of the world conjectures, perhaps with great probability, how a man will act in certain given circumstances, and that's all he needs to know. To go into detail about the various principles that influence the actions of men, giving them distinct names, defining them, and discovering the role and range of each, is the business of a philosopher and not of a man of the world; and indeed it's very hard to do, for several reasons ·of which I shall present two·.

(1) There are *so many* active principles influencing the actions of men. Man has been called an epitome [see Glossary] of the universe, and there is reason in that. His mind is greatly affected by his body, which is a part of the material system and is therefore subject to all the laws of inanimate matter. During some part of his existence, man's state is very like that of a plant. He rises by imperceptible degrees to the animal level, and finally to the rational life in which he is powered by the principles that belong to all three levels.

(2) Another reason why it is difficult to trace out the various principles of action in man is that a single action, indeed a single course and sequence of actions can come from very different principles.

Men who are fond of a hypothesis usually don't look for any proof of its truth other than the fact that it serves to explain the appearances that it was introduced to explain. This is a very slippery kind of proof in every part of philosophy, and never to be trusted; and it's least trustworthy when the appearances to be accounted for are human actions.

Most actions arise from a variety of principles working together in their direction; but we explain a given action purely in terms of the best of those principles or wholly in terms of the worst, depending on whether we have a favourable or unfavourable judgment of the person whose action it is. And we are similarly selective in how we explain *kinds* of action, depending on whether we have a favourable or unfavourable judgment of human nature in general.

The principles from which men act can be discovered only **(a)** by attention to the conduct of other men or **(b)** by attention to our own conduct and to what we feel in ourselves. There is much uncertainty in **(a)** and much difficulty in **(b)**.

Men differ greatly in their characters, and we can observe the conduct of only a few of the species. A man differs not only from other men, but from himself at different times and on different occasions; depending on whether he is

- in the company of his superiors, inferiors, or equals,
- being seen by strangers, or by friends or acquaintances only, or by no-one,
- in good or bad fortune, or
- in a good or bad mood.

We see only a small part of the actions of our friends and acquaintances; what we see may lead us to a •probable conjecture; but it can't give us •certain knowledge of the principles from which they act.

A man can know with certainty the principles from which he himself acts, because he is conscious of them. But to know this he has to reflect [see Glossary] attentively on the operations of his own mind, which is something people seldom do. It may be easier to find a man who has formed a sound notion of the character of man in general, or of his friends and acquaintances, than to find one who has a sound notion of his own character!

Most men are led by pride and self-flattery to think themselves better than they really are; and some, led perhaps by melancholy or from false principles of religion, think themselves worse than they really are.

So one needs a very precise and impartial examination of a man's own heart if one is to get a clear notion of the various principles that influence his conduct. We can judge how

difficult this is from the conflicting systems of philosophers on this subject, from the earliest ages to this day.

During the age of Greek philosophy, the Platonist, the Aristotelian, the Stoic, and the Epicurean each had his own system. In the dark ages [= approximately the 5th to 15th centuries CE] the Schoolmen and the Mystics had diametrically opposite systems. And since the revival of learning, no controversy has been more keenly agitated, especially among British philosophers, than the one about the principles of action in the human constitution.

The forces by which the planets and comets travel through the boundless regions of space have been determined, to the satisfaction of those who know anything about this; but the forces that every man is conscious of in himself and by which his conduct is directed haven't been determined with any degree of unanimity. ·Of thinkers who have addressed this topic·, different ones

- •admit no principle but self-love;
- •say that it all comes down to the pleasures of sense, in varieties differentiated by the association of ideas;
- •allow that there is disinterested [see Glossary] benevolence along with self-love;
- •reduce everything to reason and passion;
- •reduce everything to passion alone;

and there's just as much variety in views about the number and distribution of the passions.

The names we give to the various principles of action are so imprecise, even in the best and purest writers in each language, that on this account there's great difficulty in giving them names and arranging them properly.

The words *appetite*, *passion*, *affection*, *interest*, *reason*, can't be said to have one definite meaning. They are understood sometimes in a broader and sometimes in a narrower sense. The same principle is sometimes called by one of those names, sometimes by another; and principles of a very different nature are often called by the same name.

To remedy this confusion of names one might invent new ones; but few people are entitled to this privilege, and I shan't lay claim to it! But I'll try to class the various principles of human action as clearly as I can, and to point out their specific differences; giving them names that will deviate as little as possible from the common use of the words.

Some principles of action require no attention, no deliberation, no will. I'll call these 'mechanical'. A second class of principles we can call 'animal', as they seem common to man and other animals. A third class can be called 'rational', because they are exclusive to man as a rational creature. ·These three kinds of principle of action are, respectively, the topics of the three Parts of this Essay·.

Chapter 2: Instinct

The mechanical principles of action, I think, fall into two species—instincts and habits.

By 'instinct' I mean a natural blind impulse to act in a certain way, without having any end in view, without deliberation, and very often without any conception of *what* we are doing.

For as long as a man is alive, he breathes by alternately contracting and relaxing certain muscles through which the chest and thus the lungs are contracted and dilated. There's no reason to think that a new-born infant •knows that breathing is necessary to life in its new state, •knows how to do it, or even •has any thought or conception of the operation of breathing; and yet as soon as he is born he breathes with perfect regularity, as if he had been taught and acquired the habit by long practice.

By the same kind of principle, a new-born child, when its stomach is emptied and nature has brought milk into the mother's breast, sucks and swallows its food as perfectly as if it knew the principles of that operation and had acquired the habit of working according to them.

Sucking and swallowing are very complex operations. Anatomists describe about thirty pairs of muscles that must be employed in every pull; and each of those muscles must be served by its own nerve, and can't do anything except through some influence communicated by the nerve. The exertion of all those muscles and nerves is not simultaneous; they must follow along in a certain order, and their order is as necessary as the exertion itself.

This regular sequence of operations is carried on according to the most delicate rules of art [see Glossary] by the infant who has neither art nor science nor experience nor habit.

It's true that the infant feels the uneasy [see Glossary] sensation of hunger, and that it stops sucking when this sensation is removed. But who informed it that this uneasy sensation might be removed, or by what means?

It's obvious that the infant knows *nothing* of this, because it will suck a finger or a twig as readily as the nipple.

It's by a similar principle that infants cry when they are in pain; that they are afraid when left alone, especially in the dark; that they start when in danger of falling; that they are terrified by an angry face or angry tone of voice, and are soothed and comforted by a placid face and by soft and gentle tones of voice.

In the animals that we know best and regard as the more perfect of the brute-creation, we see much the same instincts as in the human species, or very similar ones that are suited to the particular state and manner of life of the animal.

Besides these instincts, brute animals have others that are exclusive to their species—instincts that equip them for defence, for offence, or for providing for themselves and their offspring. And as well as providing various animals with various weapons of offence and defence, nature has taught them how to use these weapons: the bull and the ram to butt, the horse to kick, the dog to bite, the lion to use his paws, the boar his tusks, the serpent his fangs, and the bee and wasp their sting. The manufactures of animals (if we can call them that) present us with a wonderful variety of instincts belonging to particular species, whether of the social or of the solitary kind:

- the nests of birds, so similar in situation and architecture within the species, so various in different species;
- the webs of spiders and other spinning animals;
- the ball of the silk-worm;
- the nest of ants and other mining animals;
- the combs of wasps, hornets and bees;
- the dams and houses of beavers.

The instinct of animals is one of the most delightful and instructive parts of a most pleasant study, namely natural history. It deserves to be more cultivated than it has yet been.

Every manufacturing art among men was invented by some man, improved by others, and brought to perfection by time and experience. Men learn to work in it by long practice, which produces a habit. The arts of men vary in every age, and in every nation, and are found only in those who have been *taught* them.

The manufactures of animals differ from those of men in many striking particulars.

No animal of the species can claim the invention. No animal ever introduced any new improvement or any variation from the previous practice. Each member of the species has equal skill from the outset, without teaching or experience or habit. Each one has its art [see Glossary] by a

kind of inspiration. I don't mean that it is inspired with the principles or rules of the art; what I'm saying it is inspired with is the ability and inclination to work perfectly in the art without any knowledge of its principles, rules or purpose.

The more intelligent animals can be taught to do many things that they don't do by instinct. What they're taught to do they do with more or less skill depending on their intelligence and their training. But in their own arts they don't need teaching or training, and their art is never improved or lost. Bees gather their honey and their wax, and fabricate their combs and rear their young, neither better nor worse today than they did when Virgil so sweetly sang about their works.

The work of every animal is—like the works of nature—perfect in its kind, and can stand up under the most critical examination of the physicist or the mathematician. I can illustrate this with an example from the animal last mentioned.

It's well known that bees construct their combs with small cells on both sides, fit both for •holding their store of honey and for •rearing their young. If the cells are to have the same size and shape, with no useless gaps between them, there are only three possible shapes for them to have—equilateral triangle, square, and regular hexagon. (Mathematicians know well that no fourth shape is possible.) Of these three, the hexagon is the best for convenience and strength; and bees, as though they knew this, make their cells regular hexagons.

[Reid devotes a page to explaining several other features of the cells that can be shown mathematically to be optimal for strength, economy of materials and effort, and so on. He then proceeds with a rhetorical question:] Shall we ask here who *taught* the bee the properties of solids, and how to solve these mathematical problems? If a honeycomb were a work of human art, everyone with common sense would unhesitatingly conclude that he who invented the construction must have understood the principles on which it is constructed.

We needn't say that bees know any of these things. [Reid wrote '. . . that bees know none of these things'; obviously a slip.] They work most geometrically without any knowledge of geometry, rather as a child who, without any knowledge of music, makes good music by turning the handle of an organ. The art is not in the child, but in the man who made the organ. Similarly, when a bee makes its combs so geometrically the geometry is not in the bee but in the great Geometrician who made the bee and settled the number, weight and measure of everything.

To return to instincts in man: the most remarkable ones are those that appear in infancy, when we are ignorant of everything necessary for our preservation, and would therefore perish if we didn't have an invisible Guide who leads us blindfold along the path we would choose if we had eyes to see it.

Besides the instincts that appear only in infancy and are intended to make up for our lack of understanding in that early period, there are many that continue through life and make up for defects of our intellectual powers in every period. I'll call your attention to three classes of these.

(1) There are many things that are necessary for our preservation, and we know that they are but we don't know how to do them.

A man knows that he must swallow his food before it can nourish him. But this action requires the co-operation of many nerves and muscles about which he knows nothing; and if his swallowing had to be directed solely by his understanding and will, he would starve before he learned how to perform it.

Here instinct comes to his aid. All he needs do is to *will to swallow*. All the required motions of nerves and muscles immediately take place in their proper order, without his knowing or willing anything about them.

Whose *will* do these nerves and muscles obey? Not his, surely, to whom they belong. He doesn't know their names, their nature, or what work they do; he has never given them a thought. They're moved by some impulse the cause of which is unknown, without any thought or will or intention on his part. That is, they are moved instinctively.

This is to some extent the case with every voluntary motion of our body. I will to stretch out my arm. The effect immediately follows. But we know that the arm is stretched by the contraction of certain muscles, which are contracted by the influence of the nerves. I don't know anything or think anything about nerves or muscles when I stretch out my arm; yet this nervous influence and this contraction of the muscles—not summoned by me—immediately produce the effect that I willed.

Compare that with this: a weight is to be raised, which can be raised only by a complication of levers, pulleys, and other mechanical powers that are behind the curtain and entirely unknown to me. I will to raise the weight; and no sooner is this act of will performed than the machinery behind the curtain goes to work and raises the weight. If such a thing happened we would conclude that there's a person behind the curtain who knew my will and put the machine in motion so as to carry it out.

My willing to stretch out my arm or to swallow my food is obviously very similar to this. And we are so strangely and wonderfully made that whoever stands behind the curtain and sets the internal machinery going is hidden from us. But we *do* know that those internal motions are not willed or intended by us, and are therefore instinctive.

(2) We need instinct, even in adult life, when a kind of action must be performed so often that intending and willing it every time would occupy too much of our thought and leave no room for other necessary employments of the mind.

We must breathe several times a minute, whether awake or asleep. We must often close our eyelids in order to keep the eye moist. If these things required particular attention and volition every time they are done, they would occupy all our thought; so nature gives us an impulse to do them as often as is necessary, without any thought at all. They take no time; they don't interrupt, even slightly, any exercise of the mind; because they are done by instinct.

(3) We also need the aid of instinct when an action must be done so suddenly that there's no time to think and decide. When a man loses his balance, either on foot or on horseback, he makes an instantaneous effort to recover it by instinct. The effort would be in vain if it waited for the decision of reason and will.

When something threatens our eyes, we wink hard by instinct; and we can hardly avoid doing so, even when we know that the stroke is aimed in fun and that we are perfectly safe from danger. I have seen this tried for a bet, which a man was to win if he could keep his eyes open while another jokingly aimed a punch at them. The difficulty of doing this shows that there may be a struggle between instinct and will, and that it's hard to resist the impulse of instinct even by a strong resolution not to yield to it.

Thus the merciful Author of our nature has adapted our instincts to the defects and weaknesses of our understanding. [Reid recapitulates the three kinds of case he has been discussing. Then:]

Another thing in the nature of man that I take to be partly though not wholly instinctive is his proneness to imitation.

Aristotle observed long ago that man is an imitative animal. He is so in more than one way. ·and I shall mention just three of them·. •He is disposed to imitate what he approves of. •In all arts men learn more, and learn more agreeably, by example than by rules. •Imitation by the chisel, by the pencil, by description in prose and poetry, and by action and gesture, have been favourite and elegant entertainments of the whole human species. In all these cases, however, the imitation is intended and willed, so it can't be said to be instinctive.

But I think that human nature disposes us to imitate those among whom we live, when we don't desire or will it.

Let a middle-aged Englishman take up residence in Edinburgh or Glasgow; although he hasn't the least intention to use the Scots dialect, but a firm resolve to preserve his own pure and unmixed, he'll find it hard to do what he intends. Over the years he will gradually and unintentionally come to have the tone and accent of those he converses with, and even to use their words and phrases; and nothing can preserve him from this—unless he really hates every Scoticism, which might overcome the natural instinct. . . .

I can see that instinctive imitation has a considerable influence in forming •the special features of provincial dialects, •the special features of voice, gesture, and manner that we see in some families, •the ways of behaving that go with different ranks and different professions; and perhaps even in forming national characters, and the human character in general.

There have been recorded cases of wild men brought up from their early years without the society of any of their own species, but so few of them that we can't reach conclusions from them with great certainty. But the ones I have heard of have this in common: the wild man gave only slight indications of the rational faculties, so that his mind was hardly distinguishable from that of the more intelligent of the brutes.

There's a considerable part of the lowest rank in every nation of whom it can't be said that they or anyone else has worked on cultivating their understanding or forming their ways of behaving; yet we see an immense difference between them and the wild man. This difference is wholly an effect of society; and I think it is largely though not wholly an effect of undesigned and instinctive imitation.

It may be that not only our actions but even our judgment and belief is sometimes guided by instinct, i.e. by a natural and blind impulse.

When we consider man as a rational creature, it may seem right that all his beliefs should be based on evidence, probable or demonstrative; and it seems to be commonly taken for granted that it is always real or apparent evidence that determines our belief. . . . But I suspect that this is wrong, and that before we grow up to the full use of our rational faculties we do and *must* believe many things without any evidence at all.

The faculties that we have in common with brute animals develop earlier than reason does. We are *irrational animals* for a considerable time before we can properly be called rational. The operations of reason come into play very gradually, and we can't trace in detail the order in which they do so. To track the progress of our developing faculties we would have to use •our power of reflection [see Glossary], but •that comes too late to do the job. Some operations of brute animals look so like reason that they aren't easily distinguished from it. Whether brutes have anything that can properly be called 'belief' I can't say; but their actions show something that looks very like belief.

If there's any instinctive belief in man, it is probably of the same kind as what we ascribe to brutes, and may be

radically different in kind from the rational belief that is based on evidence; but I think it must be granted that there is in man something that we call 'belief' and that isn't based on evidence.

We need to be informed of many things *before* we're capable of taking in the evidence that supports them. If we withheld our belief until we were at least somewhat capable of weighing evidence, we would lose all the benefit of the instruction and information that we need in order to acquire the use of our rational faculties.

Man would never acquire the use of reason if he weren't brought up in the society of reasonable creatures. The benefit he gets from society comes •from imitating what he sees others do and also •from the instruction and information they communicate to him. Without these he couldn't acquire the use of his rational powers—indeed he couldn't even survive.

Children have a thousand things to learn, and they learn many things every day—more than will be easily believed by those who have never given attention to their progress.

The learner should take things on trust is a common saying. [It comes from Aristotle; Reid gives it in Latin.] Children have everything to learn, and they can't learn if they don't believe their instructors. They need a greater stock of faith from infancy to age 12 or 14 than at any later time; but how are they to *get* this stock that is so necessary to them? If their faith *depended on* evidence, their stock of faith would be *proportional to* their stock of real or apparent evidence. But actually •their faith must be greatest at the time when •their evidence is least. They believe a thousand things before they ever give a thought to evidence. Nature makes up for the lack of evidence by giving them an instinctive kind of faith without evidence.

They believe implicitly whatever they are told, and confidently accept the testimony of everyone, without ever thinking of a reason why they should do so.

A parent or a master might command them to believe; but that would be pointless, because belief is not in our power. But in the first part of life it is governed by mere testimony in matters of fact, and by mere authority in all other matters, just as it is governed by evidence in the years of maturity.

What produces this belief in a child is not the •words of the testifier, but his •belief; for children soon learn to distinguish jokes from things that are said seriously. What appears to them to be said as a joke produces no belief. They glory in showing that they are not to be fooled! When the signs of belief in the speaker are ambiguous, it's enjoyable to see how alertly they examine his features so as to learn whether he really believes what he says or is only counterfeiting belief. Once they have settled this, their belief is regulated by his. If he is doubtful, they are doubtful; if he is assured, so are they. . . .

An example of belief that appears to be instinctive is the belief which children show even in infancy that an event that they have observed in certain circumstances will happen again in like circumstances. A six-month-old child who has once burned his finger by putting it in a candle's flame won't put it there again. And if you make a show of putting it in the flame by force, you see the plainest signs that he believes he'll meet with the same calamity.

Hume has shown very clearly that this belief is not an effect either of reason or of experience. He tries to explain it in terms of the association of ideas. Though I am not satisfied with his account of this phenomenon I shan't examine it here because all I need for my present point is that this belief isn't based on evidence, real or apparent—which I think he clearly proves.

A person who has lived in the world for long enough to observe that nature is governed by fixed laws may have

some rational ground for expecting similar events in similar circumstances; but this can't be the case of the child. So his belief is not grounded on evidence; it is a result of his constitution.

And that would still hold if it were a product of the association of ideas. For what is called 'the association of ideas' is a law of nature in our constitution, which produces its effects without any operation of reason on our part and in a manner of which we are entirely ignorant.

Chapter 3: Habit

Habit differs from instinct not in its nature but in its origin—habit is acquired, instinct is natural. Both count as *mechanical* principles because they operate without will or intention, without thought.

Habit is commonly defined as *an ability to do something easily, as a result of having done it frequently.* This definition is sufficient for the habits involved in a practical skill; but the habits that can properly be called 'principles of action' must supply more than an ability; they must give an inclination or impulse to perform the action; and there's no doubt that in many cases habits do have this power.

When children spend time in improper company, they acquire ever so many awkward habits in their manner, motion, looks, gesture and pronunciation. They usually acquire such habits through an unplanned and instinctive imitation, before they can judge what is and what isn't proper and becoming.

When they understand a little better, they can easily be convinced that such-and-such a thing is unbecoming; and they may decide to avoid it; but once the habit is formed, such a general decision is not enough on its own; for the habit will operate without intention; and particular attention is necessary on every occasion to resist the impulse of the habit until it is cured by the *habit* of opposing it.

It's because of the force of habits, acquired early by imitation, that a man who grows to manhood in the lowest rank of life and is then raised by fortune to a higher rank very rarely acquires the air and manners of a gentleman.

When to •the instinctive imitation that I spoke of earlier we join •the force of habit, it's easy to see that these mechanical principles have a large share in forming the manners and characters of most men.

The difficulty of overcoming vicious [see Glossary] habits has been a common topic of theologians and moralists down through the centuries; and we see too many sad examples of this to permit us to doubt it.

There are—morally speaking now—good habits as well as bad ones; and it is certain that the regular performance of what we approve doesn't just make it •easy for us to do but makes us •uneasy when we don't do it. This is the case even when the action's goodness comes purely from the belief of the performer. A good illiterate Roman Catholic doesn't sleep soundly if he goes to bed without telling his beads and repeating prayers that he doesn't understand.

Aristotle held that wisdom, prudence, good sense, science and art [see Glossary], as well as the moral virtues and vices, are habits. In giving this name to all those intellectual and moral qualities perhaps he meant only that they are all strengthened and confirmed by repeated acts; and *that* is undoubtedly true. When I consider habits as principles of action I'm taking the word 'habit' in a narrower sense than that. I see it as a feature of our constitution that when we have become accustomed to do something, we acquire not only the ability to do it with ease but also a proneness to do it on similar occasions; so that it requires a particular will and effort to •refrain from doing it, but often requires no will

at all to •do it. We are carried by habit as by a stream in swimming, if we make no resistance.

Every art provides examples both of the power of habits and of their usefulness, and none more than the commonest of all arts, the art of speaking.

Articulate language is spoken not by nature but by art. It's no easy matter for children to learn the simple sounds of language—I mean to learn to pronounce the vowels and consonants. It would be much harder if they weren't led by instinct to imitate the sounds they hear; for it is vastly more difficult to teach the deaf to pronounce the letters and words, though experience shows that it can be done.

What makes this pronunciation so easy at last that was so difficult at first? It is habit.

The moment a good speaker conceives what he wants to express, the letters, syllables and words arrange themselves according to countless rules of speech, while he never gives these rules a thought. What can explain this? He means to express certain sentiments; in order to do this properly he has to select the right words out of thousands, and he does this with no expense of time or thought. The words selected must be arranged in a particular order, according to countless rules of grammar, logic and rhetoric, and accompanied with a particular tone and emphasis. He does all this as it were by inspiration, without thinking of any of these rules and without breaking any of them.

If this linguistic skill weren't so common, it would appear more wonderful than a man dancing blindfold amidst a thousand burning plough-shares without being burnt. Yet it can all be done by habit.

It seems clear that just as •without instinct the infant couldn't live to become a man, so also •without habit the man would remain an infant through life, and would be as helpless, as incompetent, as speechless, and as much a child in understanding at threescore as at three.

I see no reason to think that we'll ever know what the operative cause is either of instinct or of the power of habit. Both seem to be parts of our basic [see Glossary] constitution. Their purpose and use is evident; but we can't assign any cause of them except the will of him who made us.

This may be easily accepted with regard to instinct, which is a natural propensity; but it is equally true with regard to the power and inclination that we acquire by habit. No-one can show a reason why our doing a thing frequently should •make it easy to do or •make us likely to do it.

The fact is so well known and so constantly on view that we're apt to think that no reason should be sought for it, any more than a reason for why the sun shines. But there must *be* a cause of the sun's shining, and there must be a cause of the power of habit.

We see nothing analogous to it in inanimate matter, or in things made by human art. A clock doesn't work better, or require less force to work, just because it has been going for years. A field doesn't increase in fertility through its custom of bearing crops!

