

The Fable of the Bees

or

Private vices, public benefits

Bernard Mandeville

1732

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis Indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type. —The work consists mainly in

- a set of 20 ‘Remarks’ on bits of a 9-page poem; preceded by
- the poem itself, presented with letters of the form of **[A]** against the bits to which Remarks are addressed;
- a longish Essay on charity and charity schools, and another on the origin of society (the black-type subheadings in these are not in the original); and
- materials attacking the first edition of this work, followed by Mandeville’s defence.

In some Remarks and in the Essay, each CROSS-HEADING in small capitals marks the start of a new topic, but no indication is given of where the topic ends.

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Glossary

connive: Used here in its proper sense: if you 'connive at' my doing x, you pretend not to know that I am doing it, although really you ought to stop me. From a Latin verb meaning 'wink'.

content: In Remark V and the related part of the Poem, this noun means 'contentment'.

cross: a small coin; 'without a cross' means 'without money'.

curious: Mandeville's uses of this seem to involve one or more of three of the OED's senses for it: 'exquisite, excellent, fine', 'interesting, noteworthy', 'deserving or arousing curiosity; strange, queer'.

dipped: mortgaged

emulation: competitive copying

encomium: high praise

enthusiasm: This is sometimes replaced by 'fanaticism'. Where it is allowed to stand, it still stands for something hotter than mere 'enthusiasm' is taken to be today.

felicity: happiness

industry: industriousness, willingness to work hard

Leviathan: As used on page 118 this has both its role as the name of a mythical sea-monster and its meaning (derived from Hobbes's classic work) as 'commonwealth'.

limner: painter; especially portrait-painter

mischief: harm

mortify: humiliate; similarly 'mortification'

operose: labour-intensive

polite: polished, civilised

politician: Mandeville often uses this word to mean something like 'person who makes it his business to modify and manipulate our behaviour'.

presentment: An action whereby a local Grand Jury 'presents' to the relevant judges its considered opinion that a certain person ought to be charged with a crime.

prodigal: excessively free-spending. The idea that a prodigal is someone who leaves home and then returns comes from misunderstanding the biblical title 'the parable of the prodigal son'.

rapine: plunder; seizing property by force

sumptuary laws: Laws enforcing frugal and simple modes of living.

temporal: Temporal happiness is happiness in this life; in contrast with eternal happiness in the after-life.

vicious: morally bad; not as intense or focussed as the word is today; Similarly 'vice'.

voluptuous: Given to sexual pleasure

vulgar: 'the vulgar' are people who not much educated and not much given to thinking.

An essay on charity and charity schools

Charity is the virtue by which part of our sincere love for ourselves is transferred pure and unmixed to others who are not tied to us by the bonds of friendship or consanguinity, and even to mere strangers whom we have no obligation to and do not hope or expect anything from. If we loosen this definition, part of the virtue must be lost. What we do for our friends and kindred we do partly for ourselves; when a man acts on behalf of nephews or nieces and says 'They are my brother's children, I do it out of charity', he deceives you. For it is expected from him, and he does it partly for his own sake: if he values the esteem of the world and cares about honour and reputation, he is obliged to have a greater regard for them than for strangers.

The exercise of this virtue relates either to **a** opinion or to **b** action, and is manifested in **a** what we think of others or **b** what we do for them. To be charitable in **a** the first way, we ought to put the best possible construction on what others do or say. If someone who has not one symptom of humility builds a fine house, furnishes it richly and spends a great deal on plate and pictures, we ought to think that he does it not out of vanity but to encourage artists, employ hands, and set the poor to work for the good of his country. If a man sleeps at church, we ought to think—as long as he does not snore—that he shuts his eyes to increase his attention. The reason is that we in our turn want our utmost avarice to pass for frugality; and what we know to be hypocrisy to pass for religion. The virtue is conspicuous in us in **b** the second way when we bestow our time and labour for nothing, or employ our credit with others on behalf of those who need it and could not expect such help from friends or relatives. The last branch of charity consists in giving away (while we are alive)

what we value ourselves, to such as I have already named; choosing to have and enjoy less rather than not relieve those who are in need and are the objects of our choice.

Pity

This virtue, 'charity', is often counterfeited by a passion of ours called 'pity' or 'compassion', which consists in a fellow-feeling and condolence for the misfortunes and calamities of others; all mankind are more or less affected with it, but the weakest minds generally the most. It is aroused in us when the sufferings and misery of other creatures make such a forcible impression upon us that we are disturbed by it. It comes in at the eye or the ear or both; and the nearer and more violently the object of compassion strikes those senses, the greater the disturbance it causes in us, often to a level that occasions great pain and anxiety.

Suppose we are locked up in a ground-floor room from which we can see through the barred window a charming toddler playing and prattling in the adjoining yard, and then a nasty overgrown sow comes into the yard and frightens the screaming child out of its wits. It is natural to think that this would disturb us and that we would try to drive the sow away by making threatening noises. But if the sow is a half-starved creature roaming about in quest of food, and we see the ravenous brute—in spite of our threatening noises and gestures—actually destroy and devour the helpless infant [and he gives gory details of the 'horrid banquet'], what indescribable tortures it would give the soul to hear and see all this! . . . This pity would be free from all other passions. There would be no need for virtue or self-denial to

be moved at such a scene; and not only a humane man with good morals and sympathies but likewise a highwayman, a burglar or a murderer could feel anxieties on such an occasion. However calamitous a man's circumstances might be, he would briefly forget his misfortunes and his most troublesome passion would give way to pity. Not one of our species has a heart so obdurate or engaged that it would not ache at such a sight. . . .

Many will wonder at my saying that pity comes in at the eye or ear; but to see the truth of this, consider the fact that the nearer the object is the more we suffer, and the further away it is the less we are troubled by it. When someone is executed for a crime, if we see this at a considerable distance it moves us much less than when we are close enough to see the motion of the soul in man's eyes, observe his fears and agonies, and read the pangs in every feature of his face. When the object is entirely removed from our senses, reading or being told about the calamities can never raise in us the passion called 'pity'. We may be concerned at bad news, the loss and misfortunes of friends and those whose cause we espouse, but this is grief or sorrow, not pity.

When we hear that several thousand men, all strangers to us, are killed by the sword or forced into a river where they are drowned, we say we pity them, and perhaps we believe we do. Humaneness tells us to have compassion with the sufferings of others, and reason tells us that our sentiments about an event ought to be the same whether it is far off or occurs in our sight, and that we should be ashamed to admit that we felt no commiseration when anything requires it—'He is a cruel man', 'He has no bowels of compassion'. So much for reason and humaneness! But nature makes no compliments; when the object does not strike, the body does not feel it; and when men talk of pitying people who are out of sight they are to be believed in the same way as

when they say that they are our 'humble servant'. . . . Pity is not a thing of choice any more than fear or anger are. Those who have a strong and lively imagination, and can make representations of things in their minds as they would be if they were actually present, may work themselves up into something like compassion; but this is done by art, often helped by a little enthusiasm [see Glossary], and is only an imitation of pity. The heart feels little of it, and it is as faint as what we suffer at the acting of a tragedy, where our judgment leaves part of the mind uninformed and allows it to be led into an error that is needed for the arousing of a passion the slight strokes of which are not unpleasant to us when the soul is in an idle inactive mood.

Pity often assumes the shape and borrows the name of charity. A beggar asks you to show 'charity' for Jesus Christ's sake, when he is really trying to arouse your pity. . . . While he seems to pray to God to open your heart, he is actually at work on your ears. [Fairly sordid details are given of how he goes about this.] When people who are not used to great cities are thus attacked on all sides by beggars, they are commonly forced to yield and can't help giving something though they can hardly spare it themselves. How oddly are we managed by self-love! It is constantly on the alert in our defence, and yet to soothe a predominant passion it obliges us to act against our interest. . . . [Mandeville continues with a withering account of bullying tactics used by 'impudent and designedly persecuting rascals' to get money from people who just want them to go away, concluding:] Yet all this by the courtesy of the country is called 'charity'.

The reverse of pity is *malice*. I have spoken of this where I talk about *envy* [page 43]. Those who know how to examine themselves will soon acknowledge that it is hard to trace the root and origin of this passion. It is among the ones we are most ashamed of, and therefore the hurtful part of it

is easily subdued and corrected by a judicious education. When anyone near us stumbles, it is natural automatically to stretch out our hands to hinder or at least break the fall, which shows that while we are calm we are inclined towards pity. But although malice by itself is little to be feared, when it is assisted by pride it is often harmful, and it becomes most terrible when egged on and heightened by anger. Nothing more readily or effectively extinguishes pity than this mixture of anger and malice, which is called 'cruelty'. From this we can learn that to perform a meritorious action it is not enough merely to conquer a passion, unless it is done from a laudable principle, and consequently how necessary that clause was in the definition of 'virtue' that our efforts must come from 'a rational wish to be good' [page 16].

Pity is the most amiable of all our passions, and there are few occasions where we ought to conquer or curb it. A surgeon may be as compassionate as he pleases, provided it does not stop him from doing what he ought to do. Judges likewise and juries may be influenced by pity, if they take care that plain laws and justice itself are not infringed and do not suffer by it. No pity does more harm than what is aroused by the tenderness of parents, hindering them from managing their children as their rational love for them would require and as they themselves could wish it. Also, the sway that this passion bears in the affections of women is more considerable than is commonly imagined; they daily commit faults that are totally ascribed to lust and yet are largely products of pity.

·OTHER PASSIONS THAT RESEMBLE CHARITY·

Pity is not the only passion that mocks and resembles charity; pride and vanity have built more hospitals than all the virtues together. Men are so tenacious of their possessions, and selfishness is so riveted in our nature, that anyone who

can somehow conquer it will get the applause of the public and all imaginable encouragement to conceal his frailty and soothe any other appetite he may be inclined to indulge. The man who provides from his private fortune something that otherwise the society would have had to pay for obliges every member of the society; so all the world are ready to acknowledge him and think themselves in duty bound to pronounce all such actions virtuous, without even *glancing* at the motives behind them. Nothing is more destructive to virtue or religion itself than to make men believe that giving money to the poor—even if only after death—will make a full atonement in the next world for the sins they have committed in this. A villain who has committed a barbarous murder escapes the punishment he deserves by the help of false witnesses; he prospers, heaps up great wealth, and by the advice of his father confessor leaves his entire estate to a monastery, leaving his children beggars. What fine amends has this good Christian made for his crime, and what sort of honest man was the priest who directed his conscience? He who parts with all he has during his lifetime, whatever his motive, only gives away what was his own; but the rich miser who refuses to help his nearest relatives. . . .and disposes of his money for so-called 'charitable' uses after his death, is robbing his posterity, whatever he may imagine of his goodness. I am now thinking of a recent 'charitable' gift that has made a great noise in the world. I want to set it in the light I think it deserves, so please let me treat it rhetorically.

·DR RADCLIFE'S BEQUEST·

[This concerns Dr John Radcliffe, who died in 1714, leaving his vast fortune to Oxford University. Mandeville's 'rhetorical' account of him overdoes his applause from the world—he was in fact widely disliked.]

That a man with small skill in medicine and hardly any learning should by vile arts get into medical practice and

accumulate great wealth is no mighty wonder. But that he should so deeply work himself into the good opinion of the world as to gain the general esteem of a nation, and establish a reputation beyond all his contemporaries—having no qualities except •a perfect knowledge of mankind and •the ability to make the most of it—is extraordinary.

- If a man arrived at such a height of glory should be almost distracted with pride, sometimes attending to a servant for nothing while neglecting a nobleman who pays exorbitant fees, at other times refusing to leave his bottle for his business, without regard to the quality of the persons who sent for him or the danger they are in;

- if he should be surly and morose, affect to be a humourist, treat his patients like dogs though they are people of distinction, and value only men who would deify him and never call in question the certainty of his oracles;

- if he should insult all the world, affront the first nobility, and extend his insolence even to the royal family;

- if to maintain and increase the fame of his competence he should scorn to consult with his betters in any emergency, look down with contempt on the most deserving of his profession, and never confer with any other physician except one who will pay homage to his superior genius, and approach him only with all the slavish obsequiousness a court-flatterer can treat a prince with;

- if a man in his lifetime should reveal on the one hand such manifest symptoms of superlative pride and an insatiable greed for wealth, and on the other no regard for religion, no affection for his kindred, no compassion for the poor, and hardly any humanity towards his fellow-creatures;

- if he gave no proofs that he loved his country, had a public spirit, or was a lover of arts, of books or of literature, what must we judge of his motive—the principle he acted

from—when after his death we find that he has left a trifle among his relatives who needed it, and an immense treasure to a university that did not?

Let a man be as charitable as it is possible for him to be without forfeiting his reason or good sense; can he avoid thinking that this famous physician in the making of his will (as in everything else) indulged his favourite passion, entertaining his vanity with the satisfactoriness of the contrivance?

- When he thought about the monuments and inscriptions, with all the sacrifices of praise that would be made to him, and above all the yearly tribute of thanks, reverence and veneration that would be paid to his memory with so much pomp and solemnity;

- when he considered how in all these performances wit and invention would be racked, art and eloquence ransacked to find out praises suitable to the benefactor's public spirit, generosity and dignity, and the artful gratitude of the receivers;

it must have thrown his ambitious soul into vast ecstasies of pleasure, especially when he ruminated on the duration of his glory and the perpetuity he would in this way get for his name. Charitable opinions are often stupidly false; when men are dead and gone we ought to judge their actions as we judge books, doing justice to their understandings and to our own. The British *Æsculapius* [= Radcliffe] was undeniably a man of sense, and if he had been acting from charity, public spirit or the love of learning, and aiming at the good of mankind in general or of his own profession in particular, he could never have made such a will; because so much wealth could have been better managed, and a much less able man would have discovered several better ways of laying out the money. But if we bear in mind that he was as undeniably a man of vast pride as he was a man of sense, and allow

ourselves only to guess that this extraordinary gift might have been motivated by pride, we shall quickly discover the excellence of his intelligence and his consummate knowledge of the world. If a man wants to make himself immortal, be praised and deified for ever after his death, and have paid to his memory all the acknowledgement, honours and compliments that vainglory itself could wish for, I don't think human skill *could* invent a more effective method than the one he adopted. If he had

- followed arms, conducted himself in two dozen sieges and as many battles with the bravery of an Alexander, and exposed his life and limbs to all the fatigues and dangers of war for fifty campaigns; or
- devoting himself to the muses, sacrificed to literature his pleasure, his rest, and his health, and spent his days in laborious study and the toils of learning; or
- abandoning all worldly interests, excelled in probity, temperance, and austerity of life, always treading the strictest path of virtue,

he would not have provided for the eternity of his name as effectively as he has now done, after a voluptuous life and the luxurious gratification of his passions, without any trouble or self-denial, purely by his choice of how to dispose of his money when he was forced to leave it.

