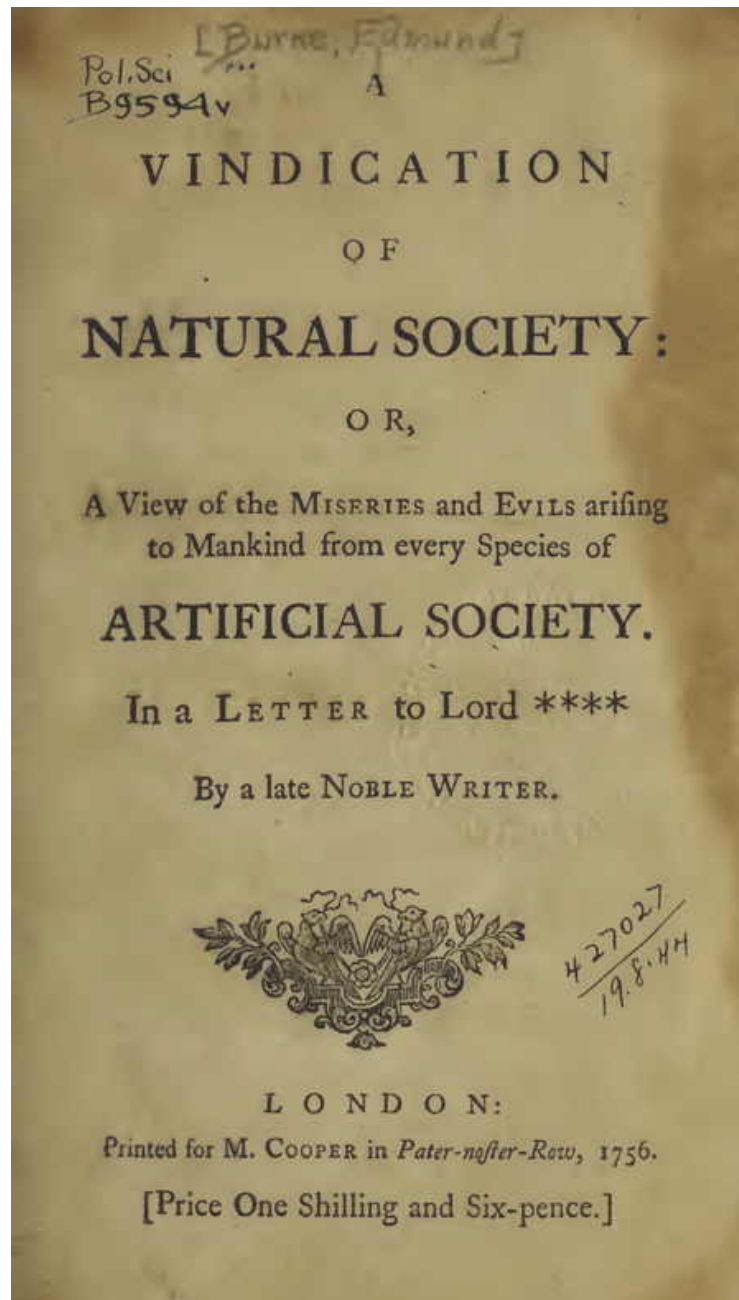


EDMUND BURKE,
A Vindication of Natural Society (1756)



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Editor's Introduction

To make this edition useful to scholars and to make it more readable, I have done the following:

1. inserted and highlighted the page numbers of the original edition
 2. not split a word if it has been hyphenated across a new line or page (this will assist in making word searches)
 3. added unique paragraph IDs (which are used in the "citation tool" which is part of the "enhanced HTML" version of this text)
 4. retained the spaces which separate sections of the text
 5. created a "blocktext" for large quotations
 6. moved the Table of Contents to the beginning of the text
 7. placed the footnotes at the end of the book
 8. formatted short margin notes to float right
 9. inserted Greek and Hebrew words as images
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Letter appears to have been written about the Year 1748, and the Person to whom it is addressed need not be pointed out. As it is probable the Noble Writer had no Design that it should ever appear in Publick, this will account for his having kept no Copy of it, and consequently, for it's not appearing amongst the rest of his Works. By what Means it came into the Hands of the Editor, is not at all material to the Publick, any farther than as such an Account might tend to authenticate the Genuineness of it, and for this it was thought it might safely rely on it's own internal Evidence.

[1]

A LETTER TO LORD ****[↩](#)

SHALL I venture to say, my LORD, that in our late Conversation, you were inclined to the Party which you adopted rather by the Feelings of your good Nature, than by the Conviction of your Judgment? We laid open the Foundations of Society; and you feared, that the Curiosity of this Search might endanger the Ruin of the whole Fabrick. You would readily have allowed my Principle, but you dreaded the Consequences; you thought, that having once entered upon [2] these Reasonings, we might be carried insensibly and irresistably farther than at first we could either have imagined or wished. But for my part, my LORD, I then thought, and am still of the same Opinion, that Error, and not Truth of any Kind, is dangerous; that ill Conclusions can only flow from false Propositions; and that, to know whether any Proposition be true or false, it is a preposterous Method to examine it by it's apparent Consequences.

These were the Reasons which induced me to go so far into that Enquiry; and they are the Reasons which direct me in all my Enquiries. I had indeed often reflected on that Subject before I could prevail upon myself to communicate my Reflections to any body. They were generally melancholy enough; as those usually are which carry us beyond the mere Surface of Things; and which would undoubtedly make the Lives of all thinking Men extremely miserable, if the same Philosophy [3] which caused the Grief, did not at the same Time administer the Comfort.

On considering political Societies, their Origin, their Constitution, and their Effects, I have sometimes been in a good deal more than Doubt, whether the Creator did ever really intend Man for a State of Happiness. He has mixed in his Cup a Number of natural Evils, (in Spite of the Boasts of Stoicism they are Evils) and every Endeavour which the Art and Policy of Mankind has used from the Beginning of the World to this Day, in order to alleviate, or cure them, has only served to introduce new Mischiefs, or to aggravate and inflame the old. Besides this, the Mind of Man itself is too active and restless a Principle ever to settle on the true Point of Quiet. It discovers every Day some craving Want in a Body, which really wants but little. It every Day invents some new artificial Rule to guide that Nature which if left to itself were the best and surest [4] Guide. It finds out imaginary Beings prescribing imaginary Laws; and then, it raises imaginary Terrors to support a Belief in the Beings, and an Obedience to the Laws. Many Things have been said, and very well undoubtedly, on the Subjection in which we should preserve our Bodies to the Government of our Understanding; but enough has not been said upon the Restraint which our bodily Necessities ought to lay on the extravagant Sublimities, and excentrick Rovings of our Minds. The Body, or as some love to call it, our inferior Nature, is wiser in it's own plain Way, and attends it's own Business more directly than the Mind with all it's boasted Subtilty.

In the State of Nature, without Question, Mankind was subjected to many and great Inconveniencies. Want of Union, Want of mutual Assistance, Want of a common Arbitrator to resort to in their Differences. These were Evils which they [5] could not but have felt pretty severely on many Occasions. The original Children of the Earth lived with their Brethren of the other Kinds in much Equality. Their Diet must have been confined almost wholly to the vegetable Kind; and the same Tree, which in it's flourishing State produced them Berries, in it's Decay gave them an Habitation. The mutual Desires of the Sexes uniting their Bodies and Affections, the Children, which were the Results of these Intercourses, introduced first the Notion of Society, and taught it's Conveniences. This Society, founded in natural Appetites and Instincts, and not in any positive Institution; I shall call *Natural Society*. Thus far Nature went, and succeeded; but Man would go farther. The great Error of our Nature is, not to know where to stop, not to be satisfied with any reasonable Acquirement; not to compound with our Condition; but to lose all we have gained by an insatiable Pursuit after more. Man found a considerable [6] Advantage by this Union of many Persons to form one Family; he therefore judged that he would find his Account proportionably in an Union of many Families into one Body politick. And as Nature has formed no Bond of Union to hold them together, he supplied this Defect by *Laws*.

This is *Political Society*. And hence the Sources of what are usually called States, civil Societies, or Governments; into some Form of which, more extended or restrained, all Mankind have gradually fallen. And since it has so happened, and that we owe an implicit Reverence to all the Institutions of our Ancestors, we shall consider these Institutions with all that Modesty with which we ought to conduct ourselves in examining a received Opinion; but with all that Freedom and Candour which we owe to Truth wherever we find it, or however it may contradict our own Notions, or oppose our own Interests. [7] There is a most absurd and audacious Method of reasoning avowed by some Bigots and Enthusiasts, and through Fear assented to by some wiser and better Men; it is this. They argue against a fair Discussion of popular Prejudices, because, say they, tho' they would be found without any reasonable Support, yet the Discovery might be productive of the most dangerous Consequences. Absurd and blasphemous Notion! as if all Happiness was not connected with the Practice of Virtue, which necessarily depends upon the Knowledge of Truth; that is, upon the Knowledge of those unalterable Relations which Providence has ordained that every thing should bear to every other. These Relations, which are Truth itself, the Foundation of Virtue, and consequently, the only Measures of Happiness, should be likewise the only Measures by which we should direct our Reasoning. To these we should conform in good Earnest; and not think to force Nature, and the whole Order of [8] her System, by a Compliance with our Pride, and Folly, to conform to our artificial Regulations. It is by a Conformity to this Method we owe the Discovery of the few Truths we know, and the little Liberty and rational Happiness we enjoy. We have something fairer Play than a Reasoner could have expected formerly; and we derive Advantages from it which are very visible.

The Fabrick of Superstition has in this our Age and Nation received much ruder Shocks than it had ever felt before; and through the Chinks and Breaches of our Prison, we see such Glimmerings of Light, and feel such refreshing Airs of Liberty, as daily raise our Ardor for more. The Miseries derived to Mankind from Superstition, under the Name of Religion, and of ecclesiastical Tyranny under the Name of Church Government, have been clearly and usefully exposed. We begin to think and to act from Reason and from Nature [9] alone. This is true of several, but still is by far the Majority in the same old State of Blindness and Slavery; and much is it to be feared that we shall perpetually relapse, whilst the real productive Cause of all this superstitious Folly, enthusiastical Nonsense, and holy Tyranny, holds a reverend Place in the Estimation even of those who are otherwise enlightened.

