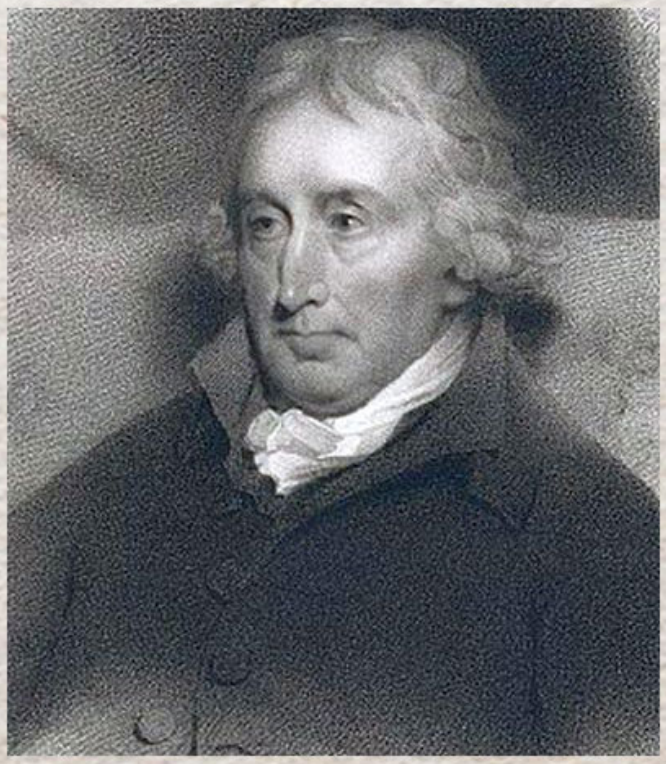

AN ESSAY ON THE HISTORY OF CIVIL SOCIETY

ADAM FERGUSON

An Essay on the History of Civil Society

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PART FIRST. OF THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMAN NATURE.

SECTION I. OF THE QUESTION RELATING TO THE STATE OF NATURE.

Natural productions are generally formed by degrees. Vegetables are raised from a tender shoot, and animals from an infant state. The latter, being active, extend together their operations and their powers, and have a progress in what they perform, as well as in the faculties they acquire. This progress in the case of man is continued to a greater extent than in that of any other animal. Not only the individual advances from infancy to manhood, but the species itself from rudeness to civilization. Hence the supposed departure of mankind from the state of their nature; hence our conjectures and different opinions of what man must have been in the first age of his being. The poet, the historian, and the moralist frequently allude to this ancient time; and under the emblems of gold, or of iron, represent a condition, and a manner of life, from which mankind have either degenerated, or on which they have greatly improved. On either supposition, the first state of our nature must have borne no resemblance to what men have exhibited in any subsequent period; historical monuments, even of the earliest date, are to be considered as novelties; and the most common establishments of human society are to be classed among the encroachments which fraud, oppression, or a busy invention, have made upon the reign of nature, by which the chief of our grievances or blessings were equally withheld.

Among the writers who have attempted to distinguish, in the human character, its original qualities, and to point out the limits between nature and art, some have represented mankind in their first condition, as possessed of mere animal sensibility, without any exercise of the faculties that render them superior to the brutes, without any political union, without any means of explaining their sentiments, and even without possessing any of the apprehensions and passions which the voice and the gesture are so well fitted to express. Others have made the state of nature to consist in perpetual wars kindled by competition for dominion and interest, where every individual had a separate quarrel with his kind, and where the presence of a fellow creature was the signal of battle.

The desire of laying the foundation of a favourite system, or a fond expectation, perhaps, that we may be able to penetrate the secrets of nature, to the very source of existence, have, on this subject, led to many fruitless inquiries, and given rise to many wild suppositions. Among the various qualities which mankind possess, we select one or a few particulars on which to establish a theory, and in framing our account of what man was in some imaginary state of nature, we overlook what he has always appeared within the reach of our own observation, and in the records of history.

In every other instance, however, the natural historian thinks himself obliged to collect facts, not to offer conjectures. When he treats of any particular species of animals, he supposes that their present dispositions and instincts are the same which they originally had, and that their present manner of life is a continuance of their first destination. He admits, that his knowledge of the material system of the world consists in a collection of facts, or at most, in general tenets derived from particular observations and experiments. It is only in what relates to himself, and in matters the most important and the most

easily known, that he substitutes hypothesis instead of reality, and confounds the provinces of imagination and reason, of poetry and science.

