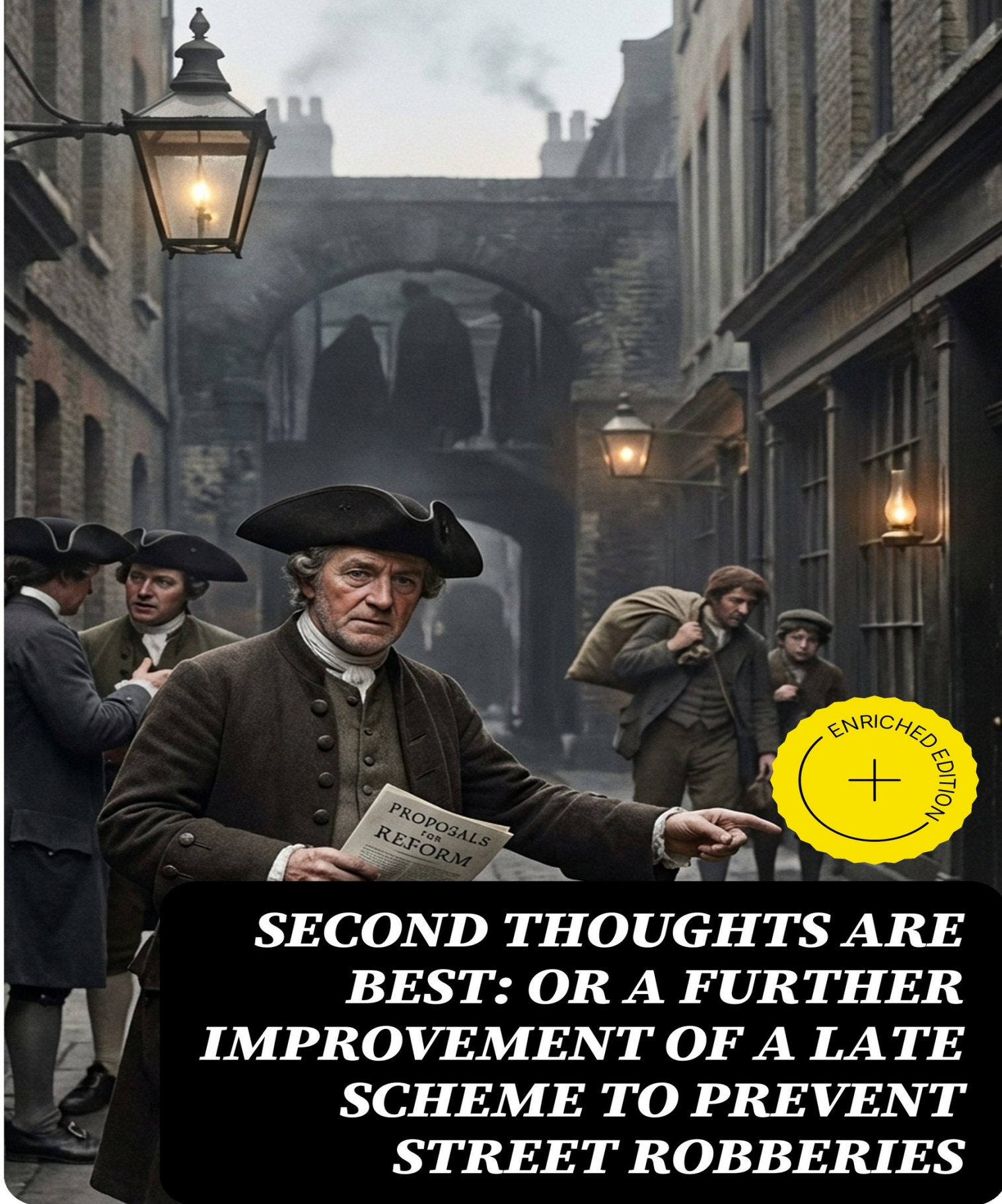


***DANIEL DEFOE***



***SECOND THOUGHTS ARE  
BEST: OR A FURTHER  
IMPROVEMENT OF A LATE  
SCHEME TO PREVENT  
STREET ROBBERIES***

Daniel Defoe

# Second Thoughts are Best: Or a Further Improvement of a Late Scheme to Prevent Street Robberies (Annotated)

**Enriched Edition. Public Safety Proposals for  
Eighteenth-Century London**

*In this **enriched edition**, we have carefully created added value for your reading experience.*

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Nolan Taylor*

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# Introduction

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In a city where darkness turns ordinary streets into arenas of fear, public safety becomes a test of conscience, authority, and ingenuity.