Civil Government borrows a Strength from ecclesiastical; and artificial Laws receive a Sanction from artificial Revelations. The Ideas of Religion and Government are closely connected; and whilst we receive Government as a Thing necessary, or even useful to our well-being, we shall in spite of us draw in, as a necessary, tho' undesirable Consequence, an artificial Religion of some Kind or other. To this the Vulgar will always be voluntary Slaves; and even those of a Rank of Understanding superior, will now and then involuntarily feel it's Influence. It is therefore of the [10] deepest Concernment to us to be set right in this Point; and to be well satisfied whether civil Government be such a Protector from natural Evils, and such a Nurse and Increaser of Blessings, as those of warm Imaginations promise. In such a Discussion, far am I from proposing in the least to reflect on our most wise Form of Government; no more than I would in the freer Parts of my philosophical Writings, mean to object to the Piety, Truth and Perfection of our most excellent Church. Both I am sensible have their Foundations on a Rock. No Discovery of Truth can prejudice them. On the contrary, the more closely the Origin of Religion and Government are examined, the more clearly their Excellencies must appear. They come purified from the Fire. My Business is not with them. Having entered a Protest against all Objections from these Quarters, I may the more freely enquire from History and Experience, how far Policy has contributed in [11] all Times to alleviate those Evils which Providence, that perhaps has designed us for a State of Imperfection, has imposed; how far our physical Skill has cured our constitutional Disorders; and whether, it may not have introduced new ones, cureable perhaps by no Skill.

In looking over any State to form a Judgment on it; it presents itself in two Lights, the external and the internal. The first, that Relation which it bears in Point of Friendship or Enmity to other States. The second, that Relation it's component Parts, the governing, and the governed, bear to each other. The first Part of the external View of all States, their Relation as Friends, makes so trifling a Figure in History, that I am very sorry to say, it affords me but little Matter on which to expatiate. The good Offices done by one Nation to it's Neighbour [2]; the Support [12] given in publick Distress; the Relief afforded in general Calamity; the Protection granted in emergent Danger; the mutual Return of Kindness and Civility, would afford a very ample and very pleasing Subject for History. But alas! all the History of all Times, concerning all Nations, does not afford Matter enough to fill ten Pages, though it should be spun out by the Wire-drawing Amplification of a *Guicciardini* himself. The glaring Side is that of Enmity. War is the Matter which fills all History, and consequently the only, or almost the only View in which we can see the external of political Society, is in a hostile Shape; and the only Actions, to which we have always seen, and still see all of them intent, are such, as tend to the Destruction of one another. War, says *Machiavell*, ought to be the only Study of a Prince; and by a Prince, [13] he means every sort of State however constituted. He ought, says this great political Doctor, only consider Peace as a breathing Time, which gives him Leisure to contrive, and furnishes Ability to execute military Plans. A Meditation on the Conduct of political Societies made old *Hobbes* imagine, that War was the State of Nature; and truly, if a Man judged of the Individuals of our Race by their Conduct when united and packed into Nations and Kingdoms, he might imagine that every sort of Virtue was unnatural and foreign to the Mind of Man.

The first Accounts we have of Mankind are but Accounts of their Butcheries of each other. All Empires have been cemented in Blood; and in those early Periods when the Race of Mankind began first to form themselves into Parties and Combinations, the first Effect of the Combination, and indeed the End for which it seems purposely formed, and best calculated, [14] is their mutual Destruction. All antient History is dark and uncertain. One thing however is clear. There were Conquerors, and Conquests, in those Days; and consequently, all that Devastation, by which they are formed, and all that Oppression by which they are maintained. We know little of *Sesostris*, but that he led out of *Egypt* an Army of above 700,000 Men; that he overran the *Mediterranean* Coast as far as *Colchis*, that in

some Places, he met but little Resistance, and of course shed not a great deal of Blood; but that he found in others, a People who knew the Value of their Liberties, and sold them dear. Whoever considers the Army this Conqueror headed, the Space he traversed, and the Opposition he frequently met; with the natural Accidents of Sickness, and the Dearth and Badness of Provision he must have been subject to in the Variety of Climates and Countries his March lay through, if he knows any thing, he must know, that even the Conqueror's [15] Army must have suffered greatly; and that, of this immense Number, but a very small Part cou'd have returned to enjoy the Plunder accumulated by the Loss of so many of their Companions, and the Devastation of so considerable a Part of the World. If this was the State of the Victorious, and from the Circumstances, it must have been this at the least; the Conquered, those Nations who lost their Liberty, and those who fought for it together, must have had a much heavier Loss. They must have lost at least double that Number, as the greatest Slaughter is always in the Flight, and great Carnage did in those Times and Countries ever attend the first Rage of Conquest. This Conqueror, the oldest we have on the Records of History, (though, as we have observed before, the Chronology of these remote Times is extremely uncertain), opens the Scene by a Destruction of at least 1,800,000 of his Species, unprovoked but by his Ambition, without any Motives [16] but Pride, Cruelty and Madness, and without any Benefit to himself; (for *Justin* expressly tells us, he did not maintain his Conquests) but solely to make so many People, in so distant Countries, feel experimentally, how severe a Scourge Providence intends for the human Race, when he gives one Man the Power over many, and arms his naturally impotent, and feeble Rage, with the Hands of Millions, who know no common Principle of Action, but a blind Obedience to the Passions of their Ruler.

The next Personage who figures in the Tragedies of this ancient Theatre is *Semiramis*: For we have no Particulars of *Ninus*, but that he made immense and rapid Conquests, which doubtless were not compassed without the usual Carnage. We hear of her Army of above three Millions employed in a War against the *Indians*. We hear of their having a yet greater; and of a War continued with [17] much fury, and with various Success. This ends in an Account of her Retreat, with scarce a third of the Troops employed in the Expedition; an Expedition, which at this rate must have cost two Millions of Souls on her part; and it is not unreasonable to judge that the Country which was the Seat of War, must have been an equal Sufferer. Its Loss must in this way of Computation be two Millions more. So that in this War alone, (for she had other Wars) in this single Reign, and in this one Spot of the Globe, did four Millions of Souls expire, with all the horrid and shocking Circumstances which attend all Wars, and in a Quarrel, in which none of the Sufferers cou'd have the least rational Concern.

The *Babylonian*, *Assyrian*, *Median*, and *Persian* Monarchies must have poured out Seas of Blood in their Formation, and in their Destruction. The Armies and Fleets of *Xerxes*, their Numbers, the glorious [18] Stand made against them, and the unfortuate Event of all his mighty Preparations, are known to every body. In this Expedition, gleaning half *Asia* of it's Inhabitants, he led an Army of about two Millions to be slaughtered, and wasted, by a thousand fatal Accidents, in the same Place where his Predecessors had before by a similar Madness consumed the Flower of so many Kingdoms, and wasted the Force of so extensive an Empire. It is a cheap Calculation to say, that the *Persian* Empire in it's Wars, against the *Greeks*, and *Sythians*, threw away at least four Millions of their Subjects, to say nothing of their other Wars, and the Losses sustained in them. These were their Losses abroad; but the War was brought home to them, first by *Agesilaus*, and afterwards, by *Alexander*. I have not, in this Retreat, the Books necessary to make very exact Calculations; nor is it necessary to give more than Hints to one of your Lordship's Erudition. You will recollect [19] his uninterrupted Series of Success. You will run over his Battles. You will call to mind the Carnage which was made. You will give a Glance of the Whole, and you will agree with me;

that to form this Hero no less than twelve hundred thousand Lives must have been sacrificed; but no sooner had he fallen himself a Sacrifice to his Vices, than a thousand Breaches were made for Ruin to enter, and give the last hand to this Scene of Misery and Destruction. His Kingdom was rent and divided; which served to employ the more distinct Parts to tear each other to Pieces, and bury the whole in Blood and Slaughter. The Kings of *Syria* and of *Egypt*, the Kings of *Pergamus* and *Macedon*, without Intermission worried each other for above two hundred Years; until at last a strong Power arising in the West, rushed in upon them and silenced their Tumuls, by involving all the contending Parties in the same Destruction. It is little to say, that the Contentions between the Successors of [20]*Alexander* depopulated that Part of the World of at least three Millions.

The Struggle between the *Macedonians* and *Greeks*, and before that, the Disputes of the *Greek* Commonwealths among themselves, for an unprofitable Superiority, form one of the bloodiest Scenes in History. One is astonished how such a small Spot could furnish Men sufficient to sacrifice to the pitiful Ambition of possessing five or six thousand more Acres, or two or three more Villages: Yet to see the Acrimony and Bitterness with which this was disputed between the *Athenians* and *Lacedemonians*; what Armies cut off; what Fleets sunk, and burnt; what a Number of Cities sacked, and their Inhabitants slaughtered, and captived; one would be induced to believe the Decision of the Fate of Mankind at least, depended upon it! But these Disputes ended as all such ever have done, and ever will do; in a real Weakness of all Parties; a momentary [21] Shadow, and Dream of Power in some one; and the Subjection of all to the Yoke of a Stranger, who knows how to profit of their Divisions. This at least was the Case of the *Greeks*; and sure, from the earliest Accounts of them, to their Absorption into the *Roman* Empire, we cannot judge that their intestine Divisions, to say nothing of their foreign Wars, consumed less than three Millions of their Inhabitants.

What an *Aceldama*, what a Field of Blood *Sicily* has been in antient times, whilst the Mode of it's Government was controverted between the Republican and Tyrannical Parties, and the Possession struggled for by the Natives, the *Greeks*, the *Carthaginians*, and the *Romans*, your Lordship will easily recollect. You will remember the total Destruction of such Bodies as an Army of 300,000 Men. You will find every Page of it's History dyed in Blood, and blotted and confounded [22] by Tumults, Rebellions, Massacres, Assassinations, Proscriptions, and a Series of Horror beyond the Histories perhaps of any other Nation in the World; though the Histories of all Nations are made up of similar Matter. I once more excuse myself in point of Exactness for want of Books. But I shall estimate the Slaughters in this Island but at two Millions; which your Lordship will find much short of the Reality.

