

against each other, and have diminished the practice, more than advanced the theory, of Morality. If I could flatter myself that this Essay has any merit, it is in steering betwixt the extremes of doctrines seemingly opposite, in passing over terms utterly unintelligible, and in forming a *temperate* yet not *inconsistent*, and a *short* yet not *imperfect* system of Ethics.

This I might have done in prose; but I chose verse, and even rhyme, for two reasons. The one will appear obvious; that principles, maxims, or precepts so written, both strike the reader more strongly at first, and are more easily retained by him afterwards: The other may seem odd, but is true, I found I could express them more *shortly* this way than in prose itself; and nothing is more certain, than that much of the *force* as well as *grace* of arguments or instructions, depends on their *conciseness*. I was unable to treat this part of my subject more in detail, without becoming dry and tedious; or more *poetically*, without sacrificing perspicuity to ornament, without wandering from the precision, or breaking the chain of reasoning: If any man can unite all these without diminution of any of them, I freely confess he will compass a thing above my capacity.

What is now published, is only to be considered as a *general Map* of MAN, marking out no more than the *greater parts*, their *extent*, their *limits*, and their *connection*, but leaving the particular to be more fully delineated in the charts which are to follow. Consequently, these Epistles in their progress (if I have health and leisure to make any progress) will be less dry, and more susceptible of poetical ornament. I am here only opening the *fountains*, and clearing the passage. To deduce the *rivers*, to follow them in their course, and to observe their effects, may be a task more agreeable.

ARGUMENT OF THE FIRST EPISTLE

Of the Nature and State of Man, with respect to the UNIVERSE. Of man in the abstract. — I. That we can judge only with regard to our own system, being ignorant of the relations of systems and things, VER. 17, &c. II. That Man is not to be deemed imperfect, but a Being suited to his place and rank in the creation, agreeable to the general Order of things, and conformable to Ends and Relations to him unknown, VER. 35, &c. III. That it is partly upon his ignorance of future events, and partly upon the hope of a future state, that all his happiness in the present depends, VER. 77, &c. IV. The pride of aiming at more knowledge, and pretending to more Perfection, the cause of Man's error and misery. The impiety of putting himself in the place of God, and judging of his fitness or unfitness, perfection or imperfection, justice or injustice of his dispensations, VER. 118, &c. V. The absurdity of conceiving himself the final cause of the creation, or expecting that perfection in the moral world, which is not

AN ESSAY ON MAN

OR

The First Book of Ethic Epistles

To H. ST. JOHN L. BOLINGBROKE

THE DESIGN

HAVING proposed to write some pieces on Human Life and Manners, such as (to use my lord Bacon's expression) *come home to Men's Business and Bosoms*, I thought it more satisfactory to begin with considering *Man* in the abstract, his *Nature* and his *State*: since, to prove any moral duty, to enforce any moral precept, or to examine the perfection or imperfection of any creature whatsoever, it is necessary first to know what *condition* and *relation* it is placed in, and what is the proper *end* and *purpose* of its *being*.

The science of Human Nature is, like all other sciences, reduced to a *few clear points*: There are not *many certain truths* in this world. It is therefore in the Anatomy of the Mind as in that of the Body, more good will accrue to mankind by attending to the large, open, and perceptible parts, than by studying too much such finer nerves and vessels, the conformations and uses of which will for ever escape our observation. The *disputes* are all upon these last, and, I will venture to say, they have less sharpened the *wits* than the *hearts* of men

AN ESSAY ON MAN: The four "Epistles" (or parts) of An Essay on Man were published successively, and anonymously, in February, March and May of 1733, and in January of 1734. As the full title and the prefatory account of its "Design" indicate, Pope at one time considered the poem to be the first or introductory "book" in a much larger work that would have contained four "books" in all. The second of these books was to consider "Knowledge and its limits"; the third, "Government; both ecclesiastical and civil"; and the fourth, "Morality, in eight or nine of the most concerning branches of it; four of which would have been the two extremes to each of the Cardinal Virtues." Although he may have composed several other poems (the *Epistles to Several Persons*, for example) with this large design vaguely in mind, so grand a scheme must ultimately have seemed impracticable, and in time Pope abandoned it.

