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THE ETHICS OF THE RAMBLER ESSAYS

THE S I S

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. Johnson's two hundred and eight Rambler Essays were published singly, twice a week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays, throughout the years 1750 - 1752. They were intended to provide society, and the women especially, with aphorisms which would have a direct moral value in their daily lives. Only occasionally does the learned man attempt to amuse; and in those cases, for the most part, we have him inserting these essays in the form of letters to the paper. There is therefore wide variety of subject-matter, but with much the same moral teachings to be found throughout.

One great writer has said that Dr. Johnson's Rambler is a book every library should, and usually does, contain, but is a volume which is seldom, if ever, taken down from the shelves. If true, this is indeed a pity; for in these essays is contained a perfect picture of the manners and customs of the eighteenth century, together with its orthodox religion, and its practical principles of morality. The essays, too, run through the whole gamut of emotions, and are very human indeed, revealing the many-sided personality of their author.

Dr. Johnson said, "My purpose is to consider the moral discipline of the mind, and to promote the increase of virtue rather than of learning." (1) Therefore a professed moralist, we find him, and it has been my task, and pleasure, to work out his complete system of ethics, as he taught them through the pages of the two hundred and eight Rambler essays.

(1) Essay 8.

Nor do I apologize for such a work, for does not Johnson himself say, "For what are treatises on morality, but persuasives to the practice of duties, for which no arguments would be necessary, but that we are continually tempted to violate or neglect them." (1) "The excellence of aphorisms consists in the comprehension of some obvious and useful truth in a few words." (2) We frequently fall into error because such maxims are not remembered.....

"He may therefore justly be numbered among the benefactors of mankind, who contracts the great rules of life into short sentences, that may be easily impressed on the memory." (3)

Though I have not, unfortunately, been able to reduce these moral teachings into very short sentences, I have at any rate endeavoured to collect the many references to morality, and arrange them in a logical system of ethics. So far as I know, this has not as yet been done, and this is, therefore, respectfully submitted.

The Table of Contents will suggest the scope of the work. I have acknowledged my books of reference in all footnotes, so I do not repeat them here.

(1) Essay 175.

(2) " "

(3) " "

Though Johnson is noted for his definition of words in his Dictionary, his definitions of terms in psychology are still those in use in the eighteenth century. Accordingly we meet not with the "instinctive tendencies" to action of McDougal, but with the terms of the Faculty Psychology.

Johnson has summarized his ideas of psychology in an essay entitled "The Climacterics of the Mind". "Our minds," he says, "are committed in a great measure first to the direction of others, and afterwards of ourselves." (1) In adolescence, when all knowledge is beginning to open before us, all are possessed by a "power of the soul" - a vivacious and desultory curiosity. Only at last do we become cold and insensible to the charms of falsehood, and imitations of truth, and transfer our affections to Truth itself. Then the reign of Reason, of Judgment, begins. We argue, analyze, and synthesize. The Passions reign during the next stage of life while the mind contemplates her own attainments. The natural desires of man, which must be controlled by Reason are: happiness, in youth, owing to the novelty of life; wealth, to which every man aspires at one time or another; power, which all wish to attain within their circle of action; fame, which no one has yet been able to despise; prudence, and foresight, which each endeavours to use in planning for the lasting pleasures of the future. Avarice is an appetite of the latter part of life. Thus in common life, Reason and Conscience have only the appetites and passions (2) to encounter; but in higher stations they must oppose artifice and adulation.

(1) Essay 151 A.

(2) Essay 172 g.

CONSCIENCE:-

There are but three references in Johnson's Essays to conscience as such, but from these three the following things may be learned:-

What it is:- It is both positive and negative, in that it forbids and enjoins with reference to special cases, bringing with it a feeling of disquiet when things are wrong, and a feeling of content when things are right. Few that wander in the wrong way mistake it for the right; they only find it more smooth and flowery and indulge their own choice, rather than approve it. Some rejoice because there are others "equally bad," but "no man yet was wicked without secret discontent, and according to the different degrees of remaining virtue, or unextinguished reason, he either endeavours to reform himself or corrupt others." (1) Every mind feels disquiet from known misconduct. Thus conscience is decidedly a feeling of right and wrong.

Its Relation to Reason:-

Conscience for Johnson, is decidedly not a reasoning faculty, though it is undoubtedly justified by reason; and reason is an infallible guide to conduct. "He that could withstand conscience is frighted at infamy, and shame prevails where Reason was defeated."

Its Relation to Experience:-

Johnson makes a careful note about the relation of conscience to other people's opinions - He says, "Every man should regulate his actions by his own conscience without any regard to the opinions of the rest of the world. If we make the praise or blame of others the rule of our conduct, we shall be distracted by a boundless variety of irreconcilable judgments, be held in perpetual suspense between contrary impulses, and consult forever without determination." (2)

Conscience, then, is not a 'Value Judgment' of better and worse, but an intuitive feeling of right and wrong.

(1) Essay 76

(2) Essay 23.

Innate Ideas

Johnson's theory of innate ideas bears a close relation to the "instinctive tendencies" of McDougal. He maintains that every man is born with a mind formed for certain purposes, and with desires unalterably determined to particular objects which will produce happiness or misery if pursued. We are made by nature ambitious, covetous, and the like. So there are souls born to soar, and others for little employments. The first may have many confused ideas, while the latter are accurate yet without dignity.(1)

MEMORY

Memory is for Johnson a moral faculty. Present pleasure is not always possible nor probable, hence memory plays an important part in increasing both our happiness and our virtue. It seems to be the possession of humans above the animals. Johnson defined memory as "the purveyor of reason, the power which places those images before the mind upon which the judgment is to be exercised, and which treasures up the determinations that are once passed, as the rules of future action, or grounds of subsequent conclusions."(2) It is indeed, the faculty of remembrance which may be said to place us in the class of moral agents. If we were to act only in consequence of some immediate impulse, and receive no direction from internal motives of choice, we should be pushed forward by an invincible fatality, without power or reason for the most part to prefer one thing to another, because we could make no comparisons but of objects which might both happen to be present. The present being in perpetual motion, almost all we can enjoy is the past or future.

In Old Age, Memory is a consciousness of pleasure in reflection. It looks backward with joy to a virtuous past. Therefore we must use the present moment in such a way that its effect to come

(1) Essay 43

(2) Essay 41.

will be only for the good. At the end of life, happiness can be drawn only from recollection, and virtue will be all that we can recollect with pleasure.

Thus memory is for Johnson a reflective moral faculty. This seems to be a unique and interesting theory of memory, in the History of Psychology.

REASON

It is recorded by Arthur Murphy that "Johnson was a born logician; one of those, to whom only books of logic are said to be of use. In consequence of his skill in that art, he loved argumentation. No man thought more profoundly, nor with such acute discernment. A fallacy could not stand before him; it was sure to be refuted by strength of reasoning, and a precision both in idea and expression almost unequalled." (1) Reason is not only for Dr. Johnson the only infallible guide to conduct, but it is, in his own words, "the great distinction of human nature, the faculty by which we approach to some degree of association with celestial intelligences." (2) It is the business of reason to rule over all the perceptions of sense, the prejudices of the mind, and the passions of the soul. (3) Even the thoughts are to be brought under regulation as they respect the past, the present, and the future. "My purpose is to consider the moral discipline of the mind, and to promote the increase of virtue rather than of learning. All action has its origin in the mind, and therefore to suffer the thoughts to be vitiated, is to poison the fountains of morality; irregular desires will produce licentious practices; what men allow themselves to wish they will soon believe, and will at last be incited to execute

(1) Murphy, intro. to Johnson's Works, vol. 1. p.30.

(2) Essay 162 b.

(3) " 155 b.

what they please themselves with contriving." (1) Johnson concludes, therefore, that what it is a crime to do, it is a crime to think, Reason must keep constant guard over imagination.