But without entering any further on questions either in moral or physical subjects, relating to the manner or to the origin of our knowledge; without any disparagement to that subtilty which would analyze every sentiment, and trace every mode of being to its source; it may be safely affirmed, that the character of man, as he now exists, that the laws of his animal and intellectual system, on which his happiness now depends, deserve our principal study; and that general principles relating to this or any other subject, are useful only so far as they are founded on just observation, and lead to the knowledge of important consequences, or so far as they enable us to act with success when we would apply either the intellectual or the physical powers of nature, to the purposes of human life.

If both the earliest and the latest accounts collected from every quarter of the earth, represent mankind as assembled in troops and companies; and the individual always joined by affection to one party, while he is possibly opposed to another; employed in the exercise of recollection and foresight; inclined to communicate his own sentiments, and to be made acquainted with those of others; these facts must be admitted as the foundation of all our reasoning relative to man. His mixed disposition to friendship or enmity, his reason, his use of language and articulate sounds, like the shape and the erect position of his body, are to be considered as so many attributes of his nature: they are to be retained in his description, as the wing and the paw are in that of the eagle and the lion, and as different degrees of fierceness, vigilance, timidity, or speed, have a place in the natural history of different animals.

If the question be put, What the mind of man could perform, when left to itself, and without the aid of any

foreign direction? we are to look for our answer in the history of mankind. Particular experiments which have been found so useful in establishing the principles of other sciences, could probably, on this subject, teach us nothing important, or new: we are to take the history of every active being from his conduct in the situation to which he is formed, not from his appearance in any forced or uncommon condition; a wild man therefore, caught in the woods, where he had always lived apart from his species, is a singular instance, not a specimen of any general character. As the anatomy of an eye which had never received the impressions of light, or that of an ear which had never felt the impulse of sounds, would probably exhibit defects in the very structure of the organs themselves, arising from their not being applied to their proper functions; so any particular case of this sort would only show in what degree the powers of apprehension and sentiment could exist where they had not been employed, and what would be the defects and imbecilities of a heart in which the emotions that arise in society had never been felt.

Mankind are to be taken in groupes, as they have always subsisted. The history of the individual is but a detail of the sentiments and the thoughts he has entertained in the view of his species: and every experiment relative to this subject should be made with entire societies, not with single men. We have every reason, however, to believe, that in the case of such an experiment made, we shall suppose, with a colony of children transplanted from the nursery, and left to form a society apart, untaught, and undisciplined, we should only have the same things repeated, which, in so many different parts of the earth, have been transacted already. The members of our little society would feed and sleep, would herd together and play, would have a language of their own, would quarrel and divide, would be to one another the most important objects of the scene, and, in the

ardour of their friendships and competitions, would overlook their personal danger, and suspend the care of their self-preservation. Has not the human race been planted like the colony in question? Who has directed their course? whose instruction have they heard? or whose example have they followed?

Nature, therefore, we shall presume, having given to every animal its mode of existence, its dispositions and manner of life, has dealt equally with the human race; and the natural historian who would collect the properties of this species, may fill up every article now as well as he could have done in any former age. The attainments of the parent do not descend in the blood of his children, nor is the progress of man to be considered as a physical mutation of the species. The individual, in every age, has the same race to run from infancy to manhood, and every infant, or ignorant person, now, is a model of what man was in his original state. He enters on his career with advantages peculiar to his age; but his natural talent is probably the same. The use and application of this talent is changing, and men continue their works in progression through many ages together: they build on foundations laid by their ancestors; and in a succession of years, tend to a perfection in the application of their faculties, to which the aid of long experience is required, and to which many generations must have combined their endeavours. We observe the progress they have made; we distinctly enumerate many of its steps; we can trace them back to a distant antiquity, of which no record remains, nor any monument is preserved, to inform us what were the openings of this wonderful scene. The consequence is, that instead of attending to the character of our species, where the particulars are vouched by the surest authority, we endeavour to trace it through ages and scenes unknown; and, instead of supposing that the beginning of our story was nearly of a piece with the sequel, we think ourselves

warranted to reject every circumstance of our present condition and frame, as adventitious, and foreign to our nature. The progress of mankind, from a supposed state of animal sensibility, to the attainment of reason, to the use of language, and to the habit of society, has been accordingly painted with a force of imagination, and its steps have been marked with a boldness of invention, that would tempt us to admit, among the materials of history, the suggestions of fancy, and to receive, perhaps, as the model of our nature in its original state, some of the animals whose shape has the greatest resemblance to ours. [Footnote: *Rousseau* sur l'origine de l'inegalité parmi les hommes.]