It is said that trees and other plants, by growing long in an unkindly soil or climate, sometimes acquire qualities by which they can bear its inclemency with less damage to themselves. This is a vegetable-kingdom phenomenon that has some resemblance to the power of habit; but I don't know of anything that resembles habit in inanimate matter. A stone loses nothing of its weight by being long supported, or made to move upward. However long or violently a body is tossed about, it loses nothing of its inertia and doesn't acquire the slightest disposition to change its state.

Part II: Animal Principles of Action

Chapter 1: Appetites

Having discussed the mechanical principles of action, I now turn to the ones I am calling 'animal' principles..

They're ones that operate on the will and intention, but don't require any exercise of judgment or reason; and are most of them to be found in some brute animals as well as in man.

In this class, the first kind I'll *appetites*, giving that word a stricter sense than it is sometimes given, even by good writers.

The word 'appetite' is sometimes limited so that it signifies only the desire for food when we are hungry; sometimes it is extended so as to signify any strong desire, whatever it is a desire *for*. Without wanting to criticise any use of the word that custom has authorised, I hope you'll allow me to limit it to a particular class of desires that are distinguished from all other desires by the following two features.

(1) Every appetite is accompanied by an uneasy sensation proper to it [= 'which is characteristic of that specific appetite']. The sensation is strong or weak in proportion to the strength of our desire for the object. **(2)** Appetites are not constant, but periodic, being sated [see Glossary] by their objects for a while and then returning after certain periods. Such is the nature of the principles of action that I ask to be allowed in this Essay to give the name 'appetites'. The appetites that are chiefly observable in man, as well as in most other animals, are hunger, thirst, and lust.

In the appetite of hunger we find two ingredients, an uneasy sensation and a desire to eat. The desire keeps pace with the sensation, and ceases when it ceases. When a man has eaten as much as he wants, both the uneasy sensation and the desire to eat cease for a time, and return after a certain interval. So it is with other appetites.

In *very* young infants the uneasy sensation of hunger is probably all there is to the appetite. We can't suppose that before experience they have any conception of eating or, therefore, any desire to eat. They are led by mere instinct to suck when they feel the sensation of hunger. But when experience has connected, in their imagination, the uneasy sensation with the means for removing it, •the desire to remove it comes to be so associated with •the means that they are inseparable from then on; and we give the name 'hunger' to the principle that is made up of both.

The statement that the appetite of hunger includes the two ingredients I have mentioned won't surprise anyone. My reason for emphasising it is ·not that I think it is novel, but· rather because I think we can find a similar composition in other principles of action. They have different ingredients, and can be analysed into the parts that make them up.

If one philosopher holds that hunger is an uneasy sensation, and another that it is a desire to eat, they seem to differ widely; for a desire and a sensation are very different things, nothing like one another. But they are both in the right; for hunger includes *both* an uneasy sensation *and* a desire to eat. There hasn't actually been any such disagreement as that about hunger; but there have been similar disputes concerning other principles of action, and we should see whether they might be terminated in a similar manner.

The purposes for which our natural appetites are given to us are too obvious to be overlooked by anyone who reflects at all. Of the three I listed, •hunger and •thirst are intended

for the preservation of the individual, and •lust for the continuance of the species.

Human reason would be utterly insufficient for those ends if it didn't have the direction and call of appetite.

Though a man knows that his life must be supported by eating, reason can't tell him when to eat, or what, or how much, or how often. In all these things, appetite is a much better guide than our reason. If we had only reason to direct us in this matter, its calm voice would often be drowned in the hurry of our daily activities or the charms of amusement. But the voice of appetite rises gradually until eventually it becomes loud enough to call our attention away from anything else we might be doing.

Everyone must be convinced of this:

> Even if mankind were inspired with all the knowledge needed for achieving their ends, if they didn't have appetites the human race would have perished long ago; whereas when armed with appetites the race continues from one generation to the next, whether men are savage or civilised, knowing or ignorant, virtuous or vicious.

And it is also with the help of appetites that every tribe of brute animals, from the whale that ranges the ocean to the tiniest microscopic insect, has been continued from the beginning of the world to this day; and no good evidence has been found that any one species that God made has perished.

Nature has given to every animal not only an appetite for its food but also taste and smell by which to pick out the food that is proper for it.

It's enjoyable to see a caterpillar, which nature intended to live on the leaf of one species of plant, crawl across a hundred leaves of other kinds without tasting one, until it reaches the one that is its natural food, which it immediately starts in on and devours greedily.

Most caterpillars feed only on the leaf of one species of plant, and nature suits the season of their production to the food that is intended to nourish them. Many insects and animals have a greater variety of food; but, of all animals, man has the greatest variety, being able to subsist on almost every kind of vegetable or animal food, from the bark of trees to the oil of whales. . . . A man may eat from appetite only. So the brutes commonly do. He may eat to please his taste when he has no call of appetite. I believe that a brute can do this also. A man may eat for the sake of health, when neither appetite not taste invites him to. As far as I can tell, brutes never do this.

That shows how a single action can come from any one of several principles—hunger, desire for a taste experience, concern for health—and there are many more that could come into play. And this holds not just for eating but for most human actions. So we see that very different and contrary theories can serve to explain the actions of men. A cause that is assigned may be sufficient to produce the effect and yet not be the true cause.

To act merely from appetite is neither good nor bad, morally speaking. . . . No man expects to be praised for eating when he is hungry or resting when he is tired. But he won't be blamed, either, if he obeys the call of appetite when there is no reason why he shouldn't. In this he is acting in conformity with his nature. . . .

Appetites, considered in themselves, are neither social [see Glossary] nor selfish. They can't be called 'social' because they don't involve any concern for the good of others. But it's not right to call them 'selfish' either, though they are commonly seen in that way. An appetite draws us to a certain object without regard to its being good or bad for us. There's no •self-love implied in it any more than •benevolence. We

know that appetite will often lead a man to something that he knows will be damaging to him. To call this ‘acting from self-love’ is to pervert the meanings of words. It’s obvious that in every case of this kind self-love is sacrificed to appetite.

Some principles of the human constitution are very like our appetites, but aren’t usually given that name.

Men are made for labour either of body or mind, yet excessive labour hurts the powers of both. To prevent this hurt, nature has given to men and other animals an uneasy sensation that always accompanies excessive labour; we call it ‘fatigue’, ‘weariness’, ‘lassitude’. This uneasy sensation is combined with a desire for rest, i.e. a break in our labour. Thus, nature calls us to rest when we are weary, in the same way as to eat when we are hungry.

In both cases there’s a desire for a certain object [see Glossary], and an uneasy sensation accompanying that desire. In both cases the desire is satisfied by its object, and returns after certain intervals. The only difference between them is this: in hunger and its like, the uneasy sensation arises at intervals without action, and leads to a certain action; in weariness, the uneasy sensation arises from action too long continued, and leads to rest.

But nature intended that we should be active, and we need some principle to incite us to action, when we happen not to be invited by any appetite or passion. For this end, when strength and spirits are recruited by rest, nature has made total inaction as uneasy as excessive labour.

We could call this the principle of activity. It is most conspicuous in children, who can’t be expected to know how necessary it is for their improvement to be constantly employed. Their constant activity seems to come not from their having some end constantly in view, but rather from their desire always to be doing something because they feel uneasiness in total inaction.

This principle isn’t confined to childhood; it has great effects in adult life.

When a man has no hope, no fear, no desire, no project, no employment of body or mind, one might think him the happiest mortal on earth, having nothing to do but to enjoy himself; but we find him in fact to be the most unhappy. He is more weary of inaction than ever he was of excessive labour. He is weary of the world, and of his own existence; and is more miserable than the sailor struggling with a storm, or the soldier attacking a city wall.

This dismal state is commonly the lot [see Glossary] of the man who has neither exercise of body nor employment of mind. The mind is really like water: it corrupts and putrefies by stagnation, but by running it purifies and refines.

Besides the appetites that nature has given us for useful and necessary purposes, we can create appetites that nature never gave.

The frequent use of things that stimulate the nervous system produces a distressed condition when their effect has worn off, and a desire to repeat them. By this means a desire for a certain object is created, accompanied by an uneasy sensation. Both are removed by the object desired, but they return after a certain interval. This differs from natural appetite only in being acquired by custom. Examples are the appetites that some men acquire for the use of tobacco, opiates, and intoxicating liqours.

These are commonly called ‘habits’, which is what they are. But there are different kinds of habits, even of the active sort, which ought to be distinguished. Some habits only make it easier to do a thing, without any inclination to do it. All arts are habits of this kind, but they can’t be called principles of action ·because they don’t cause the action, but only make it easier to perform·. Other habits produce a proneness to perform an action, without

thought or intention; I have discussed these under the label 'mechanical principles of action'. Yet other habits produce a desire for a certain object, and an uneasy [see Glossary] sensation until it is obtained. It's only this last kind that I call 'acquired appetites'.

Just as it's best to preserve our natural appetites in the tone and degree of strength that nature gives them, so we ought to beware of acquiring appetites that nature never gave. They are always useless, and very often damaging.

Although there's neither virtue nor vice in acting from appetite, there may be much virtue or vice in the management of our appetites. When an appetite is opposed by some principle drawing the person in a different direction, he must decide which of the two principles is to prevail, and this decision may be morally right or wrong.

Even in a brute animal an appetite can be restrained by a stronger principle opposed to it. A hungry dog with meat set before him can be kept from touching it by the fear of immediate punishment. In this case his fear operates more strongly than his desire. Do we attribute any virtue to the dog because of this? I think not.

Nor would we ascribe any virtue to a man in a similar case. The animal is carried by the strongest moving force. This requires no exertion, no self-control [see Glossary], but merely a passive giving in to the strongest impulse. I think that's what brutes always do, which is why we don't attribute to them either virtue or vice—don't consider them as being objects of moral approval or disapproval.

But it can happen that an appetite is opposed not by any appetite or passion but by some cool principle of action, one that has •authority but no •impulsive force. For example, the appetite is opposed by •some interest that is too distant to raise any passion or emotion, or by •some consideration of decency or of duty.

In cases of this kind, the man is convinced that he ought not to yield to appetite, but there's no equal or greater impulse to oppose it. There are indeed facts that convince the ·person's· judgment, but it's only if self-control comes into play that these facts are enough to determine the will against a strong appetite.

Brute animals have no power of self-control. Their constitution ensures that they are led by the appetite or passion that is strongest at the time. That is why they have always and everywhere been thought incapable of being •governed by laws, though some of them can be •subjected to discipline.

That would be man's situation if he had no power to restrain any appetite except through a stronger contrary appetite or passion. It would be useless to prescribe laws to him for the control of his actions . You might as well forbid the wind to blow as forbid him to follow whatever happens to give the strongest present impulse.

Everyone knows that when an appetite draws one way, duty or decency or even ·self·-interest may draw the person a contrary way; and that an appetite can give a stronger impulse than any one of these or even all three of them conjoined. Yet in every case of this kind •the appetite certainly *ought to* yield to any of these principles when they stand opposed to •it. It's in cases like this that self-control is necessary.

A man who allows himself to be led by an appetite to do something that he knows he ought not to do has an immediate and natural conviction that he did wrong and could have done otherwise; and therefore he condemns himself and admits that he gave way to an appetite that ought to have been under his control.

So although our natural appetites have in themselves neither virtue nor vice. . . ., it turns out that •there may be a great deal of virtue or of vice in the management of our

appetites, and that •the power of self-control is necessary for their regulation.

Chapter 2: Desires

For lack of a better name, I shall label as ‘desires’ the next class of animal principles of action in man that I want to discuss.

They are distinguished from appetites by two things. **(1)** It is not the case that each desire is always accompanied by its own characteristic uneasy sensation. **(2)** Desires are not periodical but constant because they aren’t sated with their objects for a time as appetites are.

I want to focus mainly on three desires: for power, for esteem, and for knowledge.

I think we can see some degree of these principles in brute animals of the more intelligent kind; but in man they are much more conspicuous and have a wider range.

In a herd of black cattle there is rank and subordination. When an animal is newly introduced into the herd, he must fight everyone till his rank is settled. After that happens, he gives way to the stronger and assumes authority over the weaker. It’s much like that with the crew of a ship of war.

As soon as men associate together, the desire for superiority comes into play. In barbarous tribes, as well as among the gregarious kinds of animals, rank is determined by strength, courage, speed, or such other qualities. Among civilised nations, many things of a different kind give power and rank—places in government, titles of honour, riches, wisdom, eloquence, virtue, and even the reputation for having any of these. These are either different kinds of power or different ways of getting power; and when they are sought for that purpose they must be regarded as cases of the desire for power.

The desire for esteem is not special to man. A dog rejoices in the approval and applause of his master, and is humbled by his displeasure. But in man this desire is much more conspicuous, and operates in a thousand different ways.

It is the reason why so very few people are proof against flattery, when it isn’t laid on too thickly. We want to stand well in the opinion of others, so we are apt to interpret the signs of their good opinion in our own favour, even when the signs are ambiguous.

Showing contempt for someone is inflicting an injury [here = ‘insult’] that is one of the hardest to bear. We can’t always avoid seeing in the conduct of other people things that move our contempt; but in all civilised circles the signs of contempt must be suppressed, because otherwise social life would be impossible.

Of the qualities that can be possessed by good men and bad men, none is more esteemed than courage, and none is more contemned [see Glossary] than cowardice; so every man desires to be thought a man of courage, and a reputation for cowardice is worse than death. How many have died to avoid being thought cowards? How many have for the same reason done things that made them unhappy to the end of their lives?

I believe that many a disastrous event, if tracked back to its source in human nature, would turn out to be traceable to the desire for esteem or the fear of contempt.

Brute animals have so little that can be called ‘knowledge’ that the desire for it can’t play a large role in their lives. Yet I have seen a cat, when brought to a new home, examine carefully every corner of it, anxious to know every hiding-place and all the ways in and out. And I believe the same thing can be observed in many other species, especially ones that are liable to be hunted by man or by other animals.

But the desire for knowledge in the human species is a principle that can't be ignored.

Children's curiosity is the principle that occupies most of their waking hours. Anything they can handle they examine on all sides, and they often break it into pieces so as to discover what is inside it.

When men grow up their curiosity continues, but is employed on other objects. Novelty is considered as one great source of the pleasures of taste, and indeed some degree of novelty is needed for such pleasures to be really enjoyable.

When we speak of the desire for knowledge as a principle of action in man, we mustn't restrict it to the pursuits of the philosopher or of the literary man. The desire for knowledge can show up in different people by an eagerness to know •the village scandal (e.g. who is making love and to whom), •the finances of the family next door, •what the post brings, or •what the path is of a new comet.

When men work hard to learn things that have no significance and can't useful to themselves or to anyone else, this is curiosity that is trivial and pointless. It is a blameworthy weakness and folly; but still it's the wrong direction for a natural principle, and it shows the force of that principle more than when it is directed to things worth knowing.

I don't think I need to *argue* that the desires for power, esteem, and knowledge are natural principles in the human constitution. Those who aren't convinced of this by reflecting on their own feelings and sentiments won't easily be convinced by arguments!

Power, esteem and knowledge are so useful for many purposes that it's easy to see the desire for them as a special case of other principles. Those who take this view must maintain that we never desire these objects for their own sakes but only as means of procuring pleasure or some other natural object of desire. . . . But this can't be right, because it has been observed that men desire posthumous fame, which can't give them any pleasure. . . .

We have in fact seen innumerable cases of men sacrificing ease, pleasure, and everything else to their lust for power, for fame, even for knowledge. It's absurd to suggest that men sacrifice an end to something they desire only as a means to that end.

The natural desires I have mentioned are not in themselves either virtuous or vicious. They're part of our constitution, and ought to be regulated and restrained when they come into competition with more important principles. But to eradicate them (if that were possible, which I believe it isn't) would be like cutting off a leg or an arm, i.e. making ourselves other creatures than God has made us.

They have commonly been said to be selfish principles, but that is wrong.

When power is desired for its own sake and not as a means to something else, this desire is neither selfish nor social. When a man desires power as a means of doing good for others, this is benevolence. When he desires it only as a means of promoting his own good, this is self-love. But if he desires it only for its own sake, then—and only then—is it properly described as a desire for power, and it implies neither self-love nor benevolence. The same thing holds for the desires for esteem and for knowledge.

Nature's wisdom shows as clearly in its giving us these •desires as in its giving us our natural •appetites. I have already remarked that without the natural appetites reason would be inadequate to preserve the individual or continue of the species; and without the natural desires that I have mentioned human virtue wouldn't be adequate to influence mankind to behave at least moderately well towards one another in society.

It is because of these morally neutral desires that a man who has little or no respect for virtue can nevertheless be a good member of society. The fact is that *perfect* virtue joined with *perfect* knowledge would make both our appetites and desires unnecessary clutter in our nature; but as human knowledge and human virtue are both very imperfect, these appetites and desires are needed to make up for our imperfections.

Human society couldn't survive without a certain degree of the regularity of conduct that virtue prescribes. Men who have no virtue are led to regularity of conduct by a concern for character, and sometimes by a concern for their own interests. [This unexplained concern (or 'regard') for character is a concern for reputation; we shall soon see Reid implicitly equating them.]

Even in those who are not entirely without virtue a •concern for character is often a useful aid to •virtue when the two principles point in the same direction.

The pursuits of power, of fame, and of knowledge require self-control just as much as virtue does. In our behaviour towards our fellow-creatures, those pursuits generally lead to the very same conduct that virtue requires. I say 'generally' because no doubt there are exceptions, especially in the case of ambition, i.e. the desire for power.

The evils that ambition has produced in the world are a common topic of denunciation. But it should be pointed out that for every **one** socially harmful act that ambition has led to there have been **ten thousand** beneficial ones. And we rightly regard a lack of ambition as one of the most unfavourable symptoms in a man's temperament.

The desires for esteem and for knowledge are highly useful to society, as well as the desire for power; and they are less dangerous than it is in their excesses.

Although •actions driven merely by the love of power, of reputation, or of knowledge can't be accounted virtuous, or be entitled to moral approval, we still accept them as manly, straightforward, and suited to the dignity [see Glossary] of human nature; which entitles them to a higher degree of respect than •actions that come from mere appetite.

[Reid illustrates this with the cases of Alexander the Great who was 'great' in his early years when dominated by the love of glory and power, but not later on when he was conquered by his 'passions and appetites'; and of the luxury-loving Persian king Sardanapalus whom no-one ever called 'great'.]

Appetite is the principle of most of the actions of brute animals, and when a man employs himself chiefly in gratifying his appetites we think he has sunk to the level of such animals. The desires for power, for esteem, and for knowledge are important working parts of the human constitution; and the actions they lead to, though not strictly virtuous, are human and manly; and they are entitled to rank higher than actions that come from appetites. I think this is the universal and unbiased judgment of mankind. . . .

The desires I have mentioned are not only highly useful in society, and in their nature nobler than our appetites; they are also the best engines that can be used in the education and discipline of men.

In training brute animals to such habits as they are capable of, the chief instrument is the fear of punishment. But in the training of decent men, •ambition to excel and •love of esteem are much nobler and more powerful engines by which to lead them to worthy conduct and train them in good habits.

And there's another point: the desires I have mentioned are very friendly to real virtue, and make it easier to acquire. A man who is not quite abandoned [= 'not completely morally bankrupt'] must behave in society in a way that lets him keep some degree of reputation. Every man desires to do this, and the majority succeed. For this he must acquire the

habit of keeping his appetites and passions within the limits that common decency requires, and so as to make himself a •tolerable member of society if not a •useful and •agreeable one.

It can't be doubted that many people who are very little influenced by a sense of duty nevertheless make themselves useful and agreeable members of society, being led to this by a concern for character and for the opinion of others.

Thus men who live in society, especially in polished society, are tamed and civilised by the principles that are common to good and bad men. They're taught to restrain their appetites and passions in the eyes of men, which makes it easier to bring them under the rein of virtue.

Just as a horse that has been broken in is more easily managed than an unbroken colt, so also a man who has undergone the discipline of society is more manageable, and is in an excellent state of preparation for the discipline of virtue; and the self-control that is necessary in the •race of ambition and honour is an important thing to have in the •course of virtue.

So I think that those who regard the life of a hermit as favourable to a course of virtue are very grossly wrong! The hermit is indeed free from some temptations to vice, but he is deprived of •many strong inducements to self-control and •of every opportunity to exercise the social virtues.

A very able author has explained our moral sentiments regarding the virtues of self-control purely in terms of a concern for the opinion of men. [He is thought to mean Adam Smith.] I think this is giving a great deal too much to the love of esteem, and putting the •shadow of virtue in place of the •substance; but there's no doubt that a concern for the opinion of others is. . . .a great inducement to good conduct. That is because however men may •behave, they will always •approve in others the conduct that they think is right.

I remarked earlier that in addition to the appetites that nature has given us we can *acquire* appetites which, if we aren't careful, become as urgently demanding as the natural ones. The same thing holds for desires.

One of the most remarkable acquired desires is the desire for money. In countries that *have* money, some degree of this desire will be found in most men, and in some men it swallows up every other desire, appetite and passion.

The desire for money only counts as a principle of action when the money is desired for its own sake, and not merely as a means to something else.

It seems obvious that misers have that kind of desire for money; and I don't think anyone will say that it is natural, or a part of our basic constitution. It seems to be an effect of habit.

In money-using nations money is an instrument by which almost anything that is desired can be obtained. Because money is useful as a means to many different ends, some men lose sight of the end and desire only the means. Money is also a species of power, equipping a man to do many things that he couldn't do without it; and power is a natural object of desire even when it isn't exercised.

In a similar way a man may acquire a desire for a title of honour, for good furniture, for an estate.

Although our natural desires are highly beneficial to society, and are even an aid to virtue, acquired desires are worse than useless—they are harmful and even disgraceful.

No man is ashamed to admit that he loves power, loves esteem, loves knowledge, for their own sake. He may love these things excessively, and that is a blemish; but there's a degree of such love that is natural and not a blemish. To love money, titles or furniture for any reason except that they are useful or ornamental is agreed by everyone to be weakness and folly.

The natural desires I have been considering can't be called *social* principles of action in the common sense of that word, because they don't aim to procure any good or benefit to others; but they relate to society in a way that shows most evidently that nature intended man to live in society.

The desire for **knowledge** is not more natural than the desire to communicate our knowledge. Even **power** would be less valued if there were no chance to show it to others; it derives half its value from that. As for the desire for **esteem**, it can't possibly be gratified except in society.

So these parts of our constitution are evidently intended for social life. It's not more obvious that birds were made for flying and fishes for swimming than that man, endowed with a natural desire for power, for esteem, and for knowledge, is made not for the savage and solitary state but for living in society.

Chapter 3: Benevolent affection in general

We have seen how, by the 'mechanical principles' of instinct and habit, man—without any expense of thought and without deliberation or will—is led to many actions that are needed for his preservation and well-being, actions that all his skill and wisdom couldn't have accomplished in the absence of those principles.

Perhaps you are thinking that man's deliberate and voluntary actions are to be guided by his reason.

But I should point out that he is a voluntary agent long before he has the use of reason. Reason and virtue, the prerogatives of man, are of the latest growth. They come to maturity slowly and gradually, and in the greater part of our species they are too weak to secure the preservation of individuals and of communities, and to produce that varied scene of human life in which they are to be exercised and improved.

So the wise Author of our being has implanted in human nature many lower principles of action which, with little or no help from reason or virtue, preserve our species and produce the various actions and changes and movements that we observe on life's stage.

In this busy scene [= 'theatrical production'] reason and virtue can come on-stage to act their parts, and they do often produce great and good effects; but whether or not they show up, there are actors of an inferior kind that will carry on the play and produce a variety of events, good or bad.

