

## SHAKESPEARE'S ETHICS

Shakespeare tells us in a very succinct way what ethics is about in the words of Lucentio:

Vincentio's son, brought up in Florence,  
It shall become to serve all hopes conceiv'd,  
To deck his fortune with his virtuous deeds.  
And therefore, Tranio, for the time I study  
Virtue and that part of philosophy  
Will I apply that treats of happiness  
By virtue especially to be achieved.<sup>1</sup>

Whoever has studied the *Nicomachean Ethics* can see how precise are the words of Lucentio. Ethics is that part or kind of philosophy which is about happiness and how it can be achieved, which is chiefly through virtue.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act I, Sc. 1

<sup>2</sup> In the longer passage from which this is taken, Shakespeare also touches upon the other parts of philosophy:

*The Taming of the Shrew*, Act I, Sc. 1:

Lucentio:           Tranio, since for the great desire I had  
To see fair Padua, nursery of arts,  
I am arriv'd for fruitful Lombardy,  
The pleasant garden of great Italy,  
And by my father's love and leave am arm'd  
With his good will and thy good company,  
My trusty servant well approv'd in all.  
Here let us breathe and haply institute  
A course of learning and ingenious studies.  
Pisa, renowned for grave citizens,  
Gave me my being and my father first,  
A merchant of great traffic through the world,  
Vincentio come of the Bentivolii.  
Vincentio's son, brought up in Florence,  
It shall become to serve all hopes conceiv'd,  
To deck his fortune with his virtuous deeds:  
And therefore, Tranio, for the time I study  
Virtue and that part of philosophy  
Will I apply that treats of happiness

Shakespeare touches upon the connection between virtue and happiness with a pun on the word *mean* in the words of Nerissa:

they are as sick that surfeit with too much, as they  
that starve with nothing. It is no mean happiness,  
therefore, to be seated in the mean.<sup>3</sup>

Virtue, and especially moral virtue, lie in the middle or mean. (But the virtue of reason is also a mean for truth is between two mistakes.) And to hit the golden mean is to go a long way towards happiness. One will be very happy if

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By virtue especially to be achiev'd.  
Tell me thy mind, for I have Pisa left  
And am to Padua come, as he that leaves  
A shallow plash to plunge him in the deep  
And with satiety seeks to quench his thirst.

Tranio:       *Me pardonato*, gentle master mine:  
I am in all affected as yourself,  
Glad that you thus continue your resolve  
To suck the sweets of sweet philosophy.  
Only, good master, while we do admire  
This virtue and this moral discipline,  
Let's be no stoics nor no stocks, I pray;  
Or so devote to Aristotle's checks  
As Ovid be an outcast quite abjur'd.  
Balk logic with acquaintance that you have  
And practice rhetoric in you common talk.  
Music and poesy use to quicken you;  
The mathematics and the metaphysics,  
Fall to them as you find your stomach serves you.  
No profit grows where is no pleasure tane;  
In brief, sir, study what you most affect.

Lucentio:       Gramercies, Tranio, well dost thou advise.

Shakespeare mentions just the beginning and the end of looking philosophy so he can alliterate. In *king Lear*, he calls the middle part, *the wisdom of nature*. And he seems to put together logic and rhetoric, and then music and poesy, as more tools than the main or chief parts of philosophy.

<sup>3</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Sc. 2

one hits the mean in one's feelings and actions and thinking. And Shakespeare rightly compares virtue to the health of the body which is between the two sick extremes of too much or too little (like an overactive or underactive thyroid, for example). Virtue could be considered as the health of the soul. (Even the virtues of reason are in the middle between two errors or mistake.) Thus, the Queen speaks of sin's true nature as a kind of sickness of the soul:

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,  
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss.<sup>4</sup>

But in Portia's replying to the words of Nerissa, Shakespeare touches upon the much greater difficulty of doing what is good than knowing what is good:

Portia:                    Good sentences and well pronounced.

Nerissa:                They would be better if well followed.

Portia:                If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple.

Since the end of ethics is to do what is good or what is better, it is important to see that knowing is not enough and that ethics should be followed by the effort to do what one has learned is good or better and that here will be the greatest difficulty.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Hamlet*, Act IV, Sc. 5

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps, it is good to quote the whole passage from which these two quotes are taken.

*The Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Sc. 2:

Portia:                    By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is

## HAPPINESS IS THE CHIEF GOOD AND END OF MAN

Shakespeare see the chief importance of the end (in the sense of purpose).  
In the words of Helena:

All's well that ends well: still the fine's the crown;  
Whate'er the course, the end is the renown.<sup>6</sup>

("fine" here, like its Latin origin, means end or purpose.)

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awearry of this great world.

Nerissa: You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are: and yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing. it is no mean happiness therefore to be seated in the mean: superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer.

Portia: Good sentences and well pronounced.

Nerissa: They would be better if well followed.

Portia: If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple.

<sup>6</sup> *All's well that Ends Well*, Act IV. Sc. 4

Metaphorically, happiness is called sweet:

And, to be short, what not that's sweet and happy.<sup>7</sup>

Lo, as at English feasts, so I regret [greet]  
The daintiest last, to make the end most sweet.<sup>8</sup>

The likeness in this metaphor is that the sweet is pleasant, restful and refreshing. It is pleasant for man to reach his end for the end is good and restful for the end is not for the sake of anything else so that one can rest in it and refreshing for rest refreshes us.

But the opposite of happiness could be called metaphorically *sour*:

Sour woe<sup>9</sup>

And after the happy victory of the Britons over the Romans, Cornelius, bringing in news of the Queen's death, says:

Hail, great king!  
To sour your happiness, I must report  
The queen is dead.<sup>10</sup>

But speaking properly, the opposite of happy is *wretched* or *miserable*. As Lady Capulet says when Juliet is found apparently dead on the day which was supposed to be her wedding day

Accurs'd, unhappy, wretched, hateful day!  
Most miserable hour that e'er Time saw  
In lasting labour of his pilgrimage.<sup>11</sup>

And in *Measure for Measure*:

Unhappy Claudio! Wretched Isabel!<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act V, Sc. 1

<sup>8</sup> *Richard II*, Act I, Sc. 3

<sup>9</sup> *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Sc. 2

<sup>10</sup> *Cymbeline*, Act V, Sc. 5

<sup>11</sup> *Romeo and Juliet*, Act IV, Sc. 4

<sup>12</sup> Act IV, Sc. 1

The name of the opposite of *happy* in English is *wretched* and this is connected with the wreck or wrack of a ship. Human life can be compared to an uncertain sea voyage where the port sought is happiness, but in which one may easily suffer shipwreck. Timon speaks of *life's uncertain voyage* which *nature's fragile vessel* undertakes:

.....Commend me to them;  
And tell them, that, to ease them of their griefs,  
Their fears of hostile strokes, their aches, losses,  
Their pangs of love, with other incident throes,  
That nature's fragile vessel doth sustain  
In life's uncertain voyage, I will some kindness do them.<sup>13</sup>

And King Henry, seeing happiness in the possession of Margaret, strives to have *fruition of her love* (a Latin word for happiness, *felicitas*, means fruitfulness for the fruit is last and sweet), or else, to suffer shipwreck:

Your wondrous rare description, noble earl,  
Of beauteous Margaret hath astonish'd me:  
Her virtues, graced with external gifts  
Do breed love's settled passions in my heart:  
And like as rigour of tempestuous gusts  
Provokes the mightiest hulk against the tide,  
So am I driven by breath of her renown  
Either to suffer shipwrack, or arrive  
Where I may have fruition of her love.<sup>14</sup>

And Lucentio says in winning Bianca:

And happily I have arriv'd at last  
Unto the wished haven of my bliss.<sup>15</sup>

But Romeo, thinking Juliet dead, takes his own life, comparing it to a pilot driving his own ship upon the rocks:

Come, bitter conduct, come unsavoury guide!  
Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on  
The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark!  
Here's to my love. [drinks] O true apothecary!

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<sup>13</sup> *Timon of Athens*, Act V, Sc. 1

<sup>14</sup> *Henry VI, Part I*, Act V, Sc. 1

<sup>15</sup> *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act V, Sc. 1

Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.<sup>16</sup>

*Unsavoury* is a beautiful way of saying foolish. The Latin word for wisdom, *sapientia*, could be rendered from its etymology as *sapida scientia* or *savoury knowledge*. Wisdom is about things that reason must savour. Hence, the opposite, *unsavoury*, means foolish. The foolish is *insipid*.

And Othello, before taking his own life, sees his miserable fate as the end of his sea-voyage:

Who can control his fate? 'Tis not so now.  
Be not afraid, though you do see me weapon'd.  
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt  
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.<sup>17</sup>

And Queen Katherine sees the *unhappy* or *wretched* condition to which she and her ladies have been reduced as a kind of shipwreck:

What will become of me now, wretched lady?  
I am the most unhappy woman living.  
Alas! poor wenches, where are now your fortunes?  
Shipwrack'd upon a kingdom, where no pity,  
No friends, no hope; no kindred weep for me,  
Almost no grave allow'd me.<sup>18</sup>

In using again the metaphor of life as a sea voyage, Shakespeare beautifully talks about opportunity and fortune in this voyage in the words of Brutus:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.<sup>19</sup>

And sometimes fortune is said to bring in our boat to a destination to which we have not steered it. Thus Pisanio says:

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<sup>16</sup> *Romeo and Juliet*, Act V, Sc. 3

<sup>17</sup> *Othello*, Act V, Sc. 2

<sup>18</sup> *Henry VIII*, Act III, Sc. 2

<sup>19</sup> *Julius Caesar*, Act IV, Sc. 3

Fortune brings in some boats that are not steer'd.<sup>20</sup>

And at other times, a higher power is said to steer our boat, as Romeo says:

But He, that hath the steerage of my course,  
Direct my sail! On, lusty gentlemen.<sup>21</sup>

## THE ETYMOLOGY OF HAPPINESS

Shakespeare is aware of the etymology of the word *happiness* which perhaps corresponds to the common man's thinking that happiness is result of good luck. Moreover, in fiction, the maker of fiction want to emphasize the role of luck or fortune in becoming happy or wretched. In tragedy, we feel pity for the tragic character, even though his misery is a result of his mistake. But his mistake *happens* to have such tragic results beyond his deserts, due to misfortune or fate. Aristotle uses the Greek word for good fortune (*eutuxia*) for happiness in the book *About the Poetic Art* rather than the word *eudaimonia* (which he uses in the *Nicomachean Ethics*). When what happens by fortune or luck is very good or very bad, it especially arouses the wonder of the philomuthos.