It would be ridiculous to affirm, as a discovery, that the species of the horse was probably never the same with that of the lion; yet, in opposition to what has dropped from the pens of eminent writers, we are obliged to observe, that men have always appeared among animals a distinct and a superior race; that neither the possession of similar organs, nor the approximation of shape, nor the use of the hand, [Footnote: Traité de l'esprit.] nor the continued intercourse with this sovereign artist, has enabled any other species to blend their nature or their inventions with his; that, in his rudest state, he is found to be above them; and in his greatest degeneracy, never descends to their level. He is, in short, a man in every condition; and we can learn nothing of his nature from the analogy of other animals. If we would know him, we must attend to himself, to the course of his life, and the tenor of his conduct. With him the society appears to be as old as the individual, and the use of the tongue as universal as that of the hand or the foot. If there was a time in which he had his acquaintance with his own species to make, and his faculties to acquire, it is a time of which we have no record, and in relation to which our opinions can serve no purpose, and are supported by no evidence.

We are often tempted into these boundless regions of ignorance or conjecture, by a fancy which delights in creating rather than in merely retaining the forms which are presented before it: we are the dupes of a subtilty, which promises to supply every defect of our knowledge, and, by filling up a few blanks in the story of nature, pretends to conduct our apprehension nearer to the source of existence. On the credit of a few observations, we are apt to presume, that the secret may soon be laid open, and that what is termed *wisdom* in nature, may be referred to the operation of physical powers. We forget that physical powers employed in succession or together, and combined to a salutary purpose, constitute those very proofs of design from which we infer the existence of God; and that this truth being once admitted, we are no longer to search for the source of existence; we can only collect the laws which the Author of nature has established; and in our latest as well as our earliest discoveries, only perceive a mode of creation or providence before unknown.

We speak of art as distinguished from nature; but art itself is natural to man. He is in some measure the artificer of his own frame, as well as of his fortune, and is destined, from the first age of his being, to invent and contrive. He applies the same talents to a variety of purposes, and acts nearly the same part in very different scenes. He would be always improving on his subject, and he carries this intention wherever he moves, through the streets of the populous city, or the wilds of the forest. While he appears equally fitted to every condition, he is upon this account unable to settle in any. At once obstinate and fickle, he complains of innovations, and is never sated with novelty. He is perpetually busied in reformations, and is continually wedded to his errors. If he dwells in a cave, he would improve it into a cottage; if he has already built, he would still build to a greater extent. But he does not propose to make rapid and hasty transitions; his steps are progressive

and slow; and his force, like the power of a spring, silently presses on every resistance; an effect is sometimes produced before the cause is perceived; and with all his talent for projects, his work is often accomplished before the plan is devised. It appears, perhaps, equally difficult to retard or to quicken his pace; if the projector complain he is tardy, the moralist thinks him unstable; and whether his motions be rapid or slow, the scenes of human affairs perpetually change in his management: his emblem is a passing stream, not a stagnating pool. We may desire to direct his love of improvement to its proper object, we may wish for stability of conduct; but we mistake human nature, if we wish for a termination of labour, or a scene of repose.

The occupations of men, in every condition, bespeak their freedom of choice, their various opinions, and the multiplicity of wants by which they are urged: but they enjoy, or endure, with a sensibility, or a phlegm, which are nearly the same in every situation. They possess the shores of the Caspian, or the Atlantic, by a different tenure, but with equal ease. On the one they are fixed to the soil, and seem to be formed for settlement, and the accommodation of cities: the names they bestow on a nation, and on its territory, are the same. On the other they are mere animals of passage, prepared to roam on the face of the earth, and with their herds, in search of new pasture and favourable seasons, to follow the sun in his annual course.

Man finds his lodgment alike in the cave, the cottage, and the palace; and his subsistence equally in the woods, in the dairy, or the farm. He assumes the distinction of titles, equipage, and dress; he devises regular systems of government, and a complicated body of laws; or naked in the woods has no badge of superiority but the strength of his limbs and the sagacity of his mind; no rule of conduct but choice; no tie with his fellow creatures but affection, the love of company, and the desire of safety. Capable of a great variety of arts, yet dependent on none in particular

for the preservation of his being; to whatever length he has carried his artifice, there he seems to enjoy the conveniences that suit his nature, and to have found the condition to which he is destined. The tree which an American, on the banks of the Oroonoko [Footnote: Lafitau, moeurs des sauvages.], has chosen to climb for the retreat, and the lodgment of his family, is to him a convenient dwelling. The sopha, the vaulted dome, and the colonade, do not more effectually content their native inhabitant.

