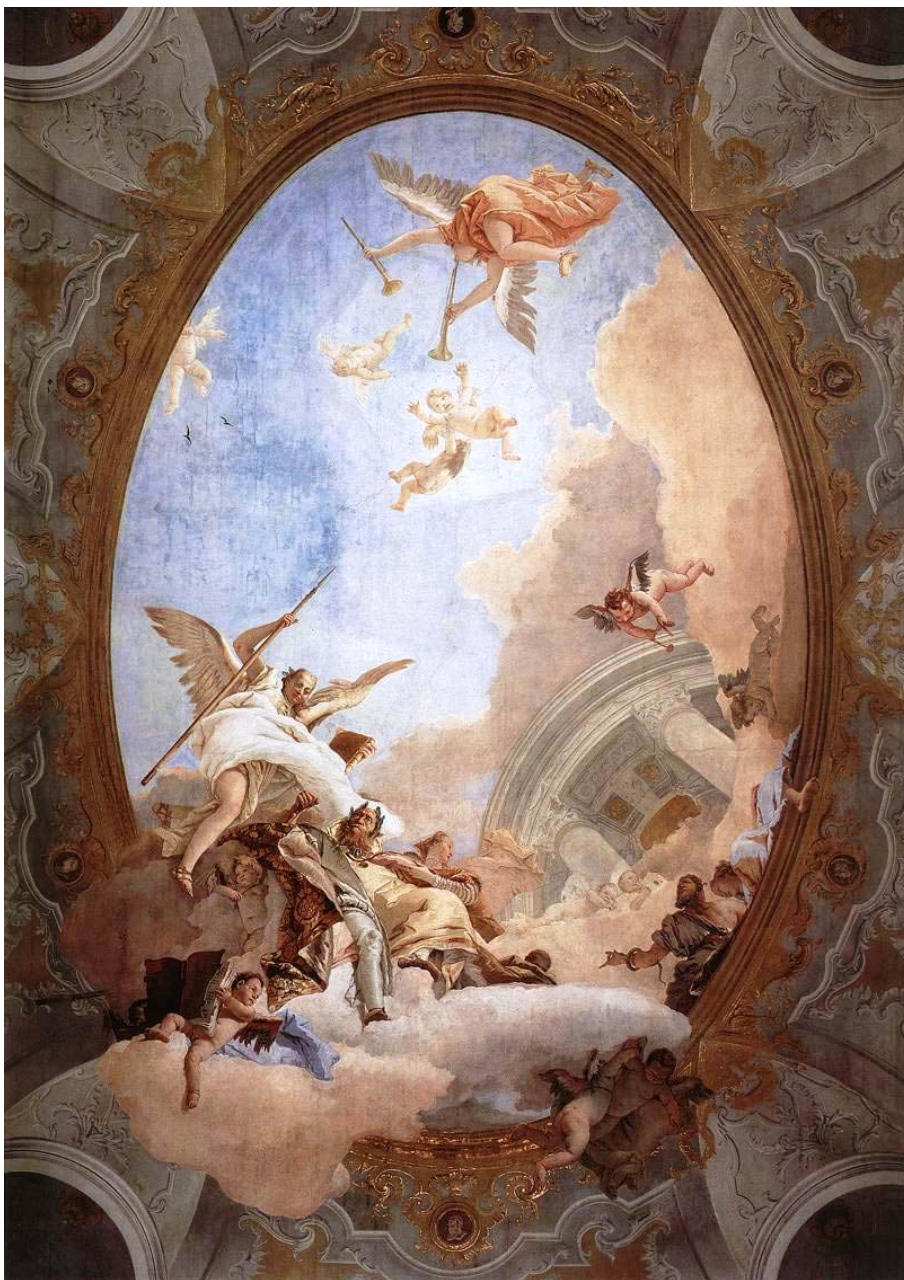


Plutarch's Morals

On Moral Virtue

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Allegory of Merit accompanied by Nobility and Virtue (1757-58)
By Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Museo del Settecento Veneziano, Ca' Rezzonico



Train of thought

- Plan of the Essay.
- Opinions of philosophers: of Menedemus, Ariston, Zeno, Chrysippus.
- Opinion of Plato; of Aristotle.
- The soul has a twofold nature.
- It is composed of intellect or reason, and the passions.
- The reason and an intelligent judgment must govern.
- The passions by long training becoming subject to the reason, the result is moral virtue.
- Science and Prudence, what, and their objects.
- How science and prudence differ.
- Prudence has need of deliberation.
- It corrects the excesses and defects of passion.
- Moral virtue is the mean between excess and defect.
- Yet it needs the ministry of the passions.
- Mean and mediocrity not the same thing.
- The idea further illustrated.
- Continence distinguished from temperance.
- Incontinence and intemperance.
- Illustrations.
- Moral virtue is firm and immovable.
- The passions are subject to frequent and sudden changes.
- When reason is overborne by passion, there is a sense of guilt.
- Reason is not at variance with itself.
- The soul is at peace, where passion does not interpose.
- Reason tends to what is true and just.
- Reason, left to itself, embraces the truth.
- It is often hindered by passion.
- Reason and passion often divide the soul.
- They often harmonize and concur.
- Some philosophers affirm that reason and passion do not materially differ.
- Their opinions controverted.
- Their improper use of term.



- The passions differ with their occasions.
- Men may mistake in their judgments.
- The passions, deriving their strength from the body, are powerful in the young.
- The state of the body corresponds with the state of the passions.
- We should not seek to exterminate the passions, but to regulate and control them.
- The passions have their proper use.
- These considerations are of importance in the government of States, and in the education of the young.

1 My design in this essay is to treat of that virtue which is called and accounted moral, and is chiefly distinguished from the contemplative, in its having for the matter thereof the passions of the mind, and for its form, right reason; and herein to consider the nature of it and how it subsists, and whether that part of the soul wherein it resides be endowed with reason of its own, inherent in itself, or whether it participates of that which is foreign; and if the latter, whether it does this after the manner of those things which are mingled with what is better than themselves, or whether, as being distinct itself but yet under the dominion and superintendency of another, it may be said to partake of the power of the predominant faculty. For that it is possible for virtue to exist and continue altogether independent of matter, and free from all mixture, I take to be most manifest. But in the first place I conceive it may be very useful briefly to run over the opinions of other philosophers, not so much for the vanity of giving an historical account thereof, as that, they being premised, ours may thence receive the greater light and be more firmly established.