Proteus says to his departing friend Valentine:

Wilt thou be gone? Sweet Valentine, adieu!  
Think on thy Proteus, when thou haply seest  
Some rare note-worthy object in thy travel:  
Wish me partaker in thy happiness,  
When thou dost meet good hap; and in thy danger,  
If ever danger do environ thee,  
Commend thy grievance to my holy prayers,  
For I will be thy beadsman, Valentine<sup>22</sup>

Happiness is here spoken of as an effect of *good hap* or good luck. And Proteus wishes his friend happiness in Milan where he is going:

All happiness bechance to thee in Milan.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Cymbeline*, Act IV, Sc. 3

<sup>21</sup> *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, Sc. 5

<sup>22</sup> *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act I, Sc. 1

<sup>23</sup> *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act I, Sc. 1



And note that here Shakespeare uses the word *bechance*.

And in the last words of the play spoken by Valentine, the other gentleman of Verona, we see that the mutual happiness is somewhat a result of fortune:

Please you, I'll tell you as we pass along,  
That you will wonder what hath fortun'd.  
Come, Proteus, 'tis your penance but to hear  
The story of your loves discovered:  
That done, our day of marriage shall be yours;  
One feast, one house, one mutual happiness.<sup>24</sup>

Note that Valentine says to the Duke that *you will wonder what hath fortun'd*.

But bad luck will result in the opposite of happiness as Shakespeare says in the words of Aegeon:

In Syracuse was I born; and wed  
Unto a woman, happy but for me,  
And by me, too, had not our hap been bad...

Thus have you heard me sever'd from my bliss;  
That by misfortunes was my life prolong'd  
To tell sad stories of my own mishaps.

Hapless Aegeon, whom the fates have mark'd  
To bear the extremity of dire mishap.<sup>25</sup>

But notice the word *bliss* above and the word *blessed* below

Some blessed power deliver us from hence<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Act V, Sc. 4

<sup>25</sup> *The Comedy of Errors*, Act I, Sc. 1

<sup>26</sup> *The Comedy of Errors*, Act IV, Sc. 3

But is it by chance or vice that the Prince of Morocco and the Prince of Arragon choose the wrong casket? And is it by chance or virtue that Bassanio chooses right?

Morocco:                If Hercules and Lichas play at dice  
Which is the better man, the greater throw  
May turn by fortune from the weaker hand.  
So is Alcides beaten by his page.  
And so may I, blind fortune leading me,  
Miss that which one unworthier may attain,  
And die with grieving.

Portia:                                You must take your chance;  
And either not attempt to choose at all,  
Or swear before you choose, if you choose wrong,  
Never to speak to lady afterward  
In way of marriage: therefore be advis'd.

Morocco:                Nor will not! come, bring me unto my chance.

Portia:                First, forward to the temple: after dinner  
Your hazard shall be made.

Morocco:                                Good fortune then!  
To make me blest or cursed'st among men!<sup>27</sup>

But if fortune rather than reason determines one's choice, one might invoke the help of some superior power. Hence, the Prince of Morocco, before he chooses, says:

Some God direct my judgment<sup>28</sup>

But the Prince of Arragon merely seems to invoke fortune before he chooses:

Fortune now To my heart's hope.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, Act II, Sc. 1

<sup>28</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, Act II, Sc. 7, line 13

<sup>29</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, Act II, Sc. 9

And even when Bassanio chooses correctly, the scroll speaks of his fortune as giving rise to his bliss:

And hold your fortune for your bliss.<sup>30</sup>

This is in accord with what Plutarch's Cassius says: "the gods have so ordained it that the greatest and chiefest things amongst men are most uncertain."

## TRUE HAPPINESS IS NOT BY LUCK, BUT IS BY AND WITH REASON

But there is a distinction between reason and luck or hap as causes. As Anthony says about the soothsayer:

Be it art, or hap,  
He hath spoken true.<sup>31</sup>

If happiness is by hap or luck, there is no art of happiness. Art is something of reason

Insofar as happiness or man's chief good may depend upon luck or upon some higher power, the philosopher by knowledge cannot direct us to it. But insofar as man's chief good can be known by man and therefore aimed at by men, the philosopher by his knowledge can give us some direction. Antiochus speaks like Aristotle in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* where knowing the chief good and end of man enables us to aim at it, just like an archer at a target

.....an arrow shot  
From a well-experience'd archer hits the mark  
His eye doth level at<sup>32</sup>

Shakespeare, in the words of Hamlet, gives us a good introduction to a knowledge of the chief good of man and the goal of his life:

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<sup>30</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, Act III, Sc. 2, line 136

<sup>31</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act II, Sc. 3

<sup>32</sup> *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, Act I, Sc. 1

.....What is a man  
 If his chief good and market of his time  
 Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.  
 Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,  
 Looking before and after, gave us not  
 That capability and god-like reason  
 To fust in us unused.....<sup>33</sup>

We should note first that Shakespeare identifies the *chief good* of man with the *market of his time*, that is, the mark or goal or end of his life. For the good (*what all want*) and the end (*that for the sake of which* something is or is done) are the same thing. The metonym for the life of man, *his time*, is well chosen by Shakespeare for man is the animal who has the sense of time (as the Philosopher teaches us in the third book *About the Soul*).

Hamlet reasons in the first three lines here from a proportion or likeness of ratios. The chief good of man is to man as the chief good of the beast (to sleep and feed) is to the beast. Then alternating the proportion, we can say that as the chief good of man is to the chief good of the beast, so is man to the beast. Hence, if the chief good of man were no more than the chief good of the beast, then man would be no more than a beast. But man is more than a beast. Hence, the chief good of man must be more than the chief good of the beast.

One could also reason by the other form of the if-then syllogism from this proportion. If man is more than a beast, then the chief good of man is more than the chief good of the beast. But man is more than a beast. Therefore, the chief good of man is more than the chief good of the beast.

In the last four lines, Hamlet or Shakespeare points out what man has in addition to the beast that will be involved in his chief good. This is reason, the ability for large discourse, looking before and after, as Hamlet teaches us.<sup>34</sup> Man's chief good will involve the use of reason, a use that is perfected by virtue. Hence, the highest use of reason will be found in the most perfect of the virtues. And therefore a knowledge of the chief good of man will follow upon the study of each of the virtues.

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<sup>33</sup> *Hamlet*, Act IV, Sc. 4

<sup>34</sup> An explanation of this definition of reason as reason can be found in the Lyceum, under Looking Philosophy under Wisdom and Reason.

Without reason, a man would be divorced from himself, a beast or a picture of a man, but not man properly speaking, as the King says about Ophelia who has gone out of her mind:

.....poor Ophelia  
 Divided from herself and her fair judgment,  
 Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts<sup>35</sup>

Hamlet touches upon, at least, five reasons why we should use our reason or use it more than we do. We could divide these in comparison to man and what is before and after man in perfection. God is before man in perfection and the beast after him.

If reason is godlike, then man becomes like what is better than himself by using well his reason. And he obeys God's plan for him in using reason. These two excellent reasons for using reason, or using it more than we do, are in comparison to what is before man in perfection. They also hint that God's plan for us is to become like himself. Socrates or Plato in the *Theaetetus* stated that philosophy is becoming like God so far as possible for man. And Plato's pupil, Aristotle, stated (in his Proemium to Wisdom) that wisdom, the end of the philosopher, is the most divine knowledge. And in practical philosophy, Aristotle had pointed out that it is more godlike to achieve happiness for a city than for oneself or one's friend only. This anticipates Aristotle's last consideration of happiness in the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Happiness consist in the act of political foresight or the act of wisdom itself, the one happiness more human and the other more divine.

In comparison to what is after man in perfection, the beast, we can see a third excellent reason for using our reason, If we do not, we fall to the level of the beast, something less than ourselves. Thus, if we use reason, we become like what is better than ourselves; and if we do not, we become like what is less than ourselves.

But there can also be seen two others reason and these in comparison to man himself.

Hamlet has pointed out the necessary connection between what man is and the use of reason. As Polonius advises his son Laertes:

This above all: to thine own self be true,

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<sup>35</sup> *Hamlet*, Act IV, Sc. 5

And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.<sup>36</sup>

A man cannot be true to himself if he does not use his reason.

Further, as we have seen, man cannot achieve his chief good and the very end or purpose of his life without using his reason.

## REASON SHOULD RULE THE WILL AND EMOTIONS

Since reason is the ability to look before and after, and before and after is the definition of order, it is clear that reason should rule or direct the will and the emotions. For to rule or direct another is nothing other than to impose some order upon it. It is impossible that will and emotion, not knowing order or the before and after, could rule anything, let alone reason.

But the emotions often resist reason and especially before they are habituated by virtue to follow reason. Shakespeare speaks of reason as wrestling with the emotions which is especially true before one has virtue:

But I persuaded them, if they lov'd Benedick,  
To wish him wrestle with affection,  
And never let Beatrice know of it.<sup>37</sup>

And in *As You Like It*:

Celia: Come, come, wrestle with thy affections.

Rosalind: O, they take the part of a better wrestler than myself.<sup>38</sup>

Shakespeare has a most apt and strong metaphor to describe reason when it accepts sense desire that is unreasonable and excessive and tries to justify it or rationalize it. Adonis says to Venus:

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<sup>36</sup> *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 3

<sup>37</sup> *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act III, Sc. 1

<sup>38</sup> *As You Like It*, Act I, Sc. 3

I hate not love, but your device in love  
 That lends embracements unto every stranger.  
 You do it for increase: O strange excuse  
 When reason is the bawd to lust's abuse.<sup>39</sup>

The bawd does not examine whether the customer should want what he does, but merely tries to give him what he wants. So when reason does not examine the emotion to see if it is reasonable, but merely tries to satisfy it, reason becomes, metaphorically speaking, a *bawd*.

And as reason should rule the emotions, so also it should rule the will. Shakespeare has the same strong metaphor in *Hamlet* (but with a different word) for the disposition of the soul when reason merely listens to the will as master and tries to obtain what it wants without even examining whether the desire of the will is reasonable:

And reason panders will.<sup>40</sup>

The word *panders* comes, of course, from *Pandarus*, the famous pimp in the story of Troilus and Cressida. "reason panders will" and "reason is the bawd" are the same metaphor or likeness.

And for this reason Antony is blamed:

Cleopatra: Is Antony or we in fault for this?

