

to Dr. Heberden's query, "Is the *fizy* covering which is often seen upon blood, of any use in directing the method of cure?" he answers; that though a mere appearance of *fize* alone gives no certain direction, yet this, together with the thickness and density of the *fizy* covering, and the tenacity of the *crassamentum*, conjointly, affords useful information.

On the whole, there are many detached observations in this short publication, which may be attended to with advantage by practitioners: at the same time, we are obliged to observe, that a want of method and connexion in its several parts, and a degree of inaccuracy and confusion in some of the leading ideas, render it much less satisfactory, in a philosophical view, than we should have expected from the character of the writer, and the apparent perspicuity of his narrations.

ART. VIII. *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*. By David Hume, Esq; 8vo. 4s. Sewed. Robinson. 1779.

WE have here a very elaborate performance. It treats on the most important and interesting subject that can possibly employ the thoughts of a reasonable being. It is written with great elegance; in the true spirit of ancient dialogue; and, in point of composition, is equal, if not superior, to any of Mr. Hume's other writings. Nothing new, however, is advanced on the subject. The Author, indeed, has attempted little more than to throw the most exceptionable parts of his philosophical works into a new form, and to present them in a different dress.

The conversation is supported by CLEANTHES, DEMEA, and PHILO.—Cleanthes, to use Mr. Hume's own words, is a person of an accurate philosophical turn; Philo, a careless sceptic; and Demea, a rigid, inflexible, orthodox divine. Cleanthes, however, defends a good cause very feebly, and is by no means entitled to the character of an accurate philosopher. Demea supports the character of a sour, croaking divine, very tolerably; but PHILO is the hero of the piece; and it must be acknowledged, that he urges his objections with no inconsiderable degree of acuteness and subtlety.

We shall endeavour to give our Readers a concise, but clear view, of what is advanced by each of the speakers; and, not to weaken the force of their arguments, we shall give their own words.

'No man; no man, at least,' says Demea, 'of common sense, I am persuaded, ever entertained a serious doubt of the being of a God. The question is not concerning the BEING, but the NATURE of GOD. This I affirm, from the infirmities of human understanding, to be altogether incomprehensible and unknown to us. The essence of that supreme mind, his attributes, the manner of his

existence, the very nature of his duration; these, and every particular, which regards so divine a Being, are mysterious to men. Finite, weak, and blind creatures, we ought to humble ourselves in his august presence, and, conscious of our frailties, adore in silence his infinite perfections, which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. They are covered in a deep cloud from human curiosity: it is profaneness to attempt penetrating through these sacred obscurities; and next to the impiety of denying his existence, is the temerity of prying into his nature and essence, decrees and attributes.—

‘ The ancient Platonists were the most religious and devout of all the Pagan philosophers: yet many of them, particularly Plotinus, expressly declare, that intellect or understanding is not to be ascribed to the Deity, and that our most perfect worship of him consists, not in acts of veneration, reverence, gratitude, or love; but in a certain mysterious self-annihilation, or total extinction of all our faculties. These ideas are, perhaps, too far stretched; but still it must be acknowledged, that, by representing the Deity as comprehensible, and similar to a human mind, we are guilty of the grossest and most narrow partiality, and make ourselves the model of the whole universe.—