2 To begin then with Menedemus of Eretria, he took away both the number and the differences of virtue, by asserting it to be but one, although distinguished by several names; holding that, in the same manner as a mortal and a man are all one, so what we call temperance, fortitude, and justice are but one and the same thing. As for Ariston of Chios, he likewise made virtue to be but one in substance, and called it sanity, which, as it had respect to this or that, was to be variously multiplied and distinguished; just after the same manner as if any one should call our sight, when applied to any white object, by the name of white-look; when to one that is black, by the name of black-look; and so in other matters. For according to him, virtue, when it considers such things as we ought to do or not to do, is called prudence; when it moderates our desires, and prescribes the measure and season for our pleasures, temperance; and when it governs the commerce and mutual contracts of mankind, justice; — in the same manner, for instance, as a knife is one and the same knife still, notwithstanding sometimes it cuts one thing, sometimes another, and just as fire does operate upon different matter, and yet retain the very same nature. Unto which opinion it seems also as if Zeno the Citian did in some measure incline; he defining prudence, while it distributes to every man his own, to be justice; when it teaches what we are to choose and what to reject or avoid, temperance; and with re-



spect to what is to be borne or suffered, fortitude. But it is to be observed, that they who take upon them the defence of Zeno's notions do suppose him to mean science by what he calls prudence. But then Chrysippus, whilst he imagined from every distinct quality a several and peculiar virtue to be formed, before he was aware, raised (as Plato hath it) a whole swarm of virtues never before known or used among the philosophers. For as from brave he derived bravery; from mild, mildness; and from just, justice; so from pleasant he fetched pleasantness; from good, goodness; from grand, grandeur; and from honest, honesty; placing these and all kind of dexterous application of discourse, all kind of facetiousness of conversation, and all witty turns of expression in the number of virtues, thereby over-running philosophy, which requires nothing less, with a multitude of uncouth, absurd, and barbarous terms.

3 However, all these do commonly agree in this one thing, in supposing virtue to be a certain disposition and faculty of the governing and directive part of the soul, of which reason is the cause; or rather to be reason itself, when it consents to what it ought, and is firm and immutable. And they do likewise think, that that part of the soul which is the seat of the passions, and is called brutal or irrational, is not at all distinct by any physical difference from that which is rational; but that this part of the soul (which they call rational and directive), being wholly turned about and changed by its affections and by those several alterations which are wrought in it with respect either to habit or disposition, becometh either vice or virtue, without having any thing in itself that is really brutal or irrational, but is then called brutal or irrational, when by the over-ruling and prevailing violence of our appetites it is hurried on to something absurd and vicious, against the judgment of reason. For passion, according to them, is nothing else but depraved and intemperate reason, that through a perverse and vicious judgment is grown over-vehement and headstrong.

Now, it seems to me, all these philosophers were perfect strangers to the clearness and truth of this point, that we every one of us are in reality twofold and compound. For, discerning only that composition in us which of the two is most evident, namely that of the soul and body, of the other they knew nothing at all. And yet that in the soul itself also there is a certain composition of two dissimilar and distinct natures, the brutal part whereof, as another body, is necessarily and physically compounded with and conjoined to reason, was, it should seem, no secret to Pythagoras himself, — as some have guessed from his having introduced the study of music amongst his scholars, for the more easy calming and assuaging the mind, as well knowing that it is not in every part of it obedient and subject to precepts and discipline, nor indeed by reason only to be recovered and retrieved from vice, but requires some other kind of persuasives to co-operate with it, to dispose it to such a temper and gentleness as that it may not be utterly intractable and obstinate to the precepts of philosophy. And Plato very strongly and plainly, without the least hesitation, maintained that the soul of the universe is neither simple, uniform, nor uncompounded; but that being mixed, as it were, and made up of that which is always the same and of that which is otherwise, in some places it is continually governed and carried about after a uniform manner in one and the same powerful and predominant order, and in other places is divided into motions and circles, one contrary to the other, unsettled and fortuitous, — whence are derived the beginnings and generation of differences in



things. And so, in like manner, the soul of man, being a part or portion of that of the universe, and framed upon reasons and proportions answerable to it, cannot be simple and all of the same nature; but must have one part that is intelligent and rational, which naturally ought to have dominion over a man, and another which, being subject to passion, irrational, extravagant, and unbounded, stands in need of direction and restraint. And this last is again subdivided into two other parts; one whereof, being called corporeal, is called concupiscible, and the other, which sometimes takes part with this and sometimes with reason, and gives respectively to either of them strength and vigor, is called irascible. And that which chiefly discovers the difference between the one and the other is the frequent conflict of the intellect and reason with concupiscence and anger, it being the nature of things that are different amongst themselves to be oftentimes repugnant and disobedient to what is best of all.

These principles at first Aristotle seems most to have relied upon, as plainly enough appears from what he has written. Though afterwards he confounded the irascible and concupiscible together, by joining the one to the other, as if anger were nothing but a thirst and desire of revenge. However, to the last he constantly maintained that the sensual and irrational was wholly distinct from the intellectual and rational part of the soul. Not that it is so absolutely devoid of reason as those faculties of the soul which are sensitive, nutritive, and vegetative, and are common to us with brute beasts and plants; for these are always deaf to the voice of reason and incapable of it, and may in some sort be said to derive themselves from flesh and blood, and to be inseparably attached to the body and devoted to the service thereof; but the other sensual part, subject to the sudden efforts of the passions and destitute of any reason of its own, is yet nevertheless naturally adapted to hear and obey the intellect and judgment, to have regard to it, and to submit itself to be regulated and ordered according the rules and precepts thereof, unless it happen to be utterly corrupted and vitiated by pleasure, which is deaf to all instruction, and by a luxurious way of living.

4 As for those who wonder how it should come to pass, that that which is irrational in itself should yet become obsequious to the dictates of right reason, they seem to me not to have duly considered the force and power of reason, how great and extensive it is, and how far it is able to carry and extend its authority and command, not so much by harsh and arbitrary methods, as by soft and gentle means, which persuade more and gain obedience sooner than all the severities and violences in the world. For even the spirits, the nerves, bones, and other parts of the body are destitute of reason; but yet no sooner do they feel the least motion of the will, reason shaking (as it were), though never so gently, the reins, but all of them observe their proper order, agree together, and pay a ready obedience. As, for instance, the feet, if the impulse of the mind be to run, immediately betake themselves to their office; or if the motion of the will be for the throwing or lifting up of any thing, the hands in a moment fall to their business. And this sympathy or consent of the brutal faculties to right reason, and the ready conformity of them thereto, Homer has most admirably expressed in these verses:



In tears dissolved she mourns her consort's fate,
So great her sorrows, scarce her charms more great.
Her tears compassion in Ulysses move,
And fill his breast with pity and with love;
Yet artful he his passion secret keeps,
It rages in his heart; and there he inward weeps.
Like steel or ivory, his fixed eyeballs stand,
Placed by some statuary's skilful hand;
And when a gentle tear would force its way,
He hides it falling, or commands its stay.¹