Enobarbus: Antony only, that would make his will  
 Lord of his reason.<sup>41</sup>

Men in power especially can be tempted to follow their will rather than their reason. Thus Isabella upbraids Angelo:

.....O perilous mouths,  
 That bear in them one and the self-same tongue.  
 Either of condemnation or approof;  
 Bidding the law make court'sy to their will;  
 Hooking both right and wrong to the appetite,

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<sup>39</sup> *Venus and Adonis*, lines 789-792

<sup>40</sup> *Hamlet*, Act II, Sc. 4

<sup>41</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act III, Sc. 11

To follow<sup>42</sup>

Cornwall also is doing the like which he admits in speaking about Gloucester:

Though well we may not pass upon his life  
Without the form of justice, yet our power  
Shall do a court'sy to our wrath, which men  
May blame, but not control.<sup>43</sup>

Since law is something of reason or should be, the robbers or outlaws in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* are described well thus:

These are my mates, that make their wills their law<sup>44</sup>

Friar Laurence speaks of the bad will as predominating also over grace:

Two such opposed kings encamp them still  
In men as well as herbs, Grace and rude Will,  
And where the worser is predominant  
Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.<sup>45</sup>

Sometimes when we can see no reason for our suffering, we think we can dispense with the governance of reason over our emotions:

Marcus: But yet let reason govern thy lament.

Titus: If there were reason for these miseries,  
Then into limits could I bind my woes.<sup>46</sup>

Being ruled or rather misruled by a passion is like tyranny. Paulina says to the Lords afraid to confront the insanely jealous king Leontes:

Fear you his tyrannous passion more, alas,

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<sup>42</sup> *Measure for Measure*, Act II, Sc. 4

<sup>43</sup> *King Lear*, Act III, Sc. 7

<sup>44</sup> *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act V, Sc. 4

<sup>45</sup> *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Sc. 3

<sup>46</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, Act III, Sc. 1



Than the queen's life?<sup>47</sup>

And to Leontes himself:

.....I'll not call you tyrant  
But this most cruel usage of your queen, -  
Not able to produce more accusation  
Than you own weak-hing'd fancy, - something savours  
Of tyranny.<sup>48</sup>

(And notice how fancy or imagination is called *weak-hing'd* meaning that it has little or nothing to support it. When will or emotion are opposed to reason, they are following imagination rather than reason.)

And Leontes tries to clear himself from the charge of tyranny by consulting the Oracle as to his wife's conduct (although in the end, he does not accept the judgment of the Oracle):

.....Let us be clear'd  
Of being tyrannous, since we so openly  
Proceed in justice, which shall have due course,  
Even to the guilt or purgation.<sup>49</sup>

Men may imagine the purpose of things other than it is. As Cicero says:

Indeed, it is a strange-disposed time:  
But men may construe things after their fashion,  
Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.<sup>50</sup>

A strong passion or emotion may seem to give us a purpose, but this disappears when the emotion subsides. The Player King says in *Hamlet*:

Most necessary 'tis that we forget  
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt;  
What to ourselves in passion we propose,  
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.

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<sup>47</sup> *Winter's Tale*, Act II, Sc. 3

<sup>48</sup> *Winter's Tale*, Act II, Sc. 3

<sup>49</sup> *Winter's Tale*, Act III, Sc. 2

<sup>50</sup> *Julius Caesar*, Act I, Sc. 3

The violence of either grief or joy  
 Their own enactures with themselves destroy.<sup>51</sup>

Reason should rule over the passions or feelings. Only when this is so can a man rule or direct himself. When the passions or feelings overcome the reason, they are in rebellion and the man himself can be said to suffer a kind of insurrection. The result of this is that the man can be come enslaved to his own passions or feelings.

Hamlet seeks a friend who is not passion's slave:

A man that fortune's buffets and rewards  
 Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those  
 Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled  
 That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger  
 To sound what stop she please. Give me that man  
 That is not passion's slave.....<sup>52</sup>

When the passion or emotion tries to rule over reason and the person, it can be called metaphorically a rebel:

.....it seem'd she was a queen  
 Over her passion, who most rebel-like  
 Sought to be king o'er her.<sup>53</sup>

As Camillo says of Leontes led by his unreasonable passion or emotion:

one....in rebellion with himself<sup>54</sup>

Octavius Caesar, criticizing Antony's following his passions, compares it to boys who pursue the present pleasure, not looking before and after, and hence *rebel* to the judgment of reason:

.....'tis to be chid  
 As we rate boys, who, being mature in knowledge,  
 Pawn their experience to their present pleasure,

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<sup>51</sup> *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 2

<sup>52</sup> *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 2

<sup>53</sup> *King Lear*, Act IV, Sc. 3

<sup>54</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, Act I, Sc. 2

And so rebel to judgment.<sup>55</sup>

And Laertes warns his sister Ophelia about Hamlet:

Be wary then; best safety lies in fear:  
Youth to itself rebels, tough none else near.<sup>56</sup>

Since reason more than anything else is man, when the emotions rebel against reason, one can be said to rebel to oneself.

And Hamlet upbraids his mother at her age:

O shame! Where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,  
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,  
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,  
And melt in her own fire.....<sup>57</sup>

But Caesar says that he is above such rebellion:

.....Be not fond,  
To think that Caesar bears such rebel blood  
That will be thaw'd from the true quality  
With that which melteth fools; I mean sweet words,  
Low-crooked curtsies, and base spaniel fawning.<sup>58</sup>

In *All's Well That Ends Well*, this condition is both called a rebellion and being a traitor to oneself (for reason more than anything else is man):

Be not so holy-cruel: love is holy;  
And my integrity ne'er knew the crafts  
That you do charge me with. Stand no more off,  
But give yourself unto my sick desires,  
Who then recover.

Now, God delay our rebellion! as we are ourselves,  
What things are we!

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<sup>55</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act I, Sc. 4

<sup>56</sup> *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 3

<sup>57</sup> *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 4

<sup>58</sup> *Julius Caesar*, Act III, Sc. 1

Merely our own traitors.<sup>59</sup>

And in *Sonnet CLI*, this betrayal is well described:

.....I do betray  
My nobler part to my gross body's treason;  
My soul doth tell my body that he may  
Triumph in love; flesh stays no farther reason.

Coriolanus speaks of the body's action sometimes teaching the soul or mind a baseness:

.....I will not do't  
Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth,  
And by my body's action teach my mind  
A most inherent baseness.<sup>60</sup>

Reason must moderate the passions or emotions before it can direct us:

..... Stay, my lord,  
And let your reason with your choler question  
What 'tis you go about.....  
I say again, there is no English soul  
More stronger to direct you than yourself,  
If with the sap of reason you would quench,  
Or but allay, the fire of passion.<sup>61</sup>

## REASON, HOWEVER, CAN BE DECEIVED

Although we say that reason should rule, this should not lead us to overlook that reason can be deceived. Listen to the words of the three witches:

Fair is foul, and foul is fair  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *All's Well That Ends Well*, Act IV, Sc. 2

<sup>60</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act III, Sc. 2

<sup>61</sup> *King Henry VIII*, Act I, Sc. 1

In the first line, the witches note the two possible mistakes of reason in regard to our doings: thinking that the good is bad (the fair is foul) or thinking that the bad is good (the foul is fair).

The second line touches upon the two sources or causes of these two mistakes. For the cause of mistake is either in reason's confusion and this is signified by the word *fog*, or in the heart, and this is signified by the word *filthy*.

Some light on *fog* as a metaphor for the cause of mistake or error on the side of reason itself can be seen in the hilarious scene from *Twelfth Night* where the simile of fog is used. Malvolio has been locked up and treated as a madman as a result of the prank played upon him in the sub-plot of the play. Malvolio is locked-up in a darkroom and has the following conversation with the Clown impersonating Sir Topas through the door:

Malvolio:               I am not mad, Sir Topas; I say to you  
                              this house is dark.

Clown:                 Mad man, thou errest. I say there is no darkness  
                              but ignorance, in which thou art more puzzl'd  
                              than the Egyptians in their fog.<sup>63</sup>

Similar images are used by Shakespeare in the *Tempest* where he speaks of darkness and ignorant fumes in the charm that Prospero had cast upon Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio (Prospero is speaking):

.....The charm dissolves apace,  
And as the morning steals upon the night,  
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses  
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle  
Their clearer reason.<sup>64</sup>

Shakespeare's words "the ignorant fumes that mantle their clearer reason" clearly confirm that fog or something like it signifies the cause of mistake on the side of reason.

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<sup>62</sup> *Macbeth*, Act I, Sc. 1

<sup>63</sup> *Twelfth Night*, Act IV, Sc. 2

<sup>64</sup> *Tempest*, Act V, Sc. 1

We have said that the other alliterating word used in the couplet from Macbeth, the word *filth*, signifies the cause of error on the side of the heart or the ability to desire. When the heart becomes vicious or we acquire a moral vice, our reason is blinded by this filth of our heart. And that I am not making a wild guess about the meaning of the word *filth* in this couplet from Macbeth can be seen from a magnificent passage in *Antony & Cleopatra* where Shakespeare again uses the word *filth* in describing how reason is blinded and led into error. Antony is the speaker in Act II, Sc. 11:

But when we in our viciousness grow hard -  
O misery on't - the wise gods seel our eyes,  
In our filth drop our clear judgments; make us  
Adore our errors; laugh at's while we strut  
To our confusion.

The first line (“when we in our viciousness grow hard”) speaks of us when, by repeated bad acts, we have acquired the habit of moral vice. For habit, being a disposition that is difficult to change, is suitably described by the word *hard*. The next words (“o misery on't”) suitably precede the description of the process by which we come to “Adore our errors” (as is said in the fourth line) for, as Thomas Aquinas observes in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, error is a great part of misery. The line “the wise gods seel our eyes” is suitable because he who does not live in accordance with reason is suitably punished by being deprived of the act of reason. The next part, “in our own filth drop our clear judgments; make us Adore our errors”, should be contrasted with the phrase above from the *Tempest*, “the ignorant fumes that mantle their clearer reason.” “Ignorant fumes” is one the side of reason or the knowing powers while “our own filth” refers to the viciousness in our heart or desiring powers. When our clear judgments have been dropped in our own filth, we proceed to the absurd conclusion of adoring our own errors and making ourselves laughable as we proceed to our own confusion. Confusion here is the opposite of glory.