‘ It is my opinion, that each man feels, in a manner, the truth of religion within his own breast; and from a consciousness of his imbecility and misery, rather than from any reasoning, is led to seek protection from that Being, on whom he and all nature is dependent. So anxious, or so tedious, are even the best scenes of life, that futurity is still the object of all our hopes and fears. We incessantly look forward, and endeavour, by prayers, adoration, and sacrifice, to appease those unknown powers, whom we find, by experience, so able to afflict and oppress us. Wretched creatures that we are! what resource for us amidst the innumerable ills of life, did not religion suggest some methods of atonement, and appease those terrors, with which we are incessantly agitated and tormented?—The miseries of life, the unhappiness of man, the general corruptions of our nature, the unsatisfactory enjoyment of pleasures, riches, honours; these phrases have become almost proverbial in all languages. And who can doubt of what all men declare from their own immediate feeling and experience?—Look round this library of Cleanthes. I *shall* venture to affirm, that, except Authors of particular sciences, such as chymistry or botany, who have no occasion to treat of human life, there is scarce one of those innumerable writers, from whom the sense of human misery has not, in some passage or other, extorted a complaint and confession of it. At least, the chance is entirely on that side; and no one Author has ever, so far as I can recollect, been so extravagant as to deny it.—The whole earth, believe me, Philo, is cursed and polluted. A perpetual war is kindled among all living creatures. Necessity, hunger, want, stimulate the strong and courageous; fear, anxiety, terror, agitate the weak and infirm. The first entrance into life gives anguish to the new born infant and to its wretched parent: weakness, impotence, distress, attend each stage of that life: and 'tis at last finished in agony and horror.—Though the external insults from animals, from  
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men, from all the elements, which assault us, form a frightful catalogue of woes, they are nothing in comparison of those, which arise within ourselves, from the disordered condition of our mind and body. How many lie under the lingering torment of diseases? And the disorders of the mind, though more secret, are not perhaps less dismal and vexatious. Remorse, shame, anguish, rage, disappointment, anxiety, fear, dejection, despair; who has ever passed through life without cruel inroads from these tormentors? How many have scarcely ever felt any better sensations? Labour and poverty, so abhorred by every one, are the certain lot of the far greater number: and those few privileged persons, who enjoy ease and opulence, never reach contentment or true felicity. All the goods of life united would not make a very happy man: but all the ills united would make a wretch indeed; and any one of them almost (and who can be free from every one?) nay often the absence of one good (and who can possess all it) is sufficient to render life ineligible.

‘Nothing can be more surprising than to find a topic like this, concerning the wickedness and misery of man, charged with no less than atheism and profaneness. Have not all pious divines and preachers, who have indulged their rhetoric on so fertile a subject; have they not easily, I say, given a solution of any difficulties which may attend it? This world is but a point in comparison of the universe: this life but a moment in comparison of eternity. The present evil phenomena, therefore, are rectified in other regions, and in some future period of existence. And the eyes of men, being then opened to larger views of things, see the whole connection of general laws, and trace, with adoration, the benevolence and rectitude of the Deity, through all the mazes and intricacies of his providence.’

Such are the sentiments of the rigid, inflexible, orthodox DEMA; such are the arguments which he employs to prove the mysterious, incomprehensible nature of the Deity, and by which he endeavours to shew, that the infirmities of our nature do not permit us to attain any ideas, which in the least correspond to the ineffable sublimity of the divine attributes. Let us now hear what the ‘accurate’ philosopher CLEANTHES says.

Demea asserts, as we have already mentioned, that the present evil phenomena are rectified in some future period of existence.—‘No! replied Cleanthes, No! These arbitrary suppositions can never be admitted, contrary to matter of fact, visible and uncontroverted. Whence can any cause be known but from its known effects? Whence can any hypothesis be proved but from the apparent phenomena? To establish one hypothesis upon another is building entirely in the air; and the utmost we ever attain, by these conjectures and fictions, is to ascertain the bare possibility of our opinion; but never can we, upon such terms, establish its reality.