Perfect reason would lead men to use the right means for preserving their own lives and continuing their species; but the Author of our being hasn't thought fit to leave this task to reason alone, and if he had, the species would long ago have been extinct. He has given us, in common with other animals, *appetites* by which those important purposes are secured, whether men are wise or foolish, virtuous or vicious.

Perfect reason would lead men not to lose the benefit of their active powers by inactivity, and not to overstrain them by excessive labour. But nature has given a powerful assistant to reason by making inactivity a grievous punishment to itself, and by linking the pain of weariness to excessive labour.

Perfect reason would lead us to desire power, knowledge, and the esteem and affection of our fellow-men as means of •promoting our own happiness and of •being useful to others. Here again nature makes up for defects in our reason by giving us a strong natural desire for those objects, which leads us to pursue them without regard to their utility.

I have already discussed those principles; and I add here another point, namely that they all have things, not persons, for their object [see Glossary]. They don't imply any good or

bad affection towards any other person, or even towards ourselves; so they can't properly be called 'selfish' or 'social'. But various principles of action in man do have persons for their immediate object, and imply in their very nature our being well or badly affected towards some person or at least towards some animated being.

I shall call such principles by the general name 'affections', whether they dispose us to do good or harm to others.

[Reid compares this with the use of 'affection' in ordinary speech, and sticks to his guns, saying that the verb 'affect' is good/bad neutral in its meaning, and that we therefore oughtn't to restrict 'affection' to items that are positive or friendly. He then goes on to say: **(a1)** Intense disturbing love is commonly called 'passion'; **(a2)** calm composed love is called 'affection'. **(b1)** 'Malevolent principles such as anger, resentment and envy' are commonly called 'passions' because of their violence. By parity with **(a2)**, therefore, **(b2)** calmly undisturbed anger, resentment etc. should be called 'affections'. Summing up:]

The principles that lead us immediately to desire the good of others, and those that lead us to desire their hurt, have in common that persons and not things are their immediate objects. Both imply our being in some way affected towards the person; so they ought to have some common name to express what is common in their natures, and I know no better name for this than 'affection'.

Taking 'affection' therefore in this extended sense, our affections are very naturally divided into benevolent and malevolent, according as they imply our being well or badly affected towards their object.

There are some things common to all benevolent affections, others in which they differ.

They differ •in the feeling or sensation contained in each of them and •in the objects to which they are directed.

They all agree in two things: •the feeling that accompanies them is agreeable, and •they imply a desire for the good and happiness of their object.

The affections we have towards a parent, a child, a benefactor, a person in distress, a mistress, differ in •the feelings they produce in the mind as much as they differ in •their objects. We don't have names to express the differences amongst these feelings, but everyone is conscious of the differences. And along with all this difference, they are alike in being agreeable feelings.

I know of no exception to this rule, if we distinguish the feeling that naturally and necessarily accompanies the kind affection from feelings that it may happen to produce in certain circumstances. Parental affection is an agreeable feeling; but it makes the misfortune or misbehaviour of a child give a deeper wound to the mind. Pity is an agreeable feeling, but distress that we can't relieve may give a painful sympathy. Love for one of the other sex is an agreeable feeling, but when it doesn't meet with a proper return it can give the most piercing distress.

The joy and comfort of human life consists in the reciprocal exercise of kind affections, and without them life would be undesirable.

Shaftesbury and many other judicious moralists have observed that even the epicure and the debauchee, who are thought to place all their happiness in sensual gratifications and to pursue these as their only object, can get no pleasure from solitary indulgences of this kind but only from ones that are mixed with social intercourse [see Glossary] and a two-way exchange of kind affections. . . .

Mutual kind affections are undoubtedly the balm of life, and of all the enjoyments common to good and bad men they are the chief. If a man had no-one to love or esteem, and no-one who loved or esteemed him, how wretched his

condition would be! Surely any man capable of reflection would rather die than live in such a state.

Poets have represented it as being the state of some bloody and barbarous tyrants, but Poets are allowed to paint a little beyond the life. Atreus is represented by a poet as saying 'Let them hate, as long as they fear'. I don't think there was ever a man with that attitude to all mankind. The most odious tyrant that ever was will have his favourites, whose affection he tries to deserve or to bribe and to whom he has some good will.

So we can lay it down as a principle that all benevolent affections are intrinsically agreeable; and that along with a good conscience (to which they are always friendly, and can't ever be adverse), they are the chief part of human happiness.

Another ingredient essential to every benevolent affection, expressed by the label 'benevolent', is a desire for the good and happiness of the object.

The object of a benevolent affection therefore, must be some being capable of happiness. When we speak of 'affection' for a house or for any inanimate thing, the word has a different meaning. Something that has no capacity for enjoyment or suffering can be an object of liking or disgust, but it can't possibly be an object either of benevolent or malevolent affection.

A thing can be desired either for itself or as a means to something else. Something can properly be called an object of desire only if it is desired for itself; and those are the only desires that I call 'principles of action'. When something is desired only as a •means, there must be an •end for which it is desired; and in that case it's the desire for the end that is the principle of action. . . .

For this reason the only affections that count as benevolent are ones where the object's good is desired ultimately, and not merely as a means to something else. To say that

> we desire the good of others only in order to procure some pleasure or good for ourselves

is to say that

> there is no benevolent affection in human nature.

This has indeed been the position of some philosophers, in ancient times and more recently. I shan't examine this view here, because I judge it to be better to present what I think is the correct view of the principles of action in man before examining theories that have mistaken or misrepresented them.

At present I'll just say this: to treat all our benevolent affections as versions of self-love appears as unreasonable as it would be to say that hunger and thirst are versions of self-love! These appetites are necessary for the survival of the individual. Benevolent affections are no less necessary for the survival of society among men, and without *that* man would become an easy prey to the beasts of the field.

We are placed in this world by the Author of our being, surrounded by many objects that are necessary or useful to us and by many that can hurt us. We are led not only by reason and self-love but also by many instincts, appetites, and natural desires to seek the helpful things and avoid the harmful ones.

Of all the things in this world, what is the most useful to man? And what is the most hurtful? It may be that the two questions have the same answer—*man*! Every man is in the power of every man with whom he lives. Every man has power to do much good to his fellow-men and to do more harm.

We can't live without the society of men; and it would be impossible to live *in* society if men were not disposed to do to other men much of the good and little of the harm that it is in their power to do.

But how is this end, so necessary for the existence of human society and thus for the existence of the human species, to be accomplished?

If we judge by analogy, we'll conclude that in this as in other parts of our conduct •our rational principles are aided by principles of a lower kind, like ones that enable many brute animals to live in society with their species; and •by means of such principles we achieve the degree of regularity that we find in all societies of men, whether wise or foolish, virtuous or vicious.

So the benevolent affections planted in human nature seem to be just as necessary for the survival of the human species as are the appetites of hunger and thirst.

Chapter 4: Some particular benevolent affections

Having made these points about benevolent affections •generally, I shall now discuss seven of them •individually.

1. The affection between parents and children, and other near relations.

We commonly call this 'natural affection'. Every language has a name for it. We have it in common with most of the brute animals, with different versions of it in different animals, depending on whether it is more or less necessary for the preservation of the species. Many of the insect tribe need no other care from their parents than that the eggs be laid in a proper place where they'll have neither too little nor too much heat, and where the newly hatched animal will find its natural food. The parent takes this care of its young, and no more.

In other tribes the young must be lodged in some secret place where they can't be easily discovered by their enemies. They must be comforted and made to feel safe by the warmth of the parent's body. They must be suckled [= 'breast-fed'] and fed at first with tender food; accompanied in their excursions and guarded from danger, until they have learned by experience and by the example of their parents to provide for their own subsistence and safety. We all know with what care and tender affection this is done by the parents in every species that requires it.

The eggs of the feathered tribe are commonly hatched by incubation by the mother, who immediately stops her lively activities and confines herself to her solitary and painful task, cheered by the song of her mate on a nearby branch. He sometimes feeds her, and sometimes takes over the incubation while she gathers a scanty meal and quickly returns to her post.

The young birds of many species are so very tender and delicate that we with all our wisdom and experience wouldn't be able to rear one to maturity. But the parents, without any experience, know perfectly how to rear their young—sometimes a dozen or more in one brood—and to give to each its due portion. They know the food best suited to their delicate constitution, which in some species must first be cooked and half digested in the stomach of the parent.

In some animals, nature has furnished the female with a kind of second womb into which the young retire occasionally for food, warmth, and the convenience of being carried about with the mother.

One could go on for ever about all the various ways in which parental affection is expressed by brute animals!

It seems to me that a person would have to have a *very strange* sort of mind if he could survey the various ways in which the young of the various species are reared and not be filled with wonder, with pious admiration for the manifold wisdom that has so skillfully fitted means to ends in such an infinite variety of ways!

In all the brute animals we know about, the purpose of the parental affection is completely met in a short time; and then the affection ceases, as if it had never been.

The infancy of man is longer and more helpless than that of any other animal. Parental affection is necessary for many years; it is highly useful throughout life; so it ends only when life does. And it extends to children's children without any lessening of its force.

Here is a *common* kind of event:

> A young woman in the gayest period of life spends her days in having fun and her nights in profound sleep with no worries or cares; then she is suddenly transformed into the careful, solicitous, watchful nurse of her dear infant. During the day she does nothing but gaze on it and serving it in the meanest offices [meaning: through the lowest tasks—burping and bottom-wiping and diaper-changing etc.]; and by night she deprives herself of sound sleep for months, so that it can lie safe in her arms. Forgetful of herself, her whole care is centred in this little object.

Such a sudden and total transformation of her habits, occupations, and cast of mind, if we didn't see it every day, would strike us as a more wonderful metamorphosis than any that Ovid has described. [The Latin poet Ovid wrote *Metamorphoses*, a book of long poems recounting Greek myths, especially ones in which some*one* is metamorphosed—transformed—into some*thing*: Jupiter into a shower of gold coins, Actaeon into a stag, and so on.]

But this is the work of nature, and not the effect of reason and reflection. For we see it in good women and in bad ones, in the most thoughtless as well as in the thoughtful.

Nature has assigned different roles to the father and mother in rearing their offspring. This can be seen in many brute animals; and its being so in the human species was long ago observed by Socrates and most beautifully illustrated by him, as we learn from Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*. The parental affection of the two sexes is exactly adapted to the work assigned to each: the father would make an awkward nurse to a new-born child, and the mother would be too indulgent as a guardian, but both act with propriety and grace in their proper sphere. [Reid had nine children, eight of whom died before he did.]

It is very remarkable that when the job of rearing a child is transferred from the parent to another person, nature seems to transfer the affection along with the work. A nurse who is breast-feeding the baby, or even one that isn't, usually has the same affection for her nursling as if she had born it. This well known fact seems to be the work of nature.

•Our affections are not immediately in our power in the way our physical actions are. Nature has directed •them to certain objects. We can give kind help without affection, but we can't create an affection that nature hasn't given.

Reason might teach a man that his children are especially committed to his care by the providence of God, and that therefore he ought to attend to them as his special responsibility; but reason couldn't teach him to love them more than other children of equal merit, or to be more saddened by their misfortunes or misbehaviour. . . . He gets that love and that sadness from the constitution that nature has given him.

There are some affections that we could call 'rational' because they are based on a belief about the merit of the object. Parental affection is not like that. For though a man's affection for his child may be •increased by merit and •lessened by demerit, I don't think anyone will say that it •arose in the first place from a belief about merit. It's not the belief that creates the affection, though often affection creates the belief. It is apt to pervert the judgment and create a belief in one's merit on the part of someone who has none.

The absolute necessity of this parental affection for the continuance of the human species is so obvious that I needn't provide arguments to prove it. The rearing of a child from its birth to maturity requires so much time and care, and such infinite attentions, that if it were to be done merely from considerations of reason and duty, and were not sweetened by affection in parents, nurses and guardians, there's reason to doubt whether one child in ten thousand would ever be reared!

This part of the human constitution is not only absolutely **necessary** for the survival of the species; it is also very **useful**

- •for toning down the wildness and impetuosity of youth, and improving its knowledge by the prudence and experience of age,
- •for encouraging industry and frugality in the parents, in order to provide for their children, and
- •for the solace and support of parents as they go through the infirmities of old age.

Not to mention the fact that that it probably gave rise to the first civil governments. [That seems to be a casual wave in the direction of certain theories about the origin of government; see for example chapters 6 and 7 of Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*.]

Parental and other family affections seem in general not to be too strong or too weak for achieving their purpose. If they were too weak, parents would be tend to err on the side of undue severity; if too strong, the error would consist in undue indulgence. As things stand, I don't think anyone can say that the errors are more general on one side than on the other. When these affections are exercised according to their intended purpose, directed by wisdom and prudence, the workings of such a family are a most delightful spectacle which provide the most agreeable and affecting subject for the painter's brush and for the pen of the orator and poet.

2. Gratitude towards benefactors.

No-one who knows anything about human nature will deny that kindly help is, by the very constitution of our nature, apt to produce good will towards the benefactor—in good and bad men, in the savage and in the civilised.

The danger of perverting a man's judgment by good deeds in a situation where he ought to have no bias is so well known that it is dishonourable in judges, in witnesses, in electors to positions of trust, to accept such favours; and in all civilised nations gifts in such situations are prohibited as a means of corruption.

Those who would corrupt the sentence of a judge, the testimony of a witness, or the vote of an elector, know well that they mustn't make a bargain, i.e. stipulate what is to be done ·for them· in return. To do so would shock every man who has the faintest claim to moral seriousness. If the judge or etc. can only be persuaded to accept the favour as an expression of pure and disinterested friendship, it is left to work on his gratitude. He finds himself under a kind of moral obligation to consider the cause of his benefactor and friend in the most favourable light. He finds it easier to justify his conduct to himself if he sides with his benefactor than if he sides against him.

Thus the principle of gratitude is taken for granted, even in the nature of a bribe. [His point is that making a gift to the judge, and wanting nothing back except gratitude, *is* in effect giving a bribe.] Bad men know how to make this natural principle the most effective means of corruption. The very best things can be turned to a bad use. But the natural effect of this principle, and the intention of nature in planting it in the human breast, are obviously to promote goodwill among men, and to give to kindly favours the power of multiplying their kind, like seed sown in the earth which brings a return with increase.

I shan't discuss the question of whether the more intelligent brutes have something that might be called 'gratitude'. We must allow this important difference between their 'gratitude' and ours, that in ours it's the mind of the benefactor that mainly counts, whereas with the brutes all that matters is the physical action. A brute animal will be as kindly affected to someone who feeds it •in order to kill and eat it as to someone who does this •from affection. . . .

3. Pity and compassion towards the distressed.

Of all persons, those in distress stand most in need of our kindly help. And for that reason the Author of nature has planted in the breast of every human creature a powerful advocate to plead their cause.

In man and in some other animals there are signs of distress that nature has taught them to •use and to •understand without any interpreter. These natural signs are more eloquent than language: they move our hearts, and produce sympathy and a desire to give relief.

There are few hearts so hard that great distress won't conquer their anger, indignation, any malevolent affection.

We sympathise even with the traitor or the assassin when we see him led to execution. It is only self-preservation and the public good that makes us reluctantly agree to his being cut off from among men.

The practice of the ·native· Canadian nations toward their prisoners would tempt one to think that they have rooted out the principle of compassion from their nature. But I think this would be a rash conclusion. They assign only some of their prisoners to a cruel death. This satisfies the desire for revenge of the women and children who have lost their husbands and fathers in the war. The other prisoners are treated kindly and adopted as brethren.

Compassion with bodily pain is no doubt weakened among these savages, because they are trained from their infancy to be superior to death and to every degree of pain; and one of them who can't defy his tormentors and sing his death-song in the midst of the most cruel tortures is thought to be unworthy to be called a man. One who *can* do this is honoured as a brave man, although an enemy. . . .

A Canadian has the most perfect contempt for every man who thinks pain an intolerable evil. And nothing is so apt to stifle compassion as contempt and the belief that the evil suffered is only what ought to be manfully borne.

It must also be observed that savages set no limits to their revenge.

Those who find no protection in laws and government never think they are safe until they have destroyed their enemy. One of the main advantages of civil government is that it damps down the cruel passion of revenge and opens the heart to compassion with every human woe.

Any religion that is able to check the tear of compassion must, it seems, be a false one. ·I mention this because· we are told that in Portugal and Spain a man condemned to be burned as an obstinate heretic meets with no compassion, even from the crowd. It 's true that they are taught to see him as an enemy to God and doomed to hell-fire. But shouldn't precisely *that* produce compassion? Surely it would if they weren't taught that in this case it is a crime to show or even to feel compassion.

4. Esteem for the wise and the good.

The worst men can't avoid feeling this in some degree. Esteem, veneration, devotion are different degrees of the same affection. The perfection of wisdom, power and goodness, which belongs only to the Almighty, is the object [see Glossary] of devotion.

Is it right to classify this principle of esteem and that of gratitude as •animal principles rather than •rational ones? They are certainly more allied to the rational nature than the

others I have named, and it's not obvious that brute animals have anything that deserves the same name.

There is indeed a subordination in a herd of cattle and in a flock of sheep, and I believe this is determined by strength and courage, as it is among savage tribes of men. I have been told that in a pack of hounds a staunch hound [i.e. one that is especially good at following scents] acquires a degree of esteem in the pack; so that when the dogs are wandering in search of the scent, if he starts baying after the scent the pack immediately follows him, when they wouldn't pay any attention to the baying of a dog of no reputation. This is something like a respect for wisdom.

But I have classified esteem for the wise and good as an 'animal' principle not because I think •it is to be found in brute animals but because I think •it appears in the most undeveloped and in the most degenerate part of our species, even in those in whom it's hard to see any activity of reason or of virtue.

But I shan't argue with anyone who thinks it deserves a more honourable name than of 'animal principle'. It is of small importance what name we give it, if we are satisfied that there is such a principle in the human constitution.

5. Friendship.

We have some famous instances of friendship in history. Not many, but enough to show that human nature is susceptible of the extraordinary attachment, sympathy [see Glossary] and affection to one or a few persons that the ancients thought was the only attachment worthy of the name 'friendship'.

The Epicureans found it difficult to reconcile the existence of friendship with the principles of their sect. They weren't so bold as to deny its existence. They even boasted that there had been more attachments of that kind between Epicureans than in any other sect! But it wasn't easy to account for real friendship on Epicurean principles. They went into different hypotheses on this point, three of which are explained by Torquatus the Epicurean, in Cicero's book *De Finibus* [= 'Concerning ends or goals']. Cicero in his reply to Torquatus examines all three, and shows each to be inconsistent either with •the nature of true friendship or with •the fundamental principles of the Epicurean sect.

Regarding the friendship that the Epicureans boasted of among those of their sect, Cicero doesn't question the fact, but remarks that just as there are many whose practice is worse than their principles, so there are some whose principles are worse than their practice, and that the bad principles of these Epicureans were overcome by the goodness of their nature.

6. The passion of love between the sexes.

Although it is commonly the theme of poets, this is not unworthy of the pen of the philosopher, as it is a most important part of the human constitution.

No doubt it's made up of various ingredients, as are many other principles of action, but it certainly can't exist without a very strong benevolent affection toward its object—in whom it finds or imagines everything that is amiable [see Glossary] and excellent and even something more than human. I am considering it here only as a benevolent affection that is natural to man; and its being so can't be doubted by any man who ever felt its force.

It is evidently intended by nature to direct a man in the choice of a mate with whom he desires to live and to rear an offspring.

It has effectively achieved this goal in all ages and in every state of society.

The passion of love and parental affection are counterparts to each other; and when they are conducted with prudence and meet with a proper return they are the source

of all domestic happiness, which is the second-greatest happiness that this world has to offer, after a good conscience.

In the world as it now is, pain often dwells near to pleasure, and sorrow near to joy, so it shouldn't seem strange that a passion fitted and intended by nature to yield the greatest worldly happiness should, when badly regulated or wrongly directed, lead to the most piercing distress.

But love's joys and griefs, its different versions in the two sexes, and its influence on the character of each, though very important subjects are fitter to be sung than said, and I leave them to the poets.

7. What we commonly call public spirit, i.e. an affection towards any community to which we belong.

If there's any man who has *nothing* of this affection, he must be as great a freak as a man born with two heads. Its effects are manifest in the whole of human life, and in the history of all nations.

The situation of a great part of mankind is such that their thoughts and views must be restricted to a very narrow sphere, and be very much occupied by their private concerns. With regard to an extensive public such as a •state or •nation they are like a drop in the ocean, so that they seldom have any opportunity to act with •*its* welfare in view.

In people whose actions can affect the public and whose rank and position lead them to think of it, private passions often outweigh public spirit. This shows only that their public spirit is weak, not that it doesn't exist.

If a man wishes the public well, and is ready to help rather than harm it when this costs him nothing, he has *some* affection towards the public though it may be scandalously weak in degree.

I believe that every man has it in some degree. What man is there who does not resent satirical reflections on his country or on any community to which he belongs?

Whether the affection is towards a college, a monastery, a clan, a profession, a party or a nation, it is public spirit. These affections differ not in kind but ·only· in the size of their object.

The object grows as our connections extend, and our sense of the connection carries the affection along with it to every community that we can call 'ours'.

> Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,
> His country next, and then all human race. (Pope)

Even in the misanthrope [= 'hater of mankind'] this affection isn't extinguished but merely overpowered by his sense of the worthlessness, the baseness, and the ingratitude of mankind. Convince him that our species has some amiable qualities and immediately his philanthropy [= 'love of mankind'] revives and rejoices to find something on which to exercise it.

Like every subordinate principle of action, public spirit when it is not under the control of reason and virtue can produce much evil as well as good. But if there is *any* reason and virtue to regulate it, its good far outweighs its evil. [Reid hasn't introduced and doesn't explain the phrase 'subordinate principle', and his use of it in the last paragraph of this chapter (page 29 doesn't fit the present context. The paragraph beginning 'I shall try to show. . . ' on page 48 gives the answer: all the 'animal principles' are and should be subordinate to 'rational principles'.]

It sometimes fires up animosities between communities or contending parties, and makes them treat each other with little concern for justice. It starts wars between nations, and makes them destroy one another for trivial causes. But without it society couldn't survive; every community would be a rope of sand.

When public spirit is under the direction of reason and virtue, it is the very *image of God* in the soul. It spreads its benign influence as far as its power reaches, and has a share in the happiness of God and of the whole creation.

* * * * *

Those ·seven· are the benevolent affections that appear to me to be built into the human constitution. If anyone thinks the list is not complete. . . ., I shall very readily listen to him, because I'm aware such enumerations are very often incomplete.

Perhaps some will think that some or all of the affections I have named are acquired by education, or by habits and associations based on self-love, and are not basic parts of our constitution. Well, there has been much subtle debate about this in ancient and in modern times; and I think it has to be settled •by what a man feels in himself when he reflects carefully, rather than •by what he observes in others. But I'm not willing to enter into this dispute until I have explained the principle of action that we commonly call self-love . [See Part III, chapters 2-4, starting on page 48.]

I shall conclude this subject with four reflections on the benevolent affections.

(1) All of them—insofar as they are benevolent (and I am looking at them only in that light)—agree very much in how they dispose us to behave with regard to their objects. They dispose us to

•do them good as far as we have power and opportunity;

•wish them well when we can't do them any good;

•judge them favourably and often with bias in their favour;

•sympathise with them in their afflictions; and

•rejoice with them in their happiness and good fortune.

