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21L.017 The Art of the Probable: Literature and Probability
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From **AN ESSAY ON MAN** by Alexander Pope (1734)
(TO H. ST. JOHN LORD BOLINGBROKE.)

EPISTLE I. OF THE NATURE AND STATE OF MAN, WITH RESPECT TO THE UNIVERSE.

The Argument

Introduction: Of Man in the abstract. I. That we can judge only with regard to our own system, being ignorant of the relations of systems and things, v.17, etc. II. That Man is not to be deemed imperfect, but a being suited to his place and rank in the Creation, agreeable to the general Order of Things, and conformable to Ends and Relations to him unknown, v.35, etc. III. That it is partly upon his ignorance of future events, and partly upon the hope of future state, that all his happiness in the present depends, v.77, etc. IV. The pride of aiming at more knowledge, and pretending to more Perfection, the cause of Man's error and misery. The impiety of putting himself in the place of God, and judging of the fitness or unfitness, perfection or imperfection, justice or injustice of His dispensations, v.109, etc. V. The absurdity of conceiving himself the final cause of the Creation, or expecting that perfection in the moral world, which is not in the natural, v.131, etc. VI. The unreasonableness of his complaints against Providence, while on the one hand he demands the Perfections of the Angels, and on the other the bodily qualifications of the Brutes; though to possess any of the sensitive faculties in a higher degree would render him miserable, v.173, etc. VII. That throughout the whole visible world, an universal order and gradation in the sensual and mental faculties is observed, which cause is a subordination of creature to creature, and of all creatures to Man. The gradations of sense, instinct, thought, reflection, reason; that Reason alone countervails all the other faculties, v.207. VIII. How much further this order and subordination of living creatures may extend, above and below us; were any part of which broken, not that part only, but the whole connected creation, must be destroyed, v.233. IX. The extravagance, madness, and pride of such a desire, v.250. X. The consequence of all, the absolute submission due to Providence, both as to our present and future state, v.281, etc., to the end.

Awake, my St. John! leave all meaner things
To low ambition, and the pride of kings.
Let us (since life can little more supply
Than just to look about us and to die)
Expatiate free o'er all this scene of man;
A mighty maze! but not without a plan;
A wild, where weeds and flowers promiscuous shoot;
Or garden tempting with forbidden fruit.
Together let us beat this ample field,
Try what the open, what the covert yield;
The latent tracts, the giddy heights, explore
Of all who blindly creep, or sightless soar;
Eye Nature's walks, shoot Folly as it flies,
And catch the manners living as they rise;
Laugh where we must, be candid where we can;
But vindicate the ways of God to man.

I. Say first, of God above, or man below
What can we reason, but from what we know?
Of man, what see we but his station here,
From which to reason, or to which refer?
Through worlds unnumbered though the God be
known,

'Tis ours to trace Him only in our own.
He, who through vast immensity can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose one universe,
Observe how system into system runs,
What other planets circle other suns,
What varied being peoples every star,
May tell why Heaven has made us as we are.
But of this frame, the bearings, and the ties,
The strong connections, nice dependencies,
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Looked through? or can a part contain the whole?
Is the great chain, that draws all to agree,
And drawn supports, upheld by God, or thee?

II. Presumptuous man! the reason wouldst thou find,
Why formed so weak, so little, and so blind?
First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,
Why formed no weaker, blinder, and no less;
Ask of thy mother earth, why oaks are made
Taller or stronger than the weeds they shade?
Or ask of yonder argent fields above,
Why Jove's satellites are less than Jove?
Of systems possible, if 'tis confest

That wisdom infinite must form the best,
Where all must full or not coherent be,
And all that rises, rise in due degree;
Then in the scale of reasoning life, 'tis plain,
There must be, somewhere, such a rank as man:
And all the question (wrangle e'er so long)
Is only this, if God has placed him wrong?

Respecting man, whatever wrong we call,
May, must be right, as relative to all.
In human works, though laboured on with pain,
A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain;
In God's one single can its end produce;
Yet serves to second too some other use.
So man, who here seems principal alone,
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown,
Touches some wheel, or verges to some goal;
'Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.