•CHARITABLE BEQUESTS GENERALLY•

A rich miser who is thoroughly selfish and wants to receive the interest on his money even after his death, has only to defraud his relatives and leave his estate to some famous university. They are the best markets at which to buy immortality at a low cost in merit; in them knowledge, wit and penetration are the growth—I almost said the 'manufacture'—of the place; men there are profoundly skilled

in human nature, and know what their benefactors want; and *there* extraordinary bounties will always meet with an extraordinary recompense. The standard of their praises is always the size of the gift, whether the donor is a physician or a tinker, once the living witnesses who might laugh at them have died out. I can never think about the anniversary of the thanksgiving day decreed to a great man without being put in mind of the miraculous cures and other surprising things that will be said of him a hundred years hence; I venture to predict that before the end of the present century he will have stories forged in his favour (for rhetoricians are never upon oath) that will be at least as fabulous as any legends of the saints.

Of all this our subtle benefactor [Radcliffe] was not ignorant. He understood universities, their genius, and their politics, and this enabled him to foresee that the incense to be offered to him would not cease within a few generations, or last only for the trifling space of three or four centuries, but that it would continue to be paid to him through all changes and revolutions of government and religion, as long as the nation survives and the island itself remains.¹

It is deplorable that the proud should have such temptations to wrong their lawful heirs. The temptations are great; for when an affluent man, brimful of vainglory and humoured in his pride by the greatest people in a polite nation, has in his heart such an infallible security for an everlasting homage to his name to be paid in such an extraordinary manner, he is like a hero in battle who in feasting on his own imagination tastes all the happiness of enthusiasm. It buoys him up in sickness, relieves him in pain, and either guards him against, or keeps out of his sight, all the terrors of death and the most dismal fears of what the future holds.

¹ [Only three centuries so far; but one of Oxford's most famous buildings is a handsome library still known as the 'Radcliffe Camera'.]

This may be said:

‘To be thus censorious, looking into matters and men’s consciences with so much precision, will discourage people from laying out their money in this way; and whatever the money is and whatever motive the donor has, he that receives the benefit gains by it.’

I don’t deny it. But I hold that it is no injury to the public to prevent men from crowding too much treasure into the dead stock of the kingdom. For a society to be happy, there needs to be a vast disproportion between its active and its inactive parts, and where this is ignored the multitude of gifts and endowments may soon be excessive and harmful to a nation. Where charity is too extensive it seldom fails to promote sloth and idleness, and is good for little in the commonwealth but to breed drones and destroy industry [see Glossary]. The more colleges and almshouses you build, the more you may do this. The first founders and benefactors may have just and good intentions, and would perhaps seem to labour for the most laudable purposes; but the executors of those wills have quite other views, and we seldom see charities long applied as they were at first intended to be.

I have no design that is cruel, nor the least aim that savours of inhumanity. I regard having enough hospitals for the sick and wounded as an indispensable duty both in peace and war; young children without parents, old folk without support, and all who are disabled from working, ought to be taken care of with tenderness and alacrity. But just as on the one hand I want none to be neglected who are helpless and really in need without there being anything intrinsically wrong with them, so on the other hand I do not want to encourage beggary or laziness in the poor. All who are in any way capable of it should be set to work, and scrutinies should be made even among the infirm: employments might be found for most of our lame people and many who are unfit

for hard labour, as well as the blind, as long as their health and strength would allow of it. This point leads me naturally to the distraction the nation has laboured under for some time, the fanatical passion for charity schools.

Charity schools

People in general are so bewitched by their usefulness and excellence that anyone who dares to oppose them openly is in danger of being stoned by the rabble.

‘Children who are taught the principles of religion and can read the word of God have a greater opportunity to improve in virtue and good morality, and must certainly be more civilised than others who are allowed to run at random with nobody to look after them. How perverse must be the judgment of those who would not rather •see children decently dressed, with clean linen at least once a week, in an orderly manner following their master to church than •see in every open place a company of shirtless blackguards who, insensible of their misery, are continually increasing it with oaths and imprecations! Can anyone doubt that these are the great nursery of thieves and pickpockets? What numbers of felons and other criminals we have tried and convicted every sessions! When the children of the poor receive a better education in charity schools, this will be prevented.’

This is the general cry, and he who speaks the least word against it is an uncharitable, hard-hearted and inhuman wretch, if not a wicked, profane, and atheistic one. Nobody disputes the attractiveness of the **sight**, it; but a nation should not pay too high a price for such a transient pleasure; and if we may set aside the finery of the *show*, everything that is *material* in this popular oration can soon be answered.

As for religion, the most knowledgeable and polished part of every nation has the least of it. Craft has a greater hand in making rogues than stupidity, and vice in general is nowhere more predominant than where arts and sciences flourish. Ignorance is the mother of devotion, and it is certain that we shall find innocence and honesty nowhere more general than among the most illiterate, the poor silly country people.

·CHARITY SCHOOLS AS TEACHERS OF MANNERS·

The next to be considered are the manners and civility that charity schools are to graft into the poor of the nation. I confess that in my opinion nothing is less requisite for the laborious poor than manners and civility, any degree of which is, for them, a frivolous if not a hurtful quality. It is not compliments that we want from them, but work and assiduity. And suppose I am wrong about this, and good manners *are* necessary for all people; how will children be provided with them in a charity school? Boys there may be taught to pull off their caps indiscriminately to everyone they meet except beggars, but that they should acquire in such a school any civility beyond that I can't conceive.

The master is not greatly qualified, as can be guessed by his salary, and even if he could teach them manners he has not time for it. While they are at school they are either learning or saying their lesson to him, or employed in writing or arithmetic, and as soon as school is over for the day they are as much at liberty as other poor people's children. It is precept and the example of parents and those they take meals and converse with that influence the minds of children. The offspring of reprobate parents who behave badly without regard for their children won't be mannerly and civilised offspring even if though they go to a charity school until they are married. Honest painstaking people with some notion of goodness and decency, however poor

they are, will keep their children in awe and never allow them to roam about the streets and sleep away from home. They will make their children do something that turns to profit as soon as they are able, be it never so little; and those who are so ungovernable that neither words nor blows can work on them will not be mended by any charity school. Indeed, experience teaches us that among the charity boys there are bad ones who swear and curse about, and apart from their clothes are as much blackguards as ever Tower Hill or St. James's produced.

Why there is so much crime

This brings me to the enormous crimes and vast multitude of malefactors that are blamed on the lack of this notable education. It is undeniable that many thefts and robberies are daily committed in and about the city, and that every year many people suffer death for those crimes; but because this is always hooked in when the usefulness of charity schools is called in question, as if it were agreed that they would in a great measure remedy those disorders and eventually prevent them, I shall examine the real causes of those mischiefs that are so justly complained of, and confidently expect to show that charity schools, and everything else that promotes idleness and keeps the poor from working, promote the growth of villainy more than the want of reading and writing, or even the grossest ignorance and stupidity.

Here I must interrupt myself to confront the clamours of some impatient people who will protest that charity schools, far from encouraging idleness, bring their children to handicrafts, trades, and all manner of honest labour. I promise them that I shall take notice of that later [page 98], and answer it without suppressing the least thing that can be said on behalf of charity schools.

In a populous city it is not difficult for a young rascal with a small hand and nimble fingers to push his way into a crowd and whip away a handkerchief or snuff-box from a man who is thinking about business and not attending to his pocket. Success in small crimes usually ushers in large ones, and he that picks pockets with impunity at 12 is likely to be a house-breaker at 16 and a thorough-paced villain long before he is 20. Those who are cautious as well as bold, and are not drunkards, may do a world of harm before they are discovered; and this is one of the greatest drawbacks of such vast over-grown cities as London or Paris, that they harbour rogues and villains as granaries do vermin; they provide a perpetual shelter to the worst of people, and are places of safety for thousands of criminals who daily commit thefts and burglaries and yet—by often changing their places of abode—may conceal themselves for many years, and may escape the hands of justice for ever unless by chance they are caught in the act. And when they *are* taken, it may happen that

- the evidence is unclear or otherwise insufficient,
- the depositions are not strong enough,
- juries and often judges are touched with compassion,
- prosecutors who were vigorous at first relent before the time of trial comes on.

Few men prefer the public safety to their own ease; a good-natured man is not easily reconciled to taking away another man's life even if he has deserved the gallows. To be the cause of someone's death, though justice requires it, is what most people are reluctant to do, especially men of conscience and probity when they lack judgment or resolution; and just as this is why thousands escape who deserve to be capitally punished, so also it is why there are so many offenders, who take risks in the hope that if they are caught they will have the same good fortune of getting off.

But if men were *convinced* that if they committed a crime that deserved hanging they would certainly be hanged, executions would be very rare, and the most desperate felon would almost as soon hang himself as break into a house. To be stupid and ignorant is seldom the character of a thief. Robberies on the highway and other bold crimes are generally perpetrated by rogues of spirit and intelligence, and villains of any fame are commonly subtle cunning fellows who are well versed in the method of trials, and acquainted with every quirk in the law that can be of use to them, who overlook not the smallest flaw in an indictment and know how to take advantage of the least slip in the prosecution.

...It is a terrible thing for a man to be put to death for a crime he is not guilty of; but a freak combination of circumstances may lead to its happening, despite all the wisdom of judges and all the conscientiousness of juries. But where men try to avoid this with all the care human prudence is capable of, if such a misfortune did happen once or twice in a dozen years, a period during which justice was administered with strictness and severity and no guilty person was allowed to escape with impunity, that would be a vast advantage to a nation. Not only would it secure everyone's property and the peace of the society in general, but it would save the lives of hundreds (if not thousands) of needy wretches who are hanged for trifles, and who would never have attempted any capital crimes if they hadn't been encouraged by the hope of getting off if they were caught. Therefore, where the laws are plain and severe, all the remissness in the execution of them, leniency of juries and frequency of pardons are over-all a much greater cruelty to a populous state or kingdom than the use of racks and the most fierce tortures.

[A paragraph saying that there would be less crime if people took more care to make their homes burglar-proof;

followed by one briefly repeating the previously listed encouragements to crime.]

To these you may add, as auxiliaries to mischief, a habit of sloth and idleness and strong aversion to labour and assiduity, which will be contracted by all young people who are not kept employed most days in the week, and the greatest part of the day. All children who are idle, even the best of either sex, are bad company to one another whenever they meet.

So it is not the lack of reading and writing, but the concurrence and a complication of more substantial evils, that are the perpetual nursery of abandoned profligates in great and affluent nations. If you want to accuse ignorance, stupidity and wickedness as the first and primary cause of crime, examine the lives and look closely into the conversations and actions of ordinary rogues and our common felons, and you will find the reverse to be true, and that the blame ought rather to be laid on the excessive cunning and subtlety, and too much knowledge in general, possessed by the worst of miscreants and the scum of the nation.

Human nature is everywhere the same: genius, wit and natural abilities are always sharpened by application, and can be improved in the practice of the meanest villainy as much as they can in the exercise of industry or the most heroic virtue. There is no station of life where pride, competitiveness and the love of glory cannot be displayed. A young pickpocket who laughs at his angry prosecutor and dextrously wheedles the old judge into thinking he is innocent is envied by his equals and admired by all the fraternity. Rogues have the same passions to gratify as other men, and value themselves on their honour and faithfulness to one another, their courage, intrepidity, and other manly virtues, as well as people of better professions; and in daring enterprises the resolution of a robber may be as much

supported by his pride as that of an honest soldier who fights for his country. So the evils we complain of are due to causes quite other than what we assign for them. . . .

Why charity schools became fashionable

But if the reasons alleged for this general education are not the true ones, how does it come about that the whole populace is so unanimously fond of it? There is no miraculous conversion to be perceived among us, no universal bent to goodness and morality that has suddenly overspread the island; there is as much wickedness as ever, charity is as cold, and real virtue as scarce. The year 1720 has been as prolific in deep villainy, and remarkable for selfish crimes and premeditated mischief, as can be picked out of any century whatever; crimes that are committed not by poor ignorant rogues who could neither read nor write but by educated wealthy people. I am afraid it will not be satisfactory to the curious to say that when a thing is once in vogue the multitude follows the common cry, that charity schools are in fashion through the same kind of whim as hooped petticoats, and that no more reason can be given for the one than the other. What I can add to that will, I suspect, not be thought of great weight by many of my readers. The real source of this present folly is certainly very abstruse and remote from sight, but anyone who lets the least light into matters of great obscurity does a kind service to enquirers.

I am willing to allow that in the beginning the first design of those schools was good and charitable, but to know what increases them so extravagantly, and who are the chief promoters of them now, we must look another way and address ourselves to the rigid party men who are zealous for their cause, whether Anglican or Presbyterian. But as the latter are only poor mimics of the former, though equally

pernicious, we shall confine ourselves to the national church and go for a stroll through a parish that is not yet blessed with a charity school.

First we must look among the young shopkeepers who have not half the business they could wish for and consequently have time to spare. If such a beginner has even a little more pride than ordinary and loves to be busy with things, he is soon humiliated in the vestry, where men of substance and long standing. . . . commonly have command. His stock and perhaps credit are inconsiderable, yet he finds within himself a strong inclination to govern. A man thus qualified thinks it a thousand pities there is no charity school in the parish; he communicates his thoughts to a few acquaintances first; they do the same to others, and in a month's time there is nothing else talked of in the parish.

'It is a shame to see so many poor who are not able to educate their children, and no provision made for them, where we have so many rich people.'

'The *rich*—they are the worst. They must have so many servants, coaches and horses; they spend hundreds or even thousands of pounds on jewels and furniture, but don't spare a shilling to a poor creature who needs it. They listen carefully when modes and fashions are talked of, but are wilfully deaf to the cries of the poor.'

'Indeed, neighbour, you are very right, I don't believe there is a worse parish in England for charity than ours. You and I would do good if it was in our power, but very few of those who are able are willing.'

While this is going on throughout the neighbourhood, the man who first broached the pious thought rejoices to hear so many join in with it, and congratulates himself on being the first cause of so much talk and bustle. But neither he nor his intimates are considerable enough to get such a thing

going, so someone more considerable must be found. He is to be approached and shown the necessity, the goodness, the usefulness, the Christianness of such a design; next he is to be flattered:

'Indeed, Sir, if you would espouse it, nobody has a greater influence over the best of the parish than yourself. . . . If you once would take it to heart, Sir, I would look on the thing as done, Sir.'

If by this kind of rhetoric they can draw in some old fool or conceited busybody who is rich or at least reputed to be so, the thing begins to be feasible, and is talked about among the better sort. The parson or his curate, and the lecturer are everywhere extolling the pious project. The first promoters meanwhile are tireless; if they have been guilty of any open vice, they sacrifice it to the love of reputation, or at least grow more cautious and learn to play the hypocrite, knowing that to be wicked or noted for bad conduct is inconsistent with their pretended zeal for works of excessive piety that go beyond the call of duty.

