Essay on Beauty

Yves-Marie André

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Translated from the French and annotated by Alan J. Cain

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Essai sur le beau by Yves-Marie André (1675–1764), originally published in 1741 and in an extended edition in 1770, is now in the public domain.

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Translator's Introduction

This is an annotated translation of the extended edition of *Essai sur le beau* (Paris: Ganeau, 1770) by Yves-Marie André ('le Père André'), following the text in *Œuvres philosophiques du Père André* (Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1843).

Although it appeared after the the studies of beauty by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, the *Essay on Beauty* was an important book in its time, and led to fame for André. It consists of eight discourses that André read to the academy of Caen, of which he was a member. It is now comparatively unknown, at least in the anglophone world. I came across it while researching a book, and, as it seemed never to have been translated into English, save for a few excerpts in anthologies, I undertook the task myself.

I have added some new explanatory remarks in new or existing footnotes; I use a dagger † to mark the beginning of new material.

I have kept all of André's original citations. I have attempted to check each citation against its source, and have silently corrected errors and have made references more precise where possible, by, for example, giving a chapter number where André gives only a book number. I note citations that I have been unable to check.

André seems to have been prone to misquotation of varying levels. At the less serious end of the range, he sometimes changed the word order of Latin quotations, but this may simply be a consequence of the edition of text he used, and in any case these changes do not affect the meaning of the text. More serious is silent elision from quotations, or where he quoted lines from a poem without indicating that these lines are not adjacent. He also sometimes altered the wording of French poems published in his own time; since it is harder to blame such alterations on problems with his source texts, the responsibility must be assigned to André. My policy in dealing with misquotations has been to correct silently minor points of spelling or punctuation, and to correct more serious points in the text and point out André's misquotaton in a footnote.

I also give translations for Latin quotations that André neither translated nor paraphrased in the original text. If no source is given for a translation, it has been drawn from a standard public-domain translation of the quoted work.

André often alluded to or cited historical or literary figures, some of whom are no longer well-known. I have thus supplied an explanatory note

for the first reference to each person, even the most widely known, since it would be difficult to pinpoint where to divide the spectrum of fame into sufficiently and insufficiently well-known.

The pagination of the original French text is indicated by a vertical bar in the text indicating that a new page starts at that point (accurate insofar as allowed by the vagaries of translation), and the new page number is indicated in the margin, like in this example: | . 17

I owe thanks to my friend and colleague Dr Pedro Vasconcelos, for making my life easier in myriad ways while I worked on this translation.

University of Porto,
August 2010

Alan J. Cain

1 On beauty in general, and in particular on visible beauty

Gentlemen,

I know not by what destiny it happens that the things most often spoken of among men are ordinarily those about which least is known. Such is, among myriad others, the subject that I undertake to treat. It is beauty; everyone speaks of it; everyone thinks of it. There are no circles at court, there are no societies in towns, there are no gossips in the countryside, there are no arches in our temples, that do not echo with it. Beauty is desired everywhere; beauty in works of nature, beauty in works of art, beauty in morals: and if we find it somewhere, it is enough to say that we are touched, we are struck, seized, enchanted. But by what?

Ask a company of people who seem most smitten, what is this beauty that charms them so? what is its basis, its nature, its precise notion, its true idea? if beauty is something absolute or relative? if there is an essential beauty, independent of any | institution? a fixed beauty, and so immutable? 2
a beauty that pleases, or that gives pleasure in China as in France; to the barbarians just as to the most civilized nations? a supreme beauty, that is the rule and the model of the subordinate beauty that we see here below? or, finally, if beauty is like fashions and jewellery, whose success depends on the caprice of men, of opinion, and of taste?

Ask these questions, and you will immediately see every idea confused, feelings divided, myriad doubts born about the things of the world that were believed to be best known: and as long as you press your request for your interlocutors to explain, you will recognize that, if something unexpected does not come to their aid, most will not know how to answer.

Someone will perhaps say to me: it is necessary to go so far to find beauty? Open your eyes, there is a beautiful company: listen: there is a beautiful air. But it is evident that this would be leaving the question. I do not ask you *what is beautiful*, said once a philosopher[1] to a sophist, who, on the same subject, gave to him approximately the same answer. I ask you *what is beauty?* The two questions are very different. You respond,

1 Plato, in his *Hippias Major.*

following the ordinary style, perfectly fairly to the one I do not ask, but you do not respond at all to the one that I do. I ask you, once again, what is beauty? beauty, which makes so all that is beautiful in appearance, in morality, in works of nature, in works of art, in any type of beauty that can be?

I know that there are philosophers throughout the world who have already answered. After having exhausted on beauty all the commonplaces of sceptical eloquence, which | reduces to proving to men that they know 3
nothing, because they do not know everything, they unceremoniously conclude by putting it in the class of entities of pure opinion. But if these great philosophers do not want to pass for extravagants who talk of beauty without knowing of what they speak, it is at least necessary that they admit the idea, which is indeed very stable. I mean, supposing nothing but the indubitable, that there is in every mind an idea of beauty, that this idea means excellence, approval, perfection; that it presents beauty to us as an advantageous quality that we esteem in others and that we would like in ourselves. The question is to develop this idea, so that it becomes manifest to all attentive minds; that is the plan that I propose.

I believe, gentlemen, that you would gladly see treated in your academic assemblies a subject so interesting and so pleasant in itself, elsewhere so little known in theory, and nevertheless so worthy of being known by its great principles, which one can drawn on in order to shape one's sentiments, one's speech, one's conduct upon true beauty, which must be the rule. This is what gives me hope of a favourable hearing.

To give at the outset a general plan of my design, I say that there is an essential beauty, independent of any institution, even divine; that there is a natural beauty, independent of the opinion of men: finally that there is a species of beauty of human institution, which is arbitrary up to a certain point; three propositions that encompass my whole subject, that show the order that I must follow in treating it, and that already start, if I am not mistaken, to shed some light thereon, through the distinction that they make between the things that have often been customarily mixed together. Retain, gentlemen, this first division of the subject that I propose to clarify.

But as beauty can be considered either in the mind | or in the body, 4
one sees well enough that, not to confuse anything, it is still necessary to divide it into different territories: into sensible beauty, and into intellectual beauty; sensible beauty is what we perceive in bodies, and intellectual beauty is what we perceive in minds. It will be agreed, doubtless, that the one and the other can only be perceived by reason; sensible beauty, by reason attentive to ideas that are received through sense; and intellectual beauty, by reason attentive to ideas of the mind alone. I start with sensible beauty, though perhaps the most complicated, but which otherwise seems to me the easiest to illuminate, through the support that I can draw from

our most familiar ideas, to make myself understood to all types of person.

First, it is certain that not all our senses have the privilege of knowing beauty. There are three of them that nature has excluded from this noble function: taste, smell, and touch; these are stupid and rude senses that only seek, like idiots, that which is good for them, without making any effort regarding beauty. Sight and hearing are our sole bodily faculties that have the gift of discerning it. We do not ask why this is; I do not know a reason other than the will of the Creator, who was pleased to divide the talents so.

The whole question is thus reduced to the beauty that springs from the two privileged senses; that is to say, to visible or optical beauty, and to acoustic or music beauty: to visible beauty, of which the eye is the natural judge, and to acoustic beauty, of which the ear is the born arbiter; the one and the other established by a sovereign order each to judge in its own area, but in subordinate tribunals following certain laws that, being anterior and superior to them, must dictate all their judgements.

Those that the ear must follow in its judgements are of a theory too fine and too delicate for me to start with them. Thus, for greater ease, I will consider in this first discourse sensible beauty, which is | the object of 5
sight.[2] We will still have only too much material.

We must show that there is a visible beauty in all the senses that we have distinguished: an essential beauty, a natural beauty, and a beauty that is in some way arbitrary. We must explain the nature of these three species of visible beauty. We must establish some rules to recognize them, each by the particular feature that characterizes it.

You see, gentlemen, by the wholly simple manner in which I explain my design, that I have no intention of suspending your approval, nor of asking your grace for my proofs. But also permit me to ask you for fairness against the insolence of scepticism, whose folly and ridicule never seem more palpable than in this subject.

Is it possible that there have been men, and even philosophers, who have doubted for a moment that there is an essential beauty, independent of any institution, that is the eternal rule of the visible beauty of bodies? Would not the slightest attention to our primitive ideas have to convince them that regularity, order, proportion, symmetry are essentially preferable to irregularity, disorder, and disproportion? Have they forgotton that natural geometry, which can be ignored by no-one, because it is part of what is called common sense, puts a compass in the their eyes, as in those of other men, to judge the elegance of a figure, or the perfection of a work? Have they forgotten learning these first principles of good sense: that one figure is altogether more elegant, that the shape is fairer and more uniform; that

2 †André confuses his terminology here. Sensible beauty is his first division (opposed to intellectual beauty); it in turn divides into visible beauty and acoustic beauty.

one work is altogether more perfect than the less polished one; that if one makes a design from several different pieces, equal or unequal, in number even or odd, they must be so distributed, that the multitude does not create confusion; that the unique components | must be placed among those that 6
they match; that the equal parts should have equal numbers, and at an equal distant from one another, and among them a rule of gradation should be followed; in a word, ensuring that this assembly results in a whole were nothing is confused, where nothing is contrary, where nothing betrays the unity of the design? And to descend from the metaphysics of beauty to the practice of the arts that make it sensible, does not a single glance at two edifices, one regular, the other irregular, suffice not only to make us see that there are rules of beauty, but to reveal to us their reason?

This fundamental reason of the rules of beauty, which is quite subtle, will perhaps seem perhaps better in the words of some famous author than in mine. I know only of two who have considered in some depth the subject I treat: Plato[3] and St Augustine.[4]

Plato wrote two dialogues entitled *On Beauty*, his *Hippias Major* and his *Phaedrus*. But, as in the first he considers what beauty is not rather than what it is, as in the second he speaks less of beauty than of the natural love we have for it, and as in both he displays as usual more wit and eloquence than true philosophy, I give up the glory of proving my thesis in Greek. St Augustine, who was the brightest of all, treated the question more as a philosopher. He even tells us that in his youth,[5] he had written a book expressly on the nature of beauty; and we would be inconsolable at having lost it, if we could not recover its principles in those of his works that time has conserved for us. I find them most well developed in his sublime treatise on the true religion. It lifts its reader from the visual beauty of the arts to essential beauty, which is the rule, by an analysis that would | 7
honour modern philosophy. But we must listen to it.

If I ask an architect,[6] said the holy doctor, why, having built an arcade on one of the wings of his edifice, he does the same on the other, he would doubtless answer that it is so that the parts of his architecture[7] fit well together. But why does this symmetry seem necessary to you? Because it pleases. But who are you, to make yourself an arbiter of what must please or displease men? and from where do you know that symmetry pleases us? I am sure of it, because things thus disposed have decency,

3 †Plato [*Πλάτων*] (c. 428–c. 348 BCE), Greek philosopher.

4 †Augustine of Hippo [Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis] (354–430 CE), Roman philosopher and theologian and bishop of Hippo Regius.

5 Augustine, *Confessions*, iv.13ff.

6 Augustine, *On True Religion*, ch. 30–2ff.

7 Augustine, *On Music*, vi.13.

appropriateness, grace; in a word, because this is beautiful. Very well. But, I say, is it beautiful because it pleases, or does it please because it is beautiful? Without question, it pleases because it is beautiful. I think so too. But I still ask you: why is it beautiful? and if my question embarrasses you, because indeed the masters of your art do not go so far, you will at least agree without trouble that the similitude, the equality, and the congruence of parts of your building all reduce to a species of unity that pleases reason. That is what I would like to say. Yes; but be careful. There is no true unity in bodies, in that they are all composed of a countless number of parts, each of which is also composed of an infinity of others. So where do you see this unity that directs you in the creation of your design, this unity that you see in your art as an inviolable law, this unity that your edifice must imitate to be beautiful, but which nothing on earth can imitate perfectly, since nothing on earth can be a perfect unity? Now, from that, what follows? Must we not recognize that there is thus above our minds a certain unity that is original, sovereign, eternal, perfect, that is | the essential rule of beauty that you seek in the practice of your art? 8

This is the reasoning of St Augustine in his book on the true religion. From which he concluded, in another work, this great principle, which is not less evident: knowing that it is unity that constitutes so to speak the form and the essence of beauty in all types of beauty. *Omnis porro pulchritudinis forma unitas est.*[8]

I adopt this principle in its full extent. But there is still the question of applying it to visible or optical beauty. One comes to see that there is one which is essential, necessary, and independent of every institution: a geometric beauty, if I may put it thus. It is the idea of this, as St Augustine said further, that shaped *the art of the Creator*: this supreme art, which furnished him with all the models of the marvels of nature, which we are going to consider.

I say, secondly, that there is a natural beauty, dependent on the will of the Creator, but independent of our opinions and tastes. Let us take especial care not to confuse it, as is common, with essential beauty. It is more different than the sky is from the land. Essential beauty, considered in the structure of bodies, is only, so to speak, the basis of natural beauty: a basis, I admit, that is in itself rich and pleasant; but which, for all its pleasantness, would please reason more than the eye, if the author of nature had not taken care to improve it through colours.

It is in their brilliance that he found the way of introducing into the universe a new type of beauty that everywhere offers us a spectacle so brilliant and so diverse. He painted the sky with a blue of which the eye never tires. He covered the earth with greenery formed of myriad flowers,

8 Augustine, *Epistles*, 18.

which appeal to us without fatiguing us. During the day, he spread for us a pure clarity | that charms us by its everywhere uniform distribution. During 9
the night, he presents us with a natural illumination, whose beauty rivals that of the day, perhaps surpassing it, at least in variety and decoration; and if sometimes he draws the curtain over this great theatre of nature by covering it with clouds, it is to offer us, in the different colours that they show, a new object of admiration. In this division of pleasantness, he did not forget the born spectators of these wonders and his power. He has, like a skilled painter, coloured men differently, to make them, in each other's regard, a spectacle still more delightful than the sky and the earth.

That there would be a natural beauty, is thus evident by a single glance at nature. That is type of beauty is independent of our opinions and our tastes, could not possibly be doubted, if all men were the same colour. But the Creator has ordered it otherwise. There are black peoples, and there are white: and each has not failed to take sides according to its self-interest. I have just read the speech of a black person,[9] who without fuss awarded the palm of beauty to the complexion of his nation. There is almost no-one who does not have a favourite colour. Some like green more, others blue, those red, these yellow or violet. And even painters, who must have on this subject the least flexible principles, are divided into several factions over the mixture that forms the true beauty of colours. Let us show that there are some rules in nature, if not to judge these disputes definitively, at least to put them into a state of being amicably settled. One need not go far to find these rules.

We have only to consult the natural judges of visible beauty. What do our eyes tell us? They firmly declare to us | that light is the queen 10
and the mother of colours. Its presence gives birth to them: its approach animates them: its departure enfeebles them: its absence kills them. As she reappears over the horizon, we are instantly struck by the idea of beauty. And even he who is essential beauty believed that he could not define himself by a more pleasant image, in saying: *I am the light.* Light is beautiful on its own basis. Light embellishes all. It is wholly against shadows. Now, of all colours, that which most closely approaches light is white: that which most closely approaches shadow is black. Our first question is thus decided by the voice of nature. And if the orator of the black people would appear in a group of whites, he must resolve himself to serve only as a beauty spot, to embellish the rest by contrast.

May I be permitted to hazard a conjecture here? From this conclusion, which could only be doubted in the land of the Moors or in Ethiopia, could

9 In *le Pour et Contre*, 1736. †André uses the term 'nègre', which literally translates as 'negro'. Perhaps that word would better reflect André's thought. Certainly, the comments in the next paragraph are very offensive to modern eyes.

we not find some favourable opening to judge the trial of other colours? I reduce them all to five primitives: yellow, red, green, blue, and violet. Could we not, I say, take light as the measure of beauty of this kind, giving them each the estimated rank that they deserve, according to how they approach it more or less? From which it follows that yellow would take its place at the head, as the most luminous; red next, then green, blue following, and finally violet, as the darkest. This order of clarity was noted between the colours by the famous Mr Newton,[10] the most original author that we have on this subject, in considering them through the prism, where it is certain that they appear in all their purity and in all their brilliance. Now, I say, what is there more | natural and more reasonable, than measuring their 11
beauty by their brightness?

But after all, gentlemen, I do not want to quarrel with any colour. It suffices me that, independently of our opinions and our tastes, they each have their own singular beauty. It suffices me that they please us entirely naturally, each in the place that the author of nature has chosen for it in the world; blue in the sky, green on the earth, the three other colours in the diverse objects into which they are ordered to adorn our gardens and our countryside. Finally, it suffices me that each in particular is the more beautiful, as it is the more pure, more homogeneous, more uniform; in a word, all the more beautiful in that one can discover there a more sensible image of unity. This is always the principle.

Yet we must admit it: any brilliance of only one colour would soon sate us, if we have only one to consider in the world. The author of nature, in this as in every other thing, took care to prevent our distaste. There are very few simple colours. Mr Newton only counted seven of them: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. There an infinite number of combined shades; I mean, those resulting from different mixtures in taking them two at a time, three at a time, four at a time, etc., etc., further combining the results with one another to thus form new mixtures, which, by the rules of combinations, give us a still greater number *ad infinitum.* Or rather, because it is evident that each of them, whether simple or combined, can have an infinitely range of strength and vivacity, and since those can be mixed together to produce others; can one not say that there is in nature, not only an infinity, but an infinity of infinities of different colours? At least it is certain that after so many centuries of observations, experience | 12
reveals new colour to us every day. Thus one still sees in this infinite variety of colours another sort of beauty, with which the Creator, independently of our opinions and our tastes, has decorated the stage of the universe: and only a ray of light is necessary to discern suddenly so many marvels.

10 Isaac Newton, *Opticks.* London, 1704, 80. †Isaac Newton (1643–1727; OS 1642–1726), British physicist and mathematician.

There is something that still perhaps seems more worthy of attention, because it seems to be a more intelligent, or at least a more easily recognizable art. This is the beauty that results, I not longer say from the mixture of colours, which destroys some to produce others, but from their union and their assembly in composing a heterogeneous whole, where they can be seen distinguished on the same background, each in its specific beauty.

To better understand this new type of visible beauty. which is the object of painting, let us make, along with the masters of the art, two observations.

The first is that, just as in music there are harmonious sounds and discordant sounds, there are in optics both friendly colours and hostile colours: friendly colours, which seem to seek their mutual embellishment; and hostile colours, jealous, so to speak, of each other's beauty, and which seem to fight, as if from fear of being effaced or obscured by their rivals. This is what one naturally assumes, when one considers matching cloths, to see if they go well together.

The second observation is, that there are no colours so friendly that, when put together on the same background, have no need of some other intermediary colour that separates them a little, to prevent their meeting seeming too abrupt; nor are there colours so hostile, that they cannot be reconciled through the mediation of some other, such as by a common friend. There are two essential points, which skilled painters always keep in view, as the perfection of their art.

| *It should be the case,* says a famous author,[11] *that among the well-formed* 13
lights and shadows, one sees in a painting the true shades of nature; that one perceives masses of colours, this amity, or this agreement, that must be found between them, is carefully observed: that flesh should be skillfully matched with clothes, clothes with each other, characters between themselves, landscapes, and distant lands, so that everything appears to the eye so artistically set that the picture seems to have been painted all at once and, so to speak, from the same palette of colours.

That is exactly what one can call the romance of painting. But this is only a romance regarding this art, and in nature a very common phenomenon. All the great ideas of perfect colouring, which we see more in painters' books than in their pictures, we find realized in a million objects that surround us; in the colours of the rainbow, in those of the tail of a peacock, in those of a butterfly basking in the rays of the sun, in the lawns of our gardens, often in a simple flower. Such a profusion of gold, of pearls, of diamonds studded so artistically on a base so fine, in a shape so fair,

11 †André cites this as 'Félibien, *Dial. des peintures*'. This probably refers to André Félibien, *Noms des peintres les plus célèbres et les plus connus anciens et modernes.* Paris, 1679, but I have not been able to confirm this. André Félibien (1619–1695), sieur des Avaux et de Jàvercy, French historian and chronicler of the arts.

in an order so regular, in a perspective so exact, in a lustre so perfect! And in this assembly of colours so different, such sympathy between them! such dexterity in the reconciliation of the greatest enemies! such vivacity in those which dominate! such softness in the imperceptible demotion of those which must only serve as ornaments! and further, between them such attentiveness, if I say say so, to offend neither their friends, nor even their rivals, which play their part, as by a repayment of reciprocal condescension! In a word, such delicacy in the passage from the one to the other! such diversity in the parts! such concord | in the whole! Everything there are 14
distinguished, everything there is a unity. Yes, I defy the most sceptical eyes not to recognize there a beauty independent of our opinions and our tastes.

Let us go further: If in purely material entities there is visible beauty, real and absolute, will there not be in man? Can one seriously doubt it? and would not it even insult him, to compare his beauty with that of any living or non-living being? He carries on his brow, in his eye, in his air, in his bearing, the titles of the empire and of the superiority that the Creator has given him over them in every way. His colours, it is true, are not entirely so lively as those of the objects of which we just spoke, but in compensation, must it not be agreed that they seem incomparably more lively? Can one have eyes, and not see that the soul spreads over the face an air of thought, of feeling, or action, which gives him a new type of beauty unknown to all the rest of the visible world. I would believe that the Author of nature made us to live together in society, since sometimes our heart flatters a little the images that we receive in the sight of each other. But could the reason that is most wary of the illusions of the heart not help seeing beauty in the regularity of the features of a well-proportioned face, in the choice and in the temperament of colours that illuminate these features, in the polish of the surface on which these colours are laid, in the different graces which successively result, according to the different ages of human life, in the tender graces of infancy, in the brilliant graces of youth, in the majestic graces of maturity, in the venerable graces of a noble old age, and principally in this air of life and of expression which raises the same graces, which makes them talk, so to speak, which distinguishes so advantageously a person from his statue and his portrait; finally, which gives the human body a type of spiritual beauty?

| How then is it that there are minds strange enough or stupid enough 15
to philosophize against a natural judgement that so conforms to reason? How are there still sometimes those, in certain groups, who would like to make the idea of beauty depend on education, on prejudice, on caprice, and on the imagination of men? Let us go to the source of the error.

There are indeed three species of beauty that one can call arbitrary or artificial, as you prefer. The philosophers that I speak of have easily

noticed it wherever they have been, at court and in the city, at home and among strangers: a beauty of system and or manner in the practice of the arts, a beauty of fashion or of custom in adornment, even in certain personal charms, that often has no merit other than pleasing by chance those people who set the tone of the world. They have had enough wit to see that there is much that is arbitrary in these ideas of beauty; and thence, without further ado, they concluded that all beauty is thus arbitrary. I do not ask of them what rules of logic they use; ordinarily these gentlemen known well how to reason without them. But it is necessary to show them, by obvious reasons, in what sense one can admit an arbitrary beauty, and in what sense one must not.

I say to them first that it is there in all the arts; and one can not doubt it when one pays attention to the nature of their rules. Those of architecture seem to me the easiest to understand; I will confine myself to the material within the commonest scope.

Architecture has rules of two sorts: first, those founded on the principles of geometry; others, shaped by the particular observations that the masters of the art have made, in different times, about the proportions that are pleasing to the eye by their regularity, true or apparent.

The first are known to be as invariable as the | science that prescribes 16
them. The perpendicularity of the columns that support the edifice, the parallelism of the floors, the symmetry of the corresponding parts, the cleanness and elegance of the design, above all the unity seen at first glance, are architectural beauties ordained by nature, independently of the choice of the architect.