When the proud steed shall know why man restrains
His fiery course, or drives him o'er the plains:
When the dull ox, why now he breaks the clod,
Is now a victim, and now Egypt's god:
Then shall man's pride and dulness comprehend
His actions', passions', being's, use and end;
Why doing, suffering, checked, impelled; and why
This hour a slave, the next a deity.

Then say not man's imperfect, Heaven in fault;
Say rather man's as perfect as he ought:
His knowledge measured to his state and place;
His time a moment, and a point his space.
If to be perfect in a certain sphere,
What matter, soon or late, or here or there?
The blest to-day is as completely so,
As who began a thousand years ago.

III. Heaven from all creatures hides the book of Fate,
All but the page prescribed, their present state:
From brutes what men, from men what spirits know:
Or who could suffer being here below?
The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?
Pleased to the last, he crops the flowery food,
And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood.
Oh, blindness to the future! kindly given,
That each may fill the circle, marked by Heaven:
Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,
Atoms or systems into ruin hurled,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world.

Hope humbly, then; with trembling pinions soar;
Wait the great teacher Death; and God adore.

What future bliss, He gives not thee to know,
But gives that hope to be thy blessing now.
Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never is, but always to be blest:
The soul, uneasy and confined from home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears Him in the wind;
His soul, proud science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk, or milky way;
Yet simple Nature to his hope has given,
Behind the cloud-topped hill, an humbler heaven;
Some safer world in depth of woods embraced,
Some happier island in the watery waste,
Where slaves once more their native land behold,
No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold.
To be, contents his natural desire,
He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company.

IV. Go, wiser thou! and, in thy scale of sense,
Weigh thy opinion against providence;
Call imperfection what thou fanciest such,
Say, here He gives too little, there too much;
Destroy all creatures for thy sport or gust,
Yet cry, if man's unhappy, God's unjust;
If man alone engross not Heaven's high care,
Alone made perfect here, immortal there:
Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Re-judge His justice, be the God of God.
In pride, in reasoning pride, our error lies;
All quit their sphere, and rush into the skies.
Pride still is aiming at the blest abodes,
Men would be angels, angels would be gods.
Aspiring to be gods, if angels fell,
Aspiring to be angels, men rebel:
And who but wishes to invert the laws
Of order, sins against the Eternal Cause.

V. Ask for what end the heavenly bodies shine,
Earth for whose use? Pride answers, "'Tis for mine:
For me kind Nature wakes her genial power,
Suckles each herb, and spreads out every flower;
Annual for me, the grape, the rose renew
The juice nectareous, and the balmy dew;
For me, the mine a thousand treasures brings;
For me, health gushes from a thousand springs;
Seas roll to waft me, suns to light me rise;
My footstool earth, my canopy the skies."

But errs not Nature from this gracious end,
 From burning suns when livid deaths descend,
 When earthquakes swallow, or when tempests sweep
 Towns to one grave, whole nations to the deep?
 "No, ('tis replied) the first Almighty Cause
 Acts not by partial, but by general laws;
 The exceptions few; some change since all began;
 And what created perfect?" -- Why then man?
 If the great end be human happiness,
 Then Nature deviates; and can man do less?
 As much that end a constant course requires
 Of showers and sunshine, as of man's desires;
 As much eternal springs and cloudless skies,
 As men for ever temperate, calm, and wise.
 If plagues or earthquakes break not Heaven's design,
 Why then a Borgia, or a Catiline?
 Who knows but He, whose hand the lightning forms,
 Who heaves old ocean, and who wings the storms;
 Pours fierce ambition in a Caesar's mind,
 Or turns young Ammon loose to scourge mankind?
 From pride, from pride, our very reasoning springs;
 Account for moral, as for natural things:
 Why charge we heaven in those, in these acquit?
 In both, to reason right is to submit.

Better for us, perhaps, it might appear,
 Were there all harmony, all virtue here;
 That never air or ocean felt the wind;
 That never passion discomposed the mind.
 But all subsists by elemental strife;
 And passions are the elements of life.
 The general order, since the whole began,
 Is kept in nature, and is kept in man.