in the natural, VER. 131, &c. VI. The unreasonableness of his complaints against Providence, while on the one hand he demands the Perfections of the Angels, and on the other the bodily qualifications of the Brutes; though, to possess any of the sensitive faculties in a higher degree, would render him miserable, VER. 173, &c. VII. That throughout the whole visible world, an universal order and gradation in the sensual and mental faculties is observed, which causes a subordination of creature to creature, and of all creatures to Man. The gradations of sense, instinct, thought, reflection, reason; that Reason alone counterpoises all the other faculties, VER. 207. VIII. How much farther this order and subordination of being creatures may extend, above and below us; were any part of which broken, not that part only, but the whole connected creation must be destroyed. VER. 233. IX. The extravagance, madness, and pride of such a desire, VER. 259. X. The consequence of all, the absolute submission due to Providence, both as to our present and future state, VER. 281, &c. to the end.

EPISTLE I

WAKE, my St. JOHN! leave all meaner things
To low ambition, and the pride of Kings.

Let us (since Life can little more supply
Than just to look about us and to die)

Expatriate free o'er all this scene of Man;

A mighty maze! but not without a plan;

A Wild, where weeds and flow'rs promiscuous shoot,

Or Garden, tempting with forbidden fruit.

Together let us beat this ample field;

Try what the open, what the covert yield;

The latent tracts, the giddy heights explore

Of all who blindly creep, or sightless soar;

Eye Nature's walks, shoot Folly as it flies,

And catch the Manners living as they rise;

Laugh where we must, be candid where we can;

But vindicate the ways of God to Man.

I. Say first, of God above, or Man below,

Epistle I: Of the Nature and State of Man with respect to the Universe. P.

1. St. John: Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678-1751), Secretary of State and, for a brief period, prime minister under Queen Anne. At the accession of George I, he fled to France to avoid prosecution on charges of high treason. Pardoned in 1723, he returned to England, resumed his early friendship with Pope, and devoted himself to political and philosophical writing. Pope also addressed the *First Ep. of the First Bk. of Horace* to Bolingbroke.

5. Expatriate: to speak at length, but also to wander.

10. covert: thicket giving shelter to game.

14. Manners: passions, habits, moral conduct.

15. candid: lenient.

17ff. He can reason only from Things known, and judges only with regard to his own System. P.

What can we reason, but from what we know?

Of Man what see we, but his station here,

From which to reason, or to which refer?

Thro' worlds unnumber'd tho' the God be known,

'Tis ours to trace him only in our own.

He, who thro' vast immensity can pierce,

See worlds on worlds compose one universe,

Observe how system into system runs,

What other planets circle other suns,

What vary'd being peoples ev'ry star,

May tell why Heav'n has made us as we are.

But of this frame the bearings, and the ties,

The strong connections, nice dependencies,

Gradations just, has thy pervading soul

Look'd thro'? or can a part contain the whole?

Is the great chain, that draws all to agree,

And drawn supports, upheld by God, or thee?

II. Presumptuous Man! the reason wouldst thou find,

Why form'd so weak, so little, and so blind!

First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,

Why form'd no weaker, blinder, and no less!

Ask of thy mother earth, why oaks are made

Taller or stronger than the weeds they shade?

Or ask of yonder argent fields above,

Why Jove's Satellites are less than Jove's?

Of Systems possible, if 'tis comest

That Wisdom infinite must form the best,

Where all must full or not coherent be,

And all that rises, rise in due degree;

Then, in the scale of reasoning life, 'tis plain

There must be, somewhere, such a rank as Man;

And all the question (wrangle e'er so long)

Is only this, if God has plac'd him wrong?

Respecting Man, whatever wrong we call,

May, must be right, as relative to all.

In human works, tho' labour'd on with pain,

A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain;

25. system: solar system.

33. chain: the chain of being or scale of creation, in which all things and creatures are arranged in a hierarchical order from nothingness to God. See ll. 207-46, below.

34. supports: sustains.

35ff. He is not therefore a judge of his own perfection or imperfection, but is certainly such a Being as is suited to his Place and Rank in the Creation. P.