If we are asked therefore, where the state of nature is to be found? we may answer, it is here; and it matters not whether we are understood to speak in the island of Great Britain, at the Cape of Good Hope, or the Straits of Magellan. While this active being is in the train of employing his talents, and of operating on the subjects around him, all situations are equally natural. If we are told, that vice, at least, is contrary to nature; we may answer, it is worse; it is folly and wretchedness. But if nature is only opposed to art, in what situation of the human race are the footsteps of art unknown? In the condition of the savage, as well as in that of the citizen, are many proofs of human invention; and in either is not any permanent station, but a mere stage through which this travelling being is destined to pass. If the palace be unnatural, the cottage is so no less; and the highest refinements of political and moral apprehension, are not more artificial in their kind, than the first operations of sentiment and reason.

If we admit that man is susceptible of improvement, and has in himself a principle of progression, and a desire of perfection, it appears improper to say, that he has quitted the state of his nature, when he has begun to proceed; or that he finds a station for which he was not intended, while, like other animals, he only follows the disposition, and employs the powers that nature has given.

The latest efforts of human invention are but a continuation of certain devices which were practised in the earliest ages of the world, and in the rudest state of mankind. What the savage projects, or observes, in the forest, are the steps which led nations, more advanced, from the architecture of the cottage to that of the palace, and conducted the human mind from the perceptions of sense, to the general conclusions of science.

Acknowledged defects are to man in every condition matter of dislike. Ignorance and imbecility are objects of contempt: penetration and conduct give eminence and procure esteem. Whither should his feelings and apprehensions on these subjects lead him? To a progress, no doubt, in which the savage, as well as the philosopher, is engaged; in which they have made different advances, but in which their ends are the same. The admiration which Cicero entertained for literature, eloquence, and civil accomplishments, was not more real than that of a Scythian for such a measure of similar endowments as his own apprehension could reach. "Were I to boast," says a Tartar prince, [Footnote: Abulgaze Bahadur Chan; History of the Tartars.] "it would be of that wisdom I have received from God. For as, on the one hand, I yield to none in the conduct of war, in the disposition of armies, whether of horse or of foot, and in directing the movements of great or small bodies; so, on the other, I have my talent in writing, inferior perhaps only to those who inhabit the great cities of Persia or India. Of other nations, unknown to me, I do not speak."

Man may mistake the objects of his pursuit; he may misapply his industry, and misplace his improvements: If, under a sense of such possible errors, he would find a standard by which to judge of his own proceedings, and arrive at the best state of his nature, he cannot find it perhaps in the practice of any individual; or of any nation whatever; not even in the sense of the majority, or the prevailing opinion of his kind. He must look for it in the

best conceptions of his understanding, in the best movements of his heart; he must thence discover what is the perfection and the happiness of which he is capable. He will find, on the scrutiny, that the proper state of his nature, taken in this sense, is not a condition from which mankind are for ever removed, but one to which they may now attain; not prior to the exercise of their faculties, but procured by their just application.

Of all the terms that we employ in treating of human affairs, those of *natural* and *unnatural* are the least determinate in their meaning. Opposed to affectation, frowardness, or any other defect of the temper or character, the natural is an epithet of praise; but employed to specify a conduct which proceeds from the nature of man, can serve to distinguish nothing; for all the actions of men are equally the result of their nature. At most, this language can only refer to the general and prevailing sense or practice of mankind; and the purpose of every important enquiry on this subject may be served by the use of a language equally familiar and more precise. What is just, or unjust? What is happy or wretched, in the manners of men? What, in their various situations, is favourable or adverse to their amiable qualities? are questions to which we may expect a satisfactory answer; and whatever may have been the original state of our species, it is of more importance to know the condition to which we ourselves should aspire, than that which our ancestors may be supposed to have left.

SECTION II. OF THE PRINCIPLES OF SELF PRESERVATION.

If in human nature there are qualities by which it is distinguished from every other part of the animal creation, this nature itself is in different climates and in different ages greatly diversified. The varieties merit our attention, and the course of every stream into which this mighty current divides, deserves to be followed to its source. It appears necessary, however, that we attend to the universal qualities of our nature, before we regard its varieties, or attempt to explain differences consisting in the unequal possession or application of dispositions and powers that are in some measure common to all mankind.

