

SHAFTESBURY  
*A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*  
edited by Laurent JAFFRO

This edition is based on *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, vol. I, treatise I, London, 1711, p. 3-55.

Shaftesbury's spelling, punctuation and use of italics have not been modernized.

Capitalization has been eliminated.

Shaftesbury's footnotes have been turned into endnotes and are referenced with letters.

<x> refers to the original page number.

Shaftesbury's corrigenda from the 1711 edition (vol. III) are included and are indicated thus: {...}.

The editor's additions are in brackets [...].

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[Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of SHAFTESBURY]

*A LETTER CONCERNING ENTHUSIASM*  
*to My Lord \*\*\*\*\**

— *Ridentem dicere verum*  
*Quid vetat?*  
Horat. Sat. I.

Printed first in the year MDCCVIII

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A LETTER, &c.

*Sept.* 1707.

*My Lord,*

Now, you are return'd to..., and before the season comes that must engage you in the weightier matters of state; if you care to be entertain'd a while with a sort of idle thoughts, that pretend only to amusement, and have no relation to business or affairs, you may cast your eye slightly on what you have before you; and if there be any thing inviting, you may read it over at your leisure.

<4> It has been an establish'd custom for poets, at the entrance of their work, to address themselves to some *muse*: and this practice of the Antients has gain'd so much repute, that in our days we find it almost constantly imitated. I cannot but fancy however, that this imitation, which passes so currently with other judgments, must at some time or other have stuck a little with your Lordship; who is us'd to examine things by a better standard than that of fashion or the common taste. You must certainly have observ'd our poets under a remarkable constraint, when oblig'd to assume this character: and you have wonder'd, perhaps, why that air of *enthusiasm*, which fits so gracefully with an Antient, shou'd be so spiritless and aukard in a Modern. But as to this doubt, your Lordship wou'd have soon resolv'd your self: and it cou'd only serve to bring a-cross you a reflection which you have often made, on many occasions besides; *that truth is the most powerful thing in the world*, since even fiction it self must be govern'd by it, and can only please by its resemblance. The appearance of reality is necessary to make any passion agreeably represented: and to be able to move others, we must first be mov'd our-selves, or at least seem to be so, upon some probable grounds. Now what possibility is there that a Modern, who is <5> known never to have worship'd Apollo, or own'd any such deity as the *Muses*, shou'd persuade us to enter into his pretended devotion, and move us by his feign'd zeal in a religion out of date? But as for the Antients, 'tis known they deriv'd both their religion and polity from the *Muses* art. How natural therefore must it have appear'd in any, but especially a poet of those times, to address himself in raptures of devotion to those acknowledg'd patronesses of wit and science? Here the poet might with probability feign an extasy, tho he really felt none: and supposing it to have been mere affectation, it wou'd look however like something natural, and cou'd not fail of pleasing.

But perhaps, my Lord, there was a further mystery in the case. Men, your Lordship knows, are wonderfully happy in a faculty of deceiving themselves, whenever they set heartily about it: and a very small foundation of any passion will serve us, not only to act it well, but even to work our-selves into it beyond our own reach. Thus, by a little affectation in love-matters, and with the help of a romance or novel, a boy of fifteen, or a grave man of fifty, may be sure to grow a very natural coxcomb, and feel the *belle passion* in good earnest. A man of tolerable good nature, who happens to be a <6> little piqu'd, may, by improving his resentment, become a very fury for revenge. Even a good Christian, who wou'd needs be over-good, and thinks he can never believe enough, may, by a small inclination well improv'd, extend his faith so largely as to comprehend in it not only all scriptural and traditional miracles, but a solid system of old-wives storys. Were it needful, I cou'd put your Lordship in mind of an eminent, learn'd, and truly Christian prelate you once knew, who cou'd have given you a full account of his belief in *fairys*. And this, methinks, may serve to make appear, how far an antient poet's faith might possibly have been rais'd, together with his imagination.

But we Christians, who have such ample faith our-selves, will allow nothing to poor heathens. They must be infidels in every sense. We will not allow 'em to believe so much as their own religion; which we cry is too absurd to have been credited by any besides the mere vulgar. But if a reverend

Christian prelate may be so great a volunteer in faith, as beyond the ordinary prescription of the catholick church, to believe in *fairys*, why may not a heathen poet, in the ordinary way of his religion, be allow'd to believe in *Muses*? For these, your Lordship knows, were so many divine persons in the heathen creed <7> and were essential in their system of theology. The goddesses had their temples and worship, the same as the other deities: and to disbelieve the *Holy Nine*, or their APOLLO, was the same as to deny JOVE himself, and must have been esteem'd equally profane and atheistical by the generality of sober men. Now what a mighty advantage must it have been to an antient poet to be thus orthodox, and by the help of his education, and a good-will into the bargain, to work himself up to the belief of a divine presence and heavenly inspiration? It was never surely the business of poets in those days to call *revelation* in question, when it evidently made so well for their art. On the contrary, they cou'd not fail to animate their faith as much as possible; when by a single act of it, {well inforc'd,} they cou'd raise themselves into such angelical company.

How much the imagination of such a presence must exalt a genius, we may observe merely from the influence which an ordinary presence has over men. Our modern wits are more or less rais'd by the opinion they have of their company, and the idea they form to themselves of the persons to whom they make their addresses. A common actor of the stage will inform us how much a full audience of the better sort exalts him above the common pitch. <8> And you, my Lord, who are the noblest actor, and of the noblest part assign'd to any mortal on this earthly stage, when you are acting for *liberty* and *mankind*; does not the publick presence, that of your friends, and the well-wishers to your cause, add something to your thought and genius? Or is that sublime of reason, and that power of eloquence, which you discover in publick, no more than what you are equally master of in private, and can command at any time, alone, or with indifferent company, or in any easy or cool hour? This indeed were more godlike; but ordinary humanity, I think, reaches not so high.

For my own part, my Lord, I have really so much need of some considerable presence or company to raise my thoughts on any occasion, that when alone, I must endeavour by strength of fancy to supply this want; and in default of *a muse*, must inquire out some great man of a more than ordinary genius, whose imagin'd presence may inspire me with more than what I feel at ordinary hours. And thus, my Lord, have I chosen to address my self to your Lordship; tho without subscribing my name: allowing you, as a stranger, the full liberty of reading no more than what you may have a fancy for; but reserving to my self the privilege of imagining you <9> read all, with particular notice, as a friend, and one whom I may justifiably treat with the intimacy and freedom which follows.

