

Observations on the Feeling of the
Beautiful and Sublime

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First Section

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On the distinct objects of the feeling for the sublime and the beautiful

The different sentiments of gratification or vexation rest not so much on the constitution of the external things that arouse them as on the feeling, intrinsic to every person, of being touched by them with pleasure or displeasure. Hence arise the joys for some people in what is disgusting to others, the passion of a lover that is often a mystery to everyone else, or even the lively repugnance that one person feels¹ in that which is completely indifferent to another. The field for observations of these peculiarities of human nature is very extensive and still conceals a rich lode for discoveries that are as charming as they are instructive. For now I will cast my glance only on several places that seem especially to stand out in this region, and even on these more with the eye of an observer than of the philosopher.

Since a human being finds himself happy only insofar as he satisfies an inclination, the feeling that makes him capable of enjoying a great gratification without requiring exceptional talents is certainly no small matter. Stout persons, whose most inspired author is their cook, and whose works of fine taste are to be found in their cellar, get just as lively a joy from vulgarities and a crude joke as that of which persons of nobler sentiment are so proud. A comfortable man, who likes having books read aloud to him because that helps him fall asleep; the merchant to whom all gratifications seem ridiculous except for that which a clever man enjoys when he calculates his business profits; he who loves the opposite sex only insofar as he counts it among the things that are to be enjoyed; the lover of the hunt, whether he hunts fleas, like Domitian,² or wild beasts, like A—: all of these have a feeling which makes them capable of enjoying gratification after their fashion, without their having to envy others or even being able to form any concept of others; but for now I do not direct

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¹ *empfindet*

² Domitian was Emperor of Rome from 81 to 96 CE. According to Suetonius, “[a]t the beginning of his reign he used to spend hours in seclusion every day, doing nothing but catch[ing] flies and stab[bing] them with a keenly sharpened stylus”; *The Lives of the Caesars*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, rev. edn London: Loeb Classical Library, 1930, Book VIII, vol. II, p. 345.

any attention to this. There is still a feeling of a finer sort, thus named either because one can enjoy it longer without surfeit and exhaustion, or because it presupposes, so to speak, a susceptibility of the soul which at the same time makes it fit for virtuous impulses, or because it is a sign of talents and excellences of the intellect; while by contrast the former can occur in complete thoughtlessness. It is this feeling one aspect of which I will consider. Yet I exclude here the inclination which is attached to lofty intellectual insights, and the charm of which a **Kepler** was capable when, as **Bayle** reports, he would not have sold one of his discoveries for a principedom.³ This sentiment is altogether too fine to belong in the present project, which will touch only upon the sensuous feeling of which more common souls are also capable.

The finer feeling that we will now consider is preeminently of two kinds: the feeling of the **sublime** and of the **beautiful**.⁴ Being touched by either is agreeable, but in very different ways. The sight of a mountain whose snow-covered peaks arise above the clouds, the description of a raging storm, or the depiction of the kingdom of hell by **Milton** arouses satisfaction, but with dread;⁵ by contrast, the prospect of meadows strewn

³ Pierre Bayle says of Kepler, “[w]e may place him among those authors, who have said, that they valued a production of a mind above a kingdom”; “Kepler,” in *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr. Peter Bayle*, trans. Pierre Des Maizeaux, 2nd edn, London: 1736, vol. III, pp. 659–60. The article on Kepler is not included in the modern volume of selections from Bayle edited by Richard Popkin (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1991).

⁴ The sublime, and the contrast between the beautiful and the sublime, were a constant theme in European letters after the republication of the ancient treatise *Peri hypsous*, falsely attributed to the rhetorician Dionysius Cassius Longinus (c. 213–73 CE), translated into English as early as 1652, and, famously, into French by Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (*Traité du sublime*, Paris: 1674). The most famous work of the eighteenth century on the beautiful and the sublime was by Edmund Burke (*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, London: 1757; 2nd edn, 1759). Burke’s book became known in Germany via the 1758 review by Moses Mendelssohn, “Philosophische Untersuchung des Ursprungs unserer Ideen vom Erhabenen und Schönen,” *Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften* 3.2. Kant would cite Burke several times in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, notably in the General Remark following § 29 (Academy Edition 5:277).

⁵ Virtually all of Book 1 of *Paradise Lost* offers a graphic description of the imagined terrors of hell. Some sample lines are:

The dismal situation waste and wild,
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end

with flowers, of valleys with winding brooks, covered with grazing herds, the description of Elysium,⁶ or **Homer's** depiction of the girdle of Venus⁷

Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed:
Such place eternal justice had prepared
For those rebellious, here their prison ordained
In utter darkness, and their portion set
As far removed from God and light of heaven
As from the centre thrice to the utmost pole.

(*Paradise Lost*, Book I, lines 60–74;
John Milton, ed. Stephen Orgel and
Jonathan Goldberg, Oxford University
Press, 1991, p. 357)

⁶ Presumably Kant has in mind the description of Elysium that Virgil gives in the *Aeneid*, Book VI, beginning at line 853:

His duty to the goddess done, they came
To places of delight, to green park land,
Where souls take ease amid the Blessed Groves.
Wider expanses of high air endow
Each vista with a wealth of light

...

Within a fragrant laurel grove, where Po
Sprang up and took his course to the world above,
The broad stream flowing on amid the forest.
This was the company of those who suffered
Wounds in battle for their country; those
Who in their lives were holy men and chaste
Or worthy of Phoebus in prophetic song;
Or those who better life, by finding out
New truths and skills;

...

"None of us
Has one fixed home. We walk in shady groves
And bed on riverbanks and occupy
Green meadows fresh with streams . . ."

(Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald,
New York: Random House, 1981, Book VI,
lines 853–903, pp. 182–3)

⁷ Hera requested Aphrodite to help her reconcile the feuding Greeks and Trojans:

"But if words of mine could lure them back to love,
back to bed, to lock in each other's arms once more

...

they would call me their honored, loving friend forever."

Aphrodite, smiling her everlasting smile, replied,
"Impossible—worse, it's *wrong* to deny your warm request,
since you are the one who lies in the arms of mighty Zeus."

With that she loosed from her breasts the breastband,
pierced and alluring, with every kind of enchantment
woven through it . . . There is the heat of Love,

[2:209] also occasion an agreeable sentiment, but one that is joyful and smiling. For the former to make its impression on us in its proper strength, we must have a **feeling** of the **sublime**, and in order properly to enjoy the latter we must have a **feeling** for the **beautiful**. Lofty oaks and lonely shadows in sacred groves are **sublime**, flowerbeds, low hedges, and trees trimmed into figures are **beautiful**. The night is **sublime**, the day is **beautiful**. Casts of mind that possess a feeling for the sublime are gradually drawn into lofty sentiments, of friendship, of contempt for the world, of eternity, by the quiet calm of a summer evening, when the flickering light of the stars breaks through the umber shadows of the night and the lonely moon rises into view. The brilliant day inspires busy fervor and a feeling of⁸ gaiety. The sublime **touches**, the beautiful **charms**. The mien of the human being who finds himself in the full feeling of the sublime is serious, sometimes even rigid and astonished. By contrast, the lively sentiment of the beautiful announces itself through shining cheerfulness in the eyes, through traces of a smile, and often through audible mirth. The sublime is in turn of different sorts. The feeling of it is sometimes accompanied with some dread or even melancholy, in some cases merely with quiet admiration and in yet others with a beauty spread over a sublime prospect. I will call the first the **terrifying sublime**, the second the **noble**, and the third the **magnificent**. Deep solitude is sublime, but in a terrifying way.^{a,9} For this reason great and extensive

[2:209] ^a I will only provide an example of the noble dread which the description of a total solitude can inspire, and to this end I will extract several passages from *Carazan's dream* in the *Bremen Magazine*, Volume IV, page 539. The more his riches had grown, the more did this miserly rich man bar his heart to compassion and the love of others. Meanwhile, as the love of humankind grew cold in him, the diligence of his prayers and religious devotions increased. After this confession, he goes on to recount: One evening, as I did my sums by my lamp and calculated the profit of

the pulsing rush of Longing, the lover's whisper,
irresistable—magic to make the sanest man go mad.
And thrusting it into Hera's outstretched hands,
she breathed her name in a throbbing, rising voice:
"Here now, take this band, put it between your breasts—
ravishing openwork, and the world lies in its weaving!"
(Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles, New York:
Viking, 1990, Book XIV, lines 251–66, pp. 376–77).

⁸ In the second and third editions: for.

⁹ The example comes from the *Bremisches Magazin zur Ausbreitung der Wissenschaften und Künste und Tugend. Von einigen Liebhabern derselben aus den englischen Monatschriften gesammelt und herausgegeben* (Bremen Magazine for the Propagation of the Sciences and the Arts and Virtue. Collected and edited from the English monthlies by some lovers of the former) 4 (1761): 539.

wastes, such as the immense deserts of Schamo in Tartary, have always given us occasion to people them with fearsome shades, goblins, and ghosts. [5:210]

The sublime must always be large, the beautiful can also be small. The sublime must be simple, the beautiful can be decorated and ornamented. A great height is just as sublime as a great depth, but the latter is accompanied with the sensation¹⁰ of shuddering, the former with that of admiration; hence the latter sentiment can be terrifyingly sublime and the former noble. The sight of an Egyptian pyramid is far more moving, as **Hasselquist** reports,¹¹ than one can imagine from any description, but its construction is simple and noble. St. Peter's in Rome is magnificent. Since on its frame, which is grand and simple, beauty, e.g., gold, mosaics, etc., are spread in such a way that it is still the sentiment of the sublime which has the most effect, the object is called magnificent.¹² An arsenal must be noble and simple, a residential castle magnificent, and a pleasure palace beautiful and decorated.¹³

my business, I was overcome by sleep. In this condition I saw the angel of death come upon me like a whirlwind, and he struck me, before I could plead against the terrible blow. I was petrified as I became aware that my fate had been cast for eternity, and that to all the good I had done, nothing could be added, and from all the evil that I had done, nothing could be subtracted. I was led before the throne of he who dwells in the third heaven. The brilliance that flamed before me spoke to me thus: Carazan, your divine service is rejected. You have closed your heart to the love of humankind, and held on to your treasures with an iron hand. You have lived only for yourself, and hence in the future you shall also live alone and excluded from all communion with the entirety of creation for all eternity. In this moment I was ripped away by an invisible force and driven through the shining edifice of creation. I quickly left innumerable worlds behind me. As I approached the most extreme limit of nature, I noticed that the shadows of the boundless void sank into the abyss before me. A fearful realm of eternal silence, solitude and darkness! Unspeakable dread overcame me at this sight. I gradually lost the last stars from view, and finally the last glimmer of light was extinguished in the most extreme darkness. The mortal terrors of despair increased with every moment, just as every moment my distance from the last inhabited world increased. I reflected with unbearable anguish in my heart that if ten thousand thousand years were to carry me further beyond the boundaries of everything created, I would still see forward into the immeasurable abyss of darkness without help or hope of return. – In this bewilderment I stretched my hands out to actual objects with such vehemence that I was thereby awakened. And now I have been instructed to esteem human beings; for even the least of them, whom in the pride of my good fortune I had turned from my door, would have been far more welcome to me in that terrifying desert than all the treasures of Golconda. [2:210]

¹⁰ *Empfindung*

¹¹ D. Friedrich Hasselquist, *Reise nach Palästina in den Jahren 1749–1762* (Journey to Palestine in the Years 1749–1762), Rostock: 1762, pp. 82–94.

¹² Kant refers to both the pyramids and St. Peter's in the course of his explication of the mathematical sublime in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 26, Academy Edition 5:252.

¹³ This sentence anticipates Kant's later account of dependent judgments of beauty; see *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 16, Academy Edition 5:230.

A long duration is sublime. If it is of time past, it is noble; if it is projected forth into an unforeseeable future, then there is something terrifying in it. An edifice from the most distant antiquity is worthy of honor. **Haller's** description of the future eternity inspires a mild horror, and of the past, a transfixed admiration.¹⁴

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Second Section

On the qualities of the sublime and the beautiful in human beings in general

Understanding is sublime, wit is beautiful. Boldness is sublime and grand, cunning is petty, but beautiful. Caution, said **Cromwell**, is a virtue for mayors.¹⁵ Truthfulness and honesty is simple and noble, jocular and pleasing flattery is fine and beautiful. Civility is the beauty of virtue. An unselfish urge to serve is noble, refinement (*politesse*) and courtliness are beautiful. Sublime qualities inspire esteem, but beautiful ones inspire love. People whose feelings run primarily to the beautiful seek out their honest, steady, and serious friends only in case of need; for ordinary company, however, they choose jocular, clever, and courtly companions. One esteems many a person too highly to be able to love him. He inspires admiration, but he is too far above us for us to dare to come close to him with the familiarity of love.

Those in whom both feelings are united will find that they are more powerfully moved by the sublime than by the beautiful, but that without variation or accompaniment by the latter the former is tiring and cannot be enjoyed as long.^b The lofty sentiments to which conversation in a well-chosen company is sometimes elevated must intermittently dissolve

^b The sentiments of the sublime stretch the powers of the soul more forcefully and therefore tire more quickly. One will read a pastoral longer at one sitting than Milton's *Paradise Lost* and la Bruyère longer than Young. It even seems to me to be a failing of the latter as a moral poet that he holds forth too uniformly in a sublime tone; for the strength of the impression can only be refreshed by interspersing gentler passages. In the case of the beautiful nothing is more tiring than laborious art that thereby betrays itself. The effort to charm becomes painful and is felt to be wearisome.

