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YES

not in it.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN ACTION:

BEING AN ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF
THE NATURAL DISINTERESTEDNESS
OF THE HUMAN MIND.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

SOME REMARKS ON THE SYSTEMS OF
HARTLEY AND HELVETIUS.

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AN ARGUMENT

IN DEFENCE OF THE

NATURAL DISINTERESTEDNESS
OF THE HUMAN MIND.

IT is the design of the following Essay to shew that the human mind is naturally disinterested, or that it is naturally interested in the welfare of others in the same way, and from the same direct motives, by which we are impelled to the pursuit of our own interest.

The objects in which the mind is interested may be either past or present, or future. These last alone can be the objects of rational or voluntary pursuit; for neither the past, nor present can be altered for the better, or worse by any efforts of the will. It is only from the in-

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terest excited in him by future objects that man becomes a moral agent, or is denominated selfish, or the contrary, according to the manner in which he is affected by what relates to his own *future* interest, or that of others. I propose then to shew that the mind is naturally interested in it's own welfare in a peculiar mechanical manner, only as far as relates to it's past, or present impressions. I have an interest in my own actual feelings or impressions by means of consciousness, and in my past feelings by means of memory, which I cannot have in the past, or present feelings of others, because these faculties can only be exerted upon those things which immediately and properly affect myself. As an affair of sensation, or memory, I can feel no interest in any thing but what relates to myself in the strictest sense. But this distinction does not apply to future objects, or to those impressions, which determine my voluntary actions. I have not the same sort of exclusive, ~~or necess-~~

~~not the same sort of exclusive~~, or mechanical self-interest in my future being or welfare, because I have no distinct faculty giving me a direct present interest in my future sensations, and none at all in those of others. The imagination, by means of which alone I can anticipate future objects, or be interested in them, must carry me out of myself into the feelings of others by one and the same process by which I am thrown forward as it were into my future being, and interested in it. I could not love myself, if I were not capable of loving others. Self-love, used in this sense, is in it's fundamental principle the same with disinterested benevolence.

Those who have maintained the doctrine of the natural selfishness of the human mind have always taken it for granted as a self-evident principle that *a man must love himself*, or that it is not less absurd to ask why a man should be interested in his own personal welfare, than it would be to ask why a man in a

state of actual enjoyment, or suffering likes what gives him pleasure, and dislikes what gives him pain. They say, that no such necessity, nor any positive reason whatever can be conceived to exist for my promoting the welfare of another, since I cannot possibly feel the pleasures, or pains which another feels without first becoming that other, that our interests must be as necessarily distinct as we ourselves are, that the good which I do to another, in itself and for its own sake can be nothing to me. *Good* is a term relative only to the being who enjoys it. The good which he does not feel must be matter of perfect indifference to him. How can I be required to make a painful exertion, or sacrifice a present convenience to serve another, if I am to be nothing the better for it? I waste my powers out of myself without sharing in the effects which they produce. Whereas when I sacrifice my present ease or convenience, for the sake of a greater good to myself at

a future period, the same being who suffers afterwards enjoys, both the loss and the gain are mine, I am upon the whole a gainer in real enjoyment, and am therefore justified to myself: I act with a view to an end in which I have a real, substantial interest. The human soul, continue some of these writers, naturally thirsts after happiness; it either enjoys, or seeks to enjoy. It constantly reaches forward towards the possession of happiness, it strives to draw it to itself, and to be absorbed in it. But as the mind cannot enjoy any good but what it possesses within itself, neither can it seek to produce any good but what it can enjoy: it is just as idle to suppose that the love of happiness or good should prompt any being to give up his own interest for the sake of another, as it would be to attempt to allay violent thirst by giving water to another to drink.

Now I can conceive that a man must be necessarily interested in his own actual

feelings, whatever these may be, merely because he feels them. He cannot help receiving pain from what gives him pain, or pleasure from what gives him pleasure. But I cannot conceive how he can have the same necessary, absolute interest in whatever relates to himself, or in his own pleasures and pains, generally speaking, whether he feels them, or not. This kind of reasoning, which in itself is all along founded in a mere play of words, could not have gained the assent of thinking men but for the force with which the idea of self habitually clings to the mind of every man, binding it as with a spell, deadening its discriminating powers, and spreading the confused associations which belong only to past and present impressions over the whole of our imaginary existence. It therefore becomes difficult to separate ideas which have been thus knit together by custom, or "by a long tract of time, by the use of language, and want of reflection."

If it were possible for a man's particular successive interests to be all bound up in one general feeling of self-interest as they are all comprehended under the same word, *self*, or if a man on the rack really felt no more than he must have done from the apprehension of the same punishment a year before, there would be some foundation for this reasoning, which supposes the mind to have the same absolute interest in it's own feelings both past, present, and to come. I say the sophism here employed consists in comparing the motives by which we are interested in the welfare of others with the mechanical impulses of self-love, as if because we are mechanically affected by the actual impression of objects on our senses in a manner in which we cannot be affected by the feelings of others, all our feelings with respect to ourselves must be of the same kind, and we could feel no interest in any thing but what was excited in the same way. It is plain we are not interested in our general, remote welfare in

the same manner, or by the same necessity that we are affected by the actual sense of pleasure, or pain. We have no instinctive secret sympathy with our future sensations by which we are attracted either consciously or unconsciously to our greatest good; we are for the most part indifferent to it, ignorant of it. We certainly do not know, and we very often care as little what is to happen to ourselves in future: it has no more effect upon us in any way, than if it were never to happen. Were it not for this shortsightedness, and insensibility, where would be the use, or what would become of the rules of personal prudence?

It will be said, I know, that this is foreign to the purpose; for that whether he feels it, or not, every man *has* a real interest in his own welfare which he cannot have in that of another person. First, this is to shift the ground of the argument; for it requires to be made out how a man can be said to have an interest in what he does not feel. There is not evidently the same

contradiction in supposing him not to be particularly interested in feelings which he has not, as there is in supposing him not to be interested in his actual, sensible pleasures and pains. Secondly, I shall very readily grant that *to have* and *to feel* an interest in any thing are not always convertible terms, that is, an interest may attach or belong to an individual in some way or other though he does not feel it at the time. My having a *real* interest in any object may refer to the matter of fact that such an object will some time or other exist: now the reality of it's existence does not certainly depend on my feeling an interest in it previously. Neither is the reality of another's pleasures, or pains affected by my not feeling such an interest in them as I ought to do. The feelings of others are evidently as real, or as much matters of fact in themselves as my own feelings can ever be: This distinction between that which is true and what has merely an imaginary existence, or none at all, does not

therefore so far apply to the question, if by a real interest be meant that which relates to a real object, for it is supposed at first that this object does not excite any immediate or real interest in the mind. Another difference that may be insisted on is this, that I *shall have* a real sensible interest in my own future feelings which I cannot possibly have in those of others. I must therefore as the same individual have the same necessary interest in them at present. This may either proceed on the supposition of the absolute, metaphysical identity of my individual being, so that whatever can be affirmed of that principle at any time must be strictly and logically true of it at all times, which is a wild and absurd notion; or it may refer to some other less strict connection between my present and future self, in consequence of which I am considered as the same being, the different events and impressions of my life constituting one regular succession of conscious feelings. In this sense, the saying that I

have a general interest in whatever concerns my future welfare in fact amounts to no more than affirming, that *I shall have* an interest in that welfare, or that I am nominally and in certain other respects the same being who will hereafter have a real interest in it. The reason why we are so ready to attribute a real identity of interests to the same person is, that we have an indistinct idea of extended consciousness, and a community of feelings as essential to the same thinking being; so that whatever interests me at one time must interest me, or be capable of interesting me, at other times. Now this continued consciousness only serves to connect my past with my present impressions. It only acts retrospectively. I have not previously the same sympathy with my future being that I have with my past being, nor consequently the same natural or necessary interest in my future welfare that I have in my past. Lastly, it may be said, that there is something in the very *idea* of plea-

sure or pain as affecting myself which naturally excites a lively, unavoidable interest in my mind. I cannot conceive how the mere idea of self can produce any such effect as is here described, unless we imagine that self-love literally consists in the love of self, or in a proper attachment to our own persons instead of referring to the feelings of desire and aversion, hope, and fear, &c. excited in us by those things which either do, or may immediately affect ourselves. In consequence of the impression of many such objects on the thinking being, we shall come no doubt to connect a sense of self-interest with this very being, with the motions of our blood, and with life itself, and shall by degrees transfer the emotions of interest excited by particular positive feelings to the idea of our own interest generally speaking. This however must be the work of time, the gradual result of habit, and reflection, and cannot be the natural reason why a man pursues his own welfare, or is interested in

his own feelings. I think therefore that in the first instance the idea of personal pleasure or pain can only affect the mind as a distinct idea of that which is in itself the object of desire, or aversion, and that the idea of self is nothing more than the first and most distinct idea we have of a being capable of receiving pleasure and pain. It will be the business of the greatest part of the following essay to make out these several points more distinctly.

There is another hypothesis which I shall just mention, that holds a sort of middle place between the two opposite ones already stated. The partisans of this more liberal philosophy, who could not suppress the consciousness of humane and benevolent dispositions in themselves, or the proofs of them in others, but yet knew not how to reconcile these feelings with the supposed selfishness of human nature, have endeavoured to account for the different impulses of generous affection from habit, or the constant connection between the

~~our own~~ and pains of others, and our own, ~~by which~~ means we come at last to confound our own interests with theirs, and to feel the same anxiety for their welfare without any view to our own advantage. A man according to this hypothesis becomes attached to others as he becomes attached to any other indifferent object, to a tree, or a stone, from familiarity, and the frequent association of his immediate gratification with the indifferent idea; and this attachment once formed, he must afterwards be interested in their welfare whether he will or no. An example of this may be given in boys at school. A boy is confined to his task at the same time with his school-fellows; he feels the effects of the good, or ill humour of the master in common with the rest; when the school-hour is over, they are all let loose to play together; he will in general like the same games that others do, and be most delighted when they are noisiest, when they happen to be in the best humour, in the hottest part of the

game, on the finest days, or in the pleasantest places: they will have the same joyous breakings-up for the holidays, and will often on some bright morning stroll out in search of unknown good, and return home tired and disappointed together. Would it not be strange if this constant fellowship of joys and sorrows did not produce in him some sensibility to the good or ill fortune of his companions, and some real good-will towards them? The greatest part of our pleasures depend upon habit: and as those which arise from acts of kindness and disinterested attachment to others are the most common, the most lasting, the least mixed with evil of all others, as a man devoid of all attachment to others, whose heart was thoroughly hard and insensible to every thing but his own interest would scarcely be able to support his existence, (for in him the spring and active principle of life would be gone) it follows that we ought to cultivate sentiments of generosity and kindness for others

out of mere selfishness. The obligations to the practice of virtue really depend on it's contributing to the original object of our nature, our own proper happiness: for no man is bound to sacrifice his own ultimate welfare to any foreign consideration whatever. The advantages of virtue are however to be derived, like those of any liberal art, from the immediate gratification attending it, from it's necessary effect on the mind, and not from a gross calculation of self-interest. This effect must be the greatest, where there is the most love of virtue for it's own sake, as we become truly disinterested, and generous. Therefore as the habit of generous concern for others, and readiness to promote their welfare cannot be broken in upon at will in every particular instance where our immediate interest might require it, it becomes necessary to disregard all such particular, accidental advantages for the sake of the general obligation, and thus confirm habit to principle.

Whatever may be the manner in which we first acquire disinterested feelings, I do not think that much good can be done by tracing these feelings back again to a selfish origin, and leaving virtue no other basis to rest upon than a principle of refined self-interest, by setting on foot a sort of game at hide-and-seek between the *reasons* and *motives* to virtue. Without stopping to inquire whether the effect of this theory upon the mind would be to produce much true generosity, or disinterested simplicity of character, there can be no doubt but that this end must be attained much more effectually, as far as the philosophical theory, or a belief of certain abstract distinctions will ever influence our habitual principles of action *, by shewing to man that his na-

* The question whether abstract or merely intellectual ideas have ever much influence on the conduct has not been fairly stated. The point is not whether an abstract proposition (no matter whether true or false) of which I became convinced yesterday, will be able to overturn all my previ-

ture is originally and essentially disinterested; that as a voluntary agent, he must be a dis-

ous habits, and prejudices, but whether ideas of this kind may not be made the foundation of inveterate prejudices themselves and the strongest principles of action. The ideas concerning religion are of a sufficiently abstract nature : and yet it will not be disputed that early impressions of this kind have some influence on a man's future conduct in life. Two persons accidentally meeting together, and who had never seen one another before shall conceive a more violent antipathy to each other in consequence of a dispute on religion or politics than they might have done from having been personally at variance half their lives. It is objected that this proceeds from wounded vanity. But why is our vanity more easily irritated upon these subjects than upon any other but from the importance attached to them by the understanding? Questions of morality do not always excite the same violent animosity ; and this I think is because they do not so properly admit of dispute in themselves, also because they are not so often made the instruments of cabal, and power, and therefore depend less on opinion, or the number of votes, and because every one appealing to his own breast for the truth of his opinion attributes the continuance of the contest not to any want of

interested one; that he could neither desire, nor will, nor pursue his own happiness but for the possession of faculties which neces-

force in his own arguments, but to a want of proper feelings in his opponent.—I will add here a remark in some measure connected with the last mentioned observation, that the reason why men are generally more anxious about the opinion entertained of their understanding than their honesty is not so much that they really think this last of less consequence as that a man always believes himself to be the best judge of what passes in his own breast. He therefore thinks very little the better of himself for the good opinion of others. Indeed he considers their suffrages in this respect as a sort of impertinence at best, as implying some doubt upon the subject: and as to their direct censures, he will always find some feelings, or motives in his own mind, or some circumstances with which they are not acquainted, which will in his opinion make a total difference in the case. With respect to manners, and those moral qualities which are denominated *pleasing*, these again depend on the judgment of others; and we find the same jealousy of the opinions of others manifested with respect to these as with respect to our sense, wit, &c.

sarily give him an interest out of himself in the happiness of others; that personal identity neither does, nor can imply any positive communication between a man's future, and present self, that it does not give him a mechanical interest in his future being, that man when he *acts* is always absolutely independent of, uninfluenced by the feelings of the being *for whom he acts*, whether this be himself, or another; lastly, that all morality, all rational, and voluntary action, every thing undertaken with a distinct reference to ourselves or others must relate to the future, that is, must have those things for it's object which can only act upon the mind by means of the imagination, and must naturally affect it in the same manner, whether they are thought of in connection with our own future being, or that of others.

I have thought upon this subject so long, and it has sunk into my mind I may say so deeply in the single abstract form which

appears to me to explain almost every other view which can be taken of it, that I cannot without difficulty bring myself to consider it separately or in detail; and I am sure that many things will appear to others very imperfectly and obscurely expressed which appear to me evident truisms from having been accustomed to refer a number of particular observations, and subordinate trains of feeling, which I have forgotten, to that general form of reasoning. However I hope that the simplicity of the principle itself which must be either logically and absolutely true, or not at all will make it sufficiently intelligible if it be stated with tolerable accuracy.

All voluntary action, that is all action proceeding from a will, or effort of the mind to produce a certain event must relate to the future, or to those things, the existence of which is problematical, undetermined, and therefore capable of being affected by the means made use of with a

view to their production, or the contrary. But that which is future, which does not yet exist can excite no interest in itself, nor act upon the mind in any way but by means of the imagination. The direct primary motive, or impulse which determines the mind to the volition of any thing must therefore in all cases depend on the *idea* of that thing as conceived of by the imagination, and on the idea solely. For the thing itself is a non-entity. By the very act of it's being *willed*, it is supposed not to exist. It neither is any thing, nor can be the cause of any thing. We are never interested in the things themselves which are the real, ultimate, practical objects of volition: the feelings of desire, aversion, &c. connected with voluntary action are always excited by the ideas of those things before they exist. The true impulse to voluntary action can only exist in the mind of a being capable of foreseeing the consequences of things, of being

interested in them from the imaginary impression thus made upon his mind, and of making choice of the means necessary to produce, or prevent what he desires or dreads. This distinction must be absolute and universally applicable, if it is so at all. The motives by which I am impelled to the pursuit of my own welfare can no more be the result of a direct impression of the thing which is the object of desire, or aversion, of any positive communication between my present, and future feelings, or of a sort of hypostatical union between the interest of the being acting, and the being acted upon, than the motives by which I am interested in the welfare of others can be so. It is true I have a real, positive interest in my actual feelings which I have not in those of others. But actual pleasure, and pain are not the objects of voluntary action. It can be to no purpose, it is downright nonsense to will that which actually exists, which is impressed on my senses to exist, or not to exist, since it will exist neither more nor

less for my willing it, or not willing it. Our shrinking from that which gives us pain could not in any respect be considered as an act of volition, or reason, if we did not know that the same object which gives us pain will continue to give us pain while we remain in contact with it. The mere mechanical movement which generally accompanies much pain does not appear to me to have any thing more to do with self-love properly so called than the convulsive motions or distortions of the muscles caused by bodily disease.—In other words the object of volition is never the cause of volition. The motive, or internal impression impelling me to the pursuit of any object is by the supposition incompatible with any such interest as belongs to the actual enjoyment of any good, or to the idea of *possession*. The real object of any particular volition is always a mere physical consequence of that volition, since it is willed for that very reason that otherwise it would not exist at all, and since the ef-

fect which the mind desires to produce by any voluntary action must be subsequent to that action. It cannot therefore exert any power over my present volitions, and actions, unless we suppose it to act before it exists, which is absurd. For there is no faculty in the mind by which future impressions can excite in it a presentiment of themselves in the same way that past impressions act upon it by means of memory. When we say that future objects act upon the mind by means of the imagination, it is not meant that such objects exercise a real power over the imagination, but merely that it is by means of this faculty that we can foresee the probable or necessary consequences of things, and are interested in them.

I hardly know how to insist on a point so plain in itself that it cannot be made plainer by any kind of reasoning. I only wish to define the sense of the general position as strictly as I can, and to guard if possible against any mistake arising from am-

biguity of expression. For nothing but the certainty of absolute proof, and of having avoided every error of this sort can overcome the reluctance of the mind to admit fully and in all its consequences a distinction, which however simple in the abstract goes to the direct subversion of one of the most deeply rooted feelings of the human mind, namely that of the essential difference between the interest we have in promoting our own welfare by all the means in our power, and that which we take in promoting the welfare of others. Almost every one has a feeling that he has a real interest in the one, but that his interest in the other is merely imaginary; that his interest in the one is absolute and independent of himself, that it exists with the same force whether he feels it, or not, whether he pursues, or neglects it, that it is a part of himself, a bond from which he cannot free himself without changing his being, whereas the interest which he takes in the welfare of others is a voluntary in-

terest, taken up and dismissed at pleasure, and which exists no longer than he feels it ; that his interest in his own welfare, however distant, must affect *him* equally at present, since he is really the same being who is to enjoy, or suffer hereafter, but that with respect to the feelings of pleasure, or pain which another is to enjoy or suffer, he neither has any direct present interest, nor can have an indirect future interest in them : they are nothing to him. This is the common feeling ; and it is perhaps not less common to the most generous than to the most narrow and selfish minds : for a man of a generous disposition will take pleasure in sacrificing his own immediate interest considering it as a real sacrifice, and will be fond of exulting in his superiority to the gross influence of selfish motives. If however the distinction above insisted on with respect to voluntary action be any thing more than a play of words without meaning, the whole of this feeling must be utterly false, and ground-

less. For the mind can take, it can have, no interest in any thing, that is an object of practical pursuit, but what is strictly imaginary: it is absurd to suppose that it can have a *real* interest in any such object directly whether relating to ourselves, or others (this has been I trust sufficiently shewn already): neither can the reality of my future interest in any object give me a real interest in that object at present, unless it could be shewn that in consequence of my being the same individual I have a necessary sympathy with my future sensations of pleasure or pain, by which means they produce in me the same mechanical impulses as if their objects were really present. The puncture of a pin causing an irritation in the extremity of one of the nerves is sensibly felt along the whole extent of that nerve; a violent pain in any of the limbs disorders the whole frame; I feel at the same moment the impressions made on opposite parts of my body; the same conscious principle pervades every part of me, it

is in my hands, my feet, my eyes, my ears at the same time, or at any rate is immediately affected by whatever is impressed on all these, it is not confined to this, or that organ for a certain time, it has an equal interest in the whole sentient system, nothing that passes in any part of it can be indifferent to me. Here we have a distinct idea of a real individuality of person, and a consequent identity of interests. Till some such diffusive conscious principle can be shewn to exist, producing a real connection between my future sensations and present impulses, collecting, and uniting the different successive moments of my being in one general representative feeling of self-interest as the impressions made on different parts of my body are all conveyed to one common principle of thought, it is in vain to tell me that I have the same interest in my future sensations as if they were present, because I am the same individual. However nearly allied, however similar I may be to my future self, what-

for this there could be no desire, no pursuit of any thing. We cannot strive to obtain what we already possess: we cannot give to that which already exists a double reality. My real interest is not therefore something which I can handle, which is to be felt, or seen, it is not lodged in the organs of hearing, or taste, or smell, it is not the subject of any of the senses, it is not in any respect what is commonly understood by a real, substantial interest. On the contrary, it is fundamentally, and in it's origin and by it's very nature the creature of reflection, and imagination; and whatever can be made the subject of these, whether relating to ourselves or others, may also be the object of an interest powerful enough to become the motive of volition and action. If it should be asked then what difference it can make to me whether I pursue my own welfare, or entirely neglect it, what reason I can have to be at all interested in it, I answer that according to the selfish hypothesis I do not see any.

But if we admit that there is something in the very idea of good, or evil, which naturally excites desire or aversion, which is in itself the proper motive of action, which impels the mind to pursue the one and to avoid the other by a true moral necessity, then it cannot be indifferent to me whether I believe that any being will be made happy or miserable in consequence of my actions, whether this be myself or another. I naturally desire and pursue my own good (in whatever this consists) simply from my having an idea of it sufficiently warm and vivid to excite in me an emotion of interest, or passion; and I love and pursue the good of others, of a relative, of a friend, of a family, a community, or of mankind for just the same reason.

The scheme of which I have here endeavoured to trace the general outline differs from the common method of accounting for the origin of our affections in this, that it supposes what is personal or selfish in our

affections to be the growth of time and habit, and the principle of a disinterested love of good as such, or for its own sake without any regard to personal distinctions to be the foundation of all the rest. In this sense self-love is in its origin a perfectly disinterested, or if I may so say *impersonal* feeling. The reason why a child first distinctly wills or pursues his own good is not because it is *his*, but because it is *good*. For the same reason he prefers his own gratification to that of others not because he likes himself better than others, but because he has a more distinct idea of his own wants and pleasures than of theirs. Independently of habit and association, the strength of the affection excited is in proportion to the strength of the idea, and does not at all depend on the person to whom it relates except indirectly and by implication. A child is insensible to the good of others not from any want of goodwill towards them, or an exclusive attachment to self, but for want of knowing bet-

ter. Indeed he can neither be attached to his own interest nor that of others but in consequence of knowing in what it consists. It is not on that account the less natural for him to seek to obtain personal pleasure, or to avoid personal pain after he has felt what these are. We are not born benevolent, that is we are not born with a desire of we know not what, and good wishes for we know not whom: neither in this sense are we born with a principle of self-love, for the idea of self is also acquired. When I say therefore that the human mind is naturally benevolent, this does not refer to any innate abstract idea of good in general, or to an instinctive desire of general indefinite unknown good but to the natural connection between the idea of happiness and the desire of it, independently of any particular attachment to the person who is to feel it.