It is not the same for rules of the second species. These are, for example, those that are established to determine the proportions of the parts of an edifice in the five orders of architecture; that, in the Tuscan, the height of the column is seven times the diameter of the base, in the Doric eight, in the Ionic nine, in the Corinthian ten, and in the composite as well; that the columns have a bulge from their base up to one third of their height; that in the other two thirds, they diminish little by little in climbing to the capital; that the column-spacing is at most eight units and at least three; that the height of the portico, of the arcades, of the doors and of the windows are double their width, and several other similar determinations that one can see in books on architecture[12] or in ordinary practices, but that, only being founded on the observations of the eye, which are always a little uncertain, or on often ambiguous examples, are not entirely indispensable rules.

12 Vitruvius, Palladio, Vignola. †Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (c. 75–c. 15 BCE), Roman architect; Andrea Palladio (1508–1580), Italian architect; Giacomo [Jacopo] Barozzi [Barocchio] da Vignola (1507–1573), Italian architect.

We also see that great architects sometimes take the liberty of putting themselves above these rules. They add to them, they break them, they imagine new ones according to the circumstances that determine the first glance. Michelangelo,[13] Palladio, Vignola in Italy, Mansard[14] and de l'Orme[15] in France, did it with a glory that would inspire their successors to imitate their boldness, provided however that in dispensing, like them, with the rules established through usage, they also had as much skill as their master only | to neglect the rules to substitute better or equivalent 17
ones. Thus there is manifestly an arbitrary beauty, a beauty, if I may put it thus, of human creation, a beauty of genius and of system that we can admit in the arts, but always without prejudice to essential beauty, which is a line one must never cross: *Hic murus aheneus esto.*[16]

Permit me, gentlemen, to contradict myself a little in favour of great geniuses? This barrier even, that seems to us so necessary, is perhaps not always and entirely a rigorous law for them. For, without leaving our example, did the most famous architects think of it? Let us judge by their practices. There are those who have been so bold as to permit themselves some licence even regarding certain rules of essential beauty. Carried away by a kind of poetic fury, they have thrown some defects of regularity into even the most ordinary of their works, when they have foreseen either that these little defects give rise to great beauties, or that they make more noticeable those that they planned to make more dominant, or finally that these defects even seem to be beautiful to a greater number of observers, in the place where they know them to be; that is to say that they have made faults to gain glory from redeeming them at a profit. Painting, sculpture, all the arts, I say, even nature itself furnishes us with countless examples of these pleasant irregularities.

We seek the source of the quite common error that makes the idea of beauty dependent on education, caprice, and the institution of men. Here we see it, if I am not mistaken. But give a moment's attention to the short analysis that we are going to make of it.

A beautiful work of art or of nature is presented to our eyes. We are struck by it, we admire it, we find it beautiful. | This idea of beauty, that 18
seizes us on seeing the whole, still follows us in examining the parts. We ordinarily start with the most beautiful, we extend their merit to those that follow; and if we meet one that diverges a little from the rule, we would see it so well accompanied that we assign to it a beauty that it only takes from

13 †Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (1475–1564), Italian sculptor, painter, and architect.

14 †François Mansart (1598–1666), French architect.

15 †Philibert de l'Orme/Delorme (1510–1570), French architect.

16 †Horace, *Epistles*, i.1.60. 'Let this be your brazen wall of defence'.

its neighbours. It is a defect, but a defect so advantageously placed, that we want to do it the favour of not seeing it. Often we go further, we perceive. But the object where it is found is a work of art or of nature. If it is a work of art, one of the most famous, like a Rubens[17] or a Raphael,[18] its defect rather changes in name and in idea, we notice genius. We suspect mystery; nothing further is needed: it is transformed into a master-stroke. And if it is a work of nature, a beautiful face, for example, where we observe some little irregularity, we voluntarily turn this defect into pleasantness. We allow to everything the talent or the good fortune to please. This is the first source of error: let us follow its progress.

It follows that if we meets the same defect in some imitation, though imperfect, of the work or of the person that we admire, the idea of beauty that has been attached to it will immediately wake in the mind. We remember it with pleasure. Before, we had admired this defect in the original through the merit it borrowed from its neighbours; and by virtue of this pleasant remembrance, we still admire it, though isolated in its copy, by force of habit, which precludes reflection.

If to this judgement from habit you oppose reason and rule, you will be instantly opposed by the counterbattery of example and authority. You will be reminded of the masterpiece that you yourself admired with everyone. But you do not care that it is the total of the work that everyone admires, and not | this accessory that that is visibly defective. Anyway, one does 19
not want to distinguish things that would cost too much to untangle: one holds to the first glance that confused everything. In a word, one wants to believe in general that everything is beautiful in that which one esteems, and more beautiful still in what one loves.

I call on those who are wiser than I on this. So much ugliness is diguised as beauty by this way of reasoning that so common among men. By means of it, many people have found grace in many visible defects. It is thus that a narrow forehead, a short nose, small eyes, large lips have become national standards of beauty. First, they were only found bearable, and only in certain people in favour of some pleasing compensation. On the strength of seeing them, they have passed little by little to excusable, then to laudable, and finally, degree by degree, to necessary features of the beauty of the country. I still owe to the prince of true philosophy, to St Augustine,[19] the first idea of this analysis. *Injucunda*, he says in his *On Music*, *quibusdam gradibus appetitui nostro conciliamus, et ea primo tolerabiliter, deinde libenter accipimus.* So much for the beauty that is called personal.

17 †Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), Flemish painter and diplomat.

18 †Raphael [Raffaello Santi] (1483–1520), Italian painter and architect.

19 Augustine, *On Music*, vi.14.

What do we say about fashions? So many arbitrary beauties have been invented to adorn those that have, or to augment those that do not! In Europe, earrings are worn; in the Mogul Empire, nose-rings. In France, hair is powdered, and curled to put it in loops; in Canada it is grown to hang on the shoulders. In the New World, one sees entire peoples who colour their faces green, blue, red, yellow, myriad strange colours; in our old | world, which prides itself on being more elegant, we put on a mask 20
of makeup, painted, in truth, with colours more natural than those of the Americans, but which is nevertheless a mask, and very certainly a mask that would appear to us as ridiculous, if we were not accustomed to see more masks than faces in the world; this proves newly and sensibly the strength of habit in judgements that concern beauty.

I would never finish if I undertook to exhaust the subject; but it is time to come to a conclusion.

Of these infinite differences of opinions and of tastes on visible beauty, the sceptics concluded that there was no rule to judge them. But on going to the source, on examining things by the first principles of good sense, one concludes, on the contrary, not that there is no rule to judge them, but that most men are pleased to judge without a rule. We have seen that there is one; that is is even easy to recognize it; that there are only three types of beauty to distinguish in general: an essential beauty, a natural beauty, an artificial or imaginary beauty. But, to make it clearer still, arbitrary beauty would have to be divided further into several species: a beauty of genius, a beauty of taste, a beauty of pure caprice. A beauty of genius, founded on a knowledge of essential beauty, extended enough to form a particular system in the application of general rules; this we admit in the arts. A beauty of taste, founded on a clear feeling for natural beauty; this we can admit in fashion with all the restrictions demanded by modesty and decency. Finally, a beauty of pure caprice, which, being founded on nothing, must not be admitted anywhere, except perhaps in the theatre of Comedy.

Do not be surprised, gentlemen, if I pass so rapidly over this last detail; I know that to minds as incisive as yours, it suffices to show the principles from a distance. | Give me only the grace of putting each in 21
its natural place: you will soon have perceived all the consequences, and you will effortlessly make all the pleasant applications of it to all types of visible beauty that surround us in the world.

Second Discourse

On beauty in morals

2

Gentlemen,

The beauty of the body, of which I have had the honour of speaking to you in the first discourse on beauty, is a brilliant quality that everyone naturally admires, that each would like to possess, but that it is in the power of no-one either to acquire for himself, or to keep for long: it is nature alone that gives it and takes it away as it pleases. The majority of the human species, which regards it as its greatest merit, recognizes in it, if not vanity, at least fragility. Sickness disfigures it, grief tarnishes it, too lively an air, too strong a diet, an excess of work or of indolence, a thousand accidents degrade it, and after a small number of beautiful days — what is called one's springtime — unpitying age brings to one, like to flowers, a rapid decline that finally wins, totally and irreversibly.

Thus this is not the type of beauty of which I have to speak to you today: a type of beauty for which Useless wishing never happens: we can always acquire it for our own, keep it as long as we please, recover it when we have lost it, even add to it each day some new degree of perfection. In these traits, one doubtless recognizes beauty in morals. This is the richest ornament with which we can | embellish the beauty of the body. It lifts the 22
graces, it covers the defects, it can repair breaches, it can even replace loss or total deprivation: a Socrates[1] among the Greeks, a Claranus[2] among the Romans, a Pellisson[3] among us, whom the misfortunes of nature did not prevent from being the delights of their age, are illustrious witnesses to this. Beauty in morals is, to speak properly, the only true merit of man, since it is one of the heart, the only merit that should be his choice, the one that

1 †Socrates [*Σωκράτης*] (c. 469–399 BCE), Greek philosopher. Socrates was reputedly physically unattractive.

2 †Claranus was a physically deformed friend of Seneca. See Seneca the Younger, ***Epistulae morales ad Lucilium***, 66. 'A great man can spring from a hovel; so can a beautiful and great soul from an ugly and insignificant body.' Lucius Annaeus Seneca [Seneca the Younger] (c. 3 BCE–65 CE), Roman philosopher, author, and statesman.

3 †Paul Pellisson-Fontanier (1624–1693), French author. Pellisson was imprisoned in the Bastille from 1661 to 1666 following the arrest of Nicolas Fouquet, the French minister of finance, to whom he was secretary. During his imprisonment, he wrote two treatises defending Fouquet.

should be truly his, and of which we can say that he is in any way the author; finally it is a beauty that age does not affect, that illnesses do not tarnish, and that no accident can wrest away despite us. May I, gentlemen, suggest more powerful considerations in order to obtain a favourable attention? I will start with the most common notions.

All reasonable men agree without argument that the beauty in morals, in sentiments, in manners, and in practices supposes a law that is the rule; that this rule of beauty in morals is a certain order that is found between the objects of our ideas, according to which they are more or less perfect; that this order of objects gives us, in the different degrees of perfection that distinguish them, the natural measure of esteem and of love, of the sentiments of the heart and of the effective regards that we must have for them; in a word, that the idea of order necessarily enters into the notion of moral beauty.

There are doubtless none that satisfy at first glance. I mean, once again, that it is evident that, in morals, as in physical appearance, it is order that is always the foundation of beauty. I know of only one type of man in the world who could doubt this; those who, not having morals, would like also that there were no morals. But to see that they make themselves blinder than they can be, we only have to develop our principle, first clarifying | 23 the idea of order, after which we will abandon ourselves to the string of consequences to decide all the questions on beauty that we undertake to explain.

I distinguish, with respect to morals, three species of order that are the rule; an essential order, absolute and independent of any institution, even divine; a natural order, independent of our opinions and our tastes, but which essentially depends on the will of the Creator; finally, a civil and political order, instituted by the consent of men to maintain States and individuals in their natural or acquired rights.

This is a large territory, gentlemen, through which I propose that you walk with me to the various lands. I know that it costs some effort to go so far; but consider, please, that it is to the land of Beauty that I call you, and believe that I will not disorient you.

First, let us leave for a moment this material and mundane world, to transport ourselves into the region of minds, or, as St Augustine said, into the intelligible world, which is the resting-place of light and truth. There, if only we pay attention to our primitive ideas, we will see all the beings that we know, God, the created mind, the material, each placed in the rank that marks in the world its degree of essence and of perfection; God at the head, as the infinite and supreme Being; the created mind immediately below, as his first subject, by its essential prerogative of knowing itself, and by its power to lift itself to its author; the material in the last rank, as a blind and purely passive substance, capable of receiving being, but incapable of

feeling it. In view of this light, I ask, can one doubt for a moment that this is the true order of the three diverse beings that contain all the objects of our knowledge? can one doubt that this order is essential, immutable, and necessary, like the essence itself of these objects? can one doubt that this | 24 immutable and necessary order that reigns between objects and our ideas, must also reign in the judgements that we make of them? And if only there were in the world minds that were, I do not say incisive, but attentive to the first principles of reason, would I be even wrong to insist for so long on a truth that demonstrates itself solely by the understanding of terms?

Now, from there I draw in a few words all the rules of beauty in morals: that the Supreme Being must thus have the supreme rank in our esteem, in our love, in our commitment; that we must give to the mind priority over the body; and that if these two beings, despite the infinite distance that separates them, find themselves united together to make a single whole, it is necessary that the body should submit to the mind, as to its natural superior, or, if I may be allowed this expression, it is necessary that the mind considers itself in the body like a governor of a place, to which it must attend at all the hours of the day or night, to the sovereign who entrusted it to him. Here is the primitive order, which the senses do not know, but which reason cannot be ignorant of: an essentially just order, since it establishes each being in its essential rank; hence an eternal, absolute, immutable order, and, we do not fear to add, independent of every institution, even divine, and in this, far from lacking the respect that we owe to the Supreme Being, we give him, on the contrary, the clearest testimony, since it is obvious that we cannot keep him in his rank and rights without maintaining the order that gives them to him in the possession of his independence and his absolute immutability.

Thus, manifestly, we have in morals a fixed point, to which we must relate everything else: the essential order that we perceive between the three different objects of our knowledge: God, the mind, and the body; this is the first rule of beauty in morals. We have said that the second is the natural order; | I mean this beautiful order that the Creator has established 25 among men. Let us see in what way.

Up to now, gentlemen, I have only spoken about the mind, in presenting to you the primitive ideas of reason on moral beauty; I am going to speak about the heart, reminding you of the first feelings of nature, and as, doubtless, there is no one in this company who has not did the justice of being interested in it, I trust that at this point you will listen to me still better, or at least more agreeably than when we were in that intelligible world, which is not too common for men; I thus return to the sensible.

It is evident that all men are, in their nature, perfectly equal, and, consequently, that if the Creator had formed them all together, independently of each other, there would be between them no natural subordination; there

would be, under this hypothesis, neither superiors nor inferiors. There would perhaps be friends, but neither subjects, nor masters, nor rank, nor legitimate authority. We would all be on a perfect level of status, and each of us would conduct ourselves, separately, like a little isolated State, free and independent, but which has also the misfortune of seeing itself a stranger to the rest of the world. What did he thus do to put among us a coherent order that, without destroying our natural equality, nevertheless subordinated us to one another by an effective law?

One admires with reason the order that reigns in the heavens, in the majestic and uniform course of the fixed stars, which hide so much speed under the guise of repose; in the free march of the planets, which, despite the inseparable errors of a vagabond course, never leave their ranks in even their greatest irregularities. But, if I am permitted to say it, in all these marvels of the world, so worthy of our admiration, nothing compares to the order that the Creator has established among men, and to the way that he, in his wisdom, | found to maintain it, despite the obstacle of our 26
natural equality. This is by submitting us to one another by the sweetest, strongest, and most easily recognizable law, which is that of blood and feeling. One only discovers the basis of things by examining them at their birth. Let us return to our origin.

The most ancient of histories, which is also the most incontestable, teaches[4] us that God formed the first man to be, after him, the common father of all mankind; this is the principle of the order that we call natural. For, thenceforth, one necessarily sees ranks established among men: a father; hence a master, a king, but whose rule is softened by paternal tenderness: there are children; hence subjects, but whose subjection is tempered by the sweetness of filial affection: they are not born to him all together, but successively; hence a right of primogeniture, and in general that of age that inspires us to respect and veneration: these children give him others; hence distinguished families, but all united among themselves by the gentle names of brothers, sisters, kin: these families multiply; hence people gather under different chiefs, but all still subordinated to one, who, being their common father, remains their natural king: these peoples being multiplied further in his life and under his reign, which lasted nine hundred years, finally cover the whole surface of the Earth; hence scattered men: some remain on dry land, while others go to populate the islands of the sea by founding colonies.

Yes, men are scattered, but they are not disunited; a secret feeling, impressed in their soul by nature's own hands, brings them all together despite the distance of places. The history of our first origin is lost in the

4 Genesis 1:27. †'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.'

memories of most peoples; but the | tradition is kept in our hearts. We find 27
it among the barbarians as among civilized nations, and when we go to their homes, or they come to ours, we profoundly feel, particularly in our need or in theirs, that we cannot fail to recognize them as our brothers. This is not a lesson that we learnt from the philosophers: this is not a law that we have received from lawgivers. Before there were philosophers, there were men, and before there were lawgivers, there was a law of humanity, a natural intimate feeling that united us all. This is a heritage that we received at birth from the hearts of our forefathers, and that our blood carries, imprinted, so to speak, in all its substance. The frenzy of debauchery sometimes ignores it, I admit; stupidity lulls and soothes it; disorder of the passions stifles it for a time; the pettiness of certain souls restrains it within the bounds of a family, a canton, a province, in what is called a country. But, I swear here to all attentive minds, the first lucid moment of reason makes the most libertine recognize it; the first awakening from stupidity reveals it to minds that are the most closed to everything else; the first calm of the passions gives it life and its natural vivacity; the first liberty that we give our heart to proceed according to its desires lets it embraces all human nature. I also find it wherever there are men; in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in the old and in the new world. I ask for their news, like from a part of my family; what is their situation, their way of living, their religion, their laws, their morals. I distinguish neither European, nor Asian, nor Greek, nor barbarian, nor French, nor Roman. This portion of material that I call my body, is only of a country: everywhere my heart sees compatriots, or rather kinfolk, to whom, in truth, I do not know what degree of blood connects me, but with whom I truly feel that I cannot ignore consanguinity.

| Besides, gentlemen, this is not a feeling that is specific to me. I 28
would not blush, although I admit that my solitude would make me afraid. But I have nothing to fear: this is the general feeling of the human heart, which is founded on the primitive order of nature, and which declares itself by myriad luminous features in all the histories. It is known that Socrates, the wisest of the Greeks, regarded the whole world as his country, because he saw men everywhere. It is known that Seneca, the prince of Roman philosophy, wanted[5] us to look upon all the peoples of the world as our fellow citizens. Other philosophers ask still more of us; they want us to regard the whole of mankind as one and the same family. What must still be done to convince the most sceptical minds, that there is in every heart a general feeling of humanity, independent of education, of opinion, of all the arbitrary institutions of men? Would they like us to show them all peoples gathered together, so that they can believe it? we have enough to satisfy them, or we have at least the equivalent of the proof that they can

5 Seneca the Younger, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, ch. 3.

ask of us. This beautiful feeling, which embraces all men in the heart of each individual man, has indeed been solemnly recognized in a famous assembly that we can consider the states-general[6] of human nature.

St Augustine relates, on the faith of history, that the first time that this beautiful verse of Terence[7] was heard on the stage in Rome: *Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto*,[8] 'I am a human; nothing human is alien to me.':[9] it produced universal applause in the amphitheatre. There was not a single man in so numerous an assembly, composed of Romans and envoys of all the nations already subject | or allied to their empire, who did 29
not seem sensibly touched, softened, pierced. Now, what do we learn from an agreement so unanimous between peoples otherwise so little agreed, so different in opinion, in morals, in education, in interests? nay, many being secret enemies, some even declared? Is this not evidently the cry of nature, which, on hearing the actor in this momentary audience that each gave to reason, suspended all the disputes to join with the the actor in pronouncing solemnly this beautiful maxim, that every man is our kinsman, our blood, our brother. At this moment, gentlemen, doubtless your heart also hears this cry of nature, which gives such glorious testimony to the wisdom of its author; or it someone in the company does not hear it, I will allow him to interrupt me to make his public confession, and after that, perhaps, I will tell him that he is deaf.

The conclusion by evident consequence is that, just as there is in our minds an order of ideas that is the rule of our essential duties regarding the three types of being that we know of in the universe, there is also in our hearts an order of feelings, which is the rule of our natural duties regarding other human beings, according to the different degrees of union or affinity that Providence has given us with them.

I know, gentlemen, that these first feelings of nature, however beautiful, however delicious even, however irremovable from our heart, nevertheless encounters cruel enemies to fight; I mean the rebellious passions that seem born for the misfortune of mankind. This is a contradiction, but one which is only too real. All human passions are naturally misanthropic, and only tend, if one lets them, to the total destruction of the man. Anger wants his life, ambition his liberty, avarice his goods, envy his merit or his success; the basest of all, so low that I dare not name it, | his honour and his virtue. 30

6 †The legislative assembly of France. It wielded no power over the king, and did not meet at all from 1614 until 1789, the eve of the revolution.

7 †Publius Terentius Afer (c. 190–159 BCE), Roman playwright.

8 Terence, *Heauton Timorumenos*, i.1.77.

9 †This is an accepted direct translation of the Latin. André's French translation is comparatively unwieldy, its literal English equivalent being: 'I am a man, and I can regard neither the person of a man, not his interests, as foreign'.

A brake upon licence is thus needed: the rights of the essential order and the natural order must be armed against the fury of their attacks. This is what is done in opposing to them the barrier of civil and political order: this is the third rule of beauty in morals, whose idea it remains for us to clarify.

We have only to direct our eyes to the map of the moral world to discover all over the world a surprising inequality in human status: some are immediately ordained by the providence of the Creator; some great and some less, some rich and some poor, uniquely by the event of their birth: others established by the prudence of lawgivers, to maintain each in his rights and his duties; princes, magistrates, officers of every type, appointed by the laws, these to watch, those to command, others to obey: this is what we understand by civil and political order.

It is not a question of justifying it to those who have the misfortune to be ill-content with their share: it is never permitted to ask God the reason for his ordinances, and it is no longer the time to ask it of men. The order is established, we will not change it, and we should sooner submit ourselves to it than complain of it. But further, without asking either God or men the reason for their conduct, it is not difficult to prove that, in the present state of human nature, this unequal distribution of goods and of ranks was absolutely necessary, and that there thus even results in the universe a type of beauty that compensates, perhaps with interest, for the apparent disorder of the inequality of the shares.

The proof is obvious that this inequality was a necessary consequence of the present state of human nature. If today you made the most equal and most geometric division between men of goods and land, the inequality will return tomorrow by the violence of some or by the poor | economy of 31
others. One would have to be perfectly ignorant of the world to doubt it. Similarly, if today you put today all men on a perfect level of ranks, then this level, the theory of which seems so agreeable, would tomorrow be seen to have been reverted by the spirit of domination, which seizes the strongest to raise them above of the weakest; or by the spirit of adulation, which always prostrates the weakest at the feet of the strongest. Are other proofs necessary than the misfortunes of States that fall into anarchy through the disregard of the established order by the laws? Such confusion! such tyranny under the name of protection of the people! such servitude under the name of liberty! It has not been very long since there was an example of it that shook all Europe.[10] Since geometric equality is thus not being able to subsist between men, neither in goods, not in ranks, does not our reason tell us that, in our own interest, and in that of our fellow citizens, which we must never separate from ours, except to make us mutually happy,

10 †André is probably alluding the English Civil War and its aftermath.

it is necessary to be content with this type of moral equality, which consists in maintaining each in his rights, in his hereditary or acquired state, in his land, in his house, in his natural liberty, but also in the necessary subordination to maintain others? This is how the laws make everyone equal. Can we wisely wish to be more equal?

Now, here is the masterwork of the civil and political order. It replaces the equality of status by the equity of laws. It was not possible to put them on a level. A balance was found, to put them at least in a type of equilibrium; and thence did we not see born in civil society so many advantages, even so many pleasantnesses and beauties! This is why it is still important to our happiness to be convinced of it.