¹⁴ Albrecht von Haller, *Über die Ewigkeit* (1736).

¹⁵ Kant attributes this statement to Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of Great Britain.

into a cheerful joke, and laughing joys should make a beautiful contrast with moved, serious countenances, allowing for an unforced alternation between both sorts of sentiment. **Friendship** has primarily the character of the sublime, but **sexual love** that of the beautiful. Yet tenderness and deep esteem give the latter a certain dignity and sublimity, while [2:212] flighty jocularly and intimacy elevate the coloration of the beautiful in this sentiment. In my opinion, **tragedy** is distinguished from **comedy** primarily in the fact that in the former it is the feeling for the **sublime** while in the latter it is the feeling for the **beautiful** that is touched. In the former there is displayed magnanimous sacrifice for the well-being of another, bold resolve in the face of danger, and proven fidelity. There love is melancholic, tender, and full of esteem; the misfortune of others stirs sympathetic sentiments in the bosom of the onlooker and allows his magnanimous heart to beat for the need of others. He is gently moved and feels the dignity of his own nature. Comedy, in contrast, represents intrigues, marvelous entanglements and clever people who know how to wriggle out of them, fools who let themselves be deceived, jests and ridiculous characters. Here love is not so grave, it is merry and intimate. Yet as in other cases, here too the noble can be united with the beautiful to a certain degree.

Even the vices and moral failings often carry with them some of the traits of the sublime or the beautiful, at least as they appear to our sensory feeling, without having been examined by reason. The wrath of someone fearsome is sublime, like the wrath of Achilles in the *Iliad*.¹⁶ In general, the hero of **Homer** is **terrifyingly sublime**, that of **Virgil**, by contrast, **noble**. Open, brazen revenge for a great offense has something grand in it, and however impermissible it might be, yet in the telling it nevertheless touches us with dread and satisfaction. When Shah Nadir was attacked at night in his tent by some conspirators, as Hanaway reports, after he had already received several wounds and was defending himself in despair, he yelled **Mercy! I will pardon you all**. One of the conspirators answered, as he raised his saber high: **You have shown no mercy and**

¹⁶ Achilles hated Agamemnon for having taken the girl Briseis from him, and refused to join in the fight against Troy for the recovery of Helen, when, after all, Agamemnon already had Briseis. Agamemnon sent ambassadors with gifts to recruit Achilles, but Achilles replied, "I hate that man like very Gates of Death, / who says one thing but hides another in his heart." Homer, *The Iliad*, Book IX, lines 378–79 (Fagles, p. 262).

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deserve none.¹⁷ Resolute audacity in a rogue is extremely dangerous, yet it touches us in the telling, and even when he is dragged to a shameful death yet he enobles himself to a certain degree when he faces it spitefully and with contempt. On the other side, a cunningly conceived scheme, even when it amounts to a piece of knavery, has something about it that is fine and worth a laugh. A wanton inclination (*coquetterie*) in a refined sense, namely an effort to fascinate and to charm, is perhaps blameworthy in an otherwise decorous person, yet it is still beautiful and is commonly preferred to the honorable, serious demeanor.

The figure¹⁸ of persons who please through their outward appearance¹⁹ touches now upon one sort of feeling, now upon the other. A grand stature earns regard²⁰ and respect, a small one more intimacy. Even brownish color and black eyes are more closely related to the sublime, blue eyes and blonde color to the beautiful. A somewhat greater age is associated more with the qualities of the sublime, youth, however, with those of the beautiful. It is similar with difference in station, and in all of those relations mentioned here even the costumes must match this distinction in feeling. Grand, sizable persons must observe simplicity or at most splendor in their dress, while small ones can be decorated and adorned. Darker colors and uniformity in costume are fitting for age, while youth radiates through brighter clothing with lively contrasts. Among the stations of similar fortune and rank, the cleric must display the greatest simplicity, the statesman the greatest splendor. The paramour can adorn himself as he pleases.

Even in external circumstances of fortune there is something that, at least in the folly of humankind, matches these sentiments. People commonly find themselves inclined to respect birth and title. Wealth, even without merit, is honored even by the disinterested, presumably because they associate with the representation of it projects for great actions that could be carried out by its means. This respect is even sometimes extended to many a rich scoundrel, who will never undertake such actions and has no conception of the noble feeling that can alone make riches estimable. What magnifies the evil of poverty is contempt,

¹⁷ Jonas Hanaway, *Herrn Jonas Hanaways zuverlässige Beschreibung. Nebst einer unpartheyischen Histoire des grossen Eroberers Nadir Kuli oder Kuli Chams* (Mr. Jonas Hanaway's reliable description. Together with an impartial history of the great Conquerer Nadir Kuli or Kuli Chams), Hamburg and Leipzig, 1754, Part II, p. 396.

¹⁸ *Gestalt* ¹⁹ *Ansehen* ²⁰ *Ansehen*

which cannot be entirely overcome even by merits, at least not before common eyes, unless rank and title deceive this coarse feeling and to some extent work to its advantage.

In human nature there are never to be found praiseworthy qualities that do not at the same time degenerate through endless gradations into the most extreme imperfection. The quality of the **terrifying sublime**, if it becomes entirely unnatural, is **adventurous**.^c Unnatural things, [2:214] in so far as the sublime is thereby intended, even if little or none of it is actually found, are **grotesqueries**. He who loves and believes the adventurous is a **fantast**, while the inclination to grotesqueries makes for a **crank**. On the other side, the feeling of the beautiful degenerates if the noble is entirely lacking from it, and one calls it **ridiculous**. A male with this quality, if he is young, is called a **dandy**, and if he is middle-aged, a **fop**. Since the sublime is most necessary for the greater age, an **old fop** is the most contemptible creature in nature, just as a young crank is the most repulsive and insufferable. Jokes and cheerfulness go with the feeling of the beautiful. Nevertheless a good deal of understanding can show through, and to this extent they can be more or less related to the sublime. He in whose cheerfulness this admixture cannot be noticed **babbles**. He who babbles constantly is **silly**. One readily notices that even clever people occasionally babble, and that it requires not a little intelligence²¹ to call the understanding away from its post for a brief time without anything thereby going awry. He whose speeches or actions neither entertain nor move is **boring**. The bore who nevertheless tries to do both is **tasteless**. The tasteless person, if he is conceited, is a **fool**.^d

I will make this curious catalog of human frailties somewhat more comprehensible through examples, for he who lacks Hogarth's burin must use description to make up for what the drawing lacks in expression.²² Boldly

^c In so far as sublimity or beauty exceed the known average, one tends to call them **fictitious**.

^d One quickly notices that this honorable company divides itself into two compartments, the cranks and the fops. A learned crank is politely called a **pedant**. If he adopts the obstinate mien of wisdom, like the **dunces** of olden and recent times, then the cap with bells becomes him well. The class of fops is more often encountered in high society. It is perhaps better than the former. At their expense one has much to gain and much to laugh at. In this caricature one makes a wry face at the other and knocks his empty head on the head of his brother.

²¹ *Geist*

²² William Hogarth (1697–1764), British painter and engraver, artist of such famous series as *The Rake's Progress* and author of *The Analysis of Beauty: Written with a view of fixing the fluctuating Ideas of Taste* (London: J. Reeves, 1753).

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undertaking danger for our own rights, for those of the fatherland, or for those of our friends is sublime. The crusades and ancient knighthood were **adventurous**; duels, a miserable remnant of the latter out of a perverted conception of honor, are **grotesqueries**. Melancholy withdrawal from the tumult of the world out of a legitimate weariness is **noble**. The solitary devotion of the ancient hermits was **adventurous**. Cloisters and graves of that sort for the entombment of living saints are **grotesqueries**. Subduing one's passions by means of principles is **sublime**. Castigation, vows, and other such monkish virtues are **grotesqueries**. Holy bones, holy wood, and all that sort of rubbish, the holy stools of the Great Lama of Tibet not excluded, are **grotesqueries**. Among the works of wit and fine feeling, the epic poems of Virgil and Klopstock are among the **noble**, those of Homer and Milton among the **adventurous**. The *Metamorphoses* of Ovid are **grotesqueries**, the fairy tales of French lunacy are the most wretched grotesqueries that have ever been hatched. Anacreontic poems commonly come very close to the **ridiculous**.

The works of the understanding and acuity, to the extent that their objects also contain something for feeling, likewise take some part in the differences under consideration. The mathematical representation of the immeasurable magnitude of the universe, metaphysical considerations of eternity, of providence, of the immortality of our soul contain a certain sublimity and dignity. Yet philosophy²³ is also distorted by many empty subtleties, and the semblance of thoroughness does not prevent the four syllogistic figures from deserving to be counted as scholastic grotesqueries.

Among moral²⁴ qualities, true virtue alone is sublime. There are nevertheless good moral²⁵ qualities that are lovable and beautiful and, to the extent that they harmonize with virtue, may also be regarded as noble, even though they cannot genuinely be counted as part of the virtuous disposition. Judgment about this is delicate and involved. One certainly cannot call that frame of mind virtuous that is a source of actions of the sort to which virtue would also lead but on grounds that only contingently agree with it, and which thus given its nature can also often conflict with the universal rules of virtue. A certain tenderheartedness that is easily led into a warm feeling of **sympathy** is beautiful and lovable, for it indicates a kindly participation in the fate of other people, to which principles of

²³ die Weltweisheit ²⁴ moralischen ²⁵ sittlichen

virtue likewise lead. But this kindly passion is nevertheless weak and is always blind. For suppose that this sentiment moves you to help someone in need with your expenditure, but you are indebted to someone else and by this means you make it impossible for yourself to fulfill the strict duty of justice; then obviously the action cannot arise from any virtuous resolution, for that could not possibly entice you into sacrificing a higher obligation to this blind enchantment. If, by contrast, general affection towards humankind has become your principle, to which you always subject your actions, then your love towards the one in need remains, but it is now, from a higher standpoint, placed in its proper relationship to your duty as a whole. The universal affection is a ground for participating in his ill-fortune, but at the same time it is also a ground of justice, in accordance with whose precept you must now forbear this action. Now as soon as this feeling is raised to its proper universality, it is sublime, but also colder. For it is not possible that our bosom should swell with tenderness on behalf of every human being and swim in melancholy for everyone else's need, otherwise the virtuous person, like Heraclitus constantly melting into sympathetic tears,²⁶ with all this good-heartedness would nevertheless become nothing more than a tenderhearted idler.^c [2:216]

The second sort of kindly feeling which is to be sure beautiful and lovable but still not the foundation of a genuine virtue is **complaisance**:²⁷ an inclination to make ourselves agreeable to others through friendliness, through acquiescence to their demands, and through conformity of our conduct to their dispositions. This ground for a charming complaisance is beautiful, and the malleability of such a heart is kindly. Yet it is so far from

^c On closer consideration, one finds that however lovable the quality of sympathy may be, yet it does not have in itself the dignity of virtue. A suffering child, an unhappy though upright woman may fill our heart with this melancholy, while at the same time we may coldly receive the news of a great battle in which, as may readily be realized, a considerable part of humankind must innocently suffer dreadful evils. Many a prince who has averted his countenance from melancholy for a single unfortunate person has at the same time given the order for war, often from a vain motive. There is here no proportion in the effect at all, so how can one say that the general love of humankind is the cause?

²⁶ Heraclitus of Ephesus, fl. c. 500–480 BCE. “The legend of the ‘weeping philosopher’ is late and based on a combination of a Platonic joke, Heraclitus’ theory of flux, and a misunderstanding of Theophrastus’ word ‘melancholia,’ which originally meant ‘impulsiveness’”; Michael C. Stokes, “Heraclitus of Ephesus,” in Paul Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, New York: Macmillan, 1967, vol. III, pp. 477–81, at p. 477. For the standard work on Heraclitus, see Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

²⁷ Kant’s text has a period here.

[2:217] being a virtue that unless higher principles set bounds for it and weaken it, all sorts of vices may spring from it. For without even considering that this complaisance towards those with whom we associate is often an injustice to those who find themselves outside of this little circle, such a man, if one takes this impulse alone, can have all sorts of vices, not because of immediate inclination but because he gladly lives to please. From affectionate complaisance he will be a liar, an idler, a drunkard, etc., for he does not act in accordance with the rules for good conduct in general, but rather in accordance with an inclination that is beautiful in itself but which in so far as it is without self-control and without principles becomes ridiculous.

Thus true virtue can only be grafted upon principles, and it will become the more sublime and noble the more general they are. These principles are not speculative rules, but the consciousness of a feeling that lives in every human breast and that extends much further than to the special grounds of sympathy and complaisance. I believe that I can bring all this together if I say that it is the **feeling of the beauty and the dignity of human nature**.²⁸ The first is a ground of universal affection, the second of universal respect, and if this feeling had the greatest perfection in any human heart then this human being would certainly love and value even himself, but only in so far as he is one among all to whom his widespread and noble feeling extends itself. Only when one subordinates one's own particular inclination to such an enlarged one can our kindly drives be proportionately applied and bring about the noble attitude that is the beauty of virtue.