Under such perfect subjection to his reason and judgment had he even his spirits, his blood, and his tears. A most evident proof of this matter we have also from hence, that our natural desires and motions are as soon repressed and quieted as we know we are either by reason or law forbidden to approach the fair ones we at the first view had so great a passion for; a thing which most commonly happens to those who are apt to fall in love at sight with beautiful women, without knowing or examining who they are; for no sooner do they afterwards find their error, by discovering the person with whose charms they were before captivated to be a sister or a daughter, but their flame is presently extinguished by the interposition of reason. And flesh and blood are immediately brought into order, and become obedient to the judgment. It often falls out likewise that, after we have eaten some kinds of meat or fish finely dressed, and by that means artificially disguised, with great pleasure and a very good stomach, at the first moment we understand they were either unclean, or unlawful and forbidden, our judgment being thereby shocked, we feel not only remorse and trouble in our mind, but the conceit reaches farther, and our whole frame is disordered by the nauseous qualms and vomitings thereby occasioned. I fear I should be thought on purpose to hunt after too far-fetched and youthful instances to insert in this discourse, if I should take notice of the lute, the harp, the pipe and flute, and such like musical instruments invented by art, and adapted to the raising or allaying of human passions; which, though they are void of life and sense, do yet most readily accommodate themselves to the judgment, to our passions and our manners, either indulging our melancholy, increasing our mirth, or feeding our wantonness, as we happen at that time to be disposed. And therefore it is reported of Zeno himself, that, going one day to the theatre to hear Amoebeus sing to the lute, he called to his scholars, Come, says he, let us go and learn what harmony and music the guts and sinews of beasts, nay even wood and bones are capable of, by the help of numbers, proportion, and order.

But to let these things pass, I would gladly know of them, whether, when they see domestic animals (as dogs, horses, or birds) by use, feeding, and teaching brought to so high a degree of perfection as that they shall utter articulately some senseful words, and by their motions, gestures, and all their actions, shall approve themselves governable, and become useful to us; and when also they find Achilles in Homer encouraging horses, as well as men, to battle; — whether, I say, after all this,

¹ *Odys.* XIX. 208.



they can yet make any wonder or doubt, whether those faculties of the mind to which we owe our anger, our desires, our joys, and our sorrows, be of such a nature that they are capable of being obedient to reason, and so affected by it as to consent and become entirely subject to it; considering especially that these faculties are not seated without us, or separated from us, or formed by any thing which is not in us, or hammered out by force and violence, but, as they have by nature their entire dependence upon the soul, so they are ever conversant and bred up with it, and also receive their final complement and perfection from use, custom, and practice. For this reason the Greeks very properly call manners *ῆθος*, *custom*; for they are nothing else, in short, but certain qualities of the irrational and brutal part of the mind, and hence by them are so named, in that this brutal and irrational part of the mind being formed and moulded by right reason, by long custom and use (which they call *ἔθος*), has these qualities or differences stamped upon it. Not that reason so much as attempts to eradicate our passions and affections, which is neither possible nor expedient, but only to keep them within due bounds, reduce them into good order, and so direct them to a good end; and thus to generate moral virtue, consisting not in a kind of insensibility, or total freedom from passions, but in the well-ordering our passions and keeping them within measure, which she effects by wisdom and prudence, bringing the faculties of that part of the soul where our affections and appetite are seated to a good habit. For these three things are commonly held to be in the soul, namely, a faculty or aptitude, passion, and habit. This aptitude or faculty then is the principle or very matter of passions; as for example, the power or aptitude to be angry, to be ashamed, to be confident and bold, or the like; passion is the actual exercise of that aptitude or faculty, as anger, shame, confidence, or boldness; and habit is the strength, firmness, and establishment of the disposition or faculty in the irrational part of the soul, gotten by continual use and custom, and which, according as the passions are well or ill governed by reason, becomes either virtue or vice.

5 But, forasmuch as philosophers do not make all virtue to consist in a mediocrity nor call it moral, to show the difference more clearly, it will be necessary to take our rise a little farther off. For of all things then in the universe, some do exist absolutely, simply, and for themselves only; others again relatively, for and with regard to us. Among those things which have an absolute and simple existence are the earth, the heavens, the stars, and the sea; and of such things as have their being relatively, with respect to us, are good and evil, things desirable and to be avoided, and things pleasant and hurtful. And seeing that both are the proper objects of reason, — while it considers the former, which are absolutely and for themselves, it is scientific and contemplative; and when the other, which have reference to us, it is deliberative and practical. And as the proper virtue in the latter case is prudence, in the former it is science. And between the one and the other, namely, between prudence and science, there is this difference. Prudence consists in a certain application and relation of the contemplative faculties of the soul to those which are practical, for the government of the sensual and irrational part, according to reason. To which purpose prudence has often need of Fortune; whereas neither of that nor of deliberation has science any occasion or want to attain its ends, forasmuch as it has nothing to consider but such things as remain always the same. For as a geometrician never deliberates about a triangle, whether all its three angles be equal to two right angles, because of that he



has a clear and distinct knowledge (and men use to deliberate about such things only as are sometimes in one state or condition and sometimes in another, and not of those which are always firm and immutable), so the mind, when merely contemplative, exercising itself about first principles and things permanent, such as retaining the same nature are incapable of mutation, has no room or occasion for deliberation. Whereas prudence, descending to actions full of error and confusion, is very often under the necessity of encountering with fortuitous accidents, and, in doubtful cases, of making use of deliberation, and, to reduce those deliberations into practice, of calling also to its assistance even the irrational faculties, which are (as it were) forcibly dragged to go along with it, and by that means to give a certain vigor or impetus to its determinations. For its determinations do indeed want something which may enliven and give them such an impetus. And moral virtue it is which gives an impetus or vigor to the passions; but at the same time reason, which accompanies that impetus, and of which it stands in great need, does so set bounds thereunto, that nothing but what is moderate appears, and that it neither outruns the proper seasons of action, nor yet falls short of them.

For the sensual faculties, where passions are seated, are subject to motions, some over-vehement, sudden, and quick, and others again too remiss, and more slow and heavy than is convenient. So that, though every thing we do can be good but in one manner, yet it may be evil in several; as there is but one single way of hitting the mark, but to miss it a great many, either by shooting over, or under, or on one side. The business therefore of practical reason, governing our actions according to the order of Nature, is to correct the excesses as well as the defects of the passions, by reducing them to a true mediocrity. For as, when through infirmity of the mind, effeminacy, fear, or laziness, the vehemence and keenness of the appetites are so abated that they are ready to sink and fall short of the good at which they are aimed and directed, there is then this practical reason at hand, exciting and rousing and pushing them onward; so, on the other hand, when it lashes out too far and is hurried beyond all measure, there also is the same reason ready to bring it again within compass and put a stop to its career. And thus, prescribing bounds and giving law to the motions of the passions, it produces in the irrational part of the soul these moral virtues (of which we now treat), which are nothing else but the mean between excess and defect. For it cannot be said that all virtue consists in mediocrity; since wisdom or prudence (one of the intellectual virtues), standing in no need of the irrational faculties, — as being seated in that part of the soul which is pure and unmixed and free from all passions, — is of itself absolutely perfect, the utmost extremity and power of reason, whereby we attain to that perfection of knowledge which is itself most divine and renders us most happy. Whereas moral virtue, which because of the body is so necessary to us, and, to put things in practice, stands in need of the instrumental ministry of the passions (as being so far from promoting the destruction and abolition of irrational powers, as to be altogether employed in the due regulation thereof), is, with respect to its power or quality, the very top and extremity of perfection; but, in respect of the proportion and quantity which it determines, it is mediocrity, in that it takes away all excess on the one hand, and cures all defects on the other.