Let us pass by the Wars, and the Consequences of them, which wasted *Grecia-Magna*, before the *Roman* Power prevailed in that Part of *Italy*. They are perhaps exaggerated; therefore I shall only rate them at one Million. Let us hasten to open that great Scene which establishes the *Roman* Empire, and forms the grand Catastrophe of the antient Drama. This Empire, whilst in it's Infancy, began by an Effusion of human Blood scarcely credible. The neighbouring little States [23] teemed for new Destruction: The *Sabines*, the *Samnites*, the *Aequi*, the *Volsci*, the *Hetrurians*, were broken by a Series of Slaughters which had no Interruption, for some hundreds of Years; Slaughters which upon all sides consumed more than two Millions of the wretched People. The *Gauls* rushing into *Italy* about this Time, added the total Destruction of their own Armies to those of the antient Inhabitants. In short, it were hardly possible to conceive a more horrid and bloody Picture, if that which the *Punic* Wars that ensued soon after did not present one, that far exceeds it. Here we find that Climax of Devastation, and Ruin, which seemed to shake the whole Earth. The Extent of this War which embraced so many Nations, and both Elements, and the Havock of the human Species caused in both, really astonishes beyond Expression, when it is nakedly considered, and those Matters which are apt to divert our Attention from it, the Characters, Actions, and Designs

[24] of the Persons concerned, are not taken into the Account. These Wars, I mean those called the *Punic Wars*, cou'd not have stood the human Race in less than five Millions of the Species. And yet this forms but a Part only, and a very small Part, of the Havock caused by the *Roman Ambition*. The *Mithridatick War* was very little less bloody; that Prince cut off at one Stroke 150,000 *Romans* by a Massacre. In that War *Sylla* destroyed 300,000 Men at *Cheronea*. The same Commander defeated *Mithridates'* Army under *Dorilaus*, and slew 300,000. The same Prince lost another 300,000 before *Cyzicum*. In the course of the War he had innumerable other Losses; and having many Intervals of Success, he revenged them severely. He was at last totally overthrown; and he crushed to Pieces the King of *Armenia* his Ally by the greatness of his Ruin. All who had Connexions with him shared the same Fate. The merciless Genius of *Sylla* had it's [25] full Scope; and the Streets of *Athens* were not the only ones which ran with Blood. At this Period, the Sword, glutted with foreign Slaughter, turned it's Edge upon the Bowels of the *Roman Republick* itself; and presented a Scene of Cruelties and Treasons enough almost to obliterate the Memory of all the external Devastations. I intended, my LORD, to have proceeded in a sort of Method in estimating the Numbers of Mankind cut off in these Wars which we have on Record. But I am obliged to alter my Design. Such a tragical Uniformity of Havock and Murder would disgust your Lordship as much as it would me; and I confess I already feel my eyes ake by keeping them so long intent on so bloody a Prospect. I shall observe little on the *Servile*, the *Social*, the *Gallic*, and *Spanish Wars*; nor upon those with *Jugurtha*, nor *Antiochus*, nor many others equally important, and carried on with equal Fury. The Butcheries of *Julius Caesar* alone, are calculated by [26] some body else; the Numbers he has been a means of destroying have been reckoned at 1,200,000. But to give your Lordship an Idea that may serve as a Standard, by which to measure, in some degree, the others; you will turn your Eyes on *Judea*; a very inconsiderable Spot of the Earth in itself, though ennobled by the singular Events which had their Rise in that Country.

This Spot happened, it matters not here by what means, to become at several times extremely populous, and to supply Men for Slaughters scarcely credible, if other well-known and well-attested ones had not given them a Colour. The first settling of the *Jews* here, was attended by an almost entire Extirpation of all the former Inhabitants. Their own civil Wars, and those with their petty Neighbours, consumed vast Multitudes almost every Year for several Centuries; and the Irruptions of the Kings of *Babylon* and *Assyria* made [27] immense Ravages. Yet we have their History but partially, in an indistinct confused manner; so that I shall only throw the strong Point of Light upon that Part which coincides with *Roman History*, and of that Part only on the Point of Time when they received the great and final Stroke which made them no more a Nation; a Stroke which is allowed to have cut off little less than two Millions of that People. I say nothing of the Loppings made from that Stock whilst it stood; nor from the Suckers that grew out of the old Root ever since. But if in this inconsiderable Part of the Globe, such a Carnage has been made in two or three short Reigns, and that this Carnage, great as it is, makes but a minute Part of what the Histories of that People inform us they suffered; what shall we judge of Countries more extended, and which have waged Wars by far more considerable?

Instances of this Sort compose the [28] uniform of History. But there have been Periods when no less than universal Destruction to the Race of Mankind seems to have been threatened. When the *Goths*, the *Vandals*, and the *Huns* poured into *Gaul*, *Italy*, *Spain*, *Greece*, and *Africa*, carrying Destruction before them as they advanced, and leaving horrid Desarts every where behind them. *Vastum ubique silentium, secreti colles; fumantia procul tecta; nemo exploratoribus obvius*, is what *Tacitus* calls *facies Victoriae*. It is always so; but was here emphatically so. From the North proceeded the Swarms of *Goths*, *Vandals*, *Huns*, *Ostrogoths*, who ran towards the South into *Africa* itself, which suffered as all to the North had done. About this Time, another Torrent of Barbarians, animated by the same Fury, and

encouraged by the same Success, poured out of the South, and ravaged all to the North-East, and West, to the remotest Parts of *Persia* on one hand, and to the Banks of the *Loire* or further on [29] the other; destroying all the proud and curious Monuments of human Art, that not even the Memory might seem to survive of the former Inhabitants. What has been done since, and what will continue to be done whilst the same Inducements to War continue, I shall not dwell upon. I shall only in one Word mention the horrid Effects of Bigotry and Avarice, in the Conquest of *Spanish America*; a Conquest on a low Estimation effected by the Murder of ten Millions of the Species. I shall draw to a Conclusion of this Part, by making a general Calculation of the Whole. I think I have actually mentioned above forty Millions. I have not particularized any more. I don't pretend to Exactness; therefore for the Sake of a general View, I shall lay together all those actually slain in Battles, from the beginning of the World to this Day, in the four Parts of it, only at a thousand times as much; a trifling Calculation, allowing [30] for Time and Extent. We have not perhaps spoke of the Five Hundredth Part, I am sure I have not of what is actually ascertained in History; but how much of these Butcheries are only expressed in generals, what part of time History has never reached, and what vast Spaces of the habitable Globe it has not embraced, I need not mention to your Lordship. I have no need to exaggerate; and I have purposely avoided a Parade of Eloquence on this Occasion. I should despise it upon any Occasion; else in mentioning these Slaughters, it is obvious how much the whole might be heightened, by an affecting Description of the Horrors that attend the Wasting of Kingdoms, and Sacking of Cities. But I do not write to the Vulgar, nor to that which only governs the Vulgar, their Passions. I go upon a naked and moderate Calculation, just enough, without a Pedantical Exactness, to give your Lordship some Feeling of the Effects of Political Society. [31] I charge the whole of these Effects on Political Society. I avow the Charge, and shall presently make it good to your Lordship's Satisfaction. The Numbers I particularized are about 40 Millions. I suppose a Thousand times as many killed in Battles. But I must make another Addition not less than the former, for the Consequences of Wars, in Skirmishes, Massacres, the contagious Disorders, and the Famine which attend them, more destructive than Battles themselves. So that allowing me in my Exuberance one way for my Deficiencies in others, I rate the Destruction caused by War, at Eighty Thousand Millions. I think the Numbers of Men now upon Earth are computed at 500 Millions at the most. Here the Slaughter of Mankind, on what you will call a small Calculation, amounts to 160 times the Number of Souls this Day on the Globe. A point which may furnish matter of Reflection to one less inclined to draw Consequences than your Lordship.

[32]

I now come to shew, that Political Society is justly chargeable with much the greatest Part of this Destruction of the Species. But to give the fairest Play to every side of the Question, I will own that there is a Haughtiness, and Fierceness in human Nature, which will cause innumerable Broils, place Men in what State you please; but owning this, I still insist in charging to Political Regulations, that these Broils are so frequent, so cruel, and attended with so deplorable Consequences. In a State of Nature, it would be impossible to join together a Number of Men, sufficiently agreed in the same bloody Design, necessary to make a very extensive Havock of their Species; and if they would come to such an Agreement, (an impossible Supposition) yet the Means that simple Nature has supplied them with, are by no Means adequate to such a Purpose; many Scratches, many Bruises undoubtedly would be received upon all hands; but only a few, a very few [33] Deaths, Society, and Politicks, which have given us these destructive Views, have given us too the Means of satisfying them. From the earliest Dawnings of Policy to this Day, the Invention of Men has been sharpening and improving the Mystery of Murder, from the first rude Essays of Clubs and Stones, to the present Perfection of Gunnery, Cannoneering, Bombarding, Ruining, and all these Species of artificial, learned, and refined Cruelty, at which we are now so expert, and which make a

principal Part of what Politicians have taught us to believe is our principal Glory,

How far mere Nature would have carried us, we may judge by the Example of those Animals, who still follow her Laws, and even those to whom she has given Dispositions more fierce, and Arms more terrible than ever she intended we should use. It is an incontestible Truth, that there is more Havock made in one Year [34] by Men, of Men, than has been made by all the Lions, Tygers, Panthers, Ounces, Leopards, Hyenas, Rhinoceroses, Elephants, Bears, and Wolves, upon their several Species, since the Beginning of the World; though these agree ill enough with each other, and have a much greater Proportion of Rage and Fury in their Composition than we have. But with respect to you, ye Legislators, ye Civilizers of Mankind! ye Orpheus's, Moseses, Minoses, Solons, Theseuses, Lycurguses, Numas! with Respect to you be it spoken, your Regulations have done more Mischief in cold Blood, than all the Rage of the fiercest Animals in their greatest Terrors, or Furies, has ever done, or ever could do!

These Evils are not accidental. Whoever will take the pains to consider the Nature of Society, will find they result directly from it's Constitution. For as *Subordination*, or in other Words, the Reciprocation [35] of Tyranny, and Slavery, is requisite to support these Societies, the Interest, the Ambition, the Malice, or the Revenge, nay even the Whim and Caprice of one ruling Man among them, is enough to arm all the rest, without any private Views of their own, to the worst and blackest Purposes; and what is at once lamentable, and ridiculous, these Wretches engage under those Banners with a Fury greater than if they were animated by Revenge for their own proper Wrongs.

It is no less worth observing, that this artificial Division of Mankind, into separate Societies, is a perpetual Source in itself of Hatred and Dissention among them. The Names which distinguish them are enough to blow up Hatred, and Rage. Examine History; consult present Experience; and you will find, that far the greater Part of the Quarrels between several Nations, had scarce any other Occasion, than that they were another [36] Combination of People, and called by another Name;—to an *Englishman*, the Name of a *Frenchman*, a *Spaniard*, an *Italian*, much more a *Turk*, or a *Tartar*, raise of course Ideas of Hatred, and Contempt. Would you inspire this Compatriot of ours with Pity or Regard, for one of these? Would you not hide that Distinction? You would not pray him to compassionate the poor *Frenchman*, or the unhappy *German*. Far from it; you would speak of him as a *Foreigner*, an Accident to which all are liable. You would represent him as a *Man*; one partaking with us of the same common Nature, and subject to the same Law. There is something so averse to Nature in these artificial Political Distinctions, that we need no other Trumpet to kindle us to War, and Destruction. But there is something so benign and healing in the general Voice of Humanity, that maugre all our Regulations to prevent it, the Name applied properly, never fails to work a salutary Effect.

[37]

This natural unpremeditated Effect of Policy on the unpossessed Passions of Mankind, appears on other Occasions. The very Name of a Politician, a Statesman, is sure to cause Terror and Hatred; it has always connected with it the Ideas of Treachery, Cruelty, Fraud and Tyranny; and those Writers who have faithfully unveiled the Mysteries of State-freemasonry, have ever been held in general Detestation, for even knowing so perfectly a Theory so detestable. The Case of *Machiavel* seems at first Sight something hard in that Respect. He is obliged to bear the Iniquities of those whose Maxims and Rules of Government he published. His Speculation is more abhorred than their Practice.