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## SECT. II

If the knowing well how to expose any infirmity or vice were but a sufficient security for the vertue which is contrary, how excellent an age might we be presum'd to live in! Never was there in our nation a time

known, when folly and extravagance of every kind were more sharply inspected, or more wittily ridicul'd. And one might hope at least from this good symptom, that our age was in no declining state; since whatever our distempers are, we stand so well affected to our remedys. To bear the being told of faults, is in private persons the best token of amendment. 'Tis seldom that a publick is thus dispos'd. For where jealousy of state, or the ill lives of the great people, or any other cause is powerful enough to restrain the *freedom of censure* in any part, it in effect destroys the benefit of it in the whole. There can be no *impartial* and *free censure* of manners where any peculiar custom or national opinion is set apart, and not only exempted from criticism, but even flatter'd with the highest art. 'Tis only in a free nation, such as ours, that imposture has no privilege; <10> and that neither the credit of a court, the power of a nobility, nor the awfulness of a church can give her protection, or hinder her from being arraign'd in every shape and appearance. 'Tis true, this liberty may seem to run too far. We may perhaps be said to make ill use of it. So every one will say, when he himself is touch'd, and his opinion freely examin'd. But who shall be judg of *what* may be freely examin'd, and *what* may not? *Where* liberty may be us'd; and *where* it may not? What remedy shall we prescribe to this in general? Can there be a better than from that liberty it self which is complain'd of? If men are vicious, petulant or abusive; the magistrate may correct them: but if they reason ill, 'tis reason still must teach 'em to do better. Justness of thought and stile, refinement in manners, good breeding, and politeness of every kind, can come only from the trial and experience of what is best. Let but the search go freely on, and the right measure of everything will soon be found. Whatever humour has got the start, if it be unnatural, it cannot hold; and *the ridicule*, if ill plac'd at first, will certainly fall at last where it deserves.

I have often wonder'd to see men of sense so mightily alarm'd at the approach of any thing like *ridicule* on certain sub<11>jects; as if they mistrusted their own judgment. For what ridicule can lie against reason? Or how can any one of the least justness of thought endure a ridicule wrong plac'd? Nothing is more ridiculous than this it self. The vulgar, indeed, may swallow any sordid jest, any mere drollery or buffoonery; but it must be a finer and truer wit that takes with the men of sense and breeding. How comes it to pass then, that we appear such cowards in reasoning, and are so afraid to stand the *test* of ridicule? O! say we, the subjects are too grave. Perhaps so: but let us see first whether they are really grave or no: for in the manner we may conceive 'em, they may, peradventure be very grave and weighty in our imagination; but very ridiculous and impertinent in their own nature. *Gravity* is of the very essence of imposture. It does not only make us mistake other things, but is apt perpetually almost to mistake it self. For in common behaviour, how hard is it for the grave character to keep long out of the limits of the formal one? We can never be too grave, if we can but be assur'd we are really so: and we can never too much honour or revere any thing for grave; if we are assur'd the thing is grave, as we apprehend it. The main point is to know always *true* gravity from *the false*: and this <12> can only be, by carrying the rule constantly with us, and freely applying it not only to the things about us, but to our-selves. For if unhappily we lose the measure in our-selves, we shall soon lose it in every thing besides. Now what rule or measure is there in the world, but by considering of the real

temper of things, to find which are truly serious, and which ridiculous? And how can this be done, unless by applying *the ridicule*, to see whether it will bear? But if we fear to apply this rule in *any* thing, what security can we have against the imposture of formality in *all* things? We have allow'd ourselves to be *formalists* in one point; and the same formality may rule us as it pleases in all other.

'Tis not in every disposition that we are capacitated to judg of things. We must beforehand judg of our own temper, and accordingly of other things which fall under our judgment. But we must never more pretend to judg of things, or of our own temper in judging them, when we have given up our preliminary right of judgment, and under a presumption of gravity, have allow'd our selves to be most ridiculous, and to admire profoundly the most ridiculous things in nature, at least for aught we know. For having resolv'd never to try, we can never be sure.

<13> — *Ridiculum acri*

*Fortius & melius magnas plerumque secat res.*

Hor. Sat. 10.

This, my Lord, I may safely aver, is so true in it-self, and so well known for truth by the cunning *formalists* of the age, that they can better bear to have their impostures rail'd at, with all the bitterness and vehemence imaginable, than to have them touch'd ever so gently in this other way. They know very well, that as modes and fashions, so *opinions*, tho ever so ridiculous, are kept up by solemnity: and that those formal notions which grew up probably in an ill mood, and have been conceiv'd in sober sadness, are never to be remov'd but in a sober kind of chearfulness, and by a more easy and pleasant way of thought. There is *a melancholy* which accompanys all enthusiasm. Be it *love* or *religion* (for there are enthusiasms in both) nothing can put a stop to the growing mischief of either, till the melancholy be remov'd, and the mind at liberty to hear what can be said against the ridiculousness of an extreme in either way.

It was heretofore the wisdom of some wise nations, to let people be fools as much as they pleas'd, and never to punish seriously what deserv'd only to be laugh'd <14> at, and was after all best cur'd by that innocent remedy. There are certain humours in mankind, which of necessity must have vent. The human mind and body are both of 'em naturally subject to commotions: and as there are strange ferments in the blood, which in many bodys occasion an extraordinary discharge; so in reason too, there are heterogeneous particles which must be thrown off by fermentation. Shou'd physicians endeavour absolutely to allay those ferments of the body, and strike in the humours which discover themselves in such eruptions, they might, instead of making a cure, bid fair perhaps to raise a plague, and turn a spring-ague or an autumn-surfeit into an epidemical malignant fever. They are certainly as ill physicians in the *body-politick*, who wou'd needs be tampering with these mental eruptions; and under the specious pretence of healing this itch of superstition, and saving souls from the contagion of enthusiasm, shou'd set all nature in an uproar, and turn a few innocent carbuncles into an inflammation and mortal gangrene.

We read (a) in history that PAN, when he accompany'd BACCHUS in an expedition to the *Indies*, found means to strike a <15> terror thro a host of enemys, by the help of a small company, whose clamours he manag'd to good advantage among the ecchoing rocks and caverns of a woody vale. The hoarse bellowing of the caves, join'd to the hideous aspect of such dark and desart places, rais'd such a horror in the enemy, that in this state their imagination help'd 'em to hear voices, and doubtless to see forms too, that were more than human: whilst the uncertainty of what they fear'd made their fear yet greater, and spread it faster by implicit looks than any narration cou'd convey it. And this was what in after-times men call'd a *pannick* The story indeed gives a good hint of the nature of this passion, which can hardly be without some mixture of enthusiasm, and horrors of a superstitious kind.

We may with good reason call every passion *pannick* which is rais'd in a multitude, and convey'd by aspect or, as it were, by contact or sympathy. Thus popular fury may be call'd *pannick*, when the rage of the people, as we have sometimes known, has put them beyond themselves; especially where religion has had to do. And in this state their very looks are infectious. The fury flies from face to face: and the disease is no sooner seen than caught. Those who in a better situa<16>tion of mind have seen a multitude under the power of this passion, have own'd that they saw in the countenances of men something more ghastly and terrible than at other times is express'd on the most passionate occasion. Such force has society in ill as well as in good passions: and so much stronger any affection is for being *social* and *communicative*.