In like manner, the perceptions of sense come under its domain. Few people have strength of reason to overrule these perceptions, hence first impressions of people are sometimes lasting ones. Thus the grossness of vulgar habits obstructs the efficacy of virtue. We must in time subject to reason all prejudices, to separate the real character from superficial appearances. Reason must so analyze a man's character as to consider his inclinations as well as his actions, to trace out those virtues which lie torpid in the heart for want of opportunity, and those vices that lurk unseen by the absence of temptation.(2)

It is not till we reach the age of maturity that the reign of reason, of judgment begins. On the voyage of life, many are irresistibly borne away whence they know not by Pleasure Others are crushed on the rocks and drowned in whirlpools who are led by false intelligence, or lack of caution. Some are turned aside by Chance. The Gulf of Intemperance beckons with Ease and Pleasure and only by the guide of Reason can they escape. (4) "Nothing which reason condemns can be suitable to the dignity of the human mind."(5)

(1) Essay 8.

(2) There is a contradiction here. Johnson has elsewhere said that it is by the consequences of a man's actions we must judge him, not by his motives. See Sec. 'Conscience'.

(3) Essay 151 c.

(4) Essay 102 f.

(5) Essay 185 b.

In a most interesting and instructive essay entitled, "The Majority Are Wicked", (1) Johnson places before us his fundamental assumption that all are possessed with certain tendencies to evil, which it is the business of the moralist to reveal. "For what are treatises of morality," says he, "but persuasives to the practice of duties, for which no arguments would be necessary, but that we are continually tempted to violate or neglect them." "Virtue, presented singly to the imagination or the reason, is so well recommended by its own graces, and so strongly supported by arguments, that a good man wonders how any can be bad; and they who are ignorant of the force of passion and interest, who never observe the arts of seduction, the contagion of example, the gradual descent from one crime to another, or the insensible depravation of the principles by loose conversation, naturally expect to find integrity in every bosom, and veracity on every tongue. Credulity is the common failing of inexperienced virtue. There is no wish, no ambition, no desire, which by indulgence will not be enabled to overpower the influence of virtue." There is a suggestion here of over indulgence, similar to Aristotle's "Theory of Extremes". Throughout all his essays, Johnson is an enthusiastic exponent of the Aristotelian mean of conduct. In essay twenty-five, we have the following, "To walk with circumspection and steadiness in the right path at an equal distance between the extremes of error, ought to be the constant endeavour of every reasonable being."

Johnson believes that at no time is ignorance a cure for

(1) Essay 175.

vice, but that earlier knowledge of wrong-doing would save many from misconduct. For it is necessary that vice should be shown, and it should always disgust; nor should the grace of gaiety or the dignity of courage be so united with it, as to reconcile it to the mind. Wherever it appears it should raise hatred by the malignity of its practices, and contempt by the meanness of its stratagems. It is therefore to be steadily inculcated that virtue is the highest proof of understanding, and the only solid basis of greatness; and that vice is the natural consequence of narrow thoughts; that it begins in mistake, and ends in ignominy.(1) So much the more is it to be despised in that it, spiritless and timorous, seeks the shelter of crowds, and the support of confederacy; whereas virtue can stand without assistance and is quite indifferent to approbation. (2)

Nor is the possession of knowledge a safeguard to virtue, for few men have it in their power to act in accordance with their thoughts in all times and in all places. Therefore all moralists are not always exemplary, and one may kindle in the hearts of thousands that flame which burns but dimly in himself. We cannot but remember the idealistic teachings of "Paradise Lost" which so ill accorded with Milton's domestic life. In Johnson's words, "The vicious moralist may be considered as a taper, by which we are lighted through the labyrinth of complicated passions; he extends his radiance further than his heat, and guides all that are within view, but burns only those who make too near approach."(3)

In Johnson's opinion, those who depart to solitude in order to concoct lewdness have no punishment great enough. The

(1) Essay 4.

(2) Essay 172 d.

(3) Essay 77 c.

man who commits one quick act is far better pardoned, because he has not reflected long on villainy. If a man has lost the sense of right and wrong, he has lost his social nature.

Likewise, in proportion as the power of doing right is enlarged, the temptations to do ill are multiplied and enforced.(1) Even uncertainty as to the right lines of conduct supplies no excuse for Johnson. Far better is it to do one's own task steadily and faithfully, than with all promises of fair deeds, dream of another.

FLATTERY.

One of the lesser evils dealt with by Johnson, is Flattery. In early society, men were valued for their contribution to the life of the tribe. One of the best examples of this is found in Barrie's play "The Admirable Crichton"; but in this false civilization, regard rests on a property basis. Man is valued and praised, not for his worth, but for his possessions. Thus by the subtle arts of flattery, the hypocrite strives to please. It is a truism that he who is desirous to be loved, will soon learn to flatter. The daughters of Lear were no exception. Johnson is even more emphatic on this point; he says, "None can be pleased without praise, and few can be praised without falsehood."(2) In essay one hundred and five, he describes a dream of the Temple of Justice and Truth, where all may bring of their substance, and have their fears set at rest. The Patron of Literature is turned away along with the thieves and robbers, because he covets flattery from his admirers, and dedications to his cleverness. (3)

Throughout the essays he maintains that praise must be merited, and flattery is an abomination.

(1) Essay 63 b.
(2) " 104

(3) Essay 105 b.

PRIDE.

One of the roots of many evils is Pride. Anger, for instance, is one of the great disturbers of human life, the chief enemy both of public happiness, and of private tranquillity. Pride is undoubtedly the original of anger; but pride, like every other passion, if it once breaks loose from reason, counteracts its own purposes. Narrow knowledge and weak arguments seek to be heard by anger. Anger raises only contempt and hatred, emotions which wisdom and virtue would always condemn. (1) A deed done in anger requires forgiveness, and that right early, for every passion is more easily subdued before it has long taken possession of the heart. "A wise man will make haste to forgive", yet pride is the only thing which withholds us, and all pride is abject and mean. (2)

Pride causes Affectation, a perpetual disguise of the real character by fictitious appearances, for it is not folly but pride, not error but deceit, which the world means to persecute, when it raises the full cry of nature to hunt down affectation. Contempt is the proper punishment of affectation, and detestation is the just consequence of hypocrisy. (3)

IDLENESS.

Another vice dealt carefully with by Johnson, is that of Idleness. In a letter written to the author of the Rambler, the writer belittles the idle waste of ability of a Club of Antiquaries, whose whole business is the collection of different antiques. Yet even here, in his fair-minded way, Johnson observes that he who does his best, however little, is to be distinguished from who who does nothing. Sanction is given to the "hobby habit", in the following words, "Whatever lures the mind without corrupting it, has at least this use, that it rescues the day from idleness, and he that is never idle will

(1) Essay 11. (2) Essay 185 c. (3) Essay 20.

not be vicious." (1)

Nor does he rest with this statement, but in an essay entitled "The Mischiefs of Total Idleness", (2) he points out that the sportsman works quite as hard as the soldier without being aware of the effort involved; and this is a good thing, for the vital powers grow in proportion to their exercise. He who thinks he must needs sleep or rest after each meal certainly will have to, but mind and body should be kept in action. Even students, geni, etc., should preserve their minds from being "cankered by the rust of their own thoughts". Idleness should be excluded from solitary moments. To be idle is to be vicious.(2)

Procrastination, one of the most pertinacious of the passions, is a direct outcome of idleness. "The folly of allowing ourselves to delay what we know cannot be finally escaped, is one of the general weaknesses which in spite of the instruction of moralists, and the remonstrances of reason, prevail to a greater or less degree in every mind. Thus life is languished away in the gloom of anxiety, and consumed in collecting resolution which the next morning dissipates. Our firmness is impaired by the contemplation of misery."(3) No procrastination relieves the anguish of anticipation, for to act is far easier than to suffer.