In recognition of the weakness of human nature and the little power that the universal moral feeling exercises over most hearts, providence has placed such helpful drives in us as supplements for virtue, which move some to beautiful actions even without principles while at the same time being able to give others, who are ruled by these principles, a greater impetus and a stronger impulse thereto. Sympathy and complaisance are grounds for beautiful actions that would perhaps all be suffocated by the preponderance of a cruder self-interest, but as we have seen they

²⁸ The argument that virtue depends on principles rather than feeling anticipates Kant's mature moral philosophy; the present reference to the special dignity of human nature should be compared to Kant's statement in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, § 2, Academy Edition 4:435.

are not immediate grounds of virtue, although since they are ennobled by their kinship with it they also bear its name. Hence I can call them **adopted virtues**, but that which rest on principles **genuine virtue**. [2:218] The former are beautiful and charming, the latter alone is sublime and worthy of honor. One calls a mind in which the former sentiments rule a **good heart** and people of that sort **good-hearted**; but one rightly ascribes a **noble heart** to one who is virtuous from principles, calling him alone a **righteous** person. These adopted virtues nevertheless have a great similarity to the true virtues, since they contain the feeling of an immediate pleasure in kindly and benevolent actions. The good-hearted person will without any ulterior aim and from immediate complaisance conduct himself peaceably and courteously with you and feel sincere compassion for the need of another.

Yet since this moral sympathy is nevertheless not enough to drive indolent human nature to actions for the common weal,²⁹ providence has further placed in us a certain feeling which is fine and moves us, or which can also balance cruder self-interest and vulgar sensuality. This is the **feeling for honor** and its consequence, **shame**. The opinion that others may have of our value and their judgment of our actions is a motivation of great weight, which can coax us into many sacrifices, and what a good part of humanity would have done neither out of an immediately arising emotion of good-heartedness nor out of principles happens often enough merely for the sake of outer appearance, out of a delusion that is very useful although in itself very facile, as if the judgment of others determined the worth of ourselves and our actions. What happens from this impulse is not in the least virtuous, for which reason everyone who wants to be taken for virtuous takes good care to conceal the motivation of lust for honor. This inclination is also not nearly so closely related as good-heartedness is to genuine virtue, since it is not moved immediately by the beauty of actions, but by their demeanor in the eyes of others. Since the feeling for honor is nevertheless still fine, I can call the similarity to virtue that is thereby occasioned the **simulacrum of virtue**.

If we compare the casts of mind of human beings in so far as one of these three species of feeling dominates in them and determines their moral character, we find that each of them stands in closer kinship with

²⁹ *gemeinnützig*

[2:219] one of the temperaments as they are usually divided,³⁰ yet in such a way that a greater lack of moral feeling would be the share of the phlegmatic. Not as if the chief criterion in the character of these different casts of mind came down to the features at issue; for in this treatise we are not considering the cruder feelings, e.g., that of self-interest, of vulgar sensuality, etc., at all, even though these sorts of inclinations are what are primarily considered in the customary division; but rather since the finer moral sentiments here mentioned are more compatible with one or the other of these temperaments and for the most part are actually so united.

An inward feeling for the beauty and dignity of human nature and a self-composure and strength of mind to relate all of one's actions to this as a general ground is serious and not readily associated with a fickle wantonness nor with the inconstancy of a frivolous person. It even approaches melancholy, a gentle and noble sentiment, to the extent that it is grounded in that dread which a restricted soul feels if, full of a great project, it sees the dangers that it has to withstand and has before its eyes the difficult but great triumph of self-overcoming. Genuine virtue from principles therefore has something about it that seems to agree most with the **melancholic** frame of mind in a moderate sense.

Good-heartedness, a beauty and fine susceptibility of the heart to be moved with sympathy or benevolence in individual cases as occasion demands, is very much subject to the change of circumstances; and since the movement of the soul does not rest upon a general principle, it readily takes on different shapes as the objects display one aspect or another. And since this inclination comes down to the beautiful, it appears to be most naturally united with that cast of mind that one calls **sanguine**, which is fickle and given to amusements. In this temperament we shall have to seek the well-loved qualities that we called adopted virtues.

[2:220] The feeling for honor is usually already taken as a mark of the **choleric** complexion, and we can thereby take the occasion to seek out the moral consequences of this fine feeling, which for the most part are aimed only at show, for the depiction of such a character.

A person is never without all traces of finer sentiment, but a greater lack of the latter, which is comparatively called a lack of feeling, is found

³⁰ Kant continued to discuss the moral significance of the traditional doctrine of the four temperaments in his anthropology lectures, beginning with his earliest lectures in 1772–73 (see *Anthropologie Collins*, Academy Edition 25:219–26) and continuing through his published handbook *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), Part II, Academy Edition 7:288–91.

in the character of the **phlegmatic**, whom one also deprives even of the cruder incentives, such as lust for money, etc., which, however, together with other sister inclinations, we can even leave to him, because they do not belong in this plan at all.

Let us now more closely consider the sentiments of the sublime and the beautiful, especially in so far as they are moral, under the assumed division of the temperaments.

He whose feeling tends towards the **melancholic** is so called not because, robbed of the joys of life, he worries himself into blackest dejection,³¹ but because his sentiments, if they were to be increased above a certain degree or to take a false direction through some causes, would more readily result in that than in some other condition. He has above all a **feeling for the sublime**. Even beauty, for which he also has a sentiment, may not merely charm him, but must rather move him by at the same time inspiring him with admiration. The enjoyment of gratification is in his case more serious, but not on that account any lesser. All emotions of the sublime are more enchanting than the deceptive charms of the beautiful. His well-being will be contentment rather than jollity. He is steadfast. For that reason he subordinates his sentiments to principles. They are the less subject to inconstancy and alteration the more general is this principle to which they are subordinated, and thus the more extensive is the elevated feeling under which the lower ones are comprehended. All particular grounds of inclinations are subjected to many exceptions and alterations in so far as they are not derived from such a high ground. The cheerful and friendly Alceste³² says: I love and treasure my wife, because she is beautiful, flattering, and clever. But what if, when she becomes disfigured with illness, sullen with age, and, once the first enchantment has disappeared, no longer seems more clever than any other to you? If the ground is no longer there, what can become of the inclination? By contrast, take the benevolent and steady Adraste, who thinks to himself: I will treat this person lovingly and with respect, because she is my wife. This disposition is noble and generous. However the contingent charms may change, she is nevertheless always still his wife. The noble ground endures and is not so subject to the inconstancy of external things. Such

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³¹ *Schwermut*

³² Kant here seems to be referring to characters from Molière, where Alceste appears in the *Misanthrope* and Adraste in *Le Sicilien ou l'amour peintre*. He is not quoting from the plays, but is interpreting Molière's characters.

is the quality of principles in comparison to emotions, which well up only on particular occasions, and thus is the man of principles by contrast to one who is occasionally overcome by a good-hearted and lovable motivation. But what if the secret language of his heart speaks thus: I must come to the help of this human being, for he suffers; not that he is my friend or companion, or that I hold him capable of sometime repaying my beneficence with gratitude. There is now no time for ratiocination and stopping at questions: He is a human being, and whatever affects human beings also affects me.³³ Then his conduct is based on the highest ground of benevolence in human nature and is extremely sublime, on account of its inalterability as well as the universality of its application.

I continue with my comments. The person of a melancholic frame of mind troubles himself little about how others judge, what they hold to be good or true, and in that regard he relies solely on his own insight. Since his motivations take on the nature of principles, he is not easily brought to other conceptions; his steadfastness thus sometimes degenerates into obstinacy. He looks on changes in fashion with indifference and on their luster with contempt. Friendship is sublime and hence he has a feeling for it. He can perhaps lose an inconstant friend, but the latter does not lose him equally quickly. Even the memory of an extinguished friendship is still worthy of honor for him. Talkativeness is beautiful, thoughtful taciturnity sublime. He is a good guardian of his own secrets and those of others. Truthfulness is sublime, and he hates lies or dissemblance. He has a lofty feeling for the dignity of human nature. He esteems himself and holds a human being to be a creature who deserves respect. He does not tolerate abject submissiveness and breathes freedom in a noble breast. All shackles, from the golden ones worn at court to the heavy irons of the galley-slave, are abominable to him. He is a strict judge of himself and others and is not seldom weary of himself as well as of the world.

[2:222] In the degenerate form of this character, seriousness inclines to dejection,³⁴ piety to zealotry, the fervor for freedom to enthusiasm. Insult and injustice kindle vengefulness in him. He is then very much to be feared. He defies danger and has contempt for death. In case of perversion of his feeling and lack of a cheerful reason he succumbs

³³ Here Kant alludes to the speech by Chremes in the Act I, scene I of Terence's *Self-Tormentor*, "I am a human being; I am interested in everything human"; *The Complete Roman Drama*, ed. George E. Duckworth, New York: Random House, 1942, vol. II, p. 199.

³⁴ *Schwermut*

to the **adventurous**:³⁵ inspirations, apparitions, temptations. If the understanding is even weaker, he hits upon **grotesqueries**:³⁶ portentous dreams, presentiments, and wondrous omens. He is in danger of becoming a **fantast** or a **crank**.

The person of a **sanguine** frame of mind has a dominant **feeling for the beautiful**. His joys are therefore laughing and lively. When he is not jolly, he is discontent and he has little acquaintance with contented silence. Variety is beautiful, and he loves change. He seeks joy in himself and around himself, amuses others, and is good company. He has much moral sympathy. The joyfulness of others is gratifying to him, and their suffering makes him soft-hearted. His moral feeling is beautiful, yet without principles, and is always immediately dependent upon the impressions that objects make on him at the moment. He is a friend of all human beings, or, what is really the same, never really a friend, although he is certainly good-hearted and benevolent. He does not dissemble. Today he will entertain you with his friendliness and good sorts, tomorrow, when you are ill or misfortunate, he will feel genuine and unfeigned compassion, but he will quietly slip away until the circumstances have changed. He must never be a judge. The laws are commonly too strict for him, and he lets himself be bribed by tears. He is a bad saint, never entirely good and never entirely evil. He is often dissolute and wicked, more from complaisance than from inclination. He is liberal and generous, but a poor payer of his debts, since he has much sentiment for goodness but little for justice. Nobody has as good an opinion of his own heart as he does. If you do not esteem him, you must still love him. In the greater deterioration of his character, he descends to the **ridiculous**, he is dawdling and childish. If age does not diminish his liveliness or bring him more understanding, then he is in danger of becoming an old fop.

He whom one means by the **choleric** constitution of mind has a dominant feeling for that sort of the sublime which one can call the **magnificent**. It is really only the gloss of sublimity and a strikingly contrasting coloration, which hides the inner content of the thing or the person, who is perhaps only bad and common, and which deceives and moves through its appearance.³⁷ Just as an edifice makes just as noble an impression by means of a stucco coating that represents carved stones, as if it were really made from that, and tacked-on cornices and pilasters give

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³⁵ The original text has a period here.

³⁶ The original text has a period here.

³⁷ *Schein*

the idea of solidity although they have little bearing and support nothing, in the same way do alloyed virtues, tinsel of wisdom, and painted merit also glisten.

The choleric person considers his own value and the value of his things and actions on the basis of the propriety or the appearance³⁸ with which it strikes the eye. With regard to the inner quality and the motivations that the object itself contains, he is cold, neither warmed by true benevolence nor moved by respect.^f His conduct is artificial. He must know how to adopt all sorts of standpoints in order to judge his propriety from the various attitudes of the onlookers; for he asks little about what he is, but only about what he seems. For this reason he must be well acquainted with the effect on the general taste and the many impressions which his conduct will have outside of him. Since in this sly attention he always needs cold blood and must not let himself be blinded by love, compassion, and sympathy, he will also avoid many follies and vexations to which a sanguine person succumbs, who is enchanted by his immediate sentiment. For this reason he commonly appears to be more intelligent than he actually is. His benevolence is politeness, his respect ceremony, his love is concocted flattery. When he adopts the attitude of a lover or a friend he is always full of himself, and is never either the one or the other. He seeks to shine through fashions, but since everything with him is artificial and made up, he is stiff and awkward in them. He acts in accordance with principles much more than the sanguine person does, who is moved only by the impressions of the occasion; but these are not principles of virtue, but of honor, and he has no feeling for the beauty or the value of actions, but only for the judgment that the world might make about them. Since his conduct, as long as one does not look to the source from which it stems, is otherwise almost as useful as virtue itself, he earns the same esteem as the virtuous person in vulgar eyes, but before more refined ones he carefully conceals himself, because he knows well that the discovery of the secret incentive of lust for honor would cost him respect. He is thus much given to dissemblance, hypocritical in religion, a flatterer in society, and in matters of political party he is fickle as circumstances suggest. He is gladly a slave of the great in order to be a tyrant over the lesser. *Naïvete*,

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^f Although he also holds himself to be happy only in so far as he suspects that he is taken to be so by others.

³⁸ *Schein*

this noble or beautiful simplicity, which bears the seal of nature and not of art, is entirely alien to him. Hence if his taste degenerates his luster becomes **strident**, i.e., it swaggers repulsively. Then he belongs as much because of his style as because of his decoration to the *galimatias*,^{39,40} (the exaggerated), a kind of grotesquerie, which in relation to the magnificent is the same as the adventurous or cranky is to the serious sublime. In cases of insults he falls back upon duels or lawsuits, and in civil relationships on ancestry, precedence, and title. As long as he is only vain, i.e., seeks honor and strives to be pleasing to the eye, then he can still be tolerated, but when he is conceited even in the complete absence of real merits and talents, then he is that which he would least gladly be taken for, namely a fool.