Thus, my Lord, there are many *pannicks* in mankind, besides merely that of fear. And thus is religion also *pannick*; when enthusiasm of any kind gets up; as oft, on melancholy occasions, it will do. For vapors naturally rise; and in bad times especially, when the spirits of men are low, as either in publick calamitys, or during the unwholesomeness of air or diet, or when convulsions happen in nature, storms, earthquakes, or other amazing prodigys: at this season the *pannick* must needs run high, and the magistrate of necessity give way to it. For to apply a serious remedy, and to bring the sword, or *fascēs*, as a cure, must make the case more melancholy, and increase the very cause of the distemper. To forbid mens natural fears, and to endeavour the overpowering them by other fears, must needs be a most unnatural method. The magistrate, if he be any artist, shou'd have a gentler hand; and instead of causticks, <17> incisions, and amputations, shou'd be using the softest balms; and with a kind sympathy entering into the concern of the people, and taking, as it were, their passion upon him, shou'd, when he has sooth'd and satisfy'd it, endeavour, by chearful ways, to divert and heal it.

This was antient policy: and hence (as a notable author of our nation expresses it) it is necessary a people shou'd have a (b) *publick leading* in religion. For to deny the magistrate a worship, or take away a national church, is as mere enthusiasm as the notion which sets up persecution. For why shou'd there not be publick walks, as well as private gardens? Why not publick librarys, as well as private education and home-tutors? But to prescribe bounds to fancy and speculation, to regulate mens apprehensions

and religious beliefs or fears, to suppress by violence the natural passion of enthusiasm, or to endeavour to ascertain it, or reduce it to one species, or bring it under any one modification, is in truth no better sense, nor deserves a better character, than what the comedian declares of the like project in the affair of love

<18> — *Nihilo plus agas*

*Quàm si des operam ut cum ratione insanias.*

Not only the visionaries and enthusiasts of all kinds were tolerated, your Lordship knows, by the Antients: but on the other side, philosophy had as free a course, and was permitted as a ballance against superstition. And whilst some sects, such as the *Pythagorean* and latter *Platonick*, join'd in with the superstition and enthusiasm of the times; the *Epicurean*, the *Academick*, and others, were allow'd to use all the force of wit and raillery against it. And thus matters were happily ballanc'd; reason had fair play; learning and science flourish'd. Wonderful was the harmony and temper which arose from all these contrarietys. Thus superstition and enthusiasm were mildly treated; and being let alone, they never rag'd to that degree as to occasion bloodshed, wars, persecutions and devastation in the world. But a new sort of policy, which extends it self to another world, and considers the future lives and happiness of men rather than the present, has made us leap the bounds of natural humanity; and out of a supernatural charity, has taught us the way of plaguing one another most devoutly. It has rais'd an antipathy which no temporal interest cou'd ever do; and entail'd upon us a mutual hatred to all eternity. And now *uniformity in opinion* (a hopeful project!) is look'd on as the only expedient against this evil. The saving of souls is now the heroick passion of exalted spirits; and is become in a manner the chief care of the magistrate, and the very end of government itself.

If magistracy shou'd vouchsafe to interpose thus much in other sciences, I am afraid we shou'd have as bad logick, as bad mathematicks, and in every kind as bad philosophy, as we often have divinity, in countrys where a precise orthodoxy is settled by law. 'Tis is a hard matter for a government to settle wit. If it does but keep us sober and honest, 'tis likely we shall have as much ability in our spiritual as in our temporal affairs: and if can but be trusted, we shall have wit enough to save our-selves, when no prejudice lies in the way. But if honesty and wit be insufficient for this saving work, 'tis in vain for the magistrate to meddle with it: since if he be ever so vertuous or wise, he may be as soon mistaken as another man. I am sure the only way to save mens sense, or preserve wit at all in the world, is to give liberty to wit. Now wit can never have its liberty, where the *freedom of raillery* is taken away: for against serious extravaganances and spleenitick humours there is no other remedy but this.

We have indeed full power over all other modifications of spleen. We may treat other enthusiasms as we please. We may ridicule love, or gallantry, or knight-errantry to the utmost; and we find, that in these latter days of wit, the humour of this kind, which was once so prevalent, is pretty well declin'd. The crusades, the rescuing of holy lands, and such devout gallantrys are in less request than formerly: but if something of this militant religion, something of this soul-rescuing spirit, and saint-errantry prevails

still, we need not wonder, when we consider in how solemn a manner we treat this distemper, and how preposterously we go about to cure enthusiasm.

I can hardly forbear fancying, that if we had but an inquisition, or some formal court of judicature, with grave officers and judges, erected to restrain poetical licence, and in general to suppress that fancy and humour of versification; but in particular that most extravagant passion of love, as it is set out by poets, in its heathenish dress of VENUS'S and CUPID'S: if the poets, as ringleaders and teachers of this heresy, were under grievous penaltys forbid to <21> enchant the people by their vein of rhyming; and if the people, on the other side, were under proportionable penaltys forbid to hearken to any such charm, or lend their attention to any love-tale, so much as in a play, a novel, or a ballad; we might perhaps see a new *Arcadia* arising out of this heavy persecution: old people and young wou'd be seiz'd with a versifying spirit: we shou'd have field-conventicles of lovers and poets: forests wou'd be fill'd with romantick shepherds and shepherdesses: and rocks resound with ecchoes of hymns and praises offer'd to the powers of love. We might indeed have a fair chance, by this management, to bring back the whole train of heathen gods, and set our cold northern island burning with as many altars to VENUS and APOLLO, as were formerly in *Cyprus*, *Delos*, or any of those warmer *Grecian* climates.

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### SECT. III

But, my Lord, you may perhaps wonder, that having been drawn into such a serious subject as *religion*, I shou'd forget my self so far as to give way to *raillery* and *humour*. I must own to you, my Lord, 'tis not merely thro chance that this has happen'd. To say truth, I hardly care so much as to think on this subject, much <22> less to write on it, without endeavouring to put my self in as good humour as is possible. People indeed, who can endure no middle temper, but are all air and humour, know little of the doubts and scruples of religion, and are safe from any immediate influence of *devout melancholy* or *enthusiasm*; which requires more deliberation and thoughtful practice to fix it self in a temper, and grow habitual. But be the habit what it will; to be deliver'd of it at so sad a cost as inconsiderateness, or madness, is what I wou'd never wish to be my lot. I had rather stand all adventures with religion, than endeavour to get rid of the thoughts of it by diversion. All I contend for, is to think of it *in a right humour*: and that this goes more than half-way towards thinking *rightly* of it, is what I shall endeavour to demonstrate.

Good humour is not only the best security against *enthusiasm*, but the best foundation of *piety* and *true religion*: for if right thoughts and worthy apprehensions of the supreme being, are fundamental to all true worship and adoration; 'tis more than probable, that we shall never miscarry in this respect, but thro ill humour only. Nothing but ill humour, either natural or forc'd, can bring a man to think seriously that the <23> world is govern'd by any devilish or malicious power. I very much question whether any thing, besides ill humour, can be the cause of atheism. For there are so many



arguments to persuade a man in humour, that, in the main, all things are kindly and well dispos'd, that one wou'd think it impossible for him to be so far out of conceit with affairs, as to imagine they all ran at adventures; and that *the world*, as venerable and wise a face as it carry'd, had neither sense nor meaning in it. This however I am persuaded of, that nothing but ill humour can give us dreadful or ill thoughts of a supreme manager. Nothing can persuade us of sullenness or sourness in such a being, but the fore-feeling of somewhat of this kind within our-selves: and if we are afraid of bringing good humour into religion, or thinking with freedom and pleasantness on such a subject as GOD; 'tis because we conceive the subject so like our-selves, and can hardly have a notion of *majesty* and *greatness* without *stateliness* and *moroseness* accompanying it.