It's impossible for there to be a benevolent affection without sympathy both with the good and the bad fortune of the object; and it appears to be impossible for there to be sympathy without benevolent affection. Men don't sympathise with anyone they hate, or even with anyone to whose welfare they are perfectly indifferent.

We may sympathise with a perfect stranger or even an enemy whom we see in distress; but this is an effect of pity—if we didn't pity him we wouldn't sympathise with him.

I'm making this point here because a very able author [Adam Smith] in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* gives a very different account of the origin of sympathy. It appears to me to be •an effect of benevolent affection, and to be inseparable from it. [Smith held that sympathy •*causes* benevolent affections.]

(2) The constitution of our nature very powerfully invites us to value the benevolent affections and cultivate them in our minds.

The agreeable feeling that always accompanies them as a present reward seems to be intended by nature for this purpose.

Benevolence naturally calms the mind, warms the heart, enlivens the whole body, and brightens every feature of the face. It can fairly be called 'medicinal' both to soul and body. We are bound to it by •duty, and invited to it by •·self·-interest; and because both of •these are often feeble, we have natural kind affections to aid them in their work and make up for their defects, and the exercise of these affections brings manly pleasure.

(3) The natural benevolent affections provide the most irresistible proof that the Author of our nature intended us to live in society and do good to our fellow-men when we have the opportunity. ·How do they prove this? Through the fact that· this great and important part of the human constitution has an obvious relation to society and can't have any use in a solitary state.

(4) The different principles of action differ in how much dignity [see Glossary] they have, and when we think carefully about them we find that some rise higher in our esteem than others.

We don't ascribe any dignity to instincts or to habits; we only admire the Creator's wisdom in adapting them so perfectly to the ways of life of the animals that have them. Much the same holds for appetites: they are for use rather than for ornament.

The desires for knowledge, power, and esteem stand higher in our estimation, and we see them as giving dignity and ornament to man. Although the actions that comes from them are not strictly speaking *virtuous*, they are manly and worthy of respect, and can fairly be counted as superior to actions that come from mere appetite. I think that's what everyone thinks.

If we apply the same kind of judgment to our benevolent affections, they appear not only manly and respect-worthy but highly amiable [see Glossary].

They are amiable even in brute animals. We love the meekness of the lamb, the gentleness of the dove, the affection of a dog to his master. [Reid gives examples: a ewe defending its lamb from predators, small birds decoying hawks away from the nest, and so on. Then:] If kind affection is amiable in brutes, it is not less so in our own species. Even the external signs of it have a powerful charm.

Everyone knows that a person of accomplished good breeding charms everyone he converses with. And what *is* this good breeding? If we analyse it we'll find it to be made up of looks, gestures and speeches, which are the natural signs of benevolence and good affection. Someone who has the habit of using these signs in the proper way and without meanness [see Glossary] is a well-bred and polite man.

What is the beauty of facial features, particularly in the fair sex, that all men love and admire? I believe it consists chiefly in the features that indicate good affections. Every indication of meekness, gentleness, and benignity is a beauty. On the contrary, every feature that indicates pride, passion, envy, and malignity is an ugliness.

. . . .Even the signs and shadows of kind affections are highly attractive in our species. Indeed they're the joy and the comfort of human life, to good men and even to vicious and dissolute ones.

Without society and the intercourse [see Glossary] of kind affection, man is a gloomy, melancholy and joyless being. His mind oppressed with cares and fears, he can't enjoy the consolations of sound sleep; in constant dread of impending danger, he jumps when a leaf rustles. His ears are continually on the stretch, and every little breeze brings a sound that alarms him.

When he enters into society and feels security in the good affection of friends and neighbours, then—but only then—his fear vanishes and his mind is at ease. His courage is raised, his understanding enlightened, his heart warmed with joy.

Human society is like a heap of embers: when they are scattered they lose their light and heat. . . ., but when brought together they give heat and light to each other, and the flame breaks out and not only defends itself but subdues everything around it.

The security, happiness and strength of human society spring solely from the benevolent affections of its members.

Though the benevolent affections are all honourable and lovely, they aren't all equally so. There's a subordination among them, and the honour we pay to them generally corresponds to how large their object is. The good husband, the good father, the good friend, the good neighbour, we honour as a good man who is worthy of our love and affection. But the man in whom these more private affections are swallowed up in zeal for the good of his country, and of mankind, who goes about doing good and looks for opportunities to be useful to his species, we revere as more than a good man—as a hero, as a good angel.

Chapter 5: Malevolent affections

Are there in the human constitution any affections that can be called 'malevolent'? What are they? And what are they *for*?

To me there seem to be two that we could call 'malevolent'. They are •emulation and •resentment. I take these to be parts of the human constitution that •were given to us by our Maker for good ends, and •are—when properly directed and regulated—of excellent use. But I call them 'malevolent' because human nature is very prone to use them wrongly or excessively, and that is what drives all the malevolence that is to be found among men.

If you think they deserve a softer name, because they can be exercised without malevolence, as nature intended, I have no objection.

Emulation

By 'emulation' I mean a desire for superiority to one's rivals in any pursuit, accompanied by an uneasiness [see Glossary] at being surpassed.

Human life has justly been compared to a race. The prize is superiority of some kind; but the kinds. . . .of superiority among men are infinitely diversified.

No man is so contemptible in his own eyes that he won't enter into some kind of contest; and he will always find competitors to rival him. . . .

We see emulation among brute animals. . . . Many animals of the gregarious kind contend for superiority in their flock or herd, and show obvious signs of jealousy when others offer to rival them.

The emulation of brute animals is mostly confined to •swiftness, •strength, and •favour with their females. But emulation of the human kind has a much wider field.

In every profession, and in every accomplishment—real or imaginary!—of body or mind, there are rivalries. Literary men rival one another in literary abilities. Artists in their various arts. The fair sex in their beauty and attractions, and in the respect paid them by the other sex.

In every political society, from a minor corporation up to the government of the country, there is rivalry for power and influence.

Men have a natural desire for power, apart from any thought about the power of others. We call that *ambition*. But the desire for superiority, in power or in anything else we think worthy of esteem, concerns a relation to rivals and is what we properly call 'emulation'.

The stronger the desire is, the more piercing will be the uneasiness of falling behind, and the more the mind will be hurt by this humiliation.

Emulation plainly makes things better. Without it, life would stagnate and the discoveries of art and genius would be at a stand. This principle produces a constant fermentation in society, by which—though dregs may be produced—the better part is purified and raised to a perfection that it couldn't otherwise reach.

We don't have enough data to weigh against one another the good and the bad effects that this principle produces in society; but there's reason to think that with emulation as with other natural principles the good outweighs the bad. As long as it's under the control of reason and virtue its effects are always good; when left to be guided by passion and folly they are often very bad.

Reason directs us to work for superiority only in things that have real excellence, otherwise we are wasting our labour. To value ourselves for superiority in things that have no real worth or none compared with what they cost is to be proud of our own folly! And it's equally ridiculous to

be uneasy [see Glossary] at not being the best at something of that kind.

Reason directs us to work for superiority only in things that we *can* achieve; otherwise we'll be like the frog in [Aesop's] fable, who tried to match the size of the ox, and swelled herself till she burst.

To suppress •all desire for things that aren't achievable, and •every uneasy thought about the lack of them, is an obvious dictate of prudence as well as of virtue and religion.

If •emulation is controlled by such maxims of reason, and if all bias in our own favour is laid aside, •it will be a powerful principle of our improvement without harming anyone else. It will give strength to the nerves and vigour to the mind in every noble and manly pursuit.

But when it isn't being directed by reason and virtue its effects are dismal. It often has the most malignant influence on men's beliefs, their affections, and their actions.

It's an old saying that *affection follows opinion*, and in many cases it does. A man can't be grateful unless he thinks that someone has done him a favour; can't have deliberate resentment unless he thinks he has been injured; can't have esteem for someone whom he doesn't think to have some estimable quality. . . .

But it's equally true that sometimes *opinion follows affection*—not that it •should but that it actually •does so, by giving a false bias to our judgment. We are apt to be biased in favour of our friends and even more of ourselves.

So the desire for superiority leads men to assign an unduly high value to things in which they excel, or think they excel. In this way, pride can feed itself on the very dregs of human nature.

That same desire for superiority may lead men to under-value things that they think they can't excel in or don't want to put in the effort needed for excellence. 'The grapes are sour', said the fox [in another of Aesop's fables], when he saw them beyond his reach. The same principle leads men to under-rate the merit of others, and to impute their brightest actions to mean or bad motives.

He who runs a race feels uneasiness at seeing another outstrip him. This is uncorrupted nature, and the work of God within him. But this uneasiness can have either one of two very different effects. •It may incite him to try harder, straining every nerve to get ahead of his rival. This is fair and honest emulation; it's effect it is intended to produce. But if he doesn't have fairness and honesty of heart, •he will look with an evil eye on his competitor, and will try to trip him or throw a stumbling-block in his way. This is pure envy, the most malignant passion that can lodge in the human breast. It devours as its natural food the fame and the happiness of those who are most deserving of esteem.

Some men are prone to detract from the character of other people, even ones they don't know or don't care about; and others are eager to hear scandal and to pass it on. To what principle in human nature must we ascribe these qualities? The failings of others surely add nothing to our worth, and they aren't in themselves a pleasant topic of thought or of discourse. But they flatter pride by making us believe we are superior to those we are running down.

Mightn't that the same desire for superiority have some secret influence on those who declaim eloquently on •the corruption of human nature and •the wickedness, fraud and insincerity of mankind in general? It should always be taken for granted that the declaimer is—·i.e. sees himself as·—an exception to the general rule. . . . Hoping that his audience will be so civil as not to include him in the black description, he *rises* by *lowering* the species; so he stands alone, like Noah in the world before the flood. This looks like envy against the human race.

It would be an endless and disagreeable task to enumerate all the evils and vices that passion and folly beget on emulation. Here as in most cases the corruption of the best things is the worst. In brute animals, emulation doesn't have much material to work on, and its effects—good or bad—are few. . . . But in mankind it has an infinity of material, and its good or bad effects. . . .multiply correspondingly. . . .

Resentment

Nature disposes us, when we are hurt, to resist and retaliate. Beside the bodily pain caused by the hurt, the mind is ruffled, and a desire is raised to retaliate against the author of the hurt or injury [see Glossary]. This in general is what we call 'anger' or 'resentment'.

·In the eighth of his *Fifteen Sermons*· Butler makes a very important distinction between •sudden resentment, which is a blind impulse arising from our constitution and •deliberate resentment. The first can be created by hurt of any kind, but the second can only be created by injury, real or conceived. The same distinction is made by Henry Home in his *Elements of Criticism*. What Butler calls 'sudden' he calls 'instinctive'.

We don't in ordinary language have different names for these different kinds of resentment, but we must distinguish them if we are to have sound notions of this part of the human constitution. The distinction corresponds perfectly with the distinction I have made between the •animal and •rational principles of action. For sudden or instinctive resentment is an animal principle that we share with brute animals, whereas the resentment that those two authors call 'deliberate' has to be classified as a rational principle.

By putting it in that class, I don't mean that it is always kept within the limits that reason prescribes, but only that it is exclusive to man as a reasonable being whose rational faculties enable him to distinguish hurt from injury—a distinction that no brute animal can make.

Each of these kinds of resentment can be produced by hurt or injury done •to ourselves or •to others whose interests we care about.

When we have a benevolent affection towards others we resent wrongs done to them, our resentment being proportion to the strength of our affection. Pity and sympathy with the sufferer produce resentment against the author of the suffering as naturally as concern for ourselves produces resentment of our own wrongs.

I shall first consider the resentment that I classify as 'animal', which Butler calls 'sudden' and Home calls 'instinctive'.

In every animal that has the power to hurt its enemy we see an attempt to retaliate for the evil that is done to it. Even a mouse will bite when it can't run away.

There are some animals to whom nature hasn't given any offensive weapon. Anger and resentment wouldn't be useful to them, and I think we'll find that they never show any sign of it. But there are few of this kind.

Some of the more intelligent animals can be provoked to fierce anger, and can stay angry for a long time. Many of them show great animosity in defending their young, yet hardly show any in defending themselves. Others resist every assault made on the flock or herd to which they belong. Bees defend their hive, wild beasts their den, and birds their nest.

This sudden resentment works in the same way in men as in brutes, and seems to be given by nature to both as a means of defence in cases where there is no time for deliberation. It is comparable with the natural instinct by which a man who has lost his balance and starts to fall makes a sudden and violent effort to recover himself, without any intention or deliberation.

In such efforts men often exert a degree of muscular strength beyond what they can exert by a calm determination of the will. . . .

By a similar violent and sudden impulse nature prompts us to lash out at the cause of any hurt to us, whether it be man or beast. The 'balance' instinct is solely defensive and is prompted by fear. This sudden resentment is offensive and is prompted by anger, but with a view to defence.

Man in his present state is surrounded by so many dangers from his own species, from brute animals, from everything around him, that he needs some defensive armour that will always be ready in a moment of danger. His reason is of great use for this purpose, when there's time to apply it. But in many cases the harm would be done before reason could work out how to prevent it.

The wisdom of nature has provided two ways of making up for this defect in our reason. One is the instinct before mentioned. . . . [Reid sketchily repeats his account of blinking to protect one's eyes, recovering from a stumble, etc.]

But •offensive arms are often the surest means of •defence—by deterrence. Accordingly, nature has provided man and other animals with this kind of defence, through the sudden resentment that outruns the quickest decisions of reason and takes fire in an instant, threatening the enemy with retaliation.

. . . .This principle has a two-fold effect: it •inspires the defender with courage and animosity, and •strikes terror into the assailant. It proclaims to all assailants what our ancient Scottish kings did on their coins, *Nemo me impune lacesset* [Latin, meaning 'No-one hurts me and gets away with it']. In countless cases this ·implied threat of retaliation· deters men and beasts from doing harm, thereby saving others from being harmed.

[Reid now raises the question of why brutes and even men show anger and resentment against inanimate things, which can't be affected by this. His answer:] It seems to me impossible that there should be resentment against a thing which at that very moment is regarded as inanimate and consequently incapable either of •intending hurt or of •being punished. What can be more absurd than to be angry with a knife for cutting me, or with a weight for falling on my toes? I think there must be some momentary notion or conception that the object of our resentment *is* capable of being punished; and if it is natural, before reflection, to be angry with inanimate things, it seems to follow that it is natural to think that they have life and feeling.

Several phenomena in human nature lead us to conjecture that in the earliest period of life we are apt to think that everything around us is animated. Judging them by ourselves, we ascribe to them the feelings we are conscious of in ourselves. So we see what a little girl thinks about her doll and her playthings, and what primitive nations think about the heavenly bodies, the elements, and the sea, rivers, and fountains.

. . . .By reason and experience we learn that certain things to which at first we ascribed life and intelligence are really inanimate. If this is right, it's not very surprising that when we are adults we should sometimes—before reflection—relapse for a moment into this prejudice of our early years, treating as alive things that we once believed to be so.

[Reid says that his present line of thought doesn't require him to have this or any other explanation of why, for instance, a man who loses at cards may 'punish' the cards. And he adds that this kind of emotional conduct doesn't matter much, because 'the least ray of reflection corrects it'.]

It's clear enough that this sudden or animal resentment is intended by nature for our defence. It prevents harmful behaviour by the fear of punishment. It's a kind of penal statute promulgated by nature and left to the sufferer to enforce.

It is to be expected that anyone who judges in his own cause will be inclined to seek more than a fair compensation. But this disposition is checked by the resentment of the other party.

But once injuries are begun in the state of nature, it often happens that the pay-back is found excessive and produces resentment and return pay-back, which. . . etc. until mortal enmity is produced, and each party thinks himself safe only in the destruction of his enemy.

This right of redressing and punishing our own wrongs, so apt to be abused, is one of the natural rights which in political society is given up to the laws and the civil magistrate; and it's one of the chief benefits of political union that it largely prevents the evils arising from ungoverned resentment.

Although deliberate resentment doesn't really belong to the class of animal principles, but I'll make some remarks about it here. It does share the name 'resentment' with the sudden resentment that certainly is an animal principle; the two are distinguished only by philosophers; and in real life they are commonly intermixed.

A very little reason and reflection is enough to teach a man that only •injury, and not mere •hurt, is a proper object of resentment for a rational creature. A man may suffer at the hands of someone else not only •without injury but •with the most friendly intention—for example, in a painful surgical operation. Every man of common sense sees that an animal may resent such suffering but a man shouldn't.

Locke reports a gentleman who •was cured of madness by a very harsh and unpleasant operation, •gratefully acknowledged the cure as the greatest obligation he could have received, but •could never bear the sight of the operator because it brought back the idea of the agony he had endured from his hands.

In this case we can see clearly that the animal and rational principles are both at work. Animal resentment produced an aversion to the operator, and reason couldn't overcome it; and in a weak mind it might well have produced lasting resentment and hatred. But in this gentleman reason prevailed enough to make him aware that gratitude and not resentment was appropriate.

Suffering may give a bias to the judgment and make us think there was injury where really there wasn't. But without a belief that there has been injury, there can't be any deliberate resentment.

Hence, among enlightened nations, hostile armies fight without anger or resentment. The vanquished are not treated as offenders but as brave men who have fought for their country unsuccessfully and are entitled to every humane help that is consistent with the safety of the conquerors.

If we analyse the deliberate resentment that is exclusive to rational creatures we'll find that though it agrees with merely animal resentment in some respects it differs in others. Both are accompanied with an uneasy sensation that disturbs the mind's peace. Both prompt us to seek redress for our sufferings and security from harm. But in deliberate resentment—and not in animal resentment—there must be a belief that injury has been done or intended. And a belief about injury implies •an idea of justice, and consequently •a moral faculty.

The very notion of an *injury* is that it is less than we may justly claim; compare the notion of a *favour*, which is that it is more than we can justly claim. Thus, justice is the standard by which both •favour and •injury are to be estimated. Their very nature and definition consist in their exceeding or falling short of this standard ·of what is just, fair, morally right·. So no-one can have the idea either of a favour or of an injury unless he has the idea of justice.

The very idea of justice that enters into cool and deliberate resentment tends to restrain its excesses. For just as there is injustice in doing an injury so also there is injustice in punishing it too severely.

For an honest and reflective man, there is a strong case to be made against excessive resentment:

- •awareness of the frailty of human nature,
- •knowledge that he has often needed of forgiveness himself,
- •the pleasure of renewing a good understanding after it has been interrupted,
- •the inward approval of a generous and forgiving disposition, and
- •the irksomeness and uneasiness of a mind ruffled by resentment.

·But there is also a case to be made against malevolent affections in general·. Consider the fact that, on one hand,

- •every benevolent affection is pleasant in its nature, is health to the soul, and a cordial to the spirits; and
- •nature has made even the outward facial expression of benevolent affections pleasant to every beholder;. . . .

and the fact that, on the other hand,

- •*every* malevolent affection—whether or not it is excessive—is vexation and disquiet to the mind, and even makes the face ugly.

Isn't it clear that these facts are signals by which nature loudly instructs us to use benevolent affections as our •daily bread, both for health and pleasure, and to consider the malevolent ones as a •disgusting medicine that is to be taken only when necessary, and even then in no greater quantity than is necessary.

Chapter 6: Passion

There are some things belonging to the mind that have great influence on human conduct, by arousing or damping down, inflaming or cooling, the animal principles I have been discussing. Three of these deserve special attention—I'll call them 'passion', 'disposition', and 'belief'. ·They will be the topics of the final three chapters of Part II of this Essay·.

The meaning of the word 'passion' hasn't been settled with any precision, either in common discourse or in the writings of philosophers. I think it is commonly taken to signify some agitation of mind, in contrast with the state of tranquility and composure in which a man is most master of himself.

The Greek word for it, $\pi\alpha\theta o\zeta$, is translated by Cicero as *perturbatio* [Latin, = 'agitation'].

It has always been thought of as like a storm at sea or a tempest in the air. So it doesn't signify thing that is constant and permanent in the mind, but rather something occasional and of limited duration, like a storm or tempest.

Passion commonly produces perceptible effects on the body. It changes the voice, features, and gesture. The external signs of passion are in some cases very like those of madness; in other cases they resemble melancholy. Passion often gives the body a level of muscular force and agility far greater than it has in calm moments.

The effects of passion on the mind are at least as remarkable. It turns the thoughts involuntarily to the objects related to it, so that a man can hardly think of anything else. It often gives a strange bias to the judgment, making a man •quick-sighted in everything that tends to inflame and justify his passion, but •blind to everything that tends to moderate and soothe it. Like a 'magic lantern' it arouses spectres and apparitions that have no reality, and throws false colours

on every object. It can turn ugliness into beauty, vice into virtue, and virtue into vice.

The sentiments of a man under the influence of a passion will appear absurd and ridiculous—not only to other men but even to himself when the storm is played out and followed by a calm. Passion often gives a violent push to the will, and makes a man do something that he knows he'll repent as long as he lives.

Such are the effects of passion—I think everyone agrees about that. They have been described in lively colours by poets, orators and moralists in all ages. But more attention has been paid to passion's •effects than to its •nature: the effects have been copiously and elegantly described, but its nature hasn't been precisely defined.

The controversy between the ancient Aristotelians and the Stoics regarding the passions probably arose from their meaning different things by the word. One group maintained that the passions are good useful parts of our constitution as long as they are governed by reason. The other group, having the idea that nothing should be called 'passion' unless it to some degree clouds and darkens the understanding, regarded all passion as hostile to reason, and therefore maintained that in a wise man passion should have no existence but be utterly exterminated.

If the two groups had agreed about the definition of 'passion', they would probably have had no disagreement. But while one thought of passion only as •the cause of the bad effects that it often produces, and the other thought of it as •fitted by nature to produce good effects while under reason's control, neither group was defending anything that the other condemned. Neither group thought that the dictates of passion ought to be followed in opposition to reason. So their difference was verbal more than substantive; it came from their giving one word different meanings.

The precise meaning of this word seems to be no more clearly fixed among modern philosophers.

Hume gives the name 'passion' to every principle of action in the human mind, which leads him to maintain that every man is and ought to be led by his passions, and that it's reason's role to be subservient to the passions.

Hutcheson sees all the principles of action as determinations or motions of the will, and divides them into the calm and turbulent. The turbulent ones, he says, are our appetites and passions. He says about our passions as well as about the calm motions of our will, that some are benevolent, others are selfish; that anger, envy, indignation, and some others can be either •selfish or •benevolent depending on whether they come from opposition to •our own interests or •to those of our friends and loved ones.

It appears, therefore, that this excellent author gives the name 'passion' not to every principle of action but only to some, and to those only when they are turbulent and intense, not when they are calm and deliberate.

Our natural desires and affections can be calm enough to leave room for reflection, so that in an individual case we have no trouble deliberating coolly about whether on this occasion they ought to be gratified. On other occasions they may press so hard that they make deliberation very difficult, urging us by a kind of violence to gratify them immediately.

A man may, without being inflamed, be aware of having received an injury. He judges coolly concerning the injury and the proper means of compensation. This is resentment without passion. It leaves the man's self-control intact.

On another occasion, that same principle of resentment bursts into flame. His blood boils within him; his looks, his voice and his gesture are changed; he can think of nothing but immediate revenge, and feels a strong impulse—without thought of the consequences—to say and do things that his

cool reason can't justify. This is the passion of resentment.

What I have said about resentment can easily be applied to other natural desires and affections. When they are calm enough not to produce any perceptible effects on the body or to darken the understanding and weaken self-control, they are not called 'passions'. But the same principle, when it becomes so violent as to produce these effects on the body and the mind, is a passion or as Cicero very properly calls it, a 'perturbation'.

