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THE ETHICS OF THE RAMBLER ESSAYS

THE S I S

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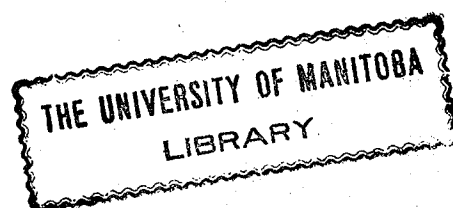
MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE

to the

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

by

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C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION-

CHAPTER I JOHNSON'S PSYCHOLOGY

1. The Climacterics of the Mind -
 - (a) In Youth - adolescence - maturity -
2. Conscience -
 - (a) Definition: a moral feeling -
 - (b) Positive and Negative -
 - (c) Its relation to Reason and Experience -
 - (d) Not a Value Judgment -
3. Innate Ideas -
 - (a) Relation to Instinctive Tendencies of McDougal.
4. Memory -
 - (a) Definition - a moral faculty; distinction of moral agents -
 - (b) In Old Age - a consciousness of pleasure; reflection -
5. Reason -
 - (a) Definition - characteristics of human beings -
 - (b) Its duties - to rule perceptions, prejudices, passions and imagination -
 - (c) In Maturity - Judgments made -
 - (d) The lure of Pleasure, Intemperance, Chance -

JOHNSON'S ETHICS

CHAPTER II THE THEORY OF EVIL.

INTRODUCTION

- (a) The Majority are wicked.
- (b) Reasons for treatises of Morality - credulity of mankind.
- (c) Theory of the Mean - Moderation.
- (d) Ignorance no cure for Vice.

THE VICES

- (e) Effects of vice on the public.
- (f) Knowledge not always a safeguard against vice.
- 1. Theorists not always practitioners.
- (g) Premeditated evil worse than spontaneous.
- (h) Glory of faithfulness in little things.

1. Flattery - an abomination. Praise must be merited.

2. Pride -

(a) Anger and forgiveness.

(b) Causes attraction.

3. Idleness -

(a) Good and evil effects of hobbies.

(2) Mischiefs of total idleness.

(c) Procrastination - a direct outcome.

(d) No tranquility for the singer.

4. Envy -

(a) Law of Mutual Benevolence violated by Envy.

(b) An unmixd and genuine evil.

(c) Causes Great unhappiness.

5. Sins of women -

(a) To prevent evil, the end of Government.

(b) The miseries of a prostitute - ignorance the cause.

(c) Plea for dissemination of knowledge, and protection.

6. Calamity - or, Miseries of Life -

(a) A fatalist - but a stoic.

(b) How to meet it.

(c) Adversity useful to the acquisition of knowledge.

ATTITUDE TOWARD EVIL. HOW TO COMBAT IT:-

1. Fear - a preservative against evil.
2. Stoicism - vain in extremes - yet useful in moderation.
3. Impatience - futile.

CHAPTER III SORROW

1. Its moral value in its overcoming.
2. Description of its state - little remedy; dwells on the past.
 - (a) Dejection and despair, its accompaniments.
 - (b) Softened by love.
3. Suggested Cures for Sorrow -
 - (a) Drag into merriment - absurd.
 - (b) Soothe into tranquility - reflection on worse sorrows of others.
 - (c) Employment of one's thoughts on other things - most efficacious.

CHAPTER IV FAME

1. Definition: desire for Praise.
2. Encourages vanity.
3. Relation to Virtue - fame the only recompense to virtue.
4. The Narrowness of Fame.
5. A painful pursuit - hard to obtain.
6. Rules for the Acquisition of lasting fame.
 - (a) Search books.
 - (b) Contemplate nature.
 - (c) Endless toil.
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 - (a) Friendship and happiness lacking.
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CHAPTER V