But if there were no other Arguments against Artificial Society than this I am going to mention, methinks it ought to fall by that one only. All Writers on the Science of Policy are agreed, and they agree [38] with Experience, that all Governments must frequently infringe the Rules of Justice to support themselves; that Truth must give way to Dissimulation; Honesty to Convenience; and Humanity itself to the reigning Interest. The Whole of this Mystery of Iniquity is called the Reason of State. It is a Reason, which I own I cannot penetrate. What Sort of a Protection is this of the general Right, that is maintained by infringing the Rights of Particulars? What Sort of Justice is this, which is enforced by Breaches of it's own Laws? These Paradoxes I leave to be solved by the able Heads of Legislators and Politicians. For my Part, I should say what a plain Man would say on such an Occasion. I can never believe, that any Institution agreeable to Nature, and proper for Mankind, could find it necessary, or even expedient in any Case whatsoever to do, what the best and worthiest Instincts of Mankind warn us to avoid. But no wonder, [39] that what is set up in Opposition to the State of Nature, should preserve itself by trampling upon the Law of Nature.

To prove, that these Sort of policed Societies are a Violation offered to Nature, and a Constraint upon the human Mind, it needs only to look upon the sanguinary Measures, and Instruments of Violence which are every where used to support them. Let us take a Review of the Dungeons, Whips, Chains, Racks, Gibbets, with which every Society is abundantly stored, by which hundreds of Victims are annually offered up to support a dozen or two in Pride and Madness, and Millions in an abject Servitude, and Dependence. There was a Time, when I looked with a reverential Awe on these Mysteries of Policy; but Age, Experience, and Philosophy have rent the Veil; and I view this *Sanctum Sanctorum*, at least, without any enthusiastick Admiration. I acknowledge indeed, the Necessity of such a Proceeding [40] in such Institutions; but I can have but a very humble Opinion of Institutions where such Proceedings are necessary.

It is a Misfortune, that in no Part of the Globe natural Liberty and natural Religion are to be found pure and free from the Mixture of Political Adulterations. Yet we have implanted in us by Providence Ideas, Axioms, Rules, of what is pious, just, fair, honest, which no Political Craft, nor learned Sophistry, can entirely expel from our Breasts. By these we judge, and we cannot otherwise judge of the several artificial Modes of Religion and Society, and determine of them as they approach to, or recede from this Standard.

The simplest Form of Government is *Despotism*, where all the inferior Orbs of Power are moved merely by the Will of the Supreme, and all that are subjected to them, directed in the same Manner, merely by the occasional Will of the Magistrate. [41] This Form, as it is the most simple, so it is infinitely the most general. Scarce any Part of the World is exempted from it's Power. And in those few Places where Men enjoy what they call Liberty, it is continually in a tottering Situation, and makes greater and greater Strides to that Gulph of Despotism which at last swallows up every Species of Government. This Manner of ruling being directed merely by the Will of the weakest, and generally the worst Man in the Society, becomes the most foolish and capricious Thing, at the same time that it is the most terrible and destructive that well can be conceived. In a Despotism the principal Person finds, that let the Want, Misery, and Indigence of his Subjects, be what they will, he can yet possess abundantly of every thing to gratify his most insatiable Wishes. He does more. He finds that these Gratifications increase in Proportion to the Wretchedness and Slavery of his Subjects. So that neglecting the publick Welfare, [42] and by his Station placed above both Shame and Fear, he proceeds to the most horrid and shocking Outrages upon Mankind. Their Persons become Victims of his Suspicions. The slightest Anger is Death; and a disagreeable Aspect is often as great a Crime as High Treason. In the Court of *Nero* a Person of Learning, of unquestioned Merit, and of unsuspected Loyalty, was put to Death for no other Reason than

that he had a pedantick Countenance which displeas'd the Emperor. This very Monster of Mankind appear'd in the Beginning of his Reign to be a Person of Virtue. Many of the greatest Tyrants on the Records of History have begun to rule in the fairest Manner. But the Truth is, this unnatural Power corrupts both the Heart, and the Understanding. And to prevent the least Hope of Amendment, a King is ever surrounded by a Crowd of infamous Flatterers, who find their Account in keeping him from the least Light of Reason, till all Ideas of Rectitude and Justice are utterly [43] erased from his Mind. When *Alexander* had in his Fury inhumanly butchered one of his best Friends, and bravest Captains; on the Return of Reason he begun to conceive an Horror suitable to the Guilt of such a Murder. In this Juncture, his Council came to his Assistance. But what did his Council? They found him out a Philosopher who gave him Comfort. And in what Manner did this Philosopher comfort him for the Loss of such a Man, and heal his Conscience, flagrant with the Smart of such a Crime? You have the Matter at Length in *Plutarch*. He told him; "*that let a Sovereign do what he will, all his Actions are just and lawful, because they are his.*"

The Palaces of all Princes abound with such courtly Philosophers. The Consequence was such as might be expected. He grew every Day a Monster more abandoned to unnatural Lust, to Debauchery, to Drunkenness, and to Murder. And yet this was originally a great Man, of uncommon Capacity, and [44] a strong Propensity to Virtue. But unbounded Power proceeds Step by Step, until it has eradicated every laudable Principle. It has been remarked, that there is no Prince so bad, whose Favourites and Ministers are not worse. There is hardly any Prince without a Favourite, by whom he is governed in as arbitrary a Manner as he governs the Wretches subjected to him. Here the Tyranny is doubled. There are two Courts, and two Interests; both very different from the Interests of the People. The Favourite knows that the Regard of a Tyrant is as unconstant and capricious as that of a Woman; and concluding his Time to be short, he makes Haste to fill up the Measure of his Iniquity, in Rapine, in Luxury, and in Revenge. Every Avenue to the Throne is shut up. He oppresses, and ruins the People, whilst he persuades the Prince, that those Murmurs raised by his own Oppression are the Effects of Disaffection to the Prince's Government. Then is the natural Violence [45] of Despotism inflamed, and aggravated by Hatred, and Revenge. To deserve well of the State is a Crime against the Prince. To be popular, and to be a Traitor, are considered as synonymous Terms. Nay, even Virtue is dangerous, as an aspiring Quality, that claims an Esteem by itself, and independent of the Countenance of the Court. What has been said of the chief, is true of the inferior Officers of this Species of Government; each in his Province exercising the same Tyranny, and grinding the People by an Oppression, the more severely felt, as it is near them, and exercised by base and subordinate Persons. For the Gross of the People; they are considered as a mere Herd of Cattle; and really in a little Time become no better; all Principle of honest Pride, all Sense of the Dignity of their Nature, is lost in their Slavery. The Day, says *Homer*, which makes a Man a Slave, takes away half his Worth; and in Fact, he loses every Impulse to Action, but that low and base [46] one of Fear.—In this Kind of Government human Nature is not only abused, and insulted, but it is actually degraded and sunk into a Species of Brutality. The Consideration of this made Mr. *Locke* say, with great Justice, that a Government of this Kind was worse than Anarchy; indeed it is so abhorred, and detested by all who live under Forms that have a milder Appearance, that there is scarce a rational Man in *Europe*, that would not prefer Death to *Asiatick* Despotism. Here then we have the Acknowledgement of a great Philosopher, that an irregular State of Nature is preferable to such a Government; we have the Consent of all sensible and generous Men, who carry it yet further, and avow that Death itself is preferable; and yet this Species of Government, so justly condemned, and so generally detested, is what infinitely the greater Part of Mankind groan under, and have groaned under from the Beginning. So that by sure and uncontested Principles, the greatest [47] Part of the Governments on Earth must be concluded, Tyrannies, Impostures, Violations of the Natural Rights of Mankind, and worse than the most disorderly Anarchies. How much other Forms exceed this, we shall consider immediately.

In all Parts of the World, Mankind, however debased, retains still the Sense of *Feeling*; the Weight of Tyranny, at last, becomes insupportable; but the Remedy is not so easy; in general, the only Remedy by which they attempt to cure the Tyranny, is to change the Tyrant; this is, and always was the Case for the greater Part. In some Countries however, were found Men of more Penetration; who discovered, "*that to live by one Man's Will, was the Cause of all Men's Misery.*" They therefore changed their former Method, and assembling the Men in their several Societies, most respectable for their Understanding, and Fortunes, they confided to them the Charge of the Publick [48] Welfare. This originally formed what is called an *Aristocracy*. They hoped, it would be impossible that such a Number could ever join in any Design against the general Good; and they promised themselves a great deal of Security and Happiness, from the united Counsels of so many able and experienced Persons. But it is now found by abundant Experience, that an *Aristocracy*, and a *Despotism*, differ but in Name; and that a People, who are in general excluded from any Share of the Legislative, are to all Intents and Purposes, as much Slaves, when twenty, independent of them, govern, as when but one domineers. The Tyranny is even more felt, as every Individual of the Nobles has the Haughtiness of a Sultan; the People are more miserable, as they seem on the Verge of Liberty, from which they are for ever debarred; this Prospect, whilst it presents a vain Shadow of Happiness to the Subject, binds faster the Chains of their Subjection; what is left undone, by the natural Avarice [49] and Pride of those who are raised above the others, is completed by their Suspicions, and Dread of losing an Authority, which has no Support in the common Utility of the Nation. A *Genoese*, or a *Venetian* Republick, is a concealed *Despotism*; where you find the same Pride of the Rulers, the same base Subjection of the People, the same bloody Maxims of a suspicious Policy. In one respect the *Aristocracy* is worse than the *Despotism*. A Body Politick, whilst it retains it's Authority, never changes it's Maxims; a *Despotism*, which is this Day horrible to a supreme Degree, by the Caprice natural to the Heart of Man, may, by the same Caprice otherwise exerted, be as lovely the next; in a Succession, it is possible to meet with some good Princes. If there have been *Tiberius's*, *Caligulas*, *Nero's*, there have been likewise the serener Days of *Vespasians*, *Titus's*, *Trajan's*, and *Antonines*; but a Body Politick is not influenced by Caprice or Whim, it proceeds in a regular [50] Manner; it's Succession is insensible; and every Man as he enters it, either has, or soon attains the Spirit of the whole Body. Never was it known, that an *Aristocracy*, which was haughty and tyrannical in one Century, became easy, and mild in the next. In Effect, the Yoke of this Species of Government is so galling, that whenever the People have got the least Power, they have shaken it off with the utmost Indignation, and established a Popular Form; and when they have not had Strength enough to support themselves, they have thrown themselves into the Arms of *Despotism*, as the more eligible of the two Evils. This latter was the Case of *Denmark*, who sought a Refuge from the Oppression of it's Nobility, in the strong Hold of Arbitrary Power. *Poland* has at present the Name of Republick, and it is one of the *Aristocratick* Form; but it is well known, that the little Finger of this Government, is heavier than the Loins of Arbitrary Power in most Nations. [51] The People are not only Politically, but Personally Slaves, and treated with the utmost Indignity. The Republick of *Venice* is somewhat more moderate; yet even here, so heavy is the *Aristocratick* Yoke, that the Nobles have been obliged to enervate the Spirit of their Subjects by every Sort of Debauchery; they have denied them the Liberty of Reason, and have recompensed it, by not only allowing, but encouraging them to corrupt themselves in the most scandalous Manner. They consider their Subjects, as the Farmer does the Hog he keeps to feast upon. He holds him fast in his Sty, but allows him to wallow as much as he pleases in his beloved Filth and Gluttony. So scandalously debauched a People as that of *Venice*, is to be met with no where else. High, Low, Men, Women, Clergy, and Laity, are all alike. The Ruling Nobility are no less afraid of one another, than they are of the People; and for that Reason, politically enervate their own Body by the same [52] effeminate Luxury, by which they corrupt their Subjects. They are impoverished by every means which can be invented; and they are kept in a perpetual Terror

by the Horrors of a State Inquisition; here you see a People deprived of all rational Freedom, and tyrannized over by about two Thousand Men; and yet this Body of two Thousand, are so far from enjoying any Liberty by the Subjection of the rest, that they are in an infinitely severer State of Slavery; they make themselves the most degenerate, and unhappy of Mankind, for no other Purpose than that they may the more effectually contribute to the Misery of an whole Nation. In short, the regular and methodical Proceedings of an *Aristocracy*, are more intolerable than the very Excesses of a *Despotism*, and in general, much further from any Remedy.