This meaning for the word 'passion' obviously squares much better with its use in ordinary language than the meaning Hume gives it.

When he says that men ought to be governed only by their passions, and that the use of reason is to be subservient to the passions, this sounds at first like a shocking paradox, inconsistent with good morals and with common sense; but when it is explained according to his meaning, it is—like most paradoxes!—nothing but a misuse of words.

If we give the name 'passion' to every principle of action. . . .and give the name 'reason' solely to the power of discovering what means are fit for what ends, it will be true that the use of reason is to be subservient to the passions.

Wanting to stay as close as possible to how words are ordinarily used, I shall use 'passion' to mean *not* •any principle of action distinct from the desires and affections that I have explained, *but only* •such a degree of intensity in any of them as is apt to produce the effects on body or mind that I described above.

Our appetites, even when they are intense, are not ordinarily called 'passions'; yet they are capable of being inflamed to rage, and in that case their effects are very like those of the passions; and what is said of one can said of the other.

Having explained what I mean by 'passion', I don't think I need to go through them one by one, because they differ not in kind but only in degree from the principles I have already enumerated.

The common classification of the passions into the **trio of pairs** •desire and aversion, •hope and fear, •joy and grief, has been mentioned almost by every writer on these topics and doesn't need to be explained. But I would point out that these are ingredients or variants not only of •the passions but of •every principle of action, animal and rational.

All the principles of action imply a desire for some object [see Glossary]; there can't be a desire for an object unless there is aversion to its contrary; and the object's being present turns the desire/aversion into joy/grief, whereas it being absent turns them into hope/fear. And it's obvious that desire and aversion, joy and grief, hope and fear, can be either calm and sedate or intense and vigorous.

So the **trio of pairs** fits all principles of action, whether calm or vigorous, and I shan't spend time on it. What I shall do now is to offer three observations on passion in general, aiming to show its influence on human conduct.

1. It is passion that makes us liable to strong temptations. If we had no passions, we would hardly be under any temptation to act wrongly. That's because when we view things calmly, free from the false colours that passion throws on them, we can hardly fail to see what's right and what's wrong, and to see that the right is the one to choose.

I believe that a person's first step into vice [see Glossary] is never his coolly and deliberately preferring evil to good. ·In the King James Bible, *Genesis* 3: 6–7, we find this·:

> When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her and he did eat; and the eyes of them both were opened.

Inflamed desire had blinded the eyes of their understanding. ·And Milton (*Paradise Lost* IX) puts it like this·:

> Fix'd on the fruit she gaz'd, which to behold
> Might tempt alone; and in her ears the sound
> Yet rung of his persuasive words impregn' d
> With reason to her seeming, and with truth.
> —Fair to the eye, inviting to the taste,
> Of virtue to make wise, what hinders then
> To reach and feed at once both body and mind.

Thus our first parents were tempted to disobey their Maker, and all their posterity are liable to temptation from the same cause. Passion—or violent appetite—first •blinds the understanding and then •perverts the will.

It is passion, therefore, and the vigorous motions of appetite, that make us in our present state liable to strong temptations to stray from our duty. That is the lot [see Glossary] of human nature in the present period of our existence [= in our life here on earth (as distinct from our after-life in heaven)'].

Human virtue must gather strength by struggle and effort. Just as infants can walk without stumbling only after being exposed to many falls and bruises; just as wrestlers acquire their strength and agility by many combats and violent exertions; so also with the noblest powers of human nature as well as the lowest, and even with virtue itself.

Temptation and trial don't just enable virtue to be on show; they also enable it to acquire its strength and vigour.

Men must acquire patience by suffering, and fortitude by being exposed to danger, and each other virtue by situations that test it and put it to work.

For all we know to the contrary, this may be necessary in the nature of things. It is certainly a law of nature with regard to man.

It would be presumptuous for us to say whether there are orders of thinking and moral creatures who are never subject to any temptation, never have virtue put to any trial. But it's obvious that this isn't and never was man's lot, even in the state of innocence [i.e. before Adam's fall].

Man's condition would be sad indeed if the temptations to which his natural constitution and his circumstances make him liable were irresistible. Such a state would not at all be a state of trial and discipline.

Our condition here ·on earth· is such that on the one hand passion often tempts and urges us to do wrong, and on the other hand reason and conscience oppose the dictates of passion. 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh' [*Galatians* 5:17]. And the man's character and his fate depend on the outcome of this conflict.

If reason is victorious, his virtue is strengthened; he has the inner satisfaction of having fought a good fight on behalf of his duty, and his peace of mind is preserved.

But if passion conquers the sense of duty, the man is conscious of having done something that he ought not to have done and *could have* refrained from doing. His own heart condemns him—he is guilty in his own judgment.

This conflict between •the passions of our animal nature and •the calm dictates of reason and conscience is not a **theory** invented to explain the facts of human conduct; it is a **fact** known to every man who attends to his own conduct.

The most ancient philosophy of which we have any account—namely the Pythagorean school—maintained this:

> The mind of man is like a state or commonwealth in which there are various powers, some of which ought to govern while others ought to be subordinate. In this as in every commonwealth, what counts above all is *the good of the whole*, and that requires that this subordination be preserved, and that •the governing powers always have the upper hand over •the appetites and passions. All wise and good conduct

> consists in this. All folly and vice consists in the prevalence of passion over the dictates of reason.

This philosophy was adopted by Plato; and it fits so well with what every man feels in himself that it is bound to be accepted by anyone who thinks about these matters without an initial bias towards some one theory.

The 'governing powers' that these ancient philosophers speak of are what I call 'the rational principles of action'; I'll discuss them later. I mention them here only because if they aren't mentioned it's impossible to get a clear account of the influence of the passions and their rank in our constitution.

2. The impulse of passion is not always to what is bad, but very often to what is good and what our reason approves. As Hutcheson points out, there are some passions that are benevolent as well as others that are selfish.

The intrinsic nature of the affections of resentment and emulation—and of the ones that spring from them—make them disturbing and disquieting to the mind, even when they aren't more intense than reason would permit; which is why they are commonly called 'passions' even in their moderate degrees. For a similar reason the benevolent affections, which are placid in their nature and are rarely carried beyond the bounds set by reason, are very seldom called 'passions'. We don't give the name 'passion' to benevolence, gratitude, or friendship. But there's one exception to this general rule: love between the sexes *is* is always called a passion, because it commonly discomposes the mind and isn't easily kept within reasonable bounds.

All our natural desires and affections are good and necessary parts of our constitution; and passion is only a certain degree of vigour in these, so its natural effect is also good, and it is by accident that it leads us wrong.

Passion is very properly said to be *blind*. It doesn't look beyond the present gratification. It's reason's job to attend to the accidental circumstances that sometimes make that gratification improper or hurtful. When there is no impropriety in it, and especially when it is our duty, passion aids reason and gives additional force to its dictates.

Sympathy with the distressed may bring them a charitable relief when a calm sense of duty would be too weak to produce that effect.

When we coolly think about something, good or bad, that we regard as very distant ·in time·, it doesn't have the influence on us that reason would say it ought to have. Imagination is like the eye: its objects shrink in proportion to how far away they are. The passions of hope and fear must be raised, in order to give such objects their proper size in the imagination and their proper influence on our conduct.

The dread of disgrace and of the civil magistrate, and the thought of future punishment, prevent many crimes that bad men would commit if these restraints didn't exist. The restraints contribute greatly to the peace and good order of society.

There's no bad action that couldn't have been prevented by some passion; and there's no external good action that couldn't have happened primarily as a result of some passion. It's very probable that men's passions, over all, do more good than harm to society.

The evil that is done attracts our attention more ·than the good·, and is said to be solely the work of human passions. The good may have better motives, and charity leads us to think that it has; but we don't see the heart, so we can't determine what share men's passions have in its output.

3. If we sort out the effects of our passions into **(i)** those that are altogether involuntary and outside the range of our power and **(ii)** those that could be prevented by an exertion, perhaps a great exertion, of self-control, we'll find that **(i)** are good and highly useful, and only **(ii)** are bad.

Moderate passions affect the health of the body, to which some agitation of this kind seems to be as useful as storms and tempests are to the wholesomeness of the air. Also, every passion naturally draws our attention to its object and interests us in it [here and below = 'makes us care about it'].

The mind of man is naturally rambling and superficial; when it's not attending to something interesting it drifts from one thing to another without fixing its attention on anything. A careless passing glance is all we give to objects in which we have no concern. It requires strong curiosity or some weightier passion to give us the interest in an object that is needed if we are to focus on it. And without such a focus we can't form a true and stable judgment about anything.

Take away the passions and who knows what proportion of mankind would resemble the frivolous people who have never had a serious and concentrated thought.

What enables a man to •excel in any art [see Glossary] or science is not mere judgment or intellectual ability; he must also have a love. . . .of it bordering on fanaticism, or a passionate desire for some advantage, e.g. fame, to be achieved through that •excellence. Without this, he wouldn't undergo the labour and fatigue of his faculties that it requires. So we can fairly credit the passions with a considerable part in the discoveries and improvements of the arts and sciences.

If the passions for fame and distinction were extinguished, it would be hard to find anyone ready to undertake the cares and toils of government; and there might not be many who would make the exertion necessary to raise themselves above the ignoble vulgar.

The involuntary signs of the passions and dispositions of the mind—in the voice, features, and action—are a part of the human constitution that deserves admiration. The meanings of those signs are known to all men by nature and independently of all experience.

They are so many openings into the souls of our fellow-men, making their thoughts and feelings visible to the eye. They are a •natural language common to all mankind, without which it would have been impossible to invent any •artificial language.

It's from the natural signs of the mind's passions and dispositions that

•the human form derives its beauty;
•painting, poetry, and music derive their expression;
•eloquence derives it greatest force, and
•conversation derives its greatest charm.

When they are kept within their proper bounds the passions give life and vigour to the whole man. Without them man would be a slug. We see what polish and animation the passion of love, when honourable and not unsuccessful, gives to both sexes.

On the day of battle the passion for military glory raises the brave commander far above himself, making his face shine and his eyes sparkle. The glory of old England warms the heart of the ordinary British sailor and makes him despise every danger.

As for the bad effects of passion: admittedly it often gives a strong impulse to a bad action, one that the man condemns himself for as soon as he has performed it. But he must be aware that the impulse, though strong, was not irresistible—otherwise he wouldn't condemn himself.

We do allow that a sudden and violent passion that takes a man by surprise partly excuses a bad action; but if it were irresistible it would not just •partly but •wholly excuse, which it never does, either in the judgment of the man himself or of others.

To sum up all this: passion provides a very strong instance of the truth of the common maxim that *the corruption of the best things is worst.*

Chapter 7: Disposition

By 'disposition' I mean a state of mind which, while it lasts, gives a tendency or proneness to be moved by •certain animal principles rather than by •others; while the same person at another time and in another state of mind may make other animal principles dominant.

I remarked earlier that it is a ·defining· property of appetites that they are periodic, ceasing for a time when sated by their objects and returning regularly after certain periods.

Even principles that aren't periodic have their ebbs and flows from time to time, depending on the disposition of the mind at the time.

There's a natural affinity among some of •the principles of action, so that having one of •the tribe naturally disposes us to have others that are allied to it.

Many good authors have observed that all the benevolent affections are related by such an affinity. The exercise of one benevolent affection makes one prone to exercise others.

They all involve a certain placid and agreeable tone of mind, and that seems to be what ties them together.

The malevolent affections have also an affinity; having any one of them disposes one to have the others. Perhaps this is because of the disagreeable feeling—making the mind sore and uneasy—that is common to them all.

As far as we can trace the causes of the various dispositions of the mind, it seems that •they sometimes come from the associating powers of the principles of action that have a natural affinity and are prone to keep company with one another; •sometimes they are due to various bits of good or bad luck; and •sometimes, no doubt, the state of the body may have influence on the disposition of the mind.

At one time the state of the mind, like a serene unclouded sky, shows everything in the most agreeable light. That is when a man is prone to benevolence, compassion, and every kind affection; unsuspicious, not easily provoked.

The poets have observed that men have . . . .times when they are averse from saying or doing anything harsh. . . . This disposition, I think, is what we commonly call 'good humour'. . . . No disposition is more comfortable to the person himself or more agreeable to others than good humour. It is to the mind what good health is to the body, equipping a man to enjoy everything that is agreeable in life, and to use every one of his faculties without clog or impediment. It disposes us to contentment with our lot, benevolence to all men, and sympathy with the distressed. It presents everything in the most favourable light, and disposes us to avoid giving or taking offence.

This happy disposition seems to be the natural fruit of a good conscience and a firm belief that the world is under a wise and benevolent government; and when that is its source it is an habitual sentiment of piety.

Good humour is also apt to be produced by happy success or unexpected good fortune. Joy and hope are favourable to it; vexation and disappointment are unfavourable.

This disposition seems to bring just one danger with it: if we aren't careful it may degenerate into light-mindedness, and indispose us to a proper degree of caution and of attention to the future consequences of our actions.

There is a disposition opposite to good humour that we call 'bad humour'; its effects are directly contrary, so that its influence is as malignant as that of good humour is salutary.

Bad humour is enough, all on its own, to make a man unhappy; it tinges every object with its own dismal colour; and like a sore on the skin it is hurt by everything that touches it. It takes offence where none was meant, and

disposes the man to discontent, jealousy, envy, and quite generally to malevolence.

Another couple of opposite dispositions are •elation of mind and •depression. These contrary dispositions are both ambiguous: their influence can be good or bad, depending on whether they are based on true or false beliefs, and on whether they are under control.

The elation of mind that comes from a sound sense of the dignity [see Glossary] of our nature and of the powers and faculties God has given us, is true magnanimity; it disposes a man to the noblest virtues and the most heroic actions and enterprises.

There is also an elation of mind that comes from an awareness of our worth and integrity, such as Job felt when he said:

> 'Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me while I live.' [Quoted fairly accurately from the King James Bible, *Job* 27:5–6]

This may be called the pride of virtue, but it is a noble pride. It makes a man scorn to do what is base or mean. This is the true sense of honour.

But there's also an elation of mind that comes from a *false* belief about our talents or our value, or from our rating too highly our endowments of mind, body, or fortune. This is *pride*, the parent of many odious vices such as arrogance, undue contempt of others, self-partiality, and vicious self-love.

The disposition that is opposite to elation of mind is depression, which also has good or bad effects depending on whether it is based on true or false beliefs.

A sound sense of the weakness and imperfections of human nature and of our own individual faults and defects is true •humility. It is *not thinking of ourselves above what we ought to think* [alluding to *Romans* 12:3], a most healthy and amiable disposition, of great value in the sight of God and man. It isn't inconsistent with real •magnanimity and greatness of soul. They can live together with great advantage to both, each guarding the other against becoming inappropriately extreme.

There is also a depression of mind that is the *opposite* of magnanimity—one that weakens the springs of action and freezes every sentiment that might lead to some noble exertion or enterprise.

Suppose a man to have no belief in a good government of the world, no conception of the dignity of virtue, no hope of happiness in another state ·after death·. Suppose him also to be in a state of extreme poverty and dependence, with no higher aim than to •meet his bodily needs or •provide for the pleasure—or flatter the pride—of some being as worthless as himself. Isn't the •soul of this man as depressed as his •body or his •fortune? And if fortune does smile on him while he retains the same sentiments, he is still only the slave of fortune. His mind is depressed to the state of a brute; and his human faculties serve only to make him feel that depression.

Depression of mind may be due to melancholy, a sickness of the mind that comes from the state of the body. [We'll get near to what Reid means if we think of his 'melancholy' as •clinical depression and his 'depression' as •extreme sadness or gloom.] It throws a dismal gloom on every object of thought, cuts all the sinews of action, and often gives rise to strange and absurd beliefs in religion or in other significant matters. But where there's real worth at bottom, some rays of it will shine out even in this depressed state of mind.

[Reid illustrates with a real-life example, which he sums up thus:] Thus this good man, when he believed that he had no soul, showed a most generous and disinterested [see

Glossary] concern for those who had souls.

Just as depression of mind may produce strange beliefs, especially when it comes from melancholy, so also our beliefs can have a very considerable influence in elevating or depressing the mind, even when there is no melancholy.

Think about two men answering to these two descriptions:

(1) A man who believes that he is destined for an eternal existence; that he who made the world and governs it takes account of him and has provided him with the means of attaining a high degree of perfection and glory.

(2) A man who believes nothing at all, or who believes that his existence is only the play of atoms, and that after he has been tossed about by blind fortune for a few years he'll revert to being nothing.

Can it be doubted that the former belief leads to elevation and greatness of mind and the latter to meanness and depression?

Chapter 8: Belief

When we come to explain the •rational principles of action, it will appear that belief [see Glossary] is an essential ingredient in them. My present topic is only the influence of beliefs on the •animal principles. Some of the principles that I have classified as 'animal' can't exist in the human mind, I think, without associated beliefs.

Gratitude involves the belief that a favour has been done or intended; resentment the belief that one has been injured; esteem the belief in someone's merit; the passion of love involves the belief that the loved person has uncommon merit and perfection.

Although natural affection towards parents, children, and near relations is not based on any belief about their merit, such a belief can greatly increase it. So can every benevolent affection. On the other side, real malevolence can hardly exist except towards someone whom one believes to have no merit.

Any natural desire or aversion can be restrained by a belief. Thus, if a man were thirsty and had a strong desire to drink, the belief that there was poison in the cup would make him forbear.

It's obvious that hope and fear, which every natural desire or affection can create, depend on beliefs about future good or evil.

So we see that our passions, our dispositions, and our beliefs have great influence on our animal principles—arousing or suppressing them, strengthening or weakening them—and in that way have a great influence on human actions and characters.

It can't be doubted that brute animals have both passions and dispositions that are in many respects like those of men. Whether they have *beliefs* is not so clear. I don't think they do have *beliefs* in the proper sense of that word, but I don't want to argue about that here. In any case it will be granted, I think, that belief in men has a much wider field than in brutes. No-one will say that the brutes have systems of theology, morals, jurisprudence or politics; or that they can reason from the laws of nature in mechanics, medicine, or agriculture.

They feel the evils or enjoyments that are present; probably they imagine those that experience has associated with what they feel. But they can't take a long view into the future or into the past, and they can't see through a train of consequences.

A dog may be deterred from eating what is in front of him by the fear of immediate punishment, which he has felt on similar occasions; but he's never deterred by the

consideration of health or of any distant good. . . .

The influence of belief on the conduct of mankind is a pointer to its being one of the chief instruments in the discipline and government of men.

Everyone in the early part of life must be under the discipline and government of parents and tutors. Men who live in society must be under the government of laws and magistrates throughout their lives. The government of men is undoubtedly one of the noblest exercises of human power. And it is very important that those who have any part in domestic or in civil government should know •the nature of man and •how he is to be trained and governed.

Of all the instruments of government, belief is the sweetest and most agreeable to the nature of man. Obedience that flows from belief is real **freedom**, which every man desires. Obedience that is extorted by fear of punishment is **slavery**—a painful yoke that every man will shake off when he can do so.

The beliefs of the bulk of mankind always were and always will be what they are taught by those whom they judge to be wise and good; and therefore they are to a considerable extent in the power of those who govern them. [Reid seems to assume that those they judge to be wise and good *are* those who govern them. The omission of this premise is his, and not an artifact of this version.]

When man is not corrupted by bad habits and bad beliefs he is of all animals the easiest to lead; when he *is* corrupted by these he is of all animals the hardest to lead.

I infer that if civil government is ever to be brought to perfection, the state's principal concern must be to make good citizens by proper education, instruction, and discipline.

The most useful part of the **medicine ·of the body·** is the part that strengthens the constitution and prevents disease by good regimen [= 'healthy food and drink, exercise, fresh air, etc.']; the rest of medicine is somewhat like propping a collapsing building at great expense and for little purpose. The art of government is the **medicine of the mind**, and its most useful part is the part that prevents crimes and bad habits and trains men—by proper education and discipline—to have virtue and good habits.

The purpose of government is to make the society happy, which can only be done by making it good and virtuous.

Experience may convince us that men in general will be good or bad members of society depending on the education and discipline by which they have been trained,

The present age has made great advances in the art of training men to perform •military duties. It won't be said that those who become soldiers are easier to lead than their fellow-subjects in other professions. And I don't know why it should be thought impossible to train men to have equal perfection in the •other duties of good citizens.

For purposes of war there is an *immense* difference between a •properly trained army and a •militia hastily assembled out of the multitude! Why shouldn't we think that for the purposes of civil government there's a similar difference between a •civil society properly trained to have virtue, good habits and right sentiments and •the civil societies that we see these days? But I'm afraid you'll think that I am digressing from my subject into Utopian speculation.

* * * * * *

We can get a complex view of the effect of the animal principles of action by considering an imagined being who is driven by them and by nothing higher: he has the superiority of understanding and the power of self-control that man actually has, but he has no conscience or sense of duty. What

patterns of conduct might be expected from this imaginary being?

Clearly he would be a very different animal from a brute, and perhaps not very different in appearance from what a great part of mankind is.

He could •consider the distant consequences of his actions, and •restrain or indulge his appetites, desires and affections on the basis of consideration of remote good or evil consequences.

He could •choose some main purpose for his life, and •plan his conduct along lines that seemed best for it. We have reason to think no brute is capable of this.

We can perhaps conceive of a balance of the animal principles of action that would, with very little self-control, make a man a good member of society, a good companion with many amiable qualities.

What we call a man's 'natural temperament' can be good or bad, independently of whether he is virtuous. It consists, I think, in the balance of his animal principles.

A man can *easily* behave properly if the dominant features of his temperament are

•the benevolent affections,
•the desire for esteem,
•good humour, and
•a calm and dispassionate nature,

and if he also has the good fortune to live among good men and associate with good companions

Such a man's natural temperament would lead him in most cases to do what virtue requires. And if he happened not to be exposed to any of the trying situations where virtue conflicts with the natural bent of his temperament, he would have no great temptation to act wrongly.

But this combination of temperament and circumstances is more ideal than real, though no doubt some men come nearer to it than others.

The temperament and the situation of men is commonly such that the animal principles alone, without self-control, would never produce any rule-governed and consistent train of conduct.

One principle conflicts with another. Without self-control, the stronger of the two will get the upper hand; but later on the weaker may become stronger—through passion, a change of disposition, or a change of fortune.

Every natural appetite, desire and affection cares only about its own present gratification. So a man who is led solely by these will be like a ship at sea with no crew—a ship that can't be said to be heading for any port. He will have no character at all, but will be benevolent or spiteful, pleasant or morose, honest or dishonest, as the present wind of passion or tide of mood moves him.

Anyone who has a purpose, whether good or bad, must be active when he is disposed to be idle; he must rein in every passion and appetite that would lead him off his path.

Voluntary suffering and self-denial occur not only on the path of virtue only, they are common to every road that leads to a goal, which could be ambition or avarice or even pleasure itself. To maintain a uniform and consistent character a man must sweat and toil, and often struggle with his present inclination.

Yet those who steadily pursue some goal in life, though they must often restrain their strongest desires and practise much self-denial, have more enjoyment over-all than those whose only goal is to gratify the present prevailing inclination.

A dog that is made for the chase can't enjoy the happiness of a dog without that exercise. Keep him within doors, feed him with the most delicious fare, give him all the pleasures his nature is capable of, he soon becomes a dull, sluggish,

unhappy animal. No enjoyment can make up for the lack of the employment that nature has made his chief good. Let him hunt, and neither pain nor hunger nor fatigue seem to be evils. Deprived of this exercise, he can't enjoy anything, and life itself becomes burdensome to him.