‘The only method of supporting divine benevolence (and it is what I willingly embrace), is to deny absolutely the misery and wickedness of man. Your representations are exaggerated: your melancholy views mostly fictitious: your inferences contrary to fact and experience. Health is more common than sickness; pleasure than pain; happiness than misery. And for one vexation, which

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we meet with, we attain, upon computation, a hundred enjoyments.——

'I have been apt to suspect,' says this *accurate philosopher*, 'the frequent repetition of the word *infinite*, which we meet with in all theological writers, to favour more of panegyric than of philosophy, and that any purposes of reasoning, and even of religion, would be better served, were we to rest contented with more accurate and more moderate expressions. The terms, *admirable*, *excellent*, *superlatively great*, *wise*, and *holy*; these sufficiently fill the imaginations of men; and any thing beyond, besides that it leads into absurdities, has no influence on the affections or sentiments. Thus, in the present subject, if we abandon all human analogy, as seems your intention, Demea, I am afraid we abandon all religion, and retain no conception of the great object of our adoration. If we preserve human analogy, we must for ever find it impossible to reconcile any mixture of evil in the universe with infinite attributes; much less, can we ever prove the latter from the former. But supposing the Author of Nature to be *initely perfect*, (a strange supposition, surely!) 'though far exceeding mankind; a satisfactory account may then be given of natural and moral evil, and every untoward phenomenon be explained and adjusted. A less evil may then be chosen, in order to avoid a greater; inconveniences be submitted to, in order to reach a desirable end; and, in a word, benevolence, regulated by wisdom, and limited by necessity may produce just such a world as the present.'

The principal points which Cleanthes endeavours to establish are,—that the works of nature are similar to those of art; that the Deity is similar to a human mind and understanding, and that our ideas of his attributes, as far as they go, are just and adequate, and correspondent to his real nature.

'Look round the world, says he, contemplate the whole and every part of it; you will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions, to a degree beyond what human senses and faculties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their most minute parts are adjusted to each other with an accuracy, which ravishes into admiration all men, who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance, of human design, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since therefore the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; and that the Author of Nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man; though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work, which he has executed. By this argument *a posteriori*, and by this argument alone, do we prove at once the existence of a Deity, and his similarity to human mind and intelligence.'

In regard to the argument *a priori*, as it is called, Cleanthes endeavours to shew its fallacy, and that it is of very little consequence to the cause of true piety or religion.

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‘I shall begin, says he, with observing, that there is an evident absurdity in pretending to demonstrate a matter of fact, or to prove it by any argument *a priori*. Nothing is demonstrable, unless the contrary implies a contradiction. Nothing, that is distinctly conceivable, implies a contradiction. Whatever we conceive as existent, we can also conceive as non-existent. There is no being, therefore, whose non-existence implies a contradiction. Consequently there is no being, whose existence is demonstrable. I propose this argument as entirely decisive, and am willing to rest the whole controversy upon it.’

Cleanthes, our Readers have already seen, is of opinion that the ascribing of *infinite* perfections to the Deity leads into absurdities, and has no influence on the affections or sentiments; and that, if we suppose the Author of Nature to be *finitely* perfect, we may give a satisfactory account of natural and moral evil, explain and adjust every untoward phenomenon.

Now, if the Author of Nature be *finitely* perfect, his perfections are limited, or, in other words, he is an imperfect Being; and yet Cleanthes, in another passage, says that he is a Being perfectly good, wise, and powerful.

‘The most agreeable reflection, says he, which it is possible for human imagination to suggest, is that of genuine Theism, which represents us as the workmanship of a Being perfectly good, wise, and powerful; who created us for happiness, and who, having implanted in us immeasurable desires of good, will prolong our existence to all eternity, and will transfer us into an infinite variety of scenes in order to satisfy those desires, and render our felicity complete and durable. Next to such a Being himself (if the comparison be allowed) the happiest lot which we can imagine, is that of being under his guardianship and protection.’—O SI SIC OMNIA!

It is not our business to answer Mr. Hume, but it is obvious to remark, that a Being *finitely* perfect, cannot be *perfectly* wise and good. The character of Cleanthes, therefore, is not consistent; nor is it properly supported; for an accurate philosopher should have shewn, clearly and distinctly, upon philosophical principles, by what steps he rose to the idea of a perfectly wise and good Being, and what reasons he had for concluding that this Being would prolong our existence to all eternity, and make us completely happy.