Since in the **phlegmatic** mixture there are ordinarily no ingredients of the sublime or the beautiful in any particularly noticeable degree, this quality of mind does not belong in the context of our considerations.

Of whichever sort these finer sentiments that we have thus far treated might be, whether sublime or beautiful, they have in common the fate of always seeming perverse and absurd in the judgment of those who have no feeling attuned to them. A person of calm and self-interested industry does not even have, so to speak, the organs to be sensitive to the noble feature in a poem or in an heroic virtue; he would rather read a Robinson than a Grandison⁴¹ and holds Cato⁴² to be an obstinate fool. Likewise, that seems ridiculous to persons of a somewhat more serious cast of mind

³⁹ This strange word, much the same in English as in German, is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, of “unknown origin.” It means “confused language, meaningless talk, nonsense,” and is found in a 1653 translation of Rabelais as well as in the *Spectator*, number 275 (January 15, 1711/12), where Addison fancifully describes an imaginary “dissection of a beau’s head, and of a coquette’s heart.” The skull of the former “was filled with a kind of spongy substance, which the French anatomists call *galimatias*, and the English, nonsense”; *The Spectator*, ed. A. Chalmers, Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1869, vol. IV, p. 223.

⁴⁰ *Gallimathias*

⁴¹ Here Kant refers to Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and to Sir Charles Grandison in Samuel Richardson’s novel of the same name (1754), “a gentleman of high character and fine appearance” who has rendered great services to others rather than simply seeking his own survival.

⁴² Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis, or Cato the Younger (95–46 BCE), Roman senator and statesman, was an opponent of Julius Caesar’s imperial ambitions. “It is said of Cato that even from his infancy, in his speech, his countenance, and all his childish pastimes, he discovered an inflexible temper, unmoved by any passion, and firm in everything”; Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, trans. John Dryden, rev. Arthur Hugh Clough, New York: Modern Library, n.d., p. 918. Cato achieved immortality when he committed suicide in order to stir the Romans of Utica to resistance against Caesar. “And a little after, the people of Utica flocked thither, crying out with one voice, he was their benefactor and their saviour, the only free and only undefeated man” (p. 959). Kant also refers to Cato in considering whether there are any circumstances in which

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which is charming to others, and the fluttering naïvete of a pastoral affair is to them tasteless and childish. And even if the mind is not entirely without a concordant finer feeling, yet the degrees of the susceptibility to the latter are very variable, and one sees that one person finds something noble and appropriate which comes across to another as grand, to be sure, but adventurous. The opportunities that present themselves in the case of nonmoral matters to detect something of the feeling of another can give us occasion also to infer with reasonable probability his sentiment with regard to the higher qualities of mind and even those of the heart. He who is bored with beautiful music arouses a strong suspicion that the beauties of a style of writing and the fine enchantments of love will have little power over him.

There is a certain spirit of trivialities (*esprit des bagatelles*), which indicates a sort of fine feeling, but which aims at precisely the opposite of the sublime:⁴³ having a taste for something because it is very *artificial* and labored, verses that can be read forwards and backwards, riddles, watches in finger rings, flea chains, etc.; a taste for everything that is measured and painfully *orderly*, although without any utility, e.g., books that stand neatly arranged in long rows in the bookcase, and an empty head that looks upon them and rejoices, rooms that are adorned like optical cabinets and are everywhere washed clean combined with an inhospitable and morose host who occupies them;⁴⁴ a taste for everything that is *rare*, however little intrinsic value it may otherwise have;⁴⁵ the lamp of Epictetus,⁴⁶ a glove of King Charles the Twelfth;⁴⁷ in a certain way coin-collecting also belongs here.⁴⁸ Such persons are very much under the suspicion that they will be grubs and cranks in the sciences, but in ethics will be without feeling for that which is beautiful or noble in a free way.

suicide is not a violation of duty to ourselves; see *Moralphilosophie* Collins, Academy Edition 27:370–71.

⁴³ The original text has a period here. ⁴⁴ The original text has a period here.

⁴⁵ The original text has a period here.

⁴⁶ The Stoic philosopher Epictetus (c. 50–130 CE), was famed for his “great sweetness, as well as personal simplicity” and “lived in a house with a rush mat, a simple pallet, and an earthenware lamp (after the iron one was stolen)”; Philip P. Hallie, “Epictetus,” in Edwards, ed., *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. III, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Here Kant refers to Charles XII of Sweden (1682–1718, reigned 1697–1718), under whom Sweden reached the height of its power, but whose death during the Northern War and Sweden’s ensuing defeat in 1721 cost the nation the rank of a great European power that it had held since the role of Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years’ War. Voltaire published a biography of Charles XII.

⁴⁸ The colon and semicolons in this sentence replace periods in the original.

To be sure, we do one another an injustice when we dismiss one who does not see the value or the beauty of what moves or charms us by saying that he does not **understand** it. In this case it is not so much a matter of what the **understanding** sees but of what the feeling is sensitive to. Nevertheless the capacities of the soul have such a great interconnection that one can often infer from the appearance of the sentiment to the talents of the insight. For to him who has many excellences of understanding these talents would be apportioned in vain if he did not at the same time have a strong sentiment for the truly noble or beautiful, which must be the incentive for applying those gifts of mind well and regularly.^g

It is indeed customary to call **useful** only that which can satisfy our cruder sentiment, what can provide us with a surplus for eating and drinking, display in clothing and furniture, and lavishness in entertaining, although I do not see why everything that is craved with my most lively feeling should not be reckoned among the useful things. Nevertheless, taking everything on this footing, he who is ruled by **self-interest** is a person with whom one must never argue concerning the finer taste. In this consideration a hen is better than a parrot, a cook pot more useful than a porcelain service, all the sharp heads in the world are not worth as much as a peasant, and the effort to discover the distance of the fixed stars can be left aside until people have agreed on the most advantageous way to drive the plow. But what folly it is to get involved in such a dispute, where it is impossible to arrive at concordant sentiments because the feeling is not at all concordant! Nevertheless, even a person of the crudest and most vulgar sentiment will be able to perceive that the charms and attractions of life which seem to be the most dispensable attract our greatest care, and that we would have few incentives left for such manifold efforts if they were to be excluded. At the same time, practically no one is so crude not to be sensitive that a moral action is all the more moving, at least to another, the further it is from self-interest and the more those nobler impulses stand out in it. [2:226]

^g One also sees that a certain fineness of feeling counts toward a person's merit. That someone can have a good meal of meat and cakes and nevertheless sleep incomparably well is interpreted as a sign of a good stomach, but not as a merit. By contrast, he who sacrifices a part of his mealtime to listening to music or who can be absorbed in a pleasant diversion by a painting or happily reads some witty stories, even if they be only poetic trivialities, nevertheless has in everyone's eyes the standing of a more refined person, of whom one has a more advantageous and favorable opinion.

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If I observe alternately the noble and the weak sides of human beings, I reprove myself that I am not able to adopt that standpoint from which these contrasts can nevertheless exhibit the great portrait of human nature in its entirety in a moving form. For I gladly grant that so far as it belongs to the project of great nature as a whole, these grotesque attitudes cannot lend it other than a noble expression, although one is far too short-sighted to see them in this connection. Nevertheless, to cast even a weak glance on this, I believe that I can note the following. There are very **few** people who conduct themselves in accordance with **principles**, which is on the whole good, since it is so easy to err with these principles, and then the ensuing disadvantage extends all the further, the more general the principle is and the more steadfast the person who has set it before himself is. Those who act out of **good-hearted drives** are far more **numerous**, which is most excellent, although it cannot be reckoned to individuals as a special personal merit; for these virtuous instincts are occasionally lacking, but on average they accomplish the great aim of nature just as well as the other instincts that so regularly move the animal world. Those always who have their dear self before them as the sole focal point of their efforts and who attempt to make everything turn on the great axis of **self-interest** are the **most common**, and nothing can be more advantageous than this, for these are the most industrious, orderly, and prudent people; they give demeanor and solidity to the whole, for even without aiming at it they serve the common good, supply the necessary requisites, and provide the foundations over which finer souls can spread beauty and harmony. Finally, the **love of honor** is distributed among **all** human hearts, although in unequal measure, which must give the whole a beauty that charms to the point of admiration. For although the lust for honor is a foolish delusion if it becomes the rule to which one subordinates the other inclinations, yet as an accompanying drive it is most excellent. For while on the great stage each prosecutes his actions in accordance with his dominant inclinations, at the same time he is moved by a hidden incentive to adopt in his thoughts a standpoint outside himself in order to judge the propriety of his conduct, how it appears and strikes the eye of the observer. In this way the different groups unite themselves in a painting of magnificent expression, where in the midst of great variety unity shines forth, and the whole of moral nature displays beauty and dignity.

Third Section

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On the difference between the sublime and
the beautiful in the contrast between the two sexes⁴⁹

He who first conceived of woman under the name of the **fair**⁵⁰ sex perhaps meant to say something flattering, but hit it better than he may himself have believed. For without taking into consideration that her figure is in general finer, her features more tender and gentle, her mien in the expression of friendliness, humor, and affability more meaningful and engaging than is the case with the male sex, and without forgetting as well what must be discounted as the secret power of enchantment by which she makes our passion inclined to a judgment that is favorable for her, above all there lies in the character of the mind of this sex features peculiar to it which clearly distinguish it from ours and which are chiefly responsible for her being characterized by the mark of the **beautiful**. On the other hand, we could lay claim to the designation of the **noble sex**, if it were not also required of a noble cast of mind to decline honorific titles and to bestow rather than receive them. Here it is not to be understood that woman is lacking noble qualities or that the male sex must entirely forego beauties; rather one expects that each sex will unite both, but in such a way that in a woman all other merits should only be united so as to emphasize the character of the **beautiful**, which is the proper point of reference, while by contrast among the male qualities the **sublime** should clearly stand out as the criterion of his kind. To this must refer all judgments of these two genders, those of praise as well as those of blame. All education and instruction must keep this before it, and likewise all effort to promote the ethical perfection of the one or the other, unless one would make unrecognizable the charming difference that nature sought to establish between the two human genders. For it is here not enough to represent that one has human beings before one: one must also not forget that these human beings are not all of the same sort.

⁴⁹ Differences between the sexes would remain a constant theme in Kant's anthropology, from his first lectures in 1772–73 (*Anthropologie Collins*, 25:234–38) to his final handbook (*Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Academy Edition 7:303–10).

⁵⁰ *schönen*

[2:229] Women have a stronger innate feeling for everything that is beautiful, decorative, and adorned. Even in childhood they are glad to be dressed up and are pleased when they are adorned. They are cleanly and very delicate with respect to everything that causes disgust. They love a joke and can be entertained with trivialities as long as they are cheerful and laughing. They have something demure about them very early, they know how to display a fine propriety and to be self-possessed; and this at an age when our well-brought-up male youth is still unruly, awkward, and embarrassed. They have many sympathetic sentiments, good-heartedness and compassion, they prefer the beautiful to the useful, and gladly transform excess in their support into parsimony in order to support expenditure on luster and adornment. They are very sensitive to the least offense, and are exceedingly quick to notice the least lack of attention and respect toward themselves. In short, they contain the chief ground for the contrast between the beautiful and the noble qualities in human nature, and even refine the male sex.

I hope I will be spared the enumeration of the male qualities to the extent that they are parallel with the former, and that it will be sufficient to consider both only in their contrast. The fair⁵¹ sex has just as much understanding as the male, only it is a **beautiful understanding**, while ours should be a **deeper understanding**, which is an expression that means the same thing as the sublime.

For the beauty of all actions it is requisite above all that they display facility and that they seem to be accomplished without painful effort; by contrast, efforts and difficulties that have been overcome arouse admiration and belong to the sublime. Deep reflection and a long drawn out consideration are noble, but are grave and not well suited for a person in whom the unconstrained charms should indicate nothing other than a beautiful nature. Laborious learning or painful grubbing, even if a woman could get very far with them, destroy the merits that are proper to her sex, and on account of their rarity may well make her into an object of a cold admiration, but at the same time they will weaken the charms by means of which she exercises her great power over the opposite sex. A woman who has a head full of Greek, like Mme. **Dacier**,⁵² or who conducts thorough

⁵¹ *schöne*

⁵² Anna Dacier, née Lefèvre (1654–1720), wife of the philologist André Dacier, translated *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, as well as other classics in both Greek and Latin, into French.

disputations about mechanics, like the Marquise du Châtelet,⁵³ might [2:230] as well also wear a beard; for that might perhaps better express the mien of depth for which they strive. The beautiful understanding chooses for its objects everything that is closely related to the finer feeling, and leaves abstract speculation or knowledge, which is useful but dry, to the industrious, thorough, and deep understanding. The woman will accordingly not learn geometry; she will know only so much about the principle of sufficient reason or the monads as is necessary in order to detect the salt in satirical poems which the insipid grubs of our sex have fabricated. The beauties can leave Descartes' vortices⁵⁴ rotating forever without worrying about them, even if the suave Fontenelle wanted to join them under the planets,⁵⁵ and the attraction of their charms loses nothing of its power even if they know nothing of what Algarotti⁵⁶ has taken the trouble to lay out for their advantage about the attractive powers of crude matter according to Newton. In history they will not fill their heads with battles nor in geography with fortresses, for it suits them just as little to reek of gunpowder as it suits men to reek of musk.