Before laws had established an order among men, what was the state of the world? Violence, rapine, | murder. Let us list all the ravages that can 32
be produced by an army of unchained passions. No assurance of life, no safeguard for goods, no sanctuary for honour. Strength, which has given the lion empire over the animals, gave it also over men to the first Nimrod who felt himself powerful enough to subjugate them; this is a fact attested by all sacred and profane histories. But here is a barrier that arrests the course of disorder. As soon as men had invented the remedy of laws to give strength to reason; when, to implemented them, they armed with the power of the sword some supreme magistrate: here a king, there a senate, there a popular council, for I do not decide between the diverse forms of government; in a word, when the civil order was established to reëstablish in it rights the order of nature, such a happy change of scene! Subordination succeeds to independence, rule to confusion, justice to strength, public security to general worry, occasional rest to continual alarms, all becomes tranquil under the protection of the laws. Under this guarantee, we can without fear voyage to all parts of the habitable world; to foreign countries, on the trust of the law of the people; and in our own, on the trust of the royal ordinances; they are our guards during the day, our sentinels during the night, our loyal escorts at every time and in every place. Wherever I go in the kingdom I see the sceptre of my king, which guards my route, which holds all in check, all at peace: the labourers in the countryside, the artisans in the towns, the merchants at sea, travellers in the forests; it seems that all passions are disarmed. The heart can still secretly experience some rebellious impulses; but the arms, restrained by fear, no longer dare do what they please. Like those torrents that run between mountains, they must confine themselves within their bounds, or if there is someone who still unhappily breaches | the dyke of the laws, there is nudge from the 33
sceptre that instantly makes him return to his course to no longer distress anywhere but his own terrain, or at least not to cause any considerable damage outside.

But this is only the exterior of the civil and political order; let us

penetrate to the interior. What is the secret spring that so constantly maintains this order in a machine as complex as a State, and in so great a number of so different States, spread over the world; some stronger, some others weaker; these monarchical, those republican; all naturally satisfied with their share, provided that they are left to enjoy in peace the goods that nature or practice have brought to them? It is one of the marvels of Providence, necessary to prevent nations from confounding themselves or destroying themselves; a marvel all the more admirable in that, following the diaspora of peoples, we see it subsisting everywhere without effort: I mean love of country; a love as natural as the love of ourselves and of our parents, which is born in us by instinct, but which is confirmed by reason; which increases by custom, but which is strengthened by reflection; which is first established by interest, but which is supported by honour and by virtue; which is kindled so to speak by zeal for its own home, but which catches fire by that of the churches; which thus unites all divine and human motives to link us inseparably under the most touching ideas: kings to their people, as to their children, people to their kings, as to their fathers; the people among themselves, as children of a single family. For, indeed, are these not the ideas that the word 'patriot'[11] presents to us? One father, children, one united family under the same paternal authority: it needed no less to keep each State in its own bounds, to keep between themselves this noble equilibrium, that the political human would seek in vain, if nature | did not furnish him with the necessary spring and fulcrum 34
in love of country; finally, to keep each people attached to the place of its birth, though often with a very bad share in the goods of life; to its form of government, though often very hard; to its laws and to its customs, though often very inconvenient; it needs no less, I say, to produce in the universe all these miracles of constancy. But also, gentlemen, you will admit to me that it needs no more to show to any attentive mind that by this the civil order, though arbitrary in an infinite number of its regulations, nevertheless fits the natural order, or rather the civil order, to deserve this name, must not be anything other than the natural order armed by the strength of the supreme power to compel obedience.

Let us conclude our three preliminaries in a few words. Just as there is an order of eternal ideas that must rule the judgements that we make of objects considered in themselves by their absolute merit, and an order of natural feelings that must rule our affections for other men, through the merit, if I may say so, of the blood that unites us in a common root, there is also a certain order of civil regards that must rule our external duties

11 †André uses the French word *patrie*, or homeland. Both 'patriot' and *patrie* derive from the Greek *πάτριος* [*pátrios*] 'of one's fathers' and *πατριά* [*patriá*] 'clan', which in turn derive from *πατήρ* [*patér*] 'father'.

through the merit of rank or of the status or the place of people with whom we have to live or to treat in the world.

These principles supposed, we have but to follow, as we have promised, the course of their consequences to find there the answer to all the question of moral beauty; in what does it consist? how many types are there? what is the particular character that distinguishes each one? and, in general, what is the precise form of beauty in morals?

In what does it consist? We see first that it is in a constant, full and, entire conformity of the heart with all the types of order that we have distinguished.

How many types are there? We have distinguished three | species 35
of order: an essential order, a natural order, a civil order; from which I deduce three types of moral beauty, an essential moral beauty, a natural moral beauty, a civil moral beauty.

What is the particular character that distinguishes them? It is still evident that these three types of moral beauty must each be defined by the species of order than names it. Essential moral beauty, by conformity of the heart with essential order, which is the universal law of all intelligences; natural moral beauty, by conformity of the heart with natural order, which is the general law of all human nature; civil moral beauty, by conformity of the heart with the civil order, which is the common law of all peoples united in single body of city or state.

I suppose, gentlemen, that the general principles that we first established, are still familiar enough for you to see there immediately the proof of my answers to the three first proposed questions. The last, which is most subtle, demands a deeper examination. It concerns knowing the precise form of moral beauty. I mean, to put the matter in its true light, what, in morals, in feelings, in manners, in practices, constitutes true honesty, true decency, true sublimity, true gracefulness, in a word, the true moral beauty of man?

To satisfy every kind of mind, I found my answer, as in the first discourse, upon a respectable authority. It is unity, says St Augustine, that is the true form of beauty in all types of beauty. *Omnis porro pulchritudinis forma unitas est.*[12] We have already adopted this principle in its full extent: we believe we have sufficiently demonstrated it for visible beauty; let us apply it to moral beauty.

| One can consider man in two states: alone or in society. Everywhere, 36
he must have what are called morals. Let us see in what sense it is true to say that, in the moral order as in the physical order, it is always a type of unity that is the essential form of beauty.

When I say that man can be considered alone, I do not pretend that,

12 Augustine, *Epistles*, 18.

in this state, he would be absolutely without society. In any solitude in which we could be, we always have to live with God and with ourselves; that is to say that, in the darkest and most isolated retreat, we always have a master to content, an empire to govern under his orders, a state to civilize, subjects to reduce; in a word, a people of passions to put to reason. This is not being without company: it is having too much. And the author who said that man is never more lonely than when he is alone has perhaps said more than he wanted to say; for instead of beautiful thoughts, with which one supposes that he maintains himself in solitude, what is his most ordinary company? A bizarre and imperious imagination that wants to reign over his mind; rebellious senses, that undertake to govern his reason; unruly moods that subjugate him in turn; needs that always cry famine; desires still more restless than his needs; fantastic ideas of glory or happiness, that multiply *ad infinitum* both his needs and his desires; so many secret enemies, so many contrary parts that divide him, and which divide themselves so each can take its side. Must one be surprised that the majority of men seek to avoid it with so much care? they cannot return without finding war, sedition, revolt, without seeing there all the horrors and all the deformity of a State armed against itself.

Do you want to replace this monster of ugliness with the idea of beauty? Put order into this confused multitude of hostile feelings; so that reason commands the soul; that | the soul receives the law and gives it to 37
the body; that the body, tamely, never does but obey without complaint, or at least without revolt. You will immediately reëstablish subordination in all the faculties of man, in his affections, in his sentiments; subordination will put there accord, accord decency, and the collective whole will thus find itself reduced to a type of unity wherein nothing contradicts and nothing denies. Now, by the principles of simple common sense, is there not there, in the morals of man considered alone, what must be called great, noble, sublime, beautiful; reigning over itself under the empire of eternal reason, which is a unity and that united everything?

Let us follow man in society. Is it not evident that unity must still create the true beauty of his morals there? Should his discourses be always in accord with his thought, his conduct with his maxims, his maxims with good sense, his air and his manners with his state, with his birth, with his age, with the place that he takes in the world; what esteem do we not conceive of his person? All there pleases, for all there agrees; all there pleases, for all there is united. And for the opposite reason, what contempt do we not feel arising, without regard to rank, or to birth, or even sometimes to personal merit, on seeing those people who always seem to contrast and to oppose themselves? When we see, for example, a cavalier air in a man of the church, an air of the soldier in a lawyer, an air of the magistrate in a swordsman, an air of the village in a courtesan, an air of the

court in a hermit, an air of Cato[13] in a young man, an air of a *petit-maître*[14] in an old man; in a word, a masked air on a face. One cannot prevent oneself laughing at it. Why? Because we were seeking one man, and we have found two with the same head, and always two men who do not agree. It is ridiculous; an odd combination that is always diametrically opposed to | beauty in morals. It is perhaps not impossible to have good morals with 38
this defect; but it is certain that one cannot have beautiful ones while the contrariness of the person and the character breaks, so to speak, the unity of the man by their indecent opposition: this is an incontestable principle of good sense.

I turn from manners to ways. Is it not still by this rule of unity, which is necessary everywhere for the beauty of morals, that we naturally measure esteem or contempt, love or hate, praise or blame for the diverse conduct that we see adopted by men in society? For, only to suggest some very common examples, why does justice, which, excepting no-one, gives to each his rights, appear to us so beautiful a virtue? It is because, in thus judging all statuses by the equity of the same law, it makes us pleasantly remember that we are all equal, all of one nature. Why, on the contrary, does an unjust and iniquitous proceeding seem to us so revolting? It breaks this bond of equity that unites all of us in spite of distance and our fortunes. Why is moderation so generally esteemed in the world? It is because it makes us see men who like society more than themselves. Why, on the contrary, are intolerant and quick-tempered moods everywhere held in horror? They are always ready to make a schism with all the world. Why are we so charmed by politeness of the great who know, through goodness, how to descend to next to the lesser? It is because it testifies to the unity of nature. Why, on the contrary, does one have so much contempt for the pride of some new nobles, who, just out of the plebeians, already believe themselves in the ranks of the demigods? It is because by this they seem to renounce their communion with the human race. Why does amity between kin offer us so pleasant an idea? It is that we love to see the natural union of blood ratified by the choice of the heart. Why, | on the contrary, does one 39
take for monsters, hostile brothers, ungrateful children, unnatural parents? It is that nature cannot, without horror, see the disunity of hearts where the same blood flows. Why has every era given so much praise to lovers of country, to a Maccabee[15] who sacrifices himself for the liberty of his people,

13 †Given that André is contrasting 'an air of Cato' with that of 'a young man', he most likely refers to Cato the Elder: Marcus Porcius Cato (234–149 BCE), Roman statesman.

14 †Literally, a 'minor master'; figuratively, a fop or young man who pretentiously assumes a greater dignity that he merits. The term contrasts *grand-maître*, or 'great master', which described a true dignitary.

15 †Judah Maccabee [יהודה המכבי] (*fl.* 167–160 BCE), Jewish soldier who led a revolt against the Seleucid empire and its backing of Hellenized Jews. He died at the Battle of Elasa in

to a Codrus[16] and a Decius[17] who go to their deaths for the salvation of their armies. They maintained, in dying, the unity of the body of which they had the honour to be members. Why, on the contrary, do we detest tyrant kings, muddled ministers, everyone in party and faction? They tear a body whose integrity they should maintain at the expense of their own life. Why, in the very name of the peace that our great monarch has just obtained for us,[18] do we see joy spread everywhere? For it announces to us union and concord. But, on the contrary, why does the most just war always seem to us so terrible an evil? For it breaks the unity of mankind.

It would be easy for me to push this induction further, by citing all the judgements of nature one after another, in order to demonstrate the great principle that we have adopted from St Augustine: *That in morals, as in physical appearance, it is always a species of unity that constitutes the form of beauty.* But I believe I have said enough, and I finish by gathering all the features of moral beauty into a sensible painting that I borrow from an ancient philosopher, in order to show that all that I have said loudest does not go beyond the lights of natural reason. Seneca is easily recognized in his manner of painting, which is strong, lively, noble, bold, which goes sometimes beyond the goal, but which is easy to bring back.

Do we want, he said, to remove ourselves from this baseness of morals so common in the world?[19] Let us first elevate our ideas. | Let us consider 40
ourselves in the universe as inhabiting two great republics: one is immense and truly public, namely that which embraces all sociable beings, God and men; the other is more restricted in its sphere, namely that where Providence has so to speak inscribed and incorporated us by the type of our birth: *Duas res publicas animo complectamur, alteram magnam et vere*

160 BCE, having refused advice to withdraw despite the Seleucid army's tenfold numerical superiority, but his death stirred his faction to renewed resistance.

16 †Codrus [*Κόδρος*] (reigned c. 1089–c. 1068 BCE), last of the semi-mythical Kings of Athens. The oracle at Delphi assured the Dorians that their invasion of Athens would succeed as long as Codrus himself was not harmed. When Codrus heard this, he secretly went to the Dorian army and goaded a group of soldiers into killing him. When the Dorians realized whom they had killed, they abandoned their invasion.

17 †Referring to two Roman consuls, father and son, who sacrificed themselves to ensure Roman victories in separate battles forty-five years apart. They were both named Publius Decius Mus. The father was consul in 340 BCE. Livy, *Ab urbe condita libri*, viii.9 tells during the Battle of Vesuvius, when the Roman army began to falter, he charged alone into the Latin lines, intimidating the enemy. Even after being killed, the Latins would not approach his body. This created a weak spot in their position that the Romans attacked. The son was consul in 312, 308, 297, and 295 BCE. Ibid., x.28 relates that he imitated his fathers example during the Battle of Sentinum.

18 In 1736. †André refers to the effective end of the War of the Polish Succession, although the formal end only came with the Treaty of Vienna in 1738.

19 Seneca the Younger, *De Otio*, 4.1.

publicam, qua Dii atque homines continentur;[20] *alteram, cui nos adscripsit condicio nascendi.* It is from this point of view that all the order of my duties presents itself to my heart in the most lovable form: I see them, I want to follow them. And first, regarding this universal republic, which embraces all sociable beings, with God at its head, I henceforth want to think ceaselessly of it above me, inside me, and everywhere at my sides, watching night and day over my thoughts, over my speech, over all my steps. *Præsides Deos hos supra me, circaque me, stare factorum dictorumque censores.*[21] In the general republic of men, I will never forget that I am born for them, even giving thanks to the Author of nature for such a glorious destiny of having made me for everyone, and everyone for me. *Ego sic vivam, quasi me sciam aliis natum, et naturæ rerum hoc nomine gratias agam.*[22] *unum me donavit omnibus; uni mihi omnes.*[23] In the particular republic where Providence has placed me in the world, I will have nothing that is not also my fellow citizens'. Without ambition, without envy, I will go to their lands in in fullness with the same pleasure as my own, and I will always regard mine as a kind of commons that I only reserve to run it for their benefit. *Ego terras omnes tanquam meas videbo, meas tanquam omnium.*[24] Particularly on guard against all spirit of clique, of sect, or of party, I will never espouse without reserve, either the interests, or the sentiments of | any society, still 41
less of any particular person. To be thus attached to one to the exclusion of others, is neither union not concord, it is faction and cabal. *Sententiam si quis unius sequitur, non id vitæ, sed factionis est.*[25] In the ordinary commerce of civil life, sensible to amity, incapable of hate, obliging to my friends, I will always be ready to take the first step, either to unite us more closely or to reunite us sooner. *Ego amicis jucundus, inimicis mitis et facilis, exorabor antequam roger.*[26] In the most secret part of my home, I will look upon all that I do with the eyes of my conscience, as if having the whole public as spectators. *Populo teste fieri credam quidquid me conscio faciam.*[27] Master

20 †André silently omits *in qua non ad hunc angulum respicimus aut ad illum, sed terminos civitatis nostrae cum sole metimur.*

21 Seneca the Younger, *De Vita Beata*, 20.5. †'[The] rulers are the gods and that they abide above me and around me, the censors of my words and deeds.' (Loeb translation)

22 †André silently omits *quo enim melius genere negotium meum agere potuit?*

23 †Seneca the Younger, *De Vita Beata*, 20.3–4. 'As for me, I shall always live as if I were aware that I had been born for service to others, and on this account I shall render my thanks to Nature; for how could she better have served my interest?' (Loeb translation)

24 †Ibid., 20.3. 'As for me, I shall view all the lands as my own, my own as belonging to all others.' (Loeb translation)

25 Seneca the Younger, *De Otio*, 3.1. †André misquotes: *vitæ* should be *curia.*

26 †Seneca the Younger, *De Vita Beata*, 20.5. 'I shall be agreeable to my friends, to my enemies mild and indulgent.' (Loeb translation)

27 †Ibid., 20.4. 'Whatever I shall do when I alone am witness I shall count as done beneath

of my senses, I will guard myself from sharing with them the empire of my heart. Am I thus born to be the slave of my body? *Major sum, et ad majora genitus, quam ut mancipium sim corporis mei.*[28] In the unfortunate necessity of keeping this rebellious subject, I will think less of satisfying these desires than of appeasing them, and never of gratifying them. *Edendi erit bibendique finis desideria naturæ restinguere, non implere.*[29] Hardworking and indefatigable, I will submit to the greatest tasks, in supporting my body's weakness with my courage. *Laboribus, quanticumque erunt, parebo, animo fulciens corpus.*[30] And when Providence will come to collect the life that it gave me, I will try, though the good usage of its gifts, to return it better than I received it, in calling on the whole universe to testify that if I have not been virtuous, I have at least loved virtue; that I have filled my days with useful occupations, and that, in keeping my liberty, I have always had care to respect that of others. *Quandoque autem natura spiritum repetet, testatus exibo, bonam me conscientiam amasse, bona studia: nullius per me libertatem imminutam, minime meam.*[31]

| This is, gentlemen, the idea of beauty in morals of a philosopher who 42
had as his guide only natural good sense, and who was still very shrouded by the shadows of his era. What must be ours, with our lights that are infinitely superior than those of the pagan philosopher? But in the end, I will ask, who can fulfil this great idea? I will be permitted to answer that it suffices me to have proved that moral beauty is a conquest proposed to everyone by the Author of nature. Easiness or difficulty is not relevant: we must each undertake it in person, all together. The order is given, the law is general; and while it could have exceptions, you will admit, gentlemen, that there would be none for an academy of literature, to which nothing is more agreeable than being at the same time an academy of good morals.

the gaze of the public.' (Loeb translation)

28 The Younger, *Epistulae*, lxv.21. †'No, I am above such an existence; I was born to a greater destiny than to be a mere chattel of my body.'

29 Seneca the Younger, *De Vita Beata*, 20.5. 'In eating and drinking my aim shall be to quench the desires of Nature, not to fill and empty my belly.' (Loeb translation)

30 †Ibid., 20.3. 'As for me, I shall submit to all hardships, no matter how great they be, staying my body by the spirit.' (Loeb translation)

31 †Ibid., 20.6. 'And whenever Nature demands back my breath, or my reason releases it, I shall depart, bearing witness that I have loved a good conscience and all good endeavor, that I have been guilty of nothing that impaired the liberty of any man, lease of all my own.' (Loeb translation)

On beauty in works of the mind 3

Gentlemen,

After beauty in morals, about which I had the honour of talking to you in the preceding discourse, there is no subject more worthy of the attention of an academy than that to which the order of the materials naturally guides me today; I mean beauty in works of the mind. You know, gentlemen, that it is there that the public awaits you. Mediocrity can be tolerated in other people who wander talking or writing, particularly in certain genres and certain circumstances. They are only asked for the good and the sound in a discourse on business, in a pleading, in a sermon in front of the people, in a necessary justification, in a journal, in a memoir, and provided that they show | there palpable defects of style or language, 43
all the rest can be ignored without difficulty; more is asked of an academic. This title, which distinguishes a man from the crowd of lettered people, is like a solemn public engagement to leave common paths. In his works he should take the good to the excellent; he should know how to embellish the sound, combine the graces with common sense, deal with science, improve scholarship, raise himself, descend, march on the ground or take flight, according to the nature of the subject; in a word, gentlemen, the public insists on asking for beauty in all your academic productions; the fact is certain.

The question is of knowing what is the object of this request; that what it means, or rather, to treat the material at the base, what is meant by what is called beauty in works of the mind, what is its general nature, how many kinds there are, what features can be recognized to place each into its particular class, and finally, what is the precise form of beauty in the totality of a composition.

There is much material here for a single discourse; but I speak in an academy whose incisiveness will spare me from lengthy reasoning, and whose erudition will effortlessly supply the multitude of authorities that would be perhaps be necessary elsewhere to support my arguments.

First, in general, what is the nature of beauty in works of the mind? is it something absolute, which is entitled to please us on its own basis, or only something relative to particular dispositions that incline us to read or hear them?

Do not be surprised, gentlemen, to see me start with a doubt, which most certainly is not one for you; but you cannot ignore that in the republic of letters, as elsewhere, there are people who, following the example of the ancient sceptics, regard the intellectual beauty | of which we speak as 44
an affair of pure taste and pure feeling; they sometimes even undertake to prove it in their way. Certain works of poetry or of eloquence which seem beautiful in one epoch do not always seem so in another; that which pleases in Italy or in Spain, commonly enough displeases in France; and, without leaving our home, it is not uncommon that an orator or a poet who charmed the provinces will fail in Paris; who has success in Paris, fails at the court; even the court finds itself divided on the merit of an author; or, what is still more strange, it varies in its consideration from one day to another, giving him today its approbation, taking it back tomorrow, according to the prevailing wind at Versailles or Fontainebleau. There are our different ages, our particular characters, our moods, our different situations, our parties, our interests, other inexhaustible sources of variation and of varieties in judgements that we make of works of the mind.

Now from there, conclude our modern sceptics, does it not follow that the beauty of these sorts of works has nothing fixed and absolute? that all that pleases is beautiful by regard of those who judge it so, and consequencely that those that cease to please stop being beautiful, not by any change that happens in their nature, but by those that happen in our opinions and our feelings? from which they infer, without fuss, that we must apply the commonplace proverb: that *there is no disputing taste.*

The vanity of mediocre authors and the presumption of superficial readers are assuredly very obliged to these gentlemen for giving them such an easy way to be always content with themselves: the former in their works, and the latter in their judgements. But, though they might treat me murderously, like that madman of Athens treated those who cured him of a pleasant illusion,[1] it is necessary to try to trick them into defining what they

1 †André exaggerates the story of Thrasylaus and perhaps conflates it with that of Lycas. The provenance of these two stories requires careful untangling. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, xii.80 relates the story of Thrasylaus the Æxonensian, son of Pythodorus, who imagined himself the owner all the ships in the Piraeus. His brother Crito arranged for his treatment, but after being cured Thrasylaus said he had never been happier than during his madness. Horace, *Epistles*, ii.2, ll. 128–140 tells of an unnamed Argive who would sit in an empty theatre and imagine that he was witnessing admirable tragedies on the stage; when cured by his relations, he complained that his pleasure had been taken away. Erasmus, *Adagia*, under *In nihil sapiendo sucundiffima vita*, alludes to Horace's account and quotes ll. 138–140, then relates Athenaeus' story of Thrasylaus in more detail. Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, ii.12 recounts the tale of Thrasylaus, but instead of telling of an anonymous Argive, writes of Lycas, who led a normal life but believed that everything was part of a theatrical performance. On being cured, he could hardly be dissuaded from suing the doctor. Montaigne quotes exactly the same lines from Horace as Erasmus, suggesting that the latter was his source, but his story has been considerably changed and, in particular, the

affect to leave always undefined, into distinguishing what they never fail to confound, and into | recalling, if possible the first principles of common 45
sense.

I call *beauty*, in a work of the mind, not what pleases the first glance of the imagination in certain particular dispositions of the faculties of the soul or the organs of the body, but what is entitled to appeal to reason and reflection by its own excellence, by its light or by its exactness, and, if I am allowed this term, by its intrinsic pleasantness.

It is the general idea of intellectual beauty that concerns us. Let us be most sensitive in developing it.