This, however, is the just reverse of that character, which we own to be most *divinely good*, when we see it, as we sometimes do, in men of highest power among us. If they pass for truly *good*, we dare treat them freely, and are sure <24> they will not be displeas'd with this liberty. They are doubly gainers by this goodness of theirs. For the more they are search'd into, and familiarly examin'd, the more their worth appears; and the discoverer, charm'd with his success, esteems and loves more than ever, when he has prov'd this additional bounty in his superior, and reflects on that candour and generosity he has experienc'd. Your Lordship knows more perhaps of this mystery than any one. How else shou'd you have been so belov'd in power, and out of power so adhered to, and still more belov'd?

Thank heaven! there are even in our own age some such examples. In former ages there have been many such. We have known mighty princes, and even emperors of the world, who cou'd bear unconcernedly not only the free censure of their actions, but the most spiteful reproaches and calumnys, even to their faces. Some perhaps may wish there had never been such examples found in *heathens*: but more especially, that the occasion had never been given by *Christians*. 'Twas more the misfortune indeed of mankind in general, than of Christians in particular, that some of the earlier *Roman* emperors were such monsters of tyranny, and began a persecution, not on reli<25>gious men merely, but on all who were suspected of worth or vertue. What cou'd have been a higher honour or advantage to Christianity, than to be persecuted by a NERO? But better princes, who came after, were persuaded to remit these severe courses. 'Tis true, the magistrate might possibly have been surpriz'd with the newness of a notion, which he might pretend, perhaps, did not only destroy the sacredness of his power, but treated him and all men as profane, impious, and damn'd, who enter'd not into certain particular modes of worship, of which there had been formerly so many thousand instituted, all of 'em compatible and sociable till that time. However, such was the wisdom of some succeeding ministrys, that the edge of persecution was much abated; and even (c) that prince, who was esteem'd the greatest enemy of the Christian sect, and who himself had been educated in it, was a great restrainer of persecution, and wou'd allow of nothing further than a resumption of church-lands and publick schools, without any attempt on the goods or persons even of those who branded the state-religion, and made a merit of affronting the publick worship.

<26> 'Tis well we have the authority of a sacred author in our religion, to assure us that the spirit of *love* and *humanity* is above that of *martyrs*. Otherwise, one might be a little scandaliz'd, perhaps, at the history of many of our primitive confessors and martyrs, even according to our own accounts. There is hardly now in the world so good a Christian (if this be indeed the mark of a good one) who, supposing he liv'd at *Constantinople*, or elsewhere under the protection of the *Turks*, wou'd think it fitting or decent to give any disturbance to their *mosque*-worship. And as good Protestants, my Lord, as you and I are, we shou'd scarce think him better {consider him as little better} than a rank enthusiast, who, out of hatred to the Romish idolatry, shou'd, in time of high mass (where mass perhaps was by law establish'd), interrupt the priest with clamours, or fall foul on his images and relicks.

There are some, it seems, of our good brethren, the *French* Protestants, lately come among us, who are mightily taken with this primitive way. They have set a-foot the spirit of martyrdom to a wonder in their own country; and they long to be trying it here, if we will give 'em leave, and afford 'em the occasion: that is to say, if we will only do 'em <27> the favour to hang or imprison 'em; if we will only be so obliging as to break their bones for 'em, after their country fashion, blow up their zeal, and stir a-fresh the coals of persecution. But no such grace can they hitherto obtain of us. So hard-hearted we are, that notwithstanding their own mob are willing to bestow kind blows upon 'em, and fairly stone 'em now and then in the open street; tho the priests of their own nation wou'd gladly give 'em their desir'd discipline, and are earnest to light their probationary fires for 'em; we *English* men, who are masters in our own country, will not suffer the enthusiasts to be thus us'd. Nor can we be suppos'd to act thus in envy to their *Phenix*-sect, which it seems has risen out of the flames, and wou'd willingly grow to be a new church by the same manner of propagation as the old one, whose *seed* was truly said to be *from the blood of the martyrs*.

But how barbarous still, and more than heathenishly cruel, are we tolerating *English* men! For, not contented to deny these prophesying enthusiasts the honour of a persecution, we have deliver'd 'em over to the cruellest contempt in the world. I am told, for certain, that they are at (d) this very time the subject of a <28> choice droll or puppet-shew at *Bart'lemy* Fair. There, doubtless, their strange voices and involuntary agitations are admirably well acted, by the motion of wires, and inspiration of pipes. For the bodys of the prophets, in their state of prophecy, being not in their own power, but (as they say themselves) mere passive organs, actuated by an exterior force, have nothing natural, or resembling real life, in any of their sounds or motions: so that how aukardly soever a puppet-shew may imitate other actions, it must needs represent this passion to the life. And whilst *Bart'lemy* Fair is in possession of this privilege, I dare stand security to our national church, that no sect of enthusiasts, no new venders of prophecy or miracles, shall ever get the start, or put her to the trouble of trying her strength with them, in any case.

Happy it was for us, that when popery had got possession, *Smithfield* was us'd in a more tragical way. Many of our first reformers, 'tis fear'd, were little better than enthusiasts: and God knows whether a warmth of this kind

did not considerably help us in throwing off that spiritual tyranny. So that had not the priests, as is usual, prefer'd the love of blood to all other passions, they might in a merrier way, perhaps, have evaded the greatest <29> force of our reforming spirit. I never heard that the antient heathens were so well advis'd in their ill purpose of suppressing the Christian religion in its first rise, as to make use, at any time, of this *Bart'lemy* Fair method. But this I am persuaded of, that had the truth of the Gospel been any way surmountable, they wou'd have bid much fairer for the silencing it, if they had chose{n} to bring our primitive founders upon the stage in a pleasanter way than that of bear-skins and pitch-barrels.

The *Jews* were naturally a very (e) cloudy people, and wou'd endure little raillery in any thing; much less in what belong'd to any religious doctrines or opinions. Religion was look'd upon with a sullen eye; and hanging was the only remedy they cou'd prescribe for any thing which look'd like setting up a new revelation. The sovereign argument was, *crucify, crucify*. But with all their malice and inveteracy to our Saviour, and his apostles after him, had they but taken the fancy to act such puppet-shews in his contempt, as at this hour the papists are acting in his honour; I am apt to think <30> they might possibly have done our religion more harm, than by all their other ways of severity.

I believe our great and learn'd apostle found less (f) advantage from the easy treatment of his *Athenian* antagonists, than from the surly and curst spirit of the most persecuting *Jewish* cities. He made less improvement of the candour and civility of his *Roman* judges, than of the zeal of the synagogue and vehemence of his national priests. Tho when I consider this apostle as appearing either before the witty *Athenians*, or before a *Roman* court of judicature, in the presence of their great men and ladys, and see how handsomely he accommodates himself to the apprehensions and temper of those politer people, I do not find that he declines the way of *wit* or *good humour*; but, without suspicion of his cause, is willing generously to commit it to this proof, and try it against the sharpness of any ridicule which might be offer'd.