Idleness will never procure tranquillity for the sluggard. For his sleep will ever be disturbed by the call of reason and of conscience. So many, believing life to be long, are content to dream of their plans for the future. The wise man, knowing life may be cut off at any

(1) Essay 177.

(3) Essay 134.

(2) " 85.

time, will hasten to prosecute whatever he is desirous of performing. It is true that no diligence can ascertain success, but he who is cut off in the midst of an honest undertaking, has at least "the honour of falling in his rank, and has bought the battle, though he missed the victory."(1)

ENVY.

The great law of Mutual Benevolence is more often violated by Envy than by Interest. For there are more who would poison the banquet they cannot partake of than attack in the open. Envy has no limits, is cowardly, works in the dark like a poisonous gas; lies, scandal, calumnies, are its means. Envy is almost the only vice which is practicable at all times, and in every place. The happiness of life would be advanced by the eradication of envy from the human heart. When a man attains great success, it is then he hears of the frivolities of his youth, and of his ignoble past. Envy is a stubborn weed of the mind and seldom yields to the culture of philosophy. It sacrifices truth and kindness to very weak temptations. Envy is unmixed and genuine evil. (2)

SINS OF WOMEN.

"To prevent evil is the great end of government," says Johnson, "But surely those whom passion or interest have already depraved, have some claim to compassion from beings equally frail and fallible with themselves." (3) It is most interesting to note that Johnson has in mind here the frail woman of the eighteenth century. In a pathetic, yet very frank essay, he has revealed the miseries of a prostitute, and begs for government protection for such unfortunate women who have no place to go, and who are without the protection of the law.

(1) Essay 134.

(2) Essay 183.

(3) Essay 107.

He makes it very clear that in this and similar cases it is ignorance has caused their downfall, and lack of help and the attitude of society, has been responsible for keeping them there. Given a chance there are very few, if any, who would not gladly seize it, and go abroad even, to live new and better lives. His message is as important to society now as then. "I am convinced that nothing would more powerfully preserve youth from irregularity, or guard inexperience from seduction, than a just description of the condition into which the wanton plunges herself."(1)

CALAMITY.

What then is our attitude toward suffering to be? Daily experience makes it evident that misfortunes are unaboidably incident to human life. When man realizes his miseries are common to the rest of the species, he will be free from the temptation of seeking, by perpetual changes, that ease which is nowhere to be found. "Calamity will never be repelled by fortitude, nor escaped by flight; neither awed by greatness, nor eluded by obscurity. The antidotes with which philosophy has medicated the cup of life, though they cannot give it salubrity and sweetness, have at least allayed its bitterness, and contempered its malignity; the balm which she drops upon the wounds of the mind, abates their pain, though it cannot heal them. By suffering willingly what we cannot avoid, we secure ourselves from vain and immoderate disquiet; we preserve for better purposes that strength which would be unprofitably wasted in wild efforts of desperation, and maintain that circumspection which may enable us to seize every

(1) Essay 107 b.

support and improve every alleviation. This calmness will be more easily obtained as the attention is more powerfully withdrawn from the contemplation of unmingled, unabated evil, and diverted to those accidental benefits which prudence may confer on every state." (1) Thus adversity is seen to be useful to the acquisition of knowledge. Seneca has attempted not only to pacify us to misfortune but almost to allure us to it, by representing it as necessary to the pleasures of the mind. The following quotations will show that Johnson was of the same opinion.

"He that was never acquainted with adversity has seen the world but on one side, and is ignorant of half the scenes of nature."

"Adversity has opportunities of observation not found in continual success."

"To escape misfortune is to want instruction."

"To live at ease is to live in ignorance." (2)

And finally he concludes that the experience of calamity is necessary to a just sense of better fortune; for the good of our present state is merely comparative, and the evil which every man feels will be sufficient to disturb and harass him, if he does not know how much he escapes.

That fortitude which has encountered no dangers; that prudence which has surmounted no difficulties; that integrity which has been attacked by no temptations, can at best be considered but as gold not yet brought to the test, of which, therefore, the true value cannot be assigned.

(1) Essay 150.

(2) Essay 150 b.

Granting that adversity is a means of acquiring a vaster experience of life, there are still other ways of looking at evil, and Johnson is many-sided in his views.

HOW TO COMBAT EVIL:-

Fear is implanted in us as a preservative against evil, but its duty, like other passions, is not to overbear reason but to assist it. (1) Many men and most children will be good from fear of punishment, who would not otherwise be so; and the end, virtue, is attained, though not in the most noble way.

The Stoics attempted to disregard pain, disease, loss of friends, by contending that they were not evils, and therefore should not be even considered. Johnson thinks such Stoicism is vain and unreasonable, for there are evils existent in the world, and it is necessary that we know how to meet them. (2) "Another great remedy which Heaven has put in our hands, is Patience, by which though we cannot lessen the torments of the body, we can in a great measure preserve the peace of the mind. Rage and turbulence incline to despisement." (3)

Impatience can have no present effect, except to drive away those who might comfort. It wastes time in complaints which could be more usefully spent in removing the cause. Vain regret is useless. Repair the injury. Patience and submission are not cowardice and indolence. Do not blame evils on Providence of God, see what you can do to better them.

Though Johnson has so criticized the Stoics, he is

(1) Essay 125

(2) Essay 66.

(3) Essay 32.

most stoical himself, in that he thinks, that we cannot feel our maladies when they are too dreadful to be borne, for at that time insensibility comes. The endurance of the body and the mind seems to me to be quite over-estimated. "I think, " says he, "there is some reason for questioning whether the body and mind are not so proportioned that the one can bear all that can be inflicted on the other, whether virtue cannot stand its ground as long as life, and whether a soul well principled will not be separated rather than subdued." (1)

We have many examples in history and around us of minds which have lost their powers of reason through the unsatisfied wants of the body, and of bodies impaired through the neglect by the mind.

MORAL VALUE OF:-

Sorrow is one of the emotions which has for Johnson a moral value. The value, it is true, comes in the overcoming of the emotion, not in its indulgence. (1) So he first describes the state, and afterwards suggests the remedies. We are always prone to go for sympathy when in trouble, to those who have suffered, and come out victorious.

DESCRIPTION OF ITS STATE:-

"It is the part of a man to be affected with grief, to feel sorrow, at the same time he is to resist it, and to admit of comfort," (2) said the Earl of Orrery. Most passions naturally hasten to their own extinction by inciting and quickening the attainment of their object. For example, the emotion of fear gives rise to the action of flight. But for sorrow there is no remedy devised by nature. It requires what it cannot hope, that the laws of the universe should be repealed, that the dead should return. In sorrow, our desires are fixed in the past, and we lament for something irretrievably lost. Sorrow is laudable as the offspring of Love, yet must not be over-indulged. Sometimes dejection and despair set in when there seems no hope of assuaging it. Johnson would therefore not agree with the popular adage, "It is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all." Some would therefore never love a person for fear of losing him. But as no man can justly claim more tenderness than he pays, he must forfeit his share in that officious and watchful kindness which love only can dictate, and those lenient endearments by which love, only, can soften life. We should endeavour to raise life above apathy at one point, as it will certainly sink below

(1) Essay 47.
(2) Essay 47 a.

at others.

SUGGESTED CURES FOR SORROW:-

Johnson suggests three cures for sorrow. The first is to drag the sorrowing one into merriment. But this he admits himself is too violent. The second is an attempt to soothe the wounded heart into tranquillity, especially by reflecting on the worse sorrows of others. It is the custom to sympathize with those in distress by telling of the greater calamities that have befallen ourselves. For example, it is surprising when one is suffering from some disease, how many there will be most eager to tell of the pains they suffered in similar cases. It is more useful to spend the mind in meditation. It furnishes a new employment, and fixes the passions on more remote objects. The attention is dissipated by variety, and sometimes we thank God we are not as other men are. This indeed is Pharisaic, but Johnson claims fortitude is developed in this way. Some bear affliction better, by considering how others before them have been courageous.