VI. What would this man? Now upward will he
 soar,
 And little less than angel, would be more;
 Now looking downwards, just as grieved appears
 To want the strength of bulls, the fur of bears
 Made for his use all creatures if he call,
 Say what their use, had he the powers of all?
 Nature to these, without profusion, kind,
 The proper organs, proper powers assigned;
 Each seeming want compensated of course,
 Here with degrees of swiftness, there of force;
 All in exact proportion to the state;
 Nothing to add, and nothing to abate.
 Each beast, each insect, happy in its own:
 Is Heaven unkind to man, and man alone?
 Shall he alone, whom rational we call,
 Be pleased with nothing, if not blessed with all?

The bliss of man (could pride that blessing find)
 Is not to act or think beyond mankind;
 No powers of body or of soul to share,
 But what his nature and his state can bear.
 Why has not man a microscopic eye?
 For this plain reason, man is not a fly.
 Say what the use, were finer optics given,
 To inspect a mite, not comprehend the heaven?
 Or touch, if tremblingly alive all o'er,
 To smart and agonize at every pore?
 Or quick effluvia darting through the brain,
 Die of a rose in aromatic pain?
 If Nature thundered in his opening ears,
 And stunned him with the music of the spheres,
 How would he wish that Heaven had left him still
 The whispering zephyr, and the purling rill?
 Who finds not Providence all good and wise,
 Alike in what it gives, and what denies?

VII. Far as Creation's ample range extends,
 The scale of sensual, mental powers ascends:
 Mark how it mounts, to man's imperial race,
 From the green myriads in the peopled grass:
 What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme,
 The mole's dim curtain, and the lynx's beam:
 Of smell, the headlong lioness between,
 And hound sagacious on the tainted green:
 Of hearing, from the life that fills the flood,
 To that which warbles through the vernal wood:
 The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!
 Feels at each thread, and lives along the line:
 In the nice bee, what sense so subtly true
 From poisonous herbs extracts the healing dew?
 How instinct varies in the grovelling swine,
 Compared, half-reasoning elephant, with thine!
 'Twixt that, and reason, what a nice barrier,
 For ever separate, yet for ever near!
 Remembrance and reflection how allayed;
 What thin partitions sense from thought divide:
 And middle natures, how they long to join,
 Yet never passed the insuperable line!
 Without this just gradation, could they be
 Subjected, these to those, or all to thee?
 The powers of all subdued by thee alone,
 Is not thy reason all these powers in one?

VIII. See, through this air, this ocean, and this earth,
 All matter quick, and bursting into birth.
 Above, how high, progressive life may go!
 Around, how wide! how deep extend below?

Vast chain of being! which from God began,
Natures ethereal, human, angel, man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
No glass can reach; from Infinite to thee,
From thee to nothing. On superior powers
Were we to press, inferior might on ours:
Or in the full creation leave a void,
Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroyed:
From Nature's chain whatever link you strike,
Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.

And, if each system in gradation roll
Alike essential to the amazing whole,
The least confusion but in one, not all
That system only, but the whole must fall.
Let earth unbalanced from her orbit fly,
Planets and suns run lawless through the sky;
Let ruling angels from their spheres be hurled,
Being on being wrecked, and world on world;
Heaven's whole foundations to their centre nod,
And nature tremble to the throne of God.
All this dread order break -- for whom? for thee?
Vile worm! -- Oh, madness! pride! impiety!

IX. What if the foot, ordained the dust to tread,
Or hand, to toil, aspired to be the head?
What if the head, the eye, or ear repined
To serve mere engines to the ruling mind?
Just as absurd for any part to claim
To be another, in this general frame:
Just as absurd, to mourn the tasks or pains,
The great directing Mind of All ordains.

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
That, changed through all, and yet in all the same;
Great in the earth, as in the ethereal frame;
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent;
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart:
As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,
As the rapt seraph that adores and burns:
To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

X. Cease, then, nor order imperfection name:
Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.
Know thy own point: this kind, this due degree
Of blindness, weakness, Heaven bestows on thee.