It seems to be malicious cunning on the part of men that they have wanted to mislead the fair sex into this perverted taste. For well aware of their weakness with respect to the natural charms of the latter, and that a single sly glance can throw them into more confusion than the most difficult question in school, as soon as the woman has given way

⁵³ Gabrielle Émilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, marquise du Châtelet-Lomont (1706–49), a mathematician and physicist, and Voltaire's companion at Cirey for the last fifteen years of her life. Kant alludes to the debate over living forces between her and Cartesians such as Jean-Jacques d'Ortous de Mairan (1678–1771), who wrote a "Lettre a Madame du Châtelet sur la question des forces vives" (Letter to Madame du Châtelet on the question of living forces) (Paris, 1741), in his earliest work, *Thoughts on the True Evaluation of Living Forces* (1747), § 33, Academy Edition 1:45.

⁵⁴ In his famous theory of vortices, Descartes claimed that "all the bodies in the universe are composed of one and the same matter, which is divisible into indefinitely many parts, and is in fact divided into a large number of parts which move in different directions and have a sort of circular motion"; *The Principles of Philosophy* (1644), Part III, § 46; in the French edition, he added that he would use the word *vortices* "to refer to all matter which revolves in this way around each of the centers." See *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, Cambridge University Press, 1985, vol. 1, pp. 256–57.

⁵⁵ Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757), a popularizer of the new science, wrote *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Dialogue on the plurality of the worlds) (Paris, 1686), presented as a conversation among women on astronomy.

⁵⁶ Francesco, Conte Algarotti (1712–64), an Italian who spent some years at the court of Frederick the Great, wrote *Newtonianismo per le Dame* (1736), translated into all the major European languages (including English in 1737 and French in 1741), as well as a well-known essay on opera (1755).

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to this taste they see themselves in a decided superiority and are at an advantage, which it would otherwise be difficult for them to have, of helping the vanity of the weak with generous indulgence. The content of the great science of woman is rather the human being, and, among human beings, the man. Her philosophical wisdom is not reasoning but sentiment. In the opportunity that one would give them to educate their beautiful nature, one must always keep this relation before his eyes. One will seek to broaden her entire moral feeling and not her memory, and not, to be sure, through universal rules, but rather through individual judgment about the conduct that she sees about her. The examples that one borrows from other times in order to understand the influence that the fair⁵⁷ sex has had in the affairs of the world, the various relationships in which it has stood to the male sex in other ages or foreign lands, the character of both so far as it can be illuminated by all this, and the variable taste in gratifications constitute her entire history and geography. It is a fine thing⁵⁸ to make looking at a map that represents either the entire globe or the most important parts of the world agreeable to a woman. This is done by depicting it to her only with the aim of illustrating the different characters of the peoples that dwell there, the differences in their taste and ethical feeling, especially with regard to the effects that these have on the relationships between the sexes, together with some easy explanations from the differences in regions, their freedom or slavery. It matters little whether or not they know the particular divisions of these countries, their industries, power, and rulers. Likewise they do not need to know more of the cosmos than is necessary to make the view of the heavens on a beautiful evening moving for them, if they have somehow understood that there are to be found still more worlds and in them still more beautiful creatures. Feeling for paintings of expression and for music, not in so far as it expresses art but rather in so far as it expresses sentiment, all of this refines or elevates the taste of this sex and always has some connection with ethical emotions. Never a cold and speculative instruction, always sentiments and indeed those that remain as close as possible to the relationships of their sex. This education⁵⁹ is so rare because it requires talents, experience, and a heart full of feeling, and

⁵⁷ *schöne* ⁵⁸ *Es ist schön* ⁵⁹ *Unterweisung*

a woman can do very well without anything else, as indeed she usually educates⁶⁰ herself quite well on her own even without this.

The virtue of the woman is a **beautiful virtue**.^h That of the male sex ought to be a **noble virtue**. Women will avoid evil not because it is unjust but because it is ugly, and for them virtuous actions mean those that are ethically beautiful. Nothing of ought, nothing of must, nothing of obligation. To a woman anything by way of orders and sullen compulsion is insufferable. They do something only because they love to, and the art lies in making sure that they love only what is good. It is difficult for me to believe that the fair sex is capable of principles, and I hope not to give offense by this, for these are also extremely rare among the male sex. In place of these, however, providence has implanted goodly and benevolent sentiments in their bosom, a fine feeling for propriety and a complaisant soul. But do not demand sacrifices and magnanimous self-compulsion. A man should never tell his wife if he risks part of his fortune for the sake of a friend. Why should he fetter her cheerful talkativeness by burdening her mind with an important secret that he alone is obliged to keep? Even many of her weaknesses are so to speak **beautiful faults**. Injury or misfortune move her tender soul to sadness. A man must never weep other than magnanimous tears. Any that he sheds in pain or over reversals of fortune make him contemptible. The **vanity** for which one so frequently reproaches the fair sex, if it is indeed a fault in her, is only a beautiful fault. For even leaving aside that the men who so gladly flatter woman would do badly if she were not inclined to take it well, she actually enlivens her charms by it. This inclination is an impulse to make herself agreeable and to show her good demeanor, to let her cheerful wit play, also to glisten with the changing inventions of her dress, and to elevate her beauty. In this there is nothing that is at all injurious to others, but rather, if it is done with good taste, there is so much refinement that it would be quite inappropriate to scold it with peevish criticism. A woman who is too inconstant and deceptive in this is called a **silly woman**,⁶¹ yet this expression does not have as harsh

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^h Above, p. 25 (2:218), this was in a strict judgment designated as adopted virtue; here, where on account of the character of the sex it deserves a favorable justification, it is called in general a beautiful virtue.

⁶⁰ *ausbildet* ⁶¹ *Närrin*

[2:233] a sense as it does when applied with a change of the final syllable⁶² to a man, so that, indeed, if one understands the other, it can sometimes even indicate an intimate flattery. If vanity is a fault that in a woman is well deserving of forgiveness, nevertheless **conceitedness** in them is not only blameworthy, as in humans in general, but entirely disfigures the character of their sex. For this quality is exceedingly stupid and ugly and entirely opposed to engaging, modest charm. Such a person is then in a slippery position. She would let herself be judged sharply and without any indulgence; for whoever insists on haughtiness invites everyone around her to reproach her. Every discovery of even the least fault is a true joy to everyone, and the expression **silly woman** here loses its mitigated sense. One must always distinguish between vanity and conceitedness. The former seeks approbation and to a certain degree honors those on whose account the effort is made; the second already believes itself to be in complete possession of that approbation, and making no effort to acquire it, it also wins none.

If some ingredients of vanity do not at all disfigure a woman in the eyes of the male sex, still the more visible they are, the more they divide the fair sex from each other. They then judge each other quite sharply, because the charms of one seem to obscure those of the other, and those who still make strong pretensions to conquest are actually rarely friends with each other in the true sense.

Nothing is so opposed to the beautiful as the disgusting, just as nothing sinks more deeply beneath the sublime than the ridiculous. Thus a man can be sensitive to no insult more than that of being called a **fool**, and a woman to none more than being called **disgusting**. The English *Spectator* holds that no reproach can be more upsetting to a man than when he is held to be a liar, and none more bitter to a woman than being held to be unchaste.⁶³ I will leave this for what it is worth in so far as it is judged with the strictness of morality. Only here the question is not what intrinsically deserves the greatest reproach, but rather what is actually felt⁶⁴ as the harshest one. And here I ask every reader whether, if in thought he places

⁶² i.e., *Narr*, a fool

⁶³ *The Spectator*, number 6 (Wednesday, March 7, 1710/11): "When modesty ceases to be the chief ornament of one sex, and integrity of the other, society is upon a wrong basis, and we shall be ever after without rules to guide our judgment in what is really becoming and ornamental" (by Richard Steele); *The Spectator*, ed. A. Chalmers, vol. 1, p. 131.

⁶⁴ *empfunden*

himself in this position, he must not agree with my opinion. The maiden Ninon Lenclos⁶⁵ made not the least claims to the honor of chastity, and nevertheless she would have been implacably offended if one of her lovers had gone so far in his judgment; and one knows the dreadful fate of Monaldeschi⁶⁶ on account of such an expression in the case of a princess who hardly wanted to represent herself as a Lucretia.⁶⁷ It is intolerable that one should not be able to commit evil even if one wants to, because then even its omission would always be only a very ambiguous virtue.

To distance oneself as far as possible from this sort of disgustingness takes *purity*, which is indeed becoming for every person, and which in the case of the fair sex is of the first rank among the virtues and can hardly be taken too far by it, although in the case of a man it can sometimes be exaggerated and then becomes ridiculous. [2:234]

The sense of shame is a secrecy of nature aimed at setting bounds to a most intractable inclination, and which, in so far as it has the call of nature on its side, always seems compatible with good, moral qualities, even if it is excessive. It is accordingly most necessary as a supplement to principles; for there is no case in which inclination so readily becomes a sophist cooking up complaisant principles as here. At the same time, it also serves to draw a secretive curtain before even the most appropriate and necessary ends of nature, so that too familiar an acquaintance with them will not occasion disgust or at least indifference with respect to the final aims of a drive on to which the finest and liveliest inclinations of human nature are grafted. This quality is especially proper to the fair sex and very appropriate for it. It is also a coarse and contemptible rudeness to put the delicate modesty of the fair sex to embarrassment or annoyance by that sort of vulgar jokes that are called **obscenities**. However, since no matter how far one might try to go around this secret,

⁶⁵ Ninon de Lenclos (1616–1705), a lover of many including La Rochefoucauld, left the young Voltaire a bequest to buy books.

⁶⁶ Marchese Giovanni Monaldeschi (d. 1657), equerry for Queen Cristina of Sweden, was assassinated at her orders after she had abdicated the Swedish throne and was living in France.

⁶⁷ Lucretia, traditionally the wife of Tarquinius Collatinus, one of the founders of the Roman republic and consul in 509 BCE, was violated by Sextus, son of Tarquinius Superbus; after telling her husband, she took her own life. This incident resulted in a popular rising led by Junius Brutus, also traditionally regarded as a consul in 509 BCE, and the expulsion of the Tarquins. The legend of Lucretia was a favorite in later literature, such as Shakespeare's 1594 poem "The Rape of Lucrece," and also in painting.

the sexual inclination is still in the end the ground of all other charms, and a woman, as a woman, is always the agreeable object of a well-mannered entertainment, it can perhaps thus be explained why otherwise refined men occasionally allow themselves the liberty of letting some fine allusions shine through the little mischief in their jokes, which leads one to call them **loose** or **waggish**, and which, since they are neither accompanied by invasive glances nor intended to injure respect, makes them believe themselves to be justified in calling the person who receives them with an indignant or standoffish mien a **stickler for honorableness**. I mention this only because it commonly is regarded as a somewhat bold feature in refined society,⁶⁸ and because in fact much wit has all along been squandered upon it; but as far as strict moral judgment is concerned, it does not belong here, since in the sentiment of the beautiful I have to observe and explain only the appearances.

[2:235] The noble qualities of this sex, which nevertheless, as we have already noted, must never make the feeling of the beautiful unrecognizable, announce themselves by nothing more clearly and surely than by the **modesty** of a kind of noble simplicity and naïvete in great excellences. From this shines forth a calm benevolence and respect toward others, combined at the same time with a certain **noble trust** in oneself and an appropriate self-esteem, which is always to be found in a sublime cast of mind. In so far as this fine mixture is both engaging in virtue of its charms and moving in virtue of respect, it secures all other shining qualities against the mischief of censure and mockery. Persons of this cast of mind also have a heart for friendship, which in a woman can never be valued enough, because it is so rare and at the same time must be so totally charming.

Since our aim is to judge of sentiments, it cannot be disagreeable to bring under concepts, so far as possible, the variety of the impression that the figure and facial features of the fair sex makes upon the masculine. This whole enchantment is at bottom spread over the sexual drive. Nature pursues its great aim, and all refinements that are associated with it, however remote from it they seem to be, are only veils, and in the end derive their charm from the very same source. A healthy and **coarse taste** that always remains close to this drive, is little troubled by the charms of

⁶⁸ *vom schönen Umgange*

demeanor, of the facial features, of the eyes, etc., in a woman, and as it is really concerned only with sex, often it sees the delicacy of others as empty flirtation.