But we now proceed to lay before our Readers Mr. Hume's own sentiments in the character of the ‘careless sceptic;’ PHILO.—He acknowledges that a purpose, an intention, a design, strikes every where the most stupid thinker, the most careless observer of nature, that no man can be so hardened in absurd systems, as at all times to reject it; that in many views of the universe, and of its parts, particularly the latter, the beauty and fitness of final causes strike us with such irresistible force, that all objections appear (what he believes they really are)

mere cavils and sophisms; and that we cannot then imagine how it was ever possible for us to lay any stress on them. But there is no view of human life, he tells us, from which, without the greatest violence, we can infer the moral attributes, or learn infinite benevolence, conjoined with infinite power and infinite wisdom, which we must discover by the eyes of faith alone. He thinks it extremely unreasonable to form our ideas of the Author of Nature from our experience of the narrow productions of human design and invention, and says that it is impossible for us to tell, from our limited views, whether the present system of things deserves any considerable praise, if compared to other possible, and even real systems.

‘ Could a peasant, says he, if the *ÆNEID* were read to him, pronounce that poem to be absolutely faultless, or even assign to it its proper rank among the productions of human wit, he, who had never seen any other production ?

‘ But were this world ever so perfect a production, it must still remain uncertain, whether all the excellencies of the work can justly be ascribed to the workman. If we survey a ship, what an exalted idea must we form of the ingenuity of the carpenter, who framed so complicated, useful, and beautiful a machine ! And what surprize must we feel, when we find him a stupid mechanic, who imitated others, and copied an art, which, through a long succession of ages, after multiplied trials, mistakes, corrections, deliberations, and controversies, had been gradually improving ! Many worlds might have been botched and bungled, throughout an eternity, ere this system was struck out : much labour lost : many fruitless trials made : and a slow, but continued improvement carried on during infinite ages in the art of world making. In such subjects, who can determine, where the truth, nay, who can conjecture where the probability, lies, amidst a great number of hypotheses which may be proposed, and a still greater number, which may be imagined ?——

‘ In a word, *CLEANTHES*, a man, who follows your hypothesis, is able, perhaps, to assert, or conjecture, that the universe, sometime, arose from something like design : but beyond that position he cannot ascertain one single circumstance, and is left afterwards to fix every point of his theology, by the utmost licence of fancy and hypothesis. This world, for aught he knows, is very faulty and imperfect, compared to a superior standard ; and was only the first rude essay of some infant Deity, who afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance : it is the work only of some dependent, inferior Deity ; and is the object of derision to his superiors : it is the production of old age and dotage in some superannuated Deity ; and ever since his death, has run on at adventure, from the first impulse and active force, which it received from him. You justly give signs of horror, *DEMEA*, at these strange suppositions : but these, and a thousand more of the same kind, are *CLEANTHES*'s suppositions, not mine.——

‘ There occurs to me another hypothesis, which must acquire an air of probability from the method of reasoning so much insisted on  
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by CLEANTHES. That like effects arise from like causes: this principle he supposes the foundation of all religion. But there is another principle of the same kind, no less certain, and derived from the same source of experience; that where several known circumstances are observed to be similar, the unknown will also be found similar. Thus, if we see the limbs of a human body, we conclude, that it is also attended with a human head, though hid from us. Thus, if we see, through a chink in a wall, a small part of the sun, we conclude, that were the wall removed, we should see the whole body. In short, this method of reasoning is so obvious and familiar, that no scruple can ever be made with regard to its solidity.