The third remedy suggested, is that of the employment of one's thoughts, time, and ability, on another task. This is really a sublimation of energy, and a re-direction of activity. Here we have the most reasonable remedy.

"Sorrow is a kind of rust of the soul, which every new idea contributes in its passage to scour away." (1)

- Johnson.

"Is fame your passion? Wisdom's powerful charm, if thrice read over, shall its force disarm." -- Francis. (Homer)

DEFINITION OF:-

"Fame is a desire of filling the minds of others with admiration, and of being celebrated by generations to come with praises which we shall not hear". (1) During our life-time, it is good to be admired, but of what avail in death? But on the other hand, if we suppose the powers of the soul to be enlarged by its separation, why should we conclude that its knowledge of sublunary transactions is contracted or extinguished?

Vanity is the petty ambition that we are all prone to. Desire for fame may cause the mind to demand it, whether it be a wicked or a good reputation that is to be established. Therefore it is dangerous and irregular. But it may be used - not abused - as a means to a better end. Virtue must never be pursued as a means to fame. Whereas fame is the only recompense which mortals can bestow on virtue. (2)

In an essay entitled "The Narrowness of Fame", Johnson reminds us of VonHartmann in his pessimism, though he has none of his bitterness. He points out that all are engaged equally seriously in their own pursuits, and care very little for the labours of other men. Therefore we must raise our eyes to higher prospects than the hope of fame. (3)

Fame is one of the most painful of all pursuits, as even the most despised can withhold happiness from one by his silence. (4) A would-be author is amazed that none has

(1) Essay 49.

(3) Essay 118.

(2) " 66 b.

(4) " 146.

read his book, and learns that works of genius have made their way slowly against ignorance and prejudice, and reputation must be gradually obtained.

RULES FOR THE ACQUISITION OF:-

Aristotle had bade those who would learn the science of government to first read and digest the learning of the ancients, and then to study the conditions of the present. His rules for acquiring lasting fame are as follows:

One- search books, two-contemplate nature. It was the characteristic of the eighteenth century to neglect and scorn the Ancients, and to attempt to develop one's own genius. Johnson says, "They cut the knots of sophistry which it was formerly the business of years to untie; to solve difficulties by sudden irradiations of intelligence; and to comprehend long processes of argument by immediate intuition." (1) Man flatters himself if he but gains superiority over his fellow idlers. Yet surely he who has the gift of genius should be urged to labour, not to negligence.

"Not to know what has been transacted in former times is to continued always a child," (2) said Cicero, and it is reiterated by Johnson. Great discoveries are made by men of genius only because of a happy coincidence of concurrent events. Every man of genius should be content to learn from books, so as to benefit from others' experience without waste of time and energy. He that wishes to be counted among the benefactors of society, must add by his own toil, to the acquisitions of his ancestors, and secure his memory from neglect by some valuable improvement. No man has ever yet become great by imitation. Either truths unknown must be discovered, or those which are already known must be enforced by stronger evidence, facilitated

by clearer method, or elucidated by brighter illustrations.
"Fame cannot spread wide, or endure long, that is not rooted in nature, and manured by art. That which hopes to resist the blast of malignity, and stand firm against the attacks of time, must contain in itself some original principle of growth." (1)

Labour is necessary to excellence. Works designed for perpetuity, art or literature, usually take much long and careful preparation. Few geni aspire to fame by impromptu sellers. In proportion as perfection is more distinctly conceived, the pleasure of contemplating our own performance will be lessened. "I please everyone else," says Tully, "but never satisfy myself." (2) He reminds us of the poet who wrote,

"Polished with endless toil, my lays,
At length aspire to Mantuan praise." (3)

MISERIES OF LITERARY EMINENCE:-

Literary emience once attained has also its dangers and its miseries. Johnson quotes an author as confessing, "I have now found that nothing is so expensive as great ability, unless there is joined with it an insatiable eagerness of praise. I have now made myself too eminent for happiness, for I am no longer able to enjoy the pleasure of mixing, upon equal terms, with the rest of the world. I have made myself too great for friendship or society, and am condemned to solitude by unhappy elevation and dreaded ascendancy. Others may be persecuted, but I am haunted." (4)

POSTHUMOUS FAME.

Some look for posthumous fame. Thus every period of life is obliged to borrow its happiness from the time to come. "Reputation is therefore a meteor which blazes awhile, and disappears forever." (5)

(1) Essay 154 b.

(3) Essay 169 b.

(5) Essay 203 c.

(2) " 169 a.

(4) " 15

Johnson concludes therefore that love of fame is to be regulated, rather than extinguished. Men should endeavour to be remembered chiefly for their virtues. We should hope that with our name our virtues only will be recorded, and those whom we could not touch in life, may afterward be benefited by our influence.

INTRODUCTION:

In the course of some sixteen essays, Johnson deals with this most fascinating topic. He does not treat it from the economic standpoint, as did Adam Smith, but from the ethical. Johnson maintains that deeply rooted in every breast the desire for gain is the general passion. Wealth is the general centre of inclination; whatever is the remote or ultimate design, the immediate care is to be rich. All desire it because there is scarcely any desire that its possession cannot satisfy. It is to be procured by fair means or foul. Laborious activity is too long for many, so subtle arts of filching are easily adopted. Wealth brings its own protection for once attained, the person is highly respected. Yet, "to have it is to be in fear, and to want it is to be in sorrow." (1) Johnson thinks the race of man may be divided, in a political estimate, into two classes, first those who are practising fraud, and secondly, those who are repelling it. We are told that one of the chief characteristics of the Golden Age, of the age in which neither care nor danger had intruded on mankind, was the community of possession; strife and fraud were totally excluded, and every turbulent passion was stilled by plenty and equality. Such times can return no more, for community of possession must include spontaneity of production; for what is obtained by labour will be by right the property of him by whose labour it is gained; and because there are those who wish the fruits without the labour, 'the victory without the danger'; (2) this can never be. In another essay Johnson remarks that every man aspires to wealth at one time or another. (3)

(1) Essay 131.
(2) " 131 b.

(3) Essay 151.

DEFINITION OF WEALTH

Riches are of no value in themselves, their use is discovered only in that which they can procure. (1) Every man is rich or poor according to the proportion between his desires and his true enjoyments. (2) Wealth is at one time referred to as "Golden Shackles," by which the wearer is at once disabled and adorned. At another time, wealth is referred to as "luscious poisons, which may for a time please the palate, but soon betray their malignity by languor and by pain." (3)

THE ILL EFFECTS OF WEALTH

In order to depict the mischiefs of extravagance, Johnson inserts in essay twenty-six a letter from a young man, left in charge of his wealthy uncle, who sent him to college. There he spent lavish sums on school-boy activities, possibly with the Bullington Club in Oxford, and finally quarrelled with his uncle. He went to London, became dependent on his friends, and utterly miserable. His own estate was now much less than his uncle's former allowance. The evils of his new state were rendered worse as he reflected on his previous life of luxury.

"Such is the power of wealth, that it commands the ear of greatness, and the eye of beauty. It gives spirit to the dull, and authority to the timorous. It leaves him from whom it departs without virtue and without understanding, the sport of caprice, the scoff of insolence, the slave of meanness, and the pupil of ignorance." (4) Such is the treatment incurred by the loss of fortune.

(1) Essay 202.

(2) " 163

(4) Essay 153.

(3) " 202.