Another passage in Shakespeare where the filth of the heart is spoken of as the cause of mistake is when Albany upbraids his evil and unnatural wife Goneril:

Goneril:	No more; the text is foolish.
Albany:	Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile. Filths savor but themselves. <sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *King Lear*, Act IV, Sc. 2

But sometimes Shakespeare represents the bad as more openly rejecting the voice of reason:

1st Murderer: Where is thy conscience now?

2nd Murderer: In the Duke of Gloucester's purse.

1st Murderer: How if it comes to thee again?

2nd Murderer:

I'll not meddle with it: it is a dangerous thing: it makes a man a coward: a man cannot steal, but it accuseth him; he cannot swear, but it checks him; he cannot lie with his neighbour's wife, but it detects him: it is a blushing shamefast spirit that mutinies in a man's bosom; it fills one full of obstacles: it made me once restore a purse of gold, that I found; it beggars any man that keeps it: it is turned out of all towns and cities for a dangerous thing; and every man that means to live well, endeavours to trust to himself and to live without it.<sup>66</sup>

Richard III awakens from his dream and hears conscience, but tries to silence it:

Give me another horse! bind up my wounds!  
 Have mercy, Jesu! soft! I did but dream.  
 O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!  
 The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight.  
 Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.  
 What? do I fear myself? There's none else by:  
 Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.  
 Is there a murtherer here? No. Yes, I am:  
 Then fly: what! from myself? Great reason: why?  
 Lest I revenge. What " myself upon myself?  
 Alack! I love myself. Wherefore? for any good  
 That I myself have done unto myself?  
 O, no: alas! I rather hate myself  
 For hateful deeds committed by myself.

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<sup>66</sup> *Richard III*, Act I, Sc. 4

I am a villain. Yet I lie; I am not.  
 Fool, of thyself speak well: fool, do not flatter.  
 My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
 And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
 And every tale condemns me for a villain....<sup>67</sup>

But when fully awake and about to lead his army, he scorns the “weakness” of listening to conscience:

Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;  
 Conscience is but a word that cowards use,  
 Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe:  
 Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law.<sup>68</sup>

Since doing is in the singular, Shakespeare notes how the opportunity and means to do bad can influence the will. Thus the King John to Hubert:

How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds  
 Makes deeds ill done! Hadst not thou been by,  
 A fellow by the hand of nature mark'd,  
 Quoted and sign'd to do a deed of shame,  
 This murther had not come into my mind.<sup>69</sup>

And Ferdinand says he will resist such opportunity:

.....the murkiest den  
 The most opportune place, the strong'st suggestion  
 Our worser Genius can, shall never melt  
 Mine honour into lust.....<sup>70</sup>

## NATURE IS THE MEASURE OF WHAT IS GOOD AND BAD

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<sup>67</sup> *Richard III*, Act V, Sc. 3

<sup>68</sup> *Richard III*, Act V, Sc. 3

<sup>69</sup> *King John*, Act IV, Sc. 2

<sup>70</sup> *The Tempest*, Act IV, Sc. 1



Since reason should rule the will and the emotions, but reason can think the good is bad or the bad is good, reason itself must be measured by something else. This measure is nature.

In connecting the chief good and end of man and his life with what man is, Hamlet or Shakespeare is showing that the good is in things and that the nature of a thing, or what it is, is a measure of what is good or bad. Hence, the order in what the playwright or poet makes a likeness of, as Hamlet explains to the players:

o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so  
overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end,  
both at the first and now, was and is,

to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature:

to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image,

and the very age and body of the time his form  
and pressure.<sup>71</sup>

When distinguishing the objects of imitation in the play, Shakespeare gives the order in which they must also be judged in life. Nature is the measure of what is virtuous (in harmony with nature) and what is vicious (against nature). And an age is to be judged good or bad according to the virtues or vices that predominate in that age. Scorn is used as a metonym for pride which is the queen of the vices. There is an interesting observation of Coleridge on the connection of scorn with bad men in commenting on the representation of Antonio and Sebastian in the *Tempest*:

In the delineation of Antonio and Sebastian, short as it is, we have a volume of wise science which Coleridge remarks upon thus:

"In the first scene of the second act, Shakespeare has shown the tendency in bad men to indulge in scorn and contemptuous expressions as a mode of getting rid of their own uneasy feelings of inferiority to the good and also of rendering the transition of others to wickedness easy by making the good ridiculous. Shakespeare never puts habitual scorn into the mouths of other

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<sup>71</sup>*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 2

than bad men, as here in the instance of Antonio and Sebastian."<sup>72</sup>

Custom can be called metaphorically a monster when it is not in harmony with our nature:

That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,  
Of habits devil...<sup>73</sup>

A monster is something unnatural.

Shakespeare likes to stay close to the origin of the word *nature* from birth. Hence, the unnatural is very concretely spoken of when the natural bond of parent and child, or brother or sister, is broken. Thus Hamlet says before he goes to upbraid his mother:

.....Soft! now to my mother!  
O heart! lose not thy nature; let not ever  
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom;  
Let me be cruel, not unnatural;  
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.<sup>74</sup>

And in the tremendous scene of *Coriolanus* where the mother (and wife and child) of Coriolanus intercede on their knees to Coriolanus to have him spare Rome, Coriolanus somewhat stupefied says:

What have you done? Behold the heavens do ope.  
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene  
They laugh at.<sup>75</sup>

It is unnatural for a mother to have to intercede on her knees with her son who should honor her.

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<sup>72</sup> *The New Hudson Shakespeare. The Tempest*, Introduction, XLVII-XLVIII

<sup>73</sup> *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 4

<sup>74</sup> *Hamlet* Act III, Sc. 2

<sup>75</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act V, Sc. 3

And when Macduff abandons his wife and children, Lady Macduff see this as against nature (“He wants the natural touch”) and consequently against reason and wisdom:

Lady Macduff: His flight was madness. When our actions do not,  
Our fears do make us traitors.

Ross: You know not  
Whether it was his wisdom or his fear.

Lady Macduff: Wisdom! to leave his wife, to leave his babes,  
His mansion, and his titles, in a place  
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not;  
He wants the natural touch. For the poor wren,  
The most diminutive of birds will fight,  
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.  
All is the fear and nothing is the love;  
As little is the wisdom, where the flight  
So runs against all reason.<sup>76</sup>

Wisdom is to follow nature as Heraclitus taught us.

Thus Prospero can upbraid his brother who usurped his throne and exiled him to almost certain death;

You, brother mine, that entertain'd ambition,  
Expell'd remorse and nature.....<sup>77</sup>

Acts against nature are also so much opposed to reason that they must lack a name to escape the scrutiny of reason which will bring to light their evil:

Macbeth: How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?  
What is't you do?

All witches:            A deed without a name.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> *Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 2

<sup>77</sup> *Tempest*, Act V, Sc. 1

<sup>78</sup> *Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 1



A falcon, tow'ring in her pride of place,  
Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

Ross: And Duncan's horses - a thing most strange and certain -  
Beauteous and swift; the minions of their race,  
Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out  
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would  
Make war with mankind.

Old Man: 'Tis said they eat each other.

Ross: They did so, to th' amazement of mine eyes,  
That look'd upon't.<sup>81</sup>

We see this represented in *As You Like It* where two pairs of brother are in conflict because in the one case the younger brother has usurped the throne of the older and in the other the older brother is denying the younger any share in his inheritance. But both pairs of brothers are finally reconciled in the forest which represents a return to nature and what is naturally good. Hence, the exiled duke in the forest speaks thus:

And this our life exempt from public haunt  
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones and good in every thing.<sup>82</sup>

We should become accustomed to what is natural for this is like health which is good. Bad customs are like a sickness and they make us unable to recognize that we are unreasonable or bad.

But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food;  
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,  
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,  
And will for evermore be true to it.<sup>83</sup>

Our natural taste is our true judgment.

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<sup>81</sup> *Macbeth*, Act II, Sc. 4

<sup>82</sup> *As You Like It*, Act II, Sc. 1

<sup>83</sup> *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Act IV, Sc. 1

And the doctor says in commenting on Lady Macbeth's troubles after partaking in the murder of her king:

.....Unnatural deeds  
Do breed unnatural troubles.<sup>84</sup>

Virtue is the road to happiness and vice, the road to misery. Happiness seems to be the natural result of virtuous doings and misery, the natural result of vicious doings. The one begets happiness and the other begets wretchedness. And in this way, there can be an art of happiness and misery for there is a road to each which can be known for our direction.

But although the word *nature* first means *birth*, the word is eventually moved to what a thing is in Greek and Latin.<sup>85</sup> In the following words of Friar Laurence, Shakespeare has move the English word to the sense of what a thing is:

For nought so vile that on the earth doth live  
But to the earth some special good doth give.  
Nor ought so good but strain'd from that fair use  
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse!<sup>86</sup>

When a thing revolts or departs from its true nature, it stumbles or falls into an abuse of itself and its abilities.

When Shakespeare says that nature or what is by nature is the measure of good and bad, he is thinking of our common nature as an animal that has reason. But individuals are also born with their own singular dispositions whereby they are well or ill disposed toward being an animal with reason or to having the virtues that are suitable to such animal. Thus Macbeth in his conversation with the murderers:

1st Murtherer:                We are men, my liege.

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<sup>84</sup> *Macbeth*, Act V, Sc. 1

<sup>85</sup> The full distinction and order of the senses of the word *phusis* or *nature* is given by Aristotle in the fifth book of *Wisdom*. See, of course, Thomas's laying out of Aristotle's text there.

<sup>86</sup> *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Sc. 3

Macbeth:                   Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men,  
                               As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,  
                               Shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves, are clipt  
                               All by the name of dogs. The valued file  
                               Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,  
                               The housekeeper, the hunter, everyone  
                               According to the gift which bounteous nature  
                               Hath in him clos'd, whereby he does receive  
                               Particular addition, from the bill  
                               That writes them all alike; and so of men.<sup>87</sup>

What is individual in addition to our common nature may be good or a *gift*, as Macbeth says, or a vicious mole, as Hamlet says:

So. oft it chances in particular men,  
 That for some vicious mole of nature in them,  
 As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty,  
 Since nature cannot choose his origin,  
 By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,  
 Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,  
 Or by some habit that too much o'er-leavens  
 The form of plausible manners, that these men,  
 Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,  
 Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,  
 Their virtues else, be they as pure as grace,  
 As infinite as man may undergo,  
 Shall in the general censure take corruption  
 From that particular fault.....<sup>88</sup>.