As in the two first discourses, I distinguish three types of beauty: an essential beauty, which pleases the pure mind, independent of any institution, even divine; a natural beauty, which pleases the mind united with the body, independently of our opinions and our tastes, but with a necessary dependence on the laws of the Creator, which are the order of nature; an arbitrary beauty, if I may put it thus, or, if you prefer, an artificial beauty, which pleases the mind by the observation of certain rules that the sages of the republic of letters have established, upon reason and upon experience, to direct us in our compositions.

Let us present in detail each of these three sorts of intellectual beauty by the features that characterize them. This, gentlemen, is what we are going to try to do, but we are always counting on your insight to avoid lengthiness on a subject that is already so extensive.

First, what is the primitive and original intellectual beauty, that we say is being essential to a work of the mind, to a discourse, to a poem, to a story, to every work that aims to please rational men? To discover its true character with its principal features, let us forget for a moment our particular tastes, capricious and bizarre like the moods they give rise to; changing and variable, according to the time and place; which are often contradictory | and consequently decide nothing. Let us consult the general 46
taste, founded on the same essence of the human spirit, engraved in all our hearts, not by an arbitrary institution, but by necessity of nature, and consequently sure and infallible in its divisions. Follow me, please, in the short analysis that we are going to make.

An orator speaks to us in live voice, a author speaks to us through writing; the first addresses his speech to the public, the second addresses it not only to the public, but also to posterity; what must they do to merit the support of such a respectable listener? what was asked of them from the birth of letters up to our times? what was demanded in all nations, from

detail of suing the doctor seems to make its first appearance here. In no version of the story does the patient contemplate violence, but Lycas' attempted lawsuit against the doctor in Montaigne's account seems closer to André's reference than the lamentations of Thrasylaus.

the extremities of the Orient, which saw eloquence born, to those of the Occident, which saw it carried to perfection? and today still, what is it that all the world demands of them, as if by the general cry of reason?

Truth, order, honesty, and decency: here, gentlemen, (I am not afraid of it being contradicted by good taste), here is the essential beauty that we seek entirely naturally in a work of the mind: *truth*, because speech is only instituted for it to be interpreted, to say it, to clarify it, to make it pass from one mind to another like a light that must be common to all men; *order*, because there is one among truths; from which it follows that order is absolutely necessary in a discourse to put each truth in its true point of view, so that the first illuminates the following, and those, in their turn, give the first, through their following naturally, a new type of lustre; *honesty*, meaning respect for religion and for decency, for it is certain, as we have seen in speaking of moral beauty, that we each carry in our soul a feeling of honour composed of these two virtues, whose being offended necessarily hurts all; an indispensable rule that even the | pagans knew: 47
Plato, in his famous Dialogue on Beauty in the discourse;[2] Longinus,[3] in his admirable treatise *On the Sublime*; Cicero,[4] Quintilian,[5] Seneca,[6] in their Reflections on the Art of oratory.[7] These great geniuses, by unanimous agreement, which only reason can have formed between them, give us as an essential precept of eloquence, of speaking always of the Divinity with respect, and speaking always to men with modesty and unpretentiousness. We understand by honesty, says Quintilian, justice, religion, piety, and other similar virtues. *Nos justum, pium, religiosum, ceteraque his similia honesto complectimur.*[8] And Seneca so scrupulously understood modesty in speech that he held that the orator should resolve sooner to lose some of the advantages of his cause than to break this rule of public honesty:[9] *Satius est quædam causædetrimento tacere, quam verecundiædamno dicere*; finally *decency*, which always supposes *honesty*, but which covers a larger range; the fourth feature of essential beauty, absolutely necessary for a work of the mind to satisfy the taste of common sense; for indeed, tell me, gentlemen, how a

2 †*Hippias Major.*

3 †The author of *On the Sublime* is only called Longinus by convention; his real name is lost. He flourished in the first century CE.

4 †Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE), Roman statesman, philosopher, and lawyer.

5 †Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (c. 35–c. 100 CE), Roman rhetorician.

6 †Lucius/Marcus Annaeus Seneca [Seneca the Elder] (c. 54 BCE–c. 39 CE), Roman author and rhetorician.

7 †Cicero, *De Oratore ad Quintum fratrem libri tres*; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*; Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae.*

8 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ii.4.38.

9 Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae*, i.2.23.

man who undertakes to speak to the public could succeed in pleasing it, if he ignored propriety, respect, what is owed to time, to place, to the nature of his subject, to its state or its character, to those of the people who listen to him, to their quality or their rank, above all to their reason, which, in the moment, will judge his heart by his words; in a word, if he forgets in his discourse this noble decency that raises all by its natural grace, which pleases by itself, and which the greatest master of eloquence in history[10] expressly made the first law of his art: *Caput artis decere.*[11]

But, gentlemen, do we need citations and | authorities to convince 48
us of this first principle of common sense: that truth, order, and decency are essential beauties in a work of the mind? So without further emphasis on such an evident point, I pass to another type of intellectual beauty, which is not entirely as necessary in a composition, but which is not less independent of our opinions and our tastes. This is what we have called natural beauty; I will explain.

If we only had for listeners pure intelligences, or at least men more rational than sensible, to satisfy them we would only have to expose to them the simple truth; by itself, it would have enough to charm them by its light, by the order of the principles that demonstrate it, or by that of the consequences that burst from it like the rays of the sun. This is the only beauty that is asked for in a work of mathematics; but in most of our discourses, we have to speak to men much more sensible than rational, who want to hear nothing but what they can imagine; who believe in knowing nothing but what they can feel; who only let themselves be persuaded by impulses that transport them; in a word, to men who are rather disgusted by a discourse that says nothing either to the imagination or to the heart.

Although perhaps it would be better if our taste was a little more free from the business of the senses, I admit that this disposition does not surprise me. The imagination and the heart are faculties as natural to man as the mind and reason; he even has for them a predilection that is only too marked. Can we hope to please him without presenting to them the type of beauty that agrees with them, whether to each in particular, or to the combination that results from their assembly?

Thus, in a discourse, not only must truth be spoken to satisfy the mind, images must be used to interest the imagination, feelings must accompany it for the heart to like it, suitable impulses must animate it | to introduce it 49
into the soul with greater strength. Thus, the beauty that we call natural, since it is founded on the same constitution as our nature, is divided into three particular species that it is very necessary to distinguish; beauty in images, beauty in feelings, beauty in movements. This is what we will try

10 Cicero.

11 †Cicero, *De Oratore*, i.132. 'The essence of art is appropriateness.'

to clarify, not by examples, which would take us too far, and which would still only give us very slight ideas, but by returning to the general principles of reason and of good taste.

It is indubitable that images are a necessary charm in a discourse of eloquence or of poetry; they put before our eyes the objects that are spoken of; they take the mind's eye there; they hold the attention; they prevent distaste; and it is not without reason that it was said that all authors must be painters. But in what consists their true beauty? I still call here on the general taste. We all like the great and the graceful in paintings: the great, which elevates us, and the graceful, which captivates us. Do you thus want to make discourses that are assured of pleasing us? our imagination is naturally broad; present to it great images. It cannot tolerate dry and hard portraits; present it with graceful images. At least one or the other, the great or the graceful, should always appear in your pictures. But if you find the secret of sometimes putting the two together, the great in the graceful and the graceful in the grand, you will see then the complete beauty of images.

Feelings are not always so necessary in a composition: there are subjects that are not susceptible to it; but when they can be included, as in a discourse on religion or morality, in a poem, in a story, what are the qualities that form true beauty? Let us always consult our infallible oracle of the inner taste of nature. Is it not true that, in feelings, | one cannot 50
tolerate the base and the coarse, that on the contrary one loves the noble and the fine or the delicate? Is it not true that our natural inclination lies there? No human heart would dare to deny it. A noble and generous feeling gives testimony to the superiority of our soul to low and mundane things. A fine and delicate feeling gives us a pure pleasure, which seizes us without troubling us, which penetrates us without confusing us. The conclusion is evident: that either nobility or delicacy must reign in every discourse that we address to men; or rather, if the subject allows it, the one and the other together. This is, in feelings, all the beauty that one can wish for.

What shall we say about the impulses called moving, that is to say strong and lively feelings, followed and pushed, if I may put it thus, by a type of spiritual transport that stirs the soul of a listener or spectator, by means of the objected presented to him? It is clear that impulses of this type should not appear in dramatic pieces or those that take this genre by their circumstances, in a discourse addressed to a wide audience, in opening statements, in a speech in court, or in illustrious cases that are pleaded before the full senate; in a word, in the great theatres of eloquence or poetry. But then what species of beauty should animate them? It is still for the general taste of nature to decide for us. Now, naturally, what is it that we admire, what is it that we love in these impulses of discourse that

are called moving? I answer, on the faith of universal experience: it is the strong and the tender, two species of the moving that are evidently the two greatest motives of the human heart. The strong awakens us, applies us, determines us; the tender entices us, engages us, makes us determine by ourselves. The strong subjugates us, so to speak, by | means of arms; the 51
tender solicits us, wins us over, takes us by intelligences and by composition. The strong enters our soul and conquers, as through a breach; the tender presents itself before us like a good-humoured king, who has only to show himself to make doors open. I do not decide, between these two types of moving impulse, which yields more beauty in a discourse; I would say only that, in seeking to impress in a discourse this marvel with which certain authors, particularly the ancient ones, Greek and Roman, carry us away, vainly shall we implore the aid of art. The great art, and the only art, is knowing how to create situations of the mind and the heart that give birth to them, so to speak, without sadness and without effort, from within of nature. Otherwise, I declare to you, all your best-figured impulses would seem to my eyes only the convulsions of rhetors who freeze me instead of inspiring me; faces of comedians that would make me laugh, or the outbursts of fanatics that would horrify me. In a word, they must be born, as we have already insinuated, in a certain transport of the soul that we call inspiration, enthusiasm, divine fury, without which, say the masters of the art, there would never be either true eloquence or true poetry. Such is the beauty that we conceive in the impulses that animate an author in a composition.

I survey, gentlemen, these subjects rather than not treat them, without stopping to prove things that everyone feels. But we must not forget an important observation. In order that images, feelings, moving impulses form a true beauty in a work of the mind, it is necessary that they agree; it is necessary that these natural adornments of the discourse find themselves applied on a worthy foundation, or at least one not made unworthy by some shocking deformity; for certainly the Author of nature has not formed the graces to adorn ugliness. It is an incontestable principle, and the
| consequence I want to draw is not less so. The essential beauty of 52
the discourse, of which we first spoke, must thus be indispensably the foundation of the natural beauty of which we are speaking. Truth, order, honesty, and decency are necessary beauties that images, feelings, moving impulses must never lose sight of. Now, I ask, what follows from that? Our principles are established, let us not fear drawing a conclusion. It follows, to speak properly, that images are only beautiful in a discourse insofar as they adorn truth; feelings are only beautiful there insofar as they have virtue as their object. And if you employ moving impulses to carry us elsewhere than these two essential goals of man, it is, to say the least, an out-of-place ornament that does not shock good taste less than good sense

and good morals. Is this conclusion not palpable evidence?

If certain contemporary authors, orators, poets, historians, even philosophers, if you like, do what they please with the other maxims of good taste; if they choose, as the foundation of their works, impious errors or infamous vices, libertine tales or scandalous chronicles, cruel gossip or slanders concocted to blacken virtue; if on this hideous background they scatter flowers with both hands; if they adorn the deformity with the most beautiful colours, the most graceful images, the sweetest sentiments, the strongest impulses, the most brilliant figures of speech, the finest turns,[12] the most delicate terms; then reason and honour, which certainly enter into the total idea of good taste, will clamour against this assembly. It is always said, everywhere that there is a spark of common sense, that so many ornaments ill befit ugliness, that the backing degrades the embroidery, and that the substance degrades the form. In vain will stupid or corrupt minds praise the beautiful surface | with which the author has enveloped his infamies: his 53
mask is too transparent to hide his shame. One always sees through it to the falsity of his mind and the corruption of his heart, and by consequence to the depravity of his taste. One perhaps may praise his natural talents, but with all the contempt that his person deserves for so abominable an abuse of the gifts of nature. And indeed, I attest by good sense, what contempt is not deserved by the impertinence of a man who applies himself to decorating monstrosities? If this comparison may be permitted to enliven the subject a little, is it not visibly falling into the same ridiculousness as these ugly and disgraced people, who, not having in themselves something pleasing, adorn themselves with sumptuous, magnificent, brilliant clothes, thus to earn at least the gazes of the world. But what happens? They have the misfortune to succeed; the make themselves watched: their dress is admired and the person is held in contempt. How many authors who roam the world have proved the same thing in adorning ugliness of another type? I leave it to you, gentlemen, to make the applications, and I now return to our division of intellectual beauty.

Of the three general kinds of beauty that we have distinguished, the first two, essential beauty and natural beauty, are, if I am not deceived, sufficiently clarified. There remains the third, which we call arbitrary beauty, because it depends of the institution of men, rules of discourse that have been established, the genius of languages, the taste of peoples, and still more on the particular talents of the authors. This is properly the beauty that, in a work of the mind, results from the pleasantness of words.

To form a clearer and more extensive idea of it, I distinguish in the

12 †I use 'turn' to translate the French *tour*, even though the appropriate slightly archaic meanings and connotations of the English word (style, character, form, aptitude) do not quite capture those of the French one.

body of the discourse three things that are like elements: expression, turn, and style; expression, which makes our thought; turn, which gives it a certain form; and style, which develops it to | put it into the different moods 54
that it asks for in regard of our design. One already sees that these three elements of discourse must each have its own beauty; it is relevant to make it known in detail, this proper beauty of expression, turn, and style. Let us always follow the principles of nature.

One only need say it to make it understood: the first beauty of expression must thus be clarity: this is what carries our thoughts into the minds of others with all the fidelity required for the exchange of speech. There are even sciences, like mathematics, history, philosophy, which only exist in terms of this one beauty; but there are also subjects of which people of intellect (and who today is not?) can only tolerate speaking in a way that leaves nothing to guesswork. They will hear a hint in a speech on morality or morals. It is thus a species of beauty in expression, of only talking to them insofar as is necessary to give them the pleasure of supplying the rest, particularly in treating certain delicate subjects where truth must never appear veiled. The difficulty is to take a middle ground between too clear a day, which does not attract attention, and too dark a night, which repels it. How many writers — even famous ones — have failed in this in our age! They have wanted to avoid in their expression a clarity too bland for their taste, and they have unfortunately produced the enigmatic, the tortuous, the mysterious, without realizing that, in discourse, the mysterious is always very close to the précieuse, and that the précieuse never goes without the ridiculous.

Regarding those authors who are obsessed with shining in the shadows, it is certain, in general, that beauty in expressions consists in the luminous manner in which they render their thought, sometimes simply and in proper terms, to present us with this invaluable accuracy, which is the charm of the pure mind; sometimes in | figurative terms, to dress it with interesting 55
colours, which are the delight of the imagination; sometimes in moving terms, strong or tender, to give it this taste of feeling that carries the heart away. But finally, where to go with them, these beautiful expressions? will it be to the court? will it be into the academies? will it be into books? No; if I may so with all the respect that we must give our models: these expressions, transplanted from one mind to another, most often degenerate like trees moved to new land. It is necessary that each finds them on his own basis, or, if you borrow them from elsewhere, you must adapt them so that your intellectual turn is perceived there. I mean a turn that does not deform them. This is the second thing that strikes us in a discourse, and which deserves particular attention.

Most men who reflect have almost the same thoughts on almost the same subjects; it is only the turn that distinguishes them. I mean that truth,

which presents itself identically to the foundation of all attentive minds, is differently modified according to the different dispositions that it finds in the soul that conceives it. It shapes itself, so to speak, in our understanding; it colours itself in the imagination; it animates itself in the heart. It thus takes on a certain marked air, often original, which, from thought, passes into expression: this is what I call intellectual turn.

You know, gentlemen, that each people has its own character that forms the dominant spirit of the nation; grave and majestic in Spain; free and cavalier in France; vehement and impetuous in England; delicate and fine in Italy, sturdy and firm in Germany. It is the same for individuals: each has his own intellectual turn that characterises him in his nation. The sublimity of Corneille[13] and the gracefulness of Racine;[14] the luminous good sense of Boileau[15] and the piquancy of Molière,[16] the strength of Bossuet[17] and the delicacy of Fénelon,[18] the noble facility of Malebranche[19] and the brilliance of Fontenelle;[20] the | rapid liveliness of Bourdaloue[21] and the 56
insinuating softness of Massillon;[22] the deep chisel of the cardinal of Retz[23] and the fine pencil of Pascal,[24] we see in our own writers ways of thought almost as different as those of a Spaniard and an Italian. The question is to know in what consists the beauty of intellectual turns, which distinguishes great authors from mediocrities, which sometimes elevates their weakest productions, and from which it so often happens that the same statement that in some seems only an entirely simple proposition without sharpness, becomes in others what is called a beautiful thought, a beautiful sentiment, a witticism. Let us not be surprised. Mediocre authors, without genius and without soul, present to us cold, inanimate objects like themselves, unlike the great writers who give them to us, if I may put it thus, with all the

13 †Pierre Corneille (1606–1684), French dramatist.

14 †Jean Racine (1639–1699), French dramatist.

15 †Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636–1711), French poet.

16 †Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (1622–1673), French playwright and actor whose stage name was Molière.

17 †Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704), French theologian and orator, bishop of Meaux (1681–1704).

18 †François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon (1651–1715), French theologian and writer.

19 †Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715), French philosopher.

20 †Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757), French writer.

21 †Louis Bourdaloue (1632–1704), French Jesuit preacher.

22 †Jean-Baptiste Massillon (1663–1742), French churchman and orator, bishop of Clermont (1717–1742).

23 †Jean François Paul de Gondi, cardinal de Retz (1613–1679), French churchman and writer, archbishop of Paris (1654–1662).

24 †Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), French mathematician and philosopher.

impressions that they themselves receive. Some only sketch them, others paint them; the former know at most only how to describe them, the latter engrave them into the depths of the heart by the strength of imagination and feeling with which they animate them. We are struck as if by lightning. Why? We suddenly see appearing there one of these features of essential or natural beauty of which we have spoken so much. Here is a quick and just spirit, who knows to offer us in few words several brilliant ideas; there is a easy and profound spirit, who thinks and who knows how to make us think; a fine and modest spirit, who knows how to make us understand what is not allowed to be said; a happy imagination that wakes us though its sallies; an elevated genius who lifts us with himself above vulgar prejudices; a generous heart that makes us, like him, superior to the weaknesses of other men; in a word, a manner of thought or of feeling things that has nothing common and nothing unnatural. There, in a work of the mind, is what we believe must be heard through beauty of turn. Finally, what is that of style? Let us start as always by defining it.

| I call style a certain set of expressions and turn sustained in the 57
course of a work, of which all its parts only seem to be strokes of the same brush; or, if we consider a discourse as a type of natural music, a certain arrangement of words that together form a concord, from which results to the ear a pleasant harmony: this is the idea that the masters of the art have given us.

I am sorry to say it, but it is not less true; it follows from there that today there are few authors who have a true style. One still find those who have expression: there are even those who have turn, at least on occasion. It is enough, for these two aspects, to have a mediocre genius; but to form them into a well-connected discourse, in a way that would throughout equally satisfy good sense, the mind, and the ear, a certain range of intelligence and taste is necessary, which is a very rare quality. Could we not even say that several have no idea? Let us judge by the mass of our orators and our writers. What is their manner of composition? Some new terms, some fashionable phrases, some cavalier or précieuse turns, some commonplaces customary to our ancestors, some features of rhetoric thrown in randomly, a few blossoms stolen in passing from the ancients and the moderns: today this is our ordinary style; disjointed and libertine, vagabond and uneven, without number, without measure, without bond, without proportion between either things or words. May I be allowed to say it? We almost no longer see in the republic of letters anything but patchwork pieces, which are not related and do not go together.

However, gentlemen, can one doubt that style, such as we have defined it, is not somehow the soul of discourse, the attraction and the charm, that sustains the attention of the mind by the sequence of subjects that it chains together, | by the natural bond of different turns that it matches, by the 58

sweetness of the harmony that strikes our ear, and through it our heart, which, by an invincible impression of nature, loves concord everywhere, not only in music, but in all types of composition. I do not believe that another proof can be asked of me than this taste of nature, which is incontestable.

Thus, in a few words, one sees all the features that the idea of beauty in style contains; a marked sequence in subjects, in thoughts, and in the reasoning that composes the basis of discourse; a just assortment of turns and of figures of speech under which they are presented; a species of harmony in the choice of the terms that express the sequence; and above all the rest, a certain fire spread everywhere, which suffers neither useless reflection, which is always cold; nor false brilliance, always boring; nor superfluous words, always chilly.

This is to demand a lot from most of our authors. I agree with it. But I ask them to consider that I speak of beauty in discourse, that I only speak of it following the greatest masters, or rather following the rules of nature, and that, if they have not the courage to aspire to it, they should abandon it and write no more, or, if they cannot be silent, to continue to write badly. One cannot force someone to goodness in the republic of letters.

However, let us not exaggerate the rigour of the laws. We take care to claim only that style must be equally beautiful and sustained throughout. One allows in painting some *carelessness* of the brush, to give more relief to the fine and accomplished features. We can also allow in discourse come *carelessness* of style, provided that the author knows how to cover these little defects by beauties that erase them. Cicero, that great model of eloquence, did not want his harangues to be proclaimed too often: beautiful! well said! *Nolo nimium, belle et festive.*[25] He had | the maxim of leaving shadows 59
and nuances to temper the brilliance of a too-constant sublimity. It is never necessary to fall, but one can sometimes descend to rise again suddenly with greater strength. The fire of the spirit, which is the soul of style, must never be entirely extinguished, but there are places where one can allow it to die a little, to relight it in others with greater light. I even believe, said a great master of the art, that is necessary to forgive the flight of genius some real faults, but on condition that there are only flaws, and not actually monstrosities of style. *Multa donanda ingenis puto, sed donanda vitia, non portenta*[26] That is to say irregularities, but not disorders; differences, but not aberrations; boldness, but not insolence; defects against art, but not against nature; that is to say, in a word, that the pardonable faults in a discourse must be like sunspots that one does not discover with the naked eye, but only with the telescope, and which even seem to be absorbed in the light that surrounds them. This is, on the subject of style, as far as one

25 †Cicero, *De Oratore*, iii.101.

26 Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae*, x.10.

can relax the rules; but here is a point on which there is no grace in asking for it.

I come to the last question that we proposed on the nature of spiritual beauty: that is, to know what is the precise form, not only in parts, but in the totality of a piece. One can maintain the larger principle that we have borrowed from St Augustine in the preceding discourses. But in any case, I repeat it: it is that unity is the essential form of every type of beauty. *Omnis porro pulchritudinis forma unitas est.*[27] We have applied it to sensible beauty, we have extended it to moral beauty. We are going to see if it applies equally to intellectual beauty; | manifest proof that it is one of the 60
first axioms of good sense and good taste.

Thus I say that, for a work of eloquence or of poetry to be truly beautiful, it does not suffice that it has beautiful features, it is necessary that one finds there a type of unity that makes a very good match: unity of relations between all the parts that compose it; unity of proportion between its style and the subject being treated; unity of propriety between the person who speaks, the things that he says, and the tone that he takes to say them. This is the famous precept of Horace, or rather of nature:

Denique sit quod uis, simplex dumtaxat et unum.[28]

Let us try to conceive the prize of this unity in discourse, by the disparate and by the ridiculous contrasts that authors who are careless necessarily fall into.