Submit. In this, or any other sphere,
Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear:
Safe in the hand of one disposing Power,
Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.
All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good:
And, spite of pride in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.

EPISTLE II:

Of the Nature and State of Man, With Respect to Himself as an Individual
ARGUMENT

I. The business of Man not to pry into God, but to study himself. His middle nature; his powers and frailties. The limits of his capacity. II. The two principles of Man: Self-love and Reason, both necessary. Self-love the stronger, and why. Their end the same. III. The Passions, and their use. The predominant passion, and its force. Its necessity, in directing men to different purposes. Its providential use, in fixing our principle, and ascertaining our virtue. IV. Virtue and Vice joined in our mixed nature; the limits near, yet the things separate, and evident: what is the office of Reason. V. How odious Vice in itself, and how we deceive ourselves into it. VI. That, however, the ends of Providence, and general goods, are answered in our passions and imperfections. How usefully these are distributed to all orders of men: how useful they are to Society; and to individuals; in every state, and every age of life.

I.
Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is Man.
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
He hangs between, in doubt to act or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a God or Beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little or too much;
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
Still by himself abused or disabused;
Created half to rise, and half to fall:
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd;
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

Go, wondrous creature! mount where Science guides;
Go measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides;
Instruct the planets in what orbs to run,
Correct old Time, and regulate the sun;
Go, soar with Plato to th'empyrean sphere,
To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;
Or tread the mazy round his followers trod,
And quitting sense call imitating God;
As eastern priests in giddy circles run,
And turn their heads to imitate the sun.
Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule--
Then drop into thyself, and be a fool!

Superior beings, when of late they saw
A mortal man unfold all Nature's law,
Admired such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And show'd a NEWTON as we show an ape.
Could he, whose rules the rapid comet bind,
Describe or fix one movement of his mind?
Who saw its fires here rise, and there descend,
Explain his own beginning or his end?
Alas! what wonder! Man's superior part
Uncheck'd may rise, and climb from art to art;
But when his own great work is but begun,
What Reason weaves, by Passion is undone.

Trace Science then, with modesty thy guide;
First strip off all her equipage of pride;
Deduct what is but vanity or dress,
Or learning's luxury, or idleness,
Or tricks to show the stretch of human brain,
Mere curious pleasure, or ingenious pain;
Expunge the whole, or lop th'excrement parts;
Of all our vices we have created arts;
Then see how little the remaining sum,
Which serv'd the past, and must the times to come!

EPISTLE III:

Of the Nature and State of Man, With Respect to Society

ARGUMENT

I. The whole Universe one system of Society. Nothing made wholly for itself, nor yet wholly for another. The happiness of animals mutual. II. Reason or Instinct operates alike to the good of each individual. Reason or Instinct operates also to Society in all animals. III. How far Society carried by Instinct;--how much farther by reason. IV. Of that which is called the state of nature. Reason instructed by Instinct in the invention of the arts;--and in the forms of Society. V. Origin of political societies;--origin of Monarchy;--patriarchal government. VI. Origin of true Religion and Government, from the same principle of Love;--origin of Superstition and Tyranny, from the same principle of Fear. The influence of Self-love operating to the social and public good. Restoration of true Religion and Government on their first principle. Mixed government. Various forms of each, and the true end of all.

Here then we rest--`The Universal Cause
Acts to one end, but acts by various laws."
In all the madness of superfluous Health,
The trim of Pride, the impudence of Wealth,
Let this great truth be present night and day:
But most be present, if we preach or pray.

I.
Look round our world; behold the chain of love
Combining all below and all above.
See plastic Nature working to this end,
The single atoms each to other tend,
Attract, attracted to, the next in place,
Form'd and impell'd its neighbour to embrace.
See matter next, with various life endued,
Press to one centre still, the gen'ral good;
See dying vegetables life sustain,
See life dissolving vegetate again.
All forms that perish other forms supply
(By turns we catch the vital breath, and die),
Like bubbles on the sea of Matter borne,
They rise, they break, and to that sea return.
Nothing is foreign; parts relate to whole;
One all-extending, all-preserving, soul
Connects each being, greatest with the least;
Made beast in aid of man, and man of beast;
All serv'd all serving: nothing stands alone;
The chain holds on, and where it ends unknown.