Now if we survey the universe, so far as it falls under our knowledge, it bears a great resemblance to an animal or organized body, and seems actuated with a like principle of life and motion. A continual circulation of matter in it produces no disorder; a continual waste in every part is incessantly repaired: the closest sympathy is perceived throughout the entire system; and each part or member, in performing its proper offices, operates both to its own preservation and to that of the whole. The world then, I infer, is an animal, and the Deity is the Soul of the world, actuating it, and actuated by it. —

Were I obliged to defend any particular system (which I never willingly should do), I esteem none more plausible, than that which ascribes an eternal, inherent principle of order to the world; though attended with great and continual revolutions and alterations. This at once solves all difficulties; and if the solution, by being so general, is not entirely complete and satisfactory, it is, at least, a theory, that we must, sooner or later, have recourse to, whatever system we embrace. —

Our friend CLEANTHES asserts, that since no question of fact can be proved otherwise than by experience, the existence of a Deity admits not of proof from any other medium. The world, says he, resembles the works of human contrivance: therefore its cause must also resemble that of the other. Here we may remark, that the operation of one very small part of nature, to wit man, upon another very small part, to wit, that inanimate matter lying within his reach, is the rule, by which CLEANTHES judges of the origin of the whole; and he measures objects, so widely disproportioned, by the same individual standard. But to waive all objections drawn from this topic; I affirm that there are other parts of the universe (besides the machines of human invention) which bear still a greater resemblance to the fabric of the world, and which therefore afford a better conjecture concerning the universal origin of this system. These parts are animals and vegetables. The world plainly resembles more an animal or a vegetable, than it does a watch or a knitting loom. Its cause, therefore, it is more probable, resembles the cause of the former. The cause of the former is generation or vegetation. The cause, therefore, of the world, we may infer to be something similar or analogous to generation or vegetation.

But how is it conceivable, said DEMA, that the world can arise from any thing similar to vegetation or generation? Very easily, replied

plied PHILLO. In like manner as a tree sheds its seed into the neighbouring fields, and produces other trees; so the great vegetable, the world, or this planetary system, produces within itself certain seeds, which, being scattered into the surrounding chaos, vegetate into new worlds. A comet, for instance, is the seed of a world; and after it has been fully ripened, by passing from sun to sun, and star to star, it is at last tost into the unformed elements, which every where surround this universe, and immediately sprouts up into a new system.——

‘ I have all along asserted, and still assert, that we have no *data* to establish any system of cosmogony. Our experience, so imperfect in itself, and so limited both in extent and duration, can afford no probable conjecture concerning the whole of things. But if we must needs fix on some hypothesis; by what rule, pray, ought we to determine our choice? Is there any other rule than the greater similarity of the objects compared? And does not a plant or an animal, which springs from vegetation or generation, bear a stronger resemblance to the world, than does any artificial machine, which arises from reason and design?——

‘ In this little corner of the world alone, there are four principles, *Reason, Instinct, Generation, Vegetation*, which are similar to each other, and are the causes of similar effects. What a number of other principles may we naturally suppose in the immense extent and variety of the universe, could we travel from planet to planet, and from system to system, in order to examine each part of this mighty fabric? Any one of these four principles above mentioned (and a hundred others which lie open to our conjecture) may afford us a theory, by which to judge of the order of the world; and it is a palpable and egregious partiality, to confine our view entirely to that principle, by which our own minds operate. Were this principle more intelligible on that account, such a partiality might be somewhat excusable; but reason, in its internal fabric and structure, is really as little known to us as instinct or vegetation; and perhaps even that vague, undeterminate word, *Nature*, to which the vulgar refer every thing, is not at the bottom more inexplicable. The effects of these principles are all known to us from experience: but the principles themselves, and their manner of operation are totally unknown: nor is it less intelligible, or less conformable to experience to say, that the world arose by vegetation from a seed shed by another world, than to say that it arose from a divine reason or contrivance, according to the sense in which CLEANTHES understands it.——

‘ That vegetation and generation, as well as reason, are experienced to be principles of order in nature, is undeniable. If I rest my system of cosmogony on the former, preferably to the latter, 'tis at my choice. The matter seems entirely arbitrary. And when CLEANTHES asks me what is the cause of my great vegetative or generative faculty, I am equally intitled to ask him the cause of his great reasoning principle. These questions we have agreed to forbear on both sides; and it is chiefly his interest on the present occasion to stick to this agreement. Judging by our limited and imper-

fect experience, generation has some privileges above reason : for we see every day the latter arise from the former, never the former from the latter.