"Absurd," remarks Johnson. It is the fate of almost every passion when it has passed the bounds which nature prescribes, to counteract its own purpose. Too much ardour bring no easiness in love. Too much extravagance brings no applause or pleasure ultimately. Prodigality is praised only by inferiors such as tailors, caterers, and the like, who turn again when they are no longer fed. To make any happiness sincere, it is necessary that we believe it to be lasting. Therefore how can one enjoy indulgence knowing poverty is tramping on one's heels? Frugality should be tempered with the pleasure of expense, or vain regret and remorse will follow.(1)

There different acceptations of poverty as there are of wealth. Thus Johnson thinks that the Cynics and the monks were not poor. Poverty without misery is envied by the rich. "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown.", was as true in Johnson's day as in our own, for he says, "Such are the blessings to be obtained by the resignation of riches, that kings might descend from their thrones, and generals retire from a triumph, only to slumber, undisturbed, in the Elysium of poverty." Poverty can be enjoyed unenvied and may be easily endured while it is associated with dignity and reputation; but it will always be shunned and dreaded when it is accompanied with ignominy and contempt.

Poverty undoubtedly at other times is accompanied by the misery of dependence. For instance, a boy wrote to the Rambler who had been sent with his sister to live with an uncle and aunt. At first they were received with politeness
(L) Essay 53.

and frigid courtesy. Then as their dependent state came to the fore, they were mistreated, neglected, teased and even insulted. His sister's beauty and grace attracted deceitful admirers, and his confidence and dignity robbed them of respect. Poverty was undoubtedly responsible.

PHILOSOPHY OF WEALTH.

Johnson, in essay fifty-seven, gives what he calls some sententious rules of frugality. Frugality if it be not a virtue is at least a quality which can seldom exist without some virtue, and without which few virtues can exist. Frugality is said to be "The Daughter of Prudence, a sister to Temperance, and the Parent of Liberty." Each man by frugal practice should be able to assure himself of cheerful competence in the decline of his life. It is dangerous to indulge hopes of a sudden rise to riches. "A penny saved is two pence got." (1) With every victory over appetite or passion new strength is added to the mind. Therefore Johnson gives these rules:-

"A man's voluntary expense should not exceed his revenue."

"Let no man anticipate uncertain profits."

"Let no man squander against his inclination." (1)

The exact valuation of human life seems very little to have affected morality, so that wealth is acquired instead of wisdom. (2)

The relation between wealth and love and the excellence of the latter is seen in the following story. Abenzain, the son of Morad, who had seen his father languish alone after he had lavished his fortune on others, received these precepts:

(1) Essay 57.

(2) Essay 71.

Nothing has been longer observed, than that a change of fortune causes a change of manner. It is generally agreed that few men are made better by affluence or exaltation, and that the powers of the mind more frequently luxuriate into follies than blossom into goodness. Nor is this change in manners observable only in the proud possessors of wealth, but also in their so-called friends. When our contemporaries attain good fortune, we either envy them, or accuse them of having used subtle arts in its attainment. Riches perhaps do not so often produce crimes as incite accusers. In time when the novelty of riches, and their products, wears off, we realize that the cooperation of others is necessary is necessary to our happiness. Yet the advice and criticism of sincere friends is lacking to the wealthy, as a general rule. This makes their lives more difficult as one seldom sees himself as others see him. We tend to rate ourselves by our fortune rather than by our virtue. The effect on character is easily seen, especially as there are more temptations in higher life.(1)

It is quite a common fallacy that to be rich is to be happy. This conviction is quite mistaken. Wealth cannot always heal disease, or assuage sorrow. (2) Nor does it quicken the discernment of the mind. It is only important for what it can purchase, and these purchases are relatively very limited. True it is that money in whatever hands will confer power. Nor will power at all times procure the needs of man. An interesting account illustrating this fact is given of Squire Bluster.(3) Fortune had given to the Squire the means of happiness, but this was not sufficient to assure it. His mind was so depraved

(1) Essay 172
(2) Essay 58

(3) Essay 142

that he possessed wealth without followers, and was magnificent without witnesses. He had birth without alliance, and influence without dignity.

There is no better way of testing the fidelity or infidelity of friends than by the acquisition of wealth. Johnson thinks that the rich and the powerful live in a perpetual masquerade, in which all about them wear borrowed characters. Born into a large fortune, Melissa took pain to cultivate herself in culture and education. She had beauty, health and other attributes, being "the quintessence of every sprite", admired and flattered by all. But the flatterer is not always detected; for the honest mind is not apt to suspect. This is just another instance proving the fact that the world is never known but by a change of fortune.(1) The masquerade theory is further developed in another essay wherein Johnson tells how a young girl Misella, who was one of a large family, was adopted by a wealthy cousin. At first she was cared for, and afterward neglected, and her life finally debauched by this wealthy relative.(2)

POVERTY

Poverty is the most dreaded of human evils, probably because mind and body suffer together. Gloom, melancholy, insensibility and even sullenness are its accompaniments. Many plunge into poverty from carelessness or luxury, unthinkingly. They first indulge in excess above their incomes, and by the influence of companions sacrifice all to pleasure and vanity.(3)

(1) Essay 75

(3) Essay 53.

(2) " 170.

"Aspire not to public honours, enter not the palaces of kings; thy wealth will set thee above insults, let thy moderation keep thee below envy. Content thyself with private dignity, diffuse thy riches among thy friends; be loved by all to whom thou art known! " (1)

The only way, therefore, to escape the dangers and pitfalls of the wealthy, and the mind secure from yielding to the continual impulse of covetousness, is by a strict adherence to unchangeable and eternal motives of conduct.(2)

(1) Essay 199.

(2) Essay 131.

CHAPTER VI.

HAPPINESS

Definition of:-

"For what is greatness and happiness but independence on external influences, exemption from hope or fear, and the power of supplying every want from the common stores of nature." (1) This complete satisfaction of all desire has an important psychological need ethical significance. We must so control and regulate our desires that their satisfaction will bring about our true good. This can only be done by conforming to the Aristotelian Mean - so often mentioned by Johnson. In another essay we find, "Happiness as well as virtue consists in mediocrity." (2) The middle path is the road of security, on either side of which are not only the pitfalls of vice but the precipice of ruin.

To bear out this statement regarding Happiness Johnson tells the following story. One man in India was content with a brook to water his fields; another longed for the Ganges to irrigate his. His wish was granted; the Ganges flooded his fields and drowned himself. (3)

Happiness is therefore for Johnson a state of contentment with one's lot. For just as soon as one envies the riches of another happiness disappears. A man who grows rich changes his notion of poverty, and soon his need being satisfied, he falls into satiety, then negligence and poverty once more. We shall quote with him,

"And in himself serenely great,

Declines an envied room of state" (4)

(1) Essay 193 (b)

(3) Essay 38 (c)

(2) " 38 (b)

(4) " 38 (a)

Johnson's Theory of Happiness.

1. Where found:- or, Happiness not local.

"Active in Indolence, abroad we roam,

In quest of happiness which dwells at home." (1)

Elphinston.

Once more we find Johnson confirming happiness to that contented state of the mind, which is only experienced in quiet and comparative seclusion. To be good is to be happy, according to Johnson - and where does man have so much time to reflect on the innocence or guilt of his mind, as he has within the precincts of his own home! It is there that every man is chiefly happy or miserable. "Some virtues have their reward in the common applause of men; fame, honor, and glory are their reward. But fortitude, diligence, and patience, glide unobserved through the crowd of life. Even though a man be great in the public eye, he comes from a home, and to a home returns. It is there he is happy or miserable. " (2)

The great end of prudence is to give cheerfulness to those hours which splendor cannot gild, and acclamation cannot exhilarate. "To be happy at home is the ultimate result of all ambition, the end to which every enterprise and labor tends". (3)

(1) Essay 6 (a)

(3) Essay 68(b.)

(2) " 68

How Happiness is to be won: in Lasting Pleasures..