If this taste is not exactly fine, still it is not on that account to be despised. For the greatest part of humanity follows by its means the great order of nature in a very simple and certain manner.ⁱ By this means most marriages are brought about, and indeed among the most industrious part of humanity, and because the man does not have his head full of enchanting miens, languishing glances, noble demeanor, etc., and also understands nothing of these, he is thus all the more attentive to domestic virtues, thrift, etc., and to the dowry. As far as the somewhat finer taste is concerned, on account of which it might be necessary to make a distinction among the external charms of the woman, this is directed either to that which is **moral** in the figure and the expression of the face or to the **immoral**. With respect to the latter sort of agreeable qualities, a woman is called **pretty**:⁶⁹ a well-proportioned build, regular features, a lovely contrast between the colors of eyes and face: all beauties that also please in a bouquet of flowers and earn a cold approbation. The face itself says nothing, although it may be pretty, and does not speak to the heart. As for the expression of the features, the eyes and the mien that are moral, this pertains either to the feeling of the sublime or of the beautiful. A woman in whom the agreeable qualities that become her sex are salient, especially the moral expression of the sublime, is called **beautiful** in the proper sense; one whose moral design, so far as it makes itself known in the mien or facial features, announces the qualities of the beautiful, is **agreeable**, and if she is that to a higher degree, **charming**. The former lets a glimmer of a beautiful understanding shine through modest glances beneath a mien of composure and a noble demeanor, and as in her face she portrays a tender feeling and a benevolent heart, she overpowers both the inclination and the esteem of a male heart. The latter displays cheer and wit in laughing eyes, a bit of fine mischief, coquetry in her jokes, and

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ⁱ As all things in the world also have their bad side, the only thing that is to be regretted about this taste is that it degenerates into dissoluteness more readily than any other. For although the fire that one person has ignited can be extinguished by another, there are not enough difficulties that could restrict an intractable inclination.

⁶⁹ In the original text there is a period here.

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a roguish coyness. She charms, while the former moves, and the feeling of love of which she is capable and which she inspires in others is fickle but beautiful, while the sentiment of the former is tender, combined with respect, and constant. I will not get too involved with detailed dissections of this sort; for in such cases the author always seems to portray his own inclination. I will still mention, however, that the taste that many ladies have for a healthy but pale color can be understood here. For the latter commonly accompanies a cast of mind of more inward feeling and tender sentiment, which belongs to the quality of the sublime, while the red and blooming color indicates less of the former, yet more of the joyful and cheerful cast of mind; but it is more suitable to vanity to move and enchain than to charm and attract. By contrast, persons without any moral feeling and without an expression that indicates sentiments can be very pretty, yet they will neither move nor charm, unless it be that **coarse taste** that we have mentioned, which occasionally becomes somewhat more refined and then also chooses after its fashion. It is bad that pretty creatures of that sort easily succumb to the fault of **conceitedness** because of the awareness of the beautiful figure that the mirror shows them, and from a lack of finer sentiments; for they then make everyone cold to them, except for the flatterer, who is after ulterior motives and fashions intrigues.

Through these concepts one can perhaps understand something of the very different effect that the figure of one and the same woman has on the taste of men. I do not mention that which in this impression is too closely related to the sexual drive and which may agree with the particularly **voluptuary** illusion with which the sentiment of everyone is clothed, because it lies outside the sphere of finer taste; and it is perhaps correct, as M. de Buffon suspects, that that figure which makes the first impression at the time when this drive is still new and beginning to develop remains the archetype to which in future times all feminine forms⁷⁰ must more or less conform, which can arouse the fantastic longing by means of which a somewhat crude inclination is made to choose among the different objects of a sex.⁷¹ As far as a somewhat finer taste

⁷⁰ *Bildungen*

⁷¹ "Every nation has ideas of beauty peculiar to itself; and every individual has his own notions and taste concerning that quality. These peculiarities probably originate from the first agreeable

is concerned, I maintain that the sort of beauty that we have called the **pretty figure** is judged fairly uniformly by all men, and that opinions about it are not so various as is commonly held. The **Circassian** and **Georgian** maidens have always been considered to be extremely pretty by all Europeans travelling through their lands. The **Turks**, the **Arabs**, and the **Persians** must be of very much the same taste, for they are very eager to beautify their populations with such fine blood, and one also notes that the Persian race has actually succeeded in this. The merchants of **Hindustan** likewise do not fail to extract great profit from a wicked trade in such beautiful creatures, by supplying them to the sweet-toothed rich men of their country, and one sees that as divergent as the caprice of taste in these different regions of the world may be, that which is held to be especially **pretty** in one of them is also taken to be such in all the others. But where what is moral in the features is mixed into the judgment on the fine figure, there the taste of different men is always very different, in accordance with the difference in their ethical feeling itself as well as with the different significance that the expression of the face may have in every fancy. One finds that those forms⁷² that on first glance do not have a marked effect because they are not pretty in any decided way usually are far more engaging and seem to grow in beauty as soon as they begin to please on closer acquaintance, while in contrast the beautiful appearance that announces itself all at once is subsequently perceived more coldly, presumably because moral charms, when they become visible, are more arresting, also because they become effective only on the occasion of moral sentiments and as it were let themselves be discovered, each discovery of a new charm, however, giving rise to a suspicion of even more; whereas all the agreeable qualities that do not at all conceal themselves can do nothing more after they have exercised their entire effect all at the beginning than to cool off the enamored curiosity and gradually bring it to indifference. [2:238]

Among these observations, the following remark naturally suggests itself. The entirely simple and crude feeling in the sexual inclinations

impressions we receive of certain objects; and therefore depend more upon chance and habit than upon difference of constitution"; Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *Natural History, General and Particular*, trans. William Smellie, ed. William Wood, 20 vols., London: 1812, vol. III, p. 203.

⁷² *Bildungen*

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leads, to be sure, quite directly to the great end of nature, and in satisfying its demands it is suited to make the person himself happy without detour; but because of its great generality, it readily degenerates into debauchery and dissoluteness. On the other side, an extremely refined taste certainly serves to remove the wildness from an impetuous inclination and, by limiting it to only a very few objects, to make it modest and decorous; but it commonly fails to attain the great final aim of nature, and since it demands or expects more than the latter commonly accomplishes, it very rarely makes the person of such delicate sentiment happy. The first cast of mind becomes uncouth, because it applies to all the members of a sex, the second brooding, because it really applies to none, but is rather occupied only with an object that the enamored inclination creates in thought and adorns with all the noble and beautiful qualities that nature rarely unites in one person and even more rarely offers to one who can treasure her and who would perhaps be worthy of such a possession. Hence arises the postponement and finally the complete renunciation of the marital bond, or, what is perhaps equally bad, a sullen regret of a choice that has already been made, which does not fulfill the great expectations that had been raised; for it is not uncommon for Aesop's cock to find a pearl when a common barley corn would have suited him better.

Here we can remark in general that, as charming as the impressions of tender feeling may be, nevertheless we have cause to be cautious in the refinement of it, unless we want to bring upon ourselves much discontent and a source of evils through excessive sensitivity. I would recommend to nobler souls that they refine their feeling as much as they can with regard to those qualities that pertain to themselves or those actions that they themselves perform, but that with regard to what they enjoy or expect from others they should preserve their taste in its simplicity: if only I understood how it is possible to bring this off. But if they were to succeed, then they would make others happy and also be happy themselves. It should never be lost sight of that, in whatever form it might be, one should not make very great claims on the happinesses of life and the perfection of human beings; for he who always expects only something average has the advantage that the outcome will seldom disappoint his hopes, although sometimes unsuspected perfections will also surprise him.

In the end, age, the great ravager of beauty, threatens all of these charms, and in the natural order of things the sublime and noble qualities

must gradually take the place of the beautiful ones in order to make a person worthy of ever greater respect as she ceases to be attractive. In my opinion, the entire perfection of the fair sex in the bloom of years should consist in the beautiful simplicity that has been heightened by a refined feeling for everything that is charming and noble. Gradually, as the claims to charms diminish, the reading of books and the expansion in insight could, unnoticed, fill with Muses the place vacated by the Graces, and the husband should be the first teacher. Nevertheless, when finally the old age that is so terrible to all women arrives, she still belongs to the fair sex, and that sex disfigures itself if in a sort of despair over holding on to this character longer it gives way to a morose and sullen mood. [2:240]

A person of years, who joins society with a modest and friendly essence,⁷³ who is talkative in a cheerful and reasonable way, who favors with propriety the enjoyments of youth of which she no longer takes part, and who, with concern for everything, displays contentment and satisfaction in the joy that surrounds her, is always still a more refined person than a man of the same age and is perhaps even more lovable than a maiden, though in a different sense. To be sure, the platonic love asserted by an ancient philosopher when he said of the object of his inclination: **The Graces reside in her wrinkles, and my soul seems to hover about my lips when I kiss her withered mouth**, may be somewhat too mystical; yet such claims must then be relinquished. An old man who acts infatuated is a fop, and the similar pretensions of the other sex are then disgusting. It is never the fault of nature if we do not appear with a good demeanor, but is rather due to the fact that we would pervert her.

In order not to lose sight of my text, I will here add several considerations on the influence that one sex can have in beautifying or ennobling of the feeling of the other. The woman has a preeminent feeling for the **beautiful**, so far as it pertains to **herself**, but for the **noble** in so far as it is found in the **male sex**. The man, on the contrary, has a decided feeling for the **noble** that belongs to **his** qualities, but for the **beautiful** in so far as it is to be found in the **woman**. From this it must follow that the ends of nature are aimed more at **ennobling** the man and **beautifying** the woman by means of the sexual inclination. A woman is little embarrassed by the fact that she does not possess certain lofty insights, that she is

⁷³ *Wesen*

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fearful and not up to important business, etc.; she is beautiful and engaging, and that is enough. By contrast, she demands all of these qualities in the man, and the sublimity of her soul is revealed only by the fact that she knows how to treasure these noble qualities in so far as they are to be found in him. How else would it be possible for so many grotesque male faces, although they may have merits, to be able to acquire such polite and fine wives! The man, in contrast, is far more delicate with regard to the beautiful charms of the woman. By her fine figure, her cheerful naïvete and her charming friendliness he is more than adequately compensated for the lack of book-learning and for other lacks that he must make good by his own talents. Vanity and fashion may well give these natural drives a false direction, and make out of many a man a **sweet gentleman**, but out of the woman a **pedant** or an **Amazon**, yet nature still always seeks to return to its proper order. From this one can judge what powerful influences the sexual inclination could have in ennobling especially the masculine sex if, in place of many dry lessons, the moral feeling of woman were developed in good time to make her sensitive to what belongs to the dignity and the sublime qualities of the opposite sex, and thereby prepared to regard the ridiculous fops with contempt and to yield to no other qualities than to merits. It is also certain that the power of her charms would thereby gain overall; for it is apparent that their enchantment is often effective only on nobler souls, while the others are not fine enough to be sensitive to them. Thus when he was advised to let the **Thessalians** hear his beautiful songs, the poet **Simonides** said: **These louts are too dumb to be beguiled by a man such as me.**⁷⁴ It has always been regarded as an effect of intercourse with the fair sex that male manners become gentler, their conduct more refined and polished, and their demeanor more elegant; but this is only an incidental advantage.^j What is most important is that the man become more perfect

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^j This advantage is itself very much diminished by the observation that has been made that those men who have become involved too early and too frequently in those parties to which the woman has given the tone commonly become somewhat ridiculous, and are boring or even contemptible in male society, because they have lost the taste for an entertainment that is certainly cheerful, but must also have real content, that is humorous but must also be useful because of serious conversations.

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⁷⁴ Simonides (c. 556–468 BCE), lyric and elegaic poet, particularly famous for his encomia and dirges during the period of the Peloponnesian wars. The authenticity of many apothegms attributed to him is dubious. See M. Boas, *De Epigrammatis Simonideis* (1905).

as a man and the woman as a woman, i.e., that the incentives of the sexual inclination operate in accordance with nature to make the one more noble and to beautify the qualities of the other. If things come to the extreme, the man, confident of his merits, can say: **Even if you do not love me I will force you to esteem me**, and the woman, secure in the power of her charms, will answer: **Even if you do not inwardly esteem us, we will still force you to love us**. In the absence of such principles one sees men adopt feminine qualities, in order to please, and woman sometimes (although much more rarely) work up a masculine demeanor, in order to inspire esteem; but whatever one does contrary to the favor of nature one always does very badly.

In marital life the united pair should as it were constitute a single moral person,⁷⁵ which is animated and ruled by the understanding of the man and the taste of the wife. For not only can one trust the former more for insight grounded in experience, but the latter more for freedom and correctness in sentiment; yet further, the more sublime a cast of mind is, the more inclined it also is to place the greatest goal of its efforts in the satisfaction of a beloved object, and on the other side the more beautiful it is, the more does it seek to respond to this effort with complaisance. In such a relationship a struggle for precedence is ridiculous, and where it does occur it is the most certain mark of a crude or unequally matched taste. If it comes down to talk of the right of the superior, then the thing is already extremely debased; for where the entire bond is really built only on inclination, there it is already half torn apart as soon as the ought begins to be heard. The presumption of the woman in this harsh tone is extremely ugly and that of the man in the highest degree ignoble and contemptible. However, the wise order of things brings it about that all these niceties and delicacies of sentiment have their full strength only in the beginning, but subsequently are gradually dulled by familiarity and domestic concerns and then degenerate into familiar love, where finally the great art consists in preserving sufficient remnants of the former so that indifference and surfeit do not defeat the entire value of the enjoyment on account of which and which alone it was worth having entered into such a bond. [2:243]

⁷⁵ Kant would later argue for the equality of man and woman within marriage, at least with regard to economic rights as well as sexual rights, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Doctrine of Right, §§ 24–26, Academy Edition 6:277–80.