Man, like the other animals, has certain instinctive propensities, which; prior to the perception of pleasure or pain, and prior to the experience of what is pernicious or useful, lead him to perform many functions which terminate in himself, or have a relation to his fellow creatures. He has one set of dispositions which tend to his animal preservation, and to the continuance of his race; another which lead to society, and by inlisting him on the side of one tribe or community, frequently engage him in war and contention with the rest of mankind. His powers of discernment, or his intellectual faculties, which, under the appellation of *reason*, are distinguished from the analogous endowments of other animals, refer to the objects around him, either as they are subjects of mere knowledge, or as they are subjects of approbation or censure. He is formed not only to know, but likewise to admire and to contemn; and these proceedings of his mind have a principal

reference to his own character, and to that of his fellow creatures, as being the subjects on which he is chiefly concerned to distinguish what is right from what is wrong. He enjoys his felicity likewise on certain fixed and determinate conditions; and either as an individual apart, or as a member of civil society, must take a particular course, in order to reap the advantages of his nature. He is, withal, in a very high degree susceptible of habits; and can, by forbearance or exercise, so far weaken, confirm, or even diversify his talents, and his dispositions, as to appear, in a great measure, the arbiter of his own rank in nature, and the author of all the varieties which are exhibited in the actual history of his species. The universal characteristics, in the mean time, to which we have now referred, must, when we would treat of any part of this history, constitute the first subject of our attention; and they require not only to be enumerated, but to be distinctly considered.

The dispositions which tend to the preservation of the individual, while they continue to operate in the manner of instinctive desires; are nearly the same in man that they are in the other animals; but in him they are sooner or later combined with reflection and foresight; they give rise to his apprehensions on the subject of property, and make him acquainted with that object of care which he calls his interest. Without the instincts which teach the beaver and the squirrel, the ant and the bee, to make up their little hoards for winter, at first improvident, and where no immediate object of passion is near, addicted to sloth, he becomes, in process of time, the great storemaster among animals. He finds in a provision of wealth, which he is probably never to employ, an object of his greatest solicitude, and the principal idol of his mind. He apprehends a relation between his person and his property, which renders what he calls his own in a manner a part of himself, a constituent of his rank, his condition, and his character; in which, independent of any real enjoyment, he

may be fortunate or unhappy; and, independent of any personal merit, he may be an object of consideration or neglect; and in which he may be wounded and injured, while his person is safe, and every want of his nature is completely supplied.

In these apprehensions, while other passions only operate occasionally, the interested find the object of their ordinary cares; their motive to the practice of mechanic and commercial arts; their temptation to trespass on the laws of justice; and, when extremely corrupted, the price of their prostitutions, and the standard of their opinions on the subject of good and of evil. Under this influence, they would enter, if not restrained by the laws of civil society, on a scene of violence or meanness, which would exhibit our species, by turns, under an aspect more terrible and odious, or more vile and contemptible, than that of any animal which inherits the earth.

Although the consideration of interest is founded on the experience of animal wants and desires, its object is not to gratify any particular appetite, but to secure the means of gratifying all; and it imposes frequently a restraint on the very desires from which it arose, more powerful and more severe than those of religion or duty. It arises from the principles of self preservation in the human frame; but is a corruption, or at least a partial result, of those principles, and is upon many accounts very improperly termed *self-love*.

Love is an affection which carries the attention of the mind beyond itself, and is the sense of a relation to some fellow creature as to its object. Being a complacency and a continued satisfaction in this object, it has, independent of any external event, and in the midst of disappointment and sorrow, pleasures and triumphs unknown to those who are guided by mere considerations of interest; in every change of condition, it continues entirely distinct from the sentiments which we feel on the subject of personal

success or adversity. But as the care a man entertains for his own interest, and the attention his affection makes him pay to that of another, may have similar effects, the one on his own fortune, the other on that of his friend, we confound the principles from which he acts; we suppose that they are the same in kind, only referred to different objects; and we not only misapply the name of love, in conjunction with self, but, in a manner tending to degrade our nature, we limit the aim of this supposed selfish affection to the securing or accumulating the constituents of interest, of the means of mere animal life.