As the number of these diminutive patriots increases they form themselves into a society and appoint stated meetings, where everyone concealing his vices has liberty to display his talents. Religion is the theme, or else the misery of the times occasioned by atheism and profaneness. Men of worth who live in splendor, and thriving people who have a great deal of business of their own, are seldom seen among them. And men of sense and education who are at a loose end generally look out for better entertainment. [He lists kinds of people—clerics and laymen—who are drawn into the founding of charity schools, with varying disgraceful motives. Some who 'would have stood out and strenuously opposed the whole scheme' let themselves be nagged into supporting it on the grounds that for each individual the amount of money is tiny.]

The governors are middling people, and many below that class are also made use of if their zeal outweighs their low social status. If you asked these worthy rulers why they take so much trouble at the expense of their own affairs and loss of time, they would all answer:

It is their concern for religion and the church, and the pleasure they take in contributing to the eternal welfare of so many poor innocents who in all probability would otherwise run into perdition in these wicked times of scoffers and freethinkers.

Even those who deal in provisions for the charity schools have not the least design of gaining by this trade; and although in everything else their avarice and greed for money is glaringly conspicuous, in this matter they are (they say) wholly divested from selfishness and have no worldly ends. One of their motives—not the least of them—is carefully concealed. I mean the satisfaction of ordering and directing: the word ‘governor’ has a melodious sound that is charming to people low on the social scale; everybody admires sway and superiority; there is a pleasure in ruling over anything, and this is what chiefly supports human nature in the tedious slavery of schoolmasters. But if there is any satisfaction in governing the children, it must be ravishing to govern the schoolmaster himself. . . .

Those who look carefully will always find that what these people most lay claim to is their least motive, and that what they utterly deny is their greatest. No habit is more easily acquired than hypocrisy, nor anything sooner learned than to deny the sentiments of our hearts and the principle we act from; but the seeds of every passion—rather than being acquired or learned later on—are innate in us, and nobody comes into the world without them. . . . Young children who are allowed to do it take delight in playing with kittens and puppies, pulling the poor creatures about the house and

putting them into any posture they choose; they are doing with them whatever they please, and the pleasure they get from this is originally due to the love of *dominion* that all mankind are born with.

Why people are charmed by charity schools

When this great work of establishing a charity school is actually accomplished, joy and serenity seem to overspread the face of every inhabitant of the parish. To account for this, I must make a short digression.

There are everywhere slovenly fellows who are usually seen ragged and dirty; we look on them as miserable creatures in general, and unless they are very remarkable we take little notice of them; yet some of them are as handsome and well-shaped as you will find among their betters. If one of these turns soldier, how much better he looks as soon as he is dressed in his red coat and we see him looking smart with his grenadier’s cap and a great regulation sword! All who knew him before are struck with other ideas of his qualities, and the judgment men and women form of him in their minds is very different from what it was. There is something analogous to this in the sight of charity children; there is a natural beauty in uniformity that most people delight in. It is diverting to the eye to see boys or girls well matched, marching two abreast in good order; and the attractiveness of the sight is increased if they are all trim and neat in the same clothes. And what makes it still more generally entertaining is the *imaginary* share that even servants and the poorest in the parish have in it—‘*our* parish church’, ‘*our* charity children’. In all this there is a shadow of ownership that tickles everybody who has a right to use the words, especially those who actually contribute and had a great hand in advancing the pious work.

It is hardly conceivable that men should so little know their own hearts, and be so ignorant of their inward condition, as to mistake frailty, passion and fanaticism for goodness, virtue and charity; yet the satisfaction, the joy and transports they feel for the reasons I have named really are thought by these miserable judges to be principles of piety and religion. Consider what I have said in the past few pages, and let your imagination rove a little further on what you has heard and seen on this subject, and you will be provided with sufficient reasons—having nothing to do with the love of God and true Christianity—why charity schools are in such uncommon vogue, and so unanimously approved of and admired among all sorts and conditions of people. It is a theme that everyone can talk of and understands thoroughly; there is no more inexhaustible fund for tittle-tattle, and a variety of low conversation in fishing boats and stage coaches. If a governor has exerted himself more than most on behalf of the school, how he is commended by the women and his zeal and charitable disposition extolled to the skies! ‘Upon my word, Sir,’ says an old lady, ‘we are all very much obliged to you. I’m told that it was because of you that his Lordship came, though he was not very well; I don’t think any of the other governors could have procures us even a bishop.’ To which the governor replies very gravely that it is his duty, and that he does not care about trouble or fatigue so long as he can be serviceable to the children, poor lambs. . . .

Sometimes the school itself is talked of. [The need for a new building; who in the parish should pay for it; which visiting clergymen would be likeliest to preach in a way that would ‘force money out of people’s pockets’ in support of the school.]

Another charm that makes charity schools bewitching to the multitude is the general opinion that they are not only •beneficial to society as to our happiness in this life but

•required by Christianity for our welfare in the next. They are fervently recommended by the whole body of the clergy, and have more labour and eloquence laid out upon them than any other Christian duty; not by young parsons or poor scholars of little credit, but by the most learned of our prelates and the most eminent for orthodoxy, even those who do not put much effort into anything else. As to religion, no doubt they know what is chiefly required of us and consequently the most necessary to salvation; and as to the world, who would understand the kingdom’s interests better than the wisdom of the nation, of which the lords spiritual are so considerable a branch? This has two consequences. •Those whose purses or power help to increase or maintain these schools are tempted to accord to what they are doing a greater merit than they could otherwise suppose it deserves. •All the rest, who cannot or will not contribute towards the schools, have still a very good reason to speak well of them; for although it is difficult to *act* well in things that interfere with our passions, it is always in our power to *wish* well, because that is done with little cost. Even a wicked person among the superstitious vulgar imagines he sees a glimmering hope that his liking for charity schools will atone for his sins. . . .

But if all these were not sufficient inducements to make men stand up in defence of the idol I am writing about, there is another that will infallibly bribe most people to be advocates for it. We all naturally love triumph, and whoever engages in this cause is sure of conquest *in arguments*, at least in nine companies out of ten. Whoever he is disputing with, the superficial attractiveness of his position and the majority he has on his side make it a castle, an impregnable fortress that he can never be beaten out of. Even if the most sober, virtuous man alive produced all the arguments to prove the harm most charity schools do to society—arguments that I shall give shortly—against an

utter scoundrel who used only the common cant of 'charity' and 'religion', the vogue would be against the former and he would lose his cause in the opinion of the vulgar.

What is intrinsically wrong with charity schools

Although the bustle and clamour that is made throughout the kingdom on behalf of charity schools is chiefly built on frailty and human passion, it is perfectly possible that a nation should have the same zeal for them as ours does yet not be prompted to it by any 'spurious' principle of virtue or religion. Encouraged by this consideration, I shall now attack this vulgar error with greater liberty, trying to show that this forced education—far from being beneficial—is pernicious to the public. The welfare of the public matters more than any other laws or considerations; and that is my whole excuse for differing from the present sentiments of the learned and reverend body of our divines, and venturing to openly deny what I have admitted to be openly asserted by most of our bishops as well as the lower clergy. Our church does not claim to be infallible even in the spiritual matters that are her proper province, so it cannot be an affront to her to think she may err in temporal matters that are not so much under her immediate care.

·THE NEED FOR THE WORKING POOR·

Now to return to my task. The whole earth being cursed, with no bread to be had except by the sweat of our brows, vast toil must be undergone before man can provide himself with necessities for his sustenance and bare support as he is a single creature. Infinitely more toil is needed to make life comfortable in a civil society, where men have become trained animals and great numbers of them have by mutual compact formed themselves into a body politic;

and the more man's knowledge increases in this state, the greater will be the variety of labour required to make him comfortable. A society cannot possibly survive and allow many of its members to live in idleness and enjoy all the ease and pleasure they can invent without having at the same time great multitudes of people who get their bodies accustomed to working for others as well as for themselves.

The abundance and cheapness of provisions depends largely on the price and value that is set on this labour; so the welfare of all societies, even before they are tainted with foreign luxury, requires that this labour be performed by such of their members as •are sturdy and robust and not accustomed to ease or idleness, and •are easily contented as to the necessities of life—are glad to take up with the coarsest manufacture in everything they wear, in their diet have no aim except to feed their bodies when their stomachs prompt them to eat, and do not refuse any wholesome nourishment that can be swallowed when men are hungry or ask anything for their thirst but to quench it.

As the greatest part of the drudgery is to be done by daylight, it is only by this that they measure the time of their labour, with no thought of the hours they are employed or the weariness they feel; and the hireling in the country must get up in the morning not because he has rested enough but because the sun is going to rise. This last item alone would be an intolerable hardship to adults under 30 who during childhood had been used to lying in bed as long as they could sleep: but all three together—coarse clothing, tasteless food, long working hours—make up a condition of life that a more gently brought up man would hardly choose, even to deliver himself from a jail or a shrew [here = 'malignant persecutor'].

If there must be such people—and no great nation can be happy without vast numbers of them—would not a wise

legislature cultivate the breeding of them with all imaginable care, and provide against their scarcity as it would prevent the scarcity of food? No man would be poor and fatigue himself for a livelihood if he could help it; the absolute necessity that all have for victuals and drink, and in cold climates for clothes and lodging, makes them submit to anything that can be borne with. If nobody had wants, nobody would work; but the greatest hardships are looked on as solid pleasures when they keep a man from starving. All this makes it evident that in a free nation where slaves are not allowed, the surest wealth consists in a multitude of laborious poor; for as well as their being the never-failing nursery of fleets and armies, without them there could be no enjoyment and no product of any country could be valuable.

To make the society happy and people comfortable in the poorest circumstances, great numbers of them must be ignorant as well as poor. Knowledge both enlarges and multiplies our desires, and the fewer things a man wishes for the more easily his needs can be met. So the welfare and felicity of every state and kingdom require that the knowledge (as to things visible) of the working poor should be confined within the limits of their occupation and never extended beyond that. The more a shepherd, a ploughman or any other peasant knows of the world and things foreign to his labour or employment, the less fit he'll be to go through the fatigues and hardships of it with cheerfulness and contentment.

Reading, writing and arithmetic are very necessary to those whose business require such qualifications, but where people's livelihood does not depend on these skills they are very pernicious to the poor who are forced to get their daily bread by their daily labour. Children who are learning things at school could instead be employed in some business or other, so that every hour the children of poor people spend at their book is an hour lost to the society. Compared with

working, going to school is idleness, and the longer boys continue in this easy sort of life the less fit they'll be as adults for downright labour, both as to strength and inclination. If a man is to spend his days in a laborious, tiresome and painful station of life, the sooner he is started on it the more patiently he'll submit to it for ever after. Hard labour and the coarsest diet are a proper punishment for several kinds of malefactors, but to impose either of them on people who have not been brought up to them is the greatest cruelty when there is no crime you can charge them with.

Reading and writing are not learned without some labour of the brain and assiduity, and people who have some slight competence in them regard themselves as infinitely above those who are wholly ignorant of them, often as unfairly and extravagantly as if they were of another species. We are all apt to over-value qualifications that we have purchased at the expense of our ease and quiet for years together. Those who spent much of their youth in learning to read, write and cipher, not unreasonably expect to be employed where those qualifications will be of use to them; and most of them will look with the utmost contempt on downright labour—I mean labour performed in the service of others in the lowest station of life and for the meanest wages. A man who has had some education may follow farming by choice, and be diligent at the dirtiest and most laborious work; but then the concern must be his own, and avarice or the care of a family or some other pressing motive must drive him; but he won't make a good hireling and serve a farmer for a pitiful reward; at least he is not as fit for that as a day-labourer who has always been employed about the plough and dung cart, and does not remember ever living otherwise.

When obsequiousness and mean services are required, they are never so cheerfully or so heartily performed as from inferiors to superiors; I mean inferiors not only in riches

and quality but also in knowledge and understanding. A servant can have no honest respect for his master as soon as he has sense enough to find out that he is serving a fool. When it comes to **a** learning or **b** obeying, we will experience in ourselves that the greater opinion we have of the wisdom and capacity of those that are either to **a** teach or **b** command us, the greater deference we pay to their **a** laws and **b** instructions. No creatures submit contentedly to their equals. If a horse knew as much as a man, I would not want to be his rider.

·AGAINST PETTY TYRANTS IN SCHOOLS·

Here I am obliged again to make a **digression**, though I declare I never had less desire to do it than I have at this minute; but I see a thousand rods in piss,¹ and the whole posse of diminutive pedants against me for assaulting the alphabet and opposing the very elements of literature.

You will not imagine my fears ill-grounded if you consider what an army of petty tyrants I have to cope with, ones who do now persecute with birch or are applying for such a preferment. If my only adversaries were

the starving wretches of both sexes, throughout the kingdom of Great Britain, who from a natural antipathy to working have a great dislike for their present employment, and—finding within themselves a much stronger inclination to command than they ever felt to obey—think themselves qualified to be masters and mistresses of charity schools, and wish with all their hearts to be so,

the number of my enemies would by the most modest computation amount to 100,000 at least.

I think I hear them cry out that a more dangerous doctrine never was broached, and Popery's nothing compared to it, and ask what brute of a Saracen it is who draws his ugly

weapon for the destruction of learning. Ten to one they'll indict me for trying by instigation of the Prince of Darkness to introduce into these realms greater ignorance and barbarism than any nation was ever plunged into by Goths and Vandals since the light of the Gospel first appeared in the world. Anyone who labours under the public odium is charged with crimes he never was guilty of, and it will be suspected that it was at my request that the small Bibles published by patent in 1721 and chiefly used in charity schools were made illegible by badness of print and paper rendered illegible; which I protest I am as innocent of as the child unborn. But I have a thousand fears, and the more I consider my situation the worse I like it. My greatest comfort is in my sincere belief that hardly anyone will attend to a word of what I say. If the people ever suspected that what I write would be of any weight to any considerable part of the society, I would not have the courage barely to *think* of all the trades I would disoblige.

I cannot help smiling when I reflect on the variety of uncouth sufferings that would be prepared for me if their various punishments for me were emblematically to point at my crime. For if I was not suddenly stuck full of useless penknives up to the hilts, the company of stationers would either •have me buried alive in their hall under a great heap of primers and spelling-books that they could not sell, or else set me up to be bruised to death in a paper mill that would be obliged to stand still for a week on my account. The ink-makers would •offer to choke me with astringents or drown me in the black liquid that would be left on their hands. . . . And if I escaped the cruelty of these united bodies, the resentment of a private monopolist would be as fatal to me, and would •have me pelted and knocked on the head

¹ Sometimes called 'rods in pickle'; canes kept in an acidic bath, keeping them stiff.

with little squat bibles—clasped in brass and ready armed for mischief—which, now that charitable learning had ceased, would be fit for nothing but unopened to fight with.