Thus, my Lord, we have pursued *Aristocracy* through it's whole Progress; we have seen the Seeds, the Growth, and [53] the Fruit. It could boast none of the Advantages of a *Despotism*, miserable as those Advantages were, and it was overloaded with an Exuberance of Mischiefs, unknown even to *Despotism* itself. In Effect, it is no more than a disorderly Tyranny. This Form therefore could be little approved, even in Speculation, by those who were capable of thinking, and could be less born in Practice by any who were capable of feeling. However, the fruitful Policy of Man was not yet exhausted. He had yet another Farthing Candle to supply the Deficiencies of the Sun. This was the third Form, known by Political Writers under the Name of *Democracy*. Here the People transacted all Publick Business, or the greater Part of it, in their own Persons: their Laws were made by themselves, and upon any Failure of Duty, their Officers were accountable to themselves, and to them only. In all appearance, they had secured by this Method the Advantages of Order and good Government, without [54] paying their Liberty for the Purchase. Now, my Lord, we are come to the Master-piece of *Grecian* Refinement, and *Roman* Solidity, a Popular Government. The earliest and most celebrated Republick of this Model, was that of *Athens*. It was constructed by no less an Artist, than the celebrated Poet and Philosopher, *Solon*. But no sooner was this Political Vessel launched from the Stocks, than it overset, even in the Life-time of the Builder. A Tyranny immediately supervened; not by a foreign Conquest, not by Accident, but by the very Nature and Constitution of a *Democracy*. An artful Man became popular, the People had Power in their hands, and they devolved a considerable Share of their Power upon their Favourite; and the only use he made of this Power, was, to plunge those who gave it into Slavery. Accident restored their Liberty, and the same good Fortune produced Men of uncommon Abilities and uncommon Virtues amongst them. But these Abilities [55] were suffered to be of little Service either to their Possessors or to the State. Some they banished, others they imprisoned, and all they treated with various Circumstances of the most shameful Ingratitude. Republicks have many things in the Spirit of absolute Monarchy, but none more than this; a shining Merit is ever hated or suspected in a Popular Assembly, as well as in a Court; and all Services done the State, are looked upon as dangerous to the Rulers, whether Sultans or Senators. The *Ostracism* at *Athens* was built upon this Principle. The giddy People whom we have now under Consideration, being elated with some Flashes of Success, which they owed to nothing less than any Merit of their own, began to tyrannize over their Equals, who had associated with them for their common Defence. With their Prudence they renounced all Appearance of Justice. They entered into Wars rashly and wantonly. If they were unsuccessful, instead of growing wiser by their [56] Misfortune, they threw the whole Blame of their own Misconduct on the Ministers who had advised, and the Generals who had conducted those Wars; until by Degrees they had cut off all who could serve them in their Councils or their Battles. If at any time these Wars had an happier Issue, it was no less difficult to deal with them on account of their Pride and Insolence. Furious in their Adversity, tyrannical in their Successes, a Commander had more trouble to concert his Defence before the People, than to plan the Operations of the Campaign. It was frequent enough for a General, under the horrid *Despotism* of the *Roman* Emperors, to be ill received in Proportion to the Greatness of his Services. *Agricola* is a strong Instance of this. No Man had done greater things, nor with an honest Ambition. Yet on his Return to Court, he was obliged to enter *Rome* with all the Secrecy of a Criminal. He went to the Palace, not like a victorious

Commander who had [57] merited and might demand the greatest Rewards, but like an Offender who had come to supplicate a Pardon for his Crimes. His Reception was answerable: "*Brevi osculo, & nullo sermone exceptus, turba servientium immistus est.*"

Yet in that worst Season of this worst of monarchical [1] Tyrannies, Modesty, Discretion, and a Coolness of Temper, formed some Kind of Security even for the highest Merit. But at *Athens*, the nicest and best studied Behaviour was not a sufficient Guard for a Man of great Capacity. Some of their bravest Commanders were obliged to fly their Country, some to enter into the Service of it's Enemies, rather than abide a popular Determination on their Conduct, lest, as one of them said, their Giddiness might make the People condemn where they meant to acquit; to throw in a black Bean, even when they intended a white one.

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The *Athenians* made a very rapid Progress to the most enormous Excesses. The People under no Restraint soon grew dissolute, luxurious, and idle. They renounced all Labour, and began to subsist themselves from the publick Revenues. They lost all Concern for their common Honour or Safety, and could bear no Advice that tended to reform them. At this Time Truth became offensive to those Lords the People, and most highly dangerous to the Speaker. The Orators no longer ascended the *Rostrum*, but to corrupt them further with the most fulsome Adulation. These Orators were all bribed by foreign Princes on the one Side or the other. And besides it's own Parties, in this City there were Parties, and avowed ones too, for the *Persians*, *Spartans* and *Macedonians*, supported each of them by one or more Demagogues pensioned and bribed to this iniquitous Service. The People, forgetful of all Virtue and publick Spirit, and intoxicated with the Flatteries [59] of their Orators (these Courtiers of Republicks, and endowed with the distinguishing Characters of all other Courtiers) this People, I say, at last arrived at that Pitch of Madness, that they coolly and deliberately, by an express Law, made it capital for any Man to propose an Application of the immense Sums squandered in publick Shows, even to the most necessary Purposes of the State. When you see the People of this Republick banishing or murdering their best and ablest Citizens, dissipating the publick Treasure with the most senseless Extravagance, and spending their whole Time, as Spectators or Actors, in playing, fiddling, dancing and singing, does it not, my LORD, strike your Imagination with the Image of a Sort of a complex *Nero*? And does it not strike you with the greater Horror, when you observe, not one Man only, but a whole City, grown drunk with Pride and Power, running with a Rage of Folly into the same mean and senseless Debauchery and Extravagance? [60] But if this People resembled *Nero* in their Extravagance, much more did they resemble and even exceed him in Cruelty and Injustice. In the Time of *Pericles*, one of the most celebrated Times in the History of that Commonwealth, a King of *Egypt* sent them a Donation of Corn. This they were mean enough to accept. And had the *Egyptian* Prince intended the Ruin of this City of wicked Bedlamites, he could not have taken a more effectual Method to do it, than by such an ensnaring Largess. The Distribution of this Bounty caused a Quarrel; the Majority set on foot an Enquiry into the Title of the Citizens, and upon a vain Pretence of Illegitimacy, newly and occasionally set up, they deprived of their Share of the royal Donation no less than five thousand of their own Body. They went further; they disfranchised them; and having once begun with an Act of Injustice, they could set no Bounds to it. Not content with cutting them off from the Rights of Citizens, they [61] plundered these unfortunate Wretches of all their Substance; and to crown this Masterpiece of Violence and Tyranny, they actually sold every Man of the five thousand as Slaves in the publick Market. Observe, my LORD, that the five thousand we here speak of, were cut off from a Body of no more than nineteen thousand; for the entire Number of Citizens was no greater at that Time. Could the Tyrant who wished the *Roman* People but one Neck, could the Tyrant himself have done, nay, he could scarcely wish for a greater Mischief, than to have cut off, at one Stroke, a fourth of his People? Or has the Cruelty of that Series of

sanguine Tyrants, the *Caesars*, ever presented such a Piece of flagrant and extensive Wickedness? The whole History of this celebrated Republick is but one Tissue of Rashness, Folly, Ingratitude, Injustice, Tumult, Violence, and Tyranny, and indeed of every Species of Wickedness that can well be imagined. This was a City of Wisemen, in which a Minister [62] could not exercise his Functions; a warlike People, amongst whom a General did not dare either to gain or lose a Battle; a learned Nation, in which a Philosopher could not enter on a free Enquiry. This was the City which banished *Themistocles*, starved *Aristides*, forced into Exile *Miltiades*, drove out *Anaxagoras*, and poisoned *Socrates*. This was a City which changed the Form of it's Government with the Moon; eternal Conspiracies, Revolutions daily, nothing fixed and established. A Republick, as an antient Philosopher has observed, is no one Species of Government, but a Magazine of every Species; here you find every Sort of it, and that in the worst Form. As there is a perpetual Change, one rising and the other falling, you have all the Violence and wicked Policy, by which a beginning Power must always acquire it's Strength, and all the Weakness by which falling States are brought to a complete Destruction.

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Rome has a more venerable Aspect than *Athens*; and she conducted her Affairs, so far as related to the Ruin and Oppression of the greatest Part of the World, with more Wisdom and Uniformity. But their domestick Oeconomy was nearly or altogether the same. An internal Dissention constantly tore to Pieces the Bowels of this Commonwealth. You find the same Confusion, the same Factions which subsisted at *Athens*, the same Tumults, the same Revolutions, and in fine, the same Slavery. If perhaps their former Condition did not deserve that Name altogether as well. All other Republicks were of the same Character. *Florence* was a Transcript of *Athens*. And the modern Republicks, as they approach more or less to the Democrattick Form, partake more or less of the Nature of those which I have described.