You have, gentlemen, too much experience in the republic of literature, to be ignorant that there are a very great number who confine all their cares to shaping well each part of their work, without thinking of the whole. A lyric poet, for example, only thinks of making beautiful verses; a dramatic poet, of composing beautiful scenes; an orator, in making beautiful figures of speech; an author, in sowing in his book much wit, often even more that he has of it and depending on his memory. There is thus sewn together, said Horace on writers of his time, a beautiful morsel from here, a beautiful morsel from there. *Unus et alter assuitur pannus.*[29] Here we have a finished piece. These gentlemen do not fail to dazzle the audience at first, because they from time to time do indeed have some beauties; but because all these disparate unconnected beauties only act separately, what is the ordinary effect? One soon perceives, by this disjointed composition, that they have discovered the art of making a bad ode with beautiful verses, a pitiable tragedy with beautiful scenes, a bland and insipid harangue | with 61
beautiful figures of speech, a very boring book with beautiful displays of

27 Augustine, *Epistles*, 18.

28 †Horace, *Art of Poetry*, l. 23.

29 †Ibid., ll. 15–16.

wit. Resembling those painters with a limited talent, who know well how to paint a portrait, but who do not know how to make a picture, they succeed in detail and they fail at large. They produce an elegant description, story, character; but all these detached members have no connections that would make them a body. Each thought, each word is a light that awakens us: one applauds it, one exclaims at it, like children at bonfires, when they see some beautiful rocket launched. But put together all these lights, all these brilliant fireworks of modern eloquence, you will never make a beautiful day. Thus we have a work of the mind pleases by parts, and it displeases in whole; one reads perhaps a page, but who wants to read the whole piece? The sequence is missing, the unity is broken, and I cannot bring myself to follow an author who does not follow himself.

I admit, gentlemen, that despite the libertine tastes of our age, there are still strong minds. They know how to take a design, match subjects, form a well-connected sequence; they always proceed to a goal without deviation, or at least without distraction. The foundation of your work is thus perfectly beautiful. I congratulate you, but unfortunately your style disfigures your subject or adorns it too much; you sound the trumpet in an eclogue, and you take a torch into an epic poem; your subject is sublime and your style crawling; or on the contrary, your subject is simple and your style pompous. You confuse all the genres of writing: you speak prose in verse and verse in prose; you use in history the tone of the pulpit, in the pulpit the flowers of the academy, and in the academy the austere style of the Bar.

Besides, your discourse is well taken, the setting is beautiful, the plan well drawn, well ordered, well filled; that is to say, that you understand the design well, but that you fail in the choice and the application of colours; shocking disproportion that, breaking the unity of your discourse in | a 62
point as essential as the relation of style to material, manifestly destroying, or at least degrading the beauty of the foundation by the contrast of the adornment.

You see well the attention demanded of an author. This is not all: there is a third type of unity that seems to me still more essential to the beauty of a work of the mind; this is where I shall finish.

You have doubtless remarked, gentlemen, a thousand times: in reading a work one also reads the author. This is an accepted expression, but I am permitted to extend its significance a little. I mean that one naturally compares his person, his state, his age, his character, his religion, even his birth and the place that he occupies in the world, with the things that he says, with his way of thinking, with his air, his language, with the tone that he takes in discourse; one so examines all that is admitted according to the laws of decency, one incorporates, if I may express myself thus, the author into his piece, to see the total that results; in a word, one wants to

find, in a work of the mind, a picture whose view is of an honest man, who speaks to the public with all the respect that is due to truth, to order, to his own honour and to public honesty; this is what I call unity of propriety. The rule is incontestable, but among our authors, since a certain time, who observes it with all the required exactness? or rather, how many do we see who violate it without respect? Is it a lack of the breadth of mind to embrace all the relations? is it inattention? is it ignorance of the rules or contempt for laws and morals? Whatever is the cause, which can only be shameful, it is manifest that this lack of unity of propriety displays in their writings a certain discordant air that shocks reason, and consequently good taste.

For, gentlemen, I still call once again on the feeling of nature; the way of not being shocked in reading, for | example, an author who prides 63
himself on shrewdness, and who only knows how to discuss profanities; a poet who prides himself on good sense, and who, in a serious ode, inserts on account of reason all the follies, all the madnesses of mankind; a poetess who boasts to us everywhere of the beauty of her soul, and who declares to us, without fuss, that the idea of honour is inconvenient; a minor master of Montparnasse, weaned from college, who already takes the tone of Boileau and of Corneille, to preach reform; a Christian author, who uses the wandering Jew or the Turkish spy to spout more freely his extravagances and his impieties; a philosopher, who has spent his entire professional life believing in the Gospel, affecting the quality of the honest man, defying all his adversaries to find him in fault either on religion or on morals, and who seems to have worked for forty years only to gather in a single work an entire library of irreligion and infamy; finally, authors consecrated by the sanctity of their state, who use the mask of cavaliers to take with impunity the libertine style, who amuse themselves in making novels of gallantry, wholly profane operas, farces, and ridiculous stories, or who, by an abuse that is still more enormous, establish in their offices creators of libels, from which they release into the gossip world calumny and furore, always disguised under some good names, but always recognizable: can one, I say, in reading such writers, help but see there, with horror, a revolting contrast? And why revolting, I ask anyone who has morals? is it not above all by the indecent opposition that we find between the character of the work and that which the author must have? that is to say because one sees broken without respect this lovable unity of propriety, which, of the author and of his work, must make only one whole, each of whose parts not dishonouring the other, either by its deformity or by its incongruity.

| Such it is, gentlemen, if I am not mistaken, the total idea of the 64
beautiful in works of the mind. Let us gather in few words all the features to make them clearer: that the basis must always be truth, order, honesty, and decency; that on this basis of essential beauty one spreads, according

to the requirements of the subject, images, feelings, agreeable impulses, and all the graces of natural beauty; that expression, turn, and style still bring to the mind and the ear these fundamental beauties of discourse, but with an art that so closely resembling nature that one can take it for nature itself; finally, that all this forms the body of a connected work, sequential, animated, supported, and in which there are no morsels that break the unity.

Denique sit quod uis, simplex dumtaxat et unum.

Fourth Discourse

On musical beauty 4

Gentlemen,

In the first three discourses on beauty, I have presented you only with spectacles; to the eye, those of visible beauty; to the heart, those of moral beauty; to the mind, of intellectual beauty: I must also satisfy the ear. I propose today to give you a sort of concert, in speaking to you of musical beauty.

But before entering into the subject, permit me first to prelude it a little, like professional musicians, to gain for my subject a favourable attention. I mean to prepare you by reminding you of the general notions of music, drawn from nature, by establishing the first principles of harmony, founded on experience, and | , by a historical summary of the different 65
systems that have been formed in different times: preliminary knowledge without which it would be quite difficult to make myself well understood when I am concerned to penetrate into the foundation of harmonic beauty. Thus I divide this discourse into two parts, of which the first will contain those elements of the musical science that have seemed to me necessary to serve as the overture to the second. That is, gentlemen, the sole design that I propose today.

First part

First, it is certain that music charms us entirely naturally: it is a taste as ancient as the world, as widely spread as mankind; and the Creator, who inspired it with life, has forgotten nothing to maintain it in our soul by the natural concert of voice and of instruments that his providence makes us hear everywhere. Birds that sing, as if provoking us to emulation, echos that answer them with so much accuracy; streams that murmur; rivers that roar; waves of the sea that rise and fall rhythmically, to blend their different sounds in crashing on the shore; here zephyrs,[1] that sigh among the roses;

1 †Zephyr or Zephyrus [*Ζέφυρος*] was the Greek god of the west wind.

there aquilons[2] that blow in the forests; sometimes all the winds conspire, or rather come together by the contrariety of their movements, which, after being shaken in the air, break against terrestrial bodies, mountains, rocks, woods, valleys, hills, buildings, huts, drawing all parties into a concert, and in the end nothing is lacking in the symphony, which is often joined in the skies by that beautiful dominant bass, commonly called thunder, so grave, so majestic, and which doubtless would please us more if the terror that it impresses in us did not sometimes stop us from appreciating the magnificent display.

But, after the storm, there is Iris[3] who appears to announce | to us 66
the calm. Could its be believed that this is still a musical image? There can be little doubt after the experiments of the famous Newton. He gave several in his *Opticks*,[4] in which he concluded that the seven colours of the rainbow, namely red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet, occupy, in the spectrum, spaces that are in the same proportion as the intervals of the seven musical tones. Thus there is a type of natural tablature that the Creator presents to our eyes to initiate us into the mysteries of this art; and with it, he gives us so many means to implement it successfully. So many resonant bodies to construct our instruments, harmonious strings to produce pleasant sounds, agile hands and fingers to give them concord, voices of all ranges, low, middle, high, to form accompaniments; and what was still more essential, a fine and delicate judge to direct the concert: I mean the ear, which today everyone accepts without contest as the most subtle and most spiritual of our senses.

I have thus had reason the be sure that the Author of nature has forgotten nothing to maintain in our hearts a taste for music. He has succeeded: we see it loved among all the peoples of the earth. But if the taste is common, one can say that the true idea is quite rare. One is almost always content with the sensible pleasure that it impresses on the heart without climbing to the source, which, would give us, alongside this sensible pleasure, a rational one, infinitely more delicious. It is thus necessary, after having sketched the idea of music by the consideration of attempts that we find in nature, to pose the fundamental principles of the art to extend the notion further; this is a second prelude, which will furnish me with images as pleasant as the first, | but which, in compensation, will be a lot more 67
useful for me to fully understand my subject.

Music, in its own notion, is the science of harmonious sounds and their agreements.

2 †Aquilon was the Roman name for the god of the north wind, known to the Greeks as Boreas [Βορέας]. Oddly, André mixes the Greek and Roman names.

3 †In Greek mythology, the goddess Iris [Ἶρις] personifies the rainbow.

4 Newton, *Opticks*, pp.104, 177.

I call harmonic sound, not a wholly simple sound, dry and instantaneous, which is properly only noise, like one stone striking another; but a sound that, by the resonance of the body that it comes from, makes us hear, outside the main sound, a succession of several others pleasant to the ear, like that of the timbre of a bell, that of the string of a harpsichord, or that of a singing voice that intones an air. I owe this idea to the celebrated Mr Sauveur[5]

Harmonic sound is divided into the low and the high. Everyone knows that from the low one climbs to the high following the order of musical notes, *do*, *re*, *mi*, *fa*, *sol*, *la*, *ti*, *do*,[6] and that one descends from the high to the low in the opposite order, *do*, *ti*, *la*, *sol*, *fa*, *mi*, *re*, *do*: this is what is called scale.

There are eight sounds in this harmonic sequence; one passes from one to another, now rising, now falling, by certain degrees or intervals that link them together. There are seven, and these are commonly called the seven musical tones: *septem discrimina vocum.*[7] We will give a more exact idea of them elsewhere; here it suffices to remark in general:

1. That, if one takes the eight harmonic sounds in ascending order, the distance from the first to the second, that from *do* to *re*, is called the *second*; the distance from the first to the third, that from *do* to *mi*, the *third*; the distance to the fourth, *fa*, the *fourth*; the distance to the fifth, *sol*, the *fifth*; the distance to the sixth, *la*, the *sixth*; the distance to the seventh, *ti*, the *seventh*; finally, the distance to the eighth, that from *do* to *do*, which, as you see, includes in its range all the other intervals, is called the *octave.*[8]

2. That, if one wants to push further this harmonic sequence, in climbing from the second *do* to a third, from a third | to a fourth, etc., one calls 68
the notes interposed between the second and the third *do* ninth, tenth, eleventh, etc., from the name of their numeric rank. One remarks, indeed, that the human voice, after being lifted by one octave from a tone can still be lifted by an octave from this octave, and sometimes even beyond: this is what is called its range.

5 Joseph Sauveur, 'Systême general des Intervalles des Sons, & Son application à tous les Systêmes & tous les Instrumens de Musique'. In: *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences: Mémoires* (1701), pp. 299–366. †Joseph Sauveur (1653–1716), French mathematician and physicist.

6 †André wrote before *ut* had been replaced by *do*, and, as is still current outside anglophone countries, uses *si* instead of *ti*.

7 †Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi, l. 646.

8 †Except for the last, these definitions seem slightly trivial in translation. In French, the names of the intevals differ from those of the ordinal numbers.

3. That sound is only low or high by comparison; that there must be two different sounds, the one low and the other high, to make a tone; two tones to make a consonance, two consonances to make a chord, several chords to make a mode, and several modes to make a complete harmony, a melody of voice or a full well-varied symphony of instruments: what is also called modulation.

4. That two harmonics can be either successive or simultaneous; successive, when they follow one another like the chant of a single voice; simultaneous, what they accompany each other, when, for example, several voices sing in parts.

   In former and in the latter case, the two sounds can produce in the ear three different impressions: unison, consonance, and dissonance.

   Unison, when they are all so equal and so consonant, that they seem to make one and the same sound.

   Consonance, when the high and the low blend without confusing, ensuring that one effortlessly sees the difference and the conformity, the distinction and the union; which gives the soul an easy pleasure, and is thus very agreeable.

   Dissonance, when, on the contrary, two sounds find themselves so different or so disproportionate, that their relationship seems to the ear either indeterminable or too difficult to determine: a difficulty that the soul cannot feel without some disagreement.

From this general idea of music, it is easy to conclude | that it is a 69
mixed science, that involves at the same time both physics and mathematics: two areas, let us take care, that it is necessary to distinguish carefully to assign to each its rights and its limits.

As a physical science, it has as object harmonious sound as we have defined it, the time of its duration, its degree of highness and lowness, its reciprocal risings and falling, the vibrations of the resonant bodies that make it, those of the air that transmit it, and the nature of the impressions that are received by the ear as it is struck.

As a mathematical science, it considers the geometrical relations of sounds, of the intervals that separate them, the tones that result from them, and the chords that they make up. It explains these relationships by numbers, in order to present them to the mind with all the precision that a true science demands; finally, from these numbers, which are called musical because of this usage, it forms harmonic proportions and progressions, to put everything in order in its compositions; thus we can still define, in regard of this, the geometry of sound.

The goal of music is twofold: like its object: it wants to please the ear, which is its natural judge; it wants to please reason, which essentially presides over the judgements of the ear; and by the pleasure it give to

the one and the other, it wants to excite in the soul the movements most capable of delighting all its faculties. An ancient author, named Aristides,[9] famous for an excellent Treatise on Music, gave to it an end still more noble: that of elevating us to the love of supreme beauty. *Finis musicæ pulchri amor.*[10]

Let us be in no doubt, gentlemen, it is principally there that it must aim. I know very well that the majority of lovers of music do not raise themselves so high, but to make | seen the substance of this thought, we 70
have only to consider the nature of those numbers that we have called musical, and to which so many philosophers have attributed all the strength of harmony; at least it is certain that they play a major role. Now I aim to determine them by sure principles, to make everyone aware of musical beauty.

Experience teaches us:

1. That all else being equal in two musical strings of unequal length, the sound of the longer is always lower than that of the shorter; that if one extends the shorter a little, the sound that it makes becomes deeper as it approaches more to being equal to the longer; finally, that the two sounds reach perfect unison when the two strings arrive at being perfectly equal; from which it follows that, everything else being equal in an string instrument, sound is to sound as string is to string; and the great Descartes,[11] who had examined it for himself, made it the foundation of his *Compendium Musicae.*

2. That if one divides a musical string into two, into three, into four, into five or into six equal parts, the sound of the entire string and that of one, or of a certain number of the aliquot parts, produce in the ear that pleasant impression, that we call consonance. Up to here, there is nothing surprising. Now witness a kind of paradox:

   It is not the same, if one takes further the division of the string, for example, into seven or into eight equal parts. One will find that the entire string and its parts no longer make compatible and consonant sounds; rather, if I may say so, sounds that are hostile, discordant, rude and most unpleasant, whose relationships are more difficult to determine: this is a fact attested by all musical ears from the famous Pythagoras,[12] the first that we know of who undertook to reduce music

9 †Aristides Quintilianus [*Ἀριστείδης Κοϊντιλιανός*] (*fl.* c. 3rd century CE), Greek author of a musical treatise, otherwise unknown.

10 Aristides, 'On Music'. In: *Antiquae musicae auctores septem.* Ed. by Marcus Meibomius, 130. *Σκοπὸς τῆς Μουσικῆς τὰ τοῦ καλοῦ ἐρωτικα.*

11 †René Descartes (1596–1650), French philosopher and mathematician.

12 †Pythagoras of Samos [*Πυθαγόρας ὁ Σάμιος*] (c. 570–c. 495 BCE), Greek philosopher, mystic,

to art, right up to Mr Rameau,[13] the last of our authors who treated it in some depth.

| Thus, all musical numbers find themselves contained in the first 71
six terms of the natural sequence: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Now, six terms only give us five immediately consecutive intervals; from which I deduce that we have only five primitive consonances, represented by their intervals or by the geometric relationships of the first six numbers; the octave, by the relationship of 1 to 2; the fifth, by that of 2 to 3; the fourth, by that of 3 to 4; the major third, by that of 4 to 5, and the minor third, by the relationship of 5 to 6.

Simple and complex consonances are distinguished.

Those whose relationship does not exceed the double are called simple. Such are, by consequence, all the primitive consonances.

Those whose relationship is greater than double; like that of 1 to 3, which gives the double fifth; that of 1 to 4, the double octave; that of 1 to 5, the double third, etc., are called complex.

The number of consonances can thus only be very limited. There are, on the contrary, an infinite number of dissonances, but which are not all equally disagreeable. There are even those that do not avoid pleasing, if not by their nature, then at least by merit borrowed from some beautiful neighbouring consonances, or by the use that the masters of the art know how to make of them, by means of temperament. Also, the ancients, wholly scrupulous as they were in this matter, had no difficulty in admitting some of them into their music; all those, for example, that seem born in some way from primitive consonances by the multiplication or by the division of musical numbers.

By multiplication, the intervals between their squares 4, 9, 16, 25, 36, whose consecutive relationships of 4 to 9, of 9 to 16, of 16 to 25, and of 25 to 36, offer us the ninth, the seventh, the augmented fifth and the diminished fifth[14]

| By division, we obtain the relation of quotients, that express the 72
smallest intervals of music, or the elements of consonances.

There are three of them: tones, semitones, and commas; these are divided into majors and minors.

The major tone is the difference, or rather the geometrical relationship, between the fifth and the fourth, which is 8/9. This is the distance from *re* to *mi* in the common scale.

and numerologist. Pythagoras left no writings, but later Greek authors attributed to him the discovery of the consonnance of the sounds produced strings whose relative lengths were a small integer ratio.

13 †Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764), French composers and music theorist.

14 †André uses Rameau's term *fausse quinte*, or 'false fifth'.

The minor tone is the difference between the fourth and the minor third, which is 9/10: this is the distance from *do* to *re*.

The major semitone is the difference between the fourth and the major third, which is 15/16: this is the distance from *mi* to *fa*, or from *ti* to *do*.

The minor semitone, also called sharp, is the difference between the major and minor thirds, which is 24/25. There is no example in the ordinary scale, which is of an wholly simple nature, but it has a great usage in figurative music.

The commas are still smaller parts of tones, the major comma is the difference between the major and the minor tones, which is 80/81; and the minor comma, the difference between the major and the minor semitones, which is 125/128.

Profound musicians carry still further their operations on the musical numbers to find still finer parts of tones. But why, one asks, are there so many painful calculations in an art wholly destined for the satisfaction of the senses, which do not amuse themselves in computing their pleasures? ... Will there ever be anything but ingratitude for the geometers, who give so much effort to spare us from it? Was it not necessary, to direct the musician in his compositions, to determine the song in which nature itself guides us, and in which art can guide nature without forcing it? Now, it is by way of these operations, joined with the experience that has always either anticipated or confirmed them, that the inventors of music have discovered that the voice | can only gracefully sing the half, the third, or the quarter 73
of a tone.

From there come the three famous systems of the ancients that we still follow: the diatonic, the chromatic and the enharmonic. The first proceeds by halves of a tone; the second, by thirds; the third, by quarters.

The first, which is the most natural, pleases everyone; the second, which adds a lot of art to nature, particularly pleases musical savants; the third, which is the most exact and the finest, pleases few but the most skilled, and few but the most profound among the skilled. It is thus that the celebrated Aristides[15] has previously characterized them. Plutarch[16] spoke of them in almost the same terms, and we do not believe that the judgement of the ear has changed in this regard since those times.

In the practice of these three systems of harmony, one can still distinguish two species of music, just music and tempered music;[17] the first,

15 Aristides, 'On Music', 19.

16 †André's allusion is actually to pseudo-Plutarch, ***On Music***, which was traditionally ascribed to the Greco-Roman writer Plutarchos [*Πλούταρχος*], later Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus (c. 46–c. 120 CE).

17 †Here André refers to music created with either just intonation or some musical temperament.

geometrically exact; and the second, which is only physically so. History will perhaps best fix the ideas that the definitions encapsulate: this is the third prelude that I had promised.

Pythagoras,[18] who was too wise a musician, scrupulously observed the rules that he had found for exact music. He only admitted primitive consonances in his compositions; he rigourously banished even the most tolerable dissonances from them; everywhere he wanted the precision of the ruler and the compass. But what was the success of this too-mathematical accuracy? it succeeded in pleasing reason, which was not a great merit for most people; and it did not satisfy the ear, to which its music seemed too simple, too dry, too abstract; which is always a great defect.

After a little more than a century, Aristoxenus[19] sought a way of remedying it; he discovered temperament, one of the most beautiful | 74
inventions of the human mind: the manner of reconciling dissonances with consonances by a moderate alteration of some of the one and the other, to make chords more biting and more varied. But, although very skilled in his art, he did not care that the strength of biting hurts; he added too much of the salt of dissonance, and was accused rather of having sought to please the ear at the expense of the reason; this displeased the sages of Athens, where music was part of the education of children. It was judged that there was a danger that musical licence could implant too much liberty of morals in the youth. This temperament itself had to be tempered, reducing it to limits where exactness would not be too sensibly violated.

Ptolemy,[20] among the ancients, tried to rectify it by new rules; Zarlino,[21] among the moderns, succeeded still more in his harmonic institutions; the fullest work that we have on musical matters, and which has merited for its author the glorious title of prince of musicians. Two celebrated members of the Royal Academy of Sciences, Mr Huygens[22] and Mr Sauveur, have distinguished themselves in our days[23] in the same way, by each inventing a new system of tempered music. The great Lulli[24] gave

18 The year of the world 3180. †This corresponds to 580 BCE, a little earlier the currently accepted dates of Pythagoras.

19 †Aristoxenus of Tarentum [*Ἀριστόξενος*] (*fl.* 335 BCE), Greek Peripatetic philosopher.

20 140 CE. †Claudius Ptolemaeus [*Κλαύδιος Πτολεμαῖος*], (c. 90–c. 168 CE), Greek mathematician and astrologer, who also wrote a treatise on *Harmonics*.

21 In 1589. †Gioseffo Zarlino (1517–1590), Italian composer and music theorist, author of *Istituzioni armoniche*.

22 †Christiaan Huygens (1629–1695), Dutch mathematician and physicist.

23 In 1699. †If André is suggesting this as a publication date, he is mistaken. Huygens wrote two works on the harmonic system: *Lettre touchant le cycle harmonique*, published in 1691, and *Novus cyclus harmonicus*, published posthumously in 1724. Sauveur's *Traité de la Théorie de la Musique* dates to 1697.

24 Died in 1686. †Jean-Baptiste de Lully [= Giovanni Battista di Lulli] (1632–1687), Italian

us more in his admirable compositions, where, in following step by step the genius of nature, he managed everything that most others could only imagine. We do not speak of a new musician[25] who seems to split all Paris; we leave his reputation to develop, especially since the principles that are his own are not still well enough established to be safe from the revolutions of fortune.