It is somewhat remarkable, that notwithstanding men value themselves so much on qualities of the mind, on parts, learning, and wit, on courage, generosity, and honour, those men are still supposed to be in the highest degree selfish or attentive to themselves, who are most careful of animal life, and who are least mindful of rendering that life an object worthy of care. It will be difficult, however, to tell why a good understanding, a resolute and generous mind, should not, by every man in his senses, be reckoned as much parts of himself, as either his stomach or his palate, and much more than his estate or his dress. The epicure, who consults his physician, how he may restore his relish for food, and, by creating an appetite, renew his enjoyment, might at least with an equal regard to himself, consult how he might strengthen his affection to a parent or a child, to his country or to mankind; and it is probable that an appetite of this sort would prove a source of enjoyment not less than the former.

By our supposed selfish maxims, notwithstanding, we generally exclude from among the objects of our personal cares, many of the happier and more respectable qualities of human nature. We consider affection and courage as mere follies, that lead us to neglect, or expose ourselves; we make wisdom consist in a regard to our interest; and

without explaining what interest means, we would have it understood as the only reasonable motive of action with mankind. There is even a system of philosophy founded upon tenets of this sort, and such is our opinion of what men are likely to do upon selfish principles, that we think it must have a tendency very dangerous to virtue. But the errors of this system do not consist so much in general principles, as in their particular applications; not so much in teaching men to regard themselves, as in leading them to forget, that their happiest affections, their candour, and their independence of mind, are in reality parts of themselves. And the adversaries of this supposed selfish philosophy, where it makes self-love the ruling passion with mankind, have had reason to find fault, not so much with its general representations of human nature, as with the obtrusion of a mere innovation in language for a discovery in science.

When the vulgar speak of their different motives, they are satisfied with ordinary names, which refer to known and obvious distinctions. Of this kind are the terms *benevolence* and *selfishness*, by the first of which they express their friendly affections, and by the second their interest. The speculative are not always satisfied with this proceeding; they would analyze, as well as enumerate the principles of nature; and the chance is, that, merely to gain the appearance of something new, without any prospect of real advantage, they will attempt to change the application of words. In the case before us, they have actually found, that benevolence is no more than a species of self-love; and would oblige us, if possible, to look out for a new set of names, by which we may distinguish the selfishness of the parent when he takes care of his child, from his selfishness when he only takes care of himself. For, according to this philosophy, as in both cases he only means to gratify a desire of his own, he is in both cases equally selfish. The term *benevolent*, in the mean time, is not employed to

characterize persons who have no desires of their own, but persons whose own desires prompt them to procure the welfare of others. The fact is, that we should need only a fresh supply of language, instead of that which by this seeming discovery we should have lost, in order to make our reasonings proceed as they formerly did. But it is certainly impossible to live and to act with men, without employing different names to distinguish the humane from the cruel, and the benevolent from the selfish.

These terms have their equivalents in every tongue; they were invented by men of no refinement, who only meant to express what they distinctly perceived, or strongly felt. And if a man of speculation should prove, that we are selfish in a sense of his own, it does not follow that we are so in the sense of the vulgar; or, as ordinary men would understand his conclusion, that we are condemned in every instance to act on motives of interest, covetousness, pusillanimity, and cowardice; for such is conceived to be the ordinary import of selfishness in the character of man.

An affection or passion of any kind is sometimes said to give us an interest in its object; and humanity itself gives an interest in the welfare of mankind. This term *interest*, which commonly implies little more than our property, is sometimes put for utility in general, and this for happiness; insomuch, that, under these ambiguities, it is not surprising we are still unable to determine, whether interest is the only motive of human action, and the standard by which to distinguish our good from our ill.

So much is said in this place, not from a desire to partake in any such controversy, but merely to confine the meaning of the term *interest* to its most common acceptation, and to intimate a design to employ it in expressing those objects of care which refer to our external condition, and the preservation of our animal nature. When taken in this sense, it will not surely be thought to comprehend at once all the motives of human conduct. If men be not allowed to

have disinterested benevolence, they will not be denied to have disinterested passions of another kind. Hatred, indignation, and rage, frequently urge them to act in opposition to their known interest, and even to hazard their lives, without any hopes of compensation in any future returns of preferment or profit.

SECTION III. OF THE PRINCIPLES OF UNION AMONG MANKIND.

Mankind have always wandered or settled, agreed or quarrelled, in troops and companies. The cause of their assembling, whatever it be, is the principle of their alliance or union.