6 Now mean and mediocrity may be differently understood. For there is one mean which is compounded and made up of the two simple extremes, as in colors, gray, of white and black; and another, where that which contains and is contained is the medium between the containing and the contained, as, for instance, the number eight, between twelve and four. And a third sort there is also, which participates of neither extreme, as for example, all those things which, as being neither good nor evil in themselves, we call adiaphorous, or indifferent. But in none of these ways can virtue be said to be a mean, or mediocrity. For neither is it a mixture of vices, nor, comprehending that which is defective and short, is it comprehended by that which runs out into excess; nor yet is it exempt from the impetuosity and sudden efforts of the passions, in which excess and defect do properly take place. But moral virtue properly doth consist in a mean or mediocrity (and so it is commonly taken), most like to that which there is in our Greek music and harmony. For, whereas there are the highest and lowest musical notes in the extremities of the scale called nete and hypate; so likewise is there in the middle thereof, between these two, another musical note, and that the sweetest of all, called mese (or mean), which does as perfectly avoid the extreme sharpness of the one as it doth the over-flatness of the other. And so also virtue, being a motion and power which is exercised about the brutal and irrational part of the soul, takes away the remission and intention — in a word, the excess and defect — of the appetites, reducing thereby every one of the passions to a due mediocrity and perfect state of rectitude.

For example, fortitude is said to be the mean between cowardice and rashness, whereof the one is a defect, as the other is an excess of the irascible faculty; liberality, between sordid parsimony on the one hand, and extravagant prodigality on the other; clemency between insensibility of injuries and its opposite, revengeful cruelty; and so of justice and temperance; the former being the mean between giving and distributing more or less than is due in all contracts, affairs, and business between man and man, and the latter a just mediocrity between a stupid apathy, touched with no sense or relish of pleasure, and dissolute softness, abandoned to all manner of sensualities.

And from this instance of temperance it is, that we are most clearly given to understand the difference between the irrational and the rational faculties of the soul, and that it so plainly appears to us that the passions and affections of the mind are quite a distinct thing from reason. For otherwise never should we be able to distinguish continence from temperance, nor incontinence from intemperance, in lust and pleasures, if it were one and the same faculty of the soul wherewith we reason and judge, and whereby we desire and covet. Now temperance is that whereby reason governs and manages that part of the soul which is subject to the passions (as it were some wild creature brought up by hand, and made quite tame and gentle), having gained an absolute victory over all its appetites, and brought them entirely under the dominion of it. Whereas we call it continence, when reason has indeed gained the mastery over the appetites and prevailed against them, though not without great pains and trouble, they being perverse and continuing to struggle, as not having wholly submitted themselves; so that it is not without great difficulty able to preserve its government over them, being forced to retain and hold them in, and keep them within compass, as it were, with stripes, with the bit and bridle, while the mind all



the time is full of nothing but agony, contentions, and confusion. All which Plato endeavors to illustrate by a similitude of the chariot-horses of the soul, the one whereof, being more unruly, not only kicks and flings at him that is more gentle and tractable, but also thereby so troubles and disorders the driver himself, that he is forced sometimes to hold him hard in, and sometimes again to give him his head,

Lest from his hands the purple reins should slip,
as Simonides speaks.

And from hence we may see why continence is not thought worthy to be placed in the number of perfect virtues, but is taken to be a degree under virtue. For there is not therein produced a mediocrity arising from a symphony of the worst with the better, nor are the excesses of the passions retrenched; nor yet doth the appetite become obedient and subservient to the reasonable faculties, but it both makes and feels disorder and disturbance, being repressed by violence and constraint, and (as it were) by necessity; as in a sedition or faction in a city or state, the contending parties, breathing nothing but war and destruction and ruin to one another, do yet cohabit together (it may be) within the compass of the same walls; insomuch that the soul of the incontinent person, with respect to the conflicts and incongruities therein, may very properly be compared to the city,

Where all the streets are filled with incense smoke,
And songs of triumph mixed with groans resound.²

And upon the same grounds it is, that incontinence is held to be something less than vice also, but intemperance to be a complete and perfect vice, for therein not the appetite only but reason likewise is debauched and corrupted; and as the former incites and pushes forward the desires and affections to that which is evil, so this, by making an ill judgment, is easily led to consent and agree to the soft whispers and tempting allurements of corrupt lusts and passions, and soon loseth all sense of sin and evil. Whereas incontinence preserves the judgment, by the help of reason, right and sound; but yet, by irresistible force and violence of the passions, is even against judgment drawn away. Moreover, in these respects following it differeth also from intemperance: — inasmuch as reason in that is overpowered by passion, but in this it never so much as struggleth; the incontinent person, after a noble resistance, is at last forced to submit to the tyranny of his lusts, and follow their guidance, while the intemperate approves them, and gladly goes along with and submits to them; one feels remorse for the evil he commits, while the other prides in lewdness and vice. Again, the one wilfully and of his own accord runs into sin; while the other, even against his will, is forced to abandon that which is good.

And this difference between them is not to be collected only from their actions, but may as plainly also be discovered by their words. For at this rate do intemperate persons use to talk:

What mirth in life, what pleasure, what delight,
Without content in sports of Venus bright?

² Soph. *Oed. Tyr.* 4.



Were those joys past, and I for them unmeet,
Ring out my knell, bring forth my winding-sheet.³

And thus says another:

To eat, to drink, to wench are principal,
All pleasures else I accessories call;

as if from his very soul he were wholly abandoned and given up to pleasures and voluptuousness, and even overwhelmed therein. And much of the same mind was he, and his judgment was as totally depraved by his passions, who said,

Let me, ye dull and formal fops, alone,
I am resolved, 'tis best to be undone.