But tho the *Jews* were never pleas'd to try their wit or malice this way against <31> our Saviour or his apostles; the irreligious part of the heathens had try'd it long before against the best doctrines and best characters of men that had ever arisen amongst them. Nor did this prove in the end any injury, but on the contrary, the highest advantage to those very characters and doctrines, which, having stood the proof, were found so solid and just. The divinest man who had ever appear'd in the heathen world, was in the height of witty times, and by the wittiest of all poets, most abominably ridicul'd, in a whole comedy writ and acted on purpose. But so far was this from sinking his reputation, or suppressing his philosophy, that they both increas'd the more for it; and he apparently grew to be more the envy of other teachers. He was not only contented to be ridicul'd; but, that he might help the poet as much as possible, he presented himself openly in the theatre; that his real figure (which was no advantageous one) might be compar'd with that which the witty poet had brought as his representative on the stage. Such was his *good humour*. Nor cou'd there be in the world a greater testimony of the invincible goodness of the man, or a greater demonstration, that there was

no imposture either in his character or opinions. For that *imposture* shou'd dare sustain the encounter of a *grave* enemy is <32> no wonder. A solemn attack, she knows, is not of such danger to her. There is nothing she abhors or dreads like pleasantness and *good humour*.

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#### SECT. IV

IN short, my Lord, the melancholy way of treating religion is that which, according to my apprehension, renders it so tragical, and is the occasion of its acting in reality such dismal tragedys in the world. And my notion is, that provided we treat religion with good manners, we can never use too much *good humour*, or examine it with too much *freedom* and *familiarity*. For, if it be genuine and sincere, it will not only stand the proof, but thrive and gain advantage from hence: if it be spurious, or mixt with any imposture, it will be detected and expos'd.

The melancholy way in which we have been taught religion, makes us unapt to think of it in good humour. 'Tis in adversity chiefly, or in ill health, under affliction, or disturbance of mind, or discomposure of temper, that we have recourse to it. Tho in reality we are never so unfit to think of it as at such a heavy and dark hour. We can never be fit to contemplate any thing above us, when <33> we are in no condition to look into our-selves, and calmly examine the temper of our own mind and passions. For then it is we see wrath, and fury, and revenge, and terrors *in the* DEITY; when we are full of disturbances and fears *within*, and have, by sufferance and anxiety, lost so much of the natural calm and easiness of our temper.

We must not only be in ordinary good humour, but in the best of humours, and in the sweetest, kindest disposition of our lives, to understand well what *true goodness* is, and what those *attributes* imply, which we ascribe with such applause and honour to *the* DEITY. We shall then be able to see best, whether those forms of justice, those degrees of punishment, that temper of resentment, and those measures of offence and indignation, which we vulgarly suppose in GOD, are sutable to those original ideas of *goodness*, which the same divine being, or nature under him, has implanted in us, and which we must necessarily presuppose, in order to give him praise or honour in any kind. This, my Lord, is the security against all superstition: to remember, that there is nothing in GOD but what is *godlike*; and that He is either *not at all*, or *truly and perfectly good*. But when we are afraid to use our rea<34>son freely, even on that very question, whether He really *be*, or *not*; we then actually presume him *bad*, and flatly contradict that pretended character of goodness and greatness; whilst we discover this mistrust of his temper, and fear his anger and resentment, in the case of this *freedom of INQUIRY*.

We have a notable instance of this *freedom* in one of our sacred authors. As patient as JOB is said to be, it cannot be deny'd but he makes bold enough with GOD, and takes his *providence* roundly to task. His friends, indeed, plead hard with him, and use all arguments, right or wrong, to patch up objections, and set the affairs of providence upon an equal foot. They make

a merit of saying all the good they can of GOD, at the very stretch of their reason, and sometimes quite beyond it. But this, in Job's opinion, is *flattering GOD, accepting of GOD's person, and even mocking him*. And no wonder. For, what merit can there be in believing GOD, or his *providence*, upon frivolous and weak grounds? What vertue in assuming an opinion contrary to the appearance of things, and resolving to hear nothing which may be said against it? Excellent character of the *GOD of truth!* that he shou'd be offended at us, for having refus'd to put the lye upon our un<sup><35></sup>derstandings, as much as in us lay; and be satisfy'd with us for having believ'd, at a venture, and against our reason, what might have been the greatest falsehood in the world, for any thing we cou'd bring as a proof or evidence to the contrary!

It is impossible that any besides an ill-natur'd man can wish against the being of a GOD: for this is wishing against the publick, and even against one's private good too, if rightly understood. But if a man has not any such ill-will to stifle his belief, he must have surely an unhappy opinion of GOD, and believe him not so good by far as he knows *himself* to be, if he imagines that an impartial use of his reason, in any matter of speculation whatsoever, can make him run any risk hereafter; and that a mean *denial of his reason, and an affectation of belief* in any point too hard for his understanding, can entitle him to any favour in another world. This is being *sycophants* in religion, mere *parasites* of devotion. 'Tis using GOD as the crafty beggars use those they address to, when they are ignorant of their quality. The novices amongst 'em may innocently come out, perhaps, with a *good sir!*, or a *good forsooth!* But with the old stagers, no matter whom they meet in a coach, 'tis always *good your Honour!* <sup><36></sup> or *good your Lordship!* or *your Ladyship!* For if there shou'd be really a *Lord* in the case, we shou'd be undone (say they) for want of giving the title; but if the party shou'd be no *Lord*, there wou'd be no offence; it wou'd not be ill taken.

And thus it is in religion. We are highly concern'd how to *beg right*; and think all depends upon hitting the *title*, and making a *good guess*. 'Tis the most beggarly refuge imaginable, which is so mightily cry'd up, and stands as a great maxim with many able men; "that they shou'd strive to have *faith*, and believe to the utmost: because if, after all, there be nothing in the matter, there will be no harm in being thus deceiv'd; but if there be any thing, it will be fatal for them not to have believ'd to the full." But they are so far mistaken that, whilst they have this thought, 'tis certain they can never believe either to their satisfaction and happiness in this world, or with any advantage of recommendation to another. For besides that our reason, which knows the cheat, will never rest thoroughly satisfy'd on such a bottom, but turn us often a-drift, and toss us in a sea of doubt and perplexity; we cannot but actually grow *worse* in our religion, and entertain a *worse* opinion still of a *supreme DEITY*, <sup><37></sup> whilst our belief is founded on so injurious a thought of him.

To love the publick, to study universal good, and to promote the interest of the whole world, as far as lies within our power, is surely the height of goodness, and makes that temper which we call *divine*. In this temper, my Lord (for surely you shou'd know it well), 'tis natural for us to wish that others shou'd partake with us, by being convinc'd of the sincerity of our

exemple. 'Tis natural for us to wish our merit shou'd be known; particularly if it be our fortune to have serv'd a nation as a good minister; or as some prince, or father of a country, to have render'd happy a considerable part of mankind under our care. But if it happen'd, that of this number there shou'd be some so ignorantly bred, and of so remote a province, as to have lain out of the hearing of our name and actions; or hearing of 'em, shou'd be so puzzl'd with odd and contrary storys told up and down concerning us, that they knew not what to think, whether there were really in the world any such person as our-self: shou'd we not, in good truth, be ridiculous to take offence at this? And shou'd we not pass for extravagantly morose and ill-humour'd, if instead of treating the matter *in raillery*, we shou'd think in ear<38>nest of *revenging our selves* on the offending partys, who, out of their rustick ignorance, ill judgment, or incredulity, had detracted from our renown?