But do we say nothing of the famous dispute between the | partisans 75
of the ancient music and those of the modern? This question does not enter into my design; however, if, after having read all the authors that I can find on music, from Aristoxenus to Mr Rameau, I am permitted to tell of the impression that I am left with, I could state in a few words. The ancients were the fathers of music; they established all its principles, and, by the musical taste that their works have spread from age to age, they have produced in our time children, of whom it seems that most do not know their fathers, and that the others, still more ungrateful, refuse to know them.

The question, elsewhere, is not very important, nor even very reasonable: we do not have many musical pieces of the ancient world, where apparently genius and taste distributed graces that books could not explain. The dispute that has been raised for some time over the precedence of Italian music or French music could have more foundation and usefulness; but I do not know if it does more honour to our taste. Sixty years ago, French music, which was satisfied, in its compositions, modestly to counter nature, would sweep unopposed over all the brilliance of Italian music. Lulli, who, although Italian in spirit and in birth, was French in education and in taste, made it victorious everywhere. I could cite in its favour the testimony of all Europe, whom it drew to Paris. Italian music, which was not allowed to become well known to us, still only served in the shadows; but after some years Lulli started to grow old. This was the fatal moment of the revolution: this was enough for a thousand people to relegate it almost to the rank of the Greek musicians. He is not yet so abandoned that he does not still have a number of partisans, but how long can they stand against the torrent of fashion?

This, gentlemen, is the present state of music in France. I believed that it was relevant to first remind you of the general notions | with which 76
that nature furnishes us, the principles that reason, joined with experience, has found to form into an art, and the manner in which they have been taken in different times to perfect practice. But finally this is enough of a prelude: it is time to come to the piece itself, and to talk to you of a musical beauty, or rather, not to fatigue you too greatly, to announce it to

composer at the French court. André gives the wrong date of death.

25 In 1739.

you in public for the first time.

Second part

Gentlemen,

An ancient author on music,[26] whose Treatise we have in the collection of Greek musicians, enters into his subject with an enthusiasm worthy of the material:

> The profane, flee from these places:
> Hurry, lovers of ethereal beauty;
> It is only pure souls,
> That should address the language of gods.

This is the idea that all the ancient philosophers, Plato at their head, had of music; they regarded it as a wholly divine language by the tone that is takes, not only above simple speech, but even above poetry; by the sublimity of its subjects, which had, in their origin, the praises of the Divinity and those of great men, of whom the virtues had enough light to explain some features, above all by the nature of musical numbers, which, from high in the heavens, if I may put it thus, presided over its compositions, and by the extraordinary transports that it inspired in all the hearts that knew how to understand it. With this idea of music, must it be surprising that our ancient masters really wanted to address this divine language only to divine souls, to souls elevated above common sentiments by genius or by taste; more aware | of the agreements of harmony than of the sweetness 77
of sounds; even cultivated by science or by exercise to know all its fineness better?

I know that there is in the world a type of philosopher who do not have so advantageous an idea of music, or rather that have one almost entirely opposite; they maintain that feeling is the only judge of harmony, that the pleasure of the ear is the sole beauty that one must seek; that even this pleasure depends too much on opinion, prejudice, received customs, and acquired habits to be able to be liable to certain rules; and the proof, they say, is it not obvious? Find me in the world two nations that agree on this point? Europeans and Orientals, French, Italians, Germans, Spaniards and English, even the Turks and the Tartars, have not they all their particular music, that they elevate without fuss above all others? in a word they are charmed, content, what more is needed? nothing doubtless for people who

26 Gaudentius, '*Εἰσαγωγὴ ἁρμονική*'. In: ***Antiquae musicae auctores septem.*** Ed. by Marcus Meibomius. †Little is known of Gaudentius, but he probably lived before Ptolemy (c. 90–c. 168 CE), whose work he seems not to have known.

only want to live and think by chance; but for people of intellect, for men, there must certainly be something more; in their pleasures reason must at least share equally with the senses. If I should contradict some in the stalls of the concert-hall, some new Midas,[27] for example, who only has ears to carry there, reason at least will not retract it; let us follow it to the end, and, by the example of the celebrated Pythagoras,[28] try to banish chance from the world, if not from human life, at least from the sciences and the arts; this is the design that I propose in this discourse in relation to music. To proceed there in an orderly way, I repeat my ordinary division of beauty into three types; to show better the soundness by their scope.

I thus say:

1. That there is an essential musical beauty, absolute, independent of any institution, even divine.
2. That there is a natural musical beauty dependent on the institution of the Creator, but independent of our opinions and our tastes. | 78
3. That there is an artificial musical beauty, in some way arbitrary, but always dependent on the eternal laws of harmony.

Finally, in what consists the precise form of musical beauty? This is the last question that we will try to resolve. Let us fully enter into the subject.

An essential musical beauty, absolute and independent of every institution, even divine; what a paradox we see here for an endless number of people! Yet nothing, gentlemen, nothing more certain, nothing must be more commonly known in a city as enlightened as yours; and to convince any man capable of reflection, I only have to take him out of one of our concerts while he still it carries in his ear and in his heart. You come, sir, to listen to beautiful music, would you like to tell me what you have found beautiful? Everything; the melody of the voices and the symphony of the instruments seemed at every moment to dispute the honour of pleasing you. But how did it please you, this confused multitude of voices so different, of instruments so diverse, of sounds so dissimilar, is it not likelier to stun the ear than entertain it? ... You do not give justice to our players; the multitude does not causes confusion; we all heard them starting together at the same moment, united and distinguished, rising in cadence, descending the same, raising, sustaining, mutually lending their reciprocal graces; we admired particularly the beautiful arrangement of consecutive sounds, the

27 †According to Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, xi, ll. 146–193, Midas, after having been cured of his affliction of turning everything he touched into gold, was invited to join in judging a musical contest between Apollo and Pan. All the judges favoured Apollo, save Midas, who declared for Pan. To punish him for his lack of musical taste, Apollo turned his ears into those of a donkey.

28 Pythagoras, in Ptolemy, *Harmonics*. Ed. by John Wallis. 1682, 209

decency of their march, the regularity of their periodic movements, the proportion of their intervals, the accuracy of timing, the perfect accord of all the divisions of the musicians ... Very good; arrangement, regularity, proportion, accuracy, decency, accord, I start to see beauty in your music; but | all this is not the sound that struck you on the ear, nor the agreeable 79
sensation that resulted in your soul, nor the reflective satisfaction that followed it in your heart ... What would you like to conclude from that? ... I conclude that in the concert there is an agreement purer that the sweetness of sounds that you hear there; a beauty, which is not the object of the senses; a certain beauty that charms the mind, that only the mind can perceive, and which it judges; do you doubt it? ... No; but I would like to know by what rule is it judged ... By which rule have you yourself judged to give me so beautiful an idea of your concert? ... By which rule! I have not consulted any but that of making myself attentive to everything; I followed all the movements of successive or simultaneous sounds; I compared them with each other; I observed all the rhythms; I felt them, the risings and the fallings, the flowing style of numbers in the compositions, the sallies, the rests, the replays, the re-meetings, the goings, the comings ... That is to say, sir, that while so many voices of musical instruments were striking you ear with pleasant agreements, you felt inside yourself an internal master of music who beat the measure, if I may put it thus, to display to you the accuracy, who revealed to you the principle in a light superior to the senses; in the idea of the order, the beauty of the arrangement of the design of the piece; in the idea of musical numbers, the rule of proportions and of harmonic progressions that there in which they are the essential images; in the idea of decency, a sacred law that prescribed to each part his place, his term and his proper way to arrive there; that is to say that while each of your musicians reads his tablature on paper, you also read your own written with eternal and unerasable notes in the great book of reason, which is open to all attentive minds; that is to say, in a word, that it is necessary either to refuse to music the name of harmony, which it has carried without contradiction from the first concert that it gave to the | world up to our 80
era, or agree that there is an essential musical beauty that must be the inviolable rule: a fundamental truth that we must first establish for the honour of so beautiful an art.

I say, in second place, that there is a natural musical beauty dependent of the institution of the Creator, but independent of out opinions and our tastes. Can one disagree, if only one pays attention to the nature of the resonant bodies, to the sensitivity of the ear in the discernment of sounds, to the harmonic structure of the human body, above all to the sympathy of certain sounds with the emotions of our soul? Four sensible proofs that music is not a purely human institution that we are allowed to add to, to take from, to change entirely as we please. We advance nothing except on

the faith of the most incontestable experience.

First, what do it teach us on the nature of resonant bodies? The great Descartes[29] remarked, at the start of the last century, that the sound of a string is never heard alone, but always with its sharp octave. The savant Father Mersenne,[30] his friend, confirmed his remark by several experiments. After them, Mr Sauveur, the famous academician,[31], discovered in the same harmonic sound, in that, for example, of the string of a harpsichord, two other very agreeable consonances: its fifth and its major third. One distinguishes all three so well, when one exercises the ear a little, that Mr Rameau[32] made it the fundamental principle of his new system of music. It is the same with the sound of the voice: it seems unique, and it is triple in nature; that is to say, that outside the main sound, which is the deepest and the most dominant, it carries with it its octave, its fifth and its major third.

| What must be the sensitivity of the organ that distinguishes them 81
with this precision? Its delicacy is such that if two musical strings are put in unison on a monotone, and one shortens one of the two by a two-thousandth part of its length, a good ear can perceive the dissonance, which is nevertheless only of a one hundred and ninety-sixth part of a tone. The experiment and the calculation are Mr Sauveur's. Mr Dodart,[33] another illustrious academician, relates them and confirms them in his excellent Memoir on the formation of the voice, printed in the volume of 1700. Mr Sauveur, having made afterwards, on the same subject, several other experiments, gives us a second calculation,[34] from which he infers that the fineness of the ear, for the discernment of sounds, is around ten thousand times greater than that of sight for the discernment of colours. Must one be surprised that music has produced in all times effects so prodigious?

One will be still less surprised, if one considers that the structure of the human body is entirely harmonic. I do not say that the nerves are strung on the bones like strings on the board of a musical instrument, nor

29 Réne Descartes, *Summary of Music*, chapter on the octave.

30 †Marin Mersenne (1588–1648), French philosopher and mathematician.

31 Sauveur, 'Systême general des Intervalles des Sons, & Son application à tous les Systêmes & tous les Instrumens de Musique'.

32 Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Génération harmonique, ou Traité de musique théorique et pratique.* Paris, 1737, preface.

33 Denis Dodart, 'Mémoire sur les causes de la voix de l'homme, & ses différens tons'. In: *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences: Mémoires* (1700), pp. 244–292. †Denis Dodart (1634–1707), French doctor and naturalist.

34 Joseph Sauveur, 'Rapport des Sons des Cordes d'Instruments de Musique aux Fléches des Cordes; Et nouvelle détermination des Sons fixes'. In: *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences: Mémoires* (1713), pp. 324–350.

that the arteries beat the measure by their regular pulsing, nor that the heart marks time and rhythm by its reciprocation. This thought, which is perhaps sound, however ancient, could seem only a frivolous imagining: I proceed to the evidence.

Anatomy shows us that the nerves that line the base of the ear, to serve as the organ of the sense of hearing, are divided into an endless number of delicate fibres; that these fibres, in leaving the eardrum and the labyrinth, spread themselves to all parts; some into the heart, which is the refuge of the mind and the imagination; others into the back of the mouth, | which is the organ of the voice; others into the heart, which is the prince 82
of the affections and the sentiments; others, finally, into the lower viscera; that all these fibres are of a very great mobility, of a very quick action, and in the right tension to be moved at the first impulse of the acoustic membrane; a little like the strings of a harpsichord at the first touch of the keys to which they respond. To this communication of the auditory nerve with the principal parts of the body, and by those to all others, add the admirable construction of the different organs that work together to form the voice: the cavity of the chest, to hold the air needed for its production, the windpipe of the trachea, to serve as airway, the opening of the glottis to produce effectively the voice through its vibrations; the channel of the mouth and the vaults of palate, to strengthen it by their resonance; the tongue, teeth and lips to modify it in many ways that art can not imitate. Now, in all these works of the Creator, in all these organs so proper in their nature, some for forming sound, others for receiving its impression, how many sensible marks are there of a design of harmony, and of a touching and moving harmony.

I say the design of a moving harmony, by the natural sympathy it creates between certain sounds and the emotions of our soul. It is not a question of explaining how; I have no need, but the fact of it is indubitable. There are sounds that have, with our heart, a secret intelligence that we cannot ignore; lively sounds that inspire us to courage; languid sounds that soften us; happy sounds that enliven us; mournful sounds that make us sad; majestic sounds that elevate our soul; harsh sounds that irritate us; soft sounds that moderate us. Love and hate, desire and fear, anger and pity, hope and despair, admiration, terror, audacity, whatever different passions we have, | there are sounds in nature to express and impress them. I will 83
go further.

Can we not even add that there is a species of gradation in the feelings that they impress on us, according to the different qualities of the resonant bodies from which they come? I man according as the bodies that send them to us are living or inanimate, or, according as in their origin they were living or not. I call upon experience. Has it not often been remarked that the sound of a trumpet, of an oboe, or of a flute, which receives its

harmony from the living breath of a man, penetrates us entirely otherwise from that of a pipe organ, which is only animated by the breath of dead air? I still believe, having experience, that the sound of a brass string, however harmonic to the ear, is less touching than that of a catgut string. And indeed, the latter being structurally much more conformed to that of the nerves and fibres of our bodies, it is not natural that they have with them more consonance than a hard and inflexible metal that always holds a little of the sharpness of the material? However it is, it is well-known, by the same reason as this conformity, that of all the musical instruments, that whose sounds sympathize most with our interior dispositions is the human voice. I attest to it all ears that are even a little attentive. A singing voice, well-conducted and well-handled, prevails infinitely, in terms of ability to move, over the most musical instruments; the sound is livelier, the tone cleaner, the agreements more exact, the passages sweeter, the nuances more graceful, the temperament more fine, the expression more animated, the total that results mellower, if I may say so, more insinuating, more penetrating. And how could it not be, since from its nature the human voice must necessarily be more in unison with the harmony of our body and our soul?

Since all the sceptics of the world undertake | to contradict reason 84
and experience when it pleases them, attributing all the rules of music to opinion and prejudice, they must either declare themselves deaf, or remain silent. The nature of resonant bodies, the fineness of the ear in discerning sounds, the structure of the human body, which is so harmonic in all its composition, and the natural sympathy of certain tones with certain passions of the soul are invincible proofs that the strength of mind on which they pride themselves, is only, in this point as in all others, a frantic and foolish strength: they are always just as fertile in arguments as they are devoid of reason.

Let us conclude, gentlemen, with all musical philosopher that have ever been, that music is not a purely human invention; that the author of nature is the first instituter of it; that he measured the tones, the consonances, the chords in the eternal light of numbers called musical; that he ordained the operation; directed the rhythms, marked the agreeable times; that he noted, so to speak, the fundamental harmony in the majority of sounding and resonant bodies that surround us; that he himself distinguished the genres, differentiated the characters, assigned to each the parts that can enter into a concert, its charm, its own pleasantness; and consequently, that there is a natural musical beauty that is arbitrary with respect to him, but that, in all that he wanted to determine, is absolutely necessary with respect to us: this is the second proposition that I had undertaken to prove.

What! must one thus leave nothing to the discretion of the musician, nothing to the liberty of genius, nothing to the instinct of taste, nothing

to the light of fancy? Is the musical profession thus fated to be restricted within a prison of rules? Would this not be the way of extinguishing its fire and removing its grand air? And would not forbidding fancy to the | 85
musician try to banish the fifth from music?

No, gentlemen, the rigour of rules does not go so far. Outside the two species of musical beauty that exist, as we have just proved, independently of the will of men, we admit a third that depends on it in some way in its institution and in its application. I mean an artificial musical beauty, that, after having accorded to the eternal rules of harmony all that they absolutely demand through the voice of nature, releases, so to speak, the hand of genius, yields a lot to taste, and even cedes something to the fancy of the composer. Is this enough to satisfy the musicians? We agree with them that there is in music a species of beauty of institution and of art; a beauty of genius, a beauty of taste, and in certain ways a beauty of fancy and of spur. We see a wide field open to musical liberty, but to prevent abuses that could lead to licentious degeneracy, it is necessary that it is explained to us: that we recall here the first principles of art that we established in our first discourse.

The very idea of consonances, which have been our principal object, declares to us that they necessarily enter into musical composition. But because they are so few in number, it would be feared that, despite the sweetness that accompanies them, they should finally come to cause distaste by the too-frequent repetition of the same tones. It would thus be necessary to find the secret, whether of augmenting the number of them, or of sometimes spicing their taste with some seasoning. As to augmenting the number of consonances, the bounds that nature has prescribed to the ear would be an insurmountable obstacle. It has thus been necessary to be content with seasoning the sweetness with a kind of harmonic salt. And where is it found, this necessary harmonic salt, above all in great compositions, to vary the chords, to | link them together, to create a more 86
sensible expression by a more piquant modulation? Has it been divined? Music has gone to take it in the bosom of its cruelest enemies: it has found temperaments to reconcile them; that is to say the art of softening the hardness, of even lending them a part of the pleasantness of consonances; to use them like shadows in a painting, or like the connections in discourse that serve to pass from one accord to another; of preparing the way before they arrive, in preceding them by lively and sweet sounds, which choke the disagreement at its birth, and when this preparation is impossible or too difficult, of saving them in retrospect by succeeding them with brilliant agreements to cover the defect; in a word, the art is found of so placing dissonances in a composition, that if they injure the ear a little more, they only injure it to please us further. There is thus a paradox: and here is the explanation.

Consonances being obliged, by their small number, to repeat themselves very often, they would eventually put the listeners to sleep by too uniform a harmony. What makes music that awakens us, to keep us always spellbound? Allow me, gentlemen, a sensible comparison, to make myself understood to everyone. It employ dissonances in its compositions to whet, if I may put it thus, the appetite of the ear, like another art, which is in more ordinary usage, employs in its own salt, pepper and other spices to pique the taste of guests; and its listeners, compensated by the pleasant surprise of seeing born accords from the bosom of discordance itself, painlessly forgive the musicians these little passing bitternesses, as the majority of guests voluntarily forgive their host these spicy mixes that set their palates on fire, provided that he is careful at the same time to serve the means of extinguishing them.

| We still have a more profound reason for admitting dissonances 87
into music. It has been remarked in all times that, if they hurt the ear by some harshness, they are, by this same, more suitable for expressing certain objects. The irregular transports of love, fits of anger, troubles of discord, the horrors of a battle, the crashing of a tempest; and, to give and example from the human voice, there is no-one who does not know that, in certain emotions of the soul, it naturally becomes embittered, that it explodes suddenly, that it rises or falls, not by degrees, but as by leaps and bounds. Thus here we evidently have the place where dissonances can serve; and thus, say the wisest musicians[35] it is indubitably proved that, if they displease the ear by the harshness of their sounds, they will please the mind and the heart by the force of their expression. Pleasure of reason, being the most essential to the soul, must be always the principal object of a skilled composer.

It is thus obvious that the use of well-understood dissonances produces in music a new type of beauty always founded on nature, since the dissonances only pass to the favour of the consonances for which they prepare or which they know, but nevertheless a beauty which is in some way arbitrary, because the temperaments that soften them, the expressions that they take, and the infinite varieties in which they adorn musical compositions, are truly the work of the musician: free beauties that are of his choice; and, if I may put it thus, of his creation. It is true that, for the entry into harmony of these beauties that I call of institution and of art, it is necessary to consult nature well, to meditate well, to reason well, sometimes to gamble | well; 88
but by dint of experiment and of reasoning, it is finally achieved.

It is thus that from music is formed a species of aural rhetoric that has, like that of words, great figures of speech to elevate the soul, graces

35 Denis Dodart, 'Suite de la premiere Partie du Supplément au Mémoire sur la Voix & sur les Tons'. In: *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences: Mémoires* (1706), pp. 388–410.

to touch it, a playful style and jokes and games to divert it. The question is of relevantly placing all these different styles; but when one has either art or talent, we see born, according to the quality of the material that we undertake to express, the three particular species of artificial beauty that we distinguished above: beauty of genius, beauty of taste, and, if you will forgive the term, beauty of fancy.

Beauty of genius in noble subjects, where music can display with pomp great figures, images, movements, suspensions, feints, fugues and contra-fugues, passages from mode to mode, to surprise the ear by the variety; sudden silence, to relax it a moment; sudden re-entry, to surprise it; long periods of holding the same tone, to hold its attention; enthusiasms, to delight it; in a word, all the sublimity of musical eloquence.

Beauty of taste in fine and delicate subjects, where music knows how to make the sounds tender, to animate them, to temper them, to prepare the ear to receive them, to make desirable to it certain consonances to make them more enjoyable, to presage others to make them more agreeable to it, even to divert it sometimes to put it back on course with greater agreement; to suppose, to promise, to imply in order to give it the pleasure of supplying by itself that which it does not hear or of completing that of which it hears only half.

Finally, if I am permitted to have this complacency about musicians, the beauty of fancy in playful subjects that include the sally, during, for example, that expression | of some bizarre imagining, some comic action 89
or some farcical passion. Poets, their colleagues, are permitted a little extravagance in these encounters; and we see every day poetic fancies succeed in pleasing the most serious minds. Why should a musical fancy not have the same privileges in similar circumstances? Why not have Fréni's new type of opera, which has entertained all France? It even pleases us sometimes, perhaps with reason, when it would have no charm but of depicting well to us the original that has been abandoned.

Do modern musicians still complain that theory would like to confine genius and taste within too-strict bounds? We have just seen that they have nothing to fear on this front. We know that genius and musical taste are a type of infused music, written in certain souls by nature's own hands. But it also must be admitted that these natural notes are drawn very lightly; that they are very mixed up; that it is very difficult, not to say impossible, to decipher them into knowledge of musical numbers, which are the true key; in a word, that musical theory is absolutely necessary to push the practice to perfection. The musical lower classes thus look in vain at those two sisters as two enemies who hold contrary views: the celebrated Zarlinp, after having studied all his life the one and the the other, tells us in his own words that he always felt the true theory, very far from ever being opposed to good practice, is in every point perfectly in agreement with

it:[36] *La scienza non discorda punto d'alla huona pratica.*

The first three propositions that I have advanced on musical beauty being thus proved by all kinds of reasons, it remains to answer our last question: What | is its precise form? All those in the company who did me 90
the honour of listening to my first three discourses on beauty will already see my response. My principles are everywhere the same: my conclusion must be.

I thus still say, with St Augustine: *Omnis porro pulchritudinis forma unitas est.*[37] In every type of production, whether of nature or of art, it is always unity that constitutes the form of true beauty. And in the matter of music, I am not afraid of assuring you that this great principle is more incontestable than in any other.

Indeed, gentlemen, let us interrogate good sense and consult our ear; what do we naturally seek in a musical composition? consonances, chords, a concert, a harmony spread everywhere, that is to say unity everywhere. And, on the contrary, what is it that we hear with so much pain in its execution? the roar of a voice, the dissonance of a string, what is called a false song, the irregular beats of certain instruments, discordance between parts of a concert, that is to say, in a word, rupture of the harmonic unity. Let us say something more sensible. What do we ask of a musician who sets words to music? that he is careful to enter into the spirit of the piece; that he grasps well character, genre, mode; that he expresses in his notes, not only the words, but above all the sense; not only the sense of each word, but the sense of the phrase; not only the particular sense of each phrase, but the whole sense of entire text in the whole of his composition. Can one ask him more distinctly that, from the words that one give him and from the air that he adds to them, there must be born a wholly perfect unity? a unity so necessary, that without it you would display in vain all the fineness of your art, I would find in the totality of your piece only a shocking | disproportion. You make me listen to the sweetest sounds, the 91
most regular rhythms, the most harmonious chords: it is a pleasure for the ear. But, by a fatal oversight of your subject, you unfortunately give me an air that clashes with your words. You sing me a tempest over an air of victory; you hum a funeral pageant like a saraband, you portray the descent of a divinity onto the earth like a village dance. Your music sings where it should only speak; you run breathlessly where you should only walk; you trail languidly, you float, if I may say so, where you should fly on the wing; you play harmoniously on each word, and you abandon the harmony of sense. What a torment for reason!

