

our confidence, which never wavers after we have begun to read him, that he-least of all writers-is not overlooking, disregarding, or falsifying anything at all. He has returned to us with credentials apparent on every page.

P. 299 The answer is typically Johnsonian: the Pyramid seems to have been erected only in compliance with that hunger of imagination which preys incessantly upon life....Those who have already all that they can enjoy, must enlarge their desires. He that has built for use, till use if supplied, must begin to build for vanity....I consider this mighty structure as a monument to the insufficiency of human enjoyments.

P. 300 And when something outside stimulates or pokes it into activity, it can start moving in any number of unforeseen ways that are by no means in harmony with things outside it.

P. 301 Nor should we forget that many who pride themselves that they are above the pursuit of wealth neglect it not because "they value riches less, but they dread labour or danger more." Few of them, as he says, would deliberately refuse to be rich if to be rich were suddenly in their power.³

P. 304 "Without hope there can be no endeavour"; and "it is
& 305 necessary to hope, though hope should always be deluded; for hope itself is happiness, and its frustrations, however frequent, are less dreadful than its extinction."⁷ The problem remains: what are we to do after accepting what we are? "Where, then, shall hope and fear their objects find?"

P. 308 In all this a fundamental motive is the desire to relieve our sense of any unfavorable disparity between ourselves and others. Instead of "lowering others," we could, of course, try to raise ourselves, or we could at least try to measure more objectively the supposed disparity to see whether it actually exists, and to discover-if it does-how seriously we are being harmed. But to lessen

others is far easier, particularly since we have an almost unlimited capacity to delude ourselves about our motives in doing so.

P. 309 But the real motivation in "the cold malignity of envy" is "not so much its own happiness as another's misery." As Johnson recurs to this, we sense an incredulity that people can treat each other thus in "a world bursting with sin and sorrow," where all face the same doom.

P. 310 We are naturally curious how he did it, and how this taboo against envy succeeded to such a degree that it remains as one of the permanently refreshing and admirable things about him. The answer is that he did it through a combination of two things: pride and charity. "Reformation," as he says, is rarely achieved through only one means. There are occasions when the only way to drive out a "passion" is by another passion. Pride can be a fearful thing. But it is possible for pride (as distinct from "envy") to rise in quality and aim to a point where it can disdain and free itself from the degrading "malignity of evil." He is speaking from the

experience of at least twenty years when he says that philosophy has proved helpless to pull out this "stubborn weed of the mind." Hence any means is justified that can help us, if not to eradicate it, at least to "overpower and repress it."

I have hitherto avoided that dangerous and empirical morality, which cures one vice by means of another. But envy is so base...that the predominance of almost any other quality is to be preferred....Let it, therefore, be constantly remembered, that whoever envies another, confesses his superiority, and let those be reformed by their pride who have lost their virtue.¹⁵

P. 316 Over a century before Freud, the plea is for the release and freedom of the psyche through what Freud, himself deeply classical, called the "reality principle," and Johnson, in the Preface to Shakespeare, called "the stability of truth." True, it is taken for granted that the frail human ego can only too readily, if unconsciously, fight against the admission of truth, and is astonishingly resourceful in the devious ways it can discover for doing so. Still, in the broadest sense, the "heart

naturally loves truth." At least is naturally wants the security, the reassurance and anchorage to fact, that only reality can give. Of course, we can quibble about "reality" forever while the world passes by. Hence Johnson, though he delighted especially in "metaphysical reasoning," finally kicked the stone in answer to Berkeley's idealistic argument against the existence of matter, saying "I refute it thus." Here he was like the philosopher Hazlitt mentions who, weary of the arguments about the impossibility of motion based on "Zeno's paradox," finally got up and walked across the room. As we read through Johnson, we begin to share his conviction that "truth such as is necessary to the regulation of life, is always to be found where it is honestly sought."²⁰ The essential phrase is "honestly sought." And, of course, it is a process, and, in our pursuit of it, we find ourselves only pilgrims and searchers. But as Whitehead said, in his great manifesto for modern science and philosophy, "The process is the reality." Every new experience we face will be in some ways different.

P. 336 He that never labours may know the pains of idleness, but not the pleasure....The great differences that disturb the peace of mankind are not about ends, but means....Pain is less subject than pleasure to caprices of expression....Man has from nature a mode of utterance peculiar to pain, but has has none peculiar to pleasure, because he never has pleasure but in such degrees as the ordinary use of language may equal or surpass.... Nothing is more hopeless than a scheme of merriment.