The **digression** I spoke of just now is not the foolish trifle in the preceding paragraph. . . ., but a serious defensive one that I am going to make to clear myself from having any design against arts and sciences, as some heads of colleges and other careful preservers of human learning might have thought from my recommending ignorance as a necessary ingredient in the mixture of civil society.

How education should be organised

In the first place I would have nearly twice as many professors in every university as there are now. Theology with us is generally well provided for, but the two other faculties have very little to boast of, especially medicine. Every branch of that art ought to have two or three professors who would take pains to communicate their skill and knowledge to others. In public lectures a vain man has great opportunities to set off his abilities, but private instructions are more useful to students. Pharmacy and the knowledge of the simples are as necessary as anatomy or the history of diseases; it is a shame that when men have taken their ·university· degree and are authoritatively entrusted with people's lives, they should be forced to come to London to be acquainted with the *materia medica* and the composition of medicines, and receive instructions from others who never had university education themselves. It is certain that in London there is ten times more opportunity for a man to improve himself in anatomy, botany, pharmacy, and the practice of medicine than at **both universities** together. What has an oil shop to do with silks? Who would look for hams and pickles at a mercer's? Where things are well managed, hospitals are put

into the service of advancing students in the art of medicine as much as into the recovery of health in the poor.

Good sense ought to govern men in learning as well as in trade: no man ever apprenticed his son to a goldsmith in order to make him a linen-draper; so why should he have a clergyman for his tutor in order to become a lawyer or a physician? It is true that the languages, logic and philosophy should be the first studies in all the learned professions; but there is so little help for medicine in our universities—

our *rich* universities, where so many idle people are well paid for eating and drinking and being magnificently as well as commodiously lodged

—that apart from books and what is common to all the three faculties, a man may as well qualify himself at **Oxford or Cambridge** to be a turkey-merchant as he can to be a physician; which is in my humble opinion a great sign that some part of the great wealth they are possessed of is not so well applied as it might be.

As well as the stipends allowed them by the public, professors should receive gratifications [= 'gifts of money'] from every student they teach, so that they might be spurred on to labour and assiduity by ·low-level· self-interest as well as competitiveness and the love of glory. If a man excels in any one part of learning and is qualified to teach others, he ought to be procured if money will purchase him, whatever party he is of, and whatever country or nation, and whether he is black or white. Universities should be public markets for all kinds of literature, as the annual fairs in Leipzig, Frankfurt and other places in Germany are for different wares and merchandises, where no difference is made between natives and foreigners, and where men come from all parts of the world with equal freedom and equal privilege.

From paying the gratifications I spoke of I would excuse all students designed for the ministry of the Gospel. There is

no faculty so immediately necessary to the government of a nation as that of theology; we ought to have great numbers of divines for the service of this island, so I would not have the lower-level people discouraged from bringing up their children to that function. [There are reasons why a wealthy man might make one of his sons a clergyman, but not enough of them come in that way,] and for the bulk of the clergy we are indebted to another origin.

Among the middling people of all trades there are bigots who have a superstitious awe for a gown and cassock, and many of these ardently desire to have a son promoted to the ministry of the Gospel, without considering what is to become of them afterwards. . . . It is to this religious zeal, or at least to the human frailties that pass for it, that we owe the great abundance of poor scholars that the nation enjoys. . . . Without this happy disposition in parents of small fortune, we could not possibly be supplied with proper persons for the ministry to attend the cures of souls. They are so pitifully provided for that no mortal who had been brought up in any tolerable plenty could live in that way unless he was possessed of real virtue; and it is foolish and indeed harmful to expect more virtue from the clergy than we generally find in the laity.

The great care I would take to promote the part of learning that is more immediately useful to society would not make me neglect the more theoretical and polite. On the contrary, I would like all the liberal arts and every branch of literature to be encouraged more than they are throughout the kingdom. In every county there should be one or more large schools erected at the public charge for Latin and Greek; they should be divided into six or more classes, with particular masters in each. The whole should be under the care and inspection of some authoritative men of letters who would not only be called 'governors' but would put in an effort at least twice a

year to hear every class thoroughly examined by its master, not settling for judging the scholars' progress on the basis of essays and other exercises that they had done out of the governors' sight.

At the same time I would discourage and hinder the multiplicity of those petty schools that would never have existed if the masters in them not been extremely indigent. It is a vulgar error that nobody can spell or write English well without a little smattering of Latin. This is upheld by pedants for their own interest, and by none more strenuously maintained than such of them as are *poor scholars* in more than one sense of that phrase; and it is an abominable falsehood. I know several people, including some of the fair sex, who never learned any Latin but keep to strict spelling and write admirable good sense; whereas everyone may meet with the scribblings of pretended scholars who went to a grammar school for several years, scribblings that have grammatical faults and are badly spelled. A thorough understanding of Latin is highly necessary for all who are going into any of the learned professions, and I would like no gentleman to be without literature; even those who are brought up to be attorneys, surgeons and apothecaries should be much better versed in that language than generally they are. But to young folk who are to get a livelihood in trades and callings in which Latin is not daily wanted, it is useless, and the learning of it is an evident loss of all the time and money bestowed on it. When men come into business, the Latin they learned in those petty schools is either soon forgotten or only fit to make them pushy and often troublesome in company. Few men can help priding themselves on any knowledge they once had, even after they have lost it; and unless they are very modest and discreet, the undigested scraps of Latin that such people commonly remember usually make them, at one time or another, ridiculous to those who understand it.

I would treat reading and writing as we do music and dancing; I would not hinder them or force them on the society. As long as there was anything to be got by them, there would be plenty of masters to teach them; but nothing should be taught for nothing except at church. And even at church those who are designed for the ministry of the Gospel should have to pay; for if parents are so miserably poor that they can't afford their children these first elements of learning, it is impudence in them to aspire any further.

The lower sort of people would be encouraged to give their children this part of their education themselves if they could see them preferred to the children of idle sots who never knew what it was to provide a rag for their brats except by begging. But as things are, when a boy or a girl is wanted for any small service, we reckon it a duty to employ a charity child before any other. The education of them looks like a reward for being vicious and inactive, a benefit commonly bestowed on parents who deserve to be punished for shamefully neglecting their families. . . .

That ends the **digression** I mentioned on page 95 and began shortly thereafter. I thought it necessary to say this much about learning, to counter the clamours of the enemies to truth and fair dealing who would—if I had not so amply explained myself on this topic—have represented me as a mortal foe to all literature and useful knowledge, and a wicked advocate for universal ignorance and stupidity.

I shall now make good my promise of answering what I know the well-wishers to charity schools would object against me, namely that they bring up the children under their care to warrantable and laborious trades, and not to idleness as I insinuated.

Against putting poor children out to trades

I have sufficiently showed already why going to school was idleness if compared to working, and exploded this sort of education in the children of the poor on the ground that it incapacitates them ever after for downright labour. *This* is their proper province, and in every civil society it is a portion that they ought not to regret or grumble at if it is exacted from them with discretion and humanity. What remains is for me to speak about their putting children out to trades. I shall try to demonstrate that this is destructive to the harmony of a nation, and is an impertinent interference with something that few of these governors of charity schools know anything about.

First let us examine the nature of societies, and what the composition of our society ought to be if we are to raise it to as high a level of strength, beauty and perfection as the ground we are to do it upon will let us. The variety of services that are required to supply the luxurious and wanton desires of man as well as his real necessities, with all their subordinate callings, is in such a nation as ours *prodigious*; but it is far from being infinite, and if you add one more than is required it must be superfluous. If a man had a good stock and the best shop in Cheapside to sell *turbans* in, he would be ruined; and if a silversmith made nothing but shrines to Diana, he would not earn a living now that the worship of that goddess is out of fashion. And just as it is folly to set up trades that are not wanted, so it is foolish to increase the numbers within any one trade beyond what are required. As things are managed with us, it would be preposterous to have as many brewers as there are bakers, or as many woollen drapers as there are shoemakers. In every trade this numerical proportion works itself out, and is best maintained when no-one interferes with it.

People with children who must earn a living are always consulting and deliberating what trade or calling they are to bring them up to, until they are fixed; and thousands think about this who hardly think about anything else. First they confine themselves to what they can afford: someone who can give only ten pounds with his son must not look out for a trade where they ask for a hundred with an apprentice. After that, they think about which trade will be the most advantageous; if there's a calling where at that time more people are employed than in any other calling in the same territory, a dozen fathers are ready to supply it with their sons. So the greatest care that most companies have is about regulating the number of apprentices. Now, when all trades complain justly that they are overstocked, you manifestly injure any trade to which you add one member more than would flow from the nature of society.

The governors of charity schools don't think about what trade is the best as much as about what tradesmen they can get who will take the boys with the available sum of money; and few potential employers of substance and experience will have anything to do with these children, because they are afraid of a hundred drawbacks from their impoverished parents. So most of them are apprenticed to sots and neglectful masters, or to ones who are very needy and don't care what becomes of their apprentices after they have received the money that comes with them; by which it seems as if we all we were trying to do was to have a *perpetual* nursery for charity schools. [His point is that a boy who is so badly apprenticed will end up poverty-stricken and thereby inclined to put *his* children into charity schools.]

When all trades and handicrafts are overstocked, it is a certain sign there is a fault in the management of the whole; for there cannot be too many people if the country is able to feed them. Are provisions dear? Whose fault is that if

you have ground untilled and hands unemployed? I shall be answered that to increase plenty [here = 'agricultural production'] must eventually undo the farmer or lessen the rents all over England. To which I reply that what the farmer complains of most is what I would remedy. The greatest grievance of farmers, gardeners and others where hard labour is required and dirty work to be done is that they can't get servants for the same wages they used to pay them. The day-labourer grumbles at sixteen pence to do work that thirty years ago his grandfather did cheerfully for half the money. As for rents, they cannot fall while you increase your numbers, unless the cost of provisions and all labour in general falls with them if not before; and a man with 150 pounds a year has no reason to complain that his income is reduced to 100 if he can buy as much for that as would earlier have cost him 200.

[Mandeville now spends several pages complaining about the state of bottom-level labour in England. There are too few people willing to do it; 'Nobody will do the dirty slavish work, that can help it. I don't discommend them; but all these things show that the people of the lowest rank know too much to be serviceable to us.' Those who are not equipped to do anything else have been enabled to get ideas above their station, as have workers at higher levels such as footmen, indeed 'servants in general'. They all demand unduly high wages, show disrespect for their employers, and some are rumoured to be combining into unions. He emerges from all this with a return to the topic of charity schools.]

Servants in general are daily encroaching on masters and mistresses, and trying to be more on a level with them. They not only seem anxious to abolish the low dignity of their condition but have already considerably raised it in the common estimation from the original lowness that the public welfare requires it should always remain in. I don't say that

these things are altogether due to charity schools; there are other evils they may be partly ascribed to. . . . But can anyone who considers what I have said doubt that charity schools are accessory to these troubles, or at least that they are more likely to create and increase than to lessen or redress them?

Charity schools and religion

The only substantial thing that can be said on their behalf, then, is that so many thousand children are educated by them in the Christian faith and the principles of the church of England. To demonstrate that this is not a sufficient plea for them, I ask the reader (as I hate repetitions) to look back at what I have already said about this [page 87]; to which I shall add that whatever children learn •at school that is necessary to salvation and requisite for poor labouring people to know concerning religion can just as well be learned (from preaching or catechising) •at church. I would want the lowest level people in a parish, if they could walk, to attend church or some other place of worship on Sundays. It is the Sabbath, the most useful day in seven, that is set apart for divine service and religious exercise as well as for resting from bodily labour, and all magistrates have a duty to take particular care of that day. The poor more especially (and their children) should be made to go to church on that day, both in the morning and in the afternoon; because they have no time to go on any other day. By precept and example they ought to be encouraged and accustomed to it from their very infancy; the wilful neglect of it ought to be regarded as scandalous; and if outright compulsion to church attendance might seem too harsh and perhaps impracticable, at least all diversions ought strictly to be prohibited, and the poor hindered from every amusement abroad that might draw them away from it.

Where this care is taken by the magistrates as far as it lies in their power, ministers of the Gospel can instill more piety and devotion and better principles of virtue and religion than charity schools ever did or ever will produce. Preachers who complain, when they have such opportunities, that without the assistance of reading and writing they cannot imbue their parishioners with enough of the knowledge they need as Christians are either very lazy or very ignorant and undeserving themselves.

That the most knowledgeable people are not the most religious will be evident if we make a trial between people of different abilities even at this time when church-going is not made such an obligation on the poor and illiterate as it might be. Let us pick at random

(i) a hundred poor men, aged above 40, who were brought up to hard labour from their infancy, never went to school, and always lived remote from knowledge and great towns;

and let us compare them to

(ii) a hundred very good scholars, all with university education; half of them divines who are well versed in philology and polemical learning.

If we impartially examine the lives and conversations of both groups, and I am sure that among (i) those who can neither read nor write we shall meet with more union and neighbourly love, less wickedness and attachment to the world, more contentment, innocence, sincerity, and other good qualities that conduce to the public peace and real felicity, than we shall find among (ii) the second group, where we are sure to find the height of pride and insolence, eternal quarrels and dissensions, irreconcilable hatreds, strife, envy, calumny and other vices destructive to mutual concord, which (i) the illiterate labouring poor are hardly ever tainted with to any considerable degree.

This will be no news to most of my readers; but if it is true, why should it be suppressed, and why must our concern for religion be eternally made a cloak to hide our real worldly intentions?

[Mandeville moves straight on from that, in a very unclear manner, to remarks about two quite different parties of supporters of charity schools, and what we would find if they 'agreed to pull off their masks'. The labels the groups are given here are not in the original.]

Group A: They aim at nothing so much in charity schools as to strengthen their party. When the great sticklers for the church speak of 'educating children in the principles of religion', they mean inspiring them with a superlative veneration for the clergy of the church of England, and a strong aversion to all those who dissent from it. Evidence for this: the facts about which divines are most admired for their charity sermons and most fond of preaching them.

Group B: The grand asserters of liberty, who are always guarding themselves and skirmishing against arbitrary power, often when they are in no danger of it, are not in general very superstitious and don't seem to lay great stress on any modern apostleship; but some of these also speak up loudly for charity schools, though what they expect from them has no relation to religion or morality. They regard them only as the proper means to destroy and disappoint the power of the priests over the laity. Reading and writing increase knowledge, and the more men know the better they can judge for themselves, and these people imagine that if knowledge could be made universal, people would no longer be priest-ridden, which is the thing they fear the most. Evidence for this: the facts about whether in recent years we have had any riots or party scuffles in which the youth of a famous hospital in this city [Christ's Hospital, a famous London charity school] were not always the most forward ring-leaders.