There is a great difference between the general love of good which implies a knowledge of it, and a general disposition to the

love of good, which does not imply any such thing. It is necessary to keep this distinction in our minds, or the greatest confusion will ensue. It is the general property of iron to be attracted by the loadstone, though this effect can only take place in consequence of the loadstone's being brought near enough to it, nor is any thing more meant by the assertion. The actual desire of good is not inherent in the mind of man, because it requires to be brought out by certain accessory objects or ideas, but the disposition itself, or property of the mind which makes him liable to be so affected by certain objects is inherent in him and a part of his nature, as sensibility to pleasure and pain will not be denied to be natural to man, though the actual feelings of pleasure and pain can only be excited in him by the impression of certain external objects. The love of my own particular good must precede that of the particular good of others, because I am acquainted with it first; the love of

particular must precede that of general good whether my own, or another's, or the general good of mankind for the same reason. I do not therefore originally love my own particular positive good as a portion of general good, or with a distinct reference in my mind to the good of the whole; for I have as yet no idea of nor any concern about the whole. But I love my own particular good as consisting in the first conception I have of some one desirable object for the same reason, for which I afterwards love any other known good whether my own, or another's, whether conceived of as consisting in one or more things, that is because it possesses that essential property common to all good, without which it would cease to be good at all, and which has a general tendency to excite certain given affections in my mind. I conceive that the knowledge of many different sorts of good must lead to the love or desire of all these, and that this knowledge of various good must be accom-

panied with an intermediate, composite, or indefinite idea of good, itself the object of desire, because retaining the same general nature: now this is an abstract idea. This idea will no doubt admit of endless degrees of indefiniteness according to the number of things, from which it is taken, or to which it is applied, and will be refined at last into a mere word, or logical definition. In this case it will owe all its power as a motive to action to habit, or association; for it is so immediately or in itself no longer than while it implies a sentiment, or real feeling representative of good, and only in proportion to the degree of force and depth which this feeling has.*

* Similarity has been defined to be *partial sameness*. Curve lines have a general resemblance, or analogy to one another as such. Does this resemblance then consist in their being partially the same? This may be said where the difference arises from drawing out the same sort of curve to a greater extent because by adding to the shorter curve I can make it equal to the other. But I cannot by adding any other line to an oval convert it into a circle, be-

The same objection evidently applies to the supposition either of an original prin-

cause these two sorts of curves can never coincide even in their smallest conceivable parts. It should seem then that their similarity is not to be deduced from partial sameness, or their having some one thing exactly the same, common to them both. But they have the same general nature as curves. True: but in what does this abstract identity consist? Is it not the same with similarity? So that we return to the same point from which we set out. I confess no light appears to me to be thrown on the subject by saying that it is partial identity. The same sort of reasoning is applicable to the question whether all good is not to be resolved into one simple principle, or essence, or whether all that is really good or pleasurable in any sensation is not the same identical feeling, an infusion of the same leaven of good, and that all the rest is perfectly foreign to the nature of good and is merely the form or vehicle in which it is conveyed to the mind. I cannot however persuade myself that our sensations differ only as to more, or less; or that the pleasure derived from seeing a fine picture, or hearing a fine piece of music, that the gratification derived from doing a good action and that which accompanies the swallowing of an oyster are in reality and at bottom the same pleasure. The liquor tastes of the vessel through which it passes.

ciple of general comprehensive benevolence, or of general and comprehensive self-love. They both suppose the mind to have attained an indefinite power of abstraction

It seems most reasonable to suppose that our feelings differ in their nature according to the nature of the objects by which they are excited, though not necessarily in the same proportion, as objects may excite very distinct ideas which have little or nothing to do with feeling. Why should there be only *two* sorts of feeling, pleasure and pain? I am convinced that any one who has reflected much on his own feelings must have found it impossible to refer them all to the same fixed invariable standard of good or evil, or by throwing away the mere husk and refuse without losing any thing essential to the feeling to arrive at some one simple principle, the same in all cases, and which determines by its quantity alone the precise degree of good or evil in any sensation. Some sensations are *like* others; this is all we know of the matter, and all that is necessary to form a class, or *genus*. The contrary method of reasoning appears to proceed on a supposition that things differing at all in kind must differ *in toto*, must be quite different from each other; so that a resemblance in kind must imply an absolute coincidence in part, or in as far as the things resemble one another.—See USHER on the Human Mind.

which is not it's natural state. Both the one and the other must be made up of many actual pleasures and pains, of many forgotten feelings and half-recollections, of hopes and fears and insensible desires : the one, that is, a sentiment of general benevolence can only arise from an habitual cultivation of the natural disposition of the mind to sympathize with the feelings of others by constantly taking an interest in those which we know, and imagining others that we do not know, as the other feeling of abstract self-interest, that is in the degree in which it generally subsists, must be caused by a long narrowing of the mind to our own particular feelings and interests, and a voluntary insensibility to every thing which does not immediately concern ourselves. It is this excessive attachment to our own good because it is ours, or for the sake of the abstract idea, which has no immediate connection with a real imagination of our own pleasures and pains, that I consider as a purely arti-

ficial feeling and as proper selfishness ; not that love of self which first or last is derived from a more immediate knowledge of our own good and is a natural consequence of the general love of good as such. So of our attachment to others ; for the general principle as exerted with respect to others admits of the same modifications from habit as when it has a merely selfish direction. Our affections settle upon others as they do upon ourselves : they pass from the thing to the person. " I hate to fill a book with things that all the world knows ;" or I might here give a very elaborate and exact account taken from twenty different authors of the manner in which this transition takes place. I do not see how ideas are the better for being often repeated. Suffice it to say that in all these cases of habitual attachment the motives to action do not depend so much on a real interest in the thing which is the object of pursuit as on a general disposition to serve that particular person occasioned by a pre-

vious habit of kind offices and by transferring the feeling of a real interest in a number of things conducive to that person's welfare to the abstract idea of his good in general. I leave it with the reader to apply this to the cases of friendship, family attachments, the effects of neighbourhood &c. and to consider the feuds, the partialities, the antipathies produced by these attachments, and the consequent unwillingness to attend to the natural feelings of compassion, humanity, and the love of justice : and then let him see if the same process, that is the ingrafting a general, or abstract interest on an habitual positive feeling will not account in the same way for the effects of self-love, without supposing this last as an exclusive principle to be natural to the human mind. For my own part, I believe that the cases are exactly parallel. Thus we may consider self-love as bearing the same relation to family affection as this does to the more general love of our neighbour, as the love of our neighbour does to

that of our country, or as the love of our country does to that of mankind. The love of mankind is here to be taken for an already given, definite, and to a certain degree *associated* feeling. The comparison might be instituted with a slight shade of difference between self-love, the love of a relative or friend, of a neighbour, and of an entire stranger. It is in proportioning our anxiety to promote the welfare of any of these to our sense of the use our assistance may be of, to use a well known phrase, *without respect of persons*, that what may be called the *natural* balance of our affections seems to consist. By the bye, this supposes that our insensibility to the feelings of others does not arise from an unwillingness to sympathise with them, or a habit of being stupidly engrossed by our own interests. Whether there may not be some higher principle of our general nature in conformity to which our sentiments and actions with respect to others should be voluntarily regulated, according

to the same rule by which gross animal appetite is subjected to rational self-interest, may be made the subject of a future inquiry. All that is necessary to my present purpose is to have made it appear that the principles of natural self-love and natural benevolence, of refined self-love and refined benevolence are the same; that if we admit the one, we must admit the other; and that whatever other principles may be combined with them, they must stand, or fall together.

It is not therefore my intention to puzzle myself or my readers with the intricacies of a debtor and creditor account between nature and habit. Whatever the force of habit may be, however subtle and universal its influence, it is not every thing, not even the principal thing. Before we plant, it is proper to know the nature of the soil, first that we may know whether it is good for any thing, secondly that we may know what it is good for. On these two questions will depend the

sort of cultivation we bestow upon it. After this is settled, it is idle to dispute how much of the produce is owing to cultivation, and how much to the nature of the soil. We should only be sure of having made the best use of it we can. But we cannot be sure of this till we know what it is naturally capable of. I will however lay down two general maxims on this subject which will not admit of much controversy. First, when there is no natural connection between any two things which yet have been supposed inseparable from a confused association of ideas, it is possible to destroy this illusion of the imagination by rational distinction, and consequently to weaken the force of the habitual feeling which is confirmed and rendered permanent by the conviction of the understanding. Thus, a principle of general self-interest has been supposed inseparable from individuality, because a feeling of immediate consciousness does essentially belong to certain individual impressions, and this feeling of

consciousness, of intimate sympathy, or of absolute self-interest has been transferred by custom and fancy together to the abstract idea of self. It is therefore of some use to separate these ideas, or to shew that there is no foundation in reason or the nature of things for a very strong prejudice which has been conceived to arise immediately out of them. The mind must be drawn together, must be contracted and shrunk up within itself by the mere supposition of this perpetual unity with itself and intense concentration of self-interest. Secondly, where this natural connection is wanting, that is, where the habitual connection of certain feelings with certain ideas does not arise from a predisposition in the mind to be affected by certain objects more than others, but from the particular direction which has been given to the mind or a more frequent association between those feelings and ideas, a contrary habit may be produced by giving the mind a different direction, and bestowing a greater

share of attention on other objects. It cannot be a matter of indifference then whether the faculty by which I am originally interested in the welfare of others is the same as that by which I am interested in my own welfare, or whether I am naturally incapable of feeling the least interest in the welfare of others except from it's indirect connection with my own. Habit is by it's nature to a certain degree arbitrary, and variable, the original disposition of the mind, it's tendency to acquire or persevere in this or that habit is alone fixed and invariable*. As however the force of previous habit is and always must be on the side

* It is a gross mistake to consider all habit as necessarily depending on association of ideas. We might as well consider the strength which is given to a muscle by habitual exertion as a case of the association of ideas. The strength, delicacy, &c. given to any feeling by frequent exercise is owing to habit. When any two feelings, or ideas are often repeated in connection, and the properties belonging to the one are by this means habitually transferred to the other, this is association.

Of selfish feelings, it is some consolation to think that the force of the habit we may oppose to this is seconded by reason, and the natural disposition of the mind, and that we are not obliged at last to establish generosity and virtue, "lean pensioners" on self-interest.*

* "Ainsi se forment les premiers liens qui l'unissent" [le jeune homme] "à son espèce. En dirigeant sur elle sa sensibilité naissante ne craignez pas qu'elle embrassera d'abord tous les hommes, & que ce mot de *genre-humain* signifiera pour lui quelque chose. Non, cette sensibilité se bornera premièrement à ses semblables, & ses semblables ne seront point pour lui des inconnus, mais ceux avec lesquels il a des liaisons, ceux que l'habitude lui a rendus chers, ou nécessaires, ceux qu'il voit évidemment avoir avec lui des manières de penser & de sentir communes, ceux qu'il voit exposés aux peines qu'il a souffertes, & sensibles aux plaisirs qu'il a goûtés ; ceux, en un mot, en qui l'identité de nature plus manifestée lui donne une plus grande disposition à aimer. Ce ne sera qu'après avoir cultivé son naturel en milles manières, après bien des réflexions sur ses propres sentimens, & sur ceux qu'il observera dans

I have thus far attempted to shew by a logical deduction that the human mind is naturally disinterested: I shall at present try to shew the same thing somewhat differently, and more in detail.

To suppose that the mind is originally determined in it's choice of good and rejection of evil solely by a regard to self is to suppose a state of *indifference* to both, which would make the existence of such a feeling as self-interest utterly impossible. If there were not something in the very notion of good, or evil which naturally made the one an object of immediate desire and the other of aversion, it is not

les autres, qu'il pourra parvenir à généraliser ses notions individuelles sous l'idée abstraite d'humanité & joindre à ses affections particulières celles qui peuvent l'identifier avec son espèce." *Emile*, t. 2, p. 192.—It is needless to add any thing on this passage. It speaks for itself.

"L'amour du genre-humain n'est autre chose en nous que l'amour de la justice," *Ibid.* p. 248,

easy to conceive how the mind should ever come to feel an interest in the prospect of obtaining the one or avoiding the other. It is great folly to think of deducing our desire of happiness and fear of pain from a principle of self-love, instead of deducing self-love itself from our natural desire of happiness and fear of pain. This sort of attachment to self could signify nothing more than a foolish complacency in our own idea, an idle dotage, and idolatry of our own abstract being; it must leave the mind indifferent to every thing else, and could not have any connection with the motives to action, unless some one should chuse to make it the foundation of a new theory of the love of life and fear of death. So long as the individual exists, and remains entire, this principle is satisfied. As to the manner in which it exists, by what objects it shall be affected, whether it shall prefer one mode of being to another, all this is left undetermined. If then by self-love be

meant a desire of one mode of being and aversion to another, or a desire of our own well-being, what is it that is to constitute this well-being? It is plain there must be something in the nature of the objects themselves which of itself determines the mind to consider them as desirable or the contrary previously to any reference of them to ourselves. They are not converted into good and evil by being impressed on our minds, but they affect our minds in a certain manner because they are essentially good or evil. How shall we reconcile this with supposing that the nature of those objects or their effect on the mind is entirely changed by their being referred to this or that person? I repeat it that self-interest implies certain objects and feelings for the mind to be interested in: to suppose that it can exist separately from all such objects, or that our attachment to certain objects is solely deduced from, and regulated by our attachment to self is plain, palpable nonsense.

Take the example of a child that has been burnt by the fire, and consequently conceives a dread of it. This dread we will say does not consist simply in the apprehension of the pain itself abstractedly considered, but together with this apprehension of pain he connects the idea (though not a very distinct one) of himself as about to feel it. Let us consider in what way the intervention of this idea can be supposed to cause or increase his dread of the pain itself. In the first place then it is evident that the fire actually burns the child, not because he is thinking of himself, or of it's burning him, but because it is the nature of fire to burn and of the child's hand to feel pain, and his dislike of the pain while it actually exists is the immediate, necessary and physical consequence of the *sense* of pain, surely not an indirect and reflex result of the child's love to himself, or after-consideration that pain is an evil as it affects himself. Again I apprehend that after the actual pain has

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should also be remembered as the constant principle of all our reasonings, that the impression which the child has of himself as the subject of future pain is never any thing more than an idea of imagination, and that he cannot possibly by any kind of anticipation feel that pain as a real sensation a single moment before it exists. How then are we to account for his supposed exclusive attachment to this ideal self so as to make that the real source of the dislike and dread which the apprehension of any particular pain to be inflicted on himself causes in the mind? There are two ways in which this may at first sight appear to be satisfactorily made out. The

at the end of this essay. In the mean time I wish the reader to be apprized, that I do not use the word *imagination* as contradistinguished from or opposed to reason, or the faculty by which we reflect upon and compare our ideas, but as opposed to sensation, or memory. It has been shewn above that by the word *idea* is not meant a merely abstract idea.

first is from the notion of personal identity; this has been considered already and will be again considered by and bye. The other is something as follows. The child having been burnt by the fire and only knowing what the pain of a burn is from his recollecting to have felt it himself, as soon as he finds himself in danger of it again, has a very vivid recollection of the pain it formerly gave him excited in his mind; and by a kind of sudden transposition substituting this idea in the place of his immediate apprehension, in thinking of the danger to which he is exposed he confounds the pain he is to feel with that which he has already actually felt, and in reality shrinks from the latter. I mean that the child strongly *recollects* that particular sort of pain as it has affected himself, and as it is not possible for him to have a recollection of it's effect on any one else, he only regards it as an evil in future in connection with the same idea, or as affecting himself, and is entirely indifferent to it as it is sup-

posed to affect any one else. Or in other words he remembers being burnt himself as an actual sensation, and he does not remember the actual sensations of any one but himself: therefore being able to trace back his present feelings to his past impressions, and struck with the extreme faintness of the one compared with the other, he gives way to his immediate apprehensions and imaginary fears only as he is conscious of, and dreads, the possibility of their returning into the same state of actual sensation again.

I do not deny that some such illusion of the imagination as I have here attempted to describe begins to take place very soon in the mind, and continues to acquire strength ever after from various causes. What I would contend for (and this is all that my argument requires) is that it is and can be nothing more than an illusion of the imagination, strengthening a difference in subordinate, indirect, collateral circumstances into an essential difference of kind.

The objection would indeed hold good if it were true that the child's imaginary sympathy with the danger of another must be derived as it were in a kind of direct line from that other's actual sense of past pain, or its immediate communication to his own senses, which is absurd. It is not supposed that the child can ever have felt the actual pains of another as his own actual pains, or that his sympathy with others is a real continuation and result of this original organic sympathy in the same way that his dread of personal pain is to be deduced from his previous consciousness of it. His sympathy with others is necessarily the result of his own past experience: if he had never felt any thing himself, he could not possibly feel for others. I do not know that any light would be thrown upon the argument by entering into a particular analysis of the faculty of imagination; nor shall I pretend to determine at what time this faculty acquires sufficient strength to enable the child to take a distinct interest

in the feelings of others. I shall content myself with observing that this faculty is necessary to the child's having any apprehension or concern about his own future interest, or that of others; that but for this faculty of multiplying, varying, extending, combining, and comparing his original passive impressions he must be utterly blind to the future and indifferent to it, insensible to every thing beyond the present moment, altogether incapable of hope, or fear, or exertion of any kind, unable to avoid or remove the most painful impressions, or to wish for or even think of their removal, to withdraw his hand out of the fire, or to move his lips to quench the most burning thirst; that without this faculty of conceiving of things which have not been impressed on his senses and of inferring like things from like, he must remain totally destitute of foresight, of self-motion, or a sense of self-interest, the passive instrument of undreaded pain and unsought-for pleasure, suffering and enjoying without

resistance and without desire just as long as the different outward objects continued to act upon his senses, in a state of more than idiot imbecility; and that with this faculty enabling him to throw himself forward into the future, to anticipate unreal events and to be affected by his own imaginary interest, he must necessarily be capable in a greater or less degree of entering into the feelings and interests of others and of being consequently influenced by them. The child (by the time that his perceptions and actions begin to take any thing of a consistent form so that they can be made the subject of reasoning) being supposed to know from experience what the pain of a burn is, and seeing himself in danger a second time is immediately filled with terror, and strives either by suddenly drawing back his hand, catching hold of something, or by his cries for assistance to avoid the danger to which he is exposed. Here then his memory and senses present him with nothing more than certain external objects in

themselves indifferent, and the recollection of extreme pain formerly connected with the same or similar objects. If he had no other faculties than these, he must stop here. He would see and feel his own body moved rapidly towards the fire, but his apprehensions would not outrun it's actual motion: he would not think of his nearer approach to the fire as a consequence of the force with which he was carried along, nor dream of falling into the fire till he found it actually burning him. Even if it were possible for him to foresee the consequence, it would not be an object of dread to him; because without a reasoning imagination he would not and could not connect with the painted flame before him the idea of violent pain which the same kind of object had formerly given him by it's actual contact. But in fact he *imagines* his continued approach to the fire till he falls into it; by his imagination he attributes to the fire a power to burn, he conceives of an ideal-self endued with a power to feel, and by the force of

imagination solely anticipates a repetition of the same sense of pain which he before felt. If then he considers this pain which is but an ideal sensation impressed on an ideal being as an object of real, present, necessary and irresistible interest to him, and knowing that it cannot be avoided but by an immediate exertion of voluntary power, makes a sudden and eager effort to avoid it by the first means he can think of, why are we to suppose that the apprehension of the same pain to be inflicted on another whom he must believe to be endowed with the same feelings, and with whose feelings he must be capable of sympathizing in the same manner as with his own imaginary feelings, should not affect him with the same sort of interest, the same sort of terrour, and impel him to the same exertions for his relief? *

* I take it for granted that the only way to establish the selfish hypothesis is by shewing that our own interest is in reality brought home to the mind as a motive to action by some means or other by

Because, it is said, in his own case there is a natural deception, by which he confounds his future being with his past being and the idea of a future imaginary pain with the recollection of a past conscious pain. At any rate, this must be unconsciously: if the sense of present danger acts so powerfully on his mind as to bring back the recollection of a past sensation, and set that before him in the place of the real object of his fear, so that, while he is endeavouring to avoid an immediate danger, he is in fact thinking only of past suffering without his

which that of others cannot possibly affect it. This is unavoidable, unless we ascribe a particular genius of selfishness to each individual which never suffers his affections to wander from himself for a moment; or shall we suppose that a man's attachment to himself is because he has a long nose or a short one, because his hair is black or red, or from an unaccountable fancy for his own name, for all these make a part of the individual, and must be deemed very weighty reasons by those who think it self-evident that a man must love himself because he is himself?

perceiving this confusion of ideas, surely the same thing must take place in a less degree with respect to others. If it be thought necessary for him, before he can seek his own future interest, to confound it with his past interest by the violent transition of an immediate apprehension into the stronger recollection of an actual impression, then I say that by the same sort of substitution he will identify his own interest with that of others, whenever a like obvious danger recalls forcibly to his mind his former situation and feelings, the lenses of memory being applied in the one case to excite his sympathy and in the other to excite personal fear, the objects of both being in themselves equally imaginary and according to this hypothesis both perfectly indifferent. But I should contend that the assumption here made that the direct and proper influence of the imagination is insufficient to account for the effects of personal fear, or of no force at all in itself is without any foundation. For there is

no reason to be shewn why the ideas of the imagination should not be efficient, operative, as well as those of memory, of which they are essentially compounded. Their substance is the same. They are of one flesh and blood. The same vital spirit animates them both. To suppose that the imagination does not exert a direct influence over human actions is to reject the plain inference from the most undoubted facts without any motive for so doing from the nature and reason of things. This notion could not have gained ground as an article of philosophical faith but from a perverse restriction of the use of the word *idea* to abstract ideas, or external forms, as if the essential quality in the feelings of pleasure, or pain must entirely evaporate in passing through the imagination; and again from associating the word *imagination* with merely fictitious situations and events, that is, such as never will have a real existence, and as it is supposed never will, and which consequent-

ly do not admit of action.* Besides, though it is certain that the imagination is strengthened in it's operation by the indirect assistance of our other faculties, yet as it is this faculty which must be the immediate spring and guide of action, unless we attribute to it an inherent, independent power over the will so as to make it bend to every change of circumstances or probability of advantage, and a power at the same time of controuling the blind impulses of associated mechanical feelings and of making them subservient to the accomplishment of some particular purpose, in other words without a power of willing a given *end* for itself, and of employing the means immediately necessary to the production of that end, because they are perceived to be so, there could be neither volition, nor action, neither rational fear nor steady pursuit of any object, neither wisdom nor folly, generosity, or selfishness : all would be left to the accidental concur-

* See the last note but one.

rence of some mechanical impulse with the immediate desire to obtain some very simple object, for in no other case can either accident or habit be supposed likely to carry any rational purpose into effect. To return however to what I have said above in answer to this objection, it is evident that all persons are more inclined to compassionate those pains and calamities in others by which they have been affected themselves, which proves that the operation of that principle, even supposing it to be the true one, is not confined to selfish objects. Our sympathy is always directly excited in proportion to our knowledge of the pain, and of the disposition and feelings of the sufferer. Thus with respect to ourselves we are little affected by the apprehension of physical pain which we have never felt and therefore can know little of; and we have still less sympathy with others in this case. Our incredulity and insensibility with respect to what others frequently suffer from the tooth-ache and other inci-

dental disorders must have been remarked by every one, and are even ludicrous from the excess to which they are carried. Give what account you will of it, the effect is the same;—our self-love and sympathy depend upon the same causes, and constantly bear a determinate proportion to each other, at least in the same individual. The same knowledge of any pain, which increases our dread of it, makes us more ready to feel for others who are exposed to it. When a boy I had my arm put out of joint, and I feel a kind of nervous twitching in it to this day whenever I see any one with his arm bound up in consequence of a similar accident. This part of my subject has been so well detailed by Smith and others that it is needless to insist on it farther. There are certain disorders which have a disgusting appearance, that shock and force attention by their novelty; but they do not properly excite our sympathy, or compassion, as they would do if we had ever been subject to them ourselves.