....Reformation is seldom the work of pure virtue or unassisted reason....Much of the pain and pleasure of mankind arises from the conjectures which everyone makes of the thoughts of others....There are few things not purely evil, of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, this is the last.

P. 337 This "little story book"-as Johnson described it to Lucy
& 338 Porter frankly and without false modesty-begins like a fairy tale from folklore, though it also has some historical background.²¹ It is the story of the Prince Rasselas, who, with his sister Nekayah and other

companions, lives in a sort of protective prison, the Happy Valley, where he is to stay until he is called to take over his ancestral duties (he is the fourth son of the Emperor). Here in the Happy Valley every pleasure is anticipated and satisfied and every external cause of anxiety or grief is removed. In this ultrapermissive world, Rasselas and his companions have long since become listless and bored and want to escape from it. With the help of the philosopher Imlac, a widely traveled man who has found his way there, they manage to get out of the Happy Valley and then eagerly explore the world in search of what will bring happiness. They inquire into every condition of life. They find the rich suffering from anxieties or boredom, restlessly seeking new interests in order to make life more attractive, while at the same time they are subject to the envy of others. Political power, which had seemed to the young travelers to provide the ideal means of doing good, proves not only precarious but far more impotent to change the condition of man than they had ever imagined. The world of learning, at first so promising to idealistic youth, is found to be torn by petty rivalries and vested interests. While the social

world of idle pleasure proves empty and ridiculous, the hermit who has tried to get away from it is found to be just as dissatisfied as those caught up in the chase of social pleasures. The philosopher who discourses bravely about the way to confront death and calamity proves as vulnerable as anyone else. At the end the little party decides to return to Abyssinia (though not to the Happy Valley), hoping to confront the duties of life with more understanding.

- P. 342 The move to Staple Inn marked the end of a period of his life with more symbolic poignance than he could afford to admit. "There are few things not purely evil"-as he was to write a year later, in the last issue of the Idler-"of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, this is the last....The secret horror of the last is inseparable from a thinking being."
- P. 342 To admit the influence, on either one's work or happiness, of "change of place"-unless real "destitution," real poverty and privation resulted-meant giving up the belief that one is a "free agent." "Do not," he once told

Boswell, "accustom yourself to trust to impressions....A man may gradually come to yield to them, and at length be subject to them, so as not to be a free agent, or what is the same thing in effect, to suppose that he is not a free agent."

P. 348 To put my rooms in order," and then, going back to the remark, adds as a sort of note, "Disorder I have found one great cause of Idleness").

P. 374 No one knew better, and he had found it out the hard way, that-beyond a certain point-the result is the erosion rather than the increase of stamina; that to have learned to live well today is to be better able to live well tomorrow; and that the "frustrations" of hope, "however frequent, are less dreadful than its extinction."

P. 376 Of course, this can be said to be the inevitable price paid by those in the spearhead of human consciousness-by those who, without complete religious confidence, follow Socrates' injunction about the "examined life" and

examine it closely, honestly, without illusion but still with values, and, in the words from King Lear, "see it feelingly."

P. 378 "Work and love," said Freud near the end of his own life, in Civilization and Its Discontents, are the only ways in which human nature can come closest to happiness or at least avoid misery.⁵ Freud adds, of course, that far fewer people really "love" than think they do. But still more neglected-and something that will "raise more difficult social problems" if a world of leisure lies ahead-is the "human aversion" to that other necessary form of therapy, "work."

P. 388 True, Johnson himself was capable of immense self-flagellation, if we wish to use the term figuratively. But this was part of the burden of being a divided soul, in which one portion of him punished another with such astounding success that it needed no co-operating flagellation from others. What he needed from others-in companionship, respect, or affection-was something that would help to get him out of himself, and free him from

the immense capacity for self-punishment that could so exhaust him.

- P. 427 Even so, he went swimming. He would also join Thrale at hunting and ride fifty miles or more without admitting he was tired, while deploring "that the paucity of human pleasures should persuade us ever to call hunting one of them" (he later concluded that it was "because man feels his own vacuity less in action than when at rest").
- P. 434 The thought haunting him now was that expressed in a line of Robert Frost's, "what to make of a diminished thing." This, as he had realized long ago, was the central problem of aging.
- P. 449 Long ago he had remarked, partly to warn himself, on the way in which hope is increasingly replaced by memory as we move into upper middle age and beyond, if only because the years that might provide hope begin rapidly to shorten.