Fourth Section

On national characters^k in so far
as they rest upon the different feeling of the
sublime and the beautiful⁷⁶

Among the peoples of our part of the world the **Italians** and the **French** are, in my opinion, those who most distinguish themselves in the feeling of the **beautiful**, but the **Germans**, the **English**, and the **Spaniards** those who are most distinguished from all others in the feeling of the **sublime**. **Holland** can be regarded as the land where this finer taste is fairly unnoticeable. The beautiful itself is either enchanting and touching, or laughing and charming. The former has something of the sublime in it, and in this feeling the mind is thoughtful and enraptured, while in the feeling of the second kind it is smiling and joyful. The first sort of beautiful feeling seems especially appropriate to the Italians, the second sort to the French. In the national character that has in it the expression of the sublime, this is either of the terrifying kind, which inclines a bit to the adventurous, or it is a feeling for the noble, or for the magnificent. I think I have grounds sufficient to attribute the first kind of feeling to the Spaniard, the second to the Englishman, and the third to the German. The feeling for the magnificent is not by its nature original, like the other kinds of taste, and although a spirit of imitation can be associated with any other feeling, yet it is more characteristic of that for the glittering sublime, since this is really a mixed feeling out of that for the beautiful and

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^k My intention is not at all to portray the characters of the peoples in detail; rather I will only outline some features that express the feeling of the sublime and the beautiful in them. One can readily guess that only a tolerable level of accuracy can be demanded in such a depiction, that its prototypes stand out in the large crowds of those who make claim to a finer feeling, and that no nation is lacking in casts of mind which unite the foremost predominant qualities of this kind. For this reason the criticism that might occasionally be cast on a people can offend no one, as it is like a ball that one can always hit to his neighbor. I will not investigate here whether these national differences are contingent and depend upon the times and the type of government, or whether they are connected with a certain necessity with the climate.

⁷⁶ Discussion of national characters was a standard part of Kant's lectures on anthropology. Beginning with his first lectures in 1772–73, we find sections on the "Taste of Different Nations" as well as "On National Character" (*Anthropologie Collins*, Academy Edition 25:201–04, 232–34); his handbook *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* includes the section "On the Character of Nations"; Part II, Section C, Academy Edition 7:311–20.

that for the noble, where each, considered by itself, is colder, and hence the mind is free enough in the connection of them to attend to examples, and also has need for their incentive. The German will accordingly have less feeling in regard to the beautiful than the Frenchman, and less of that pertaining to the sublime than the Englishman, but his feeling will be more suited for the cases where both are to appear as combined, just as he will also luckily avoid the errors into which an excessive strength of either of these kinds of feeling alone could fall.

I touch only fleetingly the arts and the sciences the selection of which can confirm the taste of the nations that we have imputed to them. The Italian genius has distinguished itself especially in music, painting, sculpture, and architecture. There is an equally fine taste for all of these fine⁷⁷ arts in France, although here their beauty is less touching. The taste with regard to poetic or rhetorical perfection runs more to the beautiful in France, in England more to the sublime. In France, fine jests, comedy, laughing satire, enamored dalliance, and the light and naturally flowing manner of writing are original;⁷⁸ in England, by contrast, thoughts with deep content, tragedy, epic poetry, and in general the heavy gold of wit, which under the French hammer can be beaten into thin little leaves of great surface area. In Germany, wit still glimmers very much through a screen. Formerly it was strident; by means of examples and the understanding of the nation, however, it has become rather more charming and nobler, but the former with less naïvete and the latter with a less bold thrust than in the peoples mentioned. The taste of the Dutch nation for a painstaking order and decorousness that leads to worry and embarrassment also leaves little feeling for the unaffected and free movements of genius, the beauty of which would only be disfigured by the anxious avoidance of errors. Nothing can be more opposed to all the arts and sciences than an adventurous taste, since this distorts nature, which is the prototype of everything beautiful and noble. Thus the Spanish nation has also demonstrated little feeling for the fine arts and sciences.

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The characters of mind of the peoples are most evident in that in them which is moral; for this reason we will next consider their different

⁷⁷ *schöne*

⁷⁸ In the original there is a period here, and the remainder of this sentence is printed as if it were a new sentence, but it lacks a verb.

feeling in regard to the sublime and the beautiful from this point of view.¹ The **Spaniard** is serious, taciturn, and truthful. There are few more honest merchants in the world than the Spanish. He has a proud soul and more feeling for great than for beautiful actions. Since in his mixture there is little to be found of generous and tender benevolence, he is often hard and also even cruel. The *Auto da Fe* endures not so much because of superstition as because of the adventurous inclination of the nation, which is moved by a venerable and terrifying rite, in which one sees **San Benito**, painted with figures of the devil, consigned to the flames that have been ignited by a raging piety.⁷⁹ One cannot say that the Spaniard is haughtier or more amorous than anyone from another people, yet he is both in an adventurous way that is rare and unusual. To leave the plow standing and walk up and down the field with a long sword and cape until the stranger who is passing by has gone, or in a bullfight, where for once the beauties of the land are seen unveiled, to announce himself to his mistress with a special greeting and then in order to wage a dangerous fight with a wild animal to honor her, these are unusual and strange actions, which greatly diverge from what is natural.

The **Italian** seems to have a feeling which mixes that of a Spaniard and that of a Frenchman: more feeling for the beautiful than the former and more for the sublime than the latter. In this way, I think, the other features of his moral character can be explained.

[2:246] The **Frenchman** has a dominant feeling for the morally beautiful. He is refined, courteous, and complaisant. He becomes intimate very quickly, is humorous and free in conversation, and the expression of a **man** or a **lady of good manners** has a meaning that is comprehensible only to one who has acquired the refined feeling of a Frenchman. Even his sublime sentiments, of which he has not a few, are subordinated to the feeling of the beautiful and acquire their strength only through accord with the latter. He very much likes to be witty, and will without

¹ It is hardly necessary for me to repeat my previous apology here. In each people the finest portion contains praiseworthy characters of all sorts, and whoever is affected by one or another criticism will, if he is fine enough, understand it to his advantage, which lies in leaving everyone else to his fate but making an exception of himself.

⁷⁹ According to Goldthwait, "The San Benito was a scapular, a loose, sleeveless monastic garment introduced by St. Benedict. That worn by confessed heretics was yellow and was decorated with flames and figures of devils." Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, trans. John Goldthwait, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.

reservation sacrifice something of the truth for the sake of a witticism. By contrast, where he cannot be witty,^m he displays just as thorough an insight as someone from any other people, e.g., in mathematics and in the other dry or profound arts and sciences. A *bon mot* does not have the same fleeting value with him as elsewhere; it is eagerly spread about and preserved in books, as if it were the most important occurrence. He is a peaceful citizen and avenges himself against the oppressions of the tax collectors by satires or remonstrations to the courts, which, after they have in accordance with their intention given the fathers of the people a beautiful patriotic aspect, accomplish nothing further than being crowned with a glorious rebuke and praised in ingenious laudatory poems. The object to which the merits and national capabilities of this people are most devoted is woman.ⁿ Not as if she were loved or esteemed here more than elsewhere, but rather because she provides the best opportunity for displaying in their best light the favorite talents of wit, cleverness, and good manners; incidentally a vain person of either sex always loves only himself or herself, while the other is only his or her plaything. Now since the French do not at all lack noble qualities, but these can only be animated through the sentiment of the beautiful, the fair sex could here be able to have a more powerful influence in awakening and arousing the noblest actions of the male sex than anywhere else in the world, if one were intent on favoring this direction of the national spirit a little. It is a pity that the lilies do not spin.

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The fault which is closest to this national character is the ridiculous or, in a more polite expression, the lighthearted. Important things are treated

^m In metaphysics, morals, and religious doctrines one cannot be too careful with the writings of this nation. They are commonly dominated by much beautiful dazzle, which cannot stand up to a cold examination. The Frenchman loves to be bold in his pronouncements; yet to attain the truth, one must not be bold, but careful. In history he loves anecdotes which leave nothing more to be wished except that they were true.

ⁿ In France, the woman gives all society and all intercourse their tone. Now it is not to be denied that society without the fair sex is rather tasteless and boring; only if the lady should give it the beautiful tone, the man on his part should give it the noble tone. Otherwise intercourse becomes just as boring, although for the opposite reason: because nothing is so disgusting as pure sweetness. In the French taste it is not: Is the gentleman at home? but rather: Is Madame at home? Madame is at her toilette, Madame has the vapors (a kind of beautiful crankiness); in short, all conversations and all amusements occupy themselves with Madame and for Madame. However, the woman is not the more honored by all of this. A person who flirts is always without the feeling of true respect as well as of tender love. I would certainly not want, indeed who knows how much, to have said what Rousseau so impudently asserted: **that a woman never becomes anything more than a big child.** Yet the acute Swiss wrote this in France, and presumably, as such a great defender of the fair sex, felt indignant that it was not treated there with more real respect.

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like jokes, and trivialities serve for serious occupation. Even in advanced age the Frenchman still sings amorous songs, and is still as gallant as he can be towards the woman. In these remarks I have great authorities from this very same people on my side, and retreat behind a Montesquieu and d'Alembert in order to secure myself from any concerned indignation.

[2:248] The **Englishman** is at the beginning of every acquaintance cold and indifferent toward a stranger. He has little inclination toward small niceties; by contrast, as soon as he is a friend he is ready to perform great services. In society, he makes little effort to be witty, or to display a refined demeanor, but he is understanding and resolute. He is a poor imitator, does not much ask how others judge, and simply follows his own taste. In relation to the woman he does not have the French refinement, but shows more respect to her and perhaps takes this too far, as in the marital state he commonly concedes an unrestricted authority to his wife. He is steadfast, sometimes to the point of being stiff-necked, bold, and resolute, often to the point of audacity, and acts according to principles, commonly to the point of being headstrong. He easily becomes an eccentric, not out of vanity, but because he troubles himself little about others and does not readily do violence to his own taste out of complaisance or imitation; for this reason he is rarely as much beloved as the Frenchman, but, once he is known, he is commonly more highly esteemed.

The **German** has a feeling that is a mixture of that of an Englishman and that of a Frenchman, but seems to come closer to the former, and the greater similarity with the latter is merely artificial and imitative. He has a happy mixture in the feeling of the sublime as well as the beautiful; and if he is not equal to an Englishman in the former or to the Frenchman in the latter, he surpasses them both in so far as he combines them. He displays more complaisance in intercourse than the former, and even if he does not bring quite as much agreeable liveliness and wit to society as the Frenchman, yet he displays there more moderation and understanding. In love, as in all other sorts of taste, he is also rather methodical, and since he combines the beautiful with the noble, he is in the sentiment of both sufficiently cool to occupy his head with considerations of demeanor, of splendor, and of appearance.⁸⁰ Hence family, title, and rank are matters of great importance to him in civic relationships as well as in love. Far more than the previous ones he asks **how people might judge him**,

⁸⁰ *des Aussehens*

and if there is something in his character that could arouse the wish for a major improvement, it is this weakness, in accordance with which he does not dare to be original, although he has all the talents for that, and that he is too concerned with the opinion of others, which deprives the moral qualities of all bearing, making them fickle and falsely contrived.

The **Dutchman** is of an orderly and industrious cast of mind, and since he looks only to what is useful, he has little feeling for what in a finer understanding is beautiful or sublime. For him a great man means the same as a rich man, by a friend he understands his business correspondents, and a visit that brings him no profit is very boring for him. He makes a contrast to both the Frenchman and the Englishman and is [2:249] to a certain extent a very phlegmatic German.

If we try to apply the sketch of these thoughts to a particular case, in order to assess, e.g., the feeling of honor, the following national differences are revealed. The sentiment for honor is in the Frenchman **vanity**, in the Spaniard **haughtiness**, in the Englishman **pride**, in the German **pomp**, and in the Dutchman **conceitedness**. At first glance these expressions seem to mean the same thing, but in the richness of our German language they mark very noticeable differences. **Vanity** strives for approval, is fickle and changeable, but its outward conduct is **courteous**. The **haughty person** is full of falsely imagined great merits and does not much seek the approval of others; his conduct is stiff and **pompous**. **Pride** is really only a greater consciousness of one's own value, which can often be quite correct (on account of which it is also sometimes called a noble pride; but I can never ascribe a noble haughtiness to someone, since the latter always indicates an incorrect and exaggerated self-appraisal); the conduct of the proud person toward others is **indifferent** and cold. The **vainglorious** person is a proud one who is at the same time vain.^o The approval, however, which he seeks from others, consists in testimonies of honor. Hence he likes to glitter with titles, ancestry, and pageantry. The German is particularly infected by this weakness. The words "gracious," "most gracious," "high-born," and "well-born" and more of that sort of bombast make his speech stiff and awkward and very much hinder the beautiful simplicity that other peoples can give to their style of writing. The conduct of a vainglorious person in social intercourse is **ceremony**.

^o It is not necessary for a vainglorious person also to be haughty, i.e., to have an exaggerated, false conception of his merits; he may perhaps not appraise himself as worth more than he is, but only has a false taste in manifesting his value outwardly.

The **conceited** person is a haughty person who expresses distinct marks of the contempt of others in his conduct. In behavior he is **coarse**. This miserable quality is the most distant from the finer taste, because it is obviously stupid; for challenging everyone around one to hatred and biting mockery through open contempt is certainly not the means for satisfying the feeling for honor.

[2:250] In love the German and the English have a fairly good stomach, somewhat fine in sentiment, but more of a healthy and **robust taste**. In this point the Italian is **brooding**, the Spaniard **fantastic**, the Frenchman **dainty**.