It's not an insult to say that man, as well as the dog, is made for hunting and can't be happy except in some vigorous pursuit. He has indeed nobler game to pursue than the dog, but he must have some pursuit, otherwise life stagnates, all the faculties are go numb, the spirits sag, and his existence becomes an unbearable burden.

Even the mere foxhunter, whose goal is no higher than his dogs', has more enjoyment than someone with no pursuit at all. He has an end in view, and this invigorates his spirits, makes him despise pleasure, and bear cold, hunger and fatigue, as if they were no evils. [Reid then quotes four lines from Horace, saying the same thing.]

Part III: The Rational Principles of Action

Chapter 1: There are rational principles of action in man

Mechanical principles of action produce their effect without any will or intention on our part. We can by a voluntary effort block the effect; but if it isn't blocked by will and effort it is produced without them.

Animal principles of action require intention and will in their operation, but not judgment. The ancient moralists were right to call them 'blind desires'.

Having discussed these two classes, I now come to the third, the **rational** principles of action in man. They have that name because only beings endowed with reason can have them, and every exercise of them requires not only intention and will but also judgment or reason. [That 'or' is Reid's.]

The talent that we call 'reason', by which • sane adult men are distinguished from •brutes, idiots, and infants, has always been thought of—by the learned and the unlearned—as having two tasks: **(i)** to regulate our belief and **(ii)** to regulate our actions and conduct.

(i) Anything we believe we think to be agreeable to reason, which is why we give it our assent. Anything we disbelieve we think to be contrary to reason, which is why we dissent from it. So reason is accepted as being the principle by which our beliefs [see Glossary] and opinions ought to be regulated.

(ii) But reason has been just as universally regarded as a principle by which our actions ought to be regulated.

In all languages 'acting reasonably' is just as standard a phrase as 'judging reasonably'. We immediately approve of a man's conduct when it appears that he had good reason for what he did. And when we disapprove of an action we think it unreasonable, or contrary to reason.

A way of speaking that is so universal among men—common to the learned and the unlearned in all nations and in all languages—must have a meaning! To suppose that it doesn't is to treat the common sense of mankind with undue contempt!

Taking it that this phrase does have a meaning, let us consider *how* reason might regulate human conduct so that some actions of men are to count as 'reasonable' and others as 'unreasonable'.

I take it for granted that there can be no exercise of reason without judgment, and no abstract and general judgment without some degree of reason.

So if the human constitution includes any principles of action that necessarily imply general judgments, we can call those principles 'rational', to distinguish them from animal principles, which imply desire and will but not judgment.

Every deliberate human action must be done either as •the means to some end to which it is subservient, or as •an end, done for its own sake without concern for anything beyond it.

No-one ever denied that it's a part of reason's job to determine what the proper means are to any end that we desire. But some philosophers, notably Hume, think that it is *no* part of work of reason to determine what ends we ought to pursue, or which of two ends we ought to prefer. This, he thinks, is to be done not by reason but by taste or feeling.

If this is right then reason oughtn't to be called a principle of action. Its job can only be to *serve* the principles of action

by discovering the means of their gratification. Accordingly Hume maintains that reason is no principle of action, and that it is and ought to be the servant of the passions.

I'll try to show that there are some ends of human actions that we couldn't even *think of* unless we had reason; and that as soon as we *do* think of them our constitution makes us respect them, this being not merely •one principle of action among many but •a leading and governing principle, to which all our animal principles are subordinate and to which they ought to be subject.

I shall call them 'rational principles', because •only beings endowed with reason can have them and because •acting from these principles is what has always been meant by acting 'according to reason'.

The ends of human actions that I have in mind are **(i)** What is good for us on the whole, and **(ii)** What appears to be our duty. They are strictly connected, lead to the same conduct, and cooperate with each other; which is why they have commonly been brought under the single label 'reason'. Each can occur without the other; they are really distinct principles of action; so I shall consider them separately.

Chapter 2: Concern for our good on the whole

It won't be denied that when a man comes to years of understanding he is led by his rational nature to have the thought of what is good for him on the whole.

I don't claim to know how early in life this general notion of good enters into the mind. It is one of the most general and abstract notions that we form.

Whatever makes a man happier or more perfect is good, and is an object of desire as soon as we are capable of thinking of it. The contrary is bad, and is an object of aversion.

In the first part of life we have many enjoyments of various kinds, but they are very similar to those of brute animals.

They consist in the exercise of our senses and powers of motion, the gratification of our appetites, and the exercise of our kind affections. These are interspersed with many evils of pain, fear, disappointment, and sympathetically sharing the sufferings of others.

But the goods and evils of this period of life are brief and soon forgotten. The child doesn't think about the past and doesn't care about the future, so that its only measure of good is the present desire, its only measure of evil the present aversion.

Every animal desire has some particular and present object, and doesn't look beyond that to its consequences or to the connections it may have with other things.

The choice is determined by the most attractive present object, the one that arouses the strongest desire, no matter what its consequences will be. The present evil that presses most is avoided even if it is •the road to a greater good to come or •the only way to escape a greater evil. This is how brutes act, and how men must also act until they come to the use of reason.

As we grow up to understanding, we extend our view both forward and backward. We reflect on what is past, and by the lamp of experience we see what will probably happen in time to come. We find that many things that we eagerly desired were too dearly purchased, and that things that are grievous at the time may be good for us in the outcome—such as nauseous medicines.

We learn to observe the connections of things and the consequences of our actions; and by taking an extended view of our existence—past, present, and future—we correct our first notions of good and bad, and form the conception of what is *good or bad on the whole*, which has to be calculated

not from the present animal desire or aversion but from a due consideration of its certain or probable consequences during the whole of our lifetime.

Something which, given all its discoverable connections and consequences, brings more good than bad is what I call ‘good on the whole’.

I see no reason to believe that brute animals have any conception of this good. And obviously man can’t have any conception of it until his reason has developed enough for him to reflect seriously on the past and take into account the future part of his existence.

So we find that the very conception of *what is good or bad for us on the whole* is the offspring of reason, and only beings endowed with reason can have it. And if this conception gives man any principle of action that he didn’t have before, that principle can very properly be called ‘rational’.

What I’m saying is not new; it’s what reason suggested to those who first thought about the philosophy of morals. [Reid then quotes in Latin a passage in which Cicero does indeed ‘express with his usual elegance the substance of what I have said’.]

My next point is this: As soon as we have the conception of what is good or bad for us on the whole we are led by our constitution to seek the good and avoid the bad; and this becomes not only *a principle* of action but *a leading or governing principle* to which all our animal principles ought to be subordinate.

I’m much inclined to think, as Richard Price does, that in thinking beings the desire for what is good and aversion to what is bad is necessarily connected with their thinking nature; and that it’s a *contradiction* to suppose such a being to have the notion of good without the desire for it, or the notion of bad without aversion to it. There may be other necessary connections between ·thinking or· understanding and the best principles of action—connections that our faculties are too weak to see. . . .

In the judgment of all men these preferences—

—preferring •a greater good in the future to •a lesser good right now,

—preferring •a lesser evil right now to •a greater evil (or the loss of a greater good) in the future

—are wise and reasonable. And when a man acts on the basis of a reversal of either of these preferences, everyone will agree that he’s acting foolishly and unreasonably. And it won’t be denied that in ever so many cases in common life our animal principles draw us one way, while a concern for what is good on the whole draws us in the opposite direction. . . . *In every conflict of this kind the rational principle ought to prevail, and the animal one ought to be subordinate*—that is too obvious to admit of a proof, and too obvious to need one!

So what we find, I think, is that to pursue what is good on the whole, and to avoid what is bad on the whole, is a rational principle of action, grounded on our constitution as reasonable creatures. And we find that there’s a good reason why the opposition between

(i) this principle and **(ii)** our animal principles

has been described as the opposition between

•‘reason’ and •‘our passions’

in common speech down the centuries.

It’s not just that **(i)** operates in a calm and cool manner as reason does, but also it involves real judgment in all its operations. And **(ii)** the passions are blind desires for some particular object, without judging that—or even *wondering whether*—it will be good or bad for us on the whole.

We also find that the basic maxim of prudence and of all good morals, namely *That the passions ought always to be under the control of reason*, is not only self-evident when rightly understood, but is expressed according to the

common use and propriety of language.

The contrary maxim maintained by Hume can be defended only by a gross and obvious misuse of words. ·The misuse has two parts·. •In order to defend his thesis Hume has to include in 'the passions' the very principle that has always in all languages been called 'reason', and has never been called a 'passion' in any language. •And from the meaning of the word 'reason' he must exclude the most important part of reason—the part by which we discover and pursue what appears to be good on the whole. And thus, including the most important part of reason under 'passion', and making the least important part of reason serve as the whole, he defends his favourite paradox, That reason is and ought to be the servant of the passions.

To judge concerning what is true or false in speculative [see Glossary] points is the job of speculative reason; and to judge concerning what is good or bad for us on the whole is the job of practical reason. There are no degrees of truth and falsity; but there are many •degrees of goodness and badness, and also many •kinds of each; and men are very apt to form erroneous beliefs concerning them—misled by their passions, by the 'authority' of the multitude, and by other causes.

All down the centuries wise men have regarded it as a chief point of wisdom to make a right estimate of the goods and evils of life. They have laboured to discover •the errors of the multitude on this important matter, and to warn others against •them.

The ancient moralists, divided though they were into sects, all agreed that beliefs have an enormous influence on what we commonly count as the goods and evils of life, to make them better or worse.

The Stoics carried this so far as to conclude that they—·goods and evils·—all depend on beliefs. . . .

We see indeed that the same condition of life that makes one man happy makes another miserable, and to a third is perfectly indifferent ·i.e. doesn't affect his feelings either way·. We see men miserable through life because of pointless fears and anxious desires, all based on nothing but false beliefs. We see men wear themselves out with laborious days and sleepless nights, in pursuit of some goal •that they never attain or •that gives little satisfaction—perhaps gives real disgust—when they attain it.

The evils of life. . . .have very different effects on different men. What sinks one into despair and absolute misery arouses the virtue and magnanimity of another, who bears it as the lot of humanity and as the discipline of a wise and merciful father in heaven. He rises above adversity, which makes him wiser and better and consequently happier.

So it is utterly important in the conduct of life to have sound beliefs regarding good and evil; and surely it is the task of reason to •correct false beliefs and •lead us into ones that are sound and true.

It is true that men's passions and appetites too often draw them to act contrary to their own cool judgment and belief about what is best for them. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor* is the case in every willful deviation from our true interest and our duty. [That was Latin meaning 'I see the better and approve it; I follow the worse' (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*).]

When that happens, the man is self-condemned; he sees that he acted like a brute animal when he ought to have acted like a man. He is convinced that reason ought to have restrained his passion rather than letting it run at full gallop.

When he feels the bad effects of his conduct he blames himself for them, and would be stung with remorse for his folly even if he didn't have to report in to a superior being. He has sinned against himself, and brought on his own head the punishment that his folly deserved.

This shows us that this rational principle of a concern for our good on the whole gives us the conception of •right and •wrong in human conduct, or at least of •wise and •foolish. It produces a kind of self-approval when the passions and appetites are appropriately subjected to it, and a kind of remorse and regret when *it* is subjected to *them*.

In these respects this principle is so similar to the moral principle, i.e. conscience, and so interwoven with it, that both are commonly brought under the name 'reason'. This similarity led many of the ancient philosophers, and some moderns also, to analyse conscience (i.e. the sense of duty) into nothing but a concern for what is good for us on the whole.

When I come to discuss conscience ·in chapter 6· I'll take the opportunity to show that these are ·two· distinct principles of action, though they lead to the same conduct in life.

Chapter 3: The effect of this principle

The wisest men in all ages have held that this principle of concern for our good on the whole leads, in a duly enlightened man, to the practice of every virtue.

This was acknowledged even by Epicurus; and the best moralists among the ancients derived all the virtues from this principle. For them the whole of morals came down to the question 'What is the greatest good?' or 'What course of conduct is best for us on the whole?'.

To find the answer to this question they divided goods into three classes:

•the goods of the body;

•the goods of fortune, or external goods, and

•the goods of the mind, i.e. wisdom and virtue.

Comparing these different classes of goods, they argued convincingly that the goods of the mind are in many respects superior to those of the body and of fortune, not only as •having more dignity and •being more durable and less exposed to the strokes of fortune, but primarily as •being the only goods that are in our power and depend wholly on our conduct.

Epicurus himself maintained that the wise man can be happy in the tranquility of his mind, even when racked with pain and struggling with adversity.

They—·the ancient moralists·—rightly held that the goods of fortune, and even those of the body, depend greatly on what one believes, and that when our beliefs about them are duly corrected by reason we'll find them of small value in themselves.

Someone who places his happiness in •things that it's not in his power to attain, or in •things which, once he has attained them, can be snatched away by an illness or a bit of bad luck—how can such a man be happy?

The value we put on things, and our uneasiness from the lack of them, depend on the strength of our desires; correct the desire and the uneasiness ceases.

The fear of the evils of body and of fortune is often a greater evil than the things we fear. Just as a wise man moderates his desires by temperance, so to real or imaginary dangers he opposes the shield of robust moral strength, which raises him above himself and makes him happy and triumphant in situations where others are most miserable.

These oracles of reason led the Stoics to the point of maintaining •that all desires and fears relating to things that aren't under our control ought to be totally eradicated; •that virtue is the *only* good; •that what we call the goods of the body and of fortune are really value-neutral, having no intrinsic goodness in themselves and capable of being good or bad depending on the circumstances; •that our sole

business ought to be to act our part well and to do what is right, without the least concern about things that aren't in our power, which we should be perfectly willing to leave to the care of him who governs the world.

This noble and elevated conception of human wisdom and duty was taught by Socrates, free from the extravagances that the Stoics later added to it. We see it in Plato's *Alcibiades*, from which Juvenal has taken it in his tenth Satire, and adorned it with the graces of poetry. [Reid now quotes 24 lines of Latin poetry, which do indeed express the moral position he has just been expounding and praising, followed by two lines from Horace.]

We can't help admiring the Stoic system of morals, even when we think that at some points it demanded more than human nature can supply. The virtue, the temperance, the robust moral strength of some who sincerely embraced it amidst all the flattery of sovereign power and the luxury of a court will be everlasting monuments to the honour of that system and to the honour of human nature.

The thesis we are addressing here is this:

> A proper concern for what is best for us on the whole leads, in an enlightened mind, to the practice of every virtue.

As a basis for evaluating this, let us consider it in terms of what we think best for •those for whom we have the strongest affection and whose good we care about as though it were our own. If we approach it in terms of •ourselves, our passions and appetites will probably bias our judgment, but when we consider •others this bias is removed and we judge impartially.

Well, then, what is it that a wise man would wish as the greatest good for a brother, a son, or a friend?

Is it that he may spend his life in a constant round of the pleasures of sense, and eat lavish meals every day?

Surely not! We wish him to be a man of real virtue and worth. We may wish for him an honourable position in life, but only on condition that he performs honourably in it and earns a good reputation by being useful to his country and to mankind. We would a thousand times rather wish him honourably to undergo the labours of Hercules than to dissolve in pleasure with Sardanapalus.

That is what any man of understanding will wish for the friend whom he loves as he loves his own soul! So those are the things that he judges to be best for his friend on the whole; and if he judges otherwise for himself that's only because his judgment is perverted by animal passions and desires.

* * * * *

Summing up what I have said in these three chapters:

In men who are adult and in their right minds there's a principle of action that has all through the centuries been •called 'reason' and •set in opposition to the animal principles that we call 'passions'. The ultimate object of this principle is what we judge to be good on the whole. This is not the object of any of our animal principles, which are all directed to particular objects without comparing them with others or thinking about whether they are good or bad on the whole.

Without the use of reason we can't even have the *thought* of what-is-good-on-the-whole, so the latter can't be desired or pursued by beings that don't have any degree of reason.

As soon as we have the conception of this object—·i.e. of what-is-good-on-the-whole·—we are led by our constitution to desire and pursue it. It rightly claims precedence over any competing object of pursuit. In preferring it to any gratification that conflicts with it, or in submitting to any pain or humiliation that it requires, we are acting *according*

to reason; and every such action is approved by oneself and by mankind. Actions that go against this bring shame and self-condemnation in the agent and contempt—as foolish and unreasonable—in the spectator.

Applying this principle correctly to our conduct—·i.e. acting in the ways that really *are* best on the whole·—requires a broad view of human life and a correct estimate of the

- •intrinsic worth and dignity,
- •constancy and duration, and
- •attainableness

of its goods and evils. It would take a *very* wise man to be able to perceive in every case—or even in every important case—what is best for him on the whole, if he had no other guide for his conduct. Perhaps there *can't* be such a man.

However, according to the best judgment that wise men *have* been able to form, this principle leads to the practice of every virtue. It leads **directly** to the virtues of prudence, temperance and fortitude. And then there are there two facts—

- •We are social creatures whose happiness or misery is strongly connected with that of our fellow-men;
- •Our constitution includes many benevolent affections the exercise of which makes a large part of our good and enjoyment

—by virtue of which this principle leads us by a different and **more indirect** route to the practice of justice, humanity, and all the social virtues.

It's true that a concern for our own good can't, all by itself, produce any benevolent affection. But if such affections are a part of our constitution, and if the exercise of them provides a chief part of our happiness, a concern for our own good ought to lead us to cultivate and exercise them, because every benevolent affection makes the good of others be our own good.

Chapter 4: Defects of this principle

Having explained the nature of this principle of action, and shown the general line of conduct to which it leads, I shall conclude my account of it by pointing out some of its defects if it is taken, as it has been by some philosophers, to be the *only* regulating principle of human conduct.

On that supposition it **(i)** wouldn't be a sufficiently *plain* rule of conduct; **(ii)** wouldn't it raise the human character to the level of perfection that it is capable of; and **(iii)** wouldn't provide as much real happiness as ·it does or could· when it is joined with another rational principle of action, namely a disinterested respect for *duty*. A brave soldier who exposes himself to danger and death is driven not by a cold calculation of the good and the bad but by a noble and elevated sense of military duty.

(i) To apply this principle correctly one would need a broader view of human life and a sounder judgment of good and evil than most people can ever attain

Juvenal's authority carries weight on this point: 'There are few who can distinguish true blessings from their opposites, putting aside the mists of error' [Reid quotes this in Latin]. For most of mankind their •ignorance collaborates with •the strength of their passions to lead them into error on this most important matter.

Every man in his calm moments wants to know what is best for him on the whole, and wants to do it. But the difficulty of discovering clearly what it is, amidst such a variety of beliefs and the pressure of present desires, tempts men to give up the search and give way to their present inclination.

Though philosophers and moralists have worked hard and laudably to correct mankind's errors on this matter, most people don't know this work, and those who do know

it aren't much influenced by it. . . . It has too little force on their minds to resist the sophistry of the passions. They are apt to think that even if such rules are good in general, there may be exceptions so that what is good for most people may be bad for some because of their particular circumstances.

•Speculative [see Glossary] discoveries gradually spread from the knowledgeable to the ignorant, and flow out over everyone, so that with regard to •them we can hope that the world will go on growing wiser. But errors about what is truly good or bad, after being discovered and refuted in every age, are still prevalent.

Men need a more precise pointer to their duty than a dubious view of distant good. There is reason to believe that •a present sense of duty often has a stronger influence than •a belief about distant good would have on its own. And it can't be doubted that a sense of guilt and demerit is a sharper critic than the bare knowledge that we have mistaken our true interest.

In short: if we had no plainer rule to direct our conduct in life than a concern for our greatest good, most people would be fatally misled, not even knowing the road to it.

(ii) Though a steady pursuit of our own real good will produce, in an enlightened mind, a kind of virtue that is entitled to some degree of approval, it can't produce the noblest kind of virtue that claims our highest love and esteem.

We count someone as a wise man if he is wise for himself; and if he works towards this goal—·namely what is good on the whole for him·—through difficulties and temptations that lie in his way, his character is far superior to that of anyone who with the same goal is continually drawn off the road to it by his appetites and passions, repeatedly doing things that he knows he will heartily repent ·later on·.

Yet this wise man is not someone whom we cordially love and esteem, because his thoughts and cares are all centered on himself—he exercises even his social affections only with a view to his own good.

Like a cunning merchant, he carries his goods to the best market and watches for every opportunity to sell them at the best price. He is acting well and wisely. But it is for himself. We don't *owe* him anything on account of this behaviour of his. Even when he does good to others he means only to serve himself, so he has no proper claim to their gratitude or affection.

If this is virtue, it is surely not the noblest kind, but rather a low and mercenary type of virtue. It can't. . . .attract the esteem and love of others.

Our cordial love and esteem is due only to the man

- •whose soul is not contracted within itself, but embraces a larger object,
- •who loves virtue not only for her dowry but for her own sake,
- •whose benevolence is not selfish, but generous and disinterested,
- •who is forgetful of himself and has the common good at heart, not only as a means but as the end,
- •who loathes anything base even if he were to gain from it, and loves everything that is right even if he suffers through it.

We regard such a man as a perfect man; compared with him, the man who has no other aim but good for himself is a mean and despicable character.

Disinterested goodness and rightness is the glory of God's nature, without which he might be an object of fear or hope but not of true devotion. And it's the image of this divine attribute in the human character that is the glory of man.

I don't think that human nature will let us rise to the level of serving God and being useful to mankind without

any concern for our own good and happiness. But to serve God and be useful to men *solely* as to obtain good or avoid evil for ourselves is servility, and not the liberal service that true devotion and real virtue require.

(iii) One might think that the best chance for happiness goes to the man whose only goal in his deliberate actions is his own good; but a little consideration will convince us that this is not so.

A concern for our own good is not a principle that provides any enjoyment just in itself. On the contrary, it is apt to fill the mind with fear, care, and anxiety. And these concomitants of this principle often give pain and uneasiness that outweigh the good they have in view.

Let us compare the present happiness of two imaginary characters ·here given the names 'One' and 'Two'·:

- •One has no other ultimate goal in his deliberate actions except his own good. He has no concern for virtue or duty except as means to that end.
- •Two does care about his own good, but he has another ultimate goal that is perfectly consistent with that, namely a disinterested •love of virtue for its own sake, or a •concern to duty as an end.

I want to give all possible advantage to the selfish principle, so I shall suppose that One, who is driven solely by it, is enlightened enough to see that it's in his interests to live soberly, righteously, and piously in the world, so that his actual behaviour isn't different from that of Two, who acts in a great measure–or anyway in some measure—from a sense of duty and rightness.

I put it like that so that these two persons may differ not in what they do but in the motive from which they do it; and I don't think there can be any doubt that Two, the man who acts from the noblest and most generous motive, will have more happiness in his conduct.

One labours only for hire, without any love for the work. Two loves the work, and thinks it the noblest and most honourable work he could do. To One the humiliation and self-denial that the course of virtue requires is a grievous task, which he performs only through necessity. To Two it is victory and triumph in the most honourable warfare.

And there's another point. Wise men have concluded that virtue is the only road to happiness, but this conclusion is based mainly on men's the natural respect for virtue, and for the good or happiness that is intrinsic to it and arises from the love of it. If we suppose a man like One, who is entirely without this principle and regards virtue *only* as a means to another end, there's no reason to think he will ever see it as the road to happiness; instead, he'll wander for ever seeking happiness where it isn't to be found.