42. Jove's Satellites: the satellites (here pronounced satellites) of the planet Jupiter.

45. full: containing the maximum number of kinds of beings, all verging, from lowest to highest, upon one another and rising "in due degree" (l. 46) so as to form a "coherent" union (i.e., a chain of being with no gaps).

48. such a rank: one that combines a rational with an animal nature.

55 In God's, one single can its end produce;
 Yet serves to second too some other use.
 60 So Man, who here seems principal alone,
 Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown,
 Touches some wheel, or verges to some goal;
 'Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.
 65 When the proud steed shall know why Man restrains
 His fiery course, or drives him o'er the plains;
 When the dull Ox, why now he breaks the clod,
 Is now a victim, and now Ægypt's God:
 70 Then shall Man's pride and dulness comprehend
 His actions' passions' being's, use and end;
 Why doing, suffering, check'd, impell'd; and why
 This hour a slave, the next a deity.
 75 Then say not Man's imperfect, Heav'n in fault;
 Say rather, Man's as perfect as he ought;
 His knowledge measur'd to his state and place,
 If to be perfect in a certain sphere,
 80 What matter, soon or late, or here or there?
 The blest today is as completely so,
 As who began a thousand years ago.

85 III. Heav'n from all creatures hides the book of Fate,
 All but the page prescrib'd, their present state;
 From brutes what men, from men what spirits know:
 Or who could suffer Being here below?
 90 The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
 Had he thy Reason, would he skip and play?
 Pleas'd to the last, he crops the flow'ry food,
 And licks the hand just rais'd to shed his blood.
 Oh blindness to the future! kindly giv'n,
 That each may fill the circle mark'd by Heav'n;
 95 Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
 A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,
 Atoms or systems into ruin hur'd,
 And now a bubble burst, and now a world.
 Hope humbly then; with trembling pinions soar;
 Wait the great teacher Death, and God adore!

64. Ægypt's God: Apis, the sacred bull of Memphis, worshipped by the Egyptians as a god.
 73. in a certain sphere: in heaven, in an afterlife.
 75. blest: with the sight of God in heaven.
 77ff. His happiness depends on his ignorance to a certain degree. P.
 79ff. See this pursued in Epist. 3. Vers. 66, Æc. 79, Æc. P.
 81. riot: extravagant mode of life.
 87. equal: impartial, but also benign.
 91ff. And on his Hope of a Relation to a future State. P. This note depends on that by Pope at l. 77.

What future bliss, he gives not thee to know,
 But gives that Hope to be thy blessing now.
 Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
 Man never Is, but always To be blest:
 The soul, uneasy and confin'd from home,
 Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

100 Lo! the poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind
 Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;
 His soul proud Science never taught to stray
 Far as the solar walk, or milky way;
 105 Yet simple Nature to his hope has giv'n,
 Behind the cloud-topt hill, an humbler heav'n;
 Some safer world in depth of woods embrac'd,
 Some happier island in the watry waste,
 Where slaves once more their native land behold,
 No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold
 110 To Be, contents his natural desire,
 He asks no Angel's wing, no Seraph's fire;
 But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
 His faithful dog shall bear him company.

115 IV. Go, wiser thou! and in thy scale of sense
 Weigh thy Opinion against Providence;
 Call Imperfection what thou fancy'st such,
 Say, here he gives too little, there too much;
 Destroy all creatures for thy sport or gust,
 Yet cry, If Man's unhappy, God's unjust;
 120 If Man alone ingross not Heav'n's high care,
 Alone made perfect here, immortal there;
 Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
 Re-judge his justice, be the God of God!

125 In Pride, in reasoning Pride, our error lies;
 All quit their sphere, and rush into the skies.
 Pride still is aiming at the blest abodes,
 Men would be Angels, Angels would be Gods.
 Aspiring to be Gods, if Angels fell,
 Aspiring to be Angels, Men rebel;
 And who but wishes to invert the laws
 130 Of Order, sins against th' Eternal Cause.