How shall we say then? Does it really deserve praise, to be thus concern'd about it? Is the doing good for *glory's* sake, so divine a thing? Or, is it not diviner, to do good even where it may be thought inglorious, even to the ingrateful, and to those who are wholly insensible of the good they receive? How comes it then, that what is so *divine* in us, shou'd lose its character in the *divine being*? And that according as *the DEITY* is represented to us, he shou'd more resemble the weak, womanish, and impotent part of our nature, than the generous, manly, and divine?

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## SECT. V

One wou'd think, my Lord, it were in reality no hard thing to know our own weaknesses at first sight, and distinguish the features of human frailty, with which we are so well acquainted. One wou'd think it were easy to understand, that provocation and offence, anger, revenge, jealousy in point of honour or power, love of fame, glory, and the like, belong only to limited be<39>ings, and are necessarily excluded [from] a being which is perfect and universal. But if we have never settl'd with our-selves any notion of what is *morally excellent*; or if we cannot trust to that reason which tells us that nothing but *what is so*, can have place in the DEITY; we can neither trust to any thing that others relate of him, or that he himself reveals to us. We must be satisfy'd before-hand, that he is *good*, and cannot deceive us. Without this, there can be no real religious faith, or confidence. Now, if there be really something previous to revelation, some antecedent demonstration of reason, to assure us, that GOD *is*, and withal, that he is *so good* as not to deceive us; the same reason, if we will trust to it, will demonstrate to us, that GOD is *so good*, as to exceed the very best of us *in goodness*. And after this manner we can have no dread or suspicion to render us uneasy: for it is *malice* only, and not *goodness*, that can make us afraid.

There is an odd way of reasoning, but in certain distempers of mind very sovereign to those who can apply it; and it is this: "There can be no malice but where interests are oppos'd. A universal being can have no interest opposite; and therefore can have no malice." If there be *a general mind*,

<40> it can have no *particular* interest: but the general good, or good of the whole, and its own private good, must of necessity be one and the same. It can intend nothing besides, nor aim at any thing beyond, nor be provok'd to any thing contrary. So that we have only to consider, whether there be really such a thing as *a mind that has relation to the whole*, or not. For if unhappily there be *no mind*, we may comfort our selves, however, that nature has *no malice*: if there be really *a MIND*, we may rest satisfy'd that it is the *best-natur'd one in the world*. The last case, one wou'd imagine, shou'd be the most comfortable; and the notion of a *common parent* less frightful than that of *forlorn nature*, and *a fatherless world*. Tho, as religion stands amongst us, there are many good people who wou'd have less fear in being thus expos'd; and wou'd be easier, perhaps, in their minds, if they were assur'd they had only mere *chance* to trust to. For nobody trembles to think there shou'd be *no God*; but rather that there *shou'd be one*. This however wou'd be otherwise, if *deity* were thought as kindly of as *humanity*; and we cou'd be persuaded to believe, that if there really was *a GOD*, *the highest goodness* must of necessity belong to him, without any of <41> those (g) defects of passion, those meannesses and imperfections which we acknowledg such in our-selves, which as good men we endeavour all we can to be superior to, and which we find we every day conquer as we grow better.

Methinks, my Lord, it wou'd be well for us, if before we ascended into the higher regions of *divinity*, we wou'd vouchsafe to descend a little into *our-selves*, and bestow some poor thoughts upon plain honest *morals*. When we had once look'd into our selves, and distinguish'd well the nature of our own affections, we shou'd probably be fitter judges of *the divineness* of a character, and discern better what affections were sutable or unsutable to *a perfect being*. We might then understand how to *love* and *praise*, when we had acquir'd some consistent notion of what was *laudable* or *lovely*. Otherwise we might chance to do GOD little honour, when we intended him the most. For 'tis hard to imagine what honour can arise to *the DEITY* <42> from the praises of creatures, who are unable to discern what is *praiseworthy* or *excellent* in their own kind.

If a musician were cry'd up to the skys by a certain set of people who had no ear in musick, he wou'd surely be put to the blush, and cou'd hardly, with a good countenance, accept the benevolence of his auditors, till they had acquir'd a more competent apprehension of him, and cou'd by their own senses find out something that was really good in his performance. Till this were brought about, there wou'd be little *glory* in the case; and the musician, tho ever so vain, wou'd have little reason to be contented.

They who affect praise the most, had rather not be taken notice of, than be impertinently applauded. I know not how it comes about that HE who is ever said to do good the most disinterestedly, shou'd be thought desirous of being prais'd so lavishly, and be suppos'd to set so high a rate upon so cheap and low a thing as *ignorant commendation* and *forc'd applause*.

'Tis not the same with *goodness* as with other qualitys, which we may understand very well, and yet not possess. We may have an excellent ear in *musick*, <43> without being able to perform in any kind. We may judg well

of *poetry*, without being poets, or possessing the least of a poetick vein: but we can have no tolerable notion of *goodness*, without being tolerably *good*. So that if the *praise* of a divine being be so great a part of his worship, we shou'd, methinks, learn *goodness*, were it for nothing else than that we might learn, in some tolerable manner, how *to praise*. For the praise of goodness from an unsound hollow heart, must certainly make the greatest dissonance in the world.

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## SECT. VI

Other reasons, my Lord, there are, why this plain home-spun philosophy, of looking into our-selves, may do us wond'rous service, in rectifying our errors in religion. For there is a sort of enthusiasm of second hand. And when men find no original commotions in themselves, no prepossessing *pannick* which bewitches 'em, they are apt still, by the testimony of others, to be impos'd on, and led credulously into the belief of many false miracles. And this habit may make 'em variable, and of a very inconstant faith, easy to be carry'd away with every wind of doctrine, and addicted to every upstart sect or superstition. But <44> the knowledg of our passions in their very seeds, the measuring well the growth and progress of enthusiasm, and the judging rightly of its natural force, and what command it has over our very senses, may teach us to oppose more successfully those delusions which come arm'd with the specious pretext of moral certainty, and *matter of fact*.