PHILO proceeds to inform us that he could, in an instant, propose various other systems of cosmogony, which would have some faint appearance of truth ; though it is a thousand, a million to one, he says, if any one of them were the true system.—Motion, we are told, in many instances, from gravity, from elasticity, from electricity, begins in matter, without any known voluntary agent, and to suppose always, in these cases, an unknown voluntary agent, is mere hypothesis ; and hypothesis attended with no advantage ; the beginning of motion in matter itself being as conceivable *a priori* as its communication from mind and intelligence.

‘ All religious systems, it is confessed, says he, are subject to great and insuperable difficulties. Each disputant triumphs in his turn ; while he carries on an offensive war, and exposes the absurdities, barbarities, and pernicious tenets of his antagonist. But all of them, on the whole, prepare a complete triumph for the *Sceptic* ; who tells them, that no system ought ever to be embraced with regard to such subjects : for this plain reason, that no absurdity ought ever to be assented to with regard to any subject. A total suspense of judgment is here our only reasonable resource. And if every attack, as is commonly observed, and no defence, among theologians, is successful ; how complete must be *his* victory, who remains always, with all mankind, on the offensive, and has himself no fixed station or abiding city, which he is ever, on any occasion, obliged to defend ?’

PHILO, in a word, is of opinion, that as no system of cosmogony ought ever to be received from a slight analogy, so neither ought any to be rejected on account of a small incongruity ; since that is an inconvenience, from which we can justly pronounce no one to be exempted.

The object of that curious artifice and machinery, which nature has displayed in all animals, PHILO tells us, is the preservation alone of individuals and propagation of the species. It seems enough for her purpose, he says, if such a rank be barely upheld in the universe, without any care or concern for the happiness of the members that compose it. No resource for this purpose : no machinery, in order merely to give pleasure or ease ; no fund of pure joy and contentment : no indulgence without some want or necessity, accompanying it. At least, the few phenomena of this nature, we are told, are overbalanced by opposite phenomena of still greater importance.

‘ Allowing, says he, what never will be believed, at least, what can never possibly be proved, that animal, or at least, human happiness in this life exceeds its misery ; we have yet done nothing ; for this is not, by any means, what we expect from infinite power, infinite wisdom, and infinite goodness. Why is there any misery at

all in the world? Not by chance surely. From some cause then. Is it from the intention of the Deity? But he is perfectly benevolent. Is it contrary to his intention? But he is almighty. Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive; except we assert, that these subjects exceed all human capacity, and that our common measures of truth and falsehood are not applicable to them; a topic, which I have all along insisted on, but which you have, from the beginning, rejected with scorn and indignation.

But I will be contented to retire still from this intrenchment: for I deny, CLEANTHES, that you can ever force me in it: I will allow, that pain or misery in man is *compatible* with infinite power and goodness in the Deity, even in your sense of these attributes: what are you advanced by all these concessions? A mere possible compatibility is not sufficient. You must *prove* these pure, unmixt, uncontrollable attributes from the present mixt and confused phenomena, and from these alone. A hopeful undertaking! Were the phenomena ever so pure and unmixt, yet being finite, they would be insufficient for that purpose. How much more, where they are also so jarring and discordant?

There seem to be *four* circumstances, PHILO says, on which depend all, or the greatest part of the ills, that molest sensible creatures, none of which appear to human reason, in the least degree, necessary or unavoidable; nor can we suppose them such, without the utmost licence of imagination.