I confess that **group A** will probably will get they are aiming at. But surely wise men who are not red-hot for a party, or bigots to the priests, will not think it worthwhile to suffer so many inconveniences as charity schools can cause merely to promote the ambition and power of the clergy. To **group B** I would answer that if all those who are educated at the charge of their parents or relations will *think for themselves* and refuse to have their reason imposed on by the priests, we need not be concerned for what the clergy will work on the ignorant who have no education at all. Let them make the most of them! Considering the schools we have for those who can and do pay for learning, it is ridiculous to think that abolishing charity schools would be a step towards any ignorance that could harm the nation.

I would not be thought cruel, and I am well assured that I abhor inhumanity; but to be compassionate to excess, where reason forbids it and the general interest of the society requires steadiness of thought and resolution, is an unpardonable weakness. I know it will be urged against me that it is barbarous that the children of the poor should have no opportunity of exerting themselves, as long as God has not debarred them from natural abilities and intellect more than the rich. But I cannot think this is harder than it is that they should not have money as long as they have the same inclinations to spend as others do. I don't deny that great and useful men have sprung from hospitals [here = 'charity schools']; but when they were first employed, that was probably to the disadvantage of many others—as capable as themselves, but not brought up in hospitals—who might have done as well as they did if they had been employed instead of them. There are many examples of women who have excelled in learning, and even in war, but this is no reason for us to bring them *all* up to Latin and Greek or else military discipline, instead of needle-work and housewifery.

There is no scarcity of sprightliness or natural abilities among us, and no soil or climate has human creatures better formed (inside and outside) than this island generally produces. However, it is not wit, genius or docility we want, but diligence, application, and assiduity. Hard and dirty labour has to be done, and coarse living has to be complied with; where shall we find a better nursery for these necessities than the children of the poor? None are nearer to it or fitter for it. Furthermore, what I have called 'hardships' do not seem to be—indeed, *are* not—hardships to those who have been brought up to them and know no better. There is not a more contented people among us than those who work the hardest and are the least acquainted with the pomp and delicacies of the world.

These truths are undeniable; yet few people will be pleased to have them divulged. What makes them odious is an unreasonable vein of petty reverence for the poor that runs through most multitudes, and more particularly in this nation, and arises from a mixture of pity, folly and superstition. It is from a lively sense of this compound that men cannot endure to hear or see anything said or done against the poor, without considering how just it is or how insolent the poor are. Thus, a beggar must not be beaten even if he strikes you first. Journeymen tailors go to law against their masters and are obstinate in a wrong cause, but they must be pitied; and complaining weavers must be relieved, and have fifty silly things done to humour them, although in the midst of their poverty they insult their betters and seem always to prefer making holidays and riots to working soberly.

[Now about a page on export/import matters with an emphasis on wool. The main thrust is that England is at a trade disadvantage because it has allowed its lowest-level workers to become too expensive.]

The cheerfulness of the working poor

Given that there is much work to be done, I think it is equally undeniable that the more cheerfully it is done the better, for those that perform it as well as for the rest of the society. The less notion a man has of a better way of living, the more contented he'll be with his own; and on the other hand, the greater a man's knowledge and experience of the world, the more discriminating his taste, and the more perfectly he can judge things in general, the harder it will be to please him. I would not support anything barbarous or inhuman; but when a man enjoys himself, laughs and sings, and in his gesture and behaviour shows me all the tokens of contentment and satisfaction, I pronounce him happy and do not inquire into his wit or capacity. I ought not to judge of the reasonableness of his mirth by my own standard, and argue from the effect the thing he is laughing over would have on me. . . . *De gustibus non est disputandum* ['One should not argue over tastes'] is as true in a metaphorical as it is in the literal sense, and the further apart people are in their condition, circumstances and manner of living, the less able they are to judge one another's troubles or pleasures.

If the lowest and most uncivilised peasant were able secretly to observe the greatest king for a fortnight, he might pick out things he would like for himself, but he would find many more that he would want to have immediately altered or redressed if the monarch and he were to exchange places—things he is amazed to see the king submit to. And if the sovereign was to examine the peasant in the same way, he would find his labour to be intolerable, the dirt and squalor, his diet and amours, his pastimes and recreations all abominable; but then what charms would he find in the peasant's peace of mind, the calmness and tranquility of his soul? No need for dissimulation with any of his family,

or pretended affection for his mortal enemies; no wife with foreign loyalties, no danger to fear from his children; no plots to unravel, no poison to fear; no popular statesman at home or cunning courts abroad to manage; no seeming patriots to bribe; no insatiable favourite to gratify; no selfish ministry to obey; no divided nation to please, or fickle mob to humour, that would direct and interfere with his pleasures.

If impartial reason were to judge between real good and real evil, and a catalogue made accordingly of the various delights and vexations of kings and peasants, I question whether the condition of kings would be preferable to that of peasants, even as ignorant and laborious as I seem to require the latter to be. Why would most people rather be kings than peasants? The first cause is pride and ambition, which is deeply rivetted in human nature; to gratify pride men daily undergo and despise the greatest hazards and difficulties. The second cause is the difference in how forcefully things affect us depending on whether they are material or spiritual.

- Things that immediately strike our outward senses act more violently on our passions than
- what is the result of thought; and there is a much stronger bias to gain our liking or aversion in the first than there is in the latter.

[He now returns to the link between working-poor wages and trade, deploring the fact that 'others grow rich by the same fish that we neglect, though it is ready to jump into our mouths'.]

National public works

There are several centuries of work for a hundred thousand more poor people than we have in this island. To make every part of the island useful, and the whole thoroughly inhabited, many rivers are to be made navigable and canals to be cut in hundreds of places. Some lands are to be

drained and secured from future floods; much barren soil is to be made fertile, and thousands of acres made more accessible and thus more beneficial. *Dii laboribus omnia vendunt* ['The gods sell everything for labour']; there is no difficulty of this sort that labour and patience cannot overcome. The highest mountains can be thrown into valleys standing ready to receive them, and bridges could be laid where now we would not dare to think of it. Let us look back on the stupendous works of the Romans, especially their highways and aqueducts. Let us compare:

- the vast extent of several of their roads, how substantial they made them, and how long they have lasted with
- a poor traveller who every ten miles is stopped by a turnpike and dunned for a penny for mending the roads with materials that everyone knows will be dirt before the next winter is over.

The convenience of the public ought always to be the public care; no private interest of a town or a county should ever block the carrying out of a project or construction that would clearly tend to the improvement of the whole country. Every member of the legislature who knows his duty and would rather act like a wise man than curry favour with his neighbours will prefer

- the least benefit coming to the whole kingdom to
- the most visible advantage of his own constituency.

We have materials of our own and no shortage of stone and timber; and if

- the money that people freely give to beggars who don't deserve it, and what every homeowner is obliged to pay to the poor of his parish who are otherwise employed or ill-applied
- were put together every year, it would make a sufficient fund to keep many thousands at work. I say this not because I

think it practicable but only to show that we have money enough to spare to employ vast multitudes of labourers. And they needn't cost as much as we might imagine. When it is taken for granted that a soldier, whose strength and vigour is to be kept up at least as much as anyone's, can live on sixpence a day, I can't see the need to pay a day-labourer sixteen or eighteen pence a day for most of the year.

The fearful and cautious people who are always protective of their liberty will protest that property and privileges would be insecure if the multitudes I speak of were constantly on the public payroll. But they might be answered that secure means might be devised—and such regulations made governing the hands in which to trust the management and direction of these labourers—so that it would be impossible for the prince or anyone else to make a bad use of their numbers.

What I have said in the last few paragraphs will be scornfully laughed at by many readers, and at best be called building castles in the air; but whether that is my fault or theirs is a question. When the public spirit has left a nation, its people not only lose their patience with it and all thoughts of perseverance, but become so narrow-souled that it is a pain for them even to *think* of things that are of uncommon extent or require great length of time; and whatever is noble or sublime in such conjunctures is regarded as chimerical. Where deep ignorance is entirely routed and expelled, and shallow learning is randomly scattered on all the people, self-love turns knowledge into cunning; and the more cunning prevails in any country, the more its people will fix all their cares, concern and application toward the present time, without concern for what is to come after them and hardly ever thinking beyond the next generation.

But cunning, according to my Lord Verulam [Francis Bacon], is only left-handed wisdom; so a prudent legislature ought

to provide against this disorder of the society as soon as its symptoms appear, among which the following are the most obvious. Imaginary rewards are generally despised; everybody is for turning the penny and short bargains; he who is cautious about everything and believes only what he sees with his own eyes is counted the most prudent, and in all their dealings men seem to act solely from the principle of the devil take the hindmost. Instead of planting oaks that will need 150 years before they are fit to be cut down, they build houses that they don't plan to have last for more than about a dozen years. All heads run upon the uncertainty of things, and the vicissitudes of human affairs. Mathematics becomes the only valuable study, and is used in everything, even where it is ridiculous, and men seem to have no more trust in providence than they would in a bankrupt merchant.

It is the business of the public to make up for the defects of the society and take in hand first whatever is most neglected by private persons. Contraries are best cured by contraries; and in amending national failings •example is more effective than •precept; so the legislature should decide on some great undertakings that must be the work of ages as well as requiring vast labour, and convince the world that they do nothing without an anxious concern for their most remote posterity. This will at least *help* to settle the volatile genius and fickle spirit of the kingdom, remind us that we are not born for ourselves only, and be a means of making men less distrustful, and inspiring them with a true love for their country and a tender affection for the ground itself—than which nothing is more necessary to make a nation great. Forms of government may alter, religions and even languages may change, but Great Britain—the island itself, even if its name changes—will remain, and in all human probability will last as long as any part of the globe. All ages have acknowledged the benefits derived from

their ancestors; a Christian who enjoys the multitude of fountains and vast abundance of water to be met with in the city of St. Peter is an ungrateful wretch if he never casts a thankful remembrance on old pagan Rome which took such prodigious pains to procure it.

When this island is cultivated and every inch of it made habitable and useful, and the whole the most convenient and agreeable spot upon earth, all the cost and labour spent

on it will be gloriously repaid by the incense of those who will come after us; and those who burn with the noble desire for immortality, and took such care to improve their country, will be able to rest satisfied that a thousand years hence—*two* thousand years hence—they will live in the memory and everlasting praises of the future ages that will then enjoy it. . . .

A search into the nature of society

The generality of moralists and philosophers have hitherto agreed that there could be no virtue without self-denial; but a late author who is now much read by men of sense is of a contrary opinion, and thinks that men can be naturally virtuous without any trouble or violence on themselves. He seems to require and expect goodness in members of his species, as we do a sweet taste in grapes and china oranges, which, if any of them are sour, we boldly say have not come to the perfection their nature is capable of. This noble writer (for it is Lord Shaftesbury I mean, in his *Characteristics*) fancies that because man is made for society he ought to be born with •a kind affection for the whole of which he is a part, and •a propensity to seek the welfare of it. In pursuance of this supposition he calls every action performed with concern for the public good *virtuous* and all selfishness that wholly excludes such a concern *vice*. In respect to our species, he looks on virtue and vice as permanent realities that must be the same in all countries and all ages, and imagines that a man of sound understanding can, by following the rules of good sense, not only •identify *pulchrum* and *honestum* [beautiful and good] in morality and in the works of art and nature but also •govern himself by his reason with as much ease and readiness as a good rider manages a well-trained horse by the bridle.

The attentive reader who has read the foregoing part of this book will soon see that two systems cannot be more opposite than his Lordship's and mine. His notions are admittedly generous and refined; they are a high compliment to human-kind, and with the help of a little enthusiasm [see Glossary] can inspire us with noble sentiments concerning the dignity of our exalted nature. What a pity it is that

they are not true! I would not say this if I had not already demonstrated on almost every page of this treatise that their substance is inconsistent with our daily experience. But so as not to leave unanswered the least shadow of a possible objection, I shall develop some things that I have so far only slightly touched on, so as to convince the reader not only that •the good and amiable qualities of man are not those that make him beyond other animals a sociable creature, but also that •it would be utterly impossible to raise any multitudes into a populous, rich and flourishing nation or to keep them in that condition without the assistance of what we call 'evil', both natural and moral.

Realism about beauty and goodness

To do this better, I shall first look into the reality of the *pulchrum* and *honestum* that the ancients talked about so much. That is, I shall discuss whether it is the case that

there is a real worth and excellence in things, a pre-eminence of one thing above another, that will be agreed to by everyone who understands them well;

or whether instead

there are few if any things that have the same esteem paid them, and on which the same judgment is passed, in all countries and all ages.

When we first set out in quest of this intrinsic worth, and find one thing better than another, a third better than that, and so on, we begin to entertain great hopes of success; but when we meet with several things that are all very good or all very bad, we are puzzled and can't always make up our own mind, let alone agree with others about them. There are faults that

will be differently disapproved of, as well as beauties that will be differently admired, as modes and fashions alter and men vary in their tastes and temperaments.

Judges of painting will never disagree in opinion when a fine picture is compared to the daubing of a novice; but how strongly they have differed regarding the works of eminent masters! There are factions among connoisseurs, and few of them agree in their esteem as to ages and countries, and the best pictures do not always command the best prices: a noted original will always be worth more than a copy of it by an unknown hand, even if the copy is better. The value that is set on paintings depends not only on the name of the master and the time in his life when he did them, but also in a great measure on the scarcity of his works and—what is still more unreasonable—on the quality of the persons who now own them and the length of time they have been in great families. If the drawings now at Hampton Court were done by someone less famous than Raphael, and were owned by a private person who was forced to sell them, they would never bring a tenth part of the money which they, with all their gross faults, are now esteemed to be worth.

Despite all this, I will readily admit that the judgment to be made of painting might acquire universal certainty, or at least become less alterable and precarious than almost anything else. The reasons for this is plain: there is a standard to go by that always remains the same. Painting is an imitation of nature, a copying of things which men have everywhere before them. [He side-tracks—'hoping that my good-humoured reader will forgive me'—into a theory of his about how the glories of the visual arts owe something to an imperfection in our eyesight.]

Worth and excellence are as uncertain in the works of nature as in works of art, and even in human creatures what is beautiful in one country is not so in another. How

whimsical is the florist in his choice! Sometimes the tulip, sometimes the auricula, and at other times the carnation will win his esteem; and every year a new flower in his judgment beats all the old ones, though it is much inferior to them in colour and shape. Three centuries ago men were shaved as closely as they are now; between then and now they wore beards, and cut them in a vast variety of forms that were all as handsome when fashionable as now they would be ridiculous. How comic an otherwise well-dressed man looks in a narrow-brimmed hat when everyone wears broad ones! How monstrous is a very large hat when the other extreme has been in fashion for some time! Experience has taught us that these fashions seldom last above a dozen years, and a man of 60 must have observed five or six revolutions of them. [He continues with examples: button-sizes, garden-designs, etc.]

