THE
ELEMENTS
OF
Moral Philosophy.

IN THREE BOOKS.


2. The principal Distinguishing Duties of Duty or Virtue. Man's Duties to Himself.—To Society.—To God.

3. Of Practical Ethics, or the Culture of the Mind. Motives to Virtue from Personal Happiness.—From the Being and Providence of God.—From the Immortality of the Soul.

The Result, or Conclusion.

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LONDON:
Printed for R. and J. Dodsley in Pallmall.

MDCCLIV.
THE ELEMENTS OF
Moral PHILOSOPHY.

BOOK I.

PRELIMINARIES.

HUMAN Knowledge has been distributed by Philosophers into different Branches, and into more or fewer Divisions, according to the more or less extensive
extensive Views, which they have taken of the various Subjects of Human Enquiry.

A great Philosopher * has laid it out into three general Provinces, History, Poetry, and Philosophy; which he refers to three several Powers of the Mind, Memory, Imagination, and Reason. Memory fleshes up Facts, or Ideas, which are the Materials of Knowledge. Imagination ranges and combines them into different Assemblages or Pictures. Reason observes their Differences, Connections, and mutual Relations, and argues concerning them.

The left is the proper Business of Philosophy, which has been defined, the "Knowledge of whatsoever exists," or the "Science of Things Human and Divine." According to this Definition, its Object comprehends the Universe or Whole of Things. It traces whatever can be known by Man concerning the Deity and his Works, their Natures, Powers, Operations, and Connections.

Therefore to give our Definition more Precision, Philosophy may be defined, the Knowledge of

Knowledge of the Universe, or of Nature, and of its Powers, Operations and Connections, with just Reasonings deduced from thence. Natural Philosophy investigates the Properties and Operations of Body or Matter. Moral Philosophy contemplates Human Nature, its Moral Powers and Connections, and from these deduces the Laws of Action; and is defined more strictly the "Science of Manners or Duty, which it traces from Man's Nature and Condition, and shews "to terminate in his Happiness." Therefore it is called Ethics, Disciplina Morum. In fewer Words, it is the "Knowledge of "our Duty and Felicity, or the Art of "being virtuous and happy."

It is denominated an Art, as it contains a System of Rules for becoming virtuous and happy. Whoever practises these Rules, by so doing, attains an habitual Power and Facility of becoming virtuous and happy. It is likewise called a Science, as it deduces those Rules from the Principles and Connections of our Nature, and proves that the Obser-
vance of them is productive of our Happiness. It is an Art, and a Science of the highest Dignity, Importance, and Use. Its Object is Man's Duty, or his Conduct in the several Moral Capacities and Connections which he sustains. Its Office is to direct that Conduct, to shew whence our Obligations arise and where they terminate. Its Use, or End, is the Attainment of Happiness; and the Means it employs are Rules for the right Conduct of our Moral Powers.

As every Art and Science is more or less valuable, as it contributes more or less to our Happiness, this Moral Art or Science which unfolds our Duty and Happiness, must be a proper Canon or Standard, by which the Dignity and Importance of every other Art or Science are to be ascertained. It is therefore pre-eminent above all others; it is that Master-Art, that Master-Science, which weighs their respective Merits, adjusts their Rank in the Scale of Science, prescribes their Measures, and superintends their
their Efficacy and Application in Human Life. Therefore Moral Philosophy has been
honoured with the glorious Epithets of the Directress of Life, the Mistress of Manners, the
Invventress of Laws and Culture, the Guide to Virtue and Happiness, without
some degree of which Man were a Savage, and his Life a Scene of Barbarity
and Wretchedness.

Having thus settled the Subject and End
of the Science, the Elements of which
we are attempting to discover, and suf-
ciently distinguished it from all others, it
seems proper next to fix the
Method of prosecuting it. Mo-
ral Philosophy has this in com-
mon with Natural Philosophy, that it ap-
peals to Nature or Fact; depends on Ob-
servation, and builds its Reasonings on
plain controverted Experiments, or up-
on the fullest Induction of Particulars of
which the Subject will admit. We must
observe, in both these Sciences, Quid fac-
ciat & fierat Natura; how Nature is af-
fected, and what her Conduct is in such
and such Circumstances. Or in other
words, we must collect the Phenomena,
or Appearances of Nature in any given In-
stance; trace these to some General Prin-
ciples,
ciples, or Laws of Operation; and then apply these Principles or Laws to the explaining of other Phenomena.

Therefore Moral Philosophy enquires, not how Man might have been, but how he is constituted; not into what Principles, or Dispositions his Actions may be artfully resolved, but from what Principles and Dispositions they actually flow; not what he may, by Education, Habit, or foreign Influence, come to be, or do, but what by his Nature, or Original Constituent Principles he is formed to be and do. We discover the Office, Use or Destination of any Work, whether natural or artificial, by observing its Structure, the Parts of which it consists, their Connection or joint Action. It is thus we understand the Office and Use of a Watch, a Plant, an Eye, or Hand. It is the same with a Living Creature, of the Rational, or Brute Kind. Therefore to determine the Office, Duty, or Destination of Man, or in other words what his Business is, or what Conduct he is obliged to pursue, we must inspect his Constitution, take every Part to pieces, examine their mutual Relations one to the other, and the common Effort or Tendency of the Whole.

S E C-
SECTION I.
Of Man and his Connections.

IN giving a rude Sketch or History in Miniature of Man, we must remember that he rises from small Beginnings, unfolds his Faculties and Dispositions by degrees, as the Purposes of Life require their Appearance, advances slowly thro' different Stages to Maturity, and when he has reached it, gradually declines till he sinks into the Grave. Let us accompany him in his Progress through these Successive Stages, and mark the Principles which actuate, and the Fortunes which attend him in each, that we may have a full View of him in each.

Man is born a weak, helpless, delicate Creature, unprotected with Food, Cloathing, and whatever else is necessary for Subsistence, or Defence. And yet, exposed as the Infant is to numberless Wants and Dangers, he is utterly incapable of supplying the former, or securing himself against the latter. But though thus feeble

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