But quite another spirit do we find running through the sayings of the incontinent:

Blame Nature only for it, blame not me,
Would she permit, I then should virtuous be,⁴

says one of them. And again,

Ah! 'tis decreed by Fate. We know, 'tis true,
We know those virtues, which we ne'er pursue.⁵

And another,

What will my swelling passions' force assuage?
No more can I sustain this tempest's rage,
Than anchor's fluke, dropt on loose ground, a storm;

where not improperly he compares the fluke of an anchor dropped in loose ground to that ill-grounded, feeble, and irresolute reason, which by the vanity, weakness, and luxury of the mind is easily brought to forsake the judgment. And the like metaphor has the poet made use of happily enough in these verses:

To us, in ships moored near the shore who lie,
Though strong the cables, when the winds rise high
Cables will prove but small security;

where by the cables the poet means the judgment opposing itself against all that is evil or dishonest, which is, however, oftentimes disturbed and broken by violent and sudden gusts of the passions. For, indeed, the intemperate are borne away directly and with full sail to their pleasures; to them they deliver up themselves entirely, and thither it is they bend their whole course. While the incontinent, indirectly only, as endeavoring to sustain and repel the assaults of the passions and withstand their temptations, either is allured and as it were slides into evil, or else is plunged violently into it whether he will or no. As Timon, in his bitter way of raillery, reproaches Anaxarchus,

³ From Mimnermus.

⁴ From the *Chrysisippus* of Euripides, Frag. 837 and 838.

⁵ *Ibid.*



When first the dogged Anaxarchus strove
The power of virtue o'er his mind to prove,
Firm though he seemed, and obstinately good,
In vain th' impulse of temper he withstood.
Nature recoiled, whatever he could do;
He saw those ills, which yet he did pursue;
In this not single, other sophists too
Felt the same force, which they could ne'er subdue.

And neither is a wise man continent, but temperate; nor a fool incontinent, but intemperate; the one taking true pleasure and delight in good, the other having no displeasure against evil. And therefore incontinence is said to be found only in a mind which is sophistical (or which barely makes a show of being governed and directed by prudence), and which has indeed the use of reason, but in so weak and faint a manner, that it is not able to persevere in that which it knows to be right.

7 Thus we have seen the diversity between incontinence and intemperance. And as for continence and temperance, their differences are analogous, and bear proportion to those of the other, but in contrary respects. For remorse, grief, and indignation do always accompany continence; whereas in the mind of a temperate person there is all over such an evenness, calmness, and firmness, that, seeing with what wonderful easiness and tranquillity the irrational faculties go along with reason and submit to its directions, one cannot but call to mind that of the poet:

Swift the command ran through the raging deep;
Th' obedient waves compose themselves to sleep;⁶

reason having quite deadened and repressed the vehement raging and furious motions of the passions and affections. But those whose assistance Nature necessarily requires are by reason rendered so agreeable and consenting, so submissive, friendly, and co-operative in the execution of all good designs and purposes, that they neither outrun it, nor recede from it, nor behave themselves disorderly, nor ever show the least disobedience; but every appetite willingly and cheerfully pursues its dictates,

As sucking foal runs by his mother mare.

Which very much confirms what was said by Xenocrates of those who are true philosophers, namely, that they alone do that voluntarily which all others do against their wills for fear of the laws; being diverted and restrained from the pursuit of their pleasures, as a dog is frightened by a whipping or a cat scared by a noise, having regard to nothing else in the matter but their own danger.

It is manifest then from what has been discoursed, that the soul does perceive within itself something that is firm and immovable, totally distinct from its passions and appetites, these being what it does always oppose and is ever contending with. But some there are, nevertheless, who affirm that reason and passion do not materially differ from one another, and that there is not in the soul any faction, sedition, or dis-

⁶ *Odyss.* XII. 168.



sension of two several and contending faculties, but only a shifting, conversion, or alteration of the same reason or rational faculty from one side to the other, backward and forward, which, by reason of the suddenness and swiftness of the change, is not perceptible by us; and therefore, that we do not consider that the same faculty of the soul is by nature so adapted as to be capable of both concupiscence and repentance, of anger and of fear, of being drawn to the commission of any lewdness or evil by the allurements of pleasure, and afterwards of being again retrieved from it. And as for lust, anger, fear, and such like passions, they will have them to be nothing but perverse opinions and false judgments, not arising or formed in any inferior part of the soul, peculiarly belonging to them, but being the advances and returns, or the motions forward and backward, the good likenings and more vehement efforts, and (in a word) such operations and energies of the whole rational and directive faculty as are ready to be turned this way or that with the greatest ease imaginable; like the sudden motions and irruptions in children, the violence and impetuosity whereof, by reason of their imbecility and weakness, are very fleeting and inconstant.

But these opinions are against common sense and experience; for no man ever felt such a sudden change in himself, as that whenever he chose any thing he immediately judged it fit to be chosen, or that, on the other hand, whenever he judged any thing fit to be chosen he immediately made choice of it. Neither does the lover who is convinced by reason that his amour is fit to be broken off, and that he ought to strive against his passion, therefore immediately cease to love; nor on the other side doth he desist reasoning, and cease from being able to give a right judgment of things, even then, when, being softened and overcome by luxury, he delivers himself up a captive to his lusts. But as, while by the assistance of reason he makes opposition to the efforts of his passions, they yet continue to solicit, and at last overcome him; so likewise, when he is overcome and forced to submit to them, by the light of reason does he plainly discern and know that he has done amiss; so that neither by the passions is reason effaced and destroyed, nor yet by reason is he rescued and delivered from them; but, being tossed to and fro between the one and the other, he is a kind of neuter, and participates in common of them both. And those, methinks, who imagine that one while the directive and rational part of the soul is changed into concupiscence and lust, and that by and by reason opposes itself against them, and they are changed into that, are not much unlike them who make the sportsman and his game not to be two, but one body, which, by a nimble and dexterous mutation of itself, one while appears in the shape of the huntsman, and at another turn puts on the form of a wild beast. For as these in a plain evident matter seem to be stark blind, so they in the other case belie even their own senses, seeing they must needs feel in themselves not merely a change or mutation of one and the same thing, but a downright struggle and quarrel between two several and distinct faculties.

But is not, say they, the deliberative power or faculty of a man often divided in itself, and distracted among several opinions contrary to one another, about that which is expedient; and yet is but one, simple, uniform thing? All this we grant to be true; but it does not reach the case we are speaking of. For that part of the soul where reason and judgment are seated is not at variance with itself, but by one and the same faculty is conversant about different reasonings; or rather, there is but one simple power of reasoning, which employs itself on several arguments, as so many different



subject-matters. And therefore it is, that no disturbance or uneasiness accompanies those reasonings or deliberations, where the passions do not at all interpose. Nor are we at any time forced, as it were, to choose any thing contrary to the dictates of our own reason, but when, as in a balance, some lurking hidden passions lay something in the scale against reason to weigh it down. And this often falls out to be the case, where it is not reasoning that is opposed to reasoning, but either ambition, or emulation, or favor, or jealousy, or fear, making a show as if there were a variance or contest between two differing reasons, according to that of Homer,

Shame in denial, in acceptance fear;⁷

and of another poet,

Hard fate to fall, but yet a glorious fate;
'Tis cowardly to live, but yet 'tis sweet.