The *first* circumstance which introduces evil, we are told, is that contrivance of œconomy or the animal creation, by which pains as well as pleasures are employed to excite all creatures to action, and make them vigilant in the great work of self-preservation. Now pleasure alone, in its various degrees, seems to human understanding sufficient to this purpose.—The *second* circumstance is, the conducting of the world by general laws; and this seems no way necessary to a very perfect being.—The *third* circumstance is, the great frugality, with which all powers and faculties are distributed to every particular being. Nature, 'tis said, seems to have formed an exact calculation of the necessities of her creatures; and like a *rigid master*, has afforded them little more powers or endowments, than what are strictly sufficient to supply those necessities. An *indulgent parent* would have bestowed a large stock, in order to guard against accidents, and secure the happiness and welfare of the creature, in the most unfortunate concurrence of circumstances. Every course of life would not have been so surrounded with precipices, that the least departure from the true path, by mistake or necessity, must involve us in misery and ruin. Some reserve, some fund would have been provided to ensure happiness; nor would the powers and the necessities have been adjusted with so rigid an œconomy.

The *fourth* circumstance, whence arises the evil and misery of the universe, is the inaccurate workmanship of all the springs and

and principles of the great machine of nature. One would imagine, PHILO says, that this grand production had not received the last hand of the maker; so little finished is every part, and so coarse are the strokes with which it is executed.

‘On the concurrence, then, continues he, of these *four* circumstances does all, or the greatest part of natural evil depend. Were all living creatures incapable of pain, or were the world administered by particular volitions, evil never could have found access into the universe; and were animals endowed with a large stock of powers and faculties, beyond what strict necessity requires; or were the several springs and principles of the universe so accurately framed, as to preserve always the just temperament and medium; there must have been very little ill in comparison of what we feel at present. What then shall we pronounce on this occasion? Shall we say, that these circumstances are not necessary, and that they might easily have been altered in the contrivance of the universe? This decision seems too presumptuous for creatures, so blind and ignorant. Let us be more modest in our conclusions. Let us allow, that, if the goodness of the Deity (I mean a goodness like the human) could be established on any tolerable reasons *a priori*, these phenomena, however untoward, would not be sufficient to subvert that principle; but might easily, in some unknown manner, be reconcilable to it. But let us still assert, that as this goodness is not antecedently established, but must be inferred from the phenomena, there can be no grounds for such an inference, while there are so many ills in the universe, and while these ills might so easily have been remedied, as far as human understanding can be allowed to judge on such a subject. I am sceptic enough to allow, that the bad appearances, notwithstanding all my reasonings, may be compatible with such attributes as you suppose: but surely they can never prove these attributes. Such a conclusion cannot result from scepticism; but must arise from the phenomena, and from our confidence in the reasonings, which we deduce from these phenomena.’

In regard to the influence of religious principles on the conduct of mankind, PHILO says, it is certain from experience, that the smallest grain of natural honesty and benevolence has more effect on men's conduct, than the most pompous views, suggested by theological theories and systems. And when we have to do with a man who makes a great profession of religion and devotion; this, we are told, has no other effect upon several, who pass for prudent, than to put them on their guard, lest they be cheated and deceived by him. He further says, that the steady attention alone to so important an interest as that of eternal salvation, is apt to extinguish the benevolent affections, and beget a narrow, contracted selfishness; and that when such a temper is encouraged, it easily eludes all the general precepts of charity and benevolence. In regard to the worship of the Deity, hear what he says:

‘To know God, says SENECA, is to worship him. All other worship is indeed absurd, superstitious, and even impious. It degrades

him to the low condition of mankind, who are delighted with intreaty, solicitation, presents, and flattery. Yet is this impiety the smallest of which superstition is guilty. Commonly, it depresses the Deity far below the condition of mankind; and represents him as a capricious demon, who exercises his power without reason, and without humanity. And were that divine Being disposed to be offended at the vices and follies of silly mortals, who are his own workmanship; ill would it surely fare with the votaries of most popular superstitions. Nor would any of the human race merit his *favour*, but a very few, the philosophical theists, who entertain, or rather indeed endeavour to entertain, suitable notions of his divine perfections: as the only persons, intitled to his *compassion* and *indulgence*, would be the philosophical sceptics, a sect almost equally rare, who, from a natural diffidence of their own capacity, suspend, or endeavour to suspend, all judgment with regard to such sublime and such extraordinary subjects.