94. Further open'd in Epist. 2. Vers. 283. Epist. 3. Vers. 74. Epist. 4. Vers. 265, Æc. P.
 98. expatiates: roams at will.
 110. Seraph's fire: see *Eloisa to Abelard*, l. 320n.
 113ff. The Pride of aiming at more Knowledge and Perfection, and the Injury of pretending to judge of the Dispensations of Providence, the causes of Error and Misery. P.
 116. he: God.
 117. gust: taste.
 121. balance: scales of justice.
 124. sphere: place in the chain of being.

V. Ask for what end the heav'nly bodies shine,
 Earth for whose use? Pride answers, "Tis for mine:
 "For me kind Nature wakes her genial pow'r,
 "Suckles each herb, and spreads out ev'ry flow'r;
 "Annual for me, the grape, the rose renew
 "The juice nectareous, and the balmy dew;
 "For me, the mine a thousand treasures brings;
 "For me, health gushes from a thousand springs;
 "Seas roll to waft me, suns to light me rise;
 "My foot-stool earth, my canopy the skies."
 But errs not Nature from this gracious end,
 From burning suns when livid deaths descend,
 When earthquakes swallow, or when tempests sweep
 Towns to one grave, whole nations to the deep?
 "No ('tis reply'd) the first Almighty Cause
 "Acts not by partial, but by gen'ral laws;
 "Th' exceptions few; some change since all began,
 "And what created perfect?"—Why then Man?
 If the great end be human Happiness,
 Then Nature deviates; and can Man do less?
 As much that end a constant course requires
 Of show'r and sun-shine, as of Man's desires;
 As much eternal springs and cloudless skies,
 As Men for ever temp'rate, calm, and wise.
 If plagues or earthquakes break not Heav'n's design
 Why then a Borgia, or a Catiline?
 Who knows but he, whose hand the lightning forms,
 Who heaves old Ocean, and who wings the storms,
 Pours fierce Ambition in a Cæsar's mind,
 Or turns young Ammon loose to scourge mankind?
 From pride, from pride, our very rearing springs;
 Account for moral as for nat'ral things:
 Why charge we Heav'n in those, in these acquit?
 In both, to reason right is to submit.
 Better for Us, perhaps, it might appear,
 Were there all harmony, all virtue here;

131ff. The Absurdity of conceiving himself the Final Cause of the Creation or expecting that Perfection in the moral world which is not in the natural. P.

133. genial; generative.

140. canopy; covering of a throne.

148. The plague was thought caused by the sun and midsummer heats. It left its victims a livid, or bluish, color.

147. change: deteriorations since the Fall.

156. Borgia: a member of the Italian Renaissance family notorious for cruelty and cunning. Catiline: Lucius Sergius Catiline (108-62 a.c.), a famous conspirator who plotted with a group of assassins against the republic.

160. Ammon: Alexander the Great (see Essay on Criticism, l. 376n.).

166. there: in "nat'ral things" (l. 162). here: in the "moral" (l. 163) life of man.

That never air or ocean felt the wind;
 That never passion discompos'd the mind:
 But ALL subsists by elemental strife;
 And Passions are the elements of Life.
 The gen'ral ORDER, since the whole began,
 Is kept in Nature, and is kept in Man.
 VI. What would this Man? Now upward will he soar,
 And little less than Angel, would be more;
 Now looking downwards, just as griev'd appears
 To want the strength of bulls, the fur of bears.
 Made for his use all creatures if he call,
 Say what their use, had he the pow'rs of all
 Nature to these, without profusion kind.
 The proper organs, proper pow'rs assign'd;
 Each seeming want compensated of course,
 Here with degrees of swiftness, there of force;
 All in exact proportion to the state;
 Nothing to add, and nothing to abate.
 Each beast, each insect, happy in its own;
 Is Heav'n unkind to Man, and Man alone?
 Shall he alone, whom rational we call,
 Be pleas'd with nothing, if not bless'd with all?
 The bliss of Man (could Pride that blessing find)
 Is not to act or think beyond mankind;
 No pow'rs of body or of soul to share,
 But what his nature and his state can bear.
 Why has not Man a microscopic eye?
 For this plain reason, Man is not a Fly.
 Say what the use, were finer optics giv'n,
 T' inspect a mite, not comprehend the heav'n?
 Or touch, if tremblingly alive all o'er,
 To smart and agonize at ev'ry pore?
 Or quick effluvia darting thro' the brain,
 Die of a rose in aromatic pain?
 If nature thunder'd in his op'ning ears,
 And stunn'd him with the music of the spheres,
 How would he wish that Heav'n had left him still
 The whispering Zephyr, and the purring rill?