We are now at the Close of our Review of the three simple Forms of Artificial Society, and we have shewn them, however [64] they may differ in Name, or in some slight Circumstances, to be all alike in Effect; in Effect, to be all Tyrannies. But suppose we were inclined to make the most ample Concessions; let us concede *Athens*, *Rome*, *Carthage*, and two or three more of the antient, and many of the modern Commonwealths, to have been, or to be free and happy, and to owe their Freedom and Happiness to their Political Constitution. Yet allowing all this, what Defence does this make for Artificial Society in general, that these inconsiderable Spots of the Globe have for some short Space of Time stood as Exceptions to a Charge so general? But when we call these Governments free, or concede that their Citizens were happier than those which lived under different Forms, it is merely *ex Abundantia*. For we should be greatly mistaken, if we really thought that the Majority of the People which filled these Cities, enjoyed even that nominal Political Freedom of which I have spoken so much already. [65] In Reality, they had no Part of it. In *Athens* there were usually from ten to thirty thousand Freemen: This was the utmost. But the Slaves usually amounted to four hundred thousand, and sometimes to a great many more. The Freemen of *Sparta* and *Rome* were not more numerous in Proportion to those whom they held in a Slavery, even more terrible than the *Athenians*. Therefore state the Matter fairly: The free States never formed, though they were taken altogether, the thousandth Part of the habitable Globe; the Freemen in these States were never the twentieth Part of the People, and the Time they subsisted is scarce any thing in that immense Ocean of Duration in which Time and Slavery are so nearly commensurate. Therefore call these free States, or popular Governments, or what you please; when we consider the Majority of their Inhabitants, and regard the natural Rights of Mankind, they must appear in Reality and Truth, [66] no better than pitiful and oppressive Oligarchies.

After so fair an Examen, wherein nothing has been exaggerated; no Fact produced which cannot be proved, and none which has been produced in any wise forced or strained, while thousands have, for Brevity, been omitted; after so candid a Discussion in all Respects; what Slave so passive, what Bigot so blind, what Enthusiast so headlong, what Politician so hardened, as to stand up in Defence of a System calculated for a Curse to Mankind? a Curse under which they smart and groan to this Hour, without thoroughly knowing the Nature of the Disease, and wanting Understanding or Courage to apply the Remedy.

I need not excuse myself to your Lordship, nor, I think, to any honest Man, for the Zeal I have shewn in this Cause; for [67] it is an honest Zeal, and in a good Cause. I have defended Natural Religion against a Confederacy of Atheists and Divines. I now plead for Natural Society against Politicians, and for Natural Reason against all three. When the World is in a fitter Temper than it is at present to hear Truth, or when I shall be more indifferent about it's Temper; my Thoughts may become more publick. In the mean time, let them repose in my own Bosom, and in the Bosoms of such Men as are fit to be initiated in the sober Mysteries of Truth and Reason. My Antagonists have already done as much as I could desire. Parties in Religion and Politicks make sufficient Discoveries concerning each other, to give a sober Man a proper Caution against them all. The Monarchick, Aristocratical, and Popular Partizans have been jointly laying their Axes to the Root of all Government, and have in their Turns proved each other absurd and inconvenient. In vain you tell me that Artificial Government is [68] good, but that I fall out only with the Abuse. The Thing! the Thing itself is the Abuse! Observe, my LORD, I pray you, that grand Error upon which all artificial legislative Power is founded. It was observed, that Men had ungovernable Passions, which made it necessary to guard against the Violence they might offer to each other. They appointed Governors over them for this Reason; but a worse and more perplexing Difficulty arises, how to be defended against the Governors? *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* In vain they change from a single Person to a few. These few have the Passions of the one, and they unite to strengthen themselves, and to secure the Gratification of their lawless Passions at the Expence of the general Good. In vain do we fly to the Many. The Case is worse; their Passions are less under the Government of Reason, they are augmented by the Contagion, and defended against all Attacks by their Multitude.

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I have purposely avoided the mention of the mixed Form of Government, for Reasons that will be very obvious to your Lordship. But my Caution can avail me but little. You will not fail to urge it against me in favour of Political Society. You will not fail to shew how the Errors of the several simple Modes are corrected by a Mixture of all of them, and a proper Ballance of the several Powers in such a State. I confess, my LORD, that this has been long a darling Mistake of my own; and that of all the Sacrifices I have made to Truth, this has been by far the greatest. When I confess that I think this Notion a Mistake, I know to whom I am speaking, for I am satisfied that Reasons are like Liquors, and there are some of such a Nature as none but strong Heads can bear. There are few with whom I can communicate so freely as with *Pope*. But *Pope* cannot bear every Truth. He has a Timidity which hinders the full Exertion of his Faculties, almost as effectually [70] as Bigotry cramps those of the general Herd of Mankind. But whoever is a genuine Follower of Truth, keeps his Eye steady upon his Guide, indifferent whither he is led, provided that she is the Leader. And, my LORD, if it be properly considered, it were infinitely better to remain possessed by the whole Legion of vulgar Mistakes, than to reject some, and at the same time to retain a Fondness for others altogether as absurd and irrational. The first has at least a Consistency, that makes a Man, however erroneously, uniform at least; but the latter way of proceeding is such an inconsistent Chimaera and Jumble of Philosophy and vulgar Prejudice, that hardly any thing more ridiculous can be conceived. Let us therefore freely, and without Fear or Prejudice,

examine this last Contrivance of Policy. And without considering how near the Quick our Instruments may come, let us search it to the Bottom.

[71]

First then, all Men are agreed, that this Junction of Regal, Aristocratick, and Popular Power, must form a very complex, nice, and intricate Machine, which being composed of such a variety of Parts, with such opposite Tendencies and Movements, it must be liable on every Accident to be disordered. To speak without Metaphor, such a Government must be liable to frequent Cabals, Tumults, and Revolutions, from it's very Constitution. These are undoubtedly as ill Effects, as can happen in a Society; for in such a Case, the Closeness acquired by Community, instead of serving for mutual Defence, serves only to increase the Danger. Such a System is like a City, where Trades that require constant Fires are much exercised, where the Houses are built of combustible Materials, and where they stand extremely close.

In the second Place, the several constituent Parts having their distinct Rights, [72] and these many of them at once so necessary to be determined with Exactness, are yet so indeterminate in their Nature, that it becomes a new and constant Source of Debate and Confusion. Hence it is, that whilst the Business of Government should be carrying on, the Question is, who has a Right to exercise this or that Function of it, or what Men have Power to keep their Offices in any Function. Whilst this Contest continues, and whilst the Ballance in any sort continues, it has never any Remission; all manner of Abuses and Villainies in Officers remain unpunished, the greatest Frauds and Robberies in the Publick Revenues are committed in Defiance of Justice; and Abuses grow, by Time and Impunity, into Customs; until they prescribe against the Laws, and grow too inveterate often to admit a Cure, unless such as may be as bad as the Disease.

Thirdly, the several Parts of this Species of Government, though united, preserve [73] the Spirit which each Form has separately. Kings are ambitious; the Nobility haughty; and the Populace tumultuous and ungovernable. Each Party, however in appearance peaceable, carries on a Design upon the others; and it is owing to this, that in all Questions, whether concerning foreign or domestick Affairs, the Whole generally turns more upon some Party Matter than upon the Nature of the Thing itself. Whether such a Step will diminish or augment the Power of the Crown, or how far the Privileges of the Subject are like to be extended or restricted by it. And these Questions are constantly resolved, without any Consideration of the Merits of the Cause, merely as the Parties who uphold these jarring Interests may chance to prevail; and as they prevail, the Ballance is overset, now upon one side, now upon the other. The Government is one Day, arbitrary Power in a single Person; another, a juggling Confederacy of a few to cheat the Prince and enslave [74] the People; and the third, a frantick and unmanageable Democracy. The great Instrument of all these Changes, and what infuses a peculiar Venom into all of them, is Party. It is of no Consequence what the Principles of any Party, or what their Pretensions are; the Spirit which actuates all Parties is the same; the Spirit of Ambition, of Self-Interest, of Oppression, and Treachery. This Spirit entirely reverses all the Principles which a benevolent Nature has erected within us; all Honesty, all equal Justice, and even the Ties of Natural Society, the Natural Affections. In a word, my LORD, we have all *seen*, and if any outward Considerations were worthy the lasting Concern of a wise Man, we have some of us *felt*, such Oppression from Party Government as no other Tyranny can parallel. We behold daily the most important Rights, Rights upon which all the others depend, we behold these Rights determined in the last Resort, without the least Attention even to [75] Appearance or Colour of Justice; we behold this without Emotion, because we have grown up in the constant View of such Practices; and we are not surprised to hear a Man requested to be a Knave and a Traitor, with as much Indifference as if the most ordinary Favour were asked; and we hear

this Request refused, not because it is a most unjust and unreasonable Desire, but that this Worthy has already engaged his Injustice to another. These and many more Points I am far from spreading to their full Extent. You are sensible that I do not put forth half my Strength; and you cannot be at a Loss for the Reason. A Man is allowed sufficient Freedom of Thought, provided he knows how to chuse his Subject properly. You may criticise freely upon the *Chinese* Constitution, and observe with as much Severity as you please upon the absurd Tricks, or destructive Bigotry of the Bonzees. But the Scene is changed as you come homeward, [76] and Atheism or Treason may be the Names given in *Britain*, to what would be Reason and Truth if asserted of *China*. I submit to the Condition, and though I have a notorious Advantage before me, waive the Pursuit. For else, my LORD, it is very obvious what a Picture might be drawn of the Excesses of Party even in our own Nation. I could shew, that the same Faction has in one Reign promoted popular Seditions, and in the next been a Patron of Tyranny; I could shew, that they have all of them betrayed the publick Safety at all Times, and have very frequently with equal Perfidy made a Market of their own Cause, and their own Associates. I could shew how vehemently they have contended for Names, and how silently they have passed over Things of the last Importance. And I could demonstrate, that they have had the Opportunity of doing all this Mischief, nay, that they themselves had their Origin and Growth from that complex Form of Government [77] which we are wisely taught to look upon as so great a Blessing. Revolve, my LORD, our History from the Conquest. We scarce ever had a Prince, who by Fraud, or Violence, had not made some Infringement on the Constitution. We scarce ever had a Parliament which knew, when it attempted to set Limits to the Royal Authority, how to set Limits to it's own. Evils we have had continually calling for Reformation, and Reformations more grievous than any Evils. Our boasted Liberty sometimes trodden down, sometimes giddily set up, and ever precariously fluctuating and unsettled; it has been only kept alive by the Blasts of continual Feuds, Wars, and Conspiracies. In no Country in *Europe* has the Scaffold so often blushed with the Blood of it's Nobility. Confiscations, Banishments, Attainders, Executions, make a large Part of the History of such of our Families as are not utterly extinguished by them. Formerly indeed Things had a more ferocious Appearance [78] than they have at this Day. In these early and unrefined Ages, the jarring Parts of a certain Chaotic Constitution supported their several Pretensions by the Sword. Experience and Policy have since taught other Methods.

Res vero nunc agitur tenui pulmone rubetae.

But how far Corruption, Venality, the Contempt of Honour, the Oblivion of all Duty to our Country, and the most abandoned publick Prostitution, are preferable to the more glaring and violent Effects of Faction, I will not presume to determine. Sure I am that they are very great Evils.