And in determining of controversies about contracts between man and man, it is by the interposition of the passions that so many disputes and delays are created. So likewise in the consultations and counsels of kings, they who design to make their court incline not to one side of the question or debate rather than the other, but only accommodate themselves to their own passions, without any regard to the interest of the public. Which is the reason that in aristocratical governments the magistrates will not suffer orators in their pleadings, by declaiming and haranguing, to raise the passions and move the affections. For reason, not being disturbed or diverted by passion, tends directly to that which is honorable and just; but if the passions are once raised, there immediately follows a mighty controversy and struggle between pleasure and grief on the one hand, and reason and judgment on the other. For otherwise how comes it to pass, that in philosophical disputes and disquisitions we so often and with so little trouble are by others drawn off from our own opinions and wrought upon to change them? — and that Aristotle himself, Democritus, and Chrysippus have without any concern or regret of mind, nay even with great satisfaction to themselves, retracted some of those points which they formerly so much approved of, and were wont so stiffly to maintain? For no passions residing in the contemplative and scientific part of the soul make any tumult or disturbance therein, and the irrational and brutal faculties remain quiet and calm, without busying themselves to intermeddle in matters of that kind. By which means it falls out, that reason no sooner comes within view of truth, but rejecting that which is false it readily embraces it; forasmuch as there is in the former what is not to be found in the other, namely, a willingness to assent and disagree as there is occasion; whereas in all deliberations had, judgments made, and resolutions taken about such things as are to be reduced into practice, and are mixed and interwoven with the passions and affections, reason meets with much opposition, and is put under great difficulties, by being stopped and interrupted in its course by the brutal faculties of the mind, throwing in its way either pleasure or fear or grief or lust, or some such like temptation or discouragement. And then the decision of these disputes belongs to sense, which is equally affected with both the one and the other; and whichever of them gets the

⁷ *Il.* VII. 93.



mastery, the other is not thereby destroyed, but (though struggling and resisting all the while) is forced only to comply and go along with the conqueror. As an amorous person, for example, finding himself engaged in an amour he cannot approve of, has immediately recourse to his reason, to oppose the force of that against his passion, as having them both together actually subsisting in his soul, plainly discerning them to be several and distinct, and feeling a sensible conflict between the two, while he endeavors (as it were) with his hand to repress and keep down the part which is inflamed and rages so violently within him. But, on the contrary, in those deliberations and disquisitions where the passions have nothing to do, such I mean as belong properly to the contemplative part of the soul, if the reasons are equally balanced, not inclining more to one side than another, then is there no determinate judgment formed, but there remains a doubting, as if there were a rest or suspense of the understanding between two contrary opinions. But if there happen to be any inclination or determination towards one side, that prevailing must needs get the better of the other, but without any regret or obstinate opposition from it against the opinion which is received. In short, whenever the contest seems to be of reason against reason, in that case we have no manner of sense of two distinct powers, but of one simple, uniform faculty only, under different apprehensions or imaginations; but when the dispute is between the irrational part and reason, where nature has so ordered it that neither the victory nor the defeat can be had without anxiety and regret, there immediately the two contending powers divide the soul in the quarrel, and thereby make the difference and distinction between them to be most plain and evident.

8 And not only from their contests, but no less also from the consequences that follow thereupon, may one clearly enough discern the source and original of the passions to be different from that of reason. For since a man may set his affection upon an ingenuous and virtuously disposed child, and no less also upon one that is naughty and dissolute, and since also one may have unreasonable and indecent transports of anger against his children or his parents, and on the contrary, may justly and unblamably be angry in their defence against their enemies and tyrants; as in the one case there is perceived a struggle and dispute of the passions against reason, so in the other may be seen a ready submission and agreement of them, running to its assistance, and lending as it were their helping hand. To illustrate this with a familiar example, — after a good man has in obedience to the laws married a convenient wife, he then in the first place comes to a resolution of conversing and cohabiting with her wisely and honestly, and of making at least a civil husband; but in process of time, custom and constant familiarity having bred within him a true passion for her, he sensibly finds that upon principles of reason his affection and love for her are every day more and more improved and grow upon him. So in like manner, young men having met with kind and gentle masters, to guide and inform their minds in the study of philosophy and sciences, make use of them at first for instruction only and information, but afterwards come to have such an affection for them, that from familiar companions and scholars they become their lovers and admirers, and are so accounted. And the same happens also to most men, with respect to good magistrates in the commonwealth, to their neighbors, and to their kindred; for, beginning an acquaintance upon necessity and interest, for the exchange of the common offices of intercourse and commerce with one another, they do afterwards by degrees, ere they



are aware, grow to have a love and friendship for them; reason in such and the like cases having over-persuaded and even compelled the passions to take delight in and pursue what it before had approved of and consented to. As for the poet who said,

Of modesty two kinds there be;
The one we cannot blame,
The other troubleth many a house,
And doth decay the same;⁸

doth he not plainly hereby intimate, that he had oftentimes found by experience that this affection of the mind, by a sheepish, shamefaced backwardness, and by foolishly bashful delays against all reason, had lost him the opportunities and seasons of making his fortune, and hindered and disappointed many brave actions and noble enterprises?

9 But these men, though by the force of these arguments sufficiently convinced, do yet seek for evasions, by calling shame by the name of modesty, pleasures by that of joy, and fear by that of caution. No man would go about to blame them for giving things the softest names they can invent, if they would be so just as to bestow these good words upon those passions and affections only which have put themselves under the conduct and direction of reason, and leave those which oppose reason and offer violence to it to be called by their own proper and odious names. But, when fully convinced by the tears they shed, by the trembling of their joints, and by their sudden changing of color back and forward, if instead of plainly calling the passions whereof these are the effects grief and fear, they make use of the fantastic terms of compunctions and conturbations, and to varnish over and disguise the lusts and affections, give them the name only of so many forwardnesses of mind, and I know not what else, they seem not to act like philosophers, but, relying upon little shifts and sophistical artifices, under an amusement of strange words, they vainly hope to cover and conceal the nature of things.

And yet even these men themselves sometimes make use of very proper terms to express these matters; as, for instance, when they call those joys, volitions, and cautions of theirs, not by the name of apathies, as if they were devoid of all manner of passions, but of eupathies. For then is there said to be an eupathy, or good disposition of the affections, when reason hath not utterly destroyed, but composed and adjusted them in the minds of discreet and temperate persons. But what then becomes of vicious and dissolute persons? Why, if they should judge it reasonable to love their parents, instead of a mistress or a gallant, are they unable to perform this; but should they judge it fitting to set their hearts upon a strumpet or a parasite, the judgment is no sooner made, but they are most desperately in love? Now were the passions and judgment one, it could not be but that the passions of love and hatred would immediately follow upon judgments made what to love and hate. But we see the contrary often happen; for the passions, as they submit to some resolutions and judgments, so others again they oppose themselves to, and refuse to comply with. Whence it is that, compelled thereto by truth and the evidence of things, they do not

⁸ Eurip. *Hippol.* 384.



affirm every judgment and determination of reason to be passion, but that only which excites too violent and inordinate an appetite; acknowledging thereby that the faculty we have in us of judging is quite another thing than that which is susceptible of the passions, as is that also which moveth from that which is moved. Nay, even Chrysippus himself, in many places defining patience and continence to be habits of submitting to and pursuing the choice and direction of right reason, doth thereby make it apparent that by the force of truth he was driven to confess that it is one thing in us which is obedient and submissive, but another and quite a different thing which it obeys when it submits, but resists when it does not submit.