Had God, thou fool! work'd solely for thy good,
Thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food?
Who for thy table feeds the wanton fawn,
For him as kindly spreads the flowery lawn.
Is it for thee the lark ascends and sings?
Joy tunes his voice, joy elevates his wings.
Is it for thee the linnet pours his throat?

Loves of his own and raptures swell the note.
The bounding steed you pompously bestride
Shares with his lord the pleasure and the pride.
Is thine alone the seed that strews the plain?
The birds of Heav'n shall vindicate their grain.
Thine the full harvest of the golden year?
Part pays, and justly, the deserving steer.
The hog that ploughs not, nor obeys thy call,
Lives on the labours of this lord of all.

Know Nature's children all divide her care;
The fur that warms a monarch warm'd a bear.
While Man exclaims, ``See all things for my use!"
``See man for mine!" replies a pamper'd goose:
And just as short of Reason he must fall,
Who thinks all made for one, not one for all.

Grant that the pow'rful still the weak control;
Be Man the wit and tyrant of the whole:
Nature that tyrant checks; he only knows,
And helps. another creature's wants and woes.
Say will the falcon, stooping from above,
Smit with her varying plumage, spare the dove?
Admires the jay the insect's gilded wings?
Or hears the hawk when Philomela sings?--
Man cares for all: to birds he gives his woods,
To beasts his pastures, and to fish his floods.
For some his Int'rest prompts him to provide,
For more his Pleasure, yet for more his Pride:
All feed on one vain patron, and enjoy
Th'extensive blessing of his luxury.
That very life his learned hunger craves,
He saves from famine, from the savage saves;
Nay, feasts the animal he dooms his feast,
And till he ends the being makes it blest;
Which sees no more the stroke, or feels the pain,

Than favour'd man by touch ethereal slain.
The creature had his feast of life before;
Thou too must perish when thy feast is o'er!

To each unthinking being, Heav'n, a friend,
Gives not the useless knowledge of its end:
To man imparts it, but with such a view
As while he dreads it, makes him hope it too;
The hour conceal'd, and so remote the fear,
Death still draws nearer, never seeming near.
Great standing miracle! that Heav'n assign'd
Its only thinking thing this turn of mind.

II.

Whether with Reason or with Instinct blest,
Know all enjoy that power which suits them best;
To bliss alike by that direction tend,
And find the means proportion'd to their end.
Say, where full Instinct is th' unerring guide,
What Pope or Council can they need beside?
Reason, however able, cool at best,
Cares not for service, or but serves when prest,
Stays till we call, and then not often near;
But honest Instinct comes a volunteer,
Sure never to o'ershoot, but just to hit,
While still too wide or short is human wit;
Sure by quick Nature happiness to gain,
Which heavier Reason labours at in vain.
This, too, serves always; Reason, never long;
One must go right, the other may go wrong.
See then the acting and comparing powers
One in their nature, which are two in ours;
And Reason raise o'er Instinct if you can,
In this 'tis God directs, in that 'tis Man.

Who taught the nations of the field and wood
To shun their poison and to choose their food?
Prescient, the tides of tempests to withstand,
Build on the wave, or arch beneath the sand?
Who made the spider's parallel design,
Sure as Demoivre, without rule or line?
Who bade the stork, Columbus-like, explore
Heav'n's not his own, and worlds unknown before?
Who calls the council, states the certain day,
Who forms the phalanx, and who points the way?

III.