170. See this subject extended in Epist. 2 from Vers. 100, to 122, 165, &c. P. 173ff. The Unreasonableness of the Complaints against Providences, and that they possess more Faculties would make us miserable. P.

181. compensated: pronounced compensated. of course: naturally.

182. It is a certain Axiom in the Anatomy of Creatures, that in proportion as they are form'd for Strength, their Swiftness is lessen'd; or as they are form'd for Swiftness, their Strength is abated. P.

185. Vid. Epist. 3. Vers. 79, &c. and 110, &c. P.

198. effluvia: odors were thought transmitted by streams of invisible particles.

202. music: angels alone were thought able to hear the music of the spheres (see Rape of the Lock, II 75n.).

Who finds not Providence all good and wise,
Alike in what it gives, and what denies?

VII. Far as Creation's ample range extends,
The scale of sensual, mental pow'rs ascends:
Mark how it mounts, to Man's imperial race,
From the green myriads in the peopled grass:
What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme,
The mole's dim curtain, and the lynx's beam:
Of smell, the headlong lioness between,
And hound sagacious on the tainted green:
Of hearing, from the life that fills the flood,
To that which warbles thro' the vernal wood:
The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!
Feels at each thread, and lives along the line:
In the nice bee, what sense so subtly true
From poisonous herbs extracts the healing dew:
How Instinct varies in the grow'ling swine,
Compar'd, half-reas'ning elephant, with thine:
Twixt that, and Reason, what a nice barrier;
For ever separate, yet for ever near!

Remembrance and Reflection how ally'd;
What thin partitions Sense from Thought divide:
And Middle natures, how they long to join,
Yet never pass th' insuperable line!
Without this just gradation, could they be
Subjected these to those, or all to thee?
The pow'rs of all subdu'd by thee alone,
Is not thy Reason all these pow'rs in one?

VIII. See, thro' this air, this ocean, and this earth,
All matter quick, and bursting into birth,
Above, how high progressive life may go!
Around, how wide! how deep extend below!
Vast chain of being, which from God began,
Natures æthereal, human, angel, man,

207ff. There is an universal Order and Gradation thro' the whole visible of the sensible and mental Faculties, which causes the Subordination of Creatures, and of all Creatures to Man, whose Reason alone counterpoises other Faculties. P.

212. lynx's beam: sight was thought to depend on a ray or beam emitted from the eye, and the lynx was regarded as the creature with the keenest sight.

213. headlong lioness: lions were thought to have a poor sense of smell.

214. sagacious: keen-scented.

219. nice: precise.

223. that: instinct.

227. Middle natures: intermediary creatures (like frogs and bats)

great chain of being.

233ff. How much farther this Gradation and Subordination may extend

any part of which broken, the whole connected Creation must be destroyed.

234. quick: alive.

Beast, bird, fish, insect! what no eye can see,
No glass can reach! from Infinite to thee,
From thee to Nothing!—On superior pow'rs
Were we to press, inferior might on ours:
Or in the full creation leave a void.

Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroy'd:
From Nature's chain whatever link you strike,
Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.

And if each system in gradation roll,
Alike essential to th' amazing whole;
The least confusion but in one, not all
That system only, but the whole must fail.
Let Earth unbalanc'd from her orbit fly,
Planets and Suns run lawless thro' the sky,
Let ruling Angels from their spheres be hur'd,
Being on being wreck'd, and world on world,
Heav'n's whole foundations to their centre nod,
And Nature tremble to the throne of God:
All this dread *OMNIA* break — for whom? for thee?
Vile worm! — oh Madness, Pride, Impiety!

IX. What if the foot, ordain'd the dust to tread,
Or hand to toil, aspir'd to be the head?
What if the head, the eye, or ear repin'd
To serve mere engines to the ruling Mind?
Just as absurd for any part to claim
To be another, in this gen'ral frame:
Just as absurd, to mourn the tasks or pains
The great directing MIND of ALL ordains.