This topic has already been touched upon in the introduction, and definition of Happiness. But in other essays, Johnson shows us further how happiness to be sincere, must be known to be lasting. (1) For example how can one enjoy indulgence knowing poverty to be trampling upon his heels? Happiness therefore is to be sought not in temporary pleasures only, but in lasting ones. The temporary pleasure of eating for example, if over-indulged, brings on the unhappiness of the dyspeptic. "The future is purchased by the present, and it is not possible to secure distant or permanent happiness but by the forbearance of some immediate gratification. " (2)

The early education of a young Fop is described: He was kept from school, and brought up to dance attendance on the ladies. Now, in early manhood, he finds himself abandoned by both sexes, and in his miserable state of idleness and discontent, he appeals to others to cultivate the useful and dignified appertances of life. (3)

Johnson's pessimism will be referred to in conclusion, but here we must give his view regarding Pleasure. "Positive pleasure we cannot obtain; and positive pain we cannot often remove." (4) The best way to free ourselves from imaginary sufferings of heat and cold, etc., which rob as of temporary happiness even; is to contrast our state with the state of those less fortunate than we; and having counted our many blessings, be thankful. If one is sad in love - bid him read the sad story of Anningait and Ajut - the Greenland lovers, (5) and their own misery will disappear in their sympathy for these two.

(1) Essay 53 (b)

(3) Essay 109

(5) Essay 186, 187.

(2) " 178 (b)

(4) " 186 (a)

To continue, happiness is only to be won in co-operating with others. So often we rate ourselves by our fortune, rather than by our virtue. In time, however, when the novelty of riches and their products, wear off we realize that the co-operation of others is necessary to our happiness. (1) The great law of Social beings is given by Johnson as follows:- "Every person is commanded to consult the happiness of others"(2) Man is a social being, living in a social world, and he will realize with the ancients, that his own happiness is only to be found in the subordination of his personal interests, to those of the State.

Happiness too, is not a matter of idle speculation, or advanced theory, but, "Upon practice, not upon opinion depends the happiness of mankind." (3) Here again we see the importance Johnson lays on actions, and their consequences, not upon the motive to action. We are almost tempted to relate him to the later Pragmatists, though himself a theorist, his doctrines are distinctly pragmatic.

Having seen where Johnson thinks happiness is to be found, let us examine for a moment where it is not to be found.

"That man should never suffer his happiness to depend upon external circumstances, is one of the chief precepts of the Stoical Philosophy; a precept indeed which that lofty sect has extended beyond the condition of human life, and in which some of them seem to have confused an other exclusion of all corporeal pain and pleasure, from the regard or attention, of a wise man. For though the boast of absolute independence

(1) Essay 172 (b)

(3) Essay 81.

(2) " 148 (b)

is ridiculous and vain, yet a mean flexibility to every impulse, and a patient submission to to the tyranny of casual troubles, is below the dignity of that mind which, however depraved or weakened, boasts its derivation from a celestial original, and hopes for a union with infinite goodness and felicity" (1)

What are then some of the outstanding externals which man thinks necessary to his happiness? Undoubtedly Praise is universally desired. To possess it is to want more - and not to possess it, is to be miserable. "Distinction is so pleasing to the pride of man that a great part of the pain and pleasure of life arises from the gratification or disappointment of an incessant wish for superiority, from the success or miscarriage of secret competitions. We seldom require more to the happiness of the present hour, than to surpass him that stands next before us. " (2)

Having surpassed, we become famous, and "Fame", we are told, "is one of the most painful of all pursuits, as even the most despised one can withhold happiness from us by his silence -" (3) A good example of this is given in the story of a would-be author who is amazed to find that none has read his book - and countless numbers of men and women whom he accosts for praise-knowing nothing of him, wound his vanity seriously. (3)

John has just a couple references to happiness in Youth and in Old Age. In the former period of life we derive our happiness from the novelties of the experiences in which we indulge - (4) whereas in Old Age we find so often people are attempting to derive their happiness from wealth they have accumulated, whereas Piety, and the love and gratitude of children, are the essentials to happiness at this period. (5)

(1) Essay 6.
(2) " 164.

(3) Essay 146.
(4) " 151 C.
(5) " 69 A.

"The known shortness of life, as it ought to moderate our passions, may likewise with equal propriety contract our designs. There is not time for the most forcible, genius, and most active industry, to extend its effects beyond a certain sphere. Many have lost the opportunities of making themselves useful and happy, by a vain ambition of obtaining a species of honour which the eternal laws of providence have placed beyond the reach of man." (1)

Happiness in Relation to the Virtues:-

This section will deal with happiness in relation to many qualities which ethically cannot be termed virtues, or at the most deserve only the title of minor virtues. But it has seemed best to treat them in this way.

"Good humour is the balm of being; by it you do not become famous, but it is like the air, ever present, and it makes us happy, or the lack of it makes us miserable." (2) Good humour is the habit of being pleased. It is well known that the most certain way to give a man pleasure is to persuade him that you receive pleasure from him. Those who have little else to their characters, still are always popular, because of their desire to please, and the easiness with which they are pleased. Good humour, like Beauty, makes many acquaintances, and only in co-operation with others, as in friendship, shall we be happy.

Gayety and Mirth - are two qualities which both make and mar happiness. The former must be "recommended by higher qualities, and the latter can never please long but as the efflorescence of a mind loved for its luxuriance, but esteemed for its usefulness" (3)

(1) Essay 17 -2

(2) " 72

(3) " 141.

The sorrows are related of one who has posed as a wit. His work is never done. Wherever he goes - whomever he meets - all await eagerly for his bursts of witty sayings. Conversations drop - and all eyes are turned on him. He is never taken seriously, is always regarded as a clown, no matter what the meaning of his words may imply. His whole state is rendered totally miserably as a result.

In conclusion, Johnson shows himself a pietist, and maintains, as he has been said, that "To be virtuous is to be happy". "The confidence of the Divine favor and the hope of future rewards, is the only happiness--bringer." (1)

Different degrees of Virtue:-

Virtue, for Johnson, is not a static quality which men can acquire like Wisdom - but all men are Virtuous in different degrees. For example, he divides men into three different classes - In the first we have "those who have the astuteness to observe what is right and wrong of themselves." (2) These are the people who intuitively infer certain judgments - those whose conscience is very active. These are the people with deep-seated convictions. Virtue here seems to be a judgment of right.

In the second class are those who can see virtue when it is pointed out to them, and so can be taught. These people are the 'raison d'etre' of the moralists.

In the third are those who are wholly indifferent to Virtue, and who gratify their present whims in sensual pleasures.

We have all a double duty, to ourselves, and to others by our example, our praise of virtue, and our condemnation of vice.

Definition of:-

"Virtue, presented singly to the imagination or the reason, is so well recommended by its own graces, and so strongly supported by arguments, that a good man wonders how any can be bad." (3) It is therefore steadily to be inculcated that virtue is the highest proof of understanding, and the only solid basis of greatness. (4)

(1) Essay 120

(3) Essay 175 -C

(2) " 70

(4) " 4.

"Virtue must never be pursued as a reason to fame," It is an End in itself - the greatest of all ends - but never should be used as a means; "but fame is the only recompense which mortals can bestow on virtue." (1)

Virtue, where seen, is always loved. Thus the best means of teaching virtue is by example. (2) It is to be remembered too, that there can be no neutral state. We are either constantly striving toward virtue, or falling back into vice. (3).

"The utmost excellence at which humanity can arrive, is a constant and determinate pursuit of Virtue, without regard to present dangers or advantage; a continual reference of every action to the Divine Will; an habitual appeal to everlasting justice; and an unvaried elevation of the intellectual eye to the reward which perseverance only can attain". (4)

Virtue in Relation to Old Age.

A virtuous old age is always revered. (5) Yet it is the habit of the aged to bemoan the laxities of the younger generations. One of the few pursuits left to the very aged is to contemplate their own lives in reflection. In proportion as they have been virtuous will they be happy. And when at length Death comes to a man, the Virtues are seen in their proper light. Those things which he sought in his Youth, seem now but dross. Reputation, fame, praise, and riches had and were no satisfaction to a dying man. All he craved was the recollection of his acts of goodness, and religion filled his mind. (6)

"Piety is the only proper and adequate relief of decaying man," (7) said Johnson, and he concludes one essay with this sentence, "The great incentive to virtue is the reflection that we must die." (8)

(1) Essay 49 (b)

(3) Essay 103 (b)

(5) Essay 50.