God, in the nature of each being founds
Its proper bliss, and sets its proper bounds;
But as he framed a whole the while to bless,

On mutual wants built mutual happiness;
So from the first eternal order ran,
And creature link'd to creature, man to man.
Whate'er of life all-quick'ning ether keeps,
Or breathes thro' air, or shoots beneath the deeps,
Or pours profuse on earth, one Nature feeds
The vital flame, and swells the genial seeds.
Not man alone, but all that roam the wood,
Or wing the sky, or roll along the flood,
Each loves itself, but not itself alone,
Each sex desires alike, till two are one.
Nor ends the pleasure with the fierce embrace:
They love themselves a third time in their race.
Thus beast and bird their common charge attend,
The mothers nurse it, and the sires defend;
The young dismiss'd to wander earth or air,
There stops the instinct, and there ends the care;
The link dissolves, each seeks a fresh embrace,
Another love succeeds, another race.
A longer care man's helpless kind demands;
That longer care contracts more lasting bands:
Reflection, Reason, still the ties improve,
At once extend the int'rest and the love;
With choice we fix, with sympathy we burn;
Each virtue in each passion takes its turn;
And still new needs, new helps, new habits rise,
That graft benevolence on charities.
Still as one brood and as another rose,
These natural love maintain'd, habitual those:
That last, scarce ripen'd into perfect man,
Saw helpless him from whom their life began:
Mem'ry and forecast just returns engage,
That pointed back to youth, this on to age;
While pleasure, gratitude, and hope, combin'd,
Still spread the int'rest, and preserv'd the kind.

IV.

Nor think in Nature's state they blindly trod;
The state of Nature was the reign of God:
Self-love and Social at her birth began,
Union the bond of all things, and of Man;
Pride then was not, nor arts, that pride to aid;
Man walk'd with beast, joint tenant of the shade;
The same his table, and the same his bed;
No murder clothed him, and no murder fed.
In the same temple, the resounding wood,
All vocal beings hymn'd their equal God:
The shrine with gore unstain'd, with gold undrest,
Unbribed, unbloody, stood the blameless priest:
Heav'n's attribute was universal care,

And man's prerogative to rule, but spare.
 Ah! how unlike the man of times to come!
 Of half that live the butcher and the tomb;
 Who, foe to Nature, hears the gen'ral groan,
 Murders their species, and betrays his own.
 But just disease to luxury succeeds,
 And ev'ry death its own avenger breeds;
 The fury-passions from that blood began,
 And turn'd on man a fiercer savage, man.

See him from Nature rising slow to Art!
 To copy Instinct then was Reason's part:
 Thus then to man the voice of Nature spake--
 "Go, from the creatures thy instructions take;
 Learn from the birds what food the thickets yield,
 Learn from the beasts the physic of the field;
 Thy arts of building from the bee receive;
 Learn of the mole to plough, the worm to weave;
 Learn of the little nautilus to sail,
 Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale.
 Here too all forms of social union find,
 And hence let Reason late instruct mankind.
 Here subterranean works and cities see;
 There towns aërial on the waving tree;
 Learn each small people's genius, policies,
 The ants' republic, and the realm of bees:
 How those in common all their wealth bestow,
 And anarchy without confusion know;
 And these for ever, tho' a monarch reign,
 Their sep'rate cells and properties maintain.
 Mark what unvaried laws preserve each state,
 Laws wise as Nature, and fix'd as Fate.
 In vain thy Reason finer webs shall draw,
 Entangle justice in her net of law,
 And right, too rigid, harden into wrong,
 Still for the stong too weak, the weak too strong.
 Yet go! and thus o'er all the creatures sway,
 Thus let the wiser make the rest obey;
 And for those arts mere Instinct could afford,
 Be crown'd as Monarchs, or as Gods ador'd."

V.
 Great Nature spoke; observant man obey'd;
 Cities were built, societies were made:
 Here rose one little state, another near
 Grew by like means, and join'd thro' love or fear.
 Did here the trees with ruddier burdens bend,
 And there the streams in purer rills descend?
 What war could ravish, commerce could bestow,
 And he return'd a friend who came a foe.

Converse and love mankind might strongly draw,
 When Love was liberty, and Nature law.
 Thus states were form'd, the name of King unknown,
 Till common int'rest placed the sway in one.
 'Twas Virtue only (or in arts or arms,
 Diffusing blessings, or averting harms),
 The same which in a sire the sons obey'd,
 A prince the father of a people made.