10 Now, as for those who make all sins and faults to be equal, to examine whether in other matters they have not also departed from the truth is not at this time and in this place seasonable; since they seem not herein only, but in most things else, to advance unreasonable paradoxes against common sense and experience. For according to them, all our passions and affections are so many faults and whosoever grieves, fears, or desires, commits sin. But with their leave, nothing is more visible and apparent than the mighty difference in those and all other passions, according as we are more or less affected with them. For will any man say that the fear of Dolon was no more than that of Ajax, who, being forced to give way before the enemy,

Sometimes retreated back, then faced about,
And step by step retired at once, and fought?⁹

Or compare the grief of Plato for the death of Socrates to the sorrow and anguish of mind which Alexander felt, when, for having murdered Clitus, he attempted to lay violent hands upon himself. For our grief is commonly increased and augmented above measure by sudden and unexpected accidents. And that which surprises us on the sudden, contrary to our hope and expectation, is much more uneasy and grievous than that which is either foreseen, or not very unlikely to happen; as must needs fall out in the case of those who, expecting nothing more than to see the happiness, advancement, and glory of a friend or a kinsman, should hear of his being put to the most exquisite tortures, as Parmenio did of his son Philotas. And who will ever say that the anger of Magas against Philemon can bear any proportion to the rage of Nicocreon against Anaxarchus? The occasion given was in both cases the same, each of them having severally been bitterly reproached and reviled by the other. For whereas Nicocreon caused Anaxarchus to be broken to pieces and brayed in a mortar with iron pestles, Magas only commanded the executioner to lay the edge of the naked sword upon the neck of Philemon, and so dismissed him. And therefore Plato called anger the nerves of the mind; because, as it may swell and be made more intense by sourness and ill-nature, so may it be slackened and remitted by gentleness and good-nature.

But to elude these and such like objections, they will not allow these intense and vehement efforts of the passions to be according to judgment, or so to proceed from it as if that were therein faulty; but they call them cessations, contractions, and extensions or diffusions, which by the irrational part are capable of being increased or di-

⁹ *Il. XI. 547.*



minished. But that there are also differences of judgment is most plain and evident; for some there are who take poverty to be no evil at all, others who look upon it as a great evil, and others again who esteem it to be the greatest evil and worst thing in the world, insomuch that rather than endure it they would dash themselves in pieces against the rocks, or cast themselves headlong into the sea. And among those who reckon death to be an evil, some are of that opinion, in regard only that it deprives us of the enjoyment of the good things of the world, as others are with respect to the eternal torments and horrible punishments under ground in hell. As for bodily health, some love it no otherwise than as it is agreeable to Nature, and very convenient and useful; while others value it as the most sovereign good, in comparison whereof they make no reckoning of riches or children, no, nor of sceptres and crowns,

Which make men equal to the Gods above.

Nor will they, in fine, allow even virtue itself to signify any thing or be of any use, without good health. So that hence it sufficiently appears that, in the judgments men make of things, they may be mistaken and very faulty with respect to both the extremes of too much and too little; but I shall pursue this argument no farther in this place.

Thus much may, however, fairly be assumed from what has already been said on this head, that even they themselves do allow a plain difference between the judgment and the irrational faculties, by means whereof, they say, the passions become greater and more violent; and so, while they cavil and contend about names and words, they give up the very cause to those who maintain the irrational part of the soul, which is the seat of the passions, to be several and distinct from that faculty by which we reason and make a judgment of things. And indeed Chrysippus, in those books which he wrote of Anomology, — after he has told us that anger is blind, not discerning oftentimes those things which are plain and conspicuous, and as frequently casting a mist upon such things as were before clear and evident, — proceeds a little farther in this manner: For, says he, the passions, being once raised, not only reject and drive away reason and those things which appear otherwise than they would have them, but violently push men forward to actions that are contrary to reason. And then he makes use of the testimony of Menander, saying,

What have I done? Where has my soul been strayed?
Would she not stay to see herself obeyed,
But let me act what I abhorred but now?

And again the same Chrysippus a little after says: Every rational creature is by Nature so disposed as to use reason in all things, and to be governed by it; but yet oftentimes it falls out that we dispose and reject it, being carried away by another more violent and over-ruling motion. In these words he plainly enough acknowledges what uses in such a case to happen on account of the difference and contest between the passions and reason. And upon any other ground it would be ridiculous (as Plato says) to suppose a man to be sometimes better than himself, and sometimes again worse; one while to be his own master, and another while his own slave.



11 For how could it possibly be, that a man should be better and worse than himself, and at once both his own master and slave, if every one were not in some sort naturally double or twofold, having in himself at the same time a better part and a worse? For so may he be reckoned to have a power over himself and to be better than himself, who has his worse and inferior faculties in obedience and subjection to the superior and more excellent; whereas he who suffers his nobler powers to fall under the government and direction of the intemperate and irrational part of the soul is less and worse than himself, and has wholly lost the command over himself, and is in a state which is contrary to Nature. For by the order of Nature, reason, which is divine, ought to have the sovereignty and dominion over the irrational and brutal faculties, which, deriving their original from the body, and being incorporated, as it were, and thoroughly mixed therewith, bear a very near resemblance to it, are replenished with, and do participate in common of the qualities, properties, and passions thereof; as is plain from our more vehement motions and efforts towards corporeal objects, which always increase or diminish in vigor according to the several changes and alterations which happen in the body. From whence it is that young men are in their lusts and appetites, because of the abundance and warmth of their blood, so quick, forward, hot, and furious; whereas in old men all natural fire being almost extinguished, and the first principles and source of the affections and passions, seated about the liver, being much lessened and debilitated, reason becomes more vigorous and predominant, while the appetites languish and decay together with the body. And after this manner it is that the nature of beasts is framed and disposed to divers passions. For it is not from any strength or weakness of thought, or from any opinions right or wrong which they form to themselves, that some of them are so bold and venturous, and dare encounter any thing, and others of them are fearful and cowardly, shrinking at every danger; but from the force and power of the blood, the spirits, and the body does this diversity of passions in them arise; for that part where the passions are seated, being derived from the body, as from its root, retains all the qualities and propensions of that from whence it is extracted.