(2) " 87

(4) " 185

(6) " 54.

(7) Essay 69.

(8) Essay 78 (b).

The Individual Virtues

Duty

Johnson has but a word or two on the outstanding individual virtues. But these words I shall endeavour to give.

In the first place Duty - Johnson reminds us of Kant in his theory. He says, "It may however satisfy an honest and benevolent mind to have been useful, though less conspicuous, nor will he that extends his hope to higher rewards be so much anxious to obtain praise, as to discharge the duty which Providence assigns him." (1) If Johnson were questioned as to what one's duty was, he probably would have said, "To do right, and avoid evil." The infallible guides to Duty are Reason and Conscience. The latter will also bring all rewards of goodness, in its feeling of contentment, in having won the favor of Divine Approbation. Johnson precedes Paley in this view.

"That all the duties of morality ought to be practised is without difficulty discoverable, because ignorance or uncertainty, would immediately involve the world in confusion and distress, but which duty ought to be most esteemed, we may continue to debate without inconvenience; so all be diligently performed as there is opportunity or need: for upon practice, not upon opinion, depends the happiness of mankind; and controversies, merely speculative, are of small importance in themselves, however they may have sometimes heated a disputant, or provoked a faction".(2)

(1) Essay 106

(2) Essay 81 A.

Justice.

This fascinating topic is dealt with by Johnson in only two complete essays, though reference is made in others.

The Measure of Justice - prescribed to us in our transactions with others is "a law by which every claim of right may be immediately adjusted as far as the private conscience requires to be informed; a law of which every man may find the exposition in his own breast, and which may always be observed without any other qualifications than honesty of intention, and purity of will."

The question always arises as to whether a man should seek to satisfy the unreasonable desires of another, if he is conscious of possessing those himself. Johnson makes it very evident that the desires which are to be considered by us, as the measure of right, are to be those which we approve. So we must also condemn in others those desires which we condemn in ourselves.

Another question for sophistry is that of the Judge and the criminal. Were the Judge in the latter's position he would doubtless beg for mercy. But he must remember that his is not a personal position, but rather is he the representative of the community who desires their rights to be carefully guarded by him. (1)

Justice is indispensably and universally necessary, while beneficence is elective and voluntary.

(1)

Essay 81. (b)

In a preceding essay, Johnson has described in allegorical form a "Temple of Justice," which is to be, "a universal register, an office in which every man may lodge on account of his superfluities and wants, of whatever he desires to purchase or to sell." Johnson in the protection of Curiosity is led by Chance to this Temple and is told that he is in the Presence of Justice and Truth, whom the father of gods and men has sent down to register the demands and pretensions of mankind, that the world may at last be reduced to order, and that none may complain hereafter of being doomed to tasks for which they are unqualified, of possessing faculties for which they cannot find employment, or virtues that languish unobserved for want of opportunities to exert them, or being encumbered with superfluities which they would willingly resign, or of wasting away in desires which ought to be satisfied. (2)

To this Temple approached many and diverse persons to have their problems settled by Justice and Truth . One outstanding case was that of the Patron of Literature, who made many claims for recognition, but Johnson follows his rule, which the Patron violates so often:- "Just praise is only a debt - but flattery is a present, " (3) and the Patron is turned away, a sadder and wiser man. "To believe no man in his own cause is the standing and perpetual rule of Justice." (4)

(1) Essay 105 (a)

(2) " "

(3) " 155 (a)

(4) " 77 (b)

Labour

is undoubtedly, when thoroughly performed, a Virtue, and one which Johnson was very fond of. His description of the origin of Labour is told in Allegorical form in one of his very first essays.

It seemed that at first Rest ruled the world, --- and all were happy in Innocence and Simplicity.

Later, however, men not satisfied and contented with their own lot, began to envy the happiness and possessions of others. In order to obtain these, Greed called in the aid of Fraud, and Rest was forced out.

At length came Famine, and with it many similar dwellers . Then Necessity produced Labour, who was nursed by Hope and taught by Art. In the end, Labour produced much, but all the soon Lassitude followed, and soon Rest was again sought.

This time with Rest came Luxury and again Satiety, and so Rest withdrew.

Eventually, after many experiments, Rest joined Labour, and they produced Health, who rewarded those spent their time equally between them.

Essay 33.

Labour's Reward:-

In a previous essay Johnson gives the prescription for him who wishes to become eminent by learning, he should carry in his mind at once the difficulty of excellence, and the force of industry, and remember that fame is not conferred but as the recompense of labour, and that labour vigorously continued has not often failed of its reward (1)

Throughout all the essays Johnson continually deplures the sins of Indolence and Idleness - and as these have been written, nothing more need be said about them here. Several essays deal with the misery brought about by paying attention and giving one's time to only the fopperies of life - which could be so better employed on gaining wisdom and virtue. Dr. Johnson knew what hard labour meant, and every where advised it as the cure of nearly all the ills the flesh is heir to.

It is his theory that pessimism could be removed if one ~~xxx~~ kept one's mind and body both well occupied; and in old age memory and reflection will enjoy moments well spent.

"He that hopes to look back hereafter with satisfaction upon past years, must learn to know the present value of single minutes, and endeavour to let no particle of time fall useless to the ground." (2)

Johnson has an interesting psychological theory about the mind's powers of concentration. In his opinion "no mind can stay long at hard labor," and "pogression" comes in small flights. Hence much that is great can be accomplished in seconds and minutes that people waste. "As a stream spurts on after rocky obstruction, so the intellectual ability leaps after forced lapses." (3)

Perseverance

is a virtue which is undoubtedly a part of all Labour, but seems to deserve a note by itself. Just because of these "leaps" the mind is said to take, and which Johnson in another place refers to as, "Precipitation incited by pride of intellectual superiority," (1) steadiness or perseverance, is essential in complicated schemes. In another essay Johnson uses a striking metaphor with regard to this much lauded quality. All is scalable with Perseverance, even the Pyramids; there are only two animals which can transcend them -- the eagle, and the snail; the latter by perseverance achieving the same object as did the eagle in its wonderful flights. (2)

(1) Essay 43 (b)

(2) " 137 (b)

Introduction.

Johnson is a pietist, of the typical 18th Century Anglican Church. He is a staunch supporter of Orthodoxy without question. The religion of the Period was his. Grant says of it, "The only hope of salvation was considered to be in a dull and formal orthodoxy." He attended regularly the Church of St. Clement Dane. (1) in the center of London - and occupied a pew, since famous, in the gallery. He had a profound veneration for the Church of England - was intolerant of all dissenters and dissension, which seemed to him but presumption and folly. (2)

Speculation.

Though an ardent and conscientious inquirer into the Truth at all other times, he would not suffer in his presence any controversy as to the Truth of revealed religion, partly it seemed from a strange dread lest his faith should be shaken - "Judging in all cases rather by intuition than by logical processes, he takes for granted the religious theories which fall in sufficiently with his moral convictions." (3)

"A disciple of Johnson learns the futility of inquiring into the ultimate purposes of the Creator; but he would acquiesce to the accepted creed." (4) He regards the ultimate foundations of morality as placed beyond the reach of speculation - We almost can hear him say, "We know we are free - and there's an end on't." He had made up his mind that religion is both need and wanted and thought that the best plan was to accept the established creed. Speculation was simply abhorrent to him. "

(1) Col. F. Grant - Johnson - Page 169

(2) " " " " " "

(3) Leslie Stephen - English Thought in the 18th Century, Vol. II Pg. 375

(4) " " " " " " " " " " 374

"And thus we have the apparent paradox that, whilst no man, did set a higher value on truthfulness, in all the ordinary affairs of life than Johnson - no man cared less for the foundations of speculative truth". (1)

In the history of the times as given by Leslie Stephen - we are told that religion had in it a hatred of enthusiasm. "A good common-sense religion should be taken for granted and no questions asked," (2) said the above.