VI.
 Till then, by Nature crown'd, each patriarch sate
 King, priest, and parent of his growing state;
 On him, their second Providence, they hung,
 Their law his eye, their oracle his tongue.
 He from the wond'ring furrow call'd the food,
 Taught to command the fire, control the flood,
 Draw forth the monsters of th'abyss profound,
 Or fetch th' aërial eagle to the ground;
 Till drooping, sick'ning, dying, they began
 Whom they revered as God to mourn as Man:
 Then, looking up from sire to sire, explor'd
 One great first Father, and that first ador'd:
 Or plain tradition that this all begun,
 Convey'd unbroken faith from sire to son;
 The worker from the work distinct was known,
 And simple Reason never sought but one.
 Ere Wit oblique had broke that steady light,
 Man, like his Maker, saw that all was right;
 To virtue in the paths of pleasure trod,
 And own'd a father when he own'd a God.
 Love all the faith, and all th'allegiance then,
 For Nature knew no right divine in men;
 No ill could fear in God, and understood
 A sov'reign being but a sov'reign good;
 True faith, true policy, united ran;
 That was but love of God, and this of Man.

Who first taught souls enslaved, and realms undone,
 Th'enormous faith of many made for one;
 That proud exception to all Nature's laws,
 T' invert the world, and counterwork its cause?
 Force first made conquest, and that conquest law;
 Till Superstition taught the tyrant awe,
 Then shared the tyranny, then lent it aid,
 And Gods of conquerors, Slaves of subjects made.
 She, 'midst the lightning's blaze and thunder's sound,
 When rock'd the mountains, and when groan'd the
 ground,
 She taught the weak to bend, the proud to pray,
 To Power unseen, and mightier far than they:

She, from the rending earth and bursting skies,
Saw Gods descend, and Fiends infernal rise:
Here fix'd the dreadful, there the bless'd abodes;
Fear made her Devils, and weak hope her Gods;
Gods, partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust;
Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
And, form'd like tyrants, tyrants would believe.
Zeal then, not Charity, became the guide,
And Hell was built on spite, and Heav'n on pride:
Then sacred seem'd th'ethereal vault no more;
Altars grew marble then, and reek'd with gore:
Then first the flamen tasted living food,
Next his grim idol smear'd with human blood;
With Heav'n's own thunders shook the world below,
And play'd the God an engine on his foe.

So drives Self-love, thro' just and thro' unjust,
To one man's power ambition, lucre, lust:
The same Self-love in all becomes the cause
Of what restrains him, government and laws.
For, what one likes if others like as well,
What serves one will, when many wills rebel?
How shall he keep what, sleeping or awake,
A weaker may surprise, a stronger take?
His safety must his liberty restrain:
All join to guard what each desires to gain.
Forc'd into virtue thus by self-defence,
Ev'n kings learn'd justice and benevolence:
Self-love forsook the path it first pursued,
And found the private in the public good.

'Twas then the studious head, or gen'rous mind
Follower of God, or friend of human kind,
Poet or patriot, rose but to restore
The faith and moral Nature give before;
Relum'd her ancient light, not kindled new;
If not God's image, yet his shadow drew;
Taught power's due use to people and to kings,
Taught nor to slack nor strain its tender strings,
The less or greater set so justly true,
That touching one must strike the other too;
Till jarring int'rests of themselves create
Th'according music of a well-mix'd state.
Such is the world's great harmony, that springs
From order, union, full consent of things;
Where small and great, where weak and mighty made
To serve, not suffer, strengthen, not invade;
More powerful each as needful to the rest,
And, in proportion as it blesses, blest;

Draw to one point, and to one centre bring
Beast, man, or angel, servant, lord, or king.
For forms of government let fools contest;
Whate'er is best administer'd is best:
For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.
In Faith and Hope the world will disagree,
But all mankind's concern is Charity:
All must be false that thwart this one great end,
And all of God that bless mankind or mend.

Man, like the gen'rous vine, supported lives;
The strength he gains is from th'embrace he gives.
On their own axis as the planets run,
Yet make at once their circle round the sun;
So two consistent motions act the soul,
And one regards itself, and one the Whole.

Thus God and Nature link'd the gen'ral frame,
And bade Self-love and Social be the same.