Children seem to sympathize more naturally with the outward signs of passion in others without inquiring into the particular causes by which it is excited, whether it is that their ideas of pain are more gross and simple, therefore more uniform and more easily substituted for each other, or that grown-up persons, having a greater number of ideas and being oftener able to sympathize with others from knowing what they feel, habitually make this knowledge the foundation of their sympathy.* In gen-

* The general clue to that ænigma, the character of the French, seems to be that their feelings are very imperfectly modified by the objects exciting them. That is, the difference between the several degrees and kinds of feeling in them does not correspond as much as it does in most other people with the different degrees and kinds of power in the external objects. They want neither feeling nor ideas in the abstract; but there seems to be no connection in their minds between the one and the other. Consequently their feelings want compass and variety, and whatever else must depend on the "building up of our feelings through the imagi-

ral it seems that those physical evils, which we have actually experienced, and which

nation." The feelings of a Frenchman seem to be all one feeling. The moment any thing produces a change in him, he is thrown completely out of his character, he is quite beside himself. This is perhaps in a great measure owing to their quickness of perception, They do not give the object time to be *thoroughly* impressed on their minds, their feelings are roused at the first notice of it's approach, and if I may so express myself, fairly run away from the object. Their feelings do not grapple with the object. The least stimulus is sufficient to excite them and more is superfluous, for they do not wait for the impression, or stop to inquire what degree or kind it is of. There is not resistance sufficient in the matter to receive those sharp incisions, those deep, marked, and strongly rooted impressions, the traces of which remain for ever. From whatever cause it proceeds, the sensitive principle in them does not seem to be susceptible of the same modification and variety of action as it does in others; and certainly the outward forms of things do not adhere to, do not wind themselves round their feelings in the same manner. For any thing that appears to the contrary, objects might be supposed to have no direct communication with the

from their nature must produce nearly the same effect upon every one, must excite

internal sense of pleasure or pain, but to act upon it through some intermediate, very confined organ, capable of transmitting little more than the simple impulse. But the same thing will follow, if we suppose the principle itself to be this very organ, that is, to want comprehensiveness, elasticity, and plastic force. (It is difficult to express this in English; but there is a French word, *ressort*, which expresses it exactly. This is possibly owing to their feeling the want of it; as there is no word in any other language to answer to the English word, *comfort*, I suppose, because the English are the most uncomfortable of all people). It will rather follow from what has been here said than be inconsistent with it that the French must be more sensible of minute impressions and slight shades of difference in their feelings than others, because having, as is here supposed, less real variety, a narrower range of feeling, they will attend more to the differences contained within that narrow circle, and so produce an artificial variety. In short their feelings are very easily set in motion and by slight causes, but they do not go the whole length of the impression, nor are they capable of combining a great variety of complicated actions to correspond with the distinct

a more immediate and natural sympathy than those which depend on sentiment or

characters and complex forms of things. Hence they have no such thing as poetry. This however must not be misunderstood. I mean then that I never met with any thing in French that produces the same kind of feeling in the mind as the following passage. If there is any thing that belongs even to the same class with it, I am ready to give the point up.

Antony. Eros, thou yet behold'st me.

Eros. Ay, noble Lord.

Ant. Sometimes we see a cloud that's Dragonish,

A vapour sometimes like a Bear, or Lion,
A tower'd Citadel, a pendant Rock,
A forked Mountain, or blue Promontory
With Trees upon't, that nod unto the World
And mock our Eyes with Air. Thou hast seen
these Signs,

They are black Vesper's Pageants.

Eros. Ay, my Lord.

Ant. That which is now a Horse, even with a
Thought

The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct
As Water is in Water.

Eros. It does, my Lord.

moral causes. It is however neither so complete nor durable, as these last being

Ant. My good Khave, *Eros*, now thy Captain is

Even such a body, &c.

It is remarkable that the French, who are a lively people and fond of shew and striking images; should be able to read and hear with such delight their own dramatic pieces, which abound in nothing but general maxims, and vague declamation, never embodying any thing, and which would appear quite tedious to an English audience, who are generally considered as a dry, dull, plodding people, much more likely to be satisfied with formal descriptions and grave reflections. This appears to me to come to the same thing that I have said before, namely, that it is characteristic of the French that their feelings let go their hold of things almost as soon as the impression is made. Except sensible impressions therefore (which have on that account more force, and carry them away without opposition while they last) all their feelings are general; and being general, not being marked by any strong distinctions, nor built on any deep foundation of inveterate associations, one thing serves to excite them as well as another, the name of the general class to which any feeling belongs, the words *plea-*

the creatures of imagination appeal more strongly to our sympathy, which is itself

sure, charming, delicious, &c. convey just the same meaning, and excite the same kind of emotion in the mind of a Frenchman, and at the same time do this more readily than the most forcible description of real feelings, and objects. The English on the contrary are not so easily moved with words, because being in the habit of retaining individual images and of brooding over the feelings connected with them, the mere names of general classes, or (which is the same thing) vague and unmeaning descriptions or sentiments must appear perfectly indifferent to them. Hence the French are delighted with Racine, the English (I mean some of them) admire Shakespear. Rousseau is the only French writer I am acquainted with (though he by the bye was not a Frenchman) who from the depth of his feelings, without many distinct images, produces the same kind of interest in the mind that is excited by the events and recollections of our own lives. If he had not true genius, he had at least something which was a very good substitute for it. The French generalise perpetually, but seldom comprehensively: they make an infinite number of observations, but have never discovered any great principle. They immediately perceive the analogy between a number

an act of the imagination, than mere physical evils can ever do, whether they relate to ourselves or others. Our sympathy with physical evil is also a more unpleasant feeling, and therefore submitted to with more reluctance. So that it is necessary to take another circumstance into the account in judging of the quantity of our

of facts of the same class, and make a general inference, which is done the more easily, the fewer particulars you trouble yourself with ; it is in a good measure the art of forgetting. The difficult part of philosophy is, when a number of particular observations and contradictory facts have been stated, to reconcile them together by finding out some other distinct view of the subject, or collateral circumstance, applicable to all the different facts or appearances, which is the true principle from which when combined with particular circumstances they are all derived. Opposite appearances are always immediately incompatible with each other, and cannot therefore be deduced from the same immediate cause, but must be accounted for from a combination of different causes, the discovery of which is an affair of comprehension, and not of mere abstraction.

sympathy, besides the two above mentioned, namely, the nature of the pain or its fitness to excite our sympathy. This makes no difference in the question.

To say that the child recollects the pain of being burnt only in connection with his own idea, and can therefore conceive of it as an evil only with respect to himself, is in effect to deny the existence of any such power as the imagination. By the same power of mind which enables him to conceive of a past sensation as about to be re-excited in the same being, namely, himself, he must be capable of transferring the same idea of pain to a different person. He *creates* the object, he pushes his ideas beyond the bounds of his memory, and senses in the first instance, and he does no more in the second. If his mind were merely passive in the operation, he would not be busy in anticipating a new impression, but would still be dreaming of the old one. It is of the very nature of the imagination to change the order in which things have been im-

pressed on the senses, and to connect the same properties with different objects, and different properties with the same objects; to combine our original impressions in all possible forms, and to modify these impressions themselves to a very great degree. Man without this would not be a rational agent: he would be below the dullest and most stupid brute. It must therefore be proved in some other way that the human mind cannot conceive of or be interested in the pleasures or pains of others because it has never felt them.

The most subtle way of putting this objection is to represent the tendency of the child's apprehension of danger to deter him from going near the fire as caused not simply by the apprehension or idea itself, which they say would never have strength enough for a motive to action, but by his being able to refer that idea to an actual sensation in his own mind, and knowing that with respect to himself it will pass into the same state of serious reality again, if he ex-

poses himself to the same danger. Now here we have nothing but a reflection on a reflection. It is supposed that the direct idea of a terrible and well-known pain has no effect at all upon the mind, but that the idea of this idea as about to be converted into, or succeeded by the pain itself in the same conscious being will immediately excite the strongest efforts to prevent it. Certainly the near expectation of the object of your dread actually realized to the senses strengthens the fear of it; but it strengthens it through the imagination. Just as the knowing that a person whom you wished anxiously to see and had not seen for many years was in the next room would make you recall the impression of their face or figure almost with the same vividness and reality as if they were actually present. The force then with which the mind anticipates future pain in connection with the idea of continued consciousness can only tend to produce voluntary action by making the idea stronger: but it could not have

this effect at all if it were not of the nature of all pain when foreseen by the mind to produce a tendency that way, that is to excite aversion, and a will to prevent it, however slight this may sometimes be. The sophism which lurks at the bottom of this last objection seems to be the confounding the idea of future pain as the cause or motive of action with the after-reflection on that idea as a positive thing, itself the object of action. Finding in many cases that the first apprehension and momentary fear of danger was gone by, but that the reason for avoiding it still remained the same, the mind would be easily led to seek for the true cause of action in something more fixed and permanent than the fleeting ideas of remote objects, and to require that every object whether of desire or aversion should have some stronger hold on the individual than its momentary effect on his imagination before it became an object of serious pursuit, or the contrary. But in rejecting the ideas of things as them-

selves the ultimate grounds and proper objects of action, and referring the mind to the things themselves as the only solid basis of a rational and durable interest, what do we do but go back to the first direct idea of the object, which as it represents that object is as distinct from any secondary reflection on, or oblique consciousness of, itself as an absolute thing, the object of thought, as a sensation can be different from an idea, or a present impression from a future one. There is nothing in the foregoing theory which has any tendency to overturn the fundamental distinctions between truth and falsehood, or the common methods of judging what these are: all the old boundaries and land-marks remain just where they were. It does not surely by any means follow because the reality of future objects can only be judged of by the mind, that therefore it has no power of distinguishing between the probable consequences of things, and what can never happen, that it is to take every

impulse of will or fancy for truth, or because future objects cannot act upon the mind from without, that therefore our ideas cannot have any reference to, or properly represent those objects, or any thing external to the mind, but must consist entirely in the conscious contemplation of themselves.

There is another feeling in a great measure the same with the former, but distinguishable from it and still more strongly connected with a sense of self-interest, namely, that of continued personal identity. This has been already treated of: I shall here resume the question once for all, as it is on this that the chief stress of the argument lies. The child seeing himself in danger of the fire does not think of his present and future self as two distinct beings, but as one and the same being: he as it were *projects* himself forward into the future, and identifies himself with his future being. He knows that he shall feel his own future pleasures and pains, and

that he must therefore be as much interested in them as if they were present. In thinking of the future, he does not conceive of any change as really taking place in himself, or of any thing intermediate between his present and future being, but considers his future sensations as affecting that very same conscious being in which he now feels such an anxious and unavoidable interest. We say that the hand which the child snatches back from the fire is the same hand which but for his doing so would the next moment be exposed to the most excessive pain. But this is much more true of that inward conscious principle which alone connects the successive moments of our being together, and of which all our outward organs are but instruments, subject to perpetual changes both of action and suffering. To make the difference of time the foundation of an essential distinction and complete separation between his present and future being as if this were the only thing to be attended to is to op-

pose an unmeaning sophism to plain matter of fact, since mere distance of time does *not* destroy individuality of consciousness. He is the same conscious being now that he will be the next moment, or the next hour, or a month or a year hence. His interests as an individual as well as his being must therefore be the same. At least this must be the case as long as he retains the consciousness of his past impressions connecting them together in one uniform or regular train of feeling: for the interruption of this sense of continued identity by sleep, inattention or otherwise seems from it's being afterwards renewed to prove the point more clearly, as it seems to shew that there is some deep inward principle which remains the same in spite of all particular accidental changes.

The child does no doubt consider himself as the same being, or as directly and absolutely interested in his own welfare, as far as he can distinctly foresee the consequences of things to himself. But this

very circumstance of his identifying himself with his future being, of feeling for this imaginary self as if it were incorporated with his actual substance, and weighed upon the pulses of his blood is itself the strongest instance that can be given of the force of the imagination, which the advocates of the selfish hypothesis would represent as a faculty entirely powerless.

No one, I should think, will be disposed seriously to maintain that this future imaginary self is, by a kind of metaphysical transubstantiation, virtually embodied in his present being, so that his future impressions are indirectly communicated to him before-hand. For whatever we may imagine, or believe concerning the substance itself, or elementary principle in which thought is supposed to reside, it is plain that that principle as acted upon by external objects, or modified by particular actual thoughts and feelings (which alone be the motives of action, or can influence the mind in this, or that direction) is

perpetually changing; and it is also plain that the changes which it has to undergo at any time can have no possible effect on those which it has previously undergone, which may be the cause indeed but cannot be the effect of subsequent changes. In this sense the individual is never the same for two moments together. What is true of him at one time is never (that we know of) exactly and particularly true of him at any other time. It is idle to say that he is the same being generally speaking, that he has the same general interest. For he is also a man in general; and this argument would prove that he has a general interest in whatever concerns humanity. Indeed the terms mean nothing as applied to this question. The question is whether the individual is the same being in such sort or manner as that he has an equal, absolute interest in every thing relating to himself, or that his future impressions affect him as much and impel him to action with the same mechanical force as if they were

actually present. This is so far from being true that his future impressions do not exert the smallest influence over his actions, they do not affect him mechanically in any degree. The catechism of this philosophy would run thus. You are necessarily interested in your future sensations? Yes. And why so? Because I am the same being. What do you mean by *the same being*? The same being is the same individual, that is, one who has the same interests, the same feelings, the same consciousness, so that whatever affects him at any one time must extend to his whole existence. He must therefore be at all times interested in it alike. Do you then feel your future sensations before they really exist? No. How then, if you do not feel them, can you be affected by them? Because as the same individual, &c. That is, by the very supposition the pain which the child is to suffer does not exist, of course he does not feel it, nor can he be moved, affected or interested by it as if it

did: and yet in the same breath, by a shrewd turn of logic it is proved that as he is the same being, he must feel, be interested in and affected by it as much as he ever will. But then it will as shrewdly follow that withth is implication he is not the same being, for he cannot be affected in the same manner by an object before it is impressed on his senses that he is afterwards; and the fear or imaginary apprehension of pain is a different thing from the actual perception of it. There is just the same difference between feeling a pain yourself and believing that another will feel it.

I do request the reader to bear it in mind throughout the whole of this reasoning that when I say that the child *does not* feel, that he *is not* interested in his future sensations, and consider this as equivalent to his *having* no real or personal interest in them, I mean that he *never* feels or can be affected by them before-hand, that he is always necessarily cut off from every

kind of communication with them, that they cannot possibly act upon his mind as motives to action; or excite in him any kind of impulse in any circumstances or any manner: and I conceive that it is no great stretch of speculative refinement to insist that without some such original faculty of being immediately affected by his future sensations more than by those of others, his relation to his future self, whatever that may be, cannot be made the foundation of his having a real positive interest in his future welfare which he has not in that of others. A general, or abstract, or reflex interest in any object implies either a previous positive interest in that object, or a natural capacity in the mind to be affected by it in the manner given. Thus I may be said to pursue any object from a general interest in it, though it excites no interest or emotion in my mind at the time, when I do this from habit, or when the impression has been so often repeated as to have produced a mechanical tendency to the

pursuit of the object, which has no need of any new impulse to excite it. Or the same thing may be said with reference to my general nature as a voluntary agent. This implies that the object, in which I am supposed to be interested without being sensible of it, is in itself *interesting* to me, that it is an object in which I can and must necessarily be interested, the moment it is known to me; that I am interested generally in that whole class of objects, and may be said to be interested in this inclusively. To go farther than this, and say that the mind as the representative of truth is or ought to be interested in things as they are really and truly interesting in themselves, without any reference to the manner in which they immediately affect the individual, is to destroy at once the foundation of every principle of selfishness, which supposes that all objects are good or bad, desirable or the contrary solely from their connection with self. But I am tired of repeating the same thing so often; for "as

to those that will not be at the pains of a little thought, no multiplication of words will ever suffice to make them understand the truth or rightly conceive my meaning."*

To return. Even if it were possible to establish some such preposterous connection between the same individual, as that, by virtue of this connection, his future sensations should be capable of transmitting their whole strength and efficacy to his present impulses, and of clothing ideal motives with a borrowed reality, yet such is the nature of all sensation, or absolute existence as to be incompatible with voluntary action. How should the reality of my future interest in any object be (by anticipation) the reason of my having a real interest in the pursuit of that object at present, when if it really existed I could no longer pursue it. The feelings of desire, aversion, &c. connected with voluntary action must

* Berkeley's Essay on Vision.

always be excited by the idea of the object before it exists, and must be totally inconsistent with any such interest as belongs to actual suffering or enjoyment.* The interest belonging to any sensation or real object as such, or which arises as one may say from the final absorption of the idea in the object cannot have any relation to an active or voluntary interest which necessarily implies the disjunction of these two things: it cannot therefore be the original, the parent-stock, the sole and absolute foundation of an interest which is defined by its connection with voluntary action.—Still it will be said that however difficult it may be to explain in what this consists, there is a principle of some sort or other which constantly connects us with ourselves, and makes each individual the same person distinct from every one else. And certainly if I did not think it possible to account satisfactorily for the origin of

* See page 22, and the following pages.

the idea of self, and the influence which that idea has on our actions without loosening the foundation of the foregoing reasonings, I should give them up without a question, as there is no reasoning which can be safely opposed against a common feeling of human nature left unexplained, and without shewing in the clearest manner the grounds from which it may have arisen. I shall proceed to state (as far as is necessary to the present argument) in what the true notion of personal identity appears to me to consist ; and this I believe it will be easy to shew depends entirely on the continued connection which subsists between a man's past and present feelings and not, *vice versâ*, on any previous connection between his future and his present feelings, which is absurd and impossible.

Every human being is distinguished from every other human being, both numerically, and characteristically. He must be numerically distinct by the sup-

position: otherwise he would not be another individual, but the same. There is however no contradiction in supposing two individuals to possess the same absolute properties: but then these original properties must be differently modified afterwards from the necessary difference of their situations, or we must suppose them both to occupy the same relative situation in two distinct systems corresponding exactly with each other. In fact every one is found to differ essentially from every one else, if not in original properties, in the circumstances and events of their lives and consequent ideas. In thinking of a number of individuals, I conceive of them all as differing in various ways from one another as well as from myself. They differ in size, in complexion, in features, in the expression of their countenances, in age, in the events and actions of their lives, in situation, in knowledge, in temper, in power. It is this perception or apprehension of their real differences that first

enables me to distinguish the several individuals of the species from each other, and that seems to give rise to the most general idea of individuality, as representing first positive number, and secondly the sum of the differences between one being and another as they really exist in a greater or less degree in nature, or as they would appear to exist to an impartial spectator, or to a perfectly intelligent being. But *I* am not in reality more different from others than any one individual is from any other individual; neither do I in fact suppose myself to differ really from them otherwise than as they differ from each other. What is it then that makes the difference greater *to me*, or that makes me feel a greater difference in passing from my own idea to that of any one else than in passing from the idea of an indifferent person to that of any one else? Neither my existing as a separate being, nor my differing from others is of itself sufficient to constitute personality, or give

me the idea of self, since I might perceive others to exist, and compare their actual differences without ever having this idea.

Farther, individuality expresses not merely the absolute difference, or distinction between one individual and another, but also a relation, or comparison of that individual with itself, whereby we affirm that it is in some way or other the same with itself or one thing. In one sense it is true of all existences whatever that they are the same with themselves, that is they are what they are and not something else. Each thing is itself, it is that individual thing and no other, and each combination of things is that combination and no other. So also each individual is necessarily the same with himself, or in other words that combination of ideas which represents any individual person is that combination of ideas and not a different one. This is the only true and absolute identity which can be affirmed of any being; which it is plain does not arise from a comparison

of the different parts composing the general idea one with another, but each with itself, or all of them taken together with the whole. I cannot help thinking that some idea of this kind is frequently at the bottom of the perplexity which is felt by most people who are not metaphysicians (not to mention those who are) when they are told that the man is not the same with himself, their notion of identity being that he is the same with himself in as far as he is positively different from every one else. They compare his present existence with the present existence of others, and his continued existence with the continued existence of others. Thus when they say that the man is the same being in general, they do not mean that he is the same at twenty that he is at sixty, but their general idea of him includes both these extremes, and therefore the same man, that is collective idea, is both the one and the other. This however is but a rude logic. Not well understanding the process of dis-

tinguishing the same individual into different metaphysical sections to compare, collate, and set one against the other, (so awkwardly do we at first apply ourselves to the analytic art!) to get rid of the difficulty, the mind produces a *double* individual part real and part imaginary, or repeats the same idea twice over, in which case it is a contradiction to suppose that the one does not correspond exactly with the other in all its parts. There is no other absolute identity in the case.