I have done with the Forms of Government. During the Course of my Enquiry you may have observed a very material Difference between my Manner of Reasoning and that which is in Use amongst the Abbetors of Artificial Society. They form [79] their Plans upon what seems most eligible to their Imaginations, for the ordering of Mankind. I discover the Mistakes in those Plans, from the real known Consequences which have resulted from them. They have inlisted Reason to fight against itself, and employ it's whole Force to prove that it is an insufficient Guide to them in the Conduct of their Lives. But unhappily for us, in Proportion as we have deviated from the plain Rule of our Nature, and turned our Reason against itself, in that Proportion have we increased the Follies and Miseries of Mankind. The more deeply we penetrate into the Labyrinth of Art, the further we find ourselves from those Ends for which we entered it. This has happened in almost every Species of Artificial Society, and in all Times. We found, or we thought we found, an Inconvenience in having every Man the Judge of his own Cause. Therefore Judges were set up, at first with

discretionary Powers. But it was soon found a miserable Slavery to have [80] our Lives and Properties precarious, and hanging upon the arbitrary Determination of any one Man, or Set of Men. We flew to Laws as a Remedy for this Evil. By these we persuaded ourselves we might know with some Certainty upon what Ground we stood. But lo! Differences arose upon the Sense and Interpretation of these Laws. Thus we were brought back to our old Incertitude. New Laws were made to expound the old; and new Difficulties arose upon the new Laws; as Words multiplied, Opportunities of cavilling upon them multiplied also. Then Recourse was had to Notes, Comments, Glosses, Reports, *Responsa Prudentum*, learned Readings: Eagle stood against Eagle. Authority was set up against Authority. Some were allured by the modern, others revered the antient. The new were more enlightened, the old were more venerable. Some adopted the Comment, others stuck to the Text. The Confusion increased, the Mist thickened, until it could be discovered [81] no longer what was allowed or forbidden, what Things were in Property, and what common. In this Uncertainty, (uncertain even to the Professors, an *Aegyptian* Darkness to the rest of Mankind) the contending Parties felt themselves more effectually ruined by the Delay than they could have been by the Injustice of any Decision. Our Inheritances are become a Prize for Disputation; and Disputes and Litigations are become an Inheritance.

The Professors of Artificial Law have always walked hand in hand with the Professors of Artificial Theology. As their End, in confounding the Reason of Man, and abridging his Natural Freedom, is exactly the same, they have adjusted the Means to that End in a Way entirely similar. The Divine thunders out his *Anathemas* with more Noise and Terror against the Breach of one of his positive Institutions, or the Neglect of some of his trivial Forms, than against the Neglect or [82] Breach of those Duties and Commandments of Natural Religion, which by these Forms and Institutions he pretends to enforce. The Lawyer has his Forms, and his positive Institutions too, and he adheres to them with a Veneration altogether as religious. The worst Cause cannot be so prejudicial to the Litigant, as his Advocate's or Attorney's Ignorance or Neglect of these Forms. A Law-suit is like an ill-managed Dispute, in which the first Object is soon out of Sight, and the Parties end upon a Matter wholly foreign to that on which they began. In a Law-suit the Question is, who has a Right to a certain House or Farm? And this Question is daily determined, not upon the Evidences of the Right, but upon the Observance or Neglect of some Forms of Words in Use amongst them, amongst which there is even amongst themselves such a Disagreement, that the most experienced Veterans in the Profession can never be positively assured that they are not mistaken.

[83]

Let us expostulate with these learned Sages, these Priests of the sacred Temple of Justice. Are we Judges of our own Property? By no Means. You then, who are initiated into the Mysteries of the blindfold Goddess, inform me whether I have a Right to eat the Bread I have earned by the hazard of my Life, or the Sweat of my Brow? The grave Doctor answers me in the Affirmative. The reverend Serjeant replies in the Negative; the learned Barrister reasons upon one side and upon the other, and concludes nothing. What shall I do? An Antagonist starts up and presses me hard. I enter the Field, and return these three Persons to defend my Cause. My Cause, which two Farmers from the Plough could have decided in half an hour, takes the Court twenty Years. I am however at the end of my Labour, and have in Reward for all my Toil and Vexation, a Judgment in my Favour. But hold—a sagacious Commander, in the Adversary's Army has found a Flaw in the Proceeding. [84] My Triumph is turned into Mourning. I have used *or*, instead of *and*, or some Mistake, small in Appearance, but dreadful in it's Consequences, and have the whole of my Success quashed in a Writ of Error. I remove my Suit; I shift from Court to Court; I fly from Equity to Law, and from Law to Equity; equal Uncertainty attends me every where: And a Mistake in which I had no Share, decides at once

upon my Liberty and Property, sending me from the Court to a Prison, and adjudging my Family to Beggary and Famine. I am innocent, Gentlemen, of the Darkness and Uncertainty of your Science. I never darkened it with absurd and contradictory Notions, nor confounded it with Chicane and Sophistry. You have excluded me from any Share in the Conduct of my own Cause; the Science was too deep for me; I acknowledged it, but it was too deep even for yourselves: You have made the way so intricate, that you are yourselves lost in it: You err, and you punish me for your Errors.

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The Delay of the Law is, your Lordship will tell me, a trite Topick, and which of it's Abuses have not been too severely felt not to be often complained of? A Man's Property is to serve for the Purposes of his Support; and therefore to delay a Determination concerning that, is the worst Injustice, because it cuts off the very End and Purpose for which I applied to the Judicature for Relief. Quite contrary in Case of a Man's Life, there the Determination can hardly be too much protracted. Mistakes in this Case are as often fallen into as in any other, and if the Judgement is sudden, the Mistakes are the most irretrievable of all others. Of this the Gentlemen of the Robe are themselves sensible, and they have brought it into a Maxim. *De morte hominis nulla est cunctatio longa*. But what could have induced them to reverse the Rules, and to contradict that Reason which dictated them, I am utterly unable to guess. A Point concerning Property, which ought, for the Reasons [86] I just mentioned, to be most speedily decided, frequently exercises the Wit of Successions of Lawyers, for many Generations. *Multa virûm volvens durando saecula vincit*. But the Question concerning a Man's Life, that great Question in which no Delay ought to be counted tedious, is commonly determined in Twenty-four Hours at the utmost. It is not to be wondered at, that Injustice and Absurdity should be inseparable Companions.

Ask of Politicians the End for which Laws were originally designed; and they will answer, that the Laws were designed as a Protection for the Poor and Weak, against the Oppression of the Rich and Powerful. But surely no Pretence can be so ridiculous; a Man might as well tell me he has taken off my Load, because he has changed the Burthen. If the poor Man is not able to support his Suit, according to the vexatious and expensive manner established in civilized Countries, has not [87] the Rich as great an Advantage over him as the Strong has over the Weak in a State of Nature? But we will not place the State of Nature, which is the Reign of God, in competition with Political Society, which is the absurd Usurpation of Man. In a State of Nature, it is true, that a Man of superior Force may beat or rob me; but then it is true, that I am at full Liberty to defend myself, or make Reprisal by Surprize or by Cunning, or by any other way in which I may be superior to him. But in Political Society, a rich Man may rob me in another way. I cannot defend myself; for Money is the only Weapon with which we are allowed to fight. And if I attempt to avenge myself, the whole Force of that Society is ready to compleat my Ruin.

A good Parson once said, that where Mystery begins, Religion ends. Cannot I say, as truly at least, of human Laws, that where Mystery begins, Justice ends? [88] It is hard to say, whether the Doctors of Law or Divinity have made the greater Advances in the lucrative Business of Mystery. The Lawyers, as well as the Theologians, have erected another Reason besides Natural Reason; and the Result has been, another Justice besides Natural Justice. They have so bewildered the World and themselves in unmeaning Forms and Ceremonies, and so perplexed the plainest Matters with metaphysical Jargon, that it carries the highest Danger to a Man out of that Profession, to make the least Step without their Advice and Assistance. Thus by confining to themselves the Knowledge of the Foundation of all Mens Lives and Properties, they have reduced all Mankind into the most abject and servile Dependence. We are Tenants at the Will of these Gentlemen for every thing; and a metaphysical Quibble is to decide whether the greatest Villain breathing shall meet his

Deserts, or escape with Impunity, or whether the best Man in the [89] Society shall not be reduced to the lowest and most despicable Condition it affords. In a word, my LORD, the Injustice, Delay, Puerility, false Refinement, and affected Mystery of the Law are such, that many who live under it come to admire and envy the Expedition, Simplicity, and Equality of Arbitrary Judgments. I need insist the less on this Article to your Lordship, as you have frequently lamented the Miseries derived to us from Artificial Law, and your Candor is the more to be admired and applauded in this, as your Lordship's noble House has derived it's Wealth and it's Honours from that Profession.

Before we finish our Examination of Artificial Society, I shall lead your Lordship into a closer Consideration of the Relations which it gives Birth to, and the Benefits, if such they are, which result from these Relations. The most obvious Division of Society is into Rich and Poor; and it is [90] no less obvious, that the Number of the former bear a great Disproportion to those of the latter. The whole Business of the Poor is to administer to the Idleness, Folly, and Luxury of the Rich; and that of the Rich, in return, is to find the best Methods of confirming the Slavery and increasing the Burthens of the Poor. In a State of Nature, it is an invariable Law, that a Man's Acquisitions are in proportion to his Labours. In a State of Artificial Society, it is a Law as constant and as invariable, that those who labour most, enjoy the fewest things; and that those who labour not at all, have the greatest Number of Enjoyments. A Constitution of things this, strange and ridiculous beyond Expression. We scarce believe a thing when we are told it, which we actually see before our Eyes every Day without being in the least surprized. I suppose that there are in *Great Britain* upwards of an hundred thousand People employed in Lead, Tin, Iron, Copper, and Coal Mines; these [91] unhappy Wretches scarce ever see the Light of the Sun; they are buried in the Bowels of the Earth; there they work at a severe and dismal Task, without the least Prospect of being delivered from it; they subsist upon the coarsest and worst sort of Fare; they have their Health miserably impaired, and their Lives cut short, by being perpetually confined in the close Vapour of these malignant Minerals. An hundred thousand more at least are tortured without Remission by the suffocating Smoak, intense Fires, and constant Drudgery necessary in the refining and managing the Products of those Mines. If any Man informed us that two hundred innocent Persons were condemned to so intolerable Slavery, how should we pity the unhappy Sufferers, and how great would be our just Indignation against those who inflicted so cruel and ignominious a Punishment? This is an Instance, I could not wish a stronger, of the numberless Things which we pass by in their [92] common Dress, yet which shock us when they are nakedly represented. But this Number, considerable as it is, and the Slavery, with all it's Baseness and Horror, which we have at Home, is nothing to what the rest of the World affords of the same Nature. Millions daily bathed in the poisonous Damps and destructive Effluvia of Lead, Silver, Copper, and Arsenick. To say nothing of those other Employments, those Stations of Wretchedness and Contempt in which Civil Society has placed the numerous *Enfans perdus* of her Army. Would any rational Man submit to one of the most tolerable of these Drudgeries for all the artificial Enjoyments which Policy has made to result from them? By no Means. And yet need I suggest to your Lordship, that those who find the Means, and those who arrive at the End, are not at all the same Persons. On considering the strange and unaccountable Fancies and Contrivances of Artificial Reason, I have somewhere called this Earth [93] the Bedlam of our System. Looking now upon the Effects of some of those Fancies, may we not with equal Reason call it likewise the Newgate, and the Bridewell of the Universe. Indeed the Blindness of one Part of Mankind co-operating with the Frenzy and Villainy of the other, has been the real Builder of this respectable Fabrick of Political Society: And as their Blindness has caused their Slavery, in Return their State of Slavery is made a Pretence for continuing them in a State of Blindness; for the Politician will tell you gravely, that their Life of Servitude disqualifies them for a Search of Truth, and supplies them with no other than mean and insufficient Ideas. This is but too true; and this is one of the Reasons for which I blame such Institutions.