Ever since Christians have been able to build them, churches have resembled the form of a cross, with the upper end pointing toward the east. Where there is room for this and it can conveniently be done, an architect who neglected it would be thought to have committed an unpardonable fault; but it would be foolish to expect this of a Turkish mosque or a pagan temple. [A century earlier, a law was enacted requiring that corpses at funerals be dressed in wool; much fuss from people who had conducted many funerals with the bodies dressed in linen. Continuing:] These days, with burying in linen being almost forgotten, it is the general opinion that nothing could be more decent than the present manner of dressing a corpse; which shows that our liking or disliking of things chiefly depends on fashion and custom. . . .

In morals there is no greater certainty. Plurality of wives is odious among Christians, and all the wit and learning of a great genius [Luther? Sir Thomas More? Plato?] in defence of it has been rejected with contempt; but polygamy is

not shocking to a Mahometan. What men have learned from their infancy enslaves them, and the force of •custom warps •nature and also imitates it in such a way that it is often difficult to know which of the two we are influenced by. In the east, sisters used to marry brothers, and it was meritorious for a man to marry his mother. Such alliances are abominable; but whatever horror we conceive at the thoughts of them, there is certainly nothing in nature opposed to them—only what is built upon fashion and custom. A religious Mahometan who has never tasted any alcoholic drink and has often seen people drunk may acquire as great an aversion against •wine as one of us who has the least tinge of morality and education will have against •lying with his sister; and each imagines that his antipathy proceeds from nature. *Which religion is the best?* is a question that has done more harm than all other questions together. Ask it at Peking, at Constantinople, and at Rome, and you'll get three extremely different answers, all delivered in a positive and peremptory manner. Christians are well assured of the falsity of the Pagan and Mahometan superstitions; on this point there is perfect concord among them; but ask their various sects 'Which is the true Church of Christ?' and all of them will tell you it is *theirs*, and to convince you they will start fighting one another.

So it is clear that hunting after this *pulchrum* and *honestum* is not much better than a wild-goose chase; but this is not the greatest fault I find with it. The fanciful idea that men can be virtuous without self-denial is a vast inlet to hypocrisy. Once this has become habitual, we not only deceive others but also become altogether unknown to ourselves. I am going to give an instance that will show how this might happen to a capable and erudite person of quality who does not

adequately examine himself. The person I shall describe greatly resembles the author of *Characteristics*. [Mandeville clearly intended what follows to be a portrait of Lord Shaftesbury.]

Hypocrisy and the 'calm virtues'

A man who has been brought up in ease and affluence, if he is of a quiet indolent nature, learns to shun everything troublesome and chooses to curb his passions, less because of any dislike for sensual enjoyments than because of the inconveniences that arise from eagerly pursuing pleasure and yielding to all the demands of our inclinations. And if such a man has been educated by a great philosopher who was a mild and good-natured tutor as well as an able one,¹ he may have a better opinion of his inward state than it really deserves, and believe himself virtuous because his passions lie dormant. He may form fine notions of the social virtues and the contempt for death, write well of them in his study and talk eloquently of them in company, but you will never catch him fighting for his country or labouring to retrieve any national losses. A man who deals in metaphysics can easily throw himself into an enthusiasm [see Glossary] and really believe that he does not fear death while it remains out of sight. But if he should be asked

- why—having this intrepidity either from nature or acquired by philosophy—he did not follow arms when his country was involved in war; or
- why—seeing the nation daily robbed by those at the helm, and the affairs of the exchequer perplexed—he did not go to Court, organise to become a Lord Treasurer, and restore the public credit through his integrity and wise management;

¹ John Locke was for many years a member of the household of Shaftesbury's grandfather, and had a large role in the grandson's upbringing.

he would probably answer that •he loved retirement, had no ambition except to be a good man, and never aspired to have any share in the government; or that •he hated all flattery and slavish attendance, the insincerity of Courts and bustle of the world. I am willing to believe him; but may not a man of indolent temper and inactive spirit say all this and be sincere in it and at the same time indulge his appetites without being able to subdue them, though his duty summons him to do so? Virtue consists in *action*; and someone who has this social love and kind affection for his species, and who by his birth or quality can claim some post in the public management, should exert himself to the utmost for the good of his fellow subjects rather than sitting still when he could be serviceable. If this noble person had had a warlike mind or a boisterous temperament, he would have chosen another role in the drama of life and preached a quite contrary doctrine; for we are always pushing our reason in whatever direction we feel passions pulling it, and self-love. . . .provides every individual with arguments to justify his inclinations.

That boasted middle way and the calm virtues recommended in the *Characteristics*. . . .might qualify a man for the stupid enjoyments of a monastic life, or at best a country justice of peace, but they would never fit him for labour and assiduity, or stir him up to great achievements and perilous undertakings. Man's natural love of ease and idleness, and proneness to indulge his sensual pleasures, cannot be cured by preaching; his strong habits and inclinations can only be subdued by passions of greater violence. Preach and demonstrate to a coward the unreasonableness of his fears and you'll not make him valiant, any more than you can make him taller by telling him to be ten foot high; whereas the secret to raise courage, as I have presented it in Remark R [see page 64], is almost infallible.

The fear of death is the strongest when we are in our greatest vigour, and our appetite is keen; when we are sharp-sighted, quick of hearing, and every part performs its office. That is clearly because that is when life is most delicious and we are most capable of enjoying it. So how does it come about that a man of honour so easily accepts a challenge ·to a duel· when he is 30 and in perfect health? It is his pride that conquers his fear; for when his pride is not concerned, this fear will appear glaringly. Let him be in a storm if he is not used to the sea, let him have but a sore throat or a slight fever if he was never ill before, and he'll show a thousand anxieties, testifying to the inestimable value he sets on life. If man had been naturally humble and proof against flattery, the politician could never have achieved his purposes or known what to make of him. Without vices, the excellence of the species would have remained forever undiscovered, and every worthy who has made himself famous in the world is a strong evidence against this amiable system ·of the 'middle way'·.

If the courage of the great Macedonian ·Alexander the Great· rose to a frenzy when he fought alone against a whole garrison, his madness was not less when he fancied himself to be a god, or at least thought he might be; and as soon as we make this reflection, we discover both the passion and the extravagance of it that buoyed up his spirits in the most imminent dangers, and carried him through all the difficulties and fatigues he underwent.

There never was an abler and more complete magistrate than Cicero. When I think about

his care and vigilance, the real hazards he slighted, and the pains he took for the safety of Rome; his wisdom and sagacity in detecting and foiling the stratagems of the boldest and most subtle conspirators, and at the same time his love for literature, arts

and sciences, his capacity in metaphysics, the soundness of his reasonings, the force of his eloquence, the polish of his style, and the genteel spirit that runs through his writings,

I am struck with amazement, and the least I can say of him is that he was a prodigious man. But still it is evident to me that his vanity was as great as his greatest excellence, and that if it had not been, his good sense and knowledge of the world would never have let him be such an extravagant and noisy trumpeter of his own praises, or allowed him to proclaim his own merit in a verse that a schoolboy would have been laughed at for—*O fortunatam natam me consule Romam!* ['O lucky Rome! Born to have me as Consul!']

How strict and severe was the morality of rigid Cato, how steady and unaffected the virtue of that grand asserter of Roman liberty! . . . But by his suicide it plainly appeared that he was governed by a tyrannical power greater than his love for his country, and that his implacable hatred and superlative envy for Caesar's glory, real greatness and personal merit had for a long time swayed all his actions under the most noble pretences. If this violent motive had not overruled his consummate prudence, he might have saved not only himself but also most of his friends who were ruined by the loss of him, and he would in all probability have been the second man in Rome, if he could have stooped to it. But he knew the boundless mind and unlimited generosity of the victor; it was his *clemency* that he feared, and therefore chose death because it was less terrible to his pride than the thought of giving his mortal foe such a tempting opportunity to show the magnanimity of his soul, as Caesar would have found in forgiving and offering friendship to such an inveterate enemy as Cato. . . .

Another argument that is supposed to prove the kind disposition and real affection we naturally have for our

species is our love of company, and the aversion that men who are in their senses generally have to solitude. This bears a fine gloss in the *Characteristics*, and is set off in very good language to the best advantage. The day after I first read it, I heard crowds of people crying 'Fresh herrings!', and that, along with the thought of the vast shoals of that and other fish that are caught together, made me very cheerful, though I was alone. But as I was entertaining myself with this contemplation, along came an impertinent idle fellow whom I had the misfortune to be known by, and asked me how I did, though I was and probably looked as healthy as ever I was in my life. I forget what I answered, but I remember that I could not get rid of him for a good while, and felt all the uneasiness my friend Horace complains of from a similar persecution.

Sociableness

I would have no sagacious critic pronounce me a man-hater on the evidence of this short story; whoever does is very much mistaken. I am a great lover of company, and if you are not quite tired of mine, before I get on with my main theme I shall give you a description of the man I would choose for conversation. I promise that before you have come to the end of what at first you might think to be a mere side-tracking digression, you will find the use of it.

By early and artful instruction he should be thoroughly imbued with the notions of honour and shame, and have contracted an habitual aversion to everything that has the least tendency to impudence, rudeness or inhumanity. He should be well versed in the Latin tongue and not ignorant of the Greek, and moreover understand one or two modern languages besides his own. He should be acquainted with the fashions and customs of the ancients, but thoroughly

skilled in the history of his own country and the manners of the age he lives in. He should besides literature have studied some useful science or other, seen some foreign courts and universities, and made the true use of travelling. He should at times take delight in dancing, fencing, riding the great horse, and knowing something of hunting and other country sports, without being attached to any, and he should treat them all as exercises for health or else diversions that should never interfere with business or the attaining of more valuable qualifications. He should have a smattering of geometry and astronomy as well as anatomy and the economy of human bodies. To understand music so as to perform is an accomplishment, but there is a lot to be said against it; and I would prefer him to know a bit about drawing. . . . He should be very early used to the company of modest women, and never go a fortnight without conversing with the ladies.

Gross vices such as irreligion, whoring, gaming, drinking and quarrelling I won't mention; even the poorest education guards us against them. I would always recommend to him the practice of virtue, but I am not in favour of a gentleman's being voluntarily ignorant of anything that is done in Court or city. It is impossible for a man to be perfect, and therefore there are faults I would connive [see Glossary] at if I could not prevent them; and if between the ages of 19 and 23

- youthful heat sometimes got the better of his chastity, provided it was done with caution;

- on some special occasion, overcome by the urgings of jovial friends, he drank more than was consistent with strict sobriety, provided it happened very seldom and did not interfere with his health or temperament;

- by the height of his mettle and great provocation in a just cause he was drawn into a quarrel which true wisdom and

a less strict adherence to the rules of honour might have declined or prevented, provided it did not happen more than once;

if he happened to be guilty of these things, but never spoke (much less brag) of them, they might be pardoned or at least overlooked at the age I have named. The very disasters of youth have sometimes frightened gentlemen into a more steady prudence than they would have been likely to command otherwise. To keep him from turpitude and things that are openly scandalous, there is nothing better than to give him free access to one or two noble families where his frequent attendance is counted a duty; that preserves his pride while also keeping him in a continual dread of shame.

[He speaks of the pleasures of good conversation among a few men of the kind he has been describing, and continues:] Most people of any taste would like such a conversation, and rightly prefer it to being alone when they were at a loose end; but if they could do something from which they expected a more solid or a more lasting satisfaction, they would deny themselves this pleasure and follow what was of greater consequence to them.

- And almost anything is preferable to *bad* 'conversation'.
- Would not a man who had seen no-one for a fortnight rather remain alone for another fortnight than get into company with noisy fellows who take delight in contradiction and place a glory in picking a quarrel?
- Would not anyone who has books prefer reading for ever, or setting himself to write on some subject or other, to being every night with political zealots who regard the island as good for nothing while their adversaries are allowed to live on it?
- Would not a man prefer to be by himself for a month and go to bed before 7 p.m. to mixing with fox-hunters who—having all day long tried in vain to break their necks—at night make a second attempt on their lives by drinking. . . .? I have no great value for a

man who would not rather tire himself with walking—or if he was shut up, scatter pins about the room in order to pick them up again—than keep company for six hours with a dozen common sailors on the day their ship was paid off.

I grant that most of mankind, rather than being alone for any considerable time, would submit to the things I have named; but I cannot see why this love of company—this strong desire for society—should count so much in our favour as a supposed mark of some intrinsic worth in man that is not to be found in other animals. If man's being a sociable creature came from the goodness of his nature—from his generous love for the rest of his species—this eagerness for company and aversion of being alone ought to have been most conspicuous and fervent in the best of their kind, the men of the greatest genius, abilities and accomplishments, and those who are the least subject to vice. But in fact the opposite of that is true. The weakest minds who can the least govern their passions, guilty consciences that abhor reflection, and worthless people who are incapable of producing anything of their own that's useful—those are the greatest enemies to solitude, and will take up with any company rather than be alone; whereas men of sense and knowledge who can think and contemplate on things, and ones who are little disturbed by their passions, can bear to be by themselves the longest without reluctance; and to avoid noise, folly, and impertinence they will run away from twenty companies; and, rather than meet with anything disagreeable to their good taste, will prefer their study or a garden—indeed, a common or a desert—to the society of some men.

Suppose it were true that the love of company is so inseparable from our species that no man could endure being alone for one moment, what conclusions could be drawn from this? Does not man love company, as he does

everything else, for his own sake? [He goes into details of the self-involved reasons why people of various kinds get satisfaction from 'friendships and civilities', and offers evidence that 'in all clubs and societies of conversable people everyone has the greatest consideration for himself'.]

In these instances, the friendly qualities arise from our perpetually contriving our own satisfaction; on other occasions they proceed from man's natural timidity and the solicitous care he takes of himself. Two Londoners whose businesses do not oblige them to have any dealings with one another may know, see, and pass by one another every day on the exchange, with not much greater civility than bulls would; but let them meet in Bristol and they'll pull off their hats and on the least opportunity enter into conversation, being glad of one another's company. When French, English and Dutch meet in any pagan country, they look on one another as fellow countrymen, and if no passion interferes they will feel a natural propensity to love one another. Indeed, two men who are at enmity, if they are forced to travel together, will often lay by their animosities and converse in a friendly manner, especially if the road is unsafe and they are both strangers in the place they are to go to. Superficial judges attribute these things to man's sociableness, his natural propensity for friendship and love of company; but if you look into man more closely you'll find that on all these occasions the causes are the ones I have cited.

The nature of society

I have been trying to prove that the *pulchrum* and *honestum*—excellence and real worth—of things are most commonly precarious and alterable as fashions and customs vary; that consequently the inferences drawn from their certainty are pointless; and that the big-hearted notions of the natural

goodness of man are harmful because they tend to mislead and are merely chimerical. . . . I have spoken of our love of company and aversion to solitude, examined thoroughly their various motives, and made it appear that they all centre in self-love. I intend now to investigate the nature of society and, diving into the very origin of it, make it evident that the first causes of man's becoming more sociable than other animals the moment after he lost paradise are not his good and amiable qualities but the bad and hateful ones, his imperfections and lack of excellences that other creatures are endowed with; and that if he had remained in his primitive innocence and continued to enjoy the blessings that came with it, there is no shadow of probability that he would ever have become that sociable creature he is now.