Such are the sentiments, such the doctrines contained in the Dialogues before us; and it is natural now, surely, to ask, what gratitude is due to Mr. Hume for this legacy to the public? If the principles which he has laboured with so much zeal and earnestness to establish be true, the wicked are set free from every restraint but that of the laws; the virtuous are robbed of their most substantial comforts; every generous ardor of the human mind is damped; the world we live in is a fatherless world; we are chained down to a life full of wretchedness and misery; and we have no hope beyond the grave.

Mr. Hume had been long floating on the boundless and pathless ocean of scepticism; it is natural, therefore, to imagine that, in the evening of his day, he would have been desirous of getting into some peaceful harbour; of breathing a pure air; of viewing a clear and unclouded sky, free from those unwholesome mists that hang over the gloomy regions of darkness and uncertainty; and of passing through the closing scenes of life with tranquillity and pleasing hopes. But his love of paradox, his inordinate pursuit of literary fame, continued, whilst life continued; it is scarce possible, indeed, with the utmost stretch of candour and charity, to assign any other motives for publishing what must shock the sense and virtue of his fellow-mortals, or to reconcile it with the character of a good citizen, and a friend to mankind.

We know it will be said, that Mr. Hume, notwithstanding his principles, was a very benevolent and a very amiable man; we *know* he was, and are as ready to allow him all the praise he is intitled to, on account of his good qualities, as the warmest of his admirers. But, surely, it cannot be inferred from this, that principles have little or no effect on human conduct. A man, who is naturally of a cool dispassionate turn of mind; of a studious disposition; whose education, fortune, and other ac-

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cidental circumstances, connect him with the upper ranks of life, may not only have fashionable manners, be an agreeable companion, but may, by the mere force of natural temper, be a benevolent, good-humoured man, and act his part in life with great decency. But suppose that Mr. Hume's principles are let loose among mankind, and generally adopted, what will then be the consequence? Will those who think they are to die like brutes, ever act like men? Their language will be, *let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*. When men are once led to believe that death puts a final period to their existence, and are set free from the idea of their being accountable creatures, what is left to restrain them from the gratification of their passions but the authority of the laws? But the best system of laws that can be formed by human wisdom, is far from being sufficient to prevent many of those evils which break in upon the peace, order, and welfare of society. A man may be a cruel husband, a cruel father, a domestic tyrant; he may seduce his neighbour's wife or his daughter, without having any thing to fear from the law; and if he takes pleasure in the gratification of his irregular appetites, is it to be supposed that he will not gratify them? What, indeed, is to restrain him?

But we leave it to our Readers to pursue these reflexions,—into which we were naturally led, and for which, we hope, we need make no apology.—Mr. Hume's *Dialogues* cannot possibly hurt any man of a philosophical turn, or, indeed, any man of common sense; and it is only the high reputation which the Author of them has so justly acquired by his other writings, and the influence of this reputation, that give them any claim to notice. They may serve, indeed, to confirm the giddy, the profligate, and the unprincipled in their prejudices against religion and virtue, but must be despised by every man who has the smallest grain of seriousness and reflection. No virtuous father will ever recommend them to the perusal of his son, except in point of composition; and every impartial judge must pronounce them unworthy of a writer of such distinguished abilities as Mr. HUME.

PAMPHILUS, a young man, who relates to HERMIPPUS the conversation which passed between Cleanthes, Philo, and Demea, concludes the *Dialogues* in the following manner.—  
‘Upon a serious review of the whole, says he, I cannot but think, that Philo's principles are more probable than Demea's; but that those of Cleanthes approach still nearer to the truth.’—  
Our Readers will make their own comment upon this, and with them we leave it.