- P. 452 Given his nature, and his lifelong habit of expecting the worst (however much he condemned the habit), he could hardly impose on his skeptical and turbulent nature a concept of afterlife in which he had only to contemplate, with smug self-satisfaction or thoughtless abandon, a state of eternal bliss as a reward for this strange purgatorial tramp he had made through life. Everything in his experience had taught him to resist any thought that happiness was just around the corner. A future life could be driven into him and felt as real only if there were also something to dread. Hence the startling remark he jotted down in one of the journals (1777), where it appears without any context: "Faith in some proportion to Fear."¹⁴
- P. 453 Religion, of which the rewards are distant and which is animated only by Faith and Hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind unless it be invigorated and reimpresed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example."¹⁵ Other remarks could easily be quoted that appear to justify the stereotype. In his religious life Johnson's battle to

resist the temptations of excessive self-reliance-one of his most deeply implanted characteristics-was unceasing.

P. 457 In other words, we must not demand "trust" in advance as a reason or incentive to obey religious dictates. We begin by obeying, by acting in conscience, with the result that the trust then follows, creatively earned and acquired by ourselves. The thought is somewhat like the famous "James-Lange theory of emotion," where feeling need not proceed but can follow and be itself created by act (e.g., to act with courage begins to give us courage, or to act lovingly begins to give us the feeling of love).

P. 459 He could only pray for help in learning to accept the fact of "God's mercy and forbearance," and to use his good sense in trying to remember what he had Imlac tell the astronomer: "Keep this thought always prevalent, that you are only one atom of the mass of humanity, and have neither such virtue nor vice as that you should be singled out for supernatural favors or afflictions."

P. 473 To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish, if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses; whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona!¹⁵

P. 473 At this "a young lady of quality"-Lady Anne Lindsay, according to Malone- said, "Might not the son has justified the fault?"

P. 496 And yet (as Johnson concludes Rambler 76): "It is generally not so much the desire of men sunk into depravity to deceive the world as themselves...."

P. 501 Asked once by a lady why he so constantly gave money to beggars, he replied with great feeling, "Madam, to enable them to beg on."

- P. 510 With accumulating infirmities constantly reminding him that time was evaporating, he made even stronger efforts to acquire that mysterious combination of qualities that he considered to make up "good humor" - "readiness to be pleased," "easiness of approach," and "softness of manner." He tried harder to resist the temptation to "talk for victory," though time and again he would relapse into doing so. "That is the happiest conversation," he would say, "where there is no competition, no vanity, but a calm quiet interchange of sentiments."
- P. 532 As a result, Johnson-in his formal critical writing if not in his conversation-never forgets that "he who differs from us, does not always contradict us," and we "have less reason to be surprised or offended when we find others differ from us in opinion, because we very often differ from ourselves."⁹
- P. 533 During the century after Johnson's death, "high culture," beginning with Romanticism, developed a life of its own-in a "pompous isolation," as Thomas Mann said in Dr. Faustus, "which was the fruit of the culture-emancipation, the

- elevation of culture as a substitute for religion," and where, he prophesied, it will soon be left "entirely alone, alone to die."
- P. 544 The mind is exercised
either by recollection or inquiry;
either something already learned is to be retrieved,
or something new is to be examined.
- P. 547 "Circumstances," said Keats, "are like Clouds continually gathering and bursing-While we are laughing the seed of some trouble is put into the wide arable land of events... It sprouts, it grows, and suddenly bears a poison fruit which we must pluck."
- P. 582 "As I know more of mankind I expect less of them, and am ready now to call a man a good man, upon easier terms than I was formerly."
- P. 594 "Each revolving year," says Horace, "each hour that snatches the day, bids us not to hope for immortal life." Johnson wrote, "The changing year's successive plan

Proclaims mortality to man." Yet this is balanced by a flourish of stoic gaiety that goes beyond Horace. "Who knows whether the gods," asks Horace, "will add tomorrow's time to the sum of today?" In Johnson this becomes: "Who knows if Jove who counts our score/ Will toss us in one morning more?"

P. 597 During the day he made an effort to be up and around. "I will be conquered," he said. "I will not capitulate."

P. 598 By now the dropsy had spread from his breast to his feet. Johnson asked the surgeon William Cruikshank to make further cuts in his leg to drain the fluid. Cruikshank was afraid mortification might set in, and only gently lanced the surface. Johnson cried out. "Deeper, deeper; I want length of life, and you are afraid of giving me pain, which I do not value." When Cruikshank was gone, Johnson told Frank to get him a lancer so that Johnson himself could cut his legs, but as he started to do this the man who sat up with him interfered. Later, when no one was looking, Johnson managed to get hold of a pair of scissors in a drawer near the bed, and plunged them deeply into the calves of each leg. The only result

was a large effusion of blood, and Mr. Cruikshank had to be called to dress the wounds. This was on December 12.

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