The road of duty is so plain that the man who seeks it with an upright heart can't stray from it much. But the road to happiness, if that is taken to be the only goal our nature leads us to seek, will be found dark and intricate, full of snares and dangers, and therefore not to be trodden without fear, care, and perplexity. [Note '*of* duty', '*to* happiness; that difference is Reid's, not an artifact of this version.]

So the happy man is not the one whose happiness is his only care, but the one who is perfectly willing to leave the care of his happiness to God, while he eagerly pursues the road of his duty.

This gives to his mind an elevation that is real happiness. Instead of care, fear, anxiety, and disappointment, it brings joy and triumph. It enhances the pleasure of every good he enjoys, and brings good out of evil. . . .

And so we find, I think, that although a concern for our ·individual· good on the whole is a rational principle in man, if it were the *only* regulating principle of our conduct it would be a more uncertain rule, giving much less perfection

to the human character and much less happiness than ·it does· when joined with another rational principle, namely a concern for duty.

Chapter 5: The notion of duty, rectitude, moral obligation

A being that had only the animal principles of action might be capable of being •trained for certain purposes by discipline, as we see many brute animals are, but he would be utterly incapable of being •governed by law.

To be subject to law, a being must have the conception of *a general rule of conduct*, and he can't have that unless he has some degree of reason. He must also have a sufficient inducement to obey the law even when his strongest animal desires draw him in a different direction.

This inducement may be a sense of interest, or a sense of duty, or both working together.

These are the only principles I can think of that can *reasonably* induce a man to regulate all his actions according to a certain general rule or law. So it's right to call them 'the rational principles of action', since they can't occur except in a being endowed with reason, and since it is only through them that man is capable either of political or of moral government.

Without them human life would be like a ship at sea with no crew, left to be carried by winds and tides as they happen. It belongs to the rational part of our nature to intend a certain port as the end of life's voyage, and to take the advantage of winds and tides when they are favourable and to bear up against them when they are unfavourable.

[An elegant pun. Colloquially, to 'bear up' under something is to put up with it bravely, strongly; and as a nautical technical term, to 'bear up' is to deal in a certain way with an opposing wind.]

Self-interest may induce us to do this when a suitable reward is offered. But the constitution of man contains a nobler principle, yielding a rule of conduct that is often clearer and more certain than anything mere self-interest would provide. It's a principle without which man wouldn't be a moral agent.

A man is prudent when he consults his real interest, but he can't be virtuous if he has no concern for duty.

I shall now discuss this concern for duty as a rational principle of action in man—the only principle that makes him capable either of virtue or vice.

I start with some observations about to the general notion of •duty and its contrary, or of •right and wrong in human conduct, and then consider how we come to judge and decide of certain things in human conduct that they are right and of others that they are wrong.

With regard to the notion or conception of duty, I take it to be too simple to admit of a logical definition.

[A paradigm 'logical definition' would be

> 'square' means 'plane & four-sided & closed & equal-sided & rectangular';

what this definition does is to open up the *complexity* of the meaning of 'square'. A meaning that doesn't have that kind of complexity is 'simple' and therefore not definable in that manner.]

We can define it only by synonymous words or phrases, or by properties that necessarily go with it, as when we say that it is •what we ought to do, •what is fair and honest, •what is approvable, •what every man claims is the rule of his conduct, •what all men praise, and •what is in itself praiseworthy whether or not anyone actually praises it.

The notion of duty can't be analysed in terms of the notion of ·self·-interest or what is best for our happiness.

You'll agree with this if you attend to your own conceptions, and the language of all mankind shows it. When I say

'This is in my interests' I mean one thing; when I say 'This is my duty' I mean something different. A single course of action may. . . .be both my duty and in my interests, but the conceptions are very different. Both are reasonable motives to action but they are quite distinct in their nature.

I presume it will be granted that in every man of real worth there is a principle of honour, a concern for what is honourable or dishonourable, that is quite distinct from a concern for his interests. For a man to disregard his interests is •folly, but to do what is dishonourable is •baseness. The first may move our pity, or in some cases our contempt, but the second provokes our indignation.

These two principles are different in their nature, and can't be analysed as different versions of some one principle. And the principle of honour is evidently superior in dignity to the principle of ·self·-interest. If a man explained that his ·self·-interest if what led him to do something that he admitted was dishonourable, no-one would accept that he was a man of honour; but to sacrifice ·self·-interest to honour never costs a blush.

It will also be agreed by every man of honour that this principle doesn't come down to a concern for our reputation among men; for if that were right, the man of honour wouldn't deserve to be trusted in the dark. He would have no difficult in lying, cheating or playing the coward when he had no fear of being caught at it.

So I take it for granted that every man of real honour feels a revulsion from certain actions because they are in themselves *base*, and feels an obligation towards certain other actions because they are in themselves what honour requires, with this having nothing to do with any consideration of ·self·-interest or reputation.

This is an immediate moral obligation. This principle of honour that is accepted by all men who claim ·to have decency of· character is the same thing, under another name, as what we call a regard for duty, for rectitude, for rightness of conduct. It's a moral obligation that obliges a man to do certain things because they are right, and not to do other things because they are wrong.

Ask the man of honour 'Why do you think you are obliged to pay a debt of honour?' The very question shocks him. To suppose that he needs any inducement to do it other than the principle of honour is to suppose that he has no honour, no worth, and deserves no esteem.

So there is in man a principle that gives him a consciousness of worth when he acts according to it, and a sense of demerit when he acts contrary to it.

Because of all the differences of education, of fashion, of prejudices, and of habits, men may differ greatly in their beliefs about the range of this principle—about *what* it commands and *what* it forbids; but the *concept* of it. . . .is the same in everyone: it is ·the concept of· *that which gives a man real worth and is the object of moral approval.*

Men of rank call it 'honour', and too often confine it to certain virtues that are thought most essential to their rank. The vulgar call it 'honesty', 'probity', 'virtue', 'conscience'. Philosophers have given it the names 'the moral sense', 'the moral faculty', 'rectitude'.

It's obvious that this principle is to be found in **all** men who have grown up to years of understanding and reflection. The words that express it, the names of the virtues that it commands and vices that it forbids, the 'ought' and 'ought not' that express its dictates, are an essential part of **every** language. The natural affections of

- •respect for worthy characters,
- •resentment of injuries,
- •gratitude for favours, and
- •indignation against the worthless

are parts of the human constitution that presuppose a right and a wrong in conduct. Many transactions that are found necessary in the most primitive societies proceed on the same supposition. In all testimony, in all promises, and in all contracts, there is necessarily implied •a moral obligation on one party and in the other •a trust based on this obligation.

The variety among people's beliefs on points of morality is, I think, not •greater but •much less than on speculative [see Glossary] points; and facts about the common causes of error enable us to explain the moral variety as easily as the speculative variety; so that there being a real distinction between true and false in matters of speculation is no more obvious than there being a real distinction between right and wrong in human conduct.

Hume's authority, if there were any need for it, carries weight in this matter, because he wasn't given to taking vulgar beliefs lightly. He says:

> 'Those who have denied the reality of moral distinctions can be counted among the dishonest disputants who really don't believe the opinions they defend, but engage in the controversy from. . . .a spirit of opposition or from a desire to show wit and ingenuity superior to the rest of mankind. It's not conceivable that any human creature could ever seriously believe that all characters and actions were equally entitled to the respect and affection of everyone.
>
> 'However insensible [= 'numb in his feelings'] a man is, he must often be touched with the images of right and wrong; however obstinate his prejudices, he must observe that others are apt to have similar impressions. So the only way of convincing an antagonist of this kind is to leave him to himself. When he finds that nobody keeps up the controversy with him, it's likely that he will eventually, unprompted, from mere weariness, come over to the side of common sense and reason.'

What we call 'right' and 'honourable' in human conduct was called *honestum* by the ancients. Cicero explained it 'what we correctly maintain merits praise, even if no-one praises it' [Reid gives this in Latin]. All the ancient sects except the Epicureans distinguished the *honestum* from the *utile* [= 'useful'], as we distinguish what is a man's duty from what is in his interests. [Reid adds a paragraph which we can safely neglect; it's about the Latin term *officium*, which he says is usually mistranslated.]

The most ancient philosophical system concerning the principles of action in the human mind, and (I think) the one that best fits the facts, is the system we find in some fragments by the ancient Pythagoreans. It was taken over by Plato, and explained in some of his dialogues.

According to this system, the soul has a leading principle which, like the supreme power in a commonwealth, has authority and right to govern. They called this leading principle 'reason'. It is what distinguishes adult humans from brute animals, idiots and infants. The subordinate principles, which are under the authority of the leading principle, are our passions and appetites, which we share with the brute animals.

Cicero adopts this system, and expresses it well in few words [Reid gives the Latin]:

> 'Now we find that the essential activity of the spirit is twofold: one force is appetite. . . ., which impels a man this way and that; the other is reason, which teaches and explains what should be done and what should be left undone. The result is that reason commands, appetite obeys.'

This division of our active principles can hardly count as a discovery of philosophy, because people—even the

unlearned—have always had it. Ordinary human common sense seems to dictate it.

What I want to point out now regarding this common division of our active powers is that the leading principle, the one called 'reason', includes both a concern for what is right and honourable and a concern for our happiness on the whole.

Although these are *two* principles of action, it's very natural to bring them under *one* name, because •both are leading principles, •both presuppose the use of reason, and when they are rightly understood •they lead to the same course of life. They are like two fountains whose streams unite and run in the same channel. . . .

If we examine the abstract notion of *duty* or *moral obligation*, it appears not to be a •quality of the action considered by itself or of the agent considered in himself, but a certain •relation between the agent and the action.

When we say 'He ought to do x', the 'ought' that expresses the moral obligation relates •to the person who ought and •to the action that he ought to do. Those two correlates are essential to every moral obligation; if you take away either, it has no existence. Where is moral obligation located among the categories? In the category of *relation*.

There are many relations of which we have very clear concepts without being able to define them logically. *Equality* and *proportion* are relations between quantities that everyone understands but no-one can define.

Moral obligation is a relation of its own kind, which every man understands though it may be too simple to admit of logical definition. [These days we would say that in Latin: it's a relation that is *sui generis*; but the Latin phrase hadn't entered English at the time when Reid wrote.] Like all other relations, it can be changed or annihilated by a change in either of the related things—the agent and the action.

I'll sketch the circumstances in the action and the agent that are necessary to constitute •moral obligation. Everyone agrees about these, which shows that everyone has the same notion of •it.

With regard to the action, it must be a voluntary action. . . .of the person who has the obligation, and not of someone else. A man can't be morally obliged to be six feet tall; and I can't be under a moral obligation that you should do such-and-such. . . .

I need hardly mention that a person can be under a moral obligation only to do things that are within the sphere of his natural power.

Obviously, an inanimate thing can't have a moral obligation. To speak of a stone or a tree as morally obliged is ridiculous, because it contradicts everyone's notion of moral obligation.

The person with the obligation must have •understanding and •will and some degree of •active power. As well as the natural faculty of understanding he must have the means of knowing that he has this obligation. If he *can't* know this, then he isn't under any moral obligation.

What the agent believes when he performs the action gives it its moral status. If he does a materially good action without believing that it is good—doing it for some other reason—then considered as his action it's not good. And if he does it while believing that it is bad, then it *is* a bad action of his.

Thus, if a man gives his neighbour a drink that he believes will poison him but which turns out to do him good, the man counts morally as a poisoner, not a benefactor. . . .

Chapter 6: The sense of duty

Our next topic is: how we learn to judge and determine that this is right and that is wrong.

The abstract notion of moral good and evil would be no use in directing our lives if we weren't able to apply it to particular actions and discover what is morally good and what is morally bad.

Some philosophers, with whom I agree, attribute this to a basic human power or faculty which they call 'the moral sense', 'the moral faculty', 'conscience'. Others think that our moral sentiments can be explained without supposing any basic sense or faculty specially for that purpose; and they go into very different systems to account for them.

I shan't at present say anything about the latter systems, because the thesis that I mentioned first seems to me to be the truth, namely that by a basic power of the mind, when we come to years of understanding and reflection, we not only •have the notions of right and wrong in conduct but •perceive certain things to be right and others to be wrong.

The label 'moral sense', though more frequently given to conscience since Shaftesbury and Hutcheson wrote, is not new. The *sensus recti et honesti* [Latin = 'sense of right and duty'] is a fairly common phrase among the ancients, and 'the sense of duty' is common enough with us.

No doubt it came to be called a 'sense' because it is thought to have some analogy to the external senses. And if we think clearly about the work of the external senses we'll have no trouble seeing the analogy. I see no reason to take offence, as some have done, at the label 'the moral sense'.

Why have some philosophers taken offence at this name? It seems to be because philosophers have degraded the ·external· senses too much, depriving them of the most important part of their work.

We are taught that all we get through the senses are certain ideas that we couldn't have otherwise. The senses are represented as powers by which we •have sensations and ideas, not as powers by which we •judge.

This *very lame* notion of the senses contradicts what nature and careful reflection teach concerning them.

A man who has totally lost the sense of seeing may still have very distinct notions of the various colours, but he can't *judge* concerning colours because he has lost the sense that he needs to be able to do that. By my eyes I don't just have the ideas of a square and a circle but I *perceive* that this surface is square and that one circular.

By my ears I don't just have the idea of sounds that are loud or soft, sharp or mellow, but I immediately *perceive* and *judge* that this sound is loud and that soft, that this is sharp and that mellow, and two or more sounds at the same time I *perceive* to be concordant or discordant.

These are **judgments of the senses**. That's what they have always been called, and how they have always been classified, by people whose minds are not tainted by philosophical theories. They are nature's immediate testimony through our senses; and we are so constituted by nature that we *must* accept their testimony simply because it is given to us by our senses.

Sceptics try in vain to overturn this evidence by metaphysical reasoning. Even if we can't answer their arguments, we still believe our senses and base our most important concerns on their testimony.

If this is the right way to think about our external senses, as I believe it is, there's nothing wrong with calling our moral faculty 'the moral sense'. It has a dignity that certainly puts it above every other power of the mind; but it resembles the external senses in the following ways.

(a) By our external senses we have not only the basic conceptions of the various qualities of bodies, but also the basic judgments that this body is spherical, that that one is blue, and so on. And by our moral faculty we have not only the basic conceptions of right and wrong in conduct of merit and demerit ·in characters·, but also the basic judgments that this action was right and that one wrong, that this character has worth and that one has demerit.

(b) The testimony of our moral faculty, like that of the external senses, is the testimony of nature, and we have the same reason to rely on it.

(c) The truths immediately testified by the external senses are the first principles from which we reason regarding the material world, and from which all our knowledge of it is deduced. The truths immediately testified by our moral faculty are the first principles of all moral reasoning, from which all our knowledge of our duty must be deduced.

By 'moral reasoning' I mean: all reasoning that is brought to prove that some item of conduct is •right and deserving of moral approval, or that it is •wrong, or that it is •indifferent, i.e. in itself neither morally good nor morally bad.

I think that anything we can properly call a 'moral judgments' will amount to one or other of these, because every human action is either good or bad or indifferent.

I know the term 'moral reasoning' is often used by good writers in a broader sense ·in which it covers anything relating to intentional human action·. But the reasoning I am now discussing is of a special kind that separates it from all others, so it ought to have a separate name of its own; and I take the liberty of limiting the name 'moral reasoning' to this kind. . . .

All reasoning must be based on first principles. This holds for moral reasoning as for all the other kinds. So morals have the same need that every other science [see Glossary] has for first or self-evident principles on which all moral reasoning is based. . . . From such self-evident principles, conclusions can be drawn synthetically with regard to the moral conduct of life; and particular duties or virtues can be traced back to such principles analytically. [This use of those two puzzling adverbs seems not to connect with any of the meanings that 'analytic' and 'synthetic' standardly had in early modern times.] But trying to establish any conclusion in morals without having such principles would be like trying to build a castle in the air.

I shall illustrate this with a couple of examples.

(i) It is a first principle in morals that *we ought not to do to anyone else something that we would think it wrong for anyone to do to us in similar circumstances*. If a man can't perceive this in his cool moments when he reflects seriously, he •isn't a moral agent and •can't be convinced of it by reasoning.

How can you start reasoning with such a man? You might convince him by reasoning that it's in his interests to conform to this rule, but that isn't convincing him that it is his duty. To reason about justice with a man who sees nothing to be just or unjust, or about benevolence with a man who doesn't see in benevolence anything to make it preferable to malice, is like reasoning with a blind man about colour or with a deaf man about sound.

(ii) A question in morals that can be reasoned about is this: Is it the case that by the law of nature a man ought to have only one wife?

We reason about this by balancing the advantages and disadvantages to the family, and to society in general, that naturally flow from monogamy and from polygamy. If it can be shown that the advantages are greatly on the side of monogamy, we think that that settles it.

But if a man doesn't perceive that he ought to have a concern for the good of society and of his wife and children,

the reasoning can't have any effect on him because he denies the first principle on which it is based..

Or we might instead reason for monogamy from the intention of nature, revealed by the proportion of males and of females that are born—a proportion that corresponds perfectly with monogamy but not with polygamy. This argument can't carry weight with a man who doesn't perceive that he ought to respect nature's intentions.

Thus we'll find that all moral reasonings rely on one or more first principles of morals whose truth is perceived immediately—without reasoning—by all men who have reached years of understanding.

And this holds for every branch of human knowledge that deserves to be called a 'science' [see Glossary]. Each science must have its own first principles, by which the whole superstructure is supported.

The first principles of all the sciences must be the *immediate* dictates of our natural faculties—we can't possibly have any other evidence of their truth. And in different sciences the faculties that dictate their first principles are different.

Discoveries that have been made in **astronomy** and in **optics** are so wonderful that people who aren't learned in these sciences can hardly believe that mere human beings *could* discover such things. Yet their first principles come from the testimony of that little organ, the human eye. If we disbelieve its report, the whole of those two noble scientific structures falls to pieces. . . .

The principles of **music** all depend on the testimony of the ear. The principles of natural philosophy [here = '**physics**'] depend on facts attested by the senses. The principles of **mathematics** depend on the necessary relations of quantities considered abstractly—e.g. the proposition that equal quantities added to equal quantities make equal sums—these being necessary relations that are immediately perceived by the understanding.

The science of **politics** borrows its principles from what we know by experience of the character and conduct of man. We consider not what he ought to be, but what he is; and from that we draw conclusions about how he will behave in various situations and circumstances. From such principles we reason concerning the causes and effects of different forms of government, laws, customs, and manners. If men were either more perfect or more imperfect than they are, better or worse creatures than they are, politics would be a different science from what it is.

The first principles of **morals** are the immediate dictates of the moral faculty. What they show us is not what man is, but what he ought to be. Whatever is immediately perceived to be just, honest, and honourable in human conduct carries moral obligation along with it, and the contrary carries demerit and blame; and from the moral obligations that are immediately perceived all other moral obligations must be deduced by reasoning.

If you want to know the colour of an object, you must consult your eyes in a good light when there's no medium or nearby objects that might give it a false tinge. But if you consult any of your other faculties about this you'll be wasting your time.

Similarly, if you want to make judgments relating to the first principles of morals, you must consult your conscience, i.e. your moral faculty, at a time when you are calm and dispassionate, not biased by ·self·-interest, affection, or fashion.

Just as we rely on the clear and distinct testimony of our eyes concerning the colours and shapes of the bodies in our vicinity, we have the same reason to rely confidently on the clear and unbiased testimony of our conscience concerning what we ought or ought not to do. In many

cases, moral worth and demerit are detected just as clearly by our conscience as shape and colour are by our eyes.

The faculties that nature has given us are the only engines we can use to find out the truth. We can't indeed prove that those faculties are trustworthy; for that we would need God to give us new faculties to sit in judgment on the old. But we *have to* trust them—that's something we are born with.

Every man in his right mind believes his eyes, his ears, and his other senses. He believes his consciousness with regard to his own thoughts and purposes, his memory with regard to what is past, his understanding with regard to abstract relations of things, and his taste with regard to what is elegant and beautiful. And he has the same reason to believe the clear and unbiased dictates of his conscience with regard to what is honourable and what is base—the same •reason for believing and the same •necessity of believing. . . .

Chapter 7: Moral approval and disapproval

The judgments that we form in speculative matters are dry and unaffecting, but our moral judgments are not like that; because of their nature, they are necessarily accompanied by affections and feelings, and these are the topic we now come to.

I have remarked that every human action, considered from a moral point of view, appears to us as good or bad or indifferent. When we judge an action to be indifferent—neither good nor bad—though this *is* a moral judgment it produces no affection or feeling, any more than our judgments in speculative matters do.

But we approve of good actions, and disapprove of bad ones; and this approval and disapproval turns out on analysis to include not only •a moral judgment on the action but also •some affection—favourable or unfavourable—towards the agent, and •some feeling in ourselves.

Nothing is more evident than this: Moral worth, even in a stranger with whom we don't have the least connection, never fails to produce some degree of esteem mixed with good will.

The esteem that we have for a man on account of his moral worth is different from esteem based on his intellectual accomplishments, his birth, fortune, or his connection with us.

Moral worth, when it doesn't have a setting of •notable abilities and external advantages, is like a diamond in the mine—rough and unpolished, and perhaps crusted over with some baser material that takes away its lustre.

But when it is accompanied by •those advantages, it is like a diamond that has been cut, polished, and given a setting. Then its lustre attracts every eye. Yet these things that add so much to its appearance don't add much to its real value.

[Reid now has a small intensely compressed paragraph, the gist of which is as follows. When we encounter conduct that has real moral worth, two things happen: **(i)** we feel an 'esteem and benevolent regard' towards it, this being a direct upshot of our natural constitution; and **(ii)** we perceive that this is the right feeling to have towards that conduct—it's something that is 'really and properly due to it'. (Reid doesn't say here that **(i)** is a feeling, but he does so in the next paragraph.) And similarly, on the other side of the moral ledger, unworthy conduct produces in us **(i)** an adverse feeling or attitude and **(ii)** a negative moral judgment.]

No judgment of the human heart is clearer or more irresistible than this: *Esteem and regard are really due to good conduct, and the contrary to base and unworthy conduct.* And we can't conceive of a greater depravity in a human heart than •to see and acknowledge worth without feeling

[Reid's word] any respect for it, or •to see and acknowledge the greatest worthlessness without any degree of dislike and indignation.

Reid's next sentence: The esteem that is due to worthy conduct, is not lessened when a man is conscious of it in himself.

which may mean: x's esteem for y's worthy conduct isn't lessened by y's being aware of his own worthiness.

or it may mean: x's esteem for y's worthy conduct isn't lessened by x's being aware that *he* is worthy in the same way.

Nor can he help having some esteem for himself when he is conscious of those qualities for which he most highly esteems others.

Self-esteem based on external advantages or the gifts of fortune is *pride*. When it is based on an empty fantasy of having inward worth that we really don't possess, it is *arrogance* and *self-deceit*. But when a man—without thinking more highly of himself than he ought—•is conscious of the integrity of heart and uprightness of conduct that he most highly esteems in others, and •values himself appropriately because of this, this might be called the *pride of virtue*, but there's nothing wrong with it. It is a noble and magnanimous disposition without which there can't be any steady virtue.

A man who values his own character won't be willing to do anything that is unworthy of it. The language of his heart will be like that of Job: 'My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me while I live.' [*Job* 27:6]

A good man owes much to the world's view of his character, and will be concerned to defend it against unjust accusations. But he owes much more to his own view of his own character. For if his heart doesn't condemn him, he puts his trust in God; and he can bear the lash of tongues more easily than the reproach of his own mind.