We are naturally so delicate on this point of musical unity that we

36 Gioseffo Zarlino, *Istituzioni armoniche*, vol. II, p. 100ff.

37 Augustine, *Epistles*, 18.

ruthlessly desire that composers direct their attention, not only to the character of the subjects that they treat, but to the place of the scene where their pieces must appear, to the condition of the people that they talk of, to the morals and the sentiments that characterize them in the story. This is a difficult attention, I admit, by the breadth of knowledge and genius that it demands; but an indispensable one to avoid the horrible contrasts that so often mar the beauties of our music. I mean, to avoid the ridicule of putting, for example, the tone of the Opera in the Church, or the tone of the Church in the Opera, of composing for the theatre airs that are only suited to the floor of a chamber; or for a chamber, airs that are only suitable to the sublimity of the theatre; of making a king sing in the tone of a subject who pleads; or a subject who pleads in the tone of a king who commands as master; and, if one has some common passions to express, of noting the sighs of an Alexander[38] in the tone of a sybarite[39]; or the sighs of a sybarite in the tone of an Alexander; in a word, the | ridicule of 92
making us hear two people in the same person; the one in the name he is given, and the other in the tone that he is made to take.

Finally, to reach the last evidence for our principle, what is it that we sometimes admire to the point of ecstasy in these great concerts that assemble so many voices of all ranges, so many instruments of all types, so many parts so discordant in appearance to play together? Is it not still the unity that is found in the art of introducing and of maintaining it in this prodigious multitude of very different sounds? It is said that these great musical works have their origin in the inventive spirit of the last century. But the wise and ingenious Seneca[40] gives us a description that proves very well, if I am not mistaken, that they only revived them. At least it is certain that one will see there the rule of unity of which we speak perfectly well established.

You see, he says in his 84th letter, this multitude of voices that make up our great musical choirs? they come together so perfectly, that it seems that they give the ear a single unique sound. *Vides quam multorum vocibus chorus constet? unus tamen ex omnibus sonus redditur.*[41] Among these voices there are the high, there are the low, there are average voices of all types. One hears those of the men with those of the women, the ones and the others intermingling with the flutes accompanying them. Each of these voices is, so to speak, hidden in the multitude, and however they all appear with the

38 †Doubtless referring to Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE), king of Macedonia 336–323 BCE and conqueror of a large empire in Asia.

39 †A person devoted to luxury or pleasure. The term comes from the ancient Greek city of Sybaris, whose citizens were traditionally noted for this.

40 The Younger, *Epistulae*, lxxxiv.

41 †Ibid., lxxxiv.9.

character that distinguishes them. *Aliqua illic acuta est, aligna gravis, aliqua media; accedunt viris feminæ, interponuntur tibiæ: singulorum illic latent voces; omnium apparent.*[42] I still only speak of the choirs that were known to the ancient philosophers. There is more in ours, | continues Seneca; 93
in the solemn concerts that we give to the public, there are more singers than the theatre once had spectators: *De choro dico, quem veteres philosophi noverant: in commissionibus nostris plus cantorum est, quam in theatris olim spectatorum fuit.*[43] Outside this great number of voices, our amphitheatres are surrounded with trumpets, and our orchestras full of an infinity of instruments of every type, wind and string. Thus we see a multitude that seems to threaten us with a horrible discordance. Nothing to fear, they form a concert: *Cum omnes vias ordo canentium implevit et cavea æneaioribus cincta est et ex pulpito omne tibiarum genus, organorumque consonuit, fit concentus ex dissonis.*[44] Now, gentlemen, I ask you: how can a concert be born from a multitude of sounds so different, and sometimes so dissonant, if our ancient and modern Orpheuses had not found that art of reducing this multitude to a unity; or, to help myself to the beautiful expression from the poetry of Horace, if they had not found the art of composing a musical totality that, despite the multitude of its parts, becomes perfectly one, by a type of miracle: *Rem prodigialiter unam?*[45]

After all these reasons that I have just drawn from the most common notions of good sense, and in the experience of the greatest masters, can one doubt, I no longer say the existence of a musical beauty independent of our opinions and of our tastes, I say the preëminence that nature has given it over all other types of sensible beauty? One may perhaps oppose to it that of painting, which, indeed, has many marvels. But if, before finishing, we want to put them in parallel for a moment: what a parallel, or rather what a contrast! There is no-one who knows that these two types of beauty consist in imitation; or, if you prefer, in expression. Here we have a point of concurrence where music and painting meet in the same design. What a difference in the execution!

| What do we see in the most beautiful painting? only the surface of 94
bodies, a face, eyes, fixed and inanimate colours, some airs at most that seem to want to speak. Music reveals to us, right to the depths of the soul, its agitations by its rapid sounds; its battles by its contrary sounds, its calm by its tranquil and uniform sounds. Painting only offers to our eyes immobile objects, objects at most in the attitude of movement: that is all of life that it can give in its pictures. Music paints movement, even with its

42 †The Younger, *Epistulae*, lxxxiv.9.

43 †Ibid., lxxxiv.10.

44 †Ibid., lxxxiv.10.

45 †Horace, *Art of Poetry*, l. 29.

different degrees of acceleration or slowing, such as its subject demands, or such that is pleasing. We only see in a painting a moment of action, often the least part of the total action that the painter wants us to remember. A single musical air can make us recall the whole, its start, it progression, its end. Twenty pictures would be needed to gather all that is contained in the least of our cantatas or our sonatas. When painting portrays a battle to you, you believe you see it. That is the greatest praise we can give it. When music undertakes to present it to you in a concert of voices and instruments, you believe it is there. The sound of the march of the two armies is heard, the beating of the charge, noise of their arms, the ringing of the blows with which they hammer each other, the triumphant cries of the victors, the plaintive tones of the vanquished: it seems that our heart is on the field of battle where the combat is fought. Nothing more admirable in painting than perspective, which, on a flat surface, makes us perceive the depths and distances that seem to stretch as far as the eye can see. But, in truth, it is necessary for the imagination to lend much to believe them very far away, despite the eyes' testimony that assures us of the opposite. Music has distances that appear more real. After unanimous bowing by twenty musicians, it makes us hear their echoes in a distance that certainly tricks the ear: a | blind man thinks that he hears two concerts that answer 95
each other at a very considerable distance.

However, painting does not complain of its defeat. I do not mean that its art is not today in a very high degree of perfection, perhaps even higher than that of music; I mean only that it has received from nature neither as much help not as many lessons as its rival. I mean, for example, that colours are not as expressive as sounds; nor the hand that guides the brush as flexible as the glottis that produces the voice; nor the eye that directs the painter as fine as the ear that directs the musician; nor the canvas that receives the paints as docile as the air that receives the musical impulses; not the rays of light that make us see the beauty in a picture, as penetrating or as sensible as the aerial vibrations that make us hear the charms of a concert; nor finally the degrees of colourisation that must distinguish the persons of a great design of painting so easy to measure or to calculate as the degrees of intonation that it are given to a voice or an instrument, according to the part that is assigned to it in a choir of music. Now, with all these advantages, is it surprising that musical beauty has more sublime and more delicate graces, stronger and more tender than those of all the other arts?

This is a new pleasantness, gentlemen, that illustrious citizens give to your city through the institution of a concert by rule. Several important towns of the kingdom have given you the example; but what is peculiar to you, what is perhaps unique in all France, is that you have found among yourselves that which forms a complete concert, without having had need

to borrow from elsewhere: geniuses for composition, talented people for executing it, and, what is infinitely more estimable, conductors to direct it, of the most proper character to make it in every way useful and agreeable; men, as | a sacred author[46] says in praise of the least equivocal heroes in 96
history, of men who are lovers of beauty, to ordain the design: *Pulchritudinis studium habentes*;[47] also connoisseurs that are lovers of beautiful music, to tastefully choose the pieces: *In pueritia sua requirentes modos musicos*;[48] but above all men full of honour and virtue: *Homines magni in virtute et prudentia sua prædili*;[49] wise and prudent, to banish all moral dissonances that could have confused the harmony of good morals in the city; to mark the days of assembly, so that pleasure and duty never find themselves in opposition; finally, to rule order and decency, which is always the most beautiful decoration of a public assembly. Thus, in a single institution, they have found the way to give you all types of beauty that I have undertaken to explain: optical beauty in the brilliant spectacle of people that the concert brings together; moral beauty in the decorum observed there; intellectual beauty in the choice of the pieces that are sung or played there, and harmonic beauty in the exactness of the execution; that which forms so proper a whole to remind you agreeably of the idea of eternal and supreme beauty, the only one capable of fully satisfying us.

46 Sirach 44.

47 †Sirach 44:6.

48 †Sirach 44:5.

49 †Sirach 44:3.

Fifth Discourse

On the modus

5

Gentlemen,

The subject on which I propose to speak to you today has always appeared to me one of the most worthy of being discussed in an academy; but unfortunately we cannot, | in our language, express it by a single word. 97
You know how inconvenient paraphrase in a discourse is for the speaker and for the listeners; permit me, to avoid it, to borrow from a foreign language, if indeed one can thus describe a language that we almost all learn from the cradle, and which is the mother of our own.

In a word, gentlemen, I am going to speak to you of what is called in Latin the *modus*: a quality or virtue that all the sacred and profane philosophers everywhere recommend to us with so much care, in ceaselessly preaching to us of being moderate in the usage of the goods of life to avoid the bad things that are inseparable from excess; of modifying our pretentions in civil society if we want to live agreeably there; of being modest in the best times, and of maintaining tranquillity in our heart in the darkest; of taking care in aiming at the great not to tend towards the wide, or, in contenting ourselves with the mediocre, not to fall into the base; of always having the ruler at hand to judge the career that we must make in the world, and the compass to circumscribe the limits within which reason ordains us to confine ourselves; finally, in prescribing to us in life, in science, in art, in sentiments, in our speech, in our methods, this general rule that one must keep the *modus* in everything. I ask once more for grace for a term that necessity obliges me to take for myself. The *decorum* of the Romans having firmly passed into our language, why has the *modus* not passed thus? But, without undertaking to fully justify it, I pray that I will be forgiven it, while waiting for the Académie Française to furnish me with a happier term to make myself understood.

The *modus*, in general, as I have just described it, embraces topics more disparate than I undertake to gather in my discourse; I confine myself to the | relation that it can have with beauty, of which I have had the honour 98
of so often speaking to you, and whose nature and attributes one cannot, it seems to me, go into too deeply. Let us see if the *modus* must enter there like the rest; why, and how?

You have doubtless, gentlemen, noticed it myriad times. Nothing is

more ordinary in the world than seeing works of art or of nature that carry off our esteem at first glance, but whose beauties, although real, do not sustain for long the test of a more attentive appraisal: they almost always lose on being considered closely. Here, one finds that the most beautiful features are only sketched; there, that they are too well finished; that there are agreements, but the majority are out-of-place or affected, forced or missing; that there is a great number in certain places that demand fewer; that there are too few in others that demand more. From which it sometimes follows that, after having initially charmed us, they suddenly fall from admiration into contempt, or at least into indifference and forgetfulness.

The first conclusion that I take from this true experience is that in beauty, as in every other thing, there is a certain measure that must be met, but that must not be over-fulfilled; that there are, in seeking beauty, two opposite extremes to avoid, the deficiency and the excess; that between these two extremities, there is a certain point marked by nature, below which an object is not yet quite beautiful, and above which it ceases to be; finally, that this fixed point, which is a type of middle between too much and too little, is thus the seat of true beauty, from which it can depart neither one way nor the other, without degenerating in contracting some vice or at least some culpable viciousness; that is to say, in a word, that even in beauty there is a *modus* to observe, following this maxim | of an 99
ancient philosopher or rather natural good sense: *Quum sit ubique virtutis modus, æque peccat quod excedit, quam quod deficit.*[1]

I really feel, gentlemen, that this heap of expressions, although very familiar, still only present the *modus* through quite confused ideas. Perhaps one will even say, or rather, I already believe that you understand, that you well conceive that beauty can, in every type of beauty, sin by deficiency, but that it is not very conceivable that it could sin by excess. It is thus necessary that I express myself more clearly.

To do so in an orderly way, I divide my subject into three questions, of which I owe the first idea to the prince of orators,[2] who was also a very great philosopher:

1. In what sense is it true to say that beauty is as susceptible of excess as of deficiency?
2. Too much and too little beauty being found equally in two objects, which of the two is more tolerable; or, in case of a choice, which of the two would be preferable to the other?

1 Seneca the Younger, *De Beneficiis*, ii.16. †'As virtue in all cases should be our measure, he who gives too much acts as wrongly as he who gives too little.' (Aubrey translation)

2 †André here refers to Cicero.

3. If, in the necessity of keeping the *modus* in total in beauty, there is even a *modus* to observe in seeking the *modus*, and if there is one, what is the consequence that we must draw from it, each in his state and in his profession, to excel in it as much as possible?

Permit me, gentlemen, to say it: was there ever a subject more worthy of being proposed for the discussion of an academy, by its importance, by its novelty, by its difficulty even, which must be, in the regard of good minds, rather a lure to pique their attentions than an obstacle to repel it? I start my responding to the first question, which is the foundation of the two others.

First, isn't it a strange paradox that beauty, | which it seems that nature 100
is always able to nurture in created objects, can be susceptible to excess? that is to say that an object can have an excess of agreements that disgrace it, displeasing by too many charms, and consequently somehow becomes ugly by dint of being beautiful. We thus certainly see a very apparent contradiction: it it necessary to make it disappear to gain the truth that it conceals.

In the discourses on beauty that have preceded this one, we have distinguished three types of beauty: essential beauty, natural beauty, and beauty that is artificial or, in some way, depends on the institution of men. Recall, if you please, the precise ideas; we will find, if I am not mistaken, how to untangle the difficulty.

I thus admit, firstly, that essential beauty cannot be susceptible to excess; that in the construction, for example, of a work of architecture, or in the shaping of the human body, the symmetry of members that compose it cannot be too well kept; that in a musical composition one cannot give too much attention to the guidance of the musical numbers that must rule the harmony; that a work of the mind can be neither too true, nor too honest, nor too decent; that in morality, one cannot excessively love order, truth, justice towards God and towards men, the intimate honour of one's conscience, or the purity of one's heart, and above all the author of our being, whom it is evident that we will never love enough if we do not love him without limit. And there is even no need to think very deeply to discover the reason: it is that essential beauty, as we have proved elsewhere, is an absolute beauty, whose beauty is measured, not by the more or less agreeable impressions that we receive from objects, but by eternal rules, absolutely independent of our opinions and our tastes; that of eternal sensible beauty, visual or musical, by the eternal rules of geometric proportions or harmonics, | whose nature we know consists of a type of 101
equality, and by consequence that excess cannot be found there; that of essential intelligible beauty in works of the mind, or in morals, by the eternal rules of reason and of order, of good sense and on decency, where

excess is no more to be feared than in mathematical proportions.

Our question must thus be wholly restricted to natural beauty and artificial beauty; to know if they can be susceptible to an excess of beauty, or, less ambiguously, if nature has determined in objects a certain measure of embellishment, beyond which one can add nothing without spoiling them, or at least without diminishing their true charm by this superfluous addition? Only a simple exposition is necessary to convince us, by relation to the four particular species of beauty that have formed the subject of the four preceding discourses.

To start with the most sensible, which is the object of sight, it is agreed that this is a beauty in a picture having a vivid and animated colouring; but at the same time do not all connoisseurs agree that colouring can have too much brightness and vivacity? that colours too clear distract the glance by dazzling us? that they hide from us, by their excessive lustre, firmer beauties, like the ordering and the distribution of the parts of the picture, the exactness of poses, the gradation of shades, the perspective of persons or other objects that enter into the composition of the design? that they therefore rob us of a distinct view of everything together, and finally that this is the reason why new painters never have that touching softness, those temperate graces, that valuable chiaroscuro that time has given to older ones?

One cannot also deny that works of architecture must have some ornaments to make the appearance more varied, more full. The Greeks and the Romans, | who are our first masters, invented them for every 102
order, with the end of giving each the exact amount of beauty of which it is capable. Too bare a body of an edifice cannot long please delicate eyes; but, conversely, what eye is Gothic enough to withstand this dreadful multitude of ornaments that once adorned the frontages of our temples and halls of our old castles? It is not that in these assemblies of little architectural figures, there is not a lot of art: there is too much; and nature, which is content with less, always criticizes a profusion that satisfies us without satisfying it.

Musical beauty is not less susceptible to excess than visual beauty: one knows that consonances are always the essential foundation; however, if you make music where there are only perfect chords, you will immediately bore me with this too-rigorous exactness. Between consonances, the octave is the most perfect, and the fifth the sweetest. Compose me nevertheless an air where you pile without limit octave upon octave, fifth upon fifth, and it is certain that you will fatigue all your listeners with this beautiful monotony. Well-formed dissonances, well-prepared, well-known, are like the salt of a musical composition. It is this necessary, so to speak, to scatter your chords; but if instead of scattering them a little you throw in the salt in handfuls, like a village cook, where will this senseless expenditure end? you

will at first pique the ear, but you can count on soon unavoidably hurting it. There are airs of images or of passions in which one admits that the repetition of certain energetic or moving phrases can have grace, can even sometimes be necessary; it serves to engrave on the soul the features that the first stroke of the chisel could only scratch. But if after two or three repetitions, which cannot be natural, you still continue to repeat to me your repetitions, only to make a beautiful figure of musical | rhetoric, or 103
even, if you desire it, to penetrate me more deeply, you should rather fear producing an entirely contrary effect. My heart revolts against too deep a chisel that tears it; my ear is tired of a repetition that descends into a battology, and which, in starting, was beautiful, becoming a defect by its excess. One must know how to finish: this is, in every art, the maxim of the great masters.

It is thus clear that this maxim extends also to beauty in works of the mind: I confine myself to those of eloquence. There the aim is to be pleasing, as in music, to the ear, to the imagination, and to the heart; but by dint of their desire to please, how many times is it made intolerable, in presenting without limit the same beauties that, naturally, charm the most? in ceaselessly offering to the ear a style too numerous and too musical, phrases that are too measured, cadences that are too marked, shapely periods, if I say so; in a word, a style that feels the modulation of a song more than a simple composition of words? in showing to the imagination images that are too large or too bold, figures pushed to excess or piled upon each other, metaphors upon metaphors, antitheses upon antitheses, flowers upon flowers, brilliancies upon brilliancies, which makes it, like lightning, perpetual bedazzled? in presenting to the heart, in place of the feelings of nature, hyperbolic feelings, or at least artificial ones; that it piles there a fictional sublimity that strains it instead of elevating it, or a moving theatrical scene that stuns instead of moving? It is nevertheless true that we often see the audience leaving wholly ecstatic about these magnificent and superb discourses, as they are called. I am not surprised by it. The orator had the talent of entrancing his audience; it is a debauchery of the mind from which one escapes; the head is still surprised. But let us wait a little whilst drunkenness has taken the place | of reason, and we will soon 104
see good sense, returned to itself, endlessly condemning this intemperance of the mind, this oratorical pomp and luxury, that, regardless of type, is not much less shocking than that of morals.

But finally, do we not do grace to moral beauty? and do we say that even virtue is susceptible to excess? We only have to explain this to us to convince all persons of good sense.

The word *virtue* has two very different meanings. We thus call the dominant and habitual love of order, or the constant will to follow in all things reason, law, religion, honour, in a word, honesty of all types. We

have already declared that this love, which has as object essential moral beauty, can never be excessive. But we also understand by *virtue* (and this is the more ordinary sense) the practice of duties such as we see in men who are called virtuous; I mean a certain assembly of views that they propose, of impulses of the heart to which they abandon themselves, and of external actions that are born from these impulses. Now, gentlemen, is it not certain, by the experience of all eras, that, in the practice of virtue, these views of the mind can be false, too wide or too bold; these impulses of the heart, too impetuous or too ardent; and the external actions that proceed from them can exceed the rules, that they are even very often so little measured that in accomplishing a duty one can injure several others? Thus here is a sense where one can say that excess often disfigures beauty in morals; that it alters the basis by the means, that it even sometimes corrupts all nature, up to transforming it into its opposite, into moral ugliness and deformity. This is the sense that one can indeed use every time our virtues degenerate into vices by the excess that they carry: prudence, into artifice; constancy, into stubbornness; justice, into severity, honour, | into pride; religion, into 105
superstition; zeal, into fury and anger.

This is a truth so evident that it was known even in the shadows of paganism. Everyone knows that Socrates, the wisest of the Greek philosophers, put at the head of his morality this great maxim that must not be broken: *Ne quid nimis.*[3] The foremost of the Roman philosophers, Cicero, supposes, as an incontestable principle, that in the best things there is a point where it is necessary to know to stop oneself, for fear of corrupting good with the admixture of evil: *In omnibusque rebus videndum est quatenus.*[4] The principle was adopted universally by Seneca; he everywhere devotes himself to provng that virtue consists, not only as is commonly imagined, in good intention or in the following duties, but still more in the *modus* is observed there to make them agree: *Omnis in modo virtus est.*[5]

But if there was any question about the type of authorities, we could effortlessly find more irrefutable ones to put to you. Before Socrates, Solomon, the wisest of kings, gave us the as maxims: to avoid excess in everything, *noli nimius esse, ne forte offendas*;[6] not to carry prudence too far, *prudentiæ tuæ pone modum*;[7] not to overdo justice, *noli esse justus multum*;[8] and not to want to be wiser than necessary, *neque plus sapias quam necesse est,*

3 †'Nothing in excess.'

4 †Cicero, *Orator ad M. Brutum*, xxii. 'In all things a man must decide how far to go.'

5 †The Younger, *Epistulae*, lxvi.9. 'All virtue is in the *modus*.'

6 Sirach 31:20. †'...exceed not, lest you offend.'

7 Proverbs 23:3. †'...set bounds to your prudence.'

8 †Ecclesiastes 7:16. †'Be not over just...'

ne forte obstupescas.[9] The restraint of wisdom, which St Paul recommended to the first of the faithful, represents for us still better this temperament of virtue that we call *modus*:[10] *Non plus sapere, quam oportet sapere, sed sapere ad sobrietatem.* Could it declare to us more clearly that, in the best things and even in the holiest, there are bounds that one cannot pass without | peril? In the end, why would it preach to us restraint even in virtue, if 106
excess was never to be feared there?

Certainly, gentlemen, you would not demand no more to be convinced that, in the sense explained above, beauty is susceptible to excess as well as deficiency: this was my first question.

My second is to known which of the two is the more tolerable; or, in case of a choice, which of the two would be preferable to the other?

Is there a balance, it will first be said, between too much and too little, when it concerns beauty? Let us hear the voices of everyone in the company: is there a man in this numerous assembly — is there a single one in the whole world — who does not prefer too much beauty to too little in his person; too much wit than too little in his discourses and writing; too much virtue to too little in his conduct or in his morals? Is it even permitted to think otherwise? And in beauty as in wealth, is it not always better to have a surplus than to lack the necessary?

The reasoning is specious; I myself even perceive that it has the signal advantage of making people laugh; but this is all the good that one can say about it: only it does not touch on the point in question. Here are a few words on it.