All individuals (or all that we name such) are aggregates, and aggregates of dissimilar things. Here then the question is not how we distinguish one individual from another, or a number of things from a number of other things, which distinction is a matter of absolute truth, but how we come to confound a number of things together, and consider many things as the same, which cannot be strictly true. This idea must therefore relate to such a connection between a number of things as determines the mind to consider them as one whole,

each thing in that whole having a much nearer and more lasting connection with the rest than with any thing else not included in it, so that the degree of connection between the parts after all requires to be determined by annexing the name of the thing, that is collective idea, signified. (The same causes that determine the mind to consider a number of things as the same individual must of course imply a correspondent distinction between them and other things, not making part of that individual. The eye is not the same thing as the ear, it is a contradiction to call it so. Yet both are parts of the same body, which contains these and infinite other distinctions. The reason of this is that all the parts of the eye have evidently a distinct nature, a separate use, a greater mutual dependence on one another than on those of the ear, at the same time that the connection between the eye and ear as well as the rest of the body is still very great, compared to their connection with any other body of the same kind, which is none

at all. Similarity is in general but a subordinate circumstance in determining this relation. For the eye is certainly more like the same organ in another individual than the different organs of sight and hearing are like one another in the same individual. Yet we do not, in making up the imaginary individual, associate our ideas according to this analogy, which of itself would answer no more purpose than the things themselves would, so separated and so reunited, but we think of them in that order in which they are mechanically connected together in nature, because it is on this order that depends their power of mutually acting and reacting on each other, of acting conjointly upon other things or of being acted upon by them. To give an instance which just occurs to me. Suppose there are two gold-headed canes standing together in the corner of the room. I of course consider each of them as the same cane. This is not from the similarity of the gold to the wood. But the two gold-heads together would not

if taken off at all answer the purpose of a cane, and the two canes together would be more than I should want. Nor is it simply from the contiguity of the parts, (for the canes themselves are supposed to touch one another) but from their being so united that by moving any part of one of them, I of necessity move the whole. The closest connection between my ideas is formed by that relation of things among themselves, which is most necessary to be attended to in making use of them, the common concurrence of many things to some given end: for example, my idea of the walking-stick is defined by the simplicity of the action necessary to wield it for that particular purpose. However, it seems hardly possible to define the different degrees or kinds of identity in the same thing by any general rule. Thus we say the same tree, the same forest, the same river, the same field, the same country, the same world, the same man, &c. The nature of the thing will best point out the

sense in which it is said to be the same.*

* The sum of the matter is this. Individuality may relate either to absolute unity, to the identity, or similarity of the parts of any thing, or to an extraordinary degree of connection between things neither the same nor similar. This last alone in fact determines the positive use of the word, at least with respect to man, and other organized beings. (Indeed the term is hardly ever applied to other things in common language.) When I speak of the difference between one individual and another, this must refer ultimately to the want of such connection between them, or to my perceiving that a number of things are so connected as to have a mutual and intimate dependence on one another, making one individual, and that they are so *disconnected* with a number of other things as not to have the least habitual dependence upon or influence over them, which makes them two distinct individuals. As to the other distinctions between one individual and another, namely those of number and properties, the first of these subsists as necessarily between the parts of the individual, as between one individual and another, and the second frequently subsists in a much greater degree between those parts, than between different individuals. Two distinct individuals can certainly never be the

—I am not the same thing, but many different things. To insist on absolute simplicity of nature as essential to individuality would be to destroy all individuality: for it would

same: that is, supposing the number of parts in each individual to be as 10, 10 can never make 20. But neither can 10 ever be made into an unit; so that we should have ten individuals instead of one by insisting on the absolute distinction of numbers. When I say therefore that one individual differs from another, I must be understood by implication to mean, in some way in which the parts of that individual do *not* differ from each other or not by any means in the same degree. The mind is however extremely apt to fasten on the distinctions of number and properties where they co-exist with the other distinction, and almost loses sight of those distinctions between things that have a very close connection with each other. When therefore we include the distinctions of number and properties in our account of the difference between one individual and another, this can only be true in an absolute sense, and not if it be meant to imply that the same distinctions do not exist in the same individual.—This account is altogether very crude and unsatisfactory.

lead to the supposition of as many distinct individuals, as there are thoughts, feelings, actions, and properties in the same being. Each thought would be a separate consciousness, each organ a different system. Each thought is a distinct thing in nature; and many of my thoughts must more nearly resemble the thoughts of others than they do my own sensations, for instance, which nevertheless are considered as a part of the same being. As to the continued identity of the whole being, that is the continued resemblance of my thoughts to my previous thoughts, of my sensations to my previous sensations and so on, this does not by any means define or circumscribe the individual, for we may say in the same manner that the species also is going on at the same time, and continues the same that it was. It is necessary to determine what constitutes the same individual at some given moment of time before we can say that he *continues* the same. Neither does the relation of cause and ef-

fect determine the point: the father of the child is not the child, nor the child the father. In this case there is an obvious reason to the contrary: but we make the same distinction where a proper succession takes place and the cause is entirely lost in the effect. We should hardly extend the idea of identity to the child before it has life, nor is the fly the same with the caterpillar. Here we again recur to likeness as essential to identity.

But to proceed to a more particular account of the origin of our idea of self, which is this relation of a thinking being to itself. This can only be known in the first instance by a consciousness of what passes in our own minds. I should say then that personality does not arise either from the being this, or that, from the identity of the thinking being with itself at different times or at the same time, or still less from being unlike others, which is not at all necessary to it, but from the peculiar

connection which subsists between the different faculties and perceptions of the same conscious being, constituted as man is, so that as the subject of his own reflection or consciousness the same things impressed on any of his faculties produce a quite different effect upon *him* from what they would do if they were impressed in the same way on any other being. Personality seems to be nothing more than conscious individuality: it is the power of perceiving that you are and what you are from the immediate reflection of the mind on it's own operations, sensations, or ideas. It cannot be affected in the same direct manner by the impressions and ideas existing in the minds of others: otherwise they would not be so many distinct minds, but one and the same mind; for in this sense the same mind will be that in which different ideas and faculties have this immediate communication with or power of acting and reacting upon each other. If to this we add the relation of such an inward conscious principle to a

certain material substance, with which it has the same peculiar connection and intimate sympathy, this combination will be the same person.

The visible impression of a man's own form does not convey to him the idea of personality any more than that of any one else; because as objects of sight they are both equally obvious and make the same direct impression on the eye; and the internal perception is in both cases equally incommunicable to any other being. It is the impinging of other objects against the different parts of our bodies, or of the body against itself so as to affect the sense of touch, that extends (though perhaps somewhat indirectly) the feeling of personal identity to our external form. The reason of which is that the whole class of tangible impressions, or the feelings of heat and cold, of hard and soft, &c. connected with the application of other material substances to our own bodies can only be produced by our immediate contact with

them, that is, the body is necessarily the instrument by which these sensations are conveyed to the mind, for they cannot be conveyed to it by any impression made on the bodies of others; whereas, as an object of sight or where the body in general acts from without on that particular organ, the eye, the impression which it excites in the mind can affect it no otherwise than any similar impression produced by any other body must do. Afterwards no doubt the visible image comes in to confirm and give distinctness to the imperfect conclusions of the other sense*.

* I remember a story somewhere in the Arabian Nights of a man with a silver thigh. Why may not a fable serve for an illustration as well as any thing else? Metaphysics themselves are but a dry romance. Now suppose this thigh to have been endowed with a power of sensation and to have answered every other purpose of a real thigh. What difference would this make in its outward appearance either to the man himself or to any one else? Or how by means of sight would he know it to be his

It is by comparing the knowledge that I have of my own impressions, ideas, feelings, powers, &c. with my knowledge of the same or similar impressions, ideas, &c. in others, and with the still more imperfect conception that I form of what passes in their minds when this is supposed to be essentially different from what passes in my own; that I acquire the general notion of self. If I had no idea of what passes in the minds of others, or if my ideas of their feelings and perceptions were perfect representations, *i. e.* mere conscious repetitions of them, all proper personal distinction would be lost either in pure self-love, or in perfect universal sympathy. In the one case it would be impossible for

thigh, more than it was? It would still look just like what it did, a silver thigh and nothing more. It's impression on the eye would not depend on it's being a *sensible* substance, on it's having life in it, or being connected with the same conscious principle as the eye, but on it's being a *visible* substance, that is having extension, figure, and colour.

me to prefer myself to others as I should be the sole object of my own consciousness; and in the other case I must love all others as myself, because I should then be nothing more than part of a whole, of which all others would be equally members with myself. I will here add once more that this distinction subsists as necessarily and completely between myself and those who most nearly resemble me as between myself and those whose character and properties are the very opposite of mine: because it does not relate to the difference between one being and another, or between one object and another considered absolutely or in themselves, but solely to the difference of the manner and the different degrees of force and certainty, with which, from the imperfect and limited nature of our faculties, the same or different things affect us as they act immediately upon ourselves, or are supposed to act upon others. Indeed the distinction becomes marked and intelligible in proportion as the objects or impres-

sions are intrinsically the same, as then it is impossible to mistake the true principle on which it is founded, namely the want of any direct communication between the feelings of one being and those of another. This will shew why the difference between ourselves and others must appear greater to us than that between other individuals, though it is not really so.

Considering mankind in this two-fold relation, as they are to themselves, or as they appear to one another, as the subjects of their own thoughts, or the thoughts of others, we shall find the origin of that wide and absolute distinction which the mind feels in comparing itself with others to be confined to two faculties, viz. *sensation*, or rather consciousness*, and *memory*. The operation of both these faculties is of

* To avoid an endless subtlety of distinction I have not here given any account of consciousness in general: but the same reasoning will apply to both.

a perfectly exclusive and individual nature; and so far as their operation extends (but no farther) is man a personal, or if you will, a selfish being. The sensation excited in me by a piece of red-hot iron striking against any part of my body is simple, absolute, terminating in itself, not representing any thing beyond itself, nor capable of being represented by any other sensation or communicated to any other being. The same sensation may indeed be excited in another by the same means, but this sensation does not imply any reference to, or consciousness of mine: there is no communication between my nerves, and another's brain, by means of which he can be affected with my sensations as I am myself. The only notice or perception which another can have of this sensation in me or which I can have of a similar sensation in another is by means of the imagination. I can form an imaginary idea of that pain as existing out of myself: but I can only feel it as a sensation when it is ac-

tually impressed on myself. Any impression made on another can neither be the cause nor object of sensation to me. The impression or idea left in my mind by this sensation, and afterwards excited either by seeing iron in the same state, or by any other means is properly an idea of memory. This idea necessarily refers to some previous impression in my own mind, and can only exist in consequence of that impression: it cannot be derived from any impression made on another. I do not *remember* the feelings of any one but myself. I may remember the objects which must have caused such or such feelings in others, or the outward signs of passion which accompanied them: these however are but the recollection of my own immediate impressions, of what I saw or heard; and I can only form an idea of the feelings themselves after they have ceased, as I must do at the time by means of the imagination. But though we should take away all power of imagination from the human mind, my own feelings must

leave behind them certain traces, or representations of themselves retaining the same properties, and having the same immediate connection with the conscious principle. On the other hand if I wish to anticipate my own future feelings, whatever these may be, I must do so by means of the same faculty, by which I conceive of those of others whether past or future. I have no distinct or separate faculty on which the events and feelings of my future being are impressed beforehand, and which shews as in an enchanted mirror to me and me alone the reversed picture of my future life. It is absurd to suppose that the feelings which I am to have hereafter should excite certain correspondent impressions, or presentiments of themselves before they exist, or act mechanically upon my mind by a secret sympathy. I can only abstract myself from my present being and take an interest in my future being in the same sense and manner, in which I can go out of myself entirely and enter into the minds

and feelings of others. In short there neither is nor can be any principle belonging to the individual which antecedently gives him the same sort of connection with his future being that he has with his past, or that reflects the impressions of his future feelings backwards with the same kind of consciousness that his past feelings are transmitted forwards through the channels of memory. The size of the river as well as its taste depends on the water that has already fallen into it. It cannot roll back its course, nor can the stream next the source be affected by the water that falls into it afterwards. Yet we call both the same river. Such is the nature of personal identity.* If this account be true (and

* Suppose a number of men employed to cast a mound into the sea. As far as it has gone, the workmen pass backwards and forwards on it, it stands firm in its place, and though it recedes farther and farther from the shore, it is still joined to it. A man's personal identity and self-interest have just the same principle and extent, and can

for my own part the only perplexity that crosses my mind in thinking of it arises from the utter impossibility of conceiving of the contrary supposition) it will follow that those faculties which may be said to constitute self, and the operations of which

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reach no farther than his actual existence. But if a man of a metaphysical turn, seeing that the pier was not yet finished, but was to be continued to a certain point and in a certain direction, should take it into his head to insist that what was already built and what was to be built were the same pier, that the one must afford as good footing as the other, and should accordingly walk over the pier-head on the solid foundation of his metaphysical hypothesis—he would argue a great deal more ridiculously, but not a whit more absurdly than those who found a principle of absolute self-interest on a man's future identity with his present being. But say you, the comparison does not hold in this, that the man *can* extend his thoughts (and that very wisely too) beyond the present moment, whereas in the other case he cannot move a single step forwards. Grant it. This will only shew that the mind has wings as well as feet, which of itself is a sufficient answer to the selfish hypothesis.

convey that idea to the mind, draw all their materials from the past and present. But all voluntary action must relate solely and exclusively to the future. That is, all those impressions or ideas with which selfish, or more properly speaking, personal feelings must be naturally connected are just those which have nothing at all to do with the motives of action.

If indeed it were possible for the human mind to alter the present or the past, so as either to recal what was done, or to give it a still greater reality, to make it exist over again and in some more emphatical sense, then man might with some pretence of reason be supposed naturally incapable of being impelled to the pursuit of any *past* or *present* object but from the mechanical excitement of personal motives. It might in this case be pretended that the impulses of imagination and sympathy are of too light, unsubstantial, and remote a nature to influence our real conduct, and that nothing is worthy of the concern of a wise

man in which he has not this direct, unavoidable, and homefelt interest. This is however too absurd a supposition to be dwelt on for a moment. I do not *will* that to be which already exists as an object of sense, nor that to have been which has already existed, and is become an object of memory. Neither can I will a thing not to be which actually exists, or that which has really existed not to have been. The only proper objects of voluntary action are (by necessity) future events: these can excite no possible interest in the mind but by means of the imagination; and these make the same direct appeal to that faculty whether they relate to ourselves, or others, as the eye receives with equal directness the impression of our own external form, or that of others.

It will be easy to perceive in this manner how notwithstanding the contradiction involved in the supposition of a general, absolute self-interest, the mind comes to feel a deep and habitual conviction of the truth

of this opinion. Feeling in itself a continued consciousness of its past impressions, it is naturally disposed to transfer the same sort of identity and consciousness to the whole of its being, as if whatever is said generally to belong to *itself* must be inseparable from its very existence. As our actual being is constantly passing into our future being, and carries this internal feeling of consciousness along with it, we seem to be already identified with our future being in that permanent part of our nature, and to feel by anticipation the same sort of necessary sympathy with our future selves, that we know we shall have with our past selves. We take the tablets of memory, reverse them, and stamp the image of self on that, which as yet possesses nothing but the name. It is no wonder then that the imagination constantly outstripping the progress of time, when its course is marked out along the strait unbroken line of individuality, should confound the necessary differences of things, and confer

on my future interests a reality, and a connection with my present feelings which they can never have. The interest which is hereafter to be felt by this continued conscious being, this indefinite unit, called *me*, seems necessarily to affect me in every part of my existence. In the first place, we abstract the successive modifications of our being, and particular temporary interests into one simple nature, and general principle of self-interest, and then make use of this nominal abstraction as an artificial medium to compel those particular actual interests into the same close affinity and union with each other, as different lines meeting in the same centre must have a mutual communication with each other.— On the other hand, as I always remain perfectly distinct from others, the interest which I take in their past or present feelings being (like that which I take in their future feelings) never any thing more than the effect of imagination and sympathy, the same illu-

sion and preposterous transposition of ideas cannot take place with regard to them, namely the confounding a physical impulse with the rational motives of action. Indeed the uniform nature of my feelings with respect to others (my interest in their welfare having always the same source; sympathy) seems by analogy to confirm the supposition of a similar simplicity in my relation to myself, and of a positive, natural, absolute interest in whatever relates to that self, not confined to my actual existence, but extending over the whole of my being. Every sensation that I feel, or that afterwards recurs vividly to my memory strengthens the sense of self, which increased strength in the mechanical feeling is transferred to the general idea, and to my remote, future, imaginary interest: whereas our sympathy with the feelings of others being always imaginary, having no sensible interest, no restless mechanical impulse to urge it on, the ties by which we are bound to others hang loose upon us, the interest we

welfare seems to be something
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is however another consideration
 (not the principal) to be taken into
 account in explaining the origin and
 growth of our selfish feelings, arising out
 of the necessary constitution of the human
 mind, and not founded like the former in a
 mere arbitrary association of ideas. There
 is naturally no essential difference between
 the motives by which I am impelled to the
 pursuit of my own good and those by
 which I am impelled to pursue the good of
 others: but though there is not a difference
 in kind, there is one in degree. I know
 better what my future feelings will be than
 what those of others will be in the like case.
 I can apply the materials of memory with
 less difficulty and more in a mass in mak-
 ing out the picture of my future pleasures

and pains, without frittering them away or destroying their original sharpnesses, in short I can imagine them more plainly and must therefore be more interested in them. This facility in passing from the recollection of my past impressions to the imagination of my future ones makes the transition almost imperceptible, and gives to the latter an apparent reality and *presentness* to the imagination, so that the feelings of others can never be brought home to us to the same degree. It is chiefly from this greater readiness and certainty with which we can look forward into our own minds than out of us into those of other men, that that strong and uneasy attachment to self which comes at last (in most minds) to overpower every generous feeling takes its rise, not, as I think I have shewn, from any natural hardness of the human heart, or necessary absorption of all its thoughts and purposes in an exclusive feeling of self-interest.

It confirms the account here given, that

we always feel for others in proportion as we know from long acquaintance what the nature of their feelings is, and that next to ourselves we have the strongest attachment to our immediate relatives and friends, who from this intercommunity of feelings and situations may more truly be said to be a part of ourselves than from the ties of blood. Moreover a man must be employed more continually in providing for his own wants and pleasures than those of others. In like manner he is employed in providing for the immediate welfare of his family and connections much more than in providing for the welfare of those, who are not bound to him by any positive ties. And we consequently find that the attention, time and pains bestowed on these several objects give him a proportionable degree of anxiety about, and attachment to his own interest and that of those connected with him, but it would be absurd to conclude that his affections are therefore circumscribed by a natural necessity within

certain limits which they cannot pass, either in the one case, or in the other. This general connection between the pursuit of any object and our habitual interest in it will also account for the well-known observation that the affection of parents to children is the strongest of all others, frequently even overpowering self-love itself. This fact is however inconsistent with the supposition that the social affections are all of them ultimately to be deduced from association, or the repeated connection of the idea of some other person with immediate selfish gratification. If this were the case, we must feel the strongest attachment to those from whom we had received, instead of those to whom we had done the greatest number of kindnesses, or where the greatest quantity of selfish enjoyment had been associated with an indifferent idea. Junius has remarked, that friendship is not conciliated "by the power of conferring benefits, but the equality with which they are received, and may be returned."

I have hitherto purposely avoided saying any thing on the subject of our physical appetites, and the manner in which they may be thought to affect the principle of the foregoing reasonings. They evidently seem at first sight to contradict the general conclusion which I have endeavoured to establish, as they all of them tend either exclusively or principally to the gratification of the individual, and at the same time refer to some future or imaginary object as the source of this gratification. The impulse which they give to the will is mechanical; and yet this impulse, blind as it is, constantly tends to, and coalesces with the pursuit of some rational end. That is, here is an end aimed at, the desire and regular pursuit of a known good, and all this produced by motives evidently mechanical, and which never impel the mind but in a selfish direction. It makes no difference in the question whether the active impulse proceeds directly from the desire of positive enjoyment, or a wish to get rid of some

positive uneasiness. I should say then that setting aside what is of a purely physical, or (for aught I can tell) instinctive nature in the case, the influence of appetite over our volitions may be accounted for consistently enough with the foregoing hypothesis from the natural effects of a particularly irritable state of bodily feeling, rendering the idea of that which will heighten and gratify it's susceptibility of pleasurable feeling, or remove some painful feeling proportionably vivid, and the object of a more vehement desire than can be excited by the same idea, when the body is supposed to be in a state of indifference, or only ordinary sensibility to that particular kind of gratification. Thus the imaginary desire is sharpened by constantly receiving fresh supplies of pungency from the irritation of bodily feeling, and it's direction is at the same time determined according to the bias of this new impulse, first indirectly by having the attention fixed on our own immediate sensations ; secondly, because that

particular gratification, the desire of which is increased by the pressure of physical appetite, must be referred primarily and by way of distinction to the same being, by whom the want of it is felt, that is, to myself. As the actual uneasiness which appetite implies can only be excited by the irritable state of my own body, so neither can the desire of the correspondent gratification subsist in that intense degree which properly constitutes appetite, except when it tends to relieve that very same uneasiness by which it was excited. As in the case of hunger. There is in the first place the strong mechanical action of the nervous and muscular systems co-operating with the rational desire of my own relief, and forcing it it's own way. Secondly, this state of uneasiness continues to grow more and more violent, the longer the relief which it requires is withheld from it:—hunger takes no denial, it hearkens to no compromise, is soothed by no flattery, tired out by no delay. It grows more importunate

every moment, it's demands become louder the less they are attended to. The first impulse which the general love of personal ease receives from bodily pain will give it the advantage over my disposition to sympathize with others in the same situation with myself; and this difference will be increasing every moment, till the pain is removed. Thus if I at first either through compassion or by an effort of the will am regardless of my own wants, and wholly bent upon satisfying the more pressing wants of my companions, yet this effort will at length become too great, and I shall be incapable of attending to any thing but the violence of my own sensations, or the means of alleviating them. It is plain with respect to one of our appetites, I mean the sexual, where the gratification of the same passion in another is the means of gratifying our own, that our physical sensibility stimulates our sympathy with the desires of the other sex, and on the other hand this feeling of mutual sympathy increases the

physical desires of both. This is indeed the chief foundation of the sexual passion, though I believe that its immediate and determining cause depends upon other principles not to be here lightly touched on*. It would be easy to shew from many things that mere appetite (generally at least in reasonable beings) is but the fragment of a self-moving machine, but a sort of half-organ, a subordinate instrument even in the accomplishment of its own purposes; that it does little or nothing without the aid of another faculty to inform and direct it. There are several striking examples of this given by Rousseau in relating the progress of his own passions. (See the first volume of his Confessions.) Before the impulses of appetite can be converted into the regular pursuit of a given object, they must first be communicated to the understanding, and modify the will through that. Consequently as the desire of the ultimate gra-

* See Preface to Wordsworth's Poems.