Insofar as these faults come in our birth, we are not responsible for them because we did not choose them. As Lepidus says about Antony:

His faults in him seem as the spots of heaven,  
 More fiery by night's blackness; hereditary  
 Rather than purchas'd: what he cannot change  
 Than what he chooses.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Macbeth*, Act III, Sc. 1

<sup>88</sup> *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 4

<sup>89</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act I, Sc. 3

In another passage, Shakespeare touches upon individual dispositions towards, or away from, the virtue concerned with the laughable:

Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time:  
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes,  
And laugh like parrots at a bag-piper;  
And others of such vinegar aspect.  
That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile  
Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.<sup>90</sup>

But when a man is individually disposed towards virtue, he seems more a man because he is well disposed by nature for being a man. Thus Antony's eulogy over the body of Brutus:

His life was gentle and the elements  
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world "This was a man!"<sup>91</sup>

But Caliban is called by Prospero "a beast" because his individual nature is so opposed to the acquisition of virtue:

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature  
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,  
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost;  
And as with age his body uglier grows,  
So his mind cankers.<sup>92</sup>

Sometimes this individual disposition is spoken of concretely with the four elements of Empedocles. Cleopatra says

I am fire and air; my other elements  
I give to baser life.<sup>93</sup>

But Prospero sees the basest element as predominating in Caliban:

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<sup>90</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Sc. 1

<sup>91</sup> *Julius Caesar*, Act V, Sc. 5

<sup>92</sup> *The Tempest*, Act IV, Sc. 1

<sup>93</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act V, Sc. 2



What, ho! Slave! Caliban!  
Thou earth, thou! speak.<sup>94</sup>

Shakespeare also speaks of the dispositions characteristic of one's age as natural:

Natural rebellion, done i' the blaze of youth,  
When oil and fire, too strong for reason's force,  
O'erbears it and burns on.<sup>95</sup>

## WHAT IS VIRTUE

Virtue is first seen as a praiseworthy quality, as Le Beau says about Rosalind:

....the people praise her for her virtues<sup>96</sup>

But this is to know virtue by its effect for we are praised because of our virtues. But we are apt to know things in this outward way first. Hence, since the virtues of the body (such as health, strength and beauty) are more known to us than the virtues of the soul, we sometimes speak of the latter by likeness to the former

We have seen already the likeness of virtue of the soul to the health of the body. It could also be compared to the strength of the body for the man of virtue has a strong soul. And since beauty also is in the middle or mean, that is one reason for calling virtue beauty. It is the beauty of the soul:

Virtue is beauty.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *The Tempest*, Act I, Sc.

<sup>95</sup> *All's Well That End Well*, Act V, Sc. 3

<sup>96</sup> *As You Like It*, Act I, Sc. 2

<sup>97</sup> *Twelfth Night*, Act III, Sc. 4

And as Bassanio says, the beauty of virtue is greater than the beauty of the body:

In Belmont is a lady richly left,  
 And she is fair, and, fairer than that word.  
 Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes  
 I did receive fair speechless messages:  
 Her name is Portia; nothing undervalu'd  
 To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia:  
 Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,  
 For the four winds blow in from every coast  
 Renowned suitors; and her sunny locks  
 Hang on her temples like a golden fleece;  
 Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strond,  
 And many Jasons come in quest of her.<sup>98</sup>

And the Duke consoles Brabantio with this same thought:

.....And, noble signior,  
 If virtue no delightful beauty lack,  
 Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.<sup>99</sup>

Moral virtue is a habit bred by custom in us:

How use doth breed a habit in a man!<sup>100</sup>

The word "breed" is used because of the likeness of habit to the acts that produce it. The word use here means custom.<sup>101</sup> In the following passage, both "breeds" and "mother" are used in the generation of courage.

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<sup>98</sup> *Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Sc. 1

<sup>99</sup> *Othello*, Act I, Sc. 3

<sup>100</sup> *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act V, Sc. 4

<sup>101</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Lib. I Sententiarum*, Distinctio 1, Quest I. Art. 11, Solutio:

...uti dicitur multipliciter.

Aliquando enim nominat quamlibet operationem, secundum quod dicimus usum alicujus rei esse bonum vel malum....

Plenty and peace breeds cowards, hardness ever  
Of hardiness is mother.<sup>102</sup>

When we become accustomed to something, it becomes pleasant for us and perhaps more so than what was previously enjoyed by us:

Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,  
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet  
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods  
More free from peril than the envious court?<sup>103</sup>

Custom can also be an angel and custom or use can greatly change individual nature or even obscure our common nature. Thus, Hamlet says to his mother:

Good night; but go not to mine uncle's bed;  
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.  
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,  
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,  
That to the use of actions fair and good  
He likewise gives a frock or livery,  
That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night;  
And that shall lend a kind of easiness  
To the next abstinence: the next more easy;  
For use almost can change the stamp of nature.<sup>104</sup>

But the custom of doing the bad can eliminate the most suitable feelings:

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Aliquando dicit frequentiam operationis, secundum quod usus est  
idem quod consuetudo...

Dicitur etiam aliquando uti eorum quae ad finem ordinantur  
aliquem.

<sup>102</sup> *Cymbeline*, Act III, Sc. 6 [hardness: difficulty; hardiness: courage]

<sup>103</sup> *As You Like It*, Act II, Sc. 1

<sup>104</sup> *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 4

All pity choked with custom of fell deeds.<sup>105</sup>

Custom can insulate us sometimes from reason, as Hamlet notes to his mother:

...let me ring your heart; for so I shall  
If it be made of penetrable stuff,  
If damnéd custom have not brass'd it so  
That it is proof and bulwark against sense.<sup>106</sup>

The word *wanton*, sometimes used for the vicious, especially the unchaste, has in its etymology that one has not been brought up well:

wanton is made up of a compound - wan, which means "not", and a form of an old participle meaning "brought up" or "trained"<sup>107</sup>

It lies within our power to correct our sense inclinations or feelings and acquire virtue:

.....'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are gardens; to the which our wills are gardeners: so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions: but we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts.<sup>108</sup>

The seeds of the moral virtues are in reason.

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<sup>105</sup> *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, Act III, Sc. 1

<sup>106</sup> *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 4

<sup>107</sup> Kittredge note on *Merchant of Venice*, Act V, Sc. 1, line 71

<sup>108</sup> *Othello*, Act I, Sc. 3

Although virtue as such makes us good, Shakespeare is also aware of how by happening virtue can make us fall and sin rise in the moral order:

Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall.<sup>109</sup>

The man who falls into manifest sin may acquire humility from seeing his defect and weakness and then rise on the foundation of humility while the man who has virtue may become proud and pride goeth before a fall. Moreover, the virtue of another may be a source of temptation as Angelo speaks in his soliloquy about the virtuous Isabella:

From thee; even from thy virtue!    □  
 What's this? what's this? Is this her fault or mine?    //  
 The tempter or the tempted, who sins most?    □  
 Ha!    □  
 Not she; nor doth she tempt: but it is I,    □  
 That, lying by the violet in the sun,    //  
 Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,    □  
 Corrupt with virtuous season. Can it be    □  
 That modesty may more betray our sense    □  
 Than woman's lightness? Having waste ground enough  
 Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary,    □  
 And pitch our evils there? O, fie, fie, fie!    □  
 What dost thou, or what art thou, Angelo?    □  
 Dost thou desire her foully for those things    //  
 That make her good? O, let her brother live!    □  
 Thieves for their robbery have authority    □  
 When judges steal themselves. What! do I love her,    □  
 That I desire to hear her speak again,    //  
 And feast upon her eyes? What is't I dream on?    □  
 O cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint,    □  
 With saints dost bait thy hook! Most dangerous    □  
 Is that temptation that doth goad us on    //  
 To sin in loving virtue: never could the strumpet,    □  
 With all her double vigour, art and nature,    □  
 Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid    □  
 Subdues me quite. Ever till now,    //  
 When men were fond, I smil'd and wonder'd how.<sup>110</sup>    □ □

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<sup>109</sup> *Measure for Measure*, Act II, Sc. 1

<sup>110</sup> *Measure for Measure*, Act II, Sc. 2

## VIRTUE IS ITS OWN REWARD

*Coriolanus*, Act II, Sc. 2, Cominius about Coriolanus:

Our spoils he kick'd at,  
And look'd upon things precious as they were  
The common muck of the world: he covets less  
Than misery itself would give, rewards  
His deeds with doing them, and is content  
To spend the time to end it.

## VIRTUE IS MANHOOD

Courage was the most praised virtue in ancient times. It is the most honored. The Medal of Honor can be received for one glorious day on the battlefield, but one who is temperate or just all his life does not receive a Medal of Honor. Thus Cominius praises Coriolanus:

I shall lack voice: the deeds of Coriolanus  
Should not be utter'd feebly. - It is held  
That valour is the chiefest virtue,  
And most dignifies the haver: if it be,  
The man I speak of cannot in the world  
Be singly counterpois'd.....<sup>111</sup>

And read the note on the following line about Coriolanus:

he did it to please his mother, and to be partly proud; which he is,  
even to the altitude of his virtue.<sup>112</sup>

[Hudson Shakespeare note 38. *virtue*: valour, courage. The original (Latin) meaning. "Now in those days, valiant ness was honored in Rome above all other virtues: which they call *virtues*,

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<sup>111</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act II, Sc. 2

<sup>112</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act I, Sc. 1

by the name of virtue itself, as including...all other special virtues besides." Plutarch]

*Virtue* first means the courage of a man from *vie* meaning man as opposed to woman. Hence, Beatrice's complaint to Benedict:

O! that I were a man for his sake, or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood is melted into curtsies, velour into compliment, and men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones too: he is now as valiant as Hercules, that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.<sup>113</sup>

But a strong woman seems to be like a man or to be a virago. Consider the words of Spiciness to the angry Vilonia (the formidable mother of Coriolanus):

Spiciness:           Are you mankind?

Vilonia:            Ay, fool; is that a shame? Note but this, fool;  
Was not a man my father?<sup>114</sup>

We could also understand *man* in *manhood* as opposed to the beast who is ruled by his passions. Note here the connection between beast and cowardly:

Ominous to        You have brought  
Tribunes:         A trembling upon Rome, such as was never  
So incapable of help.

Both Tribunes:   Say not, we brought it.