WEALTH

1. Introduction - Desire for gain in the general passion.
2. Definition of Wealth.
 - (a) Physical - riches of no value in themselves.
 - (b) Psychological - proportion between desire and enjoyment.
 - (c) Ethical - "goldenshackles," "Lascious poisons."
3. The Ill Effects of Wealth.
 - (a) Mischiefs of Extravagance.
 - (b) The power of wealth often abused.
 - (c) Change of Manners occasioned by increase of wealth.
 - (d) Brings more unhappiness than happiness.
 - (e) Flattering friends ~~at~~ flock around.
4. Poverty.
 - (a) Most dreaded, because of gloom, melancholy, etc.
 - (b) Different acceptations of Poverty.
 1. Monks and Cynics not poor.
 - (c) The misery of dependence.
5. Philosophy of Wealth.
 - (a) Contentious rules of frugality.
 - (b) Wealth acquired instead of wisdom.
 - (c) Influence of wealth on Love.
 - (d) Adhere to eternal motives of conduct.

CHAPTER VI

HAPPINESS -

1. Definition of Happiness - complete satisfaction of all desires.
 - (a) Therefore desires must be regulated and controlled.
 - (b) Happiness a state of contentment with one's lot - within self.

2. Where Happiness is found:
 - (a) In virtue - "To be good is to be happy."
 - (b) At home - for there we are either happy or miserable.
3. How Happiness is to be won:
 - (a) Preparations should be made in youth, for Old Age.
 - (b) Cultivate the useful and dignified.
 - (c) Pessimistic ideas of Positive Pleasure.
 - (d) In co-operation with others - friendship.
 - (e) In Practice - not in theory.
 - (f) Not in externals, such as riches, praise, and fame.
4. In Youth.
5. In Old Age.
6. Happiness in Relation to the Virtues:-
 - (a) Good Humour - an asset.
 - (b) Gayety and Mirth - must be controlled.
 - (c) The virtuous are happy.

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THE THEORY OF GOOD OR VIRTUE -

1. Different degrees of virtue in:-
 - (a) Intuitive persons .
 - (b) Teachable people.
 - (c) Those indifferent to virtue.
2. Definition of Virtue - only solid basis of greatness.
 - (a) Must ever be an End, never a Means to an end.
 - (b) Taught by example.
 - (c) A harmony of actions with the Divine Will.
3. Virtue in Relation to Old Age:
 - (a) Happiness of reflection on virtue in youth.
 - (i) Greatest incentive to virtue, thought that we must die.

4. The Individual Virtues:

(a) Duty - theory of cf. Kant.

(b) Justice -

i. The measure of justice.

ii. The Temple of Justice.

(c) Labour.

i. An Allegory of Rest and Labour.

ii. Rewards of Labour.

iii. Sins of Indolence.

iv. Mind's powers of concentration.

(d) Perseverance.

CHAPTER VIII

JOHNSON'S RELIGION

1. Introduction - Pericard Religion. 18th Century
Anglican - orthodox.

2. Loathed Speculation in religion - an intuitionist;
accepts blindly.

3. His theory - do good, avoid evil. Please the Divine
Being.

4. Theory of God.

(a) Description of his conception of God.

(b) The Creator of the Universe.

(c) Source of strength and comfort.

5. Theory of Religion. What it is -

(a) Obedience to the Divine Will.

(b) Many Arts of Self-Declusion. Know thyself.

(c) Friends can reveal our faults to us -
enemies still better.

(d) Adversity and Solitude essential tests of value
of religion.

6. Repentance essential.

(a) Definition - relinquishment of evil - resolve
for virtue.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

- 2. In Death faith revived, value of Religion to him.
- 1. Skeptical about world to come.

CHAPTER IX

JOHNSON'S THOUGHTS ON DEATH

- 7. Duties of Religion - It performed, will always bring contented conscience and knowledge of Divine favour.
- (c) Necessary for continual Prayer.

(b) Adjuncts of repentance - sorrow, fear, remorse, etc.

(1) Essay 6.

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

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

with much the same moral teachings to be found throughout. paper. There is therefore wide variety of subject-matter, but we have him inserting these essays in the form of letters to the learned men attempt to amuse; and in those cases, for the most part, moral value in their daily lives. Only occasionally does the and the women especially, with aphorisms which would have a direct out the years 1760 - 1782. They were intended to provide society, published singly, twice a week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays, through- Dr. Johnson's two hundred and eight Rambler Essays were

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)

Thought 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) " "