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selfishness in the human mind, or whether it is not naturally disinterested. Now the effects of appetite are so far from being any confirmation of the first supposition, that we are even oftener betrayed by them into actions contrary to our own well-known, clear, and lasting interest than into those which are injurious to others. The "short-lived pleasure" and the "lasting woe" fall to the lot of the same being.—I will give one more example and then have done. A man addicted to the pleasures of the bottle is less able to govern this propensity after drinking a certain quantity and feeling the actual pleasure and state of excitement which it produces, than he is to abstain entirely from it's indulgence. When once the liquor gets into his head, to use the common phrase, the force which it gives to his predominant feeling gets the better of every other idea, and he from that time loses all power of self-controul. Both before, and after this, however, the same feeling of actual excitement, which

urges him on, makes him enter more cordially into the convivial dispositions of his companions, and a man is always earnest that others should drink as he becomes unwilling to desist himself.

To add that there is but one instance in which appetite hangs about a man as a perpetual clog and dead-weight upon the reason, namely the sexual appetite, and that here the selfish habit produced by this constant state of animal sensibility seems to have a direct counterpoise given to it by nature in the mutual sympathy of the sexes. Quere also whether this general susceptibility is not itself an effect of an irritable imagination exerted on that particular subject. (See Notes to the Essay on the Inequality of Mankind.) I hope this will be sufficient to break the force of the objection as above stated, and may perhaps furnish a clue to a satisfactory account of the subject itself.

I do not think I should illustrate the foregoing reasoning so well by any thing I

could add on the subject as by relating the manner in which it first struck me.—There are moments in the life of a solitary thinker which are to him what the evening of some great victory is to the conqueror and hero—milder triumphs long remembered with truer and deeper delight. And though the shouts of multitudes do not hail his success; though gay trophies, though the sounds of music, the glittering of armour, and the neighing of steeds do not mingle with his joy, yet shall he not want monuments and witnesses of his glory, the deep forest, the willowy brook, the gathering clouds of winter, or the silent gloom of his own chamber, “faithful remembrancers of his high endeavour, and his glad success,” that, as time passes by him with unreturning wing, still awaken the consciousness of a spirit patient, indefatigable in the search of truth, and the hope of surviving in the thoughts and minds of other men.—I remember I had been reading a speech which Minabeau

(the author of the System of Nature) has put into the mouth of a supposed atheist at the Last Judgment; and was afterwards led on by some means or other to consider the question whether it could properly be said to be an act of virtue in any one to sacrifice his own final happiness to that of any other person or number of persons, if it were possible for the one ever to be made the price of the other. Suppose it were my own case—that it were in my power to save twenty other persons by voluntarily consenting to suffer for them: why should I not do a generous thing, and never trouble myself about what might be the consequence to myself the Lord knows when?—The reason why a man should prefer his own future welfare to that of others is that he has a necessary, absolute interest in the one which he cannot have in the other, and this again is a consequence of his being always the same individual; of his continued identity with himself. The difference I thought was this, that however insensible I

may be to my own interest at any future period, yet when the time comes I shall feel differently about it. I shall then judge of it from the actual impression of the object, that is truly and certainly; and as I shall still be conscious of my past feelings and shall bitterly regret my own folly and insensibility, I ought as a rational agent to be determined now by what I shall then wish I had done when I shall feel the consequences of my actions most deeply and sensibly. It is this continued consciousness of my own feelings which gives me an immediate interest in whatever relates to my future welfare, and makes me at all times accountable to myself for my own conduct. As therefore this consciousness will be renewed in me after death, if I exist again at all—But stop—As I must be conscious of my past feelings to be myself, and as this conscious being will be myself; how if that consciousness should be transferred to some other being? How am I to know that I am not imposed upon by a

—But that is ridi-
 culous. I will have no other self
 than this very con-
 sciousness. This self may be
 shared by different beings as
 it is proper to endue with
 consciousness, which if it can be
 shared by one instance, may
 be shared by a hundred others. Am I
 equally myself? Am I
 equally the fate of all? Or
 am I some one of them in
 representative and other
 respects? To be determined in my
 favor, I saw an end put to
 the absolute self-interest,
 which I saw plainly that
 my own feelings which
 were on of my continued
 existence did not extend to what
 might never be, that
 my self must be confined
 between my past and
 my future respect to my fu-

ture feelings or interests they could have no communication with, or influence over my present feelings and interests merely because they were future, that I shall be hereafter affected by the recollection of my past feelings and actions, and my remorse be equally heightened by reflecting on my past folly and late-earned wisdom whether I am really the same being, or have only the same consciousness renewed in me, but that to suppose that this remorse can react in the reverse order on my present feelings, or give me an immediate interest in my future feelings, before it exists, is an express contradiction in terms. It can only affect me as an imaginary idea, or an idea of truth. But so may the interests of others; and the question proposed was whether I have not some real, necessary, absolute interest in whatever relates to my future being in consequence of my immediate connection with myself, independently of the general impression which all positive ideas have on my mind. How then can

this pretended unity of consciousness which is only reflected from the past, which makes me so little acquainted with the future that I cannot even tell for a moment how long it will be continued, whether it will be entirely interrupted by or renewed in me after death, and which might be multiplied in I don't know how many different beings and prolonged by complicated sufferings without my being any the wiser for it, how I say can a principle of this sort identify my present with my future interests, and make me as much a participater in what does not at all affect me as if it were actually impressed on my senses? It is plain as this conscious being may be decomposed, entirely destroyed, renewed again, or multiplied in a great number of beings, and as, whichever of these takes place, it cannot produce the least alteration in my present being, that what I am does not depend on what I am to be, and that there is no communication between my

future interests, and the motives by which my present conduct must be governed. This can no more be influenced by what may be my future feelings with respect to it than it will then be possible for me to alter my past conduct by wishing that I had acted differently. I cannot therefore have a principle of active self-interest arising out of the immediate connection between my present and future self, for no such connection exists, or is possible. I am what I am in spite of the future. My feelings, actions, and interests must be determined by causes already existing and acting, and are absolutely independent of the future. Where there is not an intercommunity of feelings, there can be no identity of interests. My personal interest in any thing must refer either to the interest excited by the actual impression of the object which cannot be felt before it exists, and can last no longer than while the impression lasts, or it may refer to the particular manner in

~~is not~~ ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~mechanically~~ affected by the *idea*
~~of~~ ~~my~~ ~~own~~ ~~impressions~~ in the absence of the
~~idea~~. I can therefore have no proper
~~personal~~ interest in my future impres-
~~sions~~ since neither my ideas of future ob-
~~jects~~ nor my feelings with respect to them
~~can~~ be excited either directly or indirectly by
~~the~~ impressions themselves or by any ideas
~~or~~ feelings accompanying them without a
~~complete~~ transposition of the order in
~~which~~ effects follow one another in na-
~~ture~~.—The only reason for my preferring my
~~future~~ interest to that of others must arise
~~from~~ my anticipating it with greater warmth
~~of~~ present imagination. It is this greater
~~liveliness~~ and force with which I can en-
~~ter~~ into my future feelings, that in a manner
~~identifies~~ them with my present being ;
~~and~~ this notion of identity being once
~~formed~~, the mind makes use of it to
~~strengthen~~ its habitual propensity, by giv-
~~ing~~ to personal motives a reality and ab-
~~solute~~ truth which they can never have.
~~Hence~~ it has been inferred that my real, sub-

stantial interest in any thing must be derived in some indirect manner from the impression of the object itself, as if that could have any sort of communication with my present feelings, or excite any interest in my mind but by means of the imagination, which is naturally affected in a certain manner by the prospect of future good or evil.

R E M A R K S

ON

THE SYSTEMS OF

HARTLEY AND HELVETIUS.

I FIND I owe the reader two explanations, one relating to the association of ideas, from which Hartley and other writers have deduced the origin of all our affections, even of self-love itself, the other relating to the mechanical principle of self-interest stated by Helvetius.* It was my first in-

* I do not mean that Helvetius was the first who conceived the hypothesis here spoken of (for I do not think he had wit enough to invent even an ingenious absurdity) but it was through him I believe that this notion has obtained it's present popularity, and in France particularly it has had, I am certain, a very general influence on the national character. It was brought forward in the most forcible manner by the writers of the last century, and it is expressly stated, and clearly answered by Bishop Butler in the Preface to his Sermons at the Rolls' Chapel. After Berkeley's Essay on Vision, I do

tention to have given at the end of the preceding essay a general account of the nature of the will, and to have tried at least to dig down a little deeper into the foundation of human thoughts and actions than I have hitherto done. At present I have laid aside all thoughts of this kind as I have neither time nor strength for such an undertaking; and the most that I shall attempt is to point out such contradictions and difficulties in both these systems as may lessen the weight of any objections drawn from them against the one I have stated, and leave the argument as above explained in it's original force.

To begin with the doctrine of association.

The general principle of association as laid down by Hartley is this, that if any given sensation, idea, or motion be for a number of times either accompanied, or immediately followed by any other sensa-

not know of any work better worth the attention, of those who would learn to think than these same metaphysical Discourses preached at the Rolls' Chapel.

tion, idea, or muscular motion, the recurrence of the one will afterwards mechanically give rise to that of the other. By *immediately followed* I mean *closely followed*: for suppose A to be associated with B, and B with C, A will not only produce B and C intermediately, but will in time produce C immediately without the intervention of B. A mathematician would perhaps here ask how this can ever be actually proved: for though it seems reasonable to suppose that the influence of A if it extend to B should also go a little farther to the next idea, and join indirectly and secretly with B in producing C, yet as the connection between A and B must be stronger than that between A and C, if in any case the connection between the former become gradually so weakened as to dissolve of itself, the latter must fail of course, and therefore C can never follow A, except when B stands equivocally between them. This question would go upon the supposition, that B

always be impressions of ex-
 kind and degree of strength,
 case. A, though more re-
 yet be more intimately
 than with B from several
 the greater strength
 from similarity, &c.
 by the bye that the effect of
 depends on the conjunction of
 forces, and principles of ac-
 simply determined by the
 proximity or remoteness be-
 with respect to time or
 if a person has done a num-
 actions, which have been ob-
 pleasure by another, this ap-
 be afterwards associated
 of the person, and the recol-
 benevolent disposition which
 those actions remains when
 manner in which it was exert-
 First, because the feel-
 pal or strongest circumstance.

Secondly, the association of our ideas with moral qualities is evidently assisted, and forced into the same general direction by the simplicity and uniform character of our feelings compared with the great variety of things and actions, which makes it impossible to combine such a number of distinct forms under the same general notion.

What I have here stated is I believe the whole extent and compass of the law of association. It has been said that this principle is of itself sufficient to account for all the phenomena of the human mind, and is the foundation of every rule of morality. My design is to shew that both these assertions are absolutely false, or that it is an absurdity, and an express contradiction to suppose that association is either the only mode of operation of the human mind, or that it is the primary and most general principle of thought and action.—But first of all it will be necessary to consider the account which Hartley himself has given of

this principle as depending on the mechanical communication of motion from the seat of one idea to that of the next and so on, according to a certain local arrangement of these ideas in the brain, as certainly if thought is carried on in this manner, that is, by means of vibrations, it is difficult to conceive of it's being produced by any other means than the accidental justling of these one against the other, which is what is meant by association.

There are two or three general observations which will be of use in conducting us through this inquiry. In the first place it appears to me certain that every impression or idea is produced in such a manner as to affect or be perceived by the whole brain at once, or in immediate succession, that is, before the action ceases. For if we suppose a certain degree of resemblance to subsist between two ideas, the perception of the one will always be sure to excite a recollection of the other, if it is at

all worth remembering. I mean for instance if a person should in some strange place suddenly see an excellent picture of their dead father or mother, I suppose there can be no doubt but the picture would call up the memory of the person whom it resembled with an instantaneous and irresistible force. Now this could not always happen but on the supposition that the visible impression of the picture was conveyed to every part of the brain, as otherwise it must be a mere accident whether it would ever come in contact with that part of it, where that distinct set of recollections was lodged which it was calculated to excite. It is evident that the force with which the impression of the picture acts upon the mind is subsequent to the recollection of the likeness and not the cause of it, since the picture of any other person would act physically upon my mind in the same manner. It may be worth remarking here that the strength, or habitual or recent recurrence of any idea

makes it more easily recollected. I might see a picture of a person whom I had not often seen and whose face did not at all interest me at the time without recollecting whose it was, though the likeness should be never so great. The frequent recurrence of the imitation on the other hand if it has had it's usual effect renders the recollection of the object less certain or at any rate less vivid every time, till at last what remains of it is entirely lost, and confounded with the imitation *. Again, it is also certain that the proximity of the parts of an object to one another, or of one object to another object is of itself a sufficient and necessary reason for their recollection in succession or together, in the same order in which they were actually perceived. Unless this were the case, we could never recollect any thing at all, as every object

* No doubt the picture is always looked at with a very different feeling from what it would have been, if the idea of the person had never been distinctly associated with it.

is necessarily composed of parts, and those again of others without end. Now how are we to reconcile this with the first-mention inference that thought is uniformly and necessarily communicated to every part of the thinking substance? If thought is produced in such a manner, that the shock is immediately felt in those parts nearest the seat of the individual impression, and is indeed sure to excite thought in them without ever affecting the remote parts of the brain in the same manner, it seems strange that it's own communication over the whole brain should be so rapid and certain, while the force with which it is sent along (as implied in it's confined power of producing other thoughts by simple impulse) is so unequal.

The reader will I hope have the good-nature to pardon some inconsistencies of expression in treating of this subject. In order to disprove the theory which I am combating I must first assume it's truth, and go on talking of *the seats of our ideas*,

the different parts of the brain, the communication of thought by impulse, &c. till it is clearly shewn that the hypothesis to which all these expressions refer is in reality good for nothing.

Though I do not see my way out of the dilemma here stated, and find I have engaged in an undertaking I am not equal to, I think I have seen enough of the difficulties belonging to it to be able to reject the Hartleian hypothesis as directly incompatible with a fair and comprehensive view of the subject. For, first, it has been shewn above that every idea, or perception is communicated to all the parts of the brain, or to the whole sentient principle, whatever this is supposed to be. Or the same thing might be shewn from the nature of consciousness*. That there is some faculty of

* Consciousness is here and all along (where any possible stress is laid upon it) used in it's etymological sense, as literally the same with *conscientia*, the knowing or perceiving many things by a simple act.

this sort which opens a direct communication between our ideas, so that the same thinking principle is at the same time conscious of different impressions, and of their relations to each other, is what hardly any person who attends in the least to what passes in his own mind and is not determined to reason himself out of his senses will I should think deny. In other words, when any two ideas or parts of an idea (for there is no difference in this respect) as those of two lighted candles, or the top and bottom of the same candle are impressed at the same time on different parts of the brain, before these ideas can be perceived in connection as making parts of a whole, or can be accompanied with a consciousness of each other's existence, we must suppose them mutually to affect the seats of action belonging to each other, or else to be united in some common principle of thought, the same comparing power being exerted upon both. Without supposing their distinct impressions thus to meet in

the same point, it seems a thing impossible to conceive how any comparison can take place between different impressions existing at the same time, or between our past, and present impressions, or ever to explain what is meant by saying, *I perceive such and such objects, I remember such and such events*, since these different impressions are evidently referred to the same conscious being, which idea of individuality could never have been so much as conceived of if there were no other connection between our ideas than that which arises from the juxtaposition of the particles of matter on which they are severally impressed. The mere juxtaposition of the parts of the thinking substance on which different ideas are impressed will never produce any thing more than the actual juxtaposition of the ideas themselves, unaccompanied by any consciousness of their having this relation to each other: for the mind in this case consisting of nothing more than a succession of material points, each part will be

sensible of the corresponding part of any object which is impressed upon it, but can know nothing of the impression which is made on any other part of the same substance, except from it's reaction on the seat of the first, which is contrary to the supposition. In short, to attempt accounting at all for the nature of consciousness from the proximity of different impressions, or of their fluxional parts to each other in the brain seems no less absurd than it would be to imagine that by placing a number of persons together in a line we should produce in them an immediate consciousness and perfect knowledge of what was passing in each other's minds. If consciousness is to be deduced at all from the circumstance of place, it must be that different impressions occupy exactly the same place. One place has no identity with another: however thin the partition between one idea and another, the distinction must be as absolute and complete, and must confine each idea as effectually within it's own bounds

in this fantastical mosaic-work of the brain; as if the solid skulls of ten philosophers were interposed between each. There is another consideration to be attended to; which is that sensible impressions appear to be continually made on the same part of the brain in succession:—with respect to those received by the eye, a new set of objects is almost every moment impressed on the whole organ, and consequently transmitted along the nerves to the same receptacle in the brain*. It follows from this last observation in particular (which is not a speculative refinement but a plain matter of fact) that the sphere occupied by

* Those of the touch admit of the greatest variety in this respect from the general diffusion of that sense over the whole body, and those which depend on hearing from the small part of the ear which is in general distinctly affected by sound at the same time: As to the taste and smell, the stimulants applied to these senses are such as for the most part to act on a large proportion of the organ at once, though only at intervals. The direction of smells is hardly distinguishable like that of sounds.

different vibrations is constantly the same, or that the same region of the brain belongs equally to a thousand different impressions, and consequently that the mere circumstance of situation is insufficient to account for that complete distinctness, of which our ideas are capable.

From all these considerations taken together I cannot help inferring the fallacy of the Hartleian doctrine of vibrations, which all along goes on the supposition of the most exact distinction and regular arrangement of the *places* of our ideas, and which therefore cannot be effectually reconciled with any reasoning that excludes all local distinction from having a share in the mechanical operations of the human mind. For if we suppose the succession of our ideas to be carried on by the communication of the impulse belonging to one idea to the contiguous cell, or dormitory of another idea formerly associated with it, and if we at the same time suppose each idea to occupy a separate cell which is inviolable,

and which it has entirely to itself, then undoubtedly the ideas thus called up will follow one another in the same order in which they were originally excited. But if we take away this imaginary allotment of separate parcels of the brain to different ideas and suppose the same substance or principle to be constantly impressed with a succession of different ideas, then there seems to be no assignable reason why a vibratory motion accompanied with thought in passing from one part of the thinking substance to the next should not excite any other idea which had been impressed there, as well as the one with which that particular vibration had been originally associated, or why it should not by one general impulse equally excite them all. It is like supposing that you might tread on a nest of adders twined together, and provoke only one of them to sting you. On the other hand to say that this species of elective affinity is determined in it's operation by the greater readiness with which the idea of a particu-

lar impression recalls the memory of another impression which co-existed with it in a state of sensible excitement is to repeat the fact but not (that I can perceive) in any manner to account for it. Let any one compare this account with the one given by Hartley of his own principle, and he will be able to judge.

But farther, even if it could be shewn that the doctrine of vibrations accounts satisfactorily for the association of the ideas of any one sense, (as those of the sight for example) yet surely the very nature of that principle must cut off every sort of communication between the ideas of different senses, (as those of sight and hearing) which may have been associated in the order of time, but which with respect to actual situation must be farther removed from one another than any ideas of the same sense, at whatever distance of time they may have been severally impressed. If from the top of a long cold barren hill I hear the distant whistle of a thrush which seems

to come up from some warm woody shelter beyond the edge of the hill, this sound coming faint over the rocks with a mingled feeling of strangeness and joy, the idea of the place about me, and the imaginary one beyond will all be combined together in such a manner in my mind as to become inseparable. Now the doctrine of vibrations appears absolutely to exclude the possibility of the union of all these into one *associated* idea, because as the whole of that principle is founded on the greater ease and certainty with which one local impression is supposed to pass into the seat of the next, and the greater force with which it acts there than it can do farther off, the idea of a visible object can never run into the notion of a sound, nor *vice versa*, these impressions being of course conveyed along different nerves to different and very remote parts of the brain. Perhaps it will be said that all ideas impressed at the same moment of time may be supposed to be assigned to particular compartments of the

brain as well as where the external objects are contiguous. To this I should answer that such a supposition does not at all account for what I have said above with respect to consciousness and the association of ideas from similarity, &c. and secondly, this supposition is neither included in Hartley's theory, nor does it seem to be compatible with it, as there is no other reason on the common material hypothesis for inferring the contiguity of our ideas in the brain than the contiguity of their external objects, and the impression of those objects on corresponding parts of the external sensible organ.

The whole of Hartley's system is founded on what seems an entirely gratuitous supposition, viz. the imaginary communication of our ideas to particular places in the brain to correspond not only with the relations of external objects, but with the order of time. This supposition can never be reconciled with the inference mentioned above (to go no farther) that thought is

communicated to every part of the thinking substance by an immediate and uniform impulse. For though we should suppose that it is communicated in one manner to what may be called its *primary seat*, and in a different manner over the rest of the brain, yet we shall still be as much at a loss as ever to shew a reason why its primary action should always excite the associated or contiguous ideas, while its indirect or secondary action has no power at all to excite any of the ideas, with the spheres of which it necessarily comes in contact in its general diffusion over the whole brain, that is by its simple impulse. This is not all. There is another circumstance which must entirely prevent the least use being made of this distinction, which is that associated ideas are not properly such as are contiguous in place, but all such as are connected in point of time, the relation of place not being at all essential in the question, for ideas that have been impressed together are always recol-

lected as parts of the same complex impression, without any regard to the proximity or remoteness of their direct, primary seats in the brain, considered as distinct local impressions. As has been explained above with respect to sounds and visible objects, where the association must evidently arise from what I have called their secondary, or relative actions, or, if you will, their *conscious ideas*, that is those which are not confined to a particular spot in the circumference of the brain, but affect the general principle of thought, whatever this may be, whether composed of extended, material parts, or indivisible. Now if these secondary or conscious ideas which we may represent as continually posting backwards and forwards like couriers in all directions through all quarters of the brain to meet each other and exchange accounts are in fact the only instruments of association, it is plain that the account given by Hartley of that principle falls to the ground at once, first because that ac-

count affords no explanation of any of the associations which take place in the mind, except when there is an immediate communication between the primary seats of the associated ideas; secondly, because these secondary or conscious ideas being spread over the whole brain, or rather being impressed on the same thinking principle cannot have any particular connection with or power to call up one another or the contrary from any circumstances of local distinction, which is thus completely done away.—The doctrine of vibrations supposes the order of place and the order of time to correspond exactly in all combinations of our ideas, and that it is owing to this circumstance entirely that those ideas which have been impressed nearly at the same time have afterwards a power to call up one another from the facility with which they must be supposed to pass from their own primary seats into the contiguous seats of the associated ideas. I have endeavored to shew on the contrary not only

that there is no regular local arrangement of our ideas to correspond exactly with the order in which they cohere together in the mind, but that there appears to be no distinction whatever in this respect, that they all belong absolutely to the same place or internal seat of consciousness, that this want of distinction is an evident fact with respect to the successive impressions which are made on the same parts of the body, and consequently on the same parts of the thinking substance, and that it may be deduced generally from the nature of thought itself, and the associations which arise from similarity, &c. that this principle must be entirely nugatory with respect to the associations of the ideas of different senses, even though it should hold true with respect to those of any one sense*, lastly that

* The method taken by Hartley in detailing the associations, which take place between the ideas of each of the senses one by one, saves him the trouble of explaining those which take place between the ideas of different senses at the same time,

all ideas impressed at the same time acquire a power of exciting one another ever after without any regard to the coincidence of their imaginary seats in the brain (according to the material hypothesis) and that therefore the true account of the principle of association must be derived from the first cause, viz. the coincidence of time, and not from the latter which bears no manner of proportion to the effects produced.