Enemies:          How! Was it we? We loved him; but like beasts  
And cowardly nobles, gave way unto your clusters  
Who did hoot him out other city.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act IV, Sc. 1

<sup>114</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act IV, Sc. 2

<sup>115</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act IV, Sc. 6

Albany would seem to be using the word *virtue* for courage in particular when he says to Edmund:

Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,  
All levied in my name, have in my name  
Took their discharge.<sup>116</sup>

*Manhood* first means the virtue of courage as can be seen in Henry's Exhortation to his soldiers before the battle of Agincourt:

And Crispin shall ne'er go by  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered -  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother. Be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition.  
And gentlemen in England now abed  
Shall think themselves accords they were not here,  
And hold their manhood's cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.<sup>117</sup>

Earlier in these same exhortation, Henry touches upon the honor that attaches to courage which is the first meaning of manhood. Virtue, of course, is a praiseworthy or honorable quality:

God's will! I pray thee wish not one man more.  
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,  
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost.  
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;  
Such outward things dwell not in my desires.  
But if it be a sin to covet honor,  
I am the most offending soul alive.  
No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England.  
God's peace! I would not lose so great an honor  
As one man more, methinks would share from me  
For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more.

Falstaff also speaks of courage as manhood in this great scene:

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<sup>116</sup> *King Lear*, Act V, Sc. 3

<sup>117</sup> *Henry V*, Act IV, Sc. 3



Falstaff: A plague of all cowards, I say, and a vengeance too! Marry and amen! Give me a cup of sack, boy. Ere I lead this life long, I'll sew nether-stocks, and mend them, and foot them too. A plague of all cowards! Give me a cup of sack, rogue. Is there no virtue extant? [He trinket]

Prince: Didst thou ever see Titan kiss a dish of butter? Pitiful-hearted butter, that melted at the sweet tale of the sun! If thou didst, then behold that compound.

Falstaff: You rogue, here's lime in this sack too! There is nothing but roguery to be found in villainous man. Yet a coward is worse than a cup of sack with lime in it - a villainous coward! Go thy ways, old Jack, die when thou wilt; if manhood, good manhood, be not forgot upon the face of this earth, then am I a shorten herring. There lives not three good men unhinged in England; and one of them is fat, and grows old. God help the while! A bad world, I say. I would I were a weaver; I could sing psalms or anything. A plague of all cowards, I say still.<sup>118</sup>

But one could extend the word *manhood* to the man as opposed to the child. Not only should a man be well disposed towards anger, but also towards all the passions.

Thus when Antonio tries to soothe his brother Leona to, he compares the man who cannot control his emotions to a child:

Leonato: But there is no such man; for, brother, men  
Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief  
Which they themselves not feel; but tasting it,  
Their counsel turns to passion, which before  
Would give preceptial medicine to rage,  
Fetter strong madness in a silken thread,  
Charm ache with air and agony with words.  
No, no; 'tis all men's office to speak patience  
To those that wring under the load of sorrow,  
But no man's virtue nor sufficiency  
To be so moral when he shall endure  
The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel:

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<sup>118</sup> *King Henry the Fourth, Part One, Act II, Sc. 4*

My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

Antonio:     Therein do men from children nothing differ.

Leonato:     I pray thee peace! I will be flesh and blood;  
                   For there was never yet philosopher  
                   That could endure the toothache patiently  
                   However they have writ the style of gods  
                   And made a push at chance and sufferance.<sup>119</sup>

In the following passage, after commenting upon the cowardliness of Bardolph, Nym & Pistol, their boy-servant goes onto their injustice and how this is opposed to his *manhood*. *Manhood* has now been carried over to justice and is roughly equivalent with all moral virtue. But since man is man by reason, the virtues of reason could also be called *manhood*. But these are the least like courage. (See *Protagoras* etc.) Consider the lack of courage observed in Bardolph, Nym & Pistol by their boy servant in the first paragraph and then their injustice as against his manhood in the second paragraph where manhood seems to said of the boy's justice:

As young as I am, I have observ'd these three swashers. I am boy to them all three, but all three, though they would serve me, could not be man to me; for indeed three such antics do not amount to a man. For Bardolph, he is white-liver'd, and red-fac'd, by the means whereof a' faces it out, but fights not. For Pistol, he hath a killing tongue and a quiet sword, by the means whereof a' breaks words and keeps whole weapons. For Nym, he hath heard that men of few words are the best men, and therefore he scorns to say his prayers, let a' should be thought a coward. But his few bad words are match'd with as few good deeds, for a' never broke any man's head but his own, and that was against a post when he was drunk.

They will steal anything, and call it purchase. Bardolph stole a lute case, bore it twelve leagues, and sold it for three halfpence. Nym and Bardolph are sworn brothers in filching, and in Calice they stole a fire shovel. I knew by that piece of service the men would carry coals. They would have me as familiar with men's pockets as their gloves or handkerchiefs, which makes much

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<sup>119</sup> *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act V, Sc. 1



Second soldier:

Nor I<sup>123</sup>

The French, before the battle of Agincourt, mock the courage of the greatly outnumbered and exhausted English as foolish

Rambures:            That island of England breeds very valiant creatures;  
                             Their mastiffs are of unmatchable courage.

Orleans:             Foolish curs, that run winking into the mouth of a  
                             Russian bear and have their heads crush'd like  
                             rotten apples.

Constable:          Just, just; and the men do sympathize with the mastiffs  
                             In robustious and rough coming-on, leaving their wits  
                             With their wives.<sup>124</sup>

King Henry prays before the battle of Agincourt that the English would lose their ability to count if the numbers would make them regard courage as foolhardy:

O God of battles! steel my soldiers' hearts;  
Possess them not with fear; take from them now  
The sense of reckoning if th'opposed numbers  
Pluck their hearts from them.<sup>125</sup>

Youth is thought to be braver and also more foolish than the old who see the danger better. This is a sign that courage is closer to foolhardiness than to cowardliness. In *As You Like It*, Celia says:

All's brave that youth mounts and folly guides.<sup>126</sup>

In the same play, Celia and the Duke think that the young Orlando about to take on the strong and brutal Charles is foolhardy:

Celia:

Young gentleman, your spirits are too bold for your  
years. You have seen cruel proof of this man's

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<sup>123</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act I, Sc. 4

<sup>124</sup> *King Henry V*, Act III, Sc. 7

<sup>125</sup> *King Henry V*, Act IV, Sc. 1

<sup>126</sup> *As You Like It* Act III, Sc. 4

strength. If you saw yourself with your eyes or knew yourself with your judgment, the fear of your adventure would counsel you to a more equal enterprise. We pray you for your own sake to embrace your own safety and give over this attempt.....

Duke:

Come on. since the youth will not be entreated, his own peril on his forwardness

[Yale Shakespeare: forwardness: foolhardiness]<sup>127</sup>

We should note the words “the fear of your adventure would counsel you”. Shakespeare often speaks of fear as advising or counseling us. Hence, the coward seems to think more than the foolhardy man and even more than the courageous man.

But even the old and wary Caesar is warned by Calpurnia in *Julius Caesar*:

Alas, my lord, your wisdom is consumed in confidence.<sup>128</sup>

And the witches say about Macbeth:

He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear  
His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear;  
And you all know, security  
Is mortals' chiefest enemy<sup>129</sup>

Shakespeare is accustomed to modify a noun with an adjective that expresses the cause or the effect of what is signified by the noun. Consider the connection of cause and effect in the following:

In *Twelfth Night*, the Duke says to Antonio:

What foolish boldness brought thee to their mercies  
Whom thou in terms so bloody and so dear

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<sup>127</sup> *As You Like it*, Act I, Sc. 2

<sup>128</sup> Act II, Sc. 2

<sup>129</sup> *Macbeth*, Act III, Sc. 5

Hast made thine enemies?<sup>130</sup>

And in *Coriolanus*:

.....All the regions  
Do smilingly revolt; and who resist  
Are mock'd for valiant ignorance,  
And perish constant fools.<sup>131</sup>

But the man who truly has courage and not the vice of foolhardiness is guided by foresight or practical wisdom in his actions like Banquo about whom Macbeth says:

Our fears in Banquo stick deep,  
And in his royalty of nature reigns  
That which would be fear'd. 'Tis much he dares,  
And to that dauntless temper of his mind  
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valor  
To act in safety.<sup>132</sup>

Moreover, the boldness of the truly courageous man should not extend to what is beyond what is naturally good for a man to do. If only Macbeth had followed his own words at first to Lady Macbeth's urging him on to the murder of Duncan:

I dare do all that may become a man;  
who dare do more is none.<sup>133</sup>

This is why the drunk man, although bold by his drink, is not courageous because he has lost the use of his reason. Thus in *Timon of Athens*:

He's a sworn rioter; he has a sin that often  
Drowns him and takes his valour prisoner.<sup>134</sup>

The courageous man follows nature in defending his country which is called instead of one's kingdom, one's birthdom (which has the same root-meaning as *nation*):

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<sup>130</sup> *Twelfth Night*, Act V, Sc. 1

<sup>131</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act IV, Sc. 6

<sup>132</sup> *Macbeth*, Act III, Sc. 1

<sup>133</sup> *Macbeth*, Act I, Sc. 7

<sup>134</sup> *Timon of Athens*, Act III, Sc. 5

Malcolm: Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there  
Weep our bosoms empty.

Macduff: Let us rather  
Hold fast the mortal sword, and like good men  
Bestride our downfall'd birthdom.<sup>135</sup>

Courage has two integral parts, one of which is shown in advancing towards the dangerous and the other in bearing up under the evils that cannot be avoided. The former is more seen in men and the latter in women. In *Timon of Athens*, we have this conversation:

First Senator: To revenge is no valour, but to bear.

Alcibiades: My lords, then, under favour, pardon me,  
If I speak like a captain.  
Why do fond men expose themselves to battle,  
And not endure all threats? sleep upon't,  
And let the foes quietly cut their throats,  
Without repugnancy? If there be  
Such valour in the bearing, what make we  
Abroad? Why then, women are more valiant  
That stay at home, if bearing carry it.<sup>136</sup>

And Prospero recalls the bearing up patience or fortitude of his daughter, Miranda:

.....Thou didst smile,  
Infused with a fortitude from heaven,  
When I have deck'd the sea with drops full salt,  
Under my burden groan'd; which rais'd in me  
An undergoing stomach, to bear up  
Against what should ensue.<sup>137</sup>

But even men must bear misfortune:

Messala: Even so great men great losses should endure.