The new prophesying sect, I made mention of above, pretend, it seems, among many other miracles, to have had a most signal one, acted premeditatedly, and with warning, before many hundreds of people, who actually give testimony to the truth of it. But I wou'd only ask, whether there were present, among those hundreds, any one person, who having never been of their *sect*, or addicted to their *way*, will give the same testimony with, them? I must not be contented to ask, whether such a one had been wholly free of that particular enthusiasm? but, whether, before that time, he was esteem'd of so sound a judgment, and clear a head, as to be wholly free of *melancholy*, and in all likelihood incapable of all enthusiasm besides? For otherwise, the *pannick* may have been caught; the evidence of the senses lost, as in a dream; and the imagination so inflam'd, as in a moment to have burnt up every <45> particle of judgment and reason. The combustible matters lie prepar'd within, and ready to take fire at a spark; but chiefly in a multitude seiz'd with the same spirit. No wonder if the blaze arises so of a sudden; when innumerable eyes glow with the passion, and heaving breasts are labouring with inspiration: when not the aspect only, but the very breath and exhalations of men are infectious, and the inspiring disease imparts it-self by insensible transpiration. I am not a divine good enough to resolve what *spirit* that was which prov'd so catching among the antient prophets, that even the profane (h) SAUL was taken by it. But I learn from holy scripture, that there was *the* (h) *evil* as well as *the good spirit* of prophecy. And I find by present experience, as well as by all historys, sacred and profane, that the operation of this *spirit* is every where the same, as to the bodily organs.



A GENTLEMAN who has writ lately in defence of reviv'd prophecy, and has since fallen himself into the *prophetick extasys*, tells us, "that the antient prophets had the spirit of GOD upon them *under extasy*, with divers strange gestures <46> of body denominating them madmen (or enthusiasts) as appears evidently, *says he*, in the instances of BALAAM, SAUL, DAVID, EZEKIEL, DANIEL, &c." And he proceeds to justify this by *the practice* of the apostolick times, and by *the regulation* which the apostle himself applies to these seemingly irregular *gifts*, so frequent and ordinary (as our author pretends) in the primitive church, on the first rise and spreading of Christianity. But I leave it to him to make the resemblance as well as he can between his own and the apostolick way. I only know, that the symptoms he describes, and which himself (poor gentleman!) labours under, are as *heathenish* as he can possibly pretend them to be *Christian*. And when I saw him lately under *an agitation* (as they call it) uttering prophecy in a pompous *Latin* stile, of which, out of his extasy, it seems, he is wholly incapable; it brought into my mind the *Latin* poet's description of the SYBIL, whose agonys were so perfectly like these.

— *Subitò non vultus, non color unus,  
Non comptæ mansere comæ; sed pectus anhelum,  
Et rabie fera corda tument; majorque videri <47>  
Nec mortale sonans: afflata est numine quando  
Jam propiore dei —  
Virg. Æn. Lib. 6.*

And again, presently after:

— *Immanis in antro  
Bacchatur vates, magnum si pectore possit  
Excussisse deum: tanto magis ille fatigat  
Os rabidum, fera corda domans, FINGITQUE PREMENDO.*

Which is the very stile of our experienc'd author. "For the inspir'd (*says he*) undergo a probation, wherein the spirit, by frequent agitations, *forms the organs*, ordinarily for a month or two before *utterance*."

The *Roman* historian, speaking of a most horrible enthusiasm which broke out in ROME long before his days, describes this spirit of prophecy; *viros, velut mente captâ, cum jactatione fanaticâ corporis vaticinari*. Liv. 39. The detestable things that follow I wou'd not willingly transcribe: but the senate's mild decree in so execrable a case, I can't omit copying; being satisfy'd, that tho your Lordship has read it before now, you can read it again and again with admiration: *In reliquum deinde* (*says Livy*) *S. C. cautum est, &c. Si <48> quis tale sacrum solenne & necessarium duceret, nec sine religione & piaculo se id omittere posse; apud prætorem urbanum profiteretur: prætor senatum consuleret. Si ei permissum esset, cum in senatu centum non minus essent, ita id sacrum faceret; dum ne plus quinque sacrificio interessent, neu qua pecunia communis, neu quis magister sacrorum, aut sacerdos esset.*

So necessary it is to give way to this distemper of *enthusiasm*, that even that philosopher who bent the whole force of his philosophy against superstition,

appears to have left room for visionary fancy, and to have indirectly tolerated enthusiasm. For it is hard to imagine, that one who had so little religious faith as EPICURUS, shou'd have so vulgar a credulity, as to believe those accounts of armys and castles in the air, and such visionary *phænomena*. Yet he allows them; and then thinks to solve 'em by his *effluvia*, and aerial looking-glasses, and I know not what other stuff: which his *Latin* poet, however, sets off beautifully, as he does all.

— *Rerum simulacra vagari*

*Multa, modis multis, in cunctas undique parteis  
Tenuia, quæ facilè inter se junguntur in auris, <49>*

*Obvia cum veniunt, ut aranea bracteaque auri*

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*Centaurus itaque, & Scyllarum membra videmus,*

*Cerberæque canum facies, simulacraque eorum*

*Quorum morte obita tellus amplectitur ossa:*

*Omne genus quoniam passim simulacra feruntur,*

*Partim sponte suâ quæ fiunt aere in ipso;*

*Partim quæ variis ab rebus cumque recedunt.*

Lucret. L. 4.

'Twas a sign this philosopher believ'd there was a good stock of *visionary spirit* originally in human nature. He was so satisfy'd that men were inclin'd to see visions, that rather than they shou'd go without, he chose to make 'em to their hand. Notwithstanding he wou'd not allow the principles of religion to be *natural*, he was forc'd tacitly to allow there was a wondrous disposition in mankind towards *supernatural objects*; and that if these ideas were vain, they were yet in a manner *innate*, or such as men were really born to, and cou'd hardly by any means avoid. From which concession a divine, methinks, might raise a good argument against him, for the *truth* as well as the *usefulness* of RELIGION. But so it is: <50> whether the matter of apparition be true or false, the symptoms are the same, and the passion of equal force in the person who is vision-struck. The *lymphatici* of the *Latins* were the *nympholepti* of the *Greeks*. They were persons said to have seen some species of divinity, as either some rural *deity*, or *nymph*, which threw them into such transports as overcame their reason. The extasys express'd themselves outwardly in quakings, tremblings, tossings of the head and limbs, *agitations*, and (as *Livy* calls them) *fanatical throws* or convulsions, extemporary prayer, prophecy, singing, and the like. All nations have their *lymphaticks* of some kind or another; and all churches (heathen as well as Christian) have had their complaints against *fanaticism*.

One wou'd think the Antients imagin'd this disease had some relation to that which they call'd *hydrophoby*. Whether the antient *lymphaticks* had any way like that of biting, to communicate the rage of their distemper, I can't so positively determine. But certain fanaticks there have been since the time of the Antients, who have had a most prosperous faculty of communicating the appetite of the teeth. For since first the snappish spirit got up in religion, all sects have been at it, as the saying is, *tooth and nail*; <51> and are never better pleas'd, than in worrying one another without mercy.

So far indeed the innocent kind of fanaticism extends it self, that when the party is struck by the apparition, there follows always an itch of imparting it, and kindling the same fire in other breasts. For thus *poets* are fanatics too. And thus HORACE either is, or feigns himself *lymphatick*, and shews what an effect the vision of the *Nymphs* and BACCHUS had on him.