The account indeed which Hartley has in one place given of successive association as distinct from synchronous seems to have no necessary connection with this last-mentioned principle. He says, page 69, “If A and B be vibrations impressed successively, then will the latter part of A, viz. that part which remains after the impression of the object ceases, be modified and altered by B, at the same time that it will a little modify and alter it, till at last it be quite overpowered by it, and end in it. It follows therefore that the

“ successive impression of A and B suffi-
 “ ciently repeated will so alter the medul-
 “ lary substance, as that when A is im-
 “ pressed alone, it's latter part shall not
 “ be such as the sole impression of A re-
 “ quires, but lean towards B, and end in
 “ c at last. But B will not excite *a* in a
 “ retrograde order, since, by supposition,
 “ the latter part of B was not modified
 “ and altered by A, but by some other vi-
 “ bration, such as C or D.” First of all,
 this account seems to imply that the asso-
 ciated impressions A and B are the only
 ones made on the mind, and that they ex-
 tend over the whole medullary substance.
 In this case when the action of A ceases or
 grows very weak, we may suppose that
 the tendency to B will be gradually re-
 vived, and at last completely overpower
 that of A, because these are the only im-
 pressions existing in the mind, and it must
 consequently incline to one or other of
 them, which would be equally the case,
 whether they had been impressed together,

or not. Otherwise we must suppose the impressions thus made successively to have a distinct local communication with each other, or there is no reason given why *A* should excite *b* more than any other vibration impressed on the brain in general, or on the seat of *b* in particular. We must besides this suppose the vibrations *A* and *B* to have a particular line of direction, as well as primary sphere of action in the brain to account for *B*'s not exciting *a* in the reverse order, &c. The question is how the impression of different objects at the same time, or in quick succession gives the idea of one of those objects a power to excite the idea of the other, though the object is absent; and it is no answer to this question to say, that *A* being often repeated in connection with *B*, when it is afterwards excited, "leans towards *B*, and ends in it." Hartley says by way of breaking the difficulty, that the latter part of *A* is altered and modified by *B*. This is evident enough while *B* really

acts upon the senses: but why should it be modified by it in the absence of B? This modification of the latter part of A by B is not the intermediate cause of the excitement of *b*, for *b*, the representative of B, must be excited, at least imperfectly, before it can modify A (B itself being nothing) and the point is how A, or *a* excites the movement connected with B and that only, not how, supposing this connection between them to be established, the one gradually passes into the other, and ends in it. I think Hartley constantly mistakes tracing the order of palpable effects, or overt acts of the mind for explaining the causes of the connection between them, which he hardly ever does with a true metaphysical feeling. Even where he is greatest, he is always the physiologist rather than the metaphysician*.

* I have always had the same feeling with respect to Hartley (still granting his power to the utmost) which is pleasantly expressed in an old author, Roger Bacon, quoted by Sir Kenelm Digby in his

Perhaps a better way to set about discovering the clue to the principle of asso-

answer to Brown. "Those students" he says, "who busy themselves much with such notions as relate wholly to the fantasie, do hardly ever become idoneous for abstracted metaphysical speculations; the one having bulky foundation of matter or of the accidents of it to settle upon, (at the least with one foot :) the other flying continually, even to a lessening pitch, in the subtil air. And accordingly, it hath been generally noted, that the exactest mathematicians, who converse altogether with lines, figures, and other differences of quantity, have seldom proved eminent in metaphysics or speculative divinity. Nor again, the professors of these sciences in the other arts. Much less can it be expected, that an excellent physician, whose fancy is always fraught with the material drugs that he prescribeth his apothecary to compound his medicines of, and whose hands are inured to the cutting up, and eyes to the inspection of anatomized bodies, should easily and with success, flie his thoughts at so tousing a game, as a pure intellect, a separated and unbodied soul."—I confess I feel in reading Hartley something in the way in which the Dryads must

ciation, setting aside all ideas of extension, contiguity, &c. would be by considering

have done shut up in their old oak trees. I feel my sides pressed hard, and bored with points of knotty inferences piled up one upon another without being able ever to recollect myself, or catch a glimpse of the actual world without me. I am somehow wedged in between different rows of material objects, overpowering me by their throng, and from which I have no power to escape, but of which I neither know nor understand any thing. I constantly see objects multiplied upon me, not powers at work, I know no reason why one thing follows another but that something else is conjured up between them, which has as little apparent connection with either as they have with one another;—he always reasons from the concrete object, not from the abstract or essential properties of things, and in his whole book I do not believe that there is one good definition. It would be a bad way to describe a man's character to say that he had a wise father or a foolish son, and yet this is the way in which Hartley defines ideas by stating what precedes them in the mind, and what comes after them. Thus he defines the will to be "that idea, or *state of mind* which precedes action," or "a desire, or aversion sufficiently strong to produce action," &c. He gives you the outward

the manner in which the same conscious principle may be supposed to adapt itself to, to combine, and as it were reconcile together the actions of different objects impressed on it at once, and to all of which it is forced to attend at the same time; by which means these several impressions thus compelled into agreement, and a kind of mutual understanding one with another afterwards retain a particular tendency or disposition to unite together, that is to say, the mind when thrown back into the same state by the recurrence of any one of these ideas is of course put into the way of admitting or passing more readily to any other of the same set of ideas than to any other ideas of a different set not so blended and harmonized with it. It seems as if

signs of things in the order in which he conceives them to follow one another, never the demonstration of certain consequences from the known nature of their causes, which alone is true reasoning. Nevertheless, it is not to be forgotten, that he was also a great man. See his Chapter on Memory, &c.

the mind was laid open to all the impressions which had been made upon it at any given time, the moment any one of them recalls a state of feeling habitually in unison with the rest. By touching a certain spring, all obstacles are removed, the doors fly open, and the whole gallery is seen at a single glance.—The mind has a capacity to perform any complex action the easier for having performed the same action before. It will consequently have a disposition to perform that action rather than any other, the other circumstances being the same. I imagine that association is to be accounted for on the very same principle as a man's being able to comprehend or *take in* a mathematical demonstration the better for going over it a number of times, or to recognise any well-known object, as the figure of a man for instance in the middle of a common, sooner than a stump of a tree, or piece of a rock of twice the size, and of just as remarkable a shape.—In like manner, or at least consis-

tently with this, we may suppose, if one impression is very like another, though not *associated* with it, that the mind will in that case slide more naturally, will feel less repugnance in passing from the recollection of the one to that of the other, that is from it's actual state into a state very little different from it than into one of a totally different kind. When any particular idea becomes predominant, the turn which is thus given to the mind must be favourable to the reception or recollection of any other idea, which requires but little alteration in the state of the mind to admit it. A slight turn of the screws on which the tension of the mind depends will set it right to the point required. When the actual state of the mind agrees, or falls in with some previous tendency, the effort which the latent idea makes to pass into a state of excitement must be more powerful than it would be without this co-operation, and where the other circumstances are indifferent must always be effectual.

Thus the actual feeling of warmth must have a tendency to call up any old ideas of the same kind: e. g. to-day being a very warm day put me in mind of a walk I took in a hot day last summer. Here however another difficulty occurs: for the very opposition of our feelings as of heat and cold frequently produces a transition in the mind from the one to the other. This may be accounted for in a loose way (by supposing, that the struggle between very opposite feelings producing a violent and perturbed state of mind excites attention, and makes the mind more sensible to the shock of the contrary impression to that by which it is preoccupied, as we find that the body is more liable to be affected by any opposite extremes, as of heat and cold, immediately succeeding, and counteracting each other. Be this as it may, all things naturally put us in mind of their contraries, cold of heat, day of night, &c. These three, viz. association, similarity, and contrast I believe include

all the general sources of connection between our ideas, for as to that of cause and effect, it seems to be referable (as remarked by Priestley) or at least chiefly so to the first class, that of common association.—I hope no one will think me weak enough to imagine that what I have here stated is even a remote and faint approach to a satisfactory account of the matter. Every attempt of this sort must be light and ineffectual without first ascertaining (if that were possible) the manner in which our ideas are produced, and the nature of consciousness, both of which I am utterly unable to comprehend. I have endeavoured simply to point out what it is that is to be accounted for, the general feeling with which a reflecting man should set out in search of the truth, and the impossibility of ever arriving at it, if at the outset we completely cover over our own feelings with maps of the brain, dry skulls, musical chords, pendulums, and compasses, or think of looking into the bottom of our own minds by means of

any other instrument than a sharpened intellect.

What I at first proposed was to shew, that association, however we may suppose it to be carried on, is not the only source of connection between our ideas, or mode of operation of the human mind. This has been assumed indirectly, and I think proved with respect to similarity, &c. Here however a shrewd turn has been given to the argument by the Hartleians, who, admitting similarity among the causes of connection between our ideas, deny that it is any objection to their doctrine, for that this very example is easily resolved into a case of mere association. Similarity they say is nothing but partial sameness, and that where part of a thing has been first associated with certain circumstances, and is afterwards conjoined with others, making in fact two different objects, it's recurrence in the second instance will necessarily recall the circumstances with which

it was associated in the first *.—In general we suppose that if we meet a person in the street with a face resembling some other face with which we are well acquainted, the reason why the one puts us in mind of the other is *that the one is like the other* ; and we should be little disposed to believe any one who told us seriously that in reality we had before seen the one man's nose upon the other's face, and that this old impression or very identical object brought along with it the other ideas with which it had been formerly associated. This account would be sufficiently contrary to common sense and feeling, and I hope to shew that it has as little connection with any true subtlety of thinking. No metaphysician will I am sure be disposed to controvert this, who takes the trouble accurately to compare the meaning of the explanation with the terms and necessary import of the law of association. For let an impression which I received yes-

* See Priestley's Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever.

terday be in every possible respect the same with the one which I received to-day, still the one impression is not the other; they are two distinct impressions existing at different times, and by the supposition associated with very different circumstances. The one from having been co-existent with certain circumstances has a power by the law of association of exciting the recollection of those circumstances whenever it is itself recollected: the other has the same power over that particular combination of circumstances with which it was associated, merely because they were so impressed together on the mind at the same moment of time. To say therefore that a particular property of an object has a power of exciting the ideas of several other properties of another object, of which it never made a part, on the principle of association, is a contradiction in terms. It's being essentially or comparatively the same with another property which did actually make part of such an object no more proves the con-

sequences which fairly result from the principle of association than it would follow from my looking at the same object at which another has been looking, that I must forthwith be impressed with all the ideas, feelings and imaginations which have been passing in his mind at the time. This last observation has been objected to on the ground that there is no connection whatever between one man's ideas, and another's. No doubt : but then it follows as clearly (and that is all I meant to shew) that the abstract identity of the objects or impressions does not of itself produce this connection, so that the perception of the one must needs bring along with it the associated ideas belonging to the other. The objects or ideas are the same in both cases, if that were all : but this is not sufficient to prove that they must have the same accompaniments, or associations, because in the one case they are impressed on different minds, and in the other on the same mind at different times, which is expressly

contrary to the principle of association, unless we assume by the help of a verbal sophism that the same generical idea is the same associated idea, and this again would lead to the absurd consequence above stated. It is not here necessary to give a regular definition or account of what in general constitutes sameness, or to inquire whether strictly speaking such a relation can ever be said to subsist between any two assignable objects. Such an inquiry would be quite foreign to the purpose, and I wish to avoid as much as possible all useless common-place subtleties, all such as whichever way they are determined can make no alteration in the state of the argument. It is plain in the present instance for example that when it is stated that a particular idea having been once associated with given circumstances, the *same* idea will ever afterwards excite the recollection of those circumstances, all that is meant is that the idea in the latter case must be a *production*, continuation, or properly a recollection of

the former one, so as to retain the impression of the accidental modifications by which that idea was originally affected. It must be so far the same as to bear the same relation to the surrounding ideas, as to depend for what it is, on what it has been, and connect the present with the past. It must be the old idea lurking in the mind with all its old associations hanging about it, and not an entirely new impression with entirely new associations. This idea must therefore be originally derived from an individual impression in contradistinction to half a dozen different ones possessing the same absolute properties: for the whole point turns upon this, that such and such ideas have not naturally any sort of connection with certain other ideas, but that any one of these ideas having been actually associated with any of the others, this accidental relation begets a peculiar and artificial connection between them which is continued along with the remembrance of the ideas themselves.

Mr. Mac-Intosh, I remember, explained this principle in his lectures in the following manner. If, says he, any gentleman who has heard me in this place to-day should by chance pass by this way to-morrow, the sight of Lincoln's-Inn Hall will upon the principle we are now examining bring along with it the recollection of some of the persons he has met with the day before, perhaps of some of the reasonings which I have the honour to deliver to this audience, or in short any of those concomitant circumstances with which the sight of Lincoln's-Inn Hall has been previously associated in his mind. This is a correct verbal statement, but it is liable to be misunderstood. Mr. Mac-Intosh is no doubt a man of a very clear understanding, of an imposing elocution, a very able disputant, and a very metaphysical lawyer, but by no means a profound metaphysician, not quite a Berkeley in subtlety of distinction. I will try as well as I am able to help him out in his ex-

planation. It is clear that the visible image of Lincoln's-Inn Hall which any one has presented to his senses at any given moment of time cannot have been *previously* associated with other images and perceptions. Neither is a renewed sensible impression of a particular object the same with or in any manner related to a former recollected impression of the same object except from the resemblance of the one to the other. There can be no doubt then of the connection between my idea or recollection of Lincoln's-Inn Hall yesterday, and the associated ideas of the persons whom I saw there, or the things which I heard, the question is how do I get this idea of yesterday's impression from seeing Lincoln's-Inn Hall to-day. The difficulty, I say is not in connecting the links in the chain of previously associated ideas, but in arriving at the first link,—in passing from a present sensation to the recollection of a past object. Now this can never be by an act of association, because it is self-

evident that the present can never have been previously associated with the past. Every beginning of a series of associations, that is every departure from the continued beaten track of old impressions or ideas remembered in regular succession therefore implies and must be accounted for from some act of the mind which does not depend on association.

Association is an habitual relation between continuations of the same ideas which act upon one another in a certain manner simply because the original impressions were excited together. Let $A B C$ represent any associated impressions. Let $a b c$ be the ideas left in the mind by these impressions, and then let $A M N$ represent a repetition of A in conjunction with a different set of objects. Now a the idea of A when excited will excite $b c$ or the ideas of $B C$ by association, but A as part of the sensible impression $A M N$ cannot excite $b c$ by association, because it has never been associated with $B C$, because it

is not, like *a*, the production of the former impression A, but an entirely new impression made from without, totally unconnected with the first. I understand then from the nature of association how *a* will excite *bc*, but not how A excites *a*. I understand how my thinking of Lincoln's-Inn Hall, the impression of yesterday, should also lead me to think of other things connected with that impression according to the principle of association: but I cannot see how, according to this principle, there is any more connection between my seeing Lincoln's-Inn Hall to-day, and recollecting my having seen it yesterday than there is between the palace of St. Cloud, and the hovel in which Jack Shepherd hid himself when he escaped out of Newgate. Certainly the new impression is not the old one, nor the idea of the old one. What is it then that when this second impression is made on the mind determines it to connect itself with the first more than with any other indifferent impression, what carries

it forward in that particular direction which is necessary to it's finding out it's fellow, or setting aside this geographical reasoning, what is there in the action of the one on the mind that necessarily revives that of the other? All this has clearly nothing to do with association.

A question however occurs here which perplexes the subject a good deal, and which I shall state and answer as concisely as I can. I have hitherto endeavoured to shew that a particular present impression cannot excite the recollection of a past impression by association, that is, that ideas cannot be said to excite one another by association which have never been associated. But still it may be asked whether a present impression may not excite the ideas associated with any similar impression, without first exciting a distinct recollection of the similar impression with which they were associated. Now, however we may reconcile it with the foregoing reasoning, it is certainly a fact that it does do so.

And I conceive it will not be difficult to account for this, according to the explanation above hinted at of the principle of association: for we may in general suppose any similar state of mind to be favourable to the readmission, or recollection of the ideas already associated *with* such a state of mind, whether the similarity is produced by a revival of the old idea, or by the recurrence of a similar external object. In this case however we must suppose that association is only a particular and accidental effect of some more general principle, not the sole-moving spring in all combinations which take place between our ideas: and still more, that similarity itself must be directly a very strong source of connection between them, since it extends beyond the similar ideas themselves to any ideas associated with them. On the other hand according to the Hartleian theory of association as carried on by the connection of different local impressions, which alone makes it



difficult to admit similarity as a distinct source of connection between our ideas, I am utterly unable to conceive how this effect can ever take place, that is, I contend that there must be in this case a direct communication between the new impression, and the similar old one before there can be any possible reason for the revival of the *associated* ideas, and then the same difficulty will return as before, why one similar impression should have a natural tendency to excite another, which tendency cannot be accounted for from association, for it goes before it, and on this hypothesis is absolutely necessary to account for it.—Whatever relates to local connection must be confined to the individual impression and cannot possibly extend to the class or *genus*. Suppose association to depend on the actual juxtaposition of two, or more local impressions which being thus accidentally brought together have thrown a sort of grappling irons over one another, and continue to act in

concert in consequence of this immediate local communication. It is clear that in this case none but the individual, or numerical impressions so united can have any power over each other. No matter how like any other impression may be to any of the associated ones,—if it does not agree in place as well as kind, it might as well not exist at all; its influence can no more be felt in the seat of the first, than if it were parcel of another intellect, or floated in the regions of the moon. Again suppose association to consist not in connecting different local impressions, but in reconciling different heterogeneous actions of the same thinking principle, “in subduing the one even to the very quality of the other,” here the disposition of the mind being the chief thing concerned, not only those very identical impressions will coalesce together which have been previously associated, but any other very similar impressions to these will have a facility in exciting one another, that is in acting

upon the mind at the same time, their association depending solely on the habitual disposition of the mind to receive such and such impressions when preoccupied by certain others, their local relation to each other being the same in all cases.—The moment it is admitted not to be necessary to association that the very individual impressions should be actually revived, the foundation of all the inferences which have been built on this principle is completely done away.

Association is then only one of the ways in which ideas are recollected or brought back into the mind. Another view of the subject remains which is to consider their effects after they get there as well as how they are introduced, why certain ideas affect the mind differently from others, and by what means we are enabled to form comparisons and draw inferences.

If association were every thing, and the cause of every thing, there could be no comparison of one idea with another, no

reasoning, no abstraction, no regular contrivance, no wisdom, no general sense of right and wrong, no sympathy, no foresight of any thing, in short nothing that is essential, or honourable to the human mind would be left to it. Accordingly the abettors of this theory have set themselves to shew, that *judgment, imagination, &c.* are mere words that really signify nothing but certain associations of ideas following one another in the same mechanical order in which they were originally impressed, and that all our feelings, tastes, habits and actions spring from the same source. As I know of no proof whatever that has, or can be given of either of these paradoxes but that many of our opinions are prejudices, and that many of our feelings arise from habit, I shall state as concisely as I can my reasons for thinking that association alone does not account either for the proper operations of the understanding, or for our moral feelings, and voluntary actions, or that there are other

general, original, independent faculties equally necessary and more important in the "building up of the human mind." In every comparison made by the mind of one idea with another, that is perception of agreement, or disagreement, or of any kind of relation between them, I conceive that there is something implied which is essentially different from any association of ideas. Before I proceed, however, I must repeat that in this question I stand merely on the defensive. I have no positive inferences to make, nor any novelties to bring forward, and I have only to defend a common-sense feeling against the refinements of a false philosophy. I understand by association of ideas the recollecting or perceiving any two or more ideas together, or immediately one after the other. Now it is contended that this immediate succession, coexistence or juxtaposition of our ideas is all that can be meant by their comparison. It is therefore a question in this case what becomes of

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first is whether the idea of equality is merely a particular way of considering contiguity. Secondly, whether association, that is the succession or juxtaposition of our ideas can ever of itself produce the idea of this relation between them. My first object will be to inquire whether the perception of the equality of two lines is the same with the perception of the contiguity of their extremities, whether the one idea necessarily includes every thing that is contained in the other.

I see two points touch one another, or gravity by Mr. Mac-Intosh to the metaphysical students of Lincoln's-Inn. I confess I like ingenuity, however misapplied, if it is but a man's own: but the dull, affected, pompous repetition of nonsense is not to be endured with patience. In retailing what is not our own, the only merit must be in the choice, or judgment. A man, however, without originality may yet have common sense and common honesty. To be a hawker of worn-out paradoxes, and a pander to sophistry denotes indeed a desperate ambition.

that there is no sensible interval between them. What possible connection is there between this idea, and that of their being the boundaries of two lines of equal length? It is only by drawing out those points to a certain distance that I get the idea of any lines at all ; they must be drawn out to the same distance before they can be equal ; and I can have no idea of their being equal without dividing that equal distance into two distinct parts or lines, both of which I must consider at the same time as contained with the same limits. If the ideas merely succeeded one another, or even co-existed as distinct images, they would still be perfectly unconnected with each other, each being absolutely contained within itself, and there being no common act of attention to both to unite them together. Now the question is, whether this perception of the equality of these two lines is not properly an idea of comparison, (in the sense in which

every one uses and feels these words), which idea cannot possibly be expressed or defined by any other relation between our ideas, or whether it is only a round-about way of getting at the old idea of the coincidence of their points or ends, which certainly is not an idea of comparison, or of the relation between equal quantities simply because there are no quantities to be compared. The one relates to the agreement of the things themselves one with another, the other to their local situation. There is no proving any farther that these ideas are different, but by appealing to every man's own breast. If any one should choose to assert that two and two make six, or that the sun is the moon, I can only answer by saying that these ideas as they exist in my mind are totally different. In like manner I am conscious of certain operations in my own mind in comparing two equal lines together essentially different from the perception of the contiguity of their extremities, and I therefore conclude

that the ideas of equality and contiguity are not the same.