We shall close the introduction with a sentence taken directly from Dr. Johnson's lips - which he said about the author - Addison - "His religion has nothing in it enthusiastic or superstitious; he appears neither weakly credulous nor wantonly skeptical; his morality is neither dangerously lax, nor impractically rigid" (3) The same applies directly to his own, and his religious ideas could be briefly summed up in the following words:- Do good and avoid evil with the direction of Reason and Conscience. A contentment will surely follow from the knowledge that your act is in accord with the purposes of the Divine Being; and you may anticipate reward for Virtue, and punishment for evil.

This smacks strongly of Paley - and is not as idealistic as we should look for in Dr. Johnson. "I shall henceforth do good and avoid evil, without respect to the opinions of men; and resolve to solicit only the approbation of that Being, whom alone we are sure to please by endeavouring to please him." said Johnson himself. (4)

(1) Leslie Stephen Vol. II, page 375

(2) " " " " "

(3) Johnson (Life of Addison) Vol. I, Ed. by Arthur Murphy, p. 175.

(4) Essay 190 (b)

His Theory of God

God is usually referred to by Johnson as that "Divine Being" or "Creator of the Universe;" there is little speculation as to his character, rather he is accepted in the orthodox manner to be Omniscient and Almighty, "of a placible nature, a governor not too pure to be pleased, and not too severe to be pacified. Nor is he an enemy infinitely wise, and infinitely powerful, whom man could neither deceive, escape, nor resist." (1) Knowing nothing of what lies ahead in our journey through Life, we must have the conviction that nothing in reality is governed by Chance, but that the universe is under the perpetual superintendence of Him who created it; our being is in the hands of omnipotent goodness, by whom what appears casual to us, is directed for ends ultimately kind and merciful; and that nothing can finally hurt him who debars not himself from the Divine favour." (2) He is the source of strength and courage which shall make every danger give way before him (3) This is especially true in Old Age when all other supports seem to have failed. Trust will bring comfort and help.

Religion.

What it is. This is best explained by Johnson in one of the first, indeed, the mystical seventh essay, in which he says, "The great task of him who conducts his life by the precepts of religion, is to make the future predominate over the present, to impress on his mind so strong a sense of the importance of obedience to the Divine Will, of the value of the reward promised to Virtue, and the terrors of the punishment denounced against crime, as may overbear all the temptations which temporal hope or fear can bring in his way, and enable him to bid equal defiance to joy and sorrow, to turn away one time from the allurements of ambition, (1) Essay 110. (2) Essay 184. (3) Essay 65 (b).

and push forward at another against the threat of calamity. (1)

Religion is further shown to be a harmony with the Divinity and the only way to achieve this harmony is to thoroughly know ourselves, and thus make our actions and thoughts accountable to Him whose favour must constitute our total happiness.

The Arts of Self-Delusion.

It is difficult to know ourselves, however, as there are many "Arts of Self-Delusion." (2) One of the most common is love of ourselves which blinds us to our faults. Those which we are conscious of we excuse as only "temporary lapses."

Again, men may much more easily show their virtue in their talk than in their actions, and often remember only the first and congratulate themselves.

Many judge their own good, by the wickedness of others - which establishes a false standard to say the least. Each man must compare his actions with his ideals, not with even the ideals or opinions of others.

At times a good friend is a sincere judge of our actions and faults, but more often he is tender, and unwilling to give pain; or he is interested and is fearful to offend.

Undoubtedly enemies are the most faithful monitors. Adversity is the best teacher, as it is at such times our flattering friends are removed, and that which is predominant in us is brought to light. All our best is needed to cope with the conflicting circumstances.

(1) Essay 7 (a)

12 (2) Essay 28.

Solitude brings the same leisure and removal from external objects, and therefore time and inclination for introspection. With introspection comes recollection and repentance for our past misdeeds - and new promises for a better future.

"We should take time to consider things as if there were no other beings in the world - but God, and ourselves; and we should commune them with our hearts, and bestill.

"Death falls heavy on him who is too much known to others, and too little to himself" (1) Seneca.

In another essay we find the same thought repeated. "The almost excellence at which humanity can arrive, is a constant and determinate pursuit of Virtue, without regard to present dangers or advantage; a continual reference of every action to the Divine Will; an habitual appeal to everlasting Justice; and an unvaried elevation of the intellectual eye to the reward which perseverance only can obtain." (2)

Repentance is one of the chief elements in the Christian religion -

"To please the Lord and Father of the Universe, is the supreme interest of created and dependent beings." (3) says our author. Therefore, realizing how often we commit those deeds contrary to the Divine favor, or omit those others which we should do - we must continually atone. Atonement is possible only with the belief that God is a forgiving God - else as Johnson remarks, we would have none of him, for where there is no hope there is no endeavour.

(1) Essay 28.

(3) Essay 110.

(2) Essay 185.(b)

Definition of Repentance.

People are usually turned from the straight and narrow path by their "passions," and the only way back is through repentance. "Repentance is the relinquishment of our practice from the conviction that it has offended God." (1)

Sorrow, fear, and anxiety, are properly not parts, but adjuncts of, repentance, but they also work its sincerity, and promote its efficacy.

Remorse follows every man who commits any act of negligence or obstinacy. But with Repentance and Prayer, man is gradually restored to holiness. At other times he makes it synonymous with piety - "which is" that conquest of the world and of ourselves, which has been always considered as the perfection of human nature; and this is only to be obtained by fervent prayer, steady resolutions, and frequent retirement from folly and vanity, from the cares of avarice, and the joys of intemperance, from the lulling sounds of deceitful flattery and the tempting sight of prosperous wickedness." (2)

Elsewhere, we find, "Piety is the only proper and adequate relief of decaying man." (3)

In conclusion Johnson says, "The duties of religion sincerely, and regularly performed, will always be sufficient to exalt the meanest, and to exercise the highest understanding. That mind will never be vacant which is frequently recalled by stated duties to meditations on eternal interests; nor can any hour be long, which is spent in obtaining some new qualifications for celestial happiness." (4)

(1) Essay 110.

(2) " 7 (b)

(3) Essay 69 (b)

(4) Essay 124 (b)

Unfortunately this belief was not strong enough to carry him in thoughts beyond this life. He was decidedly skeptical about the world to come - and quotes Shakespeare as having said:

'Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;

To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;

This sensible warm motion to become

A Kneaded clot."

Grant credits Johnson at one time with having said,

"No rational man could die without uneasy apprehension." (1)

However, according to the same authority, when he came to die himself he expressed perfect faith in the merits and propitiations of his Redeemer and his servant said, "No man could appear more collected more devout, or less terrified at the thoughts of the approaching minute". (2)

So we can conclude that Religion was his comfort in life, and his mainstay in Death.

(1) Grant - Johnson, Page 148.

(2) " " " "

CHAPTER. X.

CONCLUSION.

In the last essay of the Rambler, Johnson had the grace and humility to remark, "They only were expected to peruse them, whose passions left them leisure for abstracted truth, and whom virtue could please by its naked dignity....."

"Having hitherto attempted only the propagation of truth, I will not at last violate it by the confession of terrors which I do not feel; having laboured to maintain the dignity of virtue, I will not now degrade it by the meanness of dedication."

(1)

He then brings this great work to a close with a repetition of their purpose, and an explanation of their more serious nature. "As it has been my principal design to inculcate wisdom on piety, I have allotted few papers to the idle sports of imagination." "The essays professedly serious, will be found exactly conformable to the precepts of Christianity, without any accommodation to the licentiousness and levity of the present age. I have tried to give ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth." (2)

(1) Essay 208.

(2) " ".