*Second Thoughts are Best: Or a Further Improvement of a Late Scheme to Prevent Street Robberies* is a short, sharply purposive work by Daniel Defoe, a writer whose nonfiction and fiction helped define the tone of early modern English prose. Although less famous than his major narratives, this pamphlet belongs to the body of Defoe's writing that made him a classic: alert to daily life, impatient with abstractions, and committed to arguments that move from observation to proposal with brisk momentum. Its classic status rests not on ornament but on influence—showing how persuasive, journalistic prose could shape public debate.

Defoe wrote during a period when London was rapidly expanding and public concerns about crime and disorder were widely discussed in print. He was a prolific commentator on trade, politics, morality, and social policy, and he often addressed urgent civic problems in compact, accessible forms. This text sits within that world of early eighteenth-century pamphleteering, where writers attempted to diagnose social ills and offer remedies intelligible to readers beyond learned specialists. The result is a work that reads like an intervention: quick, concrete, and aimed at effect rather than literary display.

The central premise is announced in the title itself. Defoe presents a “further improvement” to an earlier scheme

intended to prevent street robberies, reconsidering methods and tightening the practical logic of prevention. The pamphlet does not hinge on a plot but on a problem: how a community might reduce violent theft in public spaces without relying solely on after-the-fact punishment. Its interest lies in how Defoe frames prevention as a shared civic project, balancing what authorities can do with what ordinary residents might reasonably support or practice.

One reason the work endures is Defoe's ability to make social analysis feel immediate. He treats the street as both a physical setting and a moral landscape, where risk and responsibility intersect. His prose typically favors clear exposition, direct address, and a keen sense of how policy affects real people in motion—travelers, workers, and those simply trying to cross the city safely. In this pamphlet, the urgency of the subject keeps the argument taut, and the tone suggests a writer determined to be useful.

The pamphlet also reflects an early modern confidence that public problems can be approached through systematic thinking. Defoe's approach is recognizably modern in its emphasis on practical measures, the organization of resources, and the evaluation of what is likely to work. Yet it is also grounded in the moral vocabulary of his time, attentive to conduct, temptation, and the social conditions that make wrongdoing more or less probable. That mixture—pragmatic and ethical at once—helps explain why the text still resonates with readers interested in the history of policing and public order.

As literature, *Second Thoughts are Best* demonstrates the power of the pamphlet as a form. Defoe's sentences aim for speed and traction: they press forward, anticipate objections, and draw the reader into a shared problem-solving posture. The work's influence is less a matter of

direct imitation than of example. It shows how a writer could combine reportage-like attentiveness, argumentative structure, and civic purpose in a single piece—an approach that would nourish later traditions of social commentary and reform writing.

Its enduring themes extend beyond the specifics of street robbery. The pamphlet raises questions about fear and freedom in public spaces, about how societies justify new measures in the name of security, and about the relationship between private behavior and public outcomes. It also invites reflection on how communities decide what level of risk is tolerable and what interventions are proportionate. Because Defoe addresses these issues in terms of everyday experience, the text remains readable not only as a historical document but as a living debate.

Defoe's classic standing owes much to his ability to bridge genres, and this work benefits from that same versatility. Readers familiar with his narrative art will recognize the same instinct for concrete detail and the same drive to persuade by presenting plausible, worldly reasoning. Readers interested in history will find a vivid window onto the concerns of urban life in Defoe's England. The pamphlet thus occupies a productive middle ground: it is not merely a record, and not merely rhetoric, but a crafted piece of public-minded prose.

The title's emphasis on reconsideration points to one of the work's most attractive qualities: its willingness to revise, refine, and improve. Defoe treats policy not as a single grand gesture but as a process, where initial ideas can be corrected by experience and sharper thinking. That posture—valuing amendment over pride—gives the text a steady intellectual humility. Even when the argument is forceful,