In a Misery of this Sort, admitting some few Lenities, and those too but a few, nine Parts in ten of the whole Race of Mankind drudge through [94] Life. It may be urged perhaps, in palliation of this, that, at least, the Rich Few find a considerable and real Benefit from the Wretchedness of the Many. But is this so in fact? Let us examine the Point with a little more Attention. For this purpose the Rich in all Societies may be thrown into two Classes. The first is of those who are Powerful as well as Rich, and conduct the Operations of the vast Political Machine. The other is of those who employ their Riches wholly in the Acquisition of Pleasure. As to the first Sort, their continual Care, Anxiety, their toilsome Days and sleepless Nights, are next to Proverbial. These Circumstances are sufficient almost to level their Condition to that of the unhappy Majority; but there are other Circumstances which place them in a far lower Condition. Not only their Understandings labour continually, which is the severest Labour, but their Hearts are torn by the worst, most troublesome, and insatiable of all Passions, by Avarice, by [95] Ambition, by Fear and Jealousy. No part of the Mind has Rest. Power gradually extirpates from the Mind every humane and gentle Virtue. Pity, Benevolence, Friendship are Things almost unknown in high Stations. *Verae amicitiae rarissime inveniuntur in iis qui in honoribus reipublicae versantur*, says Cicero. And indeed, Courts are the Schools where Cruelty, Pride, Dissimulation and Treachery are studied and taught in the most vicious Perfection. This is a Point so clear and acknowledged, that if it did not make a necessary Part of my Subject, I should pass it by entirely. And this has hindered me from drawing at full length, and in the most striking Colours, this shocking Picture of the Degeneracy and Wretchedness of human Nature, in that Part which is vulgarly thought it's happiest and most amiable State. You know from what Originals I could copy such Pictures. Happy are they who know enough of them to know their little Value, and who [96] have been snatched from that Post of Danger with the Remains of their Virtue; Loss of Honours, Wealth, Titles and even the Loss of one's Country is nothing in Ballance with so great an Advantage.

Let us now view the other Species of the Rich, those who devote their Time and Fortunes to Idleness and Pleasure. How much happier are they? The Pleasures which are agreeable to Nature are within the reach of all, and therefore can form no Distinction in favour of the Rich. The Pleasures which Art forces up are seldom sincere, and never satisfying. What is worse, this constant Application to Pleasure takes away from the Enjoyment, or rather turns it into the Nature of a very burthensome and laborious Business. It has Consequences yet worse. It produces a weak valetudinary State of Body, attended by all those horrid Disorders, and yet more horrid Methods of Cure, which are the Result of Luxury on one hand, and [97] the weak and ridiculous Efforts of human Art on the other. Their Pleasures are scarcely felt as Pleasures; at the same time that they bring on Pains and Diseases, which are felt but too severely. The Mind has it's Share of the Misfortune; it grows lazy and enervate, unwilling and unable to search for Truth, and utterly incapable of knowing, much less of relishing real Happiness. The Poor by their excessive Labour, and the Rich by their enormous Luxury, are set upon a Level and made equally ignorant of any Knowledge which might conduce to their Happiness. A dismal View of the Interior of all Civil Society. The lower Part broken and ground down by the most cruel Oppression; and the Rich by their artificial Method of Life bringing worse Evils on themselves, than their Tyranny could possibly inflict on those below them. Very different is the Prospect of the Natural State. Here there is no want which Nature gives, and they can be [98] sensible of no other Wants, which is not to be supplied by a very moderate degree of Labour; therefore there is no Slavery. Neither is there any Luxury, because no single Man can supply the Materials of it. Life is simple, and therefore it is happy.

I am conscious, my LORD, that your Politician will urge in his Defence, that this unequal State is highly useful. That without dooming some Part of Mankind to extraordinary Toil, the Arts which cultivate Life could not be exercised. But I demand of this Politician, how such Arts came to be necessary? He answers, that Civil Society could not well exist without them.

So that these Arts are necessary to Civil Society, and Civil Society necessary again to these Arts. Thus running in a Circle, without Modesty, and without End; and making one Error and Extravagance an Excuse for the other. My Sentiments about these Arts and their Cause, I have often discoursed with my [99] Friends at large. *Pope* has expressed them in good Verse, where he talks with so much Force of Reason and Elegance of Language in Praise of the State of Nature.

Then was not Pride, nor Arts that Pride to aid,
Man walk'd with Beast, Joint-tenant of the Shade.

On the whole, my LORD, if Political Society, in whatever Form, has still made the Many the Property of the Few; if it has introduced Labours unnecessary, Vices and Diseases unknown, and Pleasures incompatible with Nature; if in all Countries it abridges the Lives of Millions, and renders those of Millions more utterly abject and miserable, shall we still worship so destructive an Idol, and daily sacrifice to it our Health, our Liberty, and our Peace? Or shall we pass by this monstrous Heap of absurd Notions, and abominable Practices, thinking we have sufficiently [100] discharged our Duty in exposing the trifling Cheats, and ridiculous Juggles of a few mad, designing, or ambitious Priests? Alas! my LORD, we labour under a mortal Consumption, whilst we are so anxious about the Cure of a sore Finger. For has not this Leviathan of Civil Power overflowed the Earth with a Deluge of Blood, as if he were made to disport and play therein? We have shewn, that Political Society, on a moderate Calculation, has been the Means of murdering an hundred and forty times the Number of Inhabitants now upon the Earth, during it's short Existence, not upwards of four thousand Years in any Accounts to be depended on. But we have said nothing of the other, and perhaps as bad Consequence of these Wars, which spilled such Seas of Blood, and reduced so many Millions to a merciless Slavery. But these are only the Ceremonies performed in the Porch of the Political Temple. Much more horrid ones are seen as you enter it. The several Species of Government vie [101] with each other in the Absurdity of their Constitutions, and the Oppression which they make their Subjects endure. Take them under what Form you please, they are in Effect but a Despotism, and fall, both in Effect an Appearance too, after a very short Period, into that cruel and detestable Species of Tyranny; which I rather call it, because we have been educated under another Form, than that this is of worse Consequences to Mankind. For the free Governments, for the Point of their Space, and the Moment of their Duration, have felt more Confusion, and committed more flagrant Acts of Tyranny, than the most perfect despotick Governments which we have ever known. Turn your Eye next to the Labyrinth of the Law, and the Iniquity conceived in it's intricate Recesses. Consider the Ravages committed in the Bowels of all Commonwealths by Ambition, by Avarice, Envy, Fraud, open Injustice, and pretended Friendship; Vices which could draw little Support from a [102] State of Nature, but which blossom and flourish in the Rankness of Political Society. Revolve our whole Discourse; add to it all those Reflections which your own good Understanding shall suggest, and make a strenuous Effort beyond the Reach of Vulgar Philosophy, to confess that the Cause of Artificial Society is more defenceless even than that of Artificial Religion; that it is as derogatory from the Honour of the Creator, as subversive of human Reason, and productive of infinitely more Mischief to the human Race.

If pretended Revelations have caused Wars where they were opposed, and Slavery where they were received, the pretended wise Inventions of Politicians have done the same. But the Slavery has been much heavier, the Wars far more bloody, and both more universal by many Degrees. Shew me any Mischief produced by the Madness or Wickedness of Theologians, and I will shew you an hundred, resulting [103] from the Ambition and Villainy of Conquerors and Statesmen. Shew me an Absurdity in Religion, I will undertake to shew you an hundred for one in Political Laws and Institutions. If you say, that Natural Religion is a

sufficient Guide without the foreign Aid of Revelation, on what Principle should Political Laws become necessary? Is not the same Reason available in Theology and in Politicks? If the Laws of Nature are the Laws of God, is it consistent with the Divine Wisdom to prescribe Rules to us, and leave the Enforcement of them to the Folly of human Institutions? Will you follow Truth but to a certain Point? We are indebted for all our Miseries to our Distrust of that Guide, which Providence thought sufficient for our Condition, our own Natural Reason, which rejecting both in Human and Divine things, we have given our Necks to the Yoke of Political and Theological Slavery. We have renounced the Prerogative of Man, and it [104] is not wonderful that we should be treated like Beasts. But our Misery is much the greater, as the Crime we commit in rejecting the lawful Dominion of our Reason is greater. If after all, you should confess all these things, yet plead the Necessity of Political Institutions, weak and wicked as they are, I can argue with equal, perhaps superior Force concerning the Necessity of Artificial Religion; and every Step you advance in your Argument, you add a Strength to mine. So that if we are resolved to submit our Reason and our Liberty to Civil Usurpation, we have nothing to do but to conform as quickly as we can to the vulgar Notions which are connected with this, and take up their Theology as well as their Politicks. But if we think this Necessity rather imaginary than real, we should renounce their Dreams of Society, together with their Visions of Religion, and vindicate ourselves into perfect Liberty.

[105]

You are, my LORD, but just entering into the World; I am going out of it. I have played long enough to be heartily tired of the Drama. Whether I have acted my Part in it well or ill, Posterity will judge with more Candor than I, or than the present Age, with our present Passions, can possibly pretend to. For my Part, I quit it without a Sigh, and submit to the Sovereign Order without murmuring. The nearer we approach to the Goal of Life, the better we begin to understand the true Value of our Existence, and the real Weight of our Opinions. We set out much in Love with both; but we leave much behind us as we advance. We first throw away the Tales along with the Rattles of our Nurses. Those of the Priest keep their hold a little longer; those of our Governors the longest of all. But the Passions which prop these Opinions are withdrawn one after another, and the cool Light of Reason at the Setting of our Life shews us what a false Splendor played upon [106] these Objects during our more sanguine Seasons. Happy, my Lord, if instructed by my Experience, and even by my Errors, you come early to make such an Estimate of things, as may give Freedom and Ease to your Life. I am happy that it promises me Comfort at my Death.

FINIS.

Endnotes [↩](#)

- [1] Sciant quibus moris illicita mirari, posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros, &c.
See 42 to the End of it.
- [2] Had his Lordship lived to our Days, to have seen the noble Relief given by this Nation to the distressed Portuguese, he had perhaps owned this Part of his Argument a little weakened, but we do not think ourselves intitled to alter his Lordship's Words, but that we are bound to follow him exactly.