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<sup>135</sup> *Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 3

<sup>136</sup> *Timon of Athens*, Act III, Sc. 5

<sup>137</sup> *The Tempest*, Act I, Sc. 2

Cassius: I have as much of this in art as you,  
But yet my nature could not bear it so.<sup>138</sup>

Sometimes Shakespeare calls valiant men *men of heart*:

He whin'd and roar'd away your victory  
That pages blush'd at him, and men of heart  
Look'd wondering each at others.

[Yale: men of heart: valiant men]<sup>139</sup>

## GREATNESS OF SOUL OR MAGNANIMITY

Following the order of likeness where we consider together virtues that have the same mode, we can put magnanimity or greatness of soul after courage or manhood. For when men are drawn back by their emotions from what they should do, they need to be strengthened to face dangers or to attempt great and honorable things. Shakespeare often associates this striving for the honorable with the courageous. Thus in the words of Hotspur:

O gentlemen, the time of life is short!  
To spend that shortness basely were too long,  
If life did ride upon a dial's point,  
Still ending at the arrival of an hour.<sup>140</sup>

And in Henry's Exhortation to his soldiers before the battle of Agincourt:

God's will! I pray thee wish not one man more.  
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,  
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost.  
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;  
Such outward things dwell not in my desires.  
But if it be a sin to covet honour,  
I am the most offending soul alive.  
No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England.

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<sup>138</sup> *Julius Caesar*, Act IV, Sc. 3

<sup>139</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act V, Sc. 5

<sup>140</sup> *King Henry IV, Part One*, Act V, Sc. 2



God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour  
 As one man more, methinks would share from me  
 For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more.<sup>141</sup>

But the small-souled prefer life to their honor:

thou preferr'st thy life before thine honour<sup>142</sup>

But the pursuit of honor can be seen as requiring bad things which is vicious.  
 Thus Lady Macbeth to Macbeth:

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be  
 What thou art promis'd. Yet do I fear thy nature.  
 It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness  
 To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,  
 Art not without ambition, but without  
 The illness should attend it.<sup>143</sup>

## MODERATION OR TEMPERANCE

Courage is closer to the extreme that seems more foolish (hence, called foolhardiness). But moderation or temperance is further away from the extreme that seems more foolish or more opposed to it. This is why Socrates reasons in the *Protagoras* that wisdom and moderation are both opposed to folly, but does not try to reason that courage and wisdom are opposed to the same

The intemperate man who goes to excess is more like the fool:

Olivia: What's a drunken man like, fool?

Clown: Like a drown'd man, a fool, and a madman: one draught  
 above heat makes him a fool; the second mads him;  
 and a third drowns him.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> *Henry V*, Act IV, Sc. 3

<sup>142</sup> *King Henry VI, Part Three*, Act I, Sc. 1

<sup>143</sup> *Macbeth*, Act I, Sc. 5

<sup>144</sup> *Twelfth Night*, Act I, Sc. 5

Likewise, men who go to excess in love seem to have lost reason:

The expedition of my violent love  
Out ran the pauser reason.<sup>145</sup>

And in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together  
now-a-days<sup>146</sup>

Reason should not eliminate, but moderate, love, as Lucetta says to Julia:

I do not seek to quench your love's hot fire,  
But qualify the fire's extreme rage,  
Lest it should burn above the bounds of reason.<sup>147</sup>

What can happen when reason is abandoned in love is said well in the sonnet:

My reason, the physician to my love,  
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,  
Hath left me.....  
Past cure I am, now reason is past care  
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;  
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are.<sup>148</sup>

Jealousy, which is an effect of love, can take away the judgment of reason, as Iago says about Othello:

.....yet that I put the Moor  
At least into a jealousy so strong  
That judgment cannot cure.....<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> *Macbeth*, Act II, Sc. 3

<sup>146</sup> *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act III, Sc. 1

<sup>147</sup> *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act II, Sc. 7

<sup>148</sup> *Sonnet CXLVII*

<sup>149</sup> *Othello*, Act II, Sc. 1

Thus Iago's advice to Roderigo is good:

If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most prepost'rous conclusions. But we have reason to cool our raging emotions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts.....<sup>150</sup>

As Thomas explains in the Secunda Secundae of the *Summa Theologiae* temperance or moderation has two integral parts, *verecundia* and *honestas*. Shakespeare often uses *honest* in close meaning to its Latin origin of the state of honor. Thus when the jealous Leontes thinks his wife is an adulterer, he says:

'Tis pity she's not honest, honourable

Celia touches upon these two parts using a metonym (blush) for shame or *verecundia*:

Celia: Therefore, my sweet Rose, my dear Rose, be merry.

Rosalind: From henceforth I will, coz, and devise sports.  
Let me see; what think you of falling in love?

Celia: Merry, I prithee, do, to make sport withal: but  
love no man in good earnest; nor no further in sport  
neither than with the safety of a pure blush thou  
mayst in honour come off again.<sup>151</sup>

When Hamlet upbraids his mother about her hasty second marriage, he also uses the metonym of "blush" for shame or *verecundia* and "grace" for the spiritual beauty of *honestas*.

Hamlet: .....let me ring your heart; for so I shall  
If it be made of penetrable stuff,  
If damned custom have not brass'd it so

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<sup>150</sup> *Othello*, Act I, Sc. 3

<sup>151</sup> *As You Like it*, Act I, Sc. 2

That it is proof and bulwark against sense.

Queen: What have I done that thou dar'st wag thy tongue  
In noise so rude against me?

Hamlet: Such an act  
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty<sup>152</sup>

Later in that same act (line 83), Hamlet touches upon the meaning of the metonym:

O shame! where is thy blush?

And in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, it is said about Julia disguised as a boy:

I think the boy hath grace in him; he blushes<sup>153</sup>

In *Venus and Adonis*, Venus is described as forgetting these two integral parts of temperance:

And having felt the sweetness of the spoil,  
With blindfold fury she begins to forage;  
Her face doth reek and smoke, her blood doth boil,  
And careless lust stirs up a desperate courage,  
Planting oblivion, beating reason back,  
Forgetting shame's pure blush and honour's wrack.<sup>154</sup>

And in *Much Ado About Nothing*, the deceived Claudio, who thinks his bride to be has had a lover the night before, says bitterly to her father and others present in the Church these words, touching again upon the integral parts of temperance:

There, Leonato, take her back again:  
Give not this rotten orange to your friend;  
She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.  
Behold! how like a maid she blushes here.  
O! What authority and show of truth  
Can cunning sin cover itself withal.  
Comes not that blood as modest evidence

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<sup>152</sup> *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 4

<sup>153</sup> *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act V, Sc. 4

<sup>154</sup> *Venus and Adonis*, lines 553-558

To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,  
 All you that see her, that she were a maid,  
 By these exterior shows? But she is none:  
 She knows the heat of a luxurious bed;  
 Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.....  
 Out on thee! Seeming! I will write against it.<sup>155</sup>

A maid was proverbially modest (at least before our corrupt age). Hence, in, Helena says to Hermia who she thinks has stolen her lover these words:

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,  
 No touch of bashfulness?<sup>156</sup>

When Adam explains why he is still vigorous in old age, he also speaks of the opposite of bashful found in young men who take advantage of the weaker sex. In:

Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty;  
 For in my youth I never did apply  
 Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood,  
 Nor did not with unbashful forehead woo  
 The means of weakness and debility.<sup>157</sup>

In the following conversation between Angelo and Isabella, it can be seen that Angelo has lost all control over his sensual desires and is ready to abuse his power over Isabella's brother to get her body. He wishes her to set aside her blushes and all nicety (to what does nicety refer?):

Angelo: .....I have begun  
 And now I give my sensual race the rein.  
 Fit thy consent to my sharp appetite;  
 Lay by all nicety and prolixious blushes,  
 That banish what they sue for: redeem thy brother  
 By yielding up thy body to my will,  
 Or else he must not only die the death,  
 But thy unkindness shall his death draw out  
 To ling'ring sufferance. Answer me tomorrow,  
 Or, by the affection that now guides me most,  
 I'll prove a tyrant to him.

<sup>155</sup> *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act IV, Sc. 1

<sup>156</sup> *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act III, Sc. 2

<sup>157</sup> *As You Like It*, Act II, Sc. 3

Isabella: .....O perilous mouths!  
 That bear in them one and the selfsame tongue,  
 Either of condemnation or approof,  
 Bidding the law make curtsy to their will,  
 Hooking both right and wrong to th'appetite,  
 To follow as it draws.<sup>158</sup>

Shame is a form of fear. And when Theseus speaks of those local officials who are bashful or embarrassed when called upon to greet or speak before Theseus, he connects modesty with fear in these words:

And in the modesty of fearful duty<sup>159</sup>

Othello's great metaphor touches more upon the *honestas* or spiritual beauty of modesty in which the light of reason shines forth through the rarely reasonable passions involved in the bodily pleasures of the sense of touch:

Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars.<sup>160</sup>

He will not name adultery to the chaste stars. The light of the stars is especially beautiful against the black sky. The words of Hamlet to Laertes, although in a different matter, help us to understand the metaphor of Othello and the integral part of temperance that it expresses:

I'll be your foil, Laertes. in mine ignorance  
 Your skill shall, like a star i'th' darkest night,  
 Stick fiery off indeed.<sup>161</sup>

And Lepidus about Antony:

His faults in him seem as the spots of heaven,  
 More fiery by night's blackness; hereditary  
 Rather than purchas'd: what he cannot change  
 Than what he chooses.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> *Measure for Measure*, Act II, Sc. 4

<sup>159</sup> *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V, Sc. 1

<sup>160</sup> *Othello*, Act V, Sc. 2

<sup>161</sup> *Hamlet* Act V, Sc. 2

<sup>162</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act I, Sc. 3

The first line of *Sonnet 129* touches upon one, perhaps both of the integral parts of temperance:

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame  
Is lust in action; and till action, lust  
Is perjur'd, murderous, bloody, full of blame,  
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;  
Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight;  
Past reason hunted; and no sooner had  
Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait,  
On purpose laid to make the taker mad:  
Mad in pursuit, and in possession so,  
Had, having, and in quest, to have. extreme;  
A bliss in proof, and prov'd, a very woe;  
Before, a joy propos'd; behind a dream.  
All this the world well knows; yet none knows well  
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

The man who does to excess in the pleasures of the body makes the flesh his god and becomes himself a beast:

This is the liver-vein, which makes flesh a deity.  
A green goose a goddess: pure, pure idolatry  
God amend us, God amend! we are much out o'the way.<sup>163</sup>

And in *The Rape of Lucrece*:

While she the picture of true piety,  
Like a white hind under the gripe's sharp claws,  
Pleads, in a wilderness where are no laws,  
To the rough beast that knows no gentle right,  
Nor ought obeys but his foul appetite.<sup>164</sup>

The words *honest* and *dishonest* in the works of Shakespeare often keep their Latin original meaning as pertaining to moderation or modesty. Thus Audrey to Touchstone:

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<sup>163</sup> *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act IV, Sc. 3

<sup>164</sup> *The Rape of Lucrece*, lines 542-546

I hope it is no dishonest desire to desire to be a woman of the world.<sup>165</sup>

*Honest* often means *chaste* in Shakespeare, like *honestas* is an integral part of temperance. See the following conversation:

Hamlet: Are you honest?