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
That, chang'd thro' all, and yet in all the same,
Great in the earth, as in th' æthereal frame,
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow's in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
Lives thro' all life, extends thro' all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent,
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
As the rapt Seraph that adores and burns;

240. glass: telescope or microscope.

243. full: see l. 45n., above.

247. system: planetary system.

253. ruling Angels: see *Rape of the Lock*, II 75n.

258. The *Extracogance, Impiety, and Pride of such a desire.* P.

263. engines: agents, instruments.

265. Vid. the prosecution and application of this in *Epist.* 4. Ver. 162. P.

276. burns: with the fires of holy love (see *Eloïsa to Abelard*, l. 320n.).

To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
 He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.
 X. Cease then, nor Order Imperfection name:
 Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.
 Know thy own point: This kind, this due degree
 Of blindness, weakness, Heav'n bestows on thee.
 Submit — In this, or any other sphere,
 Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear;
 Safe in the hand of one disposing Pow'r,
 Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.
 All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
 All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;
 All Discord, Harmony, not understood;
 All partial Evil, universal Good:
 And, spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
 One truth is clear, "Whatever is, is right."

ARGUMENT OF THE SECOND EPISTLE

Of the Nature and State of Man, with respect to Himself, as an Individual
 I. The business of Man not to pry into God, but to study himself. His Middle Nature; his Powers and Frailties, VER. 1 to 18. The Limits of his Capacity, VER. 19, &c. II. The two Principles of Man, Self-love and Reason, both necessary, VER. 53, &c. Self-love the stronger, and VER. 67, &c. Their end the same, VER. 81, &c. III. The Passions, and their use, VER. 93 to 130. The predominant Passion, and its force, VER. 165, &c. Its providential Use, in fixing our Principle, and ascertaining our Virtue, VER. 177. IV. Virtue and Vice joined in our mixed Nature, the limits near, yet the things separate and evident; What is the office of Reason, VER. 203 to 216. V. How odious Vice in itself, and how we deceive ourselves into it, VER. 217. VI. That, however, the Ends of Providence and general Good are answered in our Passions and Imperfections, VER. 238, &c. How usefully these are distributed to all Orders of Men, VER. 242. How useful they are to Society, VER. 249. And to the Individuals, VER. 261. In every state, and every age of life, VER. 271, &c.

280. equals all; makes all equal.
 281ff. The Consequence of all, the absolute Submission due to Providence both as to our present and future State. P.
 283. kind; natural, appropriate, but also benevolent.
 285. sphere: here pronounced "sphere."

EPISTLE II

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
 The proper study of Mankind is Man.
 Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
 A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
 With too much knowledge for the Sceptic's side,
 With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
 He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest,
 In doubt to deem himself a God, or Beast;
 In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer,
 Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
 Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
 Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
 Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd;
 Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd;
 Created half to rise, and half to fall;
 Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
 Sole judge of Truth, in endless Error hur'd:
 The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!
 Go, wondrous creature! mount where Science guides,
 Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides;
 Instruct the planets in what orbs to run,
 Correct old Time, and regulate the Sun;
 Go, soar with Plato to th' empyreal sphere,
 To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;
 Or tread the mazy round his follow'rs trod,
 And quitting sense call imitating God;
 As Eastern priests in giddy circles run,
 And turn their heads to imitate the Sun.
 Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule —
 Then drop into thyself, and be a fool!
 Superior beings, when of late they saw
 A mortal Man unfold all Nature's law,
 Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
 And shew'd a NEWTON as we shew an Ape.
 Could he, whose rules the rapid Comet bind,

Epistle II. Of the Nature and State of Man as an Individual. P.
 1ff. The business of Man not to pry into God, but to study himself. His Middle Nature, his Powers, Frailties, and the Limits of his Capacity. P. scan:
 2. Stoic's pride: the Stoic idea that man can free himself from passion was considered prideful.
 23. empyreal sphere: the highest of the heavens.
 28. quitting sense: departing not only from common sense, but also from the ordinary (as in a trance or mystical ascent).
 33. he: Newton.