In collecting the materials of history, we are seldom willing to put up with our subject merely as we find it. We are loth to be embarrassed with a multiplicity of particulars, and apparent inconsistencies. In theory we profess the investigation of general principles; and in order to bring the matter of our inquiries within the reach of our comprehension, are disposed to adopt any system. Thus, in treating of human affairs, we would draw every consequence from a principle of union, or a principle of dissention. The state of nature is a state of war, or of amity, and men are made to unite from a principle of affection, or from a principle of fear, as is most suitable to the system of different writers. The history of our species indeed abundantly shows, that they are to one another mutual objects both of fear and of love; and they who would prove them to have been originally either in a state of alliance, or of war, have arguments in store to maintain their assertions. Our attachment to one division, or to one sect, seems often to derive much of its force from an animosity conceived to an opposite one: and this animosity in its turn, as often arises from a zeal in behalf of the side we espouse, and from a desire to vindicate the rights of our party.

"Man is born in society," says Montesquieu, "and there he remains." The charms that detain him are known to be

manifold. Together with the parental affection, which, instead of deserting the adult, as among the brutes, embraces more close, as it becomes mixed with esteem, and the memory of its early effects; we may reckon a propensity common to man and other animals, to mix with the herd, and, without reflection, to follow the crowd of his species. What this propensity was in the first moment of its operation, we know not; but with men accustomed to company, its enjoyments and disappointments are reckoned among the principal pleasures or pains of human life. Sadness and melancholy are connected with solitude; gladness and pleasure with the concourse of men. The track of a Laplander on the snowy shore, gives joy to the lonely mariner; and the mute signs of cordiality and kindness which are made to him, awaken the memory of pleasures which he felt in society. In fine, says the writer of a voyage to the North, after describing a mute scene of this sort, "We were extremely pleased to converse with men, since in thirteen months we had seen no human creature." [Footnote: Collection of Dutch voyages.]

But we need no remote observation to confirm this position: the wailings of the infant, and the languors of the adult, when alone; the lively joys of the one, and the cheerfulness of the other, upon the return of company, are a sufficient proof of its solid foundations in the frame of our nature.

In accounting for actions we often forget that we ourselves have acted; and instead of the sentiments which stimulate the mind in the presence of its object, we assign as the motives of conduct with men, those considerations which occur in the hours of retirement and cold reflection. In this mood frequently we can find nothing important, besides the deliberate prospects of interest; and a great work, like that of forming society, must in our apprehension arise from deep reflections, and be carried on with a view to the advantages which mankind derive from commerce and mutual support.

But neither a propensity to mix with the herd, nor the sense of advantages enjoyed in that condition, comprehend all the principles by which men are united together. Those bands are even of a feeble texture, when compared to the resolute ardour with which a man adheres to his friend, or to his tribe, after they have for some time run the career of fortune together. Mutual discoveries of generosity, joint trials of fortitude redouble the ardours of friendship, and kindle a flame in the human breast, which the considerations of personal interest or safety cannot suppress. The most lively transports of joy are seen, and the loudest shrieks of despair are heard, when the objects of a tender affection are beheld in a state of triumph or of suffering. An Indian recovered his friend unexpectedly on the island of Juan Fernandes: he prostrated himself on the ground, at his feet. "We stood gazing in silence," says Dampier, "at this tender scene." If we would know what is the religion of a wild American, what it is in his heart that most resembles devotion; it is not his fear of the sorcerer, nor his hope of protection from the spirits of the air or the wood: it is the ardent affection with which he selects and embraces his friend; with which he clings to his side in every season of peril; and with which he invokes his spirit from a distance, when dangers surprise him alone. [Footnote: Charlevoix, Hist. of Canada.]

Whatever proofs we may have of the social disposition of man in familiar and contiguous scenes, it is possibly of importance, to draw our observations from the examples of men who live in the simplest condition, and who have not learned to affect what they do not actually feel.

Mere acquaintance and habitude nourish affection, and the experience of society brings every passion of the human mind upon its side. Its triumphs and prosperities, its calamities and distresses, bring a variety and a force of emotion, which can only have place in the company of our fellow creatures. It is here that a man is made to forget his weakness, his cares of safety, and his subsistence; and to

act from those passions which make him discover his force. It is here he finds that his arrows fly swifter than the eagle, and his weapons wound deeper than the paw of the lion, or the tooth of the boar. It is not alone his sense of a support which is near, nor the love of distinction in the opinion of his tribe, that inspire his courage, or swell his heart with a confidence that exceeds what his natural force should bestow. Vehement passions of animosity or attachment are the first exertions of vigour in his breast; under their influence every consideration, but that of his object, is forgotten; dangers and difficulties only excite him the more.