Ophelia: My lord!

Hamlet: Are you fair?

Ophelia: What means your lordship?

Hamlet: That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.

Ophelia: Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

Hamlet: Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness: this was sometimes a paradox, but now the time gives it proof.<sup>166</sup>

And Marina sees honesty or chastity as the virtue of a woman:

Bawd: Ay, and you shall live in pleasure

Marina: No

Bawd: Yes, indeed, shall you, and taste gentlemen of all fashions. You shall fare well; you shall have the difference of all complexions. What! do you stop your ears?

Marina: Are you a woman?

Bawd: What would you have me be, an I be not a woman?

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<sup>165</sup> *As You Like It*. Act V, Sc. 3 [Hudson Shakespeare note **dishonest**: immodest. Cf. 'honest' in I, ii, 34; III, iii, 22. Ben Jonson described his wife to Drummond of Hawthornden as "a shrew, yet honest."]

<sup>166</sup> *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 1



Marina: An honest woman or not a woman.<sup>167</sup>

There are other virtues which have the mode of temperance, consisting more in restraining desire from going to excess than defect in what is naturally attractive to us. Humility (which moderates the desire for excellence) is attached to temperance in the division of the virtues according to mode (in the *Secunda Secundae*). In the following passage, Shakespeare (when Hamlet upbraids his mother for her hasty second marriage) seems to use a metaphor from species to species, calling the sexual emotions *humble* when they are apt to obey reason:)

You cannot call it love, for at your age  
The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,  
And waits upon the judgment; and what judgment  
Would step from this to this.<sup>168</sup>

## MILDNESS

Mildness is also like moderation or temperance for it moderates anger, a strong passion that needs to be moderated. Thus it is said about Coriolanus:

Put him to choler straight: he hath been used  
Ever to conquer and to have his worth  
Of contradiction: being once chafed, he cannot  
Be rein'd again to temperance.<sup>169</sup>

Sometimes Shakespeare uses a metaphor from species to species, calling very strong love *wrath* as Rosalind says about the sudden strong love of Oliver and Celia:

they are in the very wrath of love and  
they will together; clubs cannot part them<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> *Pericles*, Act IV, Sc. 2

<sup>168</sup> *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 4

<sup>169</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act III, Sc. 3

<sup>170</sup> *As You Like It*. Act V, Sc. 2

Although love and anger are quite different emotions, they are alike in being very strong and in being in need of the moderation and restraint of reason. And this is why mildness that moderates anger is considered with temperance that moderates sexual love or desire in the *Secunda Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*.

Because anger and sensual love are such strong passions, the man undergoing them may identify himself with them and think he must follow their impetus in order to be true to himself. Thus Coriolanus, who is given to anger, says when he is told to moderate his anger:

Why did you wish me milder? would you have me  
False to my nature? Rather say, I play  
The man I am.<sup>171</sup>

Likewise, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Proteus thinks he must be false to his betrothed and to his friend Valentine in order to be true to himself in following the sudden passion he has for Silvia. But when one follows a strong passion in opposition to reason rather than tempering this passion, one is not true to oneself, but is acting like a beast. Thus Friar Laurence says to Romeo:

.....thy wild acts denote  
The unreasonable fury of a beast.....  
I thought thy disposition better temper'd.<sup>172</sup>

As Socrates or Plato compared the soul dominated by a passion to the rule of the city by a tyrant, so Antonio says about Shylock:

.....I do oppose  
My patience to his fury, and am arm'd  
To suffer with a quietness of spirit  
The very tyranny and rage of his.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act III, Sc. 2

<sup>172</sup> *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Sc. 2

<sup>173</sup> *Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, Sc. 1

Tyranny is a form of misgovernment. Hence, Shakespeare speaks of government by what helps to restrain anger:

Quite besides the government of patience.<sup>174</sup>

Hence, it is necessary to use reason to moderate one's anger, as Prospero says:

Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick,  
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury  
Do I take part: the rarer action is  
In virtue than in vengeance; they being penitent,  
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend  
Not a frown further. Go, release them, Ariel.<sup>175</sup>

And Norfolk says to Buckingham that this is necessary before one can direct oneself:

.....Stay, my lord,  
And let your reason with your choler question  
What 'tis you go about.....  
I say again, there is no English soul  
More stronger to direct you than yourself,  
If with the sap of reason you would quench,  
Or but allay, the fire of passion.<sup>176</sup>

## EASILY TURNING OR EUTRAPELIA

This virtue also has the mode of temperance or moderation and therefore in the order of the Secunda Secundae we placed it after mildness

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<sup>174</sup> *Cymbeline*, Act II, Sc. 4

<sup>175</sup> *The Tempest*, Act V, Sc. 1

<sup>176</sup> *King Henry VIII*, Act I, Sc. 1

The virtue concerned with the laughable is called *eutrapelia* in Greek by Aristotle. We see the same way of speaking of this virtue when Biron is described as having the virtue concerned with the laughable:

Biron they call him; but a merrier man,  
 Within the limit of becoming mirth,  
 I never spent an hour's talk withal:  
 His eye begets occasion for his wit;  
 For every object that the one doth catch,  
 The other turns to a mirth-moving jest.<sup>177</sup>

Men are by their individual natures sometimes inclined to one extreme or the other in this matter of the laughable.

Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time:  
 Some that will evermore peep through their eyes,  
 And laugh like parrots at a bag-piper;  
 And others of such vinegar aspect.  
 That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile  
 Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.<sup>178</sup>

Melancholy is the sadness opposed to mirth, the joy over the laughable. In the following conversation between Jacques and Rosalind, we see this as well as the importance of avoiding the two extremes in the matter of the laughable:

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Jacques:  | I prithee, pretty youth, let me be better acquainted with thee.   |
| Rosalind: | They say you are a melancholy fellow.   |
| Jacques:  | I am so; I do love it better than laughing.   |
| Rosalind: | Those that are in extremity of either are abominable fellows, and betray themselves to every modern censure worse than drunkards. |
| Jacques:  | Why, 't is good to be sad and say nothing.  |

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<sup>177</sup> Love's Labour's Lost, Act II, Sc. 1

<sup>111</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Sc. 1

- Rosalind: Why, then 't is good to be a post.
- Jaques: I have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician's which is fantastical; nor the courtier's, which is proud; nor the soldier's, which is ambitious; nor the lawyer's, which is politic; nor the lady's, which is nice; nor the lover's, which is of all these; but it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and, indeed, the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness.
- Rosalind: A traveller! By my faith, you have great reason to be sad: I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's; then, to have seen much, and to have nothing, is to have rich eyes and poor hands.
- Jaques: Yes, I have gain'd my experience.
- Rosalind: And experience makes you sad: I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad; and to travel for it too.<sup>179</sup>

## JUSTICE

Shakespeare sees the connection of justice with equality. Indeed *just* sometimes is a synonym for equal:

The prince is here at hand: pleaseth your lordship  
To meet his grace just distance 'tween our armies

[ *just* here means equal]<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> *As You Like It*, Act IV, Sc. 1

<sup>180</sup> *Henry IV, Part Two*, Act IV, Sc. 1

And justice can be called inequality:

.....nor do not banish reason  
For inequality.

[Yale Shakespeare: inequality: injustice]<sup>181</sup>

And justice is to be even rather than at odds:

even-handed justice<sup>182</sup>

Justice consists in paying one's debts, or giving to each his due, whether it be to God, as Belarius says:

Where I have liv'd at honest freedom, paid  
More pious debts to heaven than in all  
The fore-end of my time.<sup>183</sup>

Or to another human being:

.....Marina gets  
All praises, which are paid as debts,  
And not as given.<sup>184</sup>

Slander is opposed to justice:

'tis slander; whose edge is sharper than the sword<sup>185</sup>

## TRUTHFULNESS

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<sup>181</sup> *Measure for Measure*, Act V, Sc. 1

<sup>182</sup> *Macbeth*, Act I, Sc. 7, line 10

<sup>183</sup> *Cymbeline*, Act III, Sc. 3

<sup>184</sup> *Pericles*, Act IV, Chorus or Gower lines

<sup>185</sup> *Cymbeline*, Act III, Sc. 4

The virtue of truthfulness is attached to justice as a potential part of it as Thomas explains in the *Secunda Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*. In these beautiful words, Shakespeare also seems to associate this virtue with justice:

Falseness cannot come from thee, for thou lookest  
Modest as justice, and thou seem'st a palace  
For the crown'd truth to dwell in.<sup>186</sup>

### LIBERALITY OR GENEROSITY

The vice which is opposed to liberality by defect, stinginess or avarice, is incurable according to Aristotle because men are naturally inclined more to keep material goods as necessary for their life and as they get older they become even more dependent upon these goods as their bodily powers decline. In discussing the persistence of vices, Macduff makes this point:

This avarice  
Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root  
Than summer-seeming lust, and it hath been  
The sword of our slain kings.<sup>187</sup>

The man in excess, who is extravagant, is the extreme which seems more like the fool:

Sir Toby:    Why, he has three thousand ducats a year.

Maria:        Ay, but he'll have but a year in all these ducats; he's a  
                     very fool and a prodigal.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> *Pericles*, Act V, Sc. 1

<sup>187</sup> *Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 3

<sup>188</sup> *Twelfth Night*, Act I, Sc. 3

It is said of the misanthrope, Timon, that he never knew the middle which is the virtue in this matter:

The middle of humanity thou never knewest, but the extremity of both ends: when thou wast in thy gilt and thy perfume, they mocked thee for too much curiosity; in thy rags thou know'st none, but art despised for the contrary.<sup>189</sup>

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Shakespeare on love and friendship will be considered under the eighth and ninth books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

DUANE H. BERQUIST

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<sup>189</sup> *Timon of Athens*, Act IV, Sc. 3