I have sufficiently proved throughout the book how necessary our appetites and passions are for the welfare of all trades and handicrafts; and no-one denies that our appetites and passions *are* our bad qualities or at least *produce* them. It remains for me to set forth the various obstacles that hinder and perplex man in the labour he is constantly employed in, the procuring of what he wants, the business of self-preservation; while at the same time I demonstrate that the sociableness of man arises only from **(i)** the multiplicity of his desires and **(ii)** the continual opposition he meets with in his efforts to gratify them.

The obstacles I speak of relate to **a** our own frame and to **b** the globe we inhabit—I mean its condition since it was cursed. I have often tried to think separately about those two things, but could never keep them apart; they always interfere and mix with one another, eventually combining to form a frightful chaos of evil. All the elements are our enemies, water drowns and fire consumes those who unskillfully approach them. The earth in a thousand places produces plants that are hurtful to man, while she feeds and protects

a variety of creatures that are noxious to him, and allows a legion of poisons to dwell within her. But the most unkind of all the elements is the one we cannot live for one moment without; it is impossible to repeat all the injuries we receive from the wind and weather. . . .

Hurricanes do not happen often, and few men are swallowed up by earthquakes or devoured by lions; but while we escape those gigantic mischiefs we are persecuted by trifles. What a vast variety of insects are tormenting to us! What multitudes of them insult and make game of us with impunity! . . . We put up with them when they don't overdo things; but here again our clemency becomes a vice, and so ruthless is their cruelty and contempt for our pity that they make laystalls [= 'garbage dumps'] of our heads and devour our young ones if we are not daily vigilant in pursuing and destroying them.

No innocence or integrity can protect a man from a thousand mischiefs that surround him; on the contrary, everything that art and experience have not taught us to turn into a blessing is an evil. At harvest time how diligently the farmer gets in his crop and shelters it from rain, without which he would not have *had* a crop! As seasons differ with the climates, we have learned from experience how to make use of them: we see the farmer sow in one part of the globe while he is reaping in another part; all of which tells us how vastly this earth must have been altered since the Fall of our first parents. Let us trace man from his beautiful—his *divine*—origin, not proud of wisdom acquired by haughty precept or tedious experience but endowed with consummate knowledge the moment he was formed; I mean his state of innocence, in which no animal or plant or underground mineral was noxious to him, and he was secure from the injuries of the air as well as all other harms, and was contented with the necessities of life, which the globe he

inhabited provided for him without his assistance. When not yet conscious of guilt, he found himself to be everywhere the unchallenged lord of all, and unspoiled by his greatness was wholly caught up in sublime meditations on the infinity of his Creator, who visited him daily and spoke in a language he understood.

In such a golden age there was no reason why mankind should ever have raised themselves into such large societies as there have been in the world for as far back as we have any tolerable records. Where a man has everything he desires and nothing to vex or disturb him, nothing can be added to his happiness; and it is impossible to name a trade, art, science, dignity or employment that would not be superfluous in such a blessed state. If we follow out this thought we'll easily see that no societies could have sprung from man's amiable virtues and loving qualities, but on the contrary that all of them must have had their origin in his wants, his imperfections, and the variety of his appetites; and we'll also find that the more men's pride and vanity are displayed and the more their desires are enlarged, the more capable they must be of being raised into large and vastly numerous societies.

With the air being always as inoffensive to our naked bodies and as pleasant as we think it is to most birds in fair weather, and man not being affected with pride, luxury and hypocrisy, or with lust, I cannot see what could have led us to invent clothes and houses. (Never mind jewels, plate, painting, sculpture, fine furniture, and all that rigid moralists have called unnecessary and superfluous.) If we were not soon tired from walking on foot, and were as nimble as some other animals; if men were naturally hard-working and none were unreasonable in seeking and indulging their ease; and if the ground was everywhere even, solid and clean, who would have thought of coaches or ventured on a horse's

back? What use has the dolphin for a ship? What carriage would an eagle ask to travel in?

I hope it is clear that by 'society' I mean a body politic in which man—either subdued by superior force or drawn by persuasion from his savage state—becomes a disciplined creature who can find his own ends in labouring for others, and where under some form of government each member is made subservient to the whole, and all of them are by cunning management made to act as one. If by 'society' we only mean a number of people who without rule or government keep together out of natural affection for their species or love of company, like a herd of cows or a flock of sheep, then nothing in the world is a more unfit creature for society than man. A hundred of them who should all be equals, under no subjection or fear of any superior on earth, could not live together awake for two hours without quarrelling; and the more knowledge, strength, wit, courage and resolution there was among them, the worse it would be.

[He writes about parental authority, and how it fades away: 'once the old stock is dead, the sons would quarrel'.] Man, being a fearful animal and naturally not rapacious, loves peace and quiet and would never fight if nobody offended him and he could have what he wanted without fighting for it. This fearful disposition and his aversion to being disturbed are the source of all the various projects and forms of government. Monarchy without doubt was the first. Aristocracy and democracy were two different methods of mending the inconveniences of the first, and a mixture of these three is an improvement on all the rest.

But whether we are savages or politicians [see Glossary], it is impossible that man—mere fallen man—should act with any purpose but to please himself while he has the use of his organs, and the greatest extravagance of love or of despair can have no other centre but that. There is no difference

between will and pleasure in one sense, and every motion made in defiance of them must be unnatural and convulsive. Thus, since action is so confined and we are always forced to do what we please, and at the same time our thoughts are free and uncontrolled, we could not possibly be sociable creatures without hypocrisy. We cannot *prevent* the ideas that are continually arising within us, but all civil commerce would be lost if we had not learned to *hide and stifle* them by art and prudent dissimulation. If all our thoughts were laid open to others in the same way that they are to ourselves, it is impossible that endowed with speech we could be tolerable to one another. I am sure every reader feels the truth of what I say. . . . In all civil societies men are taught insensibly to be hypocrites from their cradle, nobody dares to make public what he gets by public calamities or even by the losses of private persons. The sexton would be stoned if he wished openly for the death of the parishioners, though everybody knows that he has nothing else to live on.

When I look on the affairs of human life, it is a great pleasure to behold the various and often strangely opposite forms men are shaped into by the hope of gain and thoughts of lucre according to their different employments and stations. How gay and merry every face appears at a well-ordered ball, and what a solemn sadness is observed at the masquerade of a funeral! But the undertaker is as much pleased with his gains as the dancing-master is with his; they are equally tired in their occupations, and the jollity of the one is as much forced as the gravity of the other is affected. Those who have never attended to the conversation between a mercer and a young lady, his customer, who comes to his shop, have neglected a scene of life that is very entertaining. I ask my serious reader to set aside his gravity for a while and allow me to examine these people separately, as to the different motives they act from.

Two comic scenes

[A] His business is to sell as much silk as he can at a price he thinks to be reasonable according to the customary profits of the trade. As for the lady: what she is up to is pleasing her fancy and buying the things she wants at sixpence per yard less than are commonly sold at. From the impression the gallantry of our sex has made upon her, she imagines (if she isn't very ugly) that she has a fine appearance and easy behaviour, and a peculiar sweetness of voice; that she is handsome, and if not beautiful at least more agreeable than most young women she knows. She is relying on her good qualities to get her better bargains than other people, so she sets herself off to the best advantage her wit and discretion will permit her. . . . She has no room for playing the tyrant and giving herself angry and peevish airs, and she gives herself more liberty to speak kindly and be affable than she can have on almost any other occasion. She knows that many well-bred people come to his shop, and tries to make herself as amiable as virtue and the rules of decency permit. Coming with such a plan for her behaviour, she cannot meet with anything to ruffle her temper.

Before her coach has quite stopped, she is approached by a gentlemanly man with everything clean and fashionable about him; with a deep bow he pays her homage, and as soon as her pleasure is known that she wants to come in he hands her into the shop, where immediately he slips from her and nimbly entrenches himself behind the counter. Facing her from there, he with a profound reverence and modish phrase begs the favour of knowing her commands. Let her say and dislike what she pleases, she will never be directly contradicted; she is dealing with a man in whom consummate patience is one of the mysteries of his trade, and whatever trouble she creates, she is sure to hear nothing

but the most obliging language, and always has before her a cheerful countenance in which joy and respect seem to be blended with good humour—creating an artificial serenity more engaging than any that untaught nature can produce.

When two persons are so well met, the conversation must be very agreeable and mannerly, even if they talk only about trifles. While she remains irresolute about what to take, he seems to be irresolute in advising her, and is very cautious how to direct her choice; but once she has settled on a choice, he immediately becomes sure that it is the best of the sort, and says that the more he looks at it the more he wonders at how long it has taken him to realise that it is the best thing he has in his shop. By precept, example and great application he has learned to slide unobserved into the inmost recesses of the soul, sound the abilities of his customers, and find out their blind side unknown to them; by all which he is instructed in fifty other tactics to make her over-value her own judgment as well as the commodity she plans to purchase. His greatest advantage over her concerns the most material part of the commerce between them, namely the price, which he knows to a farthing and she is wholly ignorant of. . . . Though he can tell what lies he pleases about the prime cost and the money he has refused, he does not rely on them only. Rather, by attacking her vanity he makes her believe most incredible things concerning his own weakness and her superior abilities; he had taken a resolution, he says, never to part with that piece under such-and-such a price, but she has more power to talk him out of his goods than anyone he ever sold to; he protests that he loses by this sale but seeing that she has a fancy for his silk and won't pay any more for it, rather than disoblige a lady he values so highly he'll let her have it, and only begs that next time she won't drive so hard a bargain. In the meantime the buyer, who knows that she is no fool

and has a voluble tongue, is easily persuaded that she has a very winning way of talking, and—thinking it sufficient for the sake of good-breeding to disown her merit and in some witty repartee reject the compliment—swallows very contentedly the substance of everything he tells her. The upshot is that she, pleased with having saved ninepence per yard, has bought her silk at exactly the same price as anyone else might have done. . . . [He makes some remarks about the 'whimsical' reasons that determine which shop a woman goes to in the first place, ending with this:] Among the fashionable mercers the dealer must stand before his own door, and draw in random customers purely through an obsequious air, a submissive posture, and a bow to every well-dressed female who offers to look towards his shop.

[B] That reminds me of another way of inviting customers, the most distant in the world from the one I have been speaking of, namely that which is practised by the London-watermen, especially on those whose appearance and clothes show them to be peasants. [In the following scene, each waterman is trying to get the peasant to hire him to row him across the river.] It is not unpleasant to see half a dozen people surround a man they never saw in their lives before, and two of them who can get the nearest each clapping an arm over his neck and hugging him in as loving a manner as if he was their brother newly returned from an East-India voyage; a third lays hold of his hand, another of his sleeve, his coat, the buttons of it, or anything he can come at, while a fifth or a sixth, who has scampered twice round him already without being able to get at him, plants himself directly in front of the man and within three inches of his nose contradicts his rivals with an open-mouthed cry, showing him a dreadful set of large teeth and a small remainder of chewed bread and cheese that the countryman's arrival had stopped him from swallowing.

No offence is taken at all this, and the peasant rightly thinks they are making much of him; therefore far from opposing them he patiently allows himself to be pushed or pulled in whatever direction the strength that surrounds him dictates. He has not the delicacy to find fault with the breath of a man who has just blown out his pipe, or a greasy head of hair that is rubbing against his cheeks; he has been used to dirt and sweat from his cradle, and it is no disturbance to him to hear a dozen people—some at his ear, the furthest not five feet away—bawl out as if he were a hundred yards distant; he is aware that he makes just as much noise when he is merry himself, and is secretly pleased with their boisterous usages. The hauling and pulling him about he construes the way it is intended; it is a courtship he can feel and understand. He can't help wishing them well for the esteem they seem to have for him; he loves to be taken notice of, and admires the Londoners for being so pressing in their offers of service to him, for the value of threepence or less; whereas at the shop he uses in the country he can't have anything without first telling them what he wants, and, though he spends three or four shillings at a time, hardly a word is spoken to him except in answer to a question he is forced to ask first. This alacrity on his behalf moves his gratitude, and unwilling to disoblige any he does not know whom to choose. I have seen a man think all this, or something like it, as plainly as I could see the nose on his face; and at the same time move along very contentedly under a load of watermen, and with a smiling countenance carry a hundred pounds more than his own weight to the water-side.

Returning to the main theme of the book

If it is unsuitable for me to have a little fun in drawing these two images from low life, I apologise; but I promise not to be guilty of that fault any more, and will now proceed with my argument in artless dull simplicity, and demonstrate the gross error of those who imagine that the social virtues and the amiable qualities that are praiseworthy in us are as beneficial to the public as they are to the individual persons who have them, and that whatever conduces to the welfare and real happiness of private families must have the same effect upon the whole society. I have been working for this all along, and I flatter myself not unsuccessfully; but I hope nobody will like a problem the worse for seeing the solution of it proved more ways than one.

It is certain that

- the fewer desires a man has and the less he covets, the more easy he is to himself;
- the more active he is in meeting his own needs and the less he requires to be waited upon, the more beloved and untroublesome he is in a family;
- the more he loves peace and concord, the more charity he has for his neighbour; and
- the more he shines in real virtue, the more acceptable he is to God and man.

But let us be just: what benefit can these things bring, what earthly good can they do, to promote the wealth, glory and worldly greatness of nations? It is •the sensual courtier who sets no limits to his luxury; •the fickle strumpet who invents new fashions every week; •the haughty duchess who wants to imitate a princess in equipage, entertainments, and all her behaviour; •the profuse rake and lavish heir who scatter their money around without wit or judgment, buy everything they see and destroy or give it away the next day; •the covetous

and perjured villain who squeezed an immense treasure from the tears of widows and orphans, and left the prodigals the money to spend; it is *these* who are the prey and proper food of a full-grown Leviathan [see Glossary]. That is, such is the calamitous condition of human affairs that we need the plagues and monsters I named to have all the variety of labour performed. . . .to procure an honest livelihood for the vast multitudes of working poor that are required to make a large society. It is folly to imagine that great and wealthy nations can survive, and be both powerful and polite [see Glossary], without such multitudes.

I protest against Popery as much as ever •Luther and Calvin did, or Queen Elizabeth herself, but I believe from my heart that the Reformation has hardly been more instrumental in making the kingdoms and states that have embraced it flourishing beyond other nations than the silly and capricious invention of hooped and quilted petticoats. If the enemies of priestly power deny this, at least I am sure that—apart from the great men who have fought for and against •that layman’s blessing—the Reformation has from its beginning up to today not employed as many hands, honest industrious labouring hands, as those petticoats have employed in a few years. Religion is one thing and trade is another. He who gives most trouble to thousands of his neighbours, and invents the most operose [see Glossary] manufactures is the greatest friend to the society.