That condition is surely favourable to the nature of any being, in which his force is increased; and if courage be the gift of society to man, we have reason to consider his union with his species as the noblest part of his fortune. From this source are derived, not only the force, but the very existence of his happiest emotions; not only the better part, but almost the whole of his rational character. Send him to the desert alone, he is a plant torn from his roots: the form indeed may remain, but every faculty droops and withers; the human personage and the human character cease to exist.

Men are so far from valuing society on account of its mere external conveniencies, that they are commonly most attached where those conveniencies are least frequent; and are there most faithful, where the tribute of their allegiance is paid in blood. Affection operates with the greatest force, where it meets with the greatest difficulties: in the breast of the parent, it is most solicitous amidst the dangers and distresses of the child; in the breast of a man, its flame redoubles where the wrongs or sufferings of his friend, or his country, require his aid. It is, in short, from this principle alone that we can account for the obstinate attachment of a savage to his unsettled and defenceless tribe, when temptations on the side of ease and of safety

might induce him to fly from famine and danger, to a station more affluent, and more secure. Hence the sanguine affection which every Greek bore to his country, and hence the devoted patriotism of an early Roman. Let those examples be compared with the spirit which reigns in a commercial state, where men may be supposed to have experienced, in its full extent, the interest which individuals have in the preservation of their country. It is here indeed, if ever, that man is sometimes found a detached and a solitary being: he has found an object which sets him in competition with his fellow creatures, and he deals with them as he does with his cattle and his soil, for the sake of the profits they bring. The mighty engine which we suppose to have formed society, only tends to set its members at variance, or to continue their intercourse after the bands of affection are broken.

SECTION IV. OF THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR AND DISSENTION.

"There are some circumstances in the lot of mankind," says Socrates, "that show them to be destined to friendship and amity: Those are, their mutual need of each other; their mutual compassion; their sense of mutual benefit; and the pleasures arising in company. There are other circumstances which prompt them to war and dissention; the admiration and the desire which they entertain for the same subjects; their opposite pretensions; and the provocations which they mutually offer in the course of their competitions."

When we endeavour to apply the maxims of natural justice to the solution of difficult questions, we find that some cases may be supposed, and actually happen, where oppositions take place, and are lawful, prior to any provocation, or act of injustice; that where the safety and preservation of numbers are mutually inconsistent, one party may employ his right of defence, before the other has begun an attack. And when we join with such examples, the instances of mistake, and misunderstanding, to which mankind are exposed, we may be satisfied that war does not always proceed from an intention to injure; and that even the best qualities of men, their candour, as well as their resolution, may operate in the midst of their quarrels.

There is still more to be observed on this subject. Mankind not only find in their condition the sources of variance and dissention; they appear to have in their minds the seeds of animosity, and to embrace the occasions of mutual opposition, with alacrity and pleasure. In the most

pacific situation, there are few who have not their enemies, as well as their friends; and who are not pleased with opposing the proceedings of one, as much as with favouring the designs of another. Small and simple tribes, who in their domestic society have the firmest union, are in their state of opposition as separate nations, frequently animated with the most implacable hatred. Among the citizens of Rome, in the early ages of that republic, the name of a foreigner, and that of an enemy, were the same. Among the Greeks, the name of Barbarian, under which that people comprehended every nation that was of a race, and spoke a language, different from their own, became a term of indiscriminate contempt and aversion. Even where no particular claim to superiority is formed, the repugnance to union, the frequent wars, or rather the perpetual hostilities which take place among rude nations and separate clans, discover how much our species is disposed to opposition, as well as to concert.

Late discoveries have brought to our knowledge almost every situation in which mankind are placed. We have found them spread over large and extensive continents, where communications are open, and where national confederacy might be easily formed. We have found them in narrower districts, circumscribed by mountains, great rivers, and arms of the sea. They have been found in small islands, where the inhabitants might be easily assembled, and derive an advantage from their union. But in all those situations, alike, they were broke into cantons, and affected a distinction of name and community. The titles of *fellow citizen* and *countrymen*, unopposed to those of *alien* and *foreigner*, to which they refer, would fall into disuse, and lose their meaning. We love individuals on account of personal qualities; but we love our country, as it is a party in the divisions of mankind; and our zeal for its interest, is a predilection in behalf of the side we maintain.