There's much talk (most of it wrong) about our 'sense of honour'. Properly understood, a worthy man's 'sense of honour' is simply the disgust he feels at the thought of doing anything dishonourable, even if it would never be known or suspected.

A good man will have a much greater abhorrence against doing a bad action than against being wrongly accused of having done it. The false accusation last may inflict a wound on his reputation, but the bad action would inflict a wound on his conscience—a wound that would be difficult to heal and more painful to endure.

On the other side, now, let us consider how we are affected by disapproval of the conduct of others or of our own conduct.

Everything that we disapprove of in the conduct of a man lessens our esteem for him. There are indeed *brilliant faults* that have a mixture of good and bad in them, and these may have one appearance when viewed from one side and a different appearance when viewed from the other.

In such faults of our friends, and much more of ourselves, we're apt to view them on their better side; we view from the worse side mixed faults in people we dislike or disapprove of.

This partiality in taking things by the better or the worse handle is the chief cause of wrong judgment about the character of others, and of self-deception about our own.

But when we dismantle a complex action and view every part separately, bad conduct of every kind lessens our esteem for a man as much as good conduct increases it. Bad conduct is apt to turn

- •love into indifference,
- •indifference into contempt, and
- •contempt into aversion and abhorrence.

[The position of 'contempt' on this descending scale may seem odd. It seems that Reid is **here** using 'contempt' in a now-obsolete sense in which having 'contempt' for something is regarding it as insignificant, negligible—e.g. a brave man's 'contempt for danger'. Every **other** use of 'contempt' in this work uses it in our sense.]

When a man is conscious of immoral conduct in himself, it lessens his self-esteem. It depresses and humbles his spirit, and makes his face fall. He might even punish himself for his misbehaviour if that would wipe out the stain. There's a sense of dishonour and worthlessness arising from guilt, as well as a sense of honour and worth arising from worthy conduct. And this would be the case even if the man could conceal his guilt from all the world.

Our next topic is the agreeable or uneasy [see Glossary] feelings in the breast of the spectator or judge which naturally accompany moral approval and disapproval.

Every affection is accompanied by some agreeable or uneasy emotion. To repeat myself: all the benevolent affections give pleasure, and the contrary ones give some degree of pain.

When we contemplate a noble character—even one in ancient history, or in fiction—it gives a lively and pleasant emotion to the spirits, like a beautiful object. It warms the heart, and invigorates the whole person. Like sunbeams, it enlivens the face of nature and diffuses heat and light all around.

We feel a sympathy [see Glossary] with every noble and worthy character that is represented to us. We rejoice in his prosperity, we are afflicted in his distress. We even catch some sparks of the heavenly fire that animated his conduct, and feel the glow of his virtue and magnanimity.

This sympathy is a necessary effect of our judgment on his conduct, and of the approval and esteem due to it; for real sympathy is always an effect of some benevolent affection, such as esteem, love, pity or humanity.

When the person that we approve of is connected with us by acquaintance, friendship or blood, the pleasure we get from his conduct is greatly increased. We claim some ownership of his worth, and are apt to value *ourselves* on account of it. This shows a stronger degree of sympathy, which gathers strength from every social tie.

But the highest pleasure of all comes from being conscious of good conduct in ourselves. The Bible calls this the testimony of a good conscience [see 2 *Corinthians* 1:12]; and it is represented not only in the sacred writings but in the writings of all moralists of every age and sect as the purest, noblest and most valuable of all human enjoyments.

If we wanted to select some one kind of enjoyment as the chief happiness of this life,. . . .our preference would surely have to go to the enjoyment that comes from •the consciousness of integrity and •a steadily continuing attempt to act as well as we can in our situation. This ranks above all other enjoyments the human mind is capable of on account of

- •its dignity,
- •the intensity of the happiness it provides,
- •its stability and duration,
- •its being in our power, and
- •its being proof against all accidents of time and fortune.

And on the other side, the view of a vicious character, like that of an ugly object, is disagreeable. It gives disgust and abhorrence.

If the unworthy person is closely connected with us, we have a very painful sympathy [see Glossary] indeed. We blush even for the smaller faults of people we're connected with, and feel ourselves (as it were) dishonoured by their bad conduct.

But when any person connected with us is very depraved, we are deeply humbled and depressed by this. Our sympathetic feeling has some resemblance to that of guilt, although there isn't any actual guilt in it. We are ashamed to see our acquaintance; we would like to disclaim all connection with the guilty person. We want to tear him from our hearts and blot him out of our memories.

Time, however, alleviates those sympathetic sorrows that arise from bad behaviour in our friends and acquaintances, if we are conscious that we had no share in their guilt.

God in his wisdom constituted us in this way so that this sympathetic distress would give us a deeper concern for our friends' good behaviour as well as for their good fortune; so that friendship, relatedness and every social tie should be helpful to virtue and unfavourable to vice.

It is very common even in vicious [see Glossary] parents to be deeply afflicted when their children start behaving in ways in which the parents themselves used to behave, setting their offspring a terrible example.

If bad conduct in people we care about is uneasy and painful ·to us·, it is so much more when we are conscious of it in ourselves. This uneasy feeling has a name in all languages. We call it 'remorse'.

It has been described in such frightful colours by writers, sacred and secular, of every age and of every belief-system, even by Epicureans, that I shan't try to describe it.

It's because of the unpleasantness of this feeling that bad men try so hard to get rid of it, and to do everything they can to hide, even from themselves, the wickedness of their conduct. That's the source of

- •all the arts of self-deception by which men put gloss on their crimes or try to wash out the stain of guilt; and of
- •the various methods of expiation [= 'atonement', 'making good'] that superstition has invented to soothe the conscience of the criminal. . . .; and of
- •the efforts that many men with bad hearts make to excel in some amiable quality that may be a kind of counterweight to their vices—in the opinion of others and of themselves.

No man can bear the thought of being absolutely without any worth. His awareness of this would make him detest himself, hate the light of the sun, and fly if possible out of existence.

I have tried to describe the natural operations of the principle of action in man that we call the 'moral sense', the 'moral faculty', 'conscience'. All we know of our natural faculties is through their operations within us. We are conscious of their operations in our own minds, and we see the signs of their operations in the minds of others. The operations of this faculty appear to be

- •judging ultimately what is right, what is wrong, and what is indifferent in the conduct of moral agents;
- •approving of good conduct and disapproving of bad in consequence of that judgment, and
- •the agreeable emotions that come with obedience to its dictates and the disagreeable ones that come with disobedience.

The Supreme Being, who has given us eyes to see what may be useful and what harmful to our natural life, has also given us this inner light to direct our moral conduct.

Moral conduct is the business of every man; and therefore the knowledge of it ought to be within everyone's reach.

Epicurus •reasoned acutely and soundly to show that a concern for our present happiness should lead us to the practice of temperance, justice and humanity. But most people can't follow long trains of •reasoning. The loud voice

of the passions drowns the still, calm voice of reasoning.

Conscience commands and forbids with more authority ·than reasoning does·, and in the most ordinary and most important questions of conduct it does so without the labour of reasoning. Its voice is heard by everyone, and you can't disregard it and get away with it.

The sense of guilt puts a man at odds with himself. He sees that he is what he ought not to be. He has fallen from the dignity of his nature, and has sold his real worth for a thing of no value. He is conscious of demerit, and can't avoid the dread of meeting with its reward [here = 'punishment'].

On the other side, someone who pays a sacred regard to the dictates of his conscience can't fail to get a present reward—one proportioned to the effort required for him to do his duty.

The man who confronts strong temptation and by a noble effort maintains his integrity is the happiest man on earth. The more severe his conflict has been, the greater is his triumph. The consciousness of inner worth gives strength to his heart, and makes his face shine. Tempests may beat and floods roar, but he stands firm as a rock in the joy of a good conscience and confidence in God's approval. . . .

Chapter 8: Conscience

I shall now conclude this Essay with ·five· observations about this power of the mind that we call 'conscience', hoping to make its nature better understood.

1. Like all our other powers, **conscience comes to maturity very gradually, and can be much aided in its strength and vigour by proper culture** [see Glossary].

All the human faculties have their infancy and their state of maturity.

The faculties that we have in common with the brutes appear first, and have the quickest growth. In the first period of life, children can't distinguish right from wrong in human conduct; nor can they engage in abstract reasoning in matters of science. Their judgment of moral conduct, as well as their judgment of truth, grows slowly and gradually, like grass.

In plants, first the •blade or the leaf appears, then the •flower, and last of all the •fruit—the noblest of the three, and the one *for* which the others were produced. These follow along a regular order. They need moisture and heat and air and shelter to bring them to maturity, and can be much improved by culture. According to the variations in soil, season and culture, some plants are brought to much greater perfection than others of the same species. But no variation of culture or season or soil can make grapes grow from thorns, or figs from thistles.

We can see a similar development in the faculties of the mind; for there is a wonderful similarity among all the works of God, from the least right through to the greatest.

The faculties of man unfold themselves in a certain order that was set by the great Creator. In their gradual development they may be greatly helped or hindered, improved or spoiled, by education, instruction, example, exercise, and by the society and conversation of men. All these things, like soil and culture in plants, can make big changes for the better or for the worse.

But these means can't produce any new faculties, or any except what were initially planted in the human mind by the Author of nature. And what is common to the whole species across all the varieties of instruction and education, of improvement and degeneracy, is the work of God and not the operation of second causes [see Glossary].

Conscience, i.e. the faculty of distinguishing right conduct from wrong, is in this category of 'common to the whole species', because it does and always did appear in mature men in all nations and at all times.

The seeds (so to speak) of moral discernment are planted in our mind by God. They grow up in their proper season, and are at first tender and delicate, and easily bent. Their progress depends very much on their being appropriately cultivated and properly exercised.

That's how it is with the power of reasoning, which everyone agrees is one of mankind's most eminent natural faculties. It doesn't show up in infancy. It grows up very gradually as we grow to maturity. But its strength and vigour depend so much on its being properly cultivated and exercised that we see many individuals—indeed, many *nations*!—in which it is hardly visible.

Our ability to think closely and sharply is not naturally strong and vigorous enough to make us secure us from errors in speculation [see Glossary]. On the contrary, a great part of mankind in every century has been •sunk in gross ignorance of things that are obvious to the more enlightened, and •chained down by errors and false notions that a duly improved human understanding could easily throw off.

It would be extremely absurd to infer from the errors and ignorance of mankind that there's no such thing as truth, or that man has no natural faculty of discerning it and distinguishing it from error.

Similarly, our moral discernment of what we ought to do and what we ought not to do is not naturally strong and vigorous enough to make us secure us from very gross mistakes with regard to our duty.

In matters of conduct, as well as in matters of speculation, we are liable to be misled by prejudices of upbringing or by wrong instruction. But in matters of conduct we are *also* very liable to have our judgment twisted by our appetites and passions, by fashion, and by the contagion of evil example.

So we mustn't think that because man has a natural power to distinguish what is right from what is wrong he has no need of instruction; that this power doesn't need cultivation and improvement; that he can safely rely on the suggestions of his mind, or on beliefs that he has come by he doesn't know how!

What would we think of a man who, because he has a natural power to move all his limbs, concludes that he doesn't need lessons in dancing, fencing, riding or swimming? All these exercises are performed by the power of moving our limbs that have by nature; but they'll be performed very awkwardly and imperfectly by anyone who hasn't been trained to them and practised them.

What would we think of the man who, because he has a natural power of distinguishing what is true from what is false, concludes that he has no need to be taught mathematics or physics or other sciences? It's by the *natural* power of human understanding that everything in those sciences has been discovered, and that the truths they contain are discovered. But if the understanding were left to itself, with no help from instruction, training, habit, and exercise, it wouldn't make much progress! We all know this from our experience of people who have not been instructed in those matters.

Our natural power of distinguishing right from wrong needs—just as our other natural powers do—the aid of instruction, education, exercise, and habit. . . .

A man who neglects the means of improvement in the knowledge of his duty may do very bad things while following the light of his mind. He isn't to blame for acting according to his judgment, but he may be very blameworthy for not taking the available steps to have his judgment better informed.

There are truths—both speculative and moral—which a man left to himself would never discover; yet when they are squarely laid before him he accepts and adopts them, not merely on the authority of his teacher but on their own intrinsic evidentness. He may even wonder how he could have been so blind as not to see them before.

Like a man whose son has been long abroad, and is thought to be dead. After many years the son returns, and isn't recognised by his father, who if left to himself would *never* discover that this is his son. But when the son reveals himself, the father soon finds many details that satisfy him that this is his son who was lost and can't be anyone else.

Truth has an affinity with the human understanding that error doesn't have. And right principles of conduct have an affinity with an honest mind that wrong principles don't have. When they are set before it in a good light, a well-disposed mind recognises this affinity, feels their authority, and perceives them to be genuine. . . .

A man born and brought up in a savage nation may be taught to pursue injury with unrelenting malice, to the destruction of his enemy. Perhaps when he does so, his heart does not condemn him. But if he is fair and honest, and if when the tumult of his passion is over he has the virtues of clemency, generosity, and forgiveness laid before him, as they were taught and exemplified by the divine Author of our religion, he will see that it is more noble to control himself and subdue a savage passion than to destroy his enemy. He will see that to make a friend of an enemy, and to overcome evil with good, is the greatest of all victories, and provides a manly and rational delight that is incomparably better than the brutish passion of revenge. He will see that hitherto he acted •like a man to his friends, but •like a brute to his enemies; now he knows how to make his whole character consistent, having one part of it in harmony with another.

Someone who doesn't see that he needs all the help he can get in order to know how he ought to act in many concrete cases must indeed be a great stranger to his own heart and to the state of human nature.

2. Conscience is exclusive to man. We don't see a trace of it in brute animals. It is one of those privileges by which we are raised above them.

Brute animals have many faculties in common with us: they see, hear, taste, smell, and feel. They have their pleasures and pains. They have various instincts and appetites. They have an affection for their offspring, and some of them for their herd or flock. Dogs have a wonderful attachment to their masters, and give clear signs of sympathy [see Glossary] with them.

We see in brute animals anger and emulation, pride and shame. Some of them can be trained by habit, and by rewards and punishments, to do many things useful to man.

All this must be granted; and if our perception of what we ought or ought not to do could be fully explained in terms of any of these principles or of any combination of them, it would follow that some brutes are moral agents and accountable for their conduct.

But common sense rebels against this conclusion. A man who seriously charged a brute with a crime would be laughed at. They may do things that are hurtful to themselves or to man. They may have qualities—or or acquire habits—that lead to such actions; and this is all we mean when we call them 'vicious'. But they can't be immoral; nor can they be virtuous. They aren't capable of self-control; and when they act according to the passion or habit that is strongest in them at the time, they are acting according to the nature that God has given them. No more than that can be required of them.

They can't lay down for themselves a rule that they are not to transgress even when prompted by appetite or upset by passion. We see no reason to think that they can form the conception of •a general rule or of •obligation to adhere to it.

They have no conception of a promise or a contract, and you can't enter into any treaty with them. They can't affirm or deny, or resolve, or give their word. If nature had made them capable of these operations we would see signs of that in their motions and gestures.

The most intelligent brutes never invented a language or learned to use one that had already been invented. They have never formed a plan of government, or transmitted inventions to their posterity.

These facts and many others that are obvious to common observation show that we have had good reason to consider the brute-creation as deprived of the noblest faculties that God has given man, and particularly of the faculty that makes us moral and accountable beings.

3. Conscience is obviously intended by nature to be the immediate guide and director of our conduct after we arrive at the years of understanding.

There are many things whose nature and structure show intuitively [= 'as immediately obvious, not needing any reasoning'] the purpose for which they were made.

A man who knows the structure of a watch or clock will confidently conclude that it was made to measure time. And someone who knows the structure of the eye and the properties of light will be equally confident that the eye was made for us to see by.

In the structure of the human body the intended purpose of many of its parts is so obvious as to leave no possibility of doubt. Who can *wonder whether* the muscles were intended to move the parts in which they are inserted? Whether the bones were intended to give strength and support to the body, and some of them to guard the parts that they enclose?

When we attend to the structure of the mind, the intended purpose of its various basic powers is equally obvious. Isn't it obvious that the external senses are given to us to enable us to detect the qualities of bodies that may be useful or hurtful to us? Memory to enable us to retain the knowledge we have acquired? Judgment and understanding to enable us to distinguish what is true from what is false?

•The natural appetites of hunger and thirst, •the natural affections of parents towards their offspring, and of relatives to each other, •the natural willingness of children to believe and to be led, •the affections of pity and sympathy with the distressed, •the attachment we feel to neighbours, to acquaintance, and to the laws and constitution of our country; these are all parts of our constitution that clearly point out their purpose; anyone who didn't see this would have to be blind or *very* inattentive. Even the passions of anger and resentment seem clearly to be a kind of defensive armour, given to us by our Maker to guard us against injuries. . . .

So it holds generally for the intellectual and active powers of man that the intention for which they are given is written legibly on their face.

Nor is this the case of any of them more evidently than of conscience. Its intended purpose is plainly implied in the work assigned to it, namely to show us what is good, what bad, and what indifferent in human conduct.

It judges concerning every action before it is done. For we can rarely act in such a rush that we have no awareness that what we are about to do is right, or is wrong, or is indifferent. Like the bodily eye, conscience naturally looks forward, though its attention may be turned back to the past.

Some writers seem to have thought that the only role of conscience is to reflect on past actions with approval or disapproval; but that's like thinking that the only work our eyes do is to look back on the road we have travelled and see whether it is clean or dirty; a mistake that no-one could make who has made the proper use of his eyes!

Conscience sets limits for every appetite, affection, and passion; it says to every other principle of action 'You may go this far, but no further'.

We can indeed transgress its dictates, but we can't do so with innocence, or even with impunity.

We condemn ourselves, or in the language of scripture *our heart condemns us*, whenever we go beyond the rules of right and wrong that conscience prescribes.

Other principles of action may have more *strength*, but this is the only one that has *authority*. Its ·judicial· sentence makes us guilty in our own eyes and the eyes of our Maker, whatever other principle may be set in opposition to it.

So it's clear that this principle's nature gives it an authority to direct our conduct; to judge, acquit, or condemn, and even to punish. No other principle of the human mind has such authority. . . .

The authority of conscience over the mind's other active principles doesn't need to be proved by argument, because it is self-evident. For all it implies is that *in all cases a man ought to do his duty*. Someone who in all cases does what he ought to do is the perfect man.

The Stoics formed the idea of this perfection in the human nature, and held it out as the goal to which the race of life ought to be directed. Their *wise man* was one in whom a concern for the *honestum* [= 'for the right and honourable'] swallowed up every other principle of action.

The *wise man* of the Stoics, like the *perfect orator* of the rhetoricians, was an •idea that they had, and it was in some ways more than human nature is capable of. But it may have been the most perfect •model of virtue that ever was exhibited to the heathen world, and some of those who followed it ·in their lives· were ornaments to human nature.

4. The moral faculty or conscience is an active power of the mind.

That is because every truly virtuous action must be more or less influenced by it. Other principles may go along with it and lead the same way; but no action can be called morally good unless it is somewhat influenced by a concern for what is right. Thus a man who has no concern for justice may pay the money he owes simply so as not to be thrown into prison. In this action there is no virtue at all.

In individual cases the moral principle may be opposed by any of our animal principles. Passion or appetite may urge us to do what we know to be wrong. In every such case the moral principle ought to prevail; and the harder that is to do, the more glorious the victory is.

In some cases, a concern for what is right may be the sole motive for an action, without help or hindrance from any other principle of action; as when a judge or arbitrator settles a dispute between two people who don't mean anything to him, acting solely from a concern for justice.

So we see that conscience, as an active principle, sometimes •concurs with other active principles, sometimes •opposes them, and sometimes •acts alone.

I tried to show earlier that a concern for *our own good on the whole* is not only a rational principle of action, but a *leading* principle to which all our animal principles are subordinate. So we have two regulating or leading principles in the constitution of man, **(i)** a concern for what is best for us on the whole and **(ii)** a concern for duty; and you may

want to ask: 'Which of these ought to yield if they happen to interfere?'

Some well-meaning people have maintained that all concern for ourselves and for our own happiness ought to be extinguished; that we should love virtue for its own sake only, even if it were to be accompanied by eternal misery.

This seems to have been the extreme view of some mystics. Perhaps they were led into it in opposition to a contrary extreme of the schoolmen [= 'academic Aristotelians'] of the middle ages. *They* claimed that the desire for good to ourselves is the sole motive for action, and that virtue is approvable only because of its present or future reward.

Sounder views of human nature will teach us to avoid both these extremes.

On the one hand, the disinterested [see Glossary] love of virtue is undoubtedly the noblest principle in human nature, and ought never to bow to any other. On the other hand, no active principle that God has planted in our nature is vicious in itself, something that ought to be eradicated if that were in our power.

They are all useful and necessary in our present state. The perfection of human nature consists not in extinguishing them but in restraining them within their proper bounds, keeping them in appropriate subordination to the governing principles.

What about cases where a concern for our happiness on the whole conflicts with a concern for duty? This is a merely imaginary conflict; there can't actually be any such opposition between the two leading principles.

While the world is under a wise and benevolent administration, it's impossible that any man should be a loser by doing his duty. So every man who believes in God, while he is careful to do his duty, can safely leave the care of his happiness to his Maker. He realizes that his most effective way of attending to his long-run happiness is *by* attending to his duty.

But consider the case of an atheist who wrongly thinks his virtue is contrary to his happiness on the whole. Shaftesbury is right: this man's dilemma is without remedy. It will be impossible for him to act so as not to ·seem to himself to· contradict a leading principle of his nature. He must either sacrifice his happiness to virtue, or his virtue to happiness, and he has to decide whether it is better to be a fool or to be a knave!

This shows •morality's strong connection with the principles of •natural religion; because only natural religion can secure a man from the possibility of coming to think that he may play the fool by doing his duty.

Thus even Shaftesbury in his most sober work concludes that *virtue without piety is incomplete*. Without piety it loses its brightest example, its noblest object, and its firmest support.

5. Conscience, i.e. the moral faculty, is an intellectual power.

It is the sole source of our basic conceptions or ideas of right and wrong in human conduct. And of right and wrong there are not only many different •degrees but many different •species.

Justice and injustice,
gratitude and ingratitude,
benevolence and malice,
prudence and folly,
magnanimity and meanness,
decency and indecency,

are various special cases that fall under the general notion of right and wrong in conduct, all of them objects of moral approval or disapproval in a greater or a lesser degree.

It's through our moral faculty that we •have the conception of these as moral qualities, and can perceive various moral relations among them. For example: justice is entitled to a small degree of praise, but injustice to a high degree of blame; and the same holds for gratitude and ingratitude. When justice and gratitude interfere, gratitude must give way to justice, and unmerited beneficence [= 'bringing a benefit to someone who doesn't deserve it'] must give place to both. [Reid's thesis that justice must win any conflict between it and gratitude is a sheer addition; it doesn't follow from what he has been saying about praise and blame.]

Many such relations between the various moral qualities are immediately discerned by our moral faculty. A man needs only to consult his own heart to be convinced of them.

All our reasonings in morals, in natural jurisprudence, in the law of nations, as well as our reasonings about the duties of natural religion, and about the moral government of the Deity, must be based on—i.e. must have as first principles—the dictates of our moral faculty, ·our conscience·.

Thus, because this faculty provides the human mind with •many of its basic conceptions or ideas, as well as with •the first principles of many important branches of human knowledge, it is right to regard it as an intellectual power of the mind, as well as an active one.