*Bacchum in remotis carmina rupibus  
Vidi docentem, credite posteri,  
NYMPHASque discentes, —  
Evæ! recenti mens trepidat metu,  
Plenoque Bacchi pectore turbidum  
(i) LYMPHATUR — as Heinsius reads: Od. 19. L. 2.*

No *poet* (as I ventur'd to say at first to your Lordship) can do any thing great in his own way, without the imagination or supposition of a *divine presence*, which may raise him to some degree of this pas<52>sion we are speaking of. Even the cold LUCRETIUS makes use of inspiration, when he writes against it; and is forc'd to raise an apparition of *nature*, in a divine form, to animate and conduct him in his very work of degrading nature, and despoiling her of all her seeming wisdom and divinity.

*Alma VENUS, cæli subter labentia signa  
Quæ mare navigerum, quæ terras frugiferentis  
Concelebras —  
Quæ quoniam rerum naturam sola gubernas,  
Nec sine te quidquam dias in luminis oras  
Exoritur, neque fit lætum neque amabile quidquam:  
Te sociam studeo scribundis versibus esse,  
Quos ego de rerum naturâ pangere conor  
MEMMIADÆ nostro.  
Lucret. L. I.*

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## SECT. VII

THE only thing, my Lord, I wou'd infer from all this, is, that ENTHUSIASM is wonderfully powerful and extensive; that it is a matter of nice judgment, and the hardest thing in the world to know fully and distinctly; since even (j) *atheism* is not exempt from it. For, as some have well remark'd, there have been *enthusiastical atheists*. Nor can divine in<53>spiration, by its outward marks, be easily distinguish'd from it. For inspiration is a *real* feeling of the divine presence, and enthusiasm a *false one*. But the passion they raise is much alike. For when the mind is taken up in vision, and fixes its view either on any real object, or mere specter of divinity; when it sees, or thinks it sees any thing prodigious, and more than human; its horror, delight, confusion, fear, admiration, or whatever passion belongs to it, or is uppermost on this occasion, will have something vast, *immane*, and (as painters say) *beyond life*. And this is what gave occasion to the name of *fanaticism*, as it was us'd by the Antients in its original sense, for an *apparition* transporting the mind.

Something there will be of extravagance and fury, when the ideas or images receiv'd are too big for the narrow human vessel to contain. So that *inspiration* may be justly call'd *divine* ENTHUSIASM: for the word it self signifies *divine presence*, and was made use of by the philosopher whom the earliest Christian Fathers call'd *divine*, to express whatever was sublime in human passions (k). This <54> was the spirit he allotted to *heroes, statesmen, poets, orators, musicians*, and even *philosophers* themselves. Nor can we, of our own accord, forbear ascribing to a noble enthusiasm, whatever is greatly perform'd by any of *these*. So that almost all of us know something of this principle. But to know it as we shou'd do, and discern it in its several kinds, both in our-selves and others; this is the great work, and by this means alone we can hope to avoid delusion. For *to judg the spirits whether they are of God*, we must antecedently *judg our own spirit*; whether it be of *reason*, and *sound sense*; whether it be fit to *judg* at all, by being sedate, cool, and impartial; free of every byassing passion, every giddy vapour, or melancholy fume. This is the first knowledg and previous judgment: to understand *our-selves*, and know *what spirit we are of*. Afterwards we may judg the *spirit* in others, consider what their personal merit is, and <55> prove the validity of their testimony by the solidity of their brain. By this means we may prepare our-selves with some *antidote* against enthusiasm. And this is what I have dar'd affirm is best perform'd by keeping to GOOD HUMOUR. For otherwise the remedy it self may turn to the disease.

And now, my Lord, having, after all, in some measure justify'd ENTHUSIASM, and own'd the word; if I appear extravagant, in addressing to you after the manner I have done, you must allow me to plead an *impulse*. You must suppose me (as with truth you may) most passionately yours; and with that kindness which is natural to you on other occasions, you must tolerate your *enthusiastick friend*, who, excepting only in the case of this over-forward *zeal*, can never but appear, with the highest respect,

*my LORD,*

*your Lordship's, &c.*

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(a) Polyæni Strateg. lib. I. C. 2.

(b) Harrington.

(c) See the *Miscellaneous Reflections* in vol. III. MISC. II ch. 2. in the marginal notes.

(d) Viz. Anno 1707.

(e) Our author having been censur'd for this and some following passages, concerning the *Jews*, the reader is refer'd to the notes and citations in the *Miscellaneous Reflections*, MISC. II. ch. I. towards the latter end.

(f) What advantage he made of his sufferings, and how pathetically his *bonds* and *stripes* were set to view, and often pleaded by him, to raise his character, and advance the interest of Christianity, any one who reads his Epistles, and is well acquainted with his manner and

stile, may easily observe.

(g) For my own part, says honest *Plutarch*, I had rather men shou'd say of me, "that there neither is, nor ever was, such a one as PLUTARCH;" than they shou'd say, "there was a PLUTARCH, an unsteady, changeable, easily provokable, and revengeful Man; ἄνθρωπος ἀβέβαιος, εὐμετάβολος, εὐχερῆς πρὸς ὀργήν, μικρόλυπος, &c." *Plutarch*. De Superstitione.

(h) See I *Kings* ch. 22. ver. 20, &c. and 2 *Chron.* ch. 18. ver. 19, &c. And in vol. III MISC. II. ch. 3.

(i) So again, *Sat.* 5. ver. 97. *Gnatia lymphis iratis exstructa*: where HORACE wittily treats the people of *Gnatia* as *lymphaticks* and enthusiasts, for believing a miracle of their priests: *Credat Judeus Apella*. Hor. *ibid.* See HEINSIUS and TORRENTIUS; and the quotation following, ὑπὸ τῶν νυμφῶν, &c.

(j) See MISC. II. ch. 2. in the beginning.

(k) Ἐρ' οἶσθ' ὅτι ὑπὸ τῶν νυμφῶν ἐκ προνοίας σαφῶς ἐνθουσιάσω.  
... τοσαῦτα μὲν σοι καὶ ἔτι πλείω ἔχω μανίας γιγνομένης ἀπὸ  
θεῶν λέγειν καλὰ ἔργα, &c. Phædr. Καὶ τοὺς πολιτικούς οὐχ  
<57> ἤχισα τούτων φαίμεν ἂν θεῖους τε εἶναι καὶ ἐνθουσιάζειν. Meno.  
Ἔγνω οὖν αὖ καὶ περὶ τῶν ποιητῶν ἐν ὀλίγῳ τοῦτο ὅτι οὐ σοφία  
ποιοῖεν, ἀλλὰ φύσει τινὶ καὶ ἐνθουσιάζοντες ὥσπερ οἱ θεομάντεις  
καὶ οἱ χρησμῶδοί. Apol. In particular as to *philosophers*, PLUTARCH tells us 'twas the  
complaint of some of the four old *Romans*, when learning first came to them from *Greece*,  
that their youth grew *enthusiastick* with philosophy. For speaking of one of the  
philosophers of the *Athenian Embassy*, he says,  
Ἐρωτα δεινὸν ἐμβέβληκε τοῖς νέοις ὑφ' οὗ τῶν ἄλλων ἡδονῶν  
καὶ διατριβῶν ἐκπέσοντες ἐνθουσιῶσι περὶ φιλοσοφίαν. Plut. in vit. Cat. Major.

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