The second question is whether the idea of contiguity itself is an idea of mere association, that is, whether it is nothing more than the recollection of a compound sensation. If by sensation is to be understood the direct impression of the parts of any outward object on corresponding parts of an extended living substance, by which means the general mass is converted from a dead into a living thing, and that this is the only difference that takes place, then I deny that this combination of living atoms, this diffusion of animal sensibility, however exquisite or thrilling to the slightest touch, will ever give the idea of *relation* of any kind whether of contiguity, co-existence, or any thing else either immediately at the time or by recollection afterwards. It has been said that *to feel is to think*, "*sentir est penser*." I believe that this is true of the human mind, because the human mind is a thinking principle, it is

natural to it to think, it cannot feel *without* thinking: but this maxim would not be at all true of such a human mind as is described by these philosophers, which would be equally incapable both of thought, and feeling as it exists in us. As this distinction is very difficult to be expressed, I hope I may be allowed to express it in the best way that I am able. Suppose a number of animalculæ as a heap of mites in a rotten cheese lying as close together as they can stick, (though the example should be of something "more drossy and divisible," of something less reasonable, approaching nearer to pure sensation than we can conceive of any creature that exercises the functions of the meanest instinct.) No one will contend that in this heap of living matter there is any idea of the number, position, or intricate involutions of that little, lively, restless tribe. This idea is evidently not contained in any of the parts separately, nor is it contained in all of them put together. That is, the aggregate

of many actual sensations is, we here plainly see, a totally different thing from the collective idea, comprehension, or *consciousness* of those sensations as many things, or of any of their relations to each other. We may go on multiplying and combining sensations to the end of time without ever advancing one step in the other process, or producing one single thought. But in what I would ask does this supposition differ from that of many distinct particles of matter, full of animation, tumbling about, and pressing against each other in the same brain, except that we make use of this brain as a common medium to unite their different desultory actions in the same general principle of thought, or consciousness? Therefore if there is no power in this principle but to repeat the old story of sensation over again, if the mind is but a sort of inner room where the images of external things like pictures in a gallery are lodged safe, and dry out of the reach of the turbulence of the senses, but remaining as

distinct from, and if I may so say as perfectly unknown to one another as the pictures on a wall, there being no general faculty to overlook and give notice of their several impressions, this medium is without any use, the hypothesis is so far an incumbrance, not an advantage. To perceive the relation of one thing to another it is not only necessary that the ideas of the things themselves should co-exist (which would signify nothing) but that they should be perceived to co-exist by the same conscious understanding, or that their different actions should be felt at the same instant by the same being in the strictest sense. If I am asked if I conceive clearly how this is possible, I answer no:—perhaps no one ever will, or can. But I do understand clearly, that the other supposition is an absurdity, and can never be reconciled with the nature of thought, or consciousness, of that power of which I have an absolute certainty in my own mind. If any one who still doubts of this will give

me a satisfactory reason why he denies the same consciousness to different minds, or thinks it necessary to circumscribe this principle within the limits of the same brain but upon the supposition that one brain is one power, in some sort modifying and reacting upon all the ideas contained in it, I shall then be ready to give up my dull, cloudy, English mysticism for the clear sky of French metaphysics. Till then it is in vain to tell me that the mind thinks by sensations, that it then thinks most emphatically, then only truly when by decomposing it's essence it comes at last to reflect the naked impression of material objects. It is easy to make a bold assertion, and just as easy to deny it; and I do not know that there is any authority yet established by which I am bound to yield an implicit assent to every extravagant opinion which some man of celebrity has been hardy enough to adopt, and make others believe. It does not surely follow that a thing is to be disbelieved, the moment any one thinks

proper to deny it, merely because it has been generally believed, as if truth were one entire paradox, and singularity the only claim to authority*.

* This subject of consciousness, the most abstruse, the most important of all others, the most filled with seeming inexplicable contradictions, that which bids the completest defiance to the matter-of-fact philosophy and can only be developed by the patient soliciting of a man's own spirit has been accordingly passed over by the herd of philosophers from Locke downwards. There is a short note about it in Hartley in which he flatly denies the possibility of any such thing. Lest what I have already said should therefore be insufficient to fix the attention of the reader on a subject which he may think quite exploded, I will add the account which Rousseau has given of the same subject, whose authority does not weigh the less with me because it is unsupported by the Logic of Condillac, or the book De l'Esprit.

“ Me voici déjà tout aussi sûr de l'existence de l'univers, que de la mienne. Ensuite je réfléchis sur les objets de mes sensations, et trouvant en moi la faculté de les comparer, je me sens doué d'une force active que je ne savois pas avoir auparavant.

“ Appercevoir, c'est sentir; comparer, c'est juger :

I never could make much of the subject of real relations in nature. But in whatever

juger et sentir ne sont pas la même chose. Par la sensation, les objets s'offrent à moi séparés, isolés, tels qu'ils sont dans la Nature ; par la comparaison, je les remue, je les transporte, pour ainsi dire, je les pose l'un sur l'autre, pour prononcer sur leur différence ou sur leur similitude, et généralement sur tous leurs rapports. Selon moi, la faculté distinctive de l'être actif, ou intelligent est de pouvoir donner un sens à ce mot, *est*. Je cherche en vain dans l'être purement sensitif cette force intelligente, qui superpose, et puis qui prononce ; je ne la saurois voir dans sa nature. Cet être passif sentira chaque objet séparément, ou même il sentira l'objet total formé des deux, mais n'ayant aucune force pour les replier l'un sur l'autre, il ne les comparera jamais, il ne les jugera point.

“ Voir deux objets à la fois, n'est pas voir leurs rapports, ni juger de leurs différences ; appercevoir plusieurs objets les uns hors des autres, n'est pas les nombrer. Je puis avoir au même instant l'idée d'un grand bâton et d'un petit bâton sans les comparer, sans juger que l'un est plus petit que l'autre, comme je puis voir à la fois ma main entière sans faire le compte de mes doigts. Ces idées comparatives, *plus grand, plus petit*, de même que les idées numériques d'un, de deux, &c. ne sont certainement pas

way we determine with respect to them, whether they are absolutely true in nature,

des sensations, quoique mon esprit ne les produise, qu'à l'occasion de mes sensations.

“ On nous dit que l'être sensitif distingue les sensations les unes des autres par les différences qu'ont entr'elles ces mêmes sensations : ceci demande explication. Quand les sensations sont différentes, l'être sensitif les distingue par leurs différences : quand elles sont semblables, il les distingue parce qu'il sent les unes hors des autres. Autrement, comment dans une sensation simultanée distinguerait-il deux objets égaux ? Il faudroit nécessairement qu'il confondît ces deux objets, et les prît pour le même, sur-tout dans un système où l'on prétend que les sensations représentatives de l'étendue ne sont point étendues.

“ Quand les deux sensations à comparer sont aperçues, leur impression est faite, chaque objet est senti, les deux sont sentis ; mais leur rapport n'est pas senti pour cela. Si le jugement de ce rapport n'étoit qu'une sensation, & me venoit uniquement de l'objet, mes jugemens ne me tromperoient jamais, puisqu'il n'est jamais faux que je sente ce que je sens.

“ Pourquoi donc est-ce que je me trompe sur le rapport de ces deux bâtons, sur-tout s'ils ne sont pas

or are only the creatures of the mind, they cannot exist in nature after the same man-

paralleles? Pourquoi, dis-je, par exemple, que le petit bâton est le tiers du grand, tandis qu'il n'en est que le quart? Pourquoi l'image, qui est la sensation, n'est-elle pas conforme à son modèle, qui est l'objet? C'est que je suis actif quand je juge, que l'opération qui compare est fautive, et que mon entendement, qui juge les rapports, mêle ses erreurs à la vérité des sensations qui ne montrent que les objets.

Ajoutez à cela une réflexion qui vous frappera, je m'assure, quand vous y aurez pensé; c'est que si nous étions purement passifs dans l'usage de nos sens, il n'y auroit entr'eux aucune communication; il nous auroit impossible de connoître que le corps que nous touchons, et l'objet que nous voyons sont le même. Ou nous ne sentirions jamais rien hors de nous, ou il y auroit pour nous cinq substances sensibles, dont nous n'aurions nul moyen d'appercevoir l'identité.

“ Qu'on donne tel ou tel nom à cette force de mon esprit qui rapproche et compare mes sensations; qu'on l'appelle attention, méditation, réflexion, ou comme on voudra; toujours est-il vrai qu'elle est en moi et non dans les choses, que c'est moi seul qui la produis, quoique je ne la produise qu'à l'occasion de l'impression que font sur moi les objets,

ner that they exist in the human mind. The forms of things in nature are manifold; they only become one by being united in the same common principle of thought. The relations of the things themselves as they exist separately and by themselves must therefore be very different from their relations as perceived by the mind where they have an immediate communication with each other. The things themselves can only have the same relation to each other that the ideas of things have in different minds, or that our sensible impressions must have to one another before we refer them to some inward conscious principle. Without this connection between our ideas in the mind there could be no preference of one thing

Sans être maître de sentir ou de ne pas sentir, je le suis d'examiner plus ou moins ce que je sens.

Je ne suis donc pas simplement un être sensitif et passif, mais un être actif et intelligent, et quoi qu'en dise la philosophie, j'oserai prétendre à l'honneur de penser, &c."—EMILE, beginning of the third, or end of the second volume.

to another, no choice of means to ends, that is, no voluntary action. Suppose the ideas or impressions of any two objects to be perfectly distinct and vivid, suppose them moreover to be mechanically *associated* together in my mind, and that they bear in fact just the same proportion to each other that the objects do in nature, that the one is attended with just so much more pleasure than the other, and is so much more desirable, what effect can this of itself have but to produce a proportionable degree of unthinking complacency in the different feelings belonging to each, and a proportionable degree of vehemence in the blind impulse, by which I am attached to each of them separately and for the moment? If there is no perception of the relation between different feelings, no proper comparison of the one with the other, there may indeed be a stronger impulse towards the one than there is towards the other in the different seats of perception which they severally affect, but there can be no reasonable attachment, no preference of

the one to the other in the same *general* principle of thought and action. And consequently on this supposition if the objects or feelings are incompatible with each other, I, or rather the different sensible beings within me will be drawn different ways, each according to it's own particular bias, blindly persisting in it's own choice without ever thinking of any other interest than it's own, or being in the least affected by any idea of the general good of the whole sentient being, which would be a thing utterly incomprehensible.—To perceive relations,—if not to choose between good and evil, to prefer a greater good to a less, a lasting to a transient enjoyment belongs only to one mind, or spirit, the mind that is in man, which is the centre in which all his thoughts meet, and the master-spring by which all his actions are governed. Every thing is one in nature, and governed by an absolute impulse. The mind of man alone is relative to other things, it represents not itself but many

things existing out of itself, it does not therefore represent the truth by being sensible of one thing but many things (for nature, it's object, is manifold) and though the things themselves as they really exist cannot go out of themselves into other things, or compromise their natures, there is no reason why the mind which is merely representative should be confined to any one of them more than to any other, and a perfect understanding should comprehend them all as they are all contained in nature, or *in all*. No one object or idea therefore ought to impel the mind for it's own sake but as it is relative to other things, nor is a motive true or natural in reference to the human mind merely because it exists, unless we at the same suppose it to be stronger than all others.

But to return. I conceive first that volition necessarily implies thought or foresight, that is, that it is not accounted for from mere association. All voluntary action implies a view to consequences, a per-

ception of the analogy between certain actions already given, and the particular action then to be employed, also a knowledge of the connection between certain actions and the effects to be produced by them ; and lastly, a faculty of combining all these with particular circumstances so as to be able to judge how far they are likely to impede or assist the accomplishment of our purposes, in what manner it may be necessary to vary our exertions according to the nature of the case, whether a greater or less degree of force is required to produce the effect, &c. Without this "discourse of reason," this circumspection and comparison, it seems to be as impossible for the human mind to pursue any regular object as it would be for a man hemmed in on all sides by the walls of houses and blind alleys to see his way clearly before him from one end of London to the other, or to go in a strait line from Westminster to Wapping. One would think it would be sufficient to state the question in order to shew

that mere association or the mechanical recurrence of any old impressions in a certain order, which can never exactly correspond with the given circumstances, would never satisfactorily account (without the aid of some other faculty) for the complexity and subtle windings and perpetual changes in the motives of human action. On the hypothesis here spoken of, I could have no comprehensive idea of things to check any immediate, passing impulse, nor should I be able to make any inference with respect to the consequences of my actions whenever there was the least alteration in the circumstances in which I must act. If however this general statement does not convince those who are unwilling to be convinced on the subject, I hope the nature of the objection will be made sufficiently clear in the course of the argument.

Secondly, it is necessary to volition that we should suppose the imaginary or general ideas of things to be efficient causes of action. It is implied in the theory we are

combating that some sort of ideas are efficient motives to action, because association itself consists of ideas. Habit can be nothing but the impulsive force of certain physical impressions surviving in their ideas, and producing the same effects as the original impressions themselves. Why then should we refuse to admit the same, or a similar power in any ideas of the same kind, because they have been combined by the imagination with different circumstances, or because a great many different ideas have gone to make up one general feeling? Why, if the inherent qualities of the ideas are not changed, should not the effects which depend on those qualities be the same also? It cannot be pretended that there is something in the nature of all ideas which renders them inadequate to the production of muscular action, the one being a mental, the other a physical essence. For ideas are evidently the instruments of association, and must therefore one way or other be the efficient causes of

voluntary action. The ideas of imagination and reason must be analogous to those of memory and association, or they could not represent their several objects, which is absurd.—It is to be remembered that the tendency of any ideas to produce action cannot be ascribed in the first instance to the accidental association between the original impression and some particular action, for the action is an immediate and natural consequence of the impression, and would equally follow from the same impression in any other circumstances, and ought to follow from any other idea partaking of the same general nature and properties. The proper effects of association can only apply to those cases, where an impression or idea by being associated with another has acquired a power of exciting actions to which it was itself perfectly indifferent. But this power cannot always be transferred from one impression to another, for there must be some original impression which

has an inherent independent power to produce action.

I do not know how far the rules of philosophizing laid down by Sir Isaac Newton apply to the question, but it appears to me an evident conclusion of common sense not to seek for a remote and indirect cause of any effect where there is a direct and obvious one. Whenever therefore a particular action follows a given impression, if there is nothing in the impression itself incompatible with such an effect, it seems an absurdity to go about to deduce that action from some other impression, which has no more right to it's production than that which is immediately and obviously connected with it. In general it may be laid down as a principle of all sound reasoning that where there are many things actually existing which may be assigned as the causes of several known effects, it is best to divide those effects among them, not arbitrarily to lay the whole weight of a complicated series of effects on the shoulders of

some one of them, generally singled out for no other reason than because it is the most remote and therefore the least probable. For this there can be no more reason than for supposing when I see a large building standing on a number of pillars, that the whole of it is secretly upheld by some main pillar in the centre, and that all the other pillars stand there for shew, not use. The principle that the fewest causes possible are to be admitted is certainly not true in the abstract; and the injudicious application of it has I think been productive of a great deal of false reasoning. Unquestionably, where there is no appearance of the existence of certain causes, they are to be admitted with caution: we are not fancifully to multiply them *ad libitum* merely because we are not satisfied with those that do appear, much less are we to multiply them gratuitously, without any reason at all. But where the supposed causes actually exist, where they are known to exist, and have an obvious connection with certain effects,

why deprive any of these causes of the real activity which they seem to possess to make some one of them reel and stagger under a weight of consequences which nature never meant to lay upon it? This mistaken notion of simplicity has been the general fault of all system-makers, who are so wholly taken up with some favourite hypothesis or principle, that they make that the sole hinge on which every thing else turns, and forget that there is any other power really at work in the universe, all other causes being set aside as false and nugatory, or else resolved into that one.—There is another principle which has a deep foundation in nature that has also served to strengthen the same feeling, which is, that things never act alone, that almost every effect that can be mentioned is a compound result of a series of causes modifying one another, and that the true cause of any thing is therefore seldom to be looked for on the surface, or in the first distinct agent that presents it-

self. This principle consistently followed up does not however lead to the supposition that the immediate and natural causes of things are nothing, but that the most trifling and remote are something, it proves that the accumulated weight of a long succession of real, efficient causes is generally far greater than that of any one of them separately, not that the operation of the whole series is in itself null and void but as the efficacy of the first sensible cause is transmitted downwards by association through the whole chain. Association has been assumed as the leading principle in the operations of the human mind, and then made the only one, forgetting first that nature must be the foundation of every artificial principle, and secondly that with respect to the result, even where association has had the greatest influence, habit is at best but a half-worker with nature, for in proportion as the habit becomes inveterate, we must suppose a greater number.

of actual impressions to have concurred in producing it.*

Association may relate only to feelings, habit implies action, a disposition to do something. Let us suppose then that it were possible to account in this way for all those affections which relate to old objects, and ideas, which depend on recalling past feelings by looking back into our memories. But the moment you introduce action (if it is any thing more than an involuntary repetition of certain motions without either end or object, a mere trick, and absense of mind) this principle can be of no use without the aid of some other faculty to enable us to apply old associated feelings to new circumstances, and to give the will a new direction.

Mr. Mac-Intosh in his public lectures used to deny the existence of such a feeling as general benevolence or humanity, on the ground that all our affections necessa-

* I here speak of association as distinct from imagination or the effects of novelty.

rily owe their rise to particular previous associations, and that they cannot exist at all unless they have been excited before in the same manner by the same objects. If I were disposed to enter particularly into this question, I might say in the first place that such a feeling as general benevolence or kindness to persons whom we have never seen or heard of before does exist. I should not scruple to charge any one who should deny this with the *mala fides*, with prevaricating either to himself, or others. It is a maxim which these gentlemen seem to be unacquainted with that it is necessary to strain an hypothesis to make it fit the facts, not to deny the facts because they do not square with the hypothesis. It generally happens, that, when a metaphysical paradox is first started, it is thought sufficient by a vague and plausible explanation to reconcile it tolerably well with known facts: afterwards it is found to be a shorter way and savours more of a certain agreeable daring in matters of philosophy.

and dashes the spirit of opposition sooner to deny the facts on the strength of the hypothesis.—Independently however of all experimental proof, the reasoning as it is applied confutes itself. It is said that habit is necessary to produce affection. Now suppose this, in what sense is the principle true? If the persons, feelings and actions must be exactly and literally the same in both cases, there can be no such thing as habit: the same objects and circumstances that influenced me to-day cannot possibly influence me to-morrow. Take the example of a child to whose welfare the attention of the parent is constantly directed. The simple wants of the child are never exactly the same in themselves, the accidental circumstances with which they are combined are necessarily varying every moment, nor are the sentiments and temper of the father less liable to constant and imperceptible fluctuations. These subtle changes, however, and this dissimilarity in subordinate circumstances do not

prevent the father's affection for the child from becoming an inveterate habit. If therefore it is merely an extraordinary degree of resemblance in the objects which produces an extraordinary degree of strength in the habitual affection, a more remote and imperfect resemblance in the objects ought to produce proportionable effects. For example, the cries of a stranger's child in want of food are similar to those of his own when hungry, the expressions of their countenances are similar, it is also certain that wholesome food will produce similar effects upon both, &c. I am not here inquiring into the degree of interest which the mind will feel for an entire stranger (though that question was well answered long ago by the story of the Samaritan.) My object is to shew that as to mere theory there is no essential difference between the two cases; that a *continued* habit of kindness to the same person implies the same power in the mind as a general disposition to feel for others in the same situation;

and that the attempt to reason us out of a sense of right and wrong and make men believe that they can only feel for themselves, or their immediate connections is not only an indecent but a very bungling piece of sophistry.—The child's being personally the same has nothing to do with the question. The idea of personal identity is a perfectly generical and abstract idea, altogether distinct from association. Any other artificial, and general connection between our ideas (as that of the same species) might as well pass for association.

The commentators on Hartley have either not studied or not understood him. Otherwise his system could not have been supposed to favour the doctrine of selfishness. My quarrel with it is not that it proves any thing against the notion of disinterestedness, but that it proves nothing. He supposes that the human mind is neither naturally selfish, nor naturally benevolent; that we are equally indifferent to our own future happiness or that of others,

and equally capable of becoming interested in either according to circumstances. [See his account of the origin of self-love, page 370.] The difference between this account, and the one I have endeavoured to defend is that I suppose that the idea of any particular positive known good either relating to ourselves or others is in itself an efficient motive to action, whereas according to Hartley no idea either of our own interest or that of others has the least tendency to produce any such effect except from association. He infers that there is no essential, original desire of happiness in the human mind, because this desire varies according to circumstances, or is different in different persons, and in the same person at different times according to the humour he is in, &c. This objection indeed holds true if applied to the desire of happiness as a general indefinite unknown object, that is, to a necessary, mechanical, uniform disposition in man as a metaphysical agent to the pursuit of good

as an abstract essence without any regard to the manner in which it is impressed on his imagination, to the knowledge which he can possibly have of any object as good, or to his immediate disposition to be affected by it. I have however all along contended that the desire of happiness is natural to the mind only in consequence of the idea, or knowledge of it, in the same manner that it is natural to the eye to see when the object is presented to it; to which it is no objection that this organ is endued with different degrees of sharpness in different persons, or that we sometimes see better than at others. Neither can I conceive how the associated impulses, spoken of in the passage above referred to, without an inherent, independent power in the ideas of certain objects to modify the will, and in the will to influence our actions can ever in any instance whatever account for voluntary action. I need not attempt to shew that the mechanical impulses to the pursuit of our own good or that of any

other person derived from past associations cannot be supposed to correspond exactly and uniformly with the particular successive situations, in which it is necessary for us to act, often with a view to a great number of circumstances, and for very complex ends. To suppose that the mechanical tendencies impressed on the muscles by any particular series of past objects can only require to be unfolded to produce regular and consistent action is like supposing that a hand-organ may be set to play a voluntary, or that the same types will serve without any alteration to print a column of a newspaper and a page of Tristram Shandy. A child for instance in going into a strange house soon after he had learned to walk would not be able to go from one room to another from the mere force of habit, that is from yielding to, or rather being blindly carried forward by the impulse of his past associations with respect to walking when at home. He would run against the doors, get entangled among

the chairs, fall over the stair case: he would commit more blunders with his eyes wide open than he would otherwise do blind-folded. He would be worse off without his understanding than without his sight. He might feel his way without his eyes, but without his understanding neither his hands nor eyes would be of any use to him. He would be incorrigible to falls and bruises. Whoever has seen a blind horse stagger against a wall and then start back from it awkward and affrighted, may have some idea of the surprise which we should constantly feel at the effects of our own actions, but not of the obstinate stupidity with which we should persist in them.