What a bustle has to be made in several parts of the world before a fine scarlet or crimson cloth can be produced, what multiplicity of trades and artificers must be employed! [He lists the ‘obvious’ ones and then some that are less obvious but equally necessary for the product, such as the makers of cloth-making tools. Then the dyes: the skill to make them, and the hazardous sea-voyages needed to bring them to England.]

When we are thoroughly acquainted with all the variety of toil and labour, the hardships and calamities that must be undergone to produce scarlet or crimson cloth, and when we consider the vast risks and perils that are run in those voyages, and that most of them are made at the expense of the health and welfare and even of the lives of many, it is hardly possible to conceive a tyrant so inhuman and void of shame that he could, while seeing all this, exact such terrible services from his innocent slaves; and at the same time dare to admit that he did it for no other reason, than the satisfaction a man receives from having a garment made of scarlet or crimson cloth. But what height of luxury must have been reached by a nation where not only the king’s officers but also his guards and even the private soldiers have such impudent desires!

But if we redirect our gaze and take in that

- all those labours are voluntary actions belonging to different occupations that men are brought up to for a livelihood, and in which everyone works for himself, however much he may seem to labour for others; and
- that even the sailors who undergo the greatest hardships, as soon as one voyage is ended (even one in which there was a ship-wreck), try to find employment in another;

we shall find that the labour of the poor is so far from being a burden and an imposition on them that to have employment is a blessing that they ask for in their prayers. To procure it for the general run of them is the greatest care of every legislature.

All young people have an ardent desire to be men and women, and often become ridiculous by their impatient efforts to appear what everyone sees they are not; and all large societies are considerably indebted to this folly for the long continuance of certain trades. What pains young will people

take, and what violence they will commit on themselves, to acquire insignificant (and often blameworthy) qualifications that their lack of judgment and experience leads them to admire in others who are older than them! This fondness of imitation makes them gradually accustom themselves to the use of things that were irksome (or worse) to them at first, until they don't know how to leave them, and are often sorry that they thoughtlessly and needlessly increased the necessities of life. What estates have been acquired through tea and coffee! What a vast traffic is driven—what a variety of labour is performed in the world—for the maintenance of thousands of families that entirely depend on two silly if not odious customs, the taking of snuff and smoking of tobacco; both which certainly do infinitely more harm than good to those who are addicted to them! I shall go further, and demonstrate the usefulness to the public of private losses and misfortunes, and the folly of our wishes when we claim to be most wise and serious. The fire of London was a great calamity, but if we set off

- the carpenters, bricklayers, smiths, and others employed in building, and also those who made and dealt in the same manufactures and other merchandises that were burned, as well as other trades that gained by those when they were in full employment

against

- those who lost by the fire,

the rejoicings would equal if not exceed the complaints. A considerable part of trade consists in making good for what is lost and destroyed by fire, storms, sea-fights, sieges, battles. The truth of this and of what I have said about the nature of society will plainly appear from what follows.

The risks and benefits of shipping

It would be hard to list all the advantages and benefits that come to a nation through shipping and navigation; but if we take into consideration only

the ships themselves, and every vessel great and small that is used for water-carriage, from the least wherry to a first-rate man of war; the timber and hands that are employed in building them; the pitch, tar, rosin, grease; the masts, yards, sails and riggings; the variety of smith's work, the cables, oars and everything else belonging to them,

we shall find that to provide only such a nation as ours with all these necessities makes up a considerable part of the traffic of Europe; quite apart from the stores of all sorts that are consumed in ships, and the mariners, watermen and others with their families that are maintained by them.

But if we look at the manifold mischiefs and variety of evils—moral as well as natural—that befall nations through seafaring and foreign trade, the prospect is frightful. And if we suppose a large populous island that was wholly unacquainted with ships and sea affairs but otherwise a wise and well-governed people, and suppose that some angel laid before them a scheme or draught that would show them

- all the riches and real advantages that would be acquired by navigation in a thousand years, and
- the wealth and lives that would be lost, and all the other calamities that would be unavoidably sustained because of navigation during that same period,

I am confident that they would look on ships with horror and detestation, and that their prudent rulers would severely forbid the making of all machines to go to sea with, of whatever kind, and would prohibit all such abominable contrivances on great penalties, if not the pain of death.

Setting aside the corruption of manners and the plagues, poxes, and other diseases that are brought to us by shipping, if we look only at

- what is to be •attributed to the wind and weather, the treachery of the seas, the ice of the north, the vermin of the south, the darkness of nights and the unwholesomeness of climates, or else •caused by the lack of good provisions and the faults of seamen, the unskilfulness of some and the neglect and drunkenness of others; and at
- the losses of men and treasure swallowed up in the deep, the tears and needs of widows and orphans made by the sea, the ruin of merchants, the continual anxieties that parents and wives are in for the safety of their children and husbands; and bear in mind
- the many pangs and heartaches that are felt throughout a trading nation by owners and insurers at every blast of wind;

and give these things the weight they deserve, would it not be amazing that a nation of thinking people should talk of their ships and navigation as a peculiar blessing to them, rejoicing at having countless vessels dispersed, going or coming, all over the world?

[He writes vividly about the harms that come to ships because of bad weather, incompetence or drunkenness of sailors, and shortage of crew because of deaths through illness.] These are all calamities inseparable from navigation, and seem to be great impediments that clog the wheels of foreign commerce. How happy a merchant would think himself if his ships always had fine weather and the wind he wished for, and every mariner he employed, from the highest to the lowest, was a knowledgeable and experienced sailor and a careful, sober, good man! If such a happiness could be had for prayers, what ship-owner or dealer in

Europe—indeed, in the whole world—would not be all day long pleading to heaven for such a blessing for himself, without regard what harm it would do to others? Such a petition would certainly be a very immoral one, yet where is the man who does not think he has a right to make it? Well, then, let us suppose that all their prayers were effective and their wishes answered, and then examine the result of such a happiness.

Ships would last at least as long as timber-houses, because they would be as strongly built and would not suffer from high winds and other storms as houses do; so that, before there was any real occasion for new ships, everyone now involved in the ship-building trade would die a natural death. All the ships, having prosperous winds and never having to wait for them, would make very quick voyages both out and home; and no merchandise would be damaged by the sea or by stress of weather thrown overboard, but the entire cargo would always come safely ashore; so that three quarters of the merchant ships already in existence would be superfluous for the present, and the world's present stock of ships would serve for vastly many years. Masts and yards would last as long as the vessels themselves, and we would not need to trouble Norway about them for a great while yet. The sails and rigging of ships would indeed wear out, but not a quarter as fast as now they do, for they often suffer more in one hour's storm than in ten days fair weather.

There would be seldom any occasion for anchors and cables, and one of each would last a ship almost for ever; this item alone would provide anchor-smiths and rope-yard workers with many tedious holidays! This general lack of consumption would have such an influence on the timber-merchants, and all who import iron, sail-cloth, hemp, pitch, tar etc., that four fifths of that branch of the traffic of Europe would be entirely lost.

So far I have touched only on the effects on shipping of this 'blessing', but it would be detrimental to all other branches of trade besides, and destructive to the poor of every country that exports anything of their own growth or manufacture. The goods and merchandise that every year

- go to the deep, •are spoiled at sea by salt water, heat, or vermin, •are destroyed by fire or lost to the merchant by other accidents—all because of storms or tedious voyages, or else the neglect or rapacity of sailors

are a considerable part of what is sent abroad annually, and must have employed great multitudes of poor people before they could come on board. A hundred bales of cloth that are burnt or sunk in the Mediterranean, are as beneficial to the poor in England as if they had safely arrived at Smyrna or Aleppo and every yard of them had been retailed in the Grand Signior's dominions.

The merchant may go bankrupt, and through him the clothier, the dyer, the packer, and other tradesmen—the middling people—may suffer; but the poor who worked on them can never lose. Day-labourers commonly receive their earnings once a week, and almost all the working people who were employed either in any the manufacture of the goods or in the various land and water transports needed to bring them from the sheep's back to the ship that was to take them, were paid before the parcel came on board. If any of my readers should draw endless conclusions from my assertions that goods sunk or burnt are as beneficial to the poor as if they had been well sold and put to their proper uses, I would count him a caviller [= 'nit-picker'] and not worth answering. If it always rained and the sun never shone, the fruits of the earth would soon be rotten and destroyed; but it is no paradox to affirm that to have grass or corn, rain is as necessary as sunshine.

Winding up

How this 'blessing' of fair winds and fine weather would affect the mariners themselves can easily be conjectured from what I have said already. With hardly one ship in four being used, and the vessels themselves always exempt from storms, fewer hands would be required to work them. This would spare us the need for five in six of the seamen we now have, which in this nation—where most employments of the poor are overstocked—would be a bad thing. As soon as those superfluous seamen were extinct [Mandeville's word], it would be impossible to man such large fleets as we can now; but I do not look upon this as a drawback or the least inconvenience, for the reduction in numbers of seamen throughout the world would have the result that in case of war the maritime powers would be obliged to fight with fewer ships, which would be a happiness instead of an evil. And if you want to carry this felicity to the highest pitch of perfection, you have only to add one desirable blessing more, which all good Christians are bound to pray for, namely

- that all princes and states would be true to their oaths and promises, and just to one another as well as their own subjects; that they might have a greater regard for the dictates of conscience and religion than for the dictates of state politics and worldly wisdom, and prefer •the spiritual welfare of others to their own carnal desires, and prefer •the honesty, safety, peace and tranquility of the nations they govern to their own love of glory, spirit of revenge, avarice, and ambition; and no nation will ever fight at all.

The preceding paragraph will strike many as a digression that serves little for my purpose; but what I mean by it is to demonstrate that goodness, integrity, and a peaceful disposition in rulers and governors of nations are not the

proper qualifications to aggrandise them and increase their numbers; any more than the uninterrupted series of successes that every private person would be blessed with if he could, and which I have shown would be injurious and destructive to a large society that •placed felicity in worldly greatness and being envied by their neighbours, and •prided themselves on their honour and their strength.

No man needs to guard himself against blessings, but calamities require hands to avert them. The amiable qualities of man don't require anyone else to *do* anything; his honesty, his love of company, his goodness, contentment and frugality are comforts to an indolent society, and the more real they are the more they keep everything at rest and peace, and the more they will prevent trouble and activity. The same almost may be said of •the gifts and generosity of heaven, and of •all the bounties and benefits of nature: the more extensive they are, and the greater abundance we have of them, the more we save our labour. But the needs, vices and imperfections of man, together with the various inclemencies of the air and other elements, contain in them the seeds of all arts, industry and labour. The extremities of heat and cold, the inconstancy and badness of seasons, the violence and uncertainty of winds, the vast power and treachery of water, the rage and untractableness of fire, and the stubbornness and sterility of the earth challenge us to work out ways of avoiding the harms they can produce or turning their various forces to our own advantage in a thousand different ways; while we are also employed in supplying the infinite variety of our wants, which will always be multiplied as our knowledge is enlarged and our desires increase. Hunger, thirst and nakedness are the first tyrants that force us to stir; then our pride, sloth, sensuality and fickleness are the great patrons that promote all the arts and sciences, trades, handicrafts and callings; while the great taskmasters—necessity, avarice,

envy, and ambition—each in the class that belongs to him, keep the members of the society to their labour, and make them all submit, most of them cheerfully, to the drudgery of their station; kings and princes not excepted.

The greater the variety of trades and manufactures, the more operose [see Glossary] they are; and the more they are divided into many branches, the greater the numbers of them that can be contained in a society without being in one another's way, and the more easily the society can be turned into a rich, potent and flourishing people. Few virtues employ any hands, so they may render a small nation *good* but they cannot make it *great*. To be strong and laborious, patient in difficulties, and assiduous in all business, are commendable qualities; but as they do their own work, so they are their own reward, and neither art nor industry has ever paid them any compliments; whereas the excellence of human thought and contrivance has never been more conspicuous than in the variety of tools and instruments of workmen and artificers, and the multiplicity of engines, that were all invented to assist man's weakness, to correct his many imperfections, to gratify his laziness, or obviate his impatience.

In morality as in nature, there is nothing so perfectly good in creatures that it cannot harm anyone in the society, nor anything so entirely evil that it cannot prove beneficial to some part of the creation; so that things are good or evil only in reference to something else, and according to the light and position they are placed in. . . . There never was a dry season, with public prayers being made for rain, when there wasn't somebody who wanted to go abroad and wished for fair weather for that one day. When the corn stands thick in the spring, and most of the country rejoice at the pleasing object, the rich farmer who kept his last year's crop for a better market pines at the sight, and inwardly

grieves at the prospect of a plentiful harvest. Indeed, we often hear idle people openly wish for the possessions of others, and—not wanting to seem injurious—add the wise proviso that it should be without detriment to the owners; but I'm afraid they often say this without any such restriction in their hearts.

It is fortunate that the prayers as well as the wishes of most people are insignificant and good for nothing; for otherwise the only thing that could keep mankind fit for society and keep the world from falling into confusion would be that all the petitions made to heaven were granted, which is impossible.

- A dutiful young gentleman newly returned from his travels waits impatiently on the Dutch coast for a wind to waft him over to England, where a dying father who wants to embrace and give him his blessing before breathing his last yearning after him, melted with grief and tenderness;
- a British minister who is to take care of the protestant interest in Germany is riding post to Harwich, in violent haste to be at Ratisbone before the parliament breaks up;
- a rich fleet lies ready for the Mediterranean; and
- a fine squadron is bound for the Baltic.

·These require, respectively, winds blowing to the east, the west, the south and the north.· There is no difficulty in supposing that these requirements should all happen at once. If these people are not atheists or very great reprobates,

they will all have some good thoughts before they go to sleep, and consequently about bed-time they must all pray for 'a fair wind and a prosperous voyage'. It may even be their *duty* to make this prayer, and it is possible they may all be *heard*; but I am sure they can't be all *served* at the same time.

After this I flatter myself that I have demonstrated that the foundation of society is not •the friendly qualities and kind affections that are **natural** to man, or •the real virtues he can **acquire** by reason and self-denial; but that what we call 'evil' in this world, moral as well as natural, is the great force that makes us sociable creatures, the solid basis, the life and support of all trades and employments without exception; that we must look *there* for the true origin of all arts and sciences, and that the moment evil ceases, the society must be spoiled, if not totally dissolved.

I could add a thousand things to enforce and further illustrate this truth with abundance of pleasure; but for fear of being troublesome I shall make an end, though I confess that I have been aiming to please myself in this amusement *much* more than to get the approval of others. But if I ever hear that by following this diversion of mine I have also diverted the intelligent reader, that will always add to the satisfaction I have received in doing this performance. My vanity leads me to hope for this; and in that hope I leave my reader with regret, and conclude by repeating the seeming paradox the substance of which is advanced on the title page; that by the dextrous management of a skilful politician [see Glossary] private vices may be turned into public benefits.