The religion of our part of the world is not the matter of an arbitrary taste, but is of honorable origin. Hence only the excesses in it and that in it which properly belongs to human beings can yield signs of the different national qualities. I classify these excesses under the following headings: **credulity, superstition, fanaticism, and indifferentism**.⁸¹ The ignorant part of every nation is for the most part **credulous**, although it has no noticeable finer feeling. Persuasion depends simply upon hearsay and merely apparent authority, without any sort of finer feeling containing the incentive for it. One must seek the examples of whole peoples of this kind in the north. The credulous person, if he is of adventuresome taste, becomes **superstitious**. This taste is even in itself a ground for believing something more readily,^p and of two people, one of whom is infected by this feeling but the other of whom is of a cool and moderate cast of mind, the former, even if he actually has more understanding, is nevertheless more readily seduced by his dominant inclination into believing something unnatural than the latter, who is saved from this excess not by his insight but by his common and phlegmatic feeling. The person who is superstitious in religion gladly places between himself and the supreme object of veneration certain powerful and astonishing

^p It has also been noted that the English, though such a clever people, can nevertheless readily be ensnared at first into believing something wondrous and absurd by a brazen announcement, of which there are many examples. Yet a bold cast of mind, prepared by diverse experiences, in which many strange things have nevertheless been found to be true, quickly breaks through the trivial reservations by means of which a weaker and more distrustful head is quickly stopped and so sometimes saved from error without any merit of its own.

⁸¹ For each of these, Kant has provided both a Germanic and a Latinate word, both of which can be translated by the same (Latinate) word in English. Thus he writes: "*Leichtgläubigkeit* (Credulität), *Aberglaube* (Superstition), *Schwärmerei* (Fanaticism), und *Gleichgültigkeit* (Indifferentism)."

human beings, so to speak giants of holiness, whom nature obeys and whose imploring voices open or close the iron gates of Tartarus, who, while they touch the heavens with their heads, still have their feet on the earth beneath. In **Spain**, accordingly, the instruction of sound reason will have great obstacles to overcome, not because it must drive away ignorance there, but rather because it is opposed by an odd taste, to which what is natural is vulgar, and which never believes itself to have a sublime sentiment if its object is not adventurous. **Fanaticism** is so to speak a pious brazenness and is occasioned by a certain pride and an altogether too great confidence in oneself to come closer to the heavenly natures and to elevate itself by an astonishing flight above the usual and prescribed order. The fanatic talks only of immediate inspiration and of the contemplative life, while the superstitious person makes vows before pictures of great wonder-working saints and places his trust in the imaginary and inimitable merits of other persons of his own nature. Even the excesses, as we have noted above, bear signs of the national sentiment, and thus at least in earlier times fanaticism⁹ was mostly to be encountered in Germany and England and is as it were an unnatural outgrowth of the noble feeling that belongs to the character of these peoples, and it is in general nowhere near as harmful as the superstitious inclination, even though it is violent at the beginning, since the inflammation of a fanatical spirit gradually cools off and in accordance with its nature must finally attain to an orderly moderation, while superstition stealthily roots itself deeper into a quiet and passive quality of mind and entirely robs the shackled person of the confidence of ever freeing himself from a harmful delusion. Finally, a vain and frivolous person is always without stronger feeling for the sublime, and his religion is without emotion, for the most part only a matter of fashion, which he conducts with decorum and remains cold. This is practical **indifferentism**, to which the **French** national spirit seems to be most inclined, from which it is only a step to sacrilegious mockery and which fundamentally, when one looks to its inner worth, is little better than a complete denial. [2:251]

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⁹ Fanaticism must always be distinguished from **enthusiasm**. The former believes itself to feel an immediate and extraordinary communion with a higher nature, the latter signifies the state of the mind which is inflamed beyond the appropriate degree by some principle, whether it be by the maxim of patriotic virtue, or of friendship, or of religion, without involving the illusion of a supernatural community.

If we now take a quick look through the other parts of the world, we find the **Arab** to be the noblest human being in the Orient, although with a feeling that very much degenerates into the adventurous. He is hospitable, generous, and truthful; but his tale and history and in general his sentiment always has something marvelous woven into it. His inflamed power of imagination presents things to him in unnatural and distorted images, and even the spread of his religion was a great adventure. If the Arabs are as it were the Spaniards of the Orient, then the **Persians** are the Frenchmen of Asia. They are good poets, courtly, and of rather fine taste. They are not such strict observers of Islam and allow their cast of mind, inclined to gaiety, a rather mild interpretation of the Koran. The **Japanese** can be regarded as it were as the Englishmen of this part of the world, although hardly in any other attribute than their steadfastness, which degenerates into the most extreme stiff-neckedness, their courage and their contempt of death. Otherwise they demonstrate few marks of a finer feeling. The **Indians** have a dominant taste for grotesqueries of the kind that comes down to the adventurous. Their religion consists of grotesqueries. Images of idols of enormous shape, the priceless tooth of the mighty ape Hanuman, the unnatural atonements of the Fakirs (heathen mendicant monks), etc., are in this taste. The voluntary sacrifice of the wives in the very same pyre that consumes the corpse of her husband is a repulsive adventure. What ridiculous grotesqueries do the verbose and studied compliments of the **Chinese** not contain: even their paintings are grotesque and represent marvelous and unnatural shapes, the likes of which are nowhere to be found in the world. They also have venerable grotesqueries, for the reason that they are of ancient usage,^r and no people in the world has more of them than this one.

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The **Negroes** of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the ridiculous. Mr. **Hume** challenges anyone to adduce a single example where a Negro has demonstrated talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who have been transported elsewhere from their countries, although very many of them have been set free, nevertheless not a single one has ever been found who has accomplished something great in art or science or shown any other praiseworthy quality,

^r In Peking, when there is an eclipse of the sun or moon, they still carry on the ceremony of driving away with a great noise the dragon that would devour these heavenly bodies, and they preserve a miserable custom from the most ancient times of ignorance, even though one is now better informed.

while among the whites there are always those who rise up from the lowest rabble and through extraordinary gifts earn respect in the world.⁸² So essential is the difference between these two human kinds, and it seems to be just as great with regard to the capacities of mind as it is with respect to color. The religion of fetishes which is widespread among them is perhaps a sort of idolatry, which sinks so deeply into the ridiculous as ever seems to be possible for human nature. A bird's feather, a cow's horn, a shell, or any other common thing, as soon as it is consecrated with some words, is an object of veneration and of invocation in swearing oaths. The blacks are very vain, but in the Negro's way, and so talkative that they must be driven apart from each other by blows.

Among all the **savages** there is no people which demonstrates such a sublime character of mind as that of **North America**. They have a strong feeling for honor, and as in hunt of it they will seek wild adventures hundreds of miles away, they are also extremely careful to avoid the least injury to it where their ever so harsh enemy, after he has captured them, tries to force a cowardly sigh from them by dreadful tortures. The Canadian savage is moreover truthful and honest. The friendship he establishes is just as adventurous and enthusiastic as anything reported from the oldest and most fabulous times. He is extremely proud, sensitive to the complete worth of freedom, and even in education tolerates no encounter that would make him feel a lowly subjugation. **Lycurgus** probably gave laws to such savages, and if a law-giver were to arise among the six nations, one would see a Spartan republic arise in the new world; just as the undertaking of the Argonauts is little different from the military expeditions of these Indians, and **Jason** has nothing

⁸² In the essay "Of National Characters," Hume wrote:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the Whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the Whites, such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are Negro slaves dispersed all over Europe, of whom none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; though low people, without education, will start up among us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In Jamaica, indeed, they talk of one Negro as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot who speaks a few words plainly. (David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 213n.)

[2:254] over **Attakakullakulla** except the honor of a Greek name.⁸³ All of these savages have little feeling for the beautiful in the moral sense, and the generous forgiveness of an insult, which is at the same time noble and beautiful, is as a virtue completely unknown among the savages, but is always looked upon with contempt as a miserable cowardice. Courage is the greatest merit of the savage and revenge his sweetest bliss. The other natives of this part of the world show few traces of a character of mind which would be disposed to finer sentiments, and an exceptional lack of feeling constitutes the mark of these kinds of human beings.

If we consider the relationship between the sexes in these parts of the world, we find that the **European** has alone found the secret of decorating the sensuous charm of a powerful inclination with so many flowers and interweaving it with so much that is moral that he has not merely very much elevated its agreeableness overall but has also made it very proper. The inhabitant of the **Orient** is of a very false taste in this point. Since he has no conception of the morally beautiful that can be combined with this drive, he also loses even the value of the sensuous gratification, and his harem is a constant source of unrest for him. He falls into all sorts of amorous grotesqueries, among which the imaginary jewel is one of the foremost, which he tries to secure above all others, whose entire value consists only in one's smashing it, and of which one in our part of the world generally raises much malicious doubt, and for the preservation of which he makes use of very improper and often disgusting means. Hence a woman there is always in prison, whether she be a maiden or have a barbaric, inept, and always suspicious husband. In the lands of the **blacks** can one expect anything better than what is generally found there, namely the female sex in the deepest slavery? A pusillanimous person is always a strict master over the weaker, just as with us that man is always a tyrant in the kitchen who outside of his house hardly dares to walk up to anyone. Indeed, Father Labat reports that a Negro carpenter, whom he reproached for haughty treatment of his wives, replied: **You whites**

⁸³ In Greek mythology, Jason was the leader of the Argonauts, who sought the Golden Fleece; the chief source is Apollonius Rhodius (third-century BCE) of Alexandria, author of the *Argonautica*, the great epic of the Alexandrian period. Attakullaculla was a Cherokee chieftain who was brought to England in 1730 by Sir Alexander Cuming, and who later was a leader and peacemaker who saved the life of an English captain. See "Attakullaculla," *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, bulletin 30 (Washington, 1907), Part 1, p. 115. (Goldthwait, trans., *Observations*)

are real fools, for first you concede so much to your wives, and then you complain when they drive you crazy.⁸⁴ There might be something here worth considering, except for the fact that this scoundrel [2:255] was completely black from head to foot, a distinct proof that what he said was stupid. Among all the savages there are none among whom the female sex stands in greater real regard than those of **Canada**. In this perhaps they even surpass our civilized part of the world. Not as if they pay the women their humble respects; that would be mere compliments. No, they actually get to command. They meet and take council about the most important affairs of the nation, about war and peace. They send their delegates to the male council, and commonly it is their vote that decides. But they pay dearly enough for this preference. They have all the domestic concerns on their shoulders and share all of the hardships with the men.

If finally we cast a few glances at history, we see the taste of human beings, like a Proteus, constantly take on changeable shapes. The ancient times of the Greeks and Romans displayed clear marks of a genuine feeling for the beautiful as well as the sublime in poetry, sculpture, architecture, legislation, and even in morals. The regime of the Roman emperors altered the noble as well as the beautiful simplicity into the magnificent and then into the false brilliance of which what survives of their oratory, poetry, and even the history of their morals can still instruct us. Gradually even this remnant of the finer taste was extinguished with the complete decay of the state. The barbarians, after they had on their part established their power, introduced a certain perverted taste that is called the Gothic, and which ends up in grotesquerie. One saw grotesqueries not only in architecture, but also in the sciences and in the other practices. The degenerated feeling, once led on by false art, adopted any unnatural⁸⁵ form other than the ancient simplicity of nature, and was either exaggerated or ridiculous. The highest flight that human genius took in order to ascend to the sublime consisted in adventures. One saw spiritual and worldly adventurers and often a repulsive and monstrous sort of bastard of both. Monks with the missal in one hand and the battle flag in the

⁸⁴ Jean Baptiste Labat (1663–1738), *Voyage du père Labat aux îles de l'Amérique* (Haye, 1724), vol. II, p. 54.

⁸⁵ Ernst Cassirer's edition substitutes "unnatural" here (*Immanuel Kants Werke*, Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922, vol. II, p. 299), as does the *Werkausgabe* by Wilhelm Weischedel. Only "unnatural" makes a plausible contrast with the "ancient simplicity of nature" to which Kant compares it.

other, followed by whole armies of deceived victims in order to let their bones be buried under other regions of the sky and in a more sacred ground, consecrated warriors, sanctified by solemn oaths to violence and misdeeds, subsequently a strange sort of heroic fantasists, who called themselves knights and sought out adventures, tournaments, duels, and romantic actions. During this period religion together with the sciences and morals was distorted by wretched grotesqueries, and one notes that taste does not readily degenerate in one area without exhibiting distinct signs of its corruption in everything else that pertains to the finer feeling. The monastic vows made out of a great number of useful people numerous societies of industrious idlers, whose brooding way of life made them fit for concocting thousands of scholastic grotesqueries, which went thence out into the larger world and spread their kind about. Finally, after the human genius had happily lifted itself out of an almost complete destruction by a kind of palingenesis, we see in our own times the proper taste for the beautiful and noble blossom in the arts and sciences as well as with regard to the moral, and there is nothing more to be wished than that the false brilliance, which so readily deceives, should not distance us unnoticed from noble simplicity, but especially that the as yet undiscovered secret of education should be torn away from the ancient delusion in order early to raise the moral feeling in the breast of every young citizen of the world into an active sentiment, so that all delicacy should not merely amount to the fleeting and idle gratification of judging with more or less taste that which goes on outside of us.