To this it is replied, that the account here given does not include all the associations which really take place: that the associations are general as well as particular, that there is the association of the general idea of a *purpose*, of the words *to walk*, *to go forwards*, &c. and that these general

actually done before, in the midst of his career. He is stopped by the idea of a pain which he has not yet felt, and which can only affect him as a general, or representative idea of pain, the object being new, and there being nothing in his past associations in the order in which they are recalled by memory to produce the necessary action. Here then he evidently *constructs* an artificial idea of pain beyond his actual experience, or he takes the old idea of pain which subsisted in his memory, and connects it by that act of the mind which we call imagination with an entirely new object; and thus torn out of its place in the lists of memory, not strengthened by its connection with any old associated ideas, nor moving on with the routine of habitual impulses, it does not fail on that account to influence the will and through that the motions of the body.—Now if any one chooses to consider this as the effect of association, he is at liberty to do so. The same kind of association, however,

must apply to the interest we take in the feelings of others, though perfect strangers to us, as well as to the interest we feel for ourselves. All that can ever take place in the imaginary anticipation either of our own feelings or those of others can be nothing more than some sort of transposition and modification of the old ideas of memory, or if there is any thing peculiar to this act of the mind, it is equally necessary to our feeling any interest in our own future impressions, or those of others. According to this account therefore the old idea of physical pain must be called up whenever I see any other person in the like danger, and the associated action along with it, just as much as if I were exposed to the same danger myself. This is I believe the doctrine of sympathy advanced by Adam Smith in his "Theory of Moral Sentiments." It is in fact neither self-love nor benevolence, neither fear nor compassion, nor voluntary attachment to any thing, but an unmeaning game of battle-

dore and shuttle-cock kept up between the nerves and muscles. But it seems to me a much more rational way to suppose that the idea does not lose it's efficacy by being combined with different circumstances, that it retains the same general nature as the original impression, that it therefore gives a new and immediate impulse to the mind, and that it's tendency to produce action is not entirely owing to the association between the original impression, and a particular action, which it mechanically excites over again. First, because the connection between the impression and action was not accidental but necessary, and therefore the connection between the idea and action is not to be attributed to association, but to the general nature of the human mind by which similar effects follow from similar causes. Secondly, if the imaginary or general idea were entirely powerless in itself except as a means of exciting some former impulse connected with physical pain, none but the very identical action formerly excited could

result from it, that is if I could not avoid an object in the same way that I had formerly done I should not attempt to avoid it at all, but remain quite helpless. Thirdly, because the ideas of future objects having no effect at all on my feelings or actions, and the connection between the original associated impressions being the strongest and most certain of all others, any particular train of mechanical impulses being once set in motion would necessarily go on in the old way unrestrained by any idea of consequences till they were stopped again by actual pain.—It is plain however that the activity of the understanding prevents this rough rebuke of experience, that the will (and our actions with it) bends and turns and winds according to every change of circumstances and impulse of imagination, that we need only foresee certain evils as the consequences of our actions in order to avoid them. The supposition that the idea of any particular motion necessary to a given end, or of the different motions

which combined together constitute some regular action is sufficient to produce that action by a subtle law of association can only apply to those different motions after they are willed, not to the willing them. That is, there must be a previous determination of the will, or feeling of remote good connected with the idea of the action before it can have any effect. The idea of any action must be in itself perfectly indifferent, being always advantageous, useless, or mischievous according to circumstances. I cannot therefore see any reason according to this hypothesis why I should will or be inclined to make any exertions not originating in some mechanical impulse that happens to be strongest at the time, merely because they may be necessary to avoid an imaginary evil which of itself does not cause the slightest emotion in my mind: on the contrary, if the barely thinking of any external action is always immediately to be followed by that action without a particular warrant from the will, there

could be no such thing as reasonable action among men, our actions would be more ridiculous than those of a monkey, or of a man possessed with St. Vitus's dance; they would resemble the diseased starts and fits of a madman, not the actions of a reasonable being. We should thrust our hands into the fire, dash our heads against the wall, leap down precipices, and commit more absurdities every moment of our lives than were performed by Don Quixote with so much labour and study by way of penance in the heart of the Brown Mountain. The *momentum* of the will is necessary to give direction and constancy to any of our actions; and this again can only be determined by the ideas of future good and evil, and the connection which the mind perceives between certain actions, and the attainment of the one or the prevention of the other. If our actions did not naturally slide into this track, if they did not follow the direction of reason wherever it points the way, they must

fall back again at every step into the old routine of blind mechanical impulse, and headlong associations that neither hear, nor see, nor understand any thing.—Lastly the terms *general association* mean nothing of themselves. I have done a particular action with a certain purpose, or I have had in my mind at the time the general idea of a purpose, of something useful connected with my action. What has this to do with my ability to perform any other action, be it ever so different, because it is also connected with a purpose? The associated idea either of a particular purpose, or of a purpose generally speaking can only have an immediate tendency to excite that particular action, with which it was associated, not any action whatever, merely because it may have a connection with some remote good. So of any number of actions. For let ever so many different actions have been associated with the idea of a purpose, this will not in the least enable me to perform any intermediate action, or to combine the

old actions in a different order with a view to a particular purpose, unless we give to the idea of this particular purpose as a general idea of good an absolute power to controul our actions, and force them into their proper places. I grant indeed that having once admitted a direct power in ideas of the same general nature to affect the will in the same manner we may by a parity of reasoning suppose that this power is capable of being transferred by association to the most indifferent ideas, which, as far as they resemble one another, will operate as general motives to action, or give a necessary bias to the will. But if this analogy holds with respect to secondary and artificial motives which are not in their own nature allied to action, surely it must hold much more with respect to the direct, original motives themselves, the ideas of good and evil, where the power inheres in the very nature of the object. My being led to perform different actions with which the same abstract idea of utility

is connected is not therefore properly owing to association, but because any ideas or motives of the same kind whether derived from a new impression, or made out by the imagination, or only general feelings must naturally influence the will in the same manner, and this impulse being once given, the understanding makes choice of such means as are perceived to be necessary to the attainment of the given object. For, after all, the execution of our purposes must be left to the understanding. The simple or direct ideas of things might excite emotion, volition, or action; but it would be the volition of the objects or feelings themselves, not of the means necessary to produce them. Feeling alone is therefore insufficient to the production of voluntary action. Neither is it to be accounted for from association. The actual means necessary to the production of a given end are willed, not because those very means have been already associated with that particular end (for this does not hap-

pen once in a thousand times) but because those means are known to be inseparable from the attainment of that end in the given circumstances.

There is however another objection to the disinterested hypothesis, which was long ago stated by Hobbes, Rochefocault, and the author of the Fable of the Bees, and has been since adopted and glossed over by Helvetius. It is pretended that in wishing to relieve the distresses of others we only wish to remove the uneasiness which pity creates in our own minds, that all our actions are necessarily selfish, as they all arise from some feeling of pleasure or pain existing in the mind of the individual, and that whether we intend our own good or that of others, the immediate gratification connected with the idea of any object is the sole motive which determines us in the pursuit of it.

First, this objection does not at all affect the question in dispute. For if it is allowed that the idea of the pleasures or pains of others excites an immediate interest

in the mind, if we feel sorrow and anxiety for their imaginary distresses exactly in the same way that we do for our own, and are impelled to action by the same motives; whether the action has for its object our own good or that of others, the nature of man as a voluntary agent must be the same, the effect of the principle impelling him must be the same, whether we call this principle self-love, or benevolence, or whatever refinements we may introduce into our manner of explaining it. The relation of man to himself and others as a moral being is plainly determined, for whether a regard to the future welfare of himself and others is the real, or only the ostensible motive of his actions, they all tend to one or other of these objects, and to one as directly as the other, which is the only thing worth inquiring about. All that can be meant by the most disinterested benevolence must be this immediate sympathy with the feelings of others, and it could never be supposed that man is more immediately

affected by the interests of others than he can be even by his own. If by self-love we understand any thing beyond the impulse of the present moment, it can be no more a mechanical thing than the most refined and comprehensive benevolence. I only contend then that we are naturally interested in the welfare of others in the same sense in which we are said to be interested in our own future welfare. Self-love used in the sense which the above objection implies must therefore mean something very different from an exclusive principle of deliberate, calculating selfishness, which must render us indifferent to every thing but own advantage, or from the love of physical pleasure and aversion to physical pain, which would produce no interest in any but sensible impressions*.

Supposing therefore that our most generous feelings and actions were equivocal, the object only bearing a shew of disinterestedness, the motive being always selfish,

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this would be no reason for rejecting the common use of the term *disinterested benevolence*, which expresses nothing more than an immediate reference of our actions to the good of others, as self-love expresses a conscious reference of them to our own good, as means to an end. This is the proper meaning of the terms. If there is any impropriety in the one, the other must be equally objectionable, the same fallacy lurks under both.

Secondly, the objection is not true in itself, that is, I see no reason for resolving the feelings of compassion, &c. into a principle of mechanical self-love. That the motive to action exists in the mind of the person who acts is what no one can deny. The passion excited and the impression producing it must necessarily affect the individual. There must always be some one to feel and act, or there could be no such thing as feeling or action *. It

* See preface to Butler's Sermons.

cannot therefore be implied as a condition in the love of others, that this love should not be *felt* by the person who loves them, for this would be to say that he must love them and not love them at the same time, which is palpable nonsense. This absurd inference, I say, could never be implied in the common use of the terms, as it could never be imagined that in order to feel for others, we must in reality feel nothing. This distinction proves clearly that it is always the individual who *loves*, but not that he always *loves himself*; for it is to be presumed that the word *self* has some meaning in it, and it would have absolutely none at all, if nothing more were intended by it than any object or impression existing in the mind. Self-love would merely signify the love of something, and the distinction between ourselves and others be quite confounded. It therefore becomes necessary to set limits to the meaning of the term.

First, it may signify, as explained above, the love or affection excited by the

idea of our own good, and the conscious pursuit of it as a general, remote, ideal thing. In this sense, that is considered with respect to the proposed end of our actions, I have shewn sufficiently that there is no exclusive principle of self-love in the human mind which constantly impels us to pursue our own advantage and nothing but that, and that it must be equally absurd to consider either self-love or benevolence as a physical operation.

Another sense of the term may be, that the indulgence of certain affections necessarily tends without our thinking of it to our immediate gratification, and that the impulse to prolong a state of pleasure and put a stop to whatever gives the mind the least uneasiness is the real spring and overruling principle of our actions. No matter whether the impression existing in my mind is a sensation or an idea, whether it is an idea of my own good or that of another, its effect on the mind is entirely owing to this involuntary attachment to

whatever contributes to my own gratification, and aversion from actual pain. Or the mind is so constructed that without forethought or any reflection on itself it has a natural tendency to prolong and heighten a state of pleasurable feeling, and instantly remove every painful feeling. This tendency must be wholly unconscious; the moment my own gratification is indirectly adverted to by the mind as the consequence of indulging certain feelings, and so becomes a distinct motive to action, it returns back into the limits of deliberate, calculating selfishness; and it has been shewn that there is nothing in the idea of our own good which makes it a proper motive of action more than that of others. There appears to be as little propriety in making the mechanical tendency to our own good the foundation of human actions. In the first place, it may be sufficient to deny the mere matter of fact, that such is the natural disposition of the human mind, We do not on every occasion

blindly consult the interest of the moment, there is no instinctive, unerring bias to our own good, controuling all other impulses, and guiding them to it's own purposes. It is not true that in giving way to the feelings either of sympathy or rational self-interest (by one or other of which feelings my actions are constantly governed *) I always yield to that impulse which is accompanied with most pleasure at the time. It is true that I yield to the strongest inclination, but not that my strongest inclination is to pleasure. The

* As far as the love of good or happiness operates as a general principle of action, it is in this way. I have supposed this principle to be at the bottom of all our actions, because I did not desire to enter into the question. If I should ever finish the plan which I have begun, I shall endeavour to shew that the love of happiness even in the most general sense does not account for the passions of men. The love of truth, and the love of power are I think distinct principles of action, and mix with, and modify all our pursuits. See Butler as quoted above.

idea of the relief I may afford to a person in extreme distress is not necessarily accompanied by a correspondent degree of pleasurable sensation to counterbalance the painful feeling his immediate distress occasions in my mind. It is certain that sometimes the one and sometimes the other may prevail without altering my purpose in the least: I am held to my purpose by the idea (which I cannot get rid of) of what another suffers, and that is in my power to alleviate his suffering, not that that idea is always the most agreeable contemplation I could have. The mind is often haunted by painful images and recollections, not that we court their company, but that we cannot shake them off, even though we strive to do it. Why does a woman of the town always turn round to look at another finer than herself? Why does the envious man torment himself by dwelling on the advantages of his rival? Not from the pleasure it affords him. Why then should it be maintained that the feel-

ings of compassion, generosity, &c. cannot possibly actuate the mind, but because and in as far as they contribute to our own satisfaction? Those who willingly perform the most painful duties of friendship or humanity do not do this from the immediate gratification attending it; it is as easy to turn away from a beggar as to relieve him; and if the mind were not governed by a sense of truth, and of the real consequences of its actions, we should treat the distresses of others with the same sort of feeling as we go to see a tragedy because we know that the pleasure will be greater than the pain. There is indeed a false and bastard kind of feeling which is governed altogether by a regard to this reaction of pity on our own minds, and which therefore serves more strongly to distinguish the true. So there is a false fear, as well as a refined self-interest. We very often shrink from immediate pain, though we know that it is necessary to our obtaining some important object; and at

other times undergo the most painful operations in order to avoid some greater evil at a distance.—In the sense which the objection implies, my love of another is not the love of myself but as it operates to produce my own good. The mind is supposed to be mechanically attached to, or to fly from every idea or impression simply as it affects it with pleasure, or pain. And if this were the case, it might with some propriety be said to be actuated by a principle of mechanical or practical self-love. If however there is no such principle regulating my attachment to others by my own convenience, very little foundation will be left for the mechanical theory. For, secondly, the real question is, why do we sympathize with others at all? It seems we are first impelled by self-love to feel uneasiness at the prospect of another's suffering, in order that the same principle of tender concern for ourselves may afterwards impel us to get rid of that uneasiness by endeavouring to prevent the suffering which is the cause

of it. It is absurd to say that in compassionating the distress of others we are only affected by our own pain or uneasiness, since this very pain arises from our compassion. It is putting the effect before the cause. Before I can be affected by my own pain, I must first be put in pain. If I am affected by, or feel pain and sorrow at an idea existing in my mind, which idea is neither pain itself nor an idea of my own pain, I wonder in what sense this can be called the love of myself. Again, I am equally at a loss to conceive how if the pain which this idea gives me does not impel me to get rid of it as it gives *me* pain or as it actually affects myself as a distinct, momentary impression, but as it is connected with other ideas, that is, is supposed to affect another, how I say this can be considered as the effect of self-love. The object, effort or struggle of the mind is not to remove the idea or immediate feeling of pain from the individual or to put a stop to that feeling as it affects his

temporary interest, but to produce a disconnection (whatever it may cost him) between certain ideas of other things existing in his mind, namely the idea of pain, and the idea of another person. Self, mere physical self, is entirely forgotten both practically and consciously. My own good is neither the exciting cause nor the immediate result of the feeling by which I am actuated. I do not shrink from the idea of the pain which another feels as it affects myself, but it excites repugnance, uneasiness, or active aversion in my mind as it affects, or is connected with the idea of another; and it is because I know that certain actions will prevent or remove that pain from that other person according to the manner in which I have perceived effects to be connected together in nature, that I *will* those actions for that purpose, or that their ideas take hold of my mind, and affect it in such a manner as to produce their volition. In short, the change which the mind endeavours to produce is

not in the relation of a certain painful idea to itself as perceiving it, but in the relation of certain ideas of external things to one another. If this is not sufficient to make the distinction intelligible, I cannot express it any better. "Oh, but" (it will be said) "I cannot help feeling pain when I see another in actual pain, or get rid of the idea by any other means than by relieving the person, and knowing that it exists no longer." But will this prove that my love of others is regulated by my love of myself, or that my self-love is subservient to my love of others? What hinders me from immediately removing the painful idea from my mind but that my sympathy with others stands in the way of it? That this independent attachment to the good of others is a natural, unavoidable feeling of the human mind is what I do not wish to deny. It is also, if you will, a mechanical feeling; but then it is neither a physical, nor a selfish mechanism. I see colours, hear sounds,

feel heat, and cold, and believe that two and two make four by a certain mechanism, or from the necessary structure of the human mind; but it does not follow that all this has any thing to do with self-love.—One half of the process, namely the connecting the sense of pain with the idea of it, is evidently contrary to self-love; nor do I see any more reason for ascribing the uneasiness, or active impulse which follows to that principle, since my own good is neither thought of in it, nor does it follow from it except indirectly, slowly and conditionally. The mechanical tendency to my own ease or gratification is so far from being the real spring or natural motive of compassion that it is constantly overruled and defeated by it. If it should be answered that these restrictions and modifications of the principle of self-love are a necessary consequence of the nature of a thinking being, then I say that it is nonsense to talk of mechanical self-love in connection with a

power of reflection, that is, a mind capable of perceiving the consequences of things beyond itself, and of being affected by them. To ask therefore whether if it were possible to get rid of my own uneasiness without supposing the uneasiness of another to be removed I should wish to remove it, is foreign to the purpose; for it is to suppose that the idea of another's uneasiness is not an immediate object of uneasiness to me, or that by making a distinction of reflection between the idea of what another suffers, and the uneasiness it causes in me, the former will cease to give me any uneasiness, which is a contradiction. A question might as well be put whether if pleasure gave me pain, and pain pleasure, I should not like pain, and dislike pleasure. So long as the idea of what another suffers is a necessary source of uneasiness to me, and the motive and guide of my actions, it is not true that my only concern is for self, or that I am governed solely by

a principle of self-interest.—The body has a mechanical tendency to shrink from physical pain: this may be called mechanical self-love, because, though the good of the individual is not the object of the action, it is the immediate and natural effect of it. The movement which is dictated by nature is directly followed by the cessation of the pain by which the individual was annoyed. The evil is completely removed with respect to the individual, the moment the object is at a distance from him; but it only exists as it affects the individual, it is therefore completely at an end when it ceases to affect him. The only thing necessary therefore is to produce this change in the relation of the body to the object; now this is the exact tendency of the impulse produced by bodily pain, that is, it shrinks *at* the pain and *from* the object. The being does not suffer a moment longer than he can help it: for there is nothing that should induce him to remain in pain. The body is

not tied down to do penance under the discipline of external objects, till by fulfilling certain conditions, from which it reaps no benefit, it obtains a release; all its exertions tend immediately to its own relief. The body (at least according to the account here spoken of) is a machine so contrived, that, as far as depends on itself, it always tends to its own good, in the mind, on the contrary, there are numberless lets and impediments that interfere with this object inseparable from its very nature; the body strives to produce such alterations in its relation to other things as conduce to its own advantage, the mind seeks to alter the relations of other things to one another; the body *loves* its own good, for it tends to it, the understanding is not governed solely by this principle, for it is constantly aiming at other objects. To make the two cases of physical uneasiness, and compassion parallel, it would be necessary to suppose either an involuntary tendency in the muscles to remove every

painful object from another through mechanical sympathy, or that the real object of compassion was to remove the nervous uneasiness, occasioned by the idea of another's pain, as an abstract sensation existing in my mind, totally unconnected with the idea which gave rise to it.

Lastly, should any desperate metaphysician persist in affirming that my love of others is still the love of myself because the impression exciting my sympathy must exist in my mind and so be a part of myself, I should answer that this is using words without affixing any distinct meaning to them. The love or affection excited by any general idea existing in my mind can no more be said to be the love of myself than the idea of another person is the idea of myself because it is I who perceive it. This method of reasoning, however, will not go a great way to prove the doctrine of an abstract principle of self-interest, for by the same rule it would follow that I hate myself in hating any

other person. Indeed upon this principle the whole structure of language is a continued absurdity. Whatever can be made the object of our thoughts must be a part of ourselves, the whole world is contained within us, I am no longer John or James, but every one that I know or can think of, I am the least part of myself, my self-interest is extended as far as my thoughts can reach, I can love no one but I must love myself in him, in hating others I also hate myself. In this sense no one can so much as think of, much less love any one besides himself, for he can only think of his own thoughts. If our generous feelings are thus to be construed into selfishness, our malevolent ones must at least be allowed to be disinterested, for they are directed against ourselves, that is against the *ideas* of certain persons in our minds. If I can have no feeling *for* any one but myself, I can have no feeling *about* any one but myself. Suppose I am seized with a fit of rage against

a man, and take up a knife to stab him, the quantity of malice, which according to the common notion is here directed against another, must according to this system fall upon myself. I see a man sitting on the opposite side of a table, towards whom I think I feel the greatest rancour, but in fact I only feel it against myself. For what is this man whom I think I see before me but an object existing in my mind, and therefore a part of myself? The sword which I see is not a real sword, but an image impressed on my mind; and the mental blow which I strike with it is not aimed at another being out of myself, (for that is impossible) but at an idea of my own, at the being whom I hate within myself, at myself. If I am always necessarily the object of my own thoughts and actions, I must hate, love, serve, or stab myself as it happens. It is pretended by a violent assumption that benevolence is only a desire to prolong the idea of another's pleasure in one's own mind,

because that idea exists there: malevolence must therefore be a disposition to prolong the idea of pain in one's own mind for the same reason, that is, to injure one's-self, for by this philosophy no one can have a single idea which does not refer to, nor any impulse which does not originate in self.—If by self-love be meant nothing more than the attachment of the mind to any object or idea existing in it, or the connection between any object or idea producing affection and the state of mind produced by it, this is merely the common connection between cause and effect, and the love of every thing must be the love of myself, for the love of every thing must be the love of the object exciting it. On the contrary, if by self-love be meant my attachment to or interest in any object in consequence of it's affecting me personally or from the stronger and more immediate manner in which certain objects and impressions act upon me, then it cannot be affirmed without an absurdity that all affection whatever is self-love. So if I

see a man wounded, and this sight occasions in me a painful feeling of sympathy, I do not in this case feel for myself, because between that idea or object impressed on my mind and the painful feeling which follows there is no such positive connection as there is between the infliction of the same wound on my own body; and the physical pain which follows it. Will it be pretended by any one, on whose brain the intricacies of metaphysics have not had the same effect as the reading of romances had on the renowned knight of La Mancha, that a piece of wood which I see a man cutting in pieces, and so is an object existing in my mind, is a part of myself in the same sense as a leg or an arm? For my own part, as I am not at all affected by the hacking and hewing which this piece of wood receives, or all the blows with which it rings, which are to me mere harmless flourishes in the air, it seems to me a very different thing. The one idea is myself in a simple, very abstract sense

indeed, the other idea is myself in the common emphatical sense, it is a reduplication or aggravation of the idea, the object becomes myself by a double right, I am sensible *in* the object as well as *to* it. I should say, then, that when the sight of another person wounded excites a feeling of compassion in my mind, this is not a selfish feeling in any narrow or degrading sense of the word, which is the only thing in dispute. (If selfishness is to mean generosity, there is an end at once of the dispute.) And that for this plain reason, that the connection between the visible impression and the feeling of pain is of a totally different kind from the connection between the feeling of pain, and the same wound when inflicted on my own body. The one is an affair of sensation, the other is entirely an affair of imagination. My love of others cannot therefore be built upon the love of myself, considering this last as the effect of "physical sensibility", and the mo-

ment we resolve self-love into the rational pursuit of a remote object, it has been shewn that the same reasoning applies to both, and that the love of others has the same necessary foundation in the human mind as the love of ourselves.

THE END,

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ERRATA.

- Page 23, l. 13, *for interest read interests.*
44, l. 18, *for sympathise read sympathize.*
49, l. 6, *dele comma after virtue.*
56, l. 3, *for by and bye read by and by.*
88, l. 3, *a comma after action.*
98, l. 13, *insert a mark for a parenthesis after individual.*
206, l. 12 *from the bottom, for auroit read seroit.*

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JAN 24 1936