Now that in man there is a sympathy and an agreeable and correspondent motion of the body with the passions and appetites, is proved by the paleness and blushings of the face, by the tremblings of the joints, and by the palpitation of the heart; and, on the contrary, by the diffusion or dilatation which we feel upon the hope and expectation of pleasures. But when the mind or intellect doth move of itself alone, without any passion to disorder and ruffle it, then is the body at repose and rests quiet, having nothing at all to do with those acts and operations of the mind; as, when it takes into consideration a proposition in mathematics or some such scientific thing, it calls not for the aid or assistance of the irrational or brutal faculties. From whence also it is very apparent that there are in us two distinct parts, differing in their powers and faculties from one another.

12 In fine, throughout the whole world, all things (as they themselves are forced to confess, and is evident in itself) are governed and directed, some by a certain habit, some by Nature, others by a brutal or irrational soul, and some again by that which has reason and understanding. Of all which things man does in some measure participate, and is concerned in all the above-mentioned differences. For he is contained by habit, and nourished by Nature; he makes use of reason and understanding; he



wants not his share of the irrational soul; he has also in him a native source and inbred principle of the passions, not as adventitious, but necessary to him, which ought not therefore to be utterly rooted out, but only pruned and cultivated. For it is not the method and custom of reason — in imitation either of the manner of the Thracians or of what Lycurgus ordered to be done to the vines — to destroy and tear up all the passions and affections indifferently, good and bad, useful and hurtful together; but rather — like some kind and careful Deity who has a tender regard to the growth and improvement of fruit-trees and plants — to cut away and clip off that which grows wild and rank, and to dress and manage the rest that it may serve for use and profit. For as they who are afraid of being drunk pour not their wine upon the ground, but dilute it with water; so neither do they who fear any violent commotion of their passions go about utterly to destroy and eradicate, but rather wisely to temper and moderate them. And as they who use to break horses and oxen do not go about to take away their goings, or to render them unfit for labor and service, but only strive to cure them of their unluckiness and flinging up their heels, and to bring them to be patient of the bit and yoke, so as to become useful; after the same manner reason makes very good use of the passions, after they are well subdued and made gentle, without either tearing in pieces or over-much weakening that part of the soul which was made to be obedient to her. In Pindar we find it said:

As 'tis the horse's pride to win the race,
And to plough up the fruitful soil
Is the laborious ox's toil,
So the fierce dog we take the foaming boar to chase.

But much more useful than these in their several kinds are the whole brood of passions, when they become attendants to reason, and when, being assistant and obedient to virtue, they give life and vigor to it.

Thus, moderate anger is of admirable use to courage or fortitude; hatred and aversion for ill men promotes the execution of justice; and a just indignation against those who are prosperous beyond what they deserve is then both convenient and even necessary, when with pride and insolence their minds are so swollen and elated, that they need to be repressed and taken down. Neither by any means can a man, though he never so much desire it, be able to separate from friendship a natural propension to affection; from humanity and good nature, tenderness and commiseration; nor from true benevolence, a mutual participation of joy and grief. And if they run into an error who would take away all love that they may destroy mad and wanton passions, neither can those be in the right who, for the sake of covetousness, condemn all other appetites and desires. Which is full as ridiculous as if one should always refuse to run, because one time or other he may chance to catch a fall; or to shoot, because he may sometimes happen to miss the mark; or should forbear all singing, because a discord or a jar is offensive to the ear. For, as in sounds the music and harmony thereof takes away neither the sharpest nor the deepest notes, and in our bodies physic procureth health, not by the destruction of heat and cold, but by a due and proportionable temperature and mixture of them both together; so in the same manner it happeneth in the soul of man, when reason becomes victorious and triumphant by reducing the faculties of the mind which belong to the passions, and



all their motions, to a due moderation and mediocrity. And excessive and unmeasurable joy or grief or fear in the soul (not, however, either joy, grief, or fear, simply in itself) may very properly be resembled to a great swelling or inflammation in the body. And therefore Homer, where he says,

A valiant man doth never color change;
Excessive fear to him is very strange,¹⁰

does not take away all fear (but that only which is extreme and unmanly), that bravery and courage may not be thought to be fool-hardiness, nor boldness and resolution pass for temerity and rashness. And therefore he that in pleasures and delights can prescribe bounds to his lusts and desires, and in punishing offences can moderate his rage and hatred to the offenders, shall in one case get the reputation not of an insensible, but temperate person, and in the other be accounted a man of justice without cruelty or bitterness. Whereas, if all the passions, if that were possible, were clean rooted out, reason in most men would grow sensibly more dull and inactive than the pilot of a ship in a calm.

And to these things (as it should seem) prudent law-givers having regard have wisely taken care to excite and encourage in commonwealths and cities the ambition and emulation of their people amongst one another, and with trumpets, drums, and flutes to whet their anger and courage against their enemies. For not only in poetry (as Plato very well observes), he that is inspired by the Muses, and as it were possessed by a poetical fury, will make him that is otherwise a master of his trade and an exact critic in poetry appear ridiculous; but also in fighting, those who are elevated and inspired with a noble rage, and a resolution and courage about the common pitch, become invincible, and are not to be withstood. And this is that warlike fury which the Gods, as Homer will have it, infuse into men of honor:

He spoke, and every word new strength inspired;

and again:

This more than human rage is from the Gods;¹¹

as if to reason the Gods had joined some or other of passions, as an incitement or, if I may so say, a vehicle to push and carry it forward.

Nay we often see these very men against whom I now dispute exciting and encouraging young persons with praises, and as often checking and rebuking them with severe reprimands; whereupon in the one case there must follow pleasure and satisfaction as necessarily as grief and trouble are produced in the other. For reprehension and admonition certainly strike us with repentance and shame, whereof this is comprehended under fear, as the other is under grief. And these are the things they chiefly make use of for correction and amendment. Which seems to be the reason why Diogenes, to some who had magnified Plato, made this reply: What can there be in him, said he, so much to be valued, who, having been so long a philosopher, has never yet been known so much as to excite the single passion of grief in the mind of

¹⁰ *Il.* XIII. 284.

¹¹ *Il.* XV. 262; *V.* 185.



any one? And certainly the mathematics cannot so properly be called (to use the words of Xenocrates) the handles of philosophy, as these passions are of young men, namely, bashfulness, desire, repentance, pleasure, pain, ambition; whereon right reason and the law discreetly laying their salutary hands do thereby effectually and speedily reduce a young man into the right way. Agreeably hereunto the Lacedaemonian instructor of youth was in the right, when he professed that he would bring it to pass that youths under his care should take a pleasure and satisfaction in good and have an abhorrence for evil, than which there cannot be a greater or nobler end of the liberal education of youth proposed or assigned.



Effects of Intemperance (1663-65) Jan Steen, National Gallery, London