It is relevant to compare together two works of art, or of two processes in morals, of which neither lacks what is necessary to merit being called beautiful, but one of which does not go as far as it could, and the other goes further that it must; or it you prefer, two works or two processes that do not lack anything necessary to be perfectly beautiful, but that one remains short of the point of beauty that it must seek, and the other goes beyond the point where it should stop; they thus both lack something, the first by deficiency and the second by excess. One cannot disagree | that 107
the one and the other are blemishes that degrade the beauty of the objects in which they occur.

The question is to know which of the two is the more tolerable or the less shocking in its nature. This is the sense of our academic problem, of which you doubtless see the extreme usefulness by the influence that it can have on our judgements and on our conduct.

The great author who gave me the first thought, also furnishes me

9 Ecclesiastes 7:16. †'...and be not more wise than is necessary, lest you become stupid.'

10 Romans 12:3. †'...not to think more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly...'

with the solution, at least in part. Cicero,[11] in his sublime Treatise on the *perfect orator*, after having posited as a principle that in all things there is a point of excellence where one must know to stop, immediately adds that he has always notices that excess shocks us more than deficiency: *Etsi enim suus cuique modus est, tamen magis offendit nimium quam parum.* Why? this is what he forgets to tell us. But in his third dialogue on the Orator, where he talks of the ornaments of discourse, he demonstrates the fact by detailing experiences that bear much better on our subject, that it holds for all the species of beauty that we heave distinguished.

It is,[12] he says, quite difficult to understand why beauties, of which the first impression initially has for us the most charm in a work, are also those that leave us soonest when they are offered to us too often, or in too great a number; but it suffices me that all the arts furnish us with daily experience of it. In the new painters, for example, how many places are more brilliant and more florid that in the old ones! We nevertheless see every day, that after having dazzled us at first glance, our admiration ceases in a quarter of an hour; that often even they rather fatigue us by this great brilliance; however, that the old paintings, with their sombre and clouded colours, grasp us | and please us for entire days: thus for visible beauty. 108

In song, how many inflexions of soft and delicate voices! how many fine passages, of small elusive tones, of chords even a little altered by the skill of the musician, initially cause us a pleasure sharper than stronger or more regular accents would! However, if they are made to recur to us too frequently, then, blow by blow, these finesses of art cause not only knowledgeable ears, but even people, by the simple taste of nature, to exclaim to themselves against this ambitious profusion of harmonic beauties: thus for musical beauty.

That if in this beauties that strike our senses, continues our philosophical orator,[13], distaste is so close to the greatest pleasures, much less must one be surprised that the same thing happens in works of the mind. A discourse, for example, or a poem, otherwise well-ordered, well-conducted, elegant, clean, ornamented with the most beautiful shades of eloquence or of poetry, but everywhere equally too much so, and without interruption, does not sustain for long the first satisfaction that it gave us: we feel that it fatigues us by dint of making us admire it. Admiration is a condition of the soul too violent to be durable, and this excess of intellectual beauty is even ordinarily distasteful to us sooner than an excess of sensible beauty, because the judgement of the mind is faster and finer than that of the senses. Also, I confess, adds Cicero, I like rather that in my discourses they

11 Cicero, *Orator ad M. Brutum*, xxii.

12 Cicero, *De Oratore*, iii.96.

13 Ibid., iii.96.

cry: this is good; but I would be very vexed to hear cried too often: this is good; *bene et præclare nobis quamvis sæpe dicatur, belle et festive, nimium nolo*,[14] I would be afraid rather of wearying my audience. It is necessary, to sustain its attention to the end, to give it from time to time some respite. It is necessary | that there should be in a discourse, as in a picture, shadows 109
and depressions to give relief to the places that must be more illuminated, or more noticed: thus for intellectual beauty.

I am vexed, gentlemen, that the eloquence of Cicero does not take me farther; but provided you do me the favour of not losing sight of the state of the question, it will perhaps be quite easy to apply its principle to moral beauty, and of proving that, in even the practice of virtue, excess is more shocking than deficiency. Can we let ourselves doubt it, if we consult the feelings that strike us in view of excess or of deficiency that we notice in the actions of people that are called virtuous? Is not too refined a caution, which, to reach its goal, risks being a little misleading, naturally more shocking than an ordinary foresight that confines itself to not being fooled? Is one not more shocked by an obstinate constancy than by a common firmness that sometimes allows itself to be too easily undermined? more shocked by an inexorable justice that never knows mercy, than by a more human equity that contents itself with not doing injustice? more shocked by a misanthropic sincerity that can never be silent, than a sincerity with a little discretion that does not say all that it could? more shocked by too impetuous a zeal than a zeal that is a little patient? is not one even more shocked by these extreme virtues, that they have by their nature a holier object? And it is not necessary to say that it is only the vice or the self-love of imperfections that is shocking; this is the reason, this is even the virtue, because it is evident that excess is more contrary that deficiency to this precious *modus* that makes in everything a point of perfection; or, to express myself in a clearer way, because it is certain that extreme virtues are more contrary than slightly deficient virtues, to moderation, the only virtue that knows, | in practice, accord with all our duties. Finally, to establish my 110
proposition by proofs of all types, the most sensitive of our poets,[15] who was also a philosopher, put the question: *if the honest man himself must suffer deficiencies?* Has the question ever been: *if the honest man himself must suffer excess?*

You have, gentlemen, too much illumination to conclude from there that it is thus necessary that, in the practice of the arts and even in that of virtue, we content ourselves with mediocrity. This conclusion would be

14 †Cicero, *De Oratore*, iii.101.

15 Nicholas Boileau-Despréaux, 'Épitre de M. de Lamoignon, avocat-général'. In: *Oeuvres de Boileau-Despréaux*. Vol. 2. Paris: J. J. Blaise, 1821. The letter is addressed to Chrétien-François de Lamoignon (1644–1709), French advocate-general and magistrate.

surely far removed from my principles, for, although I recognize that there is in the one and in the other a beautiful mediocrity, it is not the *modus* or the tempered beauty of which I speak. To be content with mediocrity when one can go farther, is cowardice, is reprehensible laziness. I mean only that excess being, in the sense that we have noticed, less tolerable that deficiency in arts and in morals, we must pay attention to the maxim in the care we take to seek in everything the *modus* or the point of perfection; and there is no longer, it seems to me, the slightest doubt about it.

But in the quest itself of seeking the *modus* in everything, even in beauty, is there still a *modus* to observe? This is my last question; how must I answer?

If I say that there is one, is it not authorising human laziness, which already has only too much tendency to relax in the name of moderation? If I say, on the contrary, that in the quest for this *modus*, that, in the arts and in morals, constitutes excellence, there is no *modus* to observe, it is not despairing of the love of beauty, in proposing to it an endless work to find a point of perfection so difficult to recognize?

Indeed, gentlemen, while I am very far from | regarding this point of 111
excellence as an indivisible mathematical point, where one gets nothing if one does not get all; while I agree, on the contrary, to give it some moral latitude; in a word, while I admit several degrees even in beauty according to its kind; despite this necessary modification, not to exaggerate the idea of the *modus*, there is still the difficulty of knowing it well, whether in the arts, or in morals! and with the best will in the world, how many mistakes do we not make every day in its practice! I want to follow any ardour that takes me towards beauty, it carries me beyond the goal; I want to temper it, I remain below. If, to lift myself again, I add some degrees of speed that were lacking in my flight, I soon perceive that I have added too much; if, to return to my point, I subtract a little of this excess, I fall again, without realizing it, into deficiency. This is a type of perpetual balancing, which, in seeking my centre, ceaselessly carries me from high to low, and from low to high, without being able to fix me at the level of the goal; and, to serve me as a comparison that is perhaps more exact, we see, in the search for perfect beauty, the fate of geometers who pursue the quadrature of the circle: in seeking numbers to express the exact ratio of the diameter to the circumference, they always find in their calculations slightly too much or too little, and never just enough.[16]

16 †André is referring to the problem of finding a method of constructing a square with the same area as a given circle, starting from the diameter of that circle, and using only compass and straightedge; that is, with the axioms of Euclidean geometry. This problem was not *proven* to be impossible until 1882. Here, André may only refer to the experiences of mathematicians thus far, but two paragraphs hence he seems to support the growing feeling that the problem was impossible.

Now, from this difficulty, this almost insurmountable task of grasping the true point of the *modus* in beauty in the arts or in that of morals, what must we conclude with relation to our last question? All considered, would it not be better to risk favouring human laziness a little, than to throw lovers of beauty into despair? I believe thus that there is a *modus* to observe even in the care the we must take in attaining it: I will explain.

It is necessary to seek in all types of beauty the exact middle | between 112
excess and deficiency: this cannot be doubted. But because this is a point that it is not really possible to reach except by approximation, as in the geometry of the quadrature of the circle, we say at the same time that in the correction of a work of art, and in the practice even of virtue, it is necessary to know how to be content with the point that seems to us the closest to perfection: this is the maxim of the greatest masters of the science of beauty, as we shall see.

The famous painter of Alexander, Apelles,[17] highly condemned those of his art who, in the correction of their works, did not feel the point of beauty where it must be said: this is enough. Protogenes,[18] he said, is admirable, but he can finish nothing: he always takes the brush in one hand and the sponge in the other; he ceaselessly adds to his pictures or he erases; he strengthens features or softens them; he retouches them further; he finishes nothing by force of wanting too much to finish. This is the ordinary destiny of an immoderate work, finding the point of the *modus* in visible beauty.

Aristoxenus,[19] the first inventor of tempered music, reproached Pythagoras for having too much desire to please reason at the expense of the ear. He was reproached, in his turn, for having too much desire to please the ear at the expense of reason. Who reconciled these two extremes? The celebrated Zarlino, at the end of the sixteenth century, had undertake it in Italy with moderate rules. The great Lulli carried it out in France in the time of our fathers, but sometimes took into practice these rules of modest liberties to give to his compositions an easier air, which, being that of nature, always pleased good taste more than either the excessive scrupulousness of the ancients or the excessive licence of the moderns. There is thus also a *modus* to observe in the search for musical beauty.

| Terence, elsewhere so exact, wants that the same grace to be accorded 113
to works of the mind. Accused by his rivals of permitting himself some irregularities in the construction of his works, he justified himself initially by the example of the most famous comic poets, his predecessors, adding that he liked better to imitate the noble negligence of these great models,

17 †Apelles of Kos [Ἀπελλῆς] (*fl.* 4th century BCE), Greek painter.

18 †Protogenes of Caunus (*fl.* 4th century BCE), Greek painter, rival of Apelles.

19 pseudo-Plutarch, *On Music*.

than the base and obscure exactness of the minor authors who censured him: *Quorum aemulari exoptat neglegentiam potius quam istorum obscuram diligentiam.*.[20] And Cicero, who joined the most consummate experience to the most fortunate genius for composition, made for us, from the orator that was called attic or perfect, a character that proved manifestly that the rule of the *modus*, even in the search for the *modus*, was well known to him. This orator, he said, is soft, easy, flowing, natural without baseness, free without deviation, full without being swollen, bound without constraint, pure in his language without affectation, always more occupied with care for things than care for words, that he even takes pleasure in the most common usages, such that those who hear his discourse imagine at first that they could do just as well. But nothing is more difficult when one comes to try it: *Imitabilis illa quidem videtur esse existimanti, sed nihil est experienti minus.*[21] There is effectively, continues this great master of the art of oratory, a type of elegant negligence, *sed quædam etiam neglegentia est diligens*,[22] which can only be the effect of a great genius or a great effort aided by a great taste. It is thus that, by a moderate care to please, our attic orator is surer to succeed than if he is more exact or more ornate. Similar (it is still Cicero who speaks), similar are those naturally graceful people, who seem better dressed with a little neglect, than other would be by the most minute adjustments.

While poetry must be more exact than prose, the | doctors of Mont- 114
parnasse do not hesitate to extend the rule of Cicero. I want, said Horace,[23] that my poems are of a composition so easy and so flowing, that in reading them each thinks himself capable of effortlessly creating it, and that it would only be his experience that disabused him of it, by the difficulty that there always is in saying common things well:

> *Ex noto fictum carmen sequar, ut sibi quivis*
> *Speret idem, sudet multum, frustraque laboret*
> *Ausus idem: tantum series, juncturaque pollet.*[24]

If the Roman severity admits the maxim of the *modus* in the search for beauty in works of he mind, one can well imagine that French liberty does not reject it. That is the sense of this beautiful piece by Boileau, imitating Horace, but always in his own way, in embellishing his model.

> He cannot write who knows not to give o'er,
> To mend one fault he makes a hundred more:

20 Terence, *Andria*, Prologue, ll. 20–21.

21 †Cicero, *Orator ad M. Brutum*, xxiii.76.

22 †Ibid., xxiii.78.

23 Horace, *Art of Poetry*.

24 †Ibid., ll. 240–242.

A verse was weak, you turn it much too strong.
And grow obscure for fear you should be long;
Some are not gaudy, but are flat and dry;
Not to be low, another soars too high.
Would you of every one deserve the praise?
In writing vary your discourse and phrase;
A frozen style, that neither ebbs nor flows,
Instead of pleasing, makes us gape and doze.[25]

Another of our poets,[26], who deserves to be less unknown, expressed still better, if I am not mistaken, our rule of the *modus* in the advice that he gives, under the name of Saint-Évremond,[27] to two authors of quality. These two gentlemen, great admirers of the famous Comte de Grammont,[28] so known at the court of Louis XIV[29] by his exploits of all types, had formed the design of celebrating them in | verse. Here is the advice they were 115
given to succeed in their work:

Mark these facts quite plainly,
People like you would not have grace
To rise insolently;
And it is not always at the top of Parnassus
That you sing with pleasure
That by an easy turn every story is explained;

25 Nicholas Boileau, *Art of Poetry*, ch. 1. †The translation is from Albert S. Cook, ed., *The Art of Poetry: The poetical treatises of Horace, Vida, and Boileau.* Boston: Ginn & Company, 1892, which credits the translation to Chalmers. Since poetry always suffers particularly in translation, the original French is reproduced here:

Qui ne sait se borner ne sut jamais écrire.
Souvent la peur d'un mal nous conduit dans un pire.
Un vers était trop lâche, et vous le rendez dur:
J'évite d'être long, et je deviens obscur.
L'un n'est point trop fardé, mais sa muse est trop nue;
L'autre a peur de ramper, il se perd dans la nue.
Voulez-vous du public mériter les amours?
Sans cesse, en écrivant, variez vos discours.
Un style trop égal, et toujours uniforme,
En vain brille à nos yeux; il faut qu'il nous endorme.

26 Hamilton. †Antoine [Anthony] Hamilton (1646–1720), Irish author who wrote in French.

27 †Charles de Marguetel de Saint-Denis, seigneur de Saint-Évremond (1610–1703), French soldier and essayist.

28 †Philibert, comte de Gramont (1621–1707), French soldier and nobleman, and the subject of the famous *Mémoires*, written with his consent by Antoine Hamilton, his brother-in-law, which provides a witty, truthful, and not altogether flattering account of Gramont's life and character.

29 †King Louis XIV of France (1638–1715, reigned 1643–1715).

Follow nature closely,
And in each verse the rhyme expresses,
Of the miserable prosaic
And style too poetic
Avoid both excesses. [30]

Thus, gentlemen, nothing is firmer for all sorts of reasons, than that in works of the mind there is a *modus* to observe in the search for the point that separates too much from too little beauty. Is it the same in morals or in moral beauty? Let us consult further the principle that we initially established.

This is the extreme difficulty, not to say the impossibility, that we try in all things in grasping the true point of perfection; a difficulty that is all the greater in morality, where the subject matter is infinitely more complicated than in the practice of the finest arts. In life, how many natural relations do we have, amongst each other, and amongst other sociable beings whom we know! and, consequently, how many obligations must we have to fulfil in the different societies that we have on earth! In the universal society, which unites us with God and with men; in the general human society, which links us with all peoples by the law of humanity; in the particular society, which gathers us into the body of a nation under the same civil laws; in jobs, that occupy us for the public service; in a family, into which Providence led to us to be born; in a company, where we find ourselves | engaged by necessity 116
or by choice; in a liaison of friendship or of propriety, of honour or of religion, of politics or of interest: in all these circumstances, how many necessary virtues whose concourse discomfits us by myriad appearances of incompatibility!

There is though a point where they must all meet and lend each other a hand, so to speak, like inseparable sisters; but in a lengthy sequence of actions, or even sometimes in a single one, where is the spirit right enough

30 †The original French:

Contez ces faits tout uniment,
Gens comme vous n'auroient pas bonne grâce
A s'élever insolemment;
Et ce n'est pas toujours au sommet du Parnasse
Que l'on chante avec agrément
Que par un tour aisé chaque récit s'explique;
Suivez la nature de près ,
Et que pour chaque vers la rime faite exprès,
Du misérable prosaïque,
Et du style trop poétique
Évitez l'un et l'autre excès.

See Antoine Hamilton, *Œuvres du comte Antoine Hamilton.* Paris: Antoine-Augustin Renouard, 1812, vol. 1, p. 61. André misquotes the sixth line of this extract as 'Et dans vos vers sans trop d'apprêts'.

to always grasp it so exactly, this meeting-point of all the virtues? where is the heart firm enough to retain them constantly, each in its territory, without allowing them to escape; particularly to reconcile them with one another in certain critical conjunctions where they seem to fight each other: prudence with good faith, justice with clemency; greatness of soul with modesty, constancy with flexibility, zeal for good order with patience, care for one's interests with disinterestedness, affection for one's family with the quality of the citizen, what is called *esprit de corps* with equity that makes no exception for anyone; and, not to forget a feeling in which it is so usual to be deceived, the love of one's country with that of other peoples, who are not less our brothers, nor less honest people, for sometimes being our enemies.

Once again, gentlemen, in this apparent fight of virtues against virtues, what is the way of always finding precisely the true point of the *modus* that would destroy even the appearance of these contrarieties? What to do? Before determining a course of action for ourselves, must we await full evidence being openly shown to us, without any hint of obscurity? after having determined ourselves to the cause that appears best to us, must we stop ourselves in the course of our action at the least doubt about whether there could be a yet better course to pursue, and thus losing in eternal deliberations a time destined for acting, often at risk of | losing the chance 117
of doing well, under the pretext of doing better, which will perhaps never happen?

Therefore it is thus (I am not afraid to say it) that scruples may not be timely. It is necessary in morals, as in all other affairs of life, to know how to commit oneself. The maxim is indubitable. From which I conclude that, in these uncertainties between the good and the best, we have nothing better to do than to imitate wise pilots when they are at sea. What do they do when, in cloudy weather, they cannot make immediate observations to see how to guide themselves? they guide themselves by estimation. Thus, when we no longer see clearly the precise point of agreement of the virtues, we will content ourselves with approaching it closer, rather than remain in suspense, indecisive or irresolute. And as in navigation one of the rules of good estimation is, after having calculated his route as well as is possible by the principles of the art, to conclude that he is close to rather than distant from his goal, because this assumption of nearby land determines the pilot to moderate accordingly the sailing of his vessel, that it not be in danger of crashing into the harbour by too too rapid a movement; we will use the same in our moral course. After having combined and speculated on everything by the rules of morals, we will make every effort to temper the impulse of our action, with the end of not allowing it to carry us too far, that is to say, in a word, that our maxim, that there is a *modus* to mind in the search for the *modus* itself, holds also in moral beauty.

But, because it is always easy to abuse this maxim, which is, after all, only a law of necessity, we add, for greater clarity, that to follow it without danger, there are three precautions to take.

The first is that, since excess is, as we have seen, more contrary to the *modus* than deficiency, we should be particularly on guard against certain presumptuous virtues | that never think they are susceptible to excess; 118
otherwise, we would miss the *modus*, in processes that are elsewhere most laudable, finishing by passion after having started by reason, and what is, I ask, more odious or more ridiculous of us to applaud still being moderate after having passed all bounds of moderation?

The second rule is to make ourselves, by continual victory of the first impulses of nature, masters enough of our heart to oblige all virtues to give up something mutually in favour of peace: this is the only way for them all to meet together in one's conduct; and of making serve those that appear the most opposed to the beautification of each other, as in a well-ruled company there are no moods so contrary that cannot have their place and their agreement there, provided that each takes care to accommodate itself with all the others rather than wanting to dominate them.

The third precaution, and the most essential, is of knowing well the nature of all the virtues necessary in society, to learn over a long time how to distinguish in the moment those to which one can without peril give more rather than less, and those, on the contrary, to which one must almost always give less rather than more, that is to say, for example, in sincerity, more rather than less; in politics, less rather than more; in gentleness, more rather than less; in severity, less rather than more; in zeal to fulfil one's duties, more rather than less; in care to pursue one's rights, less rather than more; in liberality, more rather than less, in thriftiness, less rather than more; in gratitude, more rather than less; in attention to choosing precisely one's kind deeds, less rather than more; in disinterestedness, more rather than less; in one's most reasonable interest, less rather than more; in the honour of one's conscience, more rather than less; in the honour of the world, less rather than more; in the essential decorum of one's state, of one's job or of one's dignity, more rather than less; of purely ceremonial decorum, less rather than more.

| This is a new field, gentlemen, that I open here to your reflections, 119
and which would perhaps demand from me new clarifications to make me well understood on a matter so delicate; but I speak of the *modus*: it is necessary to know how to maintain it.

I am content to finish with concluding in general from the great principles that we have just established that, after the study of beauty, that of the *modus*, which always makes the firmest agreement, must be the principal one. After so many sensible proofs of its importance in the arts and in morals, can one disagree? It is the sole study that can give us this

quality so precious and so rare, though so necessary in life in order to judge well the merit of objects that are ceaselessly presented to our consideration or our choice. I mean exactness: the exactness of the eye to judge well visible beauty in works of art of of nature; the exactness of the ear to judge well the harmonic beauty of an air or in a concert; the exactness of the mind to judge well the intellectual beauty of a piece of eloquence or of poetry, and, if may put it thus, the exactness of the heart, not only to judge well the moral beauty in the actions of others, but still further to express it in our own conduct without ever putting us, insofar as possible, at risk of spoiling it by either deficiency or excess.

Sixth Discourse

On decorum 6

Gentlemen,

Beauty is an inexhaustible subject. After having explained its nature, its types, and its species in four discourses; after having made a fifth to show that in the search for beauty there is | always a certain *modus* to maintain 120
to keep it in all its natural graces, I believed I could stop there; but, in considering the closest things, I perceived that I had only treated in passing one of its most essential qualities; a quality of beauty that appears to me to be, particularly in morals, the most striking and the most victorious charm: I mean the decency that must prevail, convenience, agreement, harmony, the exact mix of all the features that make it up, relative to the circumstances of times, places, people: in a word, what is called *decorum*: a term that is Latin in its origin, but which, after being naturalized in France for so long a time, we must no longer take as foreign.

You see all at once, gentlemen, the grandeur and the range of my subject: it embraces all human life, all conditions, all positions, all ages, all that currently agrees with us, and all that can agree with us in all the other situations in which the order of Providence could place us. I feel more than anyone the difficult of the undertaking. It is however necessary to admit that I find here an advantage that I had lacked in the preceding discourses. A very famous author of antiquity, who all his life had studied *decorum*, and who was a philosopher in order to know its principles, and a man of the world in order to make agreeable applications of them, has fortunately preceded me. He unclouded the subject with enough depth to save me the pain of having to clear a difficult terrain: this is the incomparable Cicero, in the first book of his *De Officiis*. I will be permitted to draw without fuss from this public source of natural good sense. I will even do so more readily, since I find almost throughout it a very pure morality that gives us sensible testimony that philosophy, or, if you prefer, reason, consulted with a just mind and with a right heart, is, in the doctrine of morals, naturally Christian. *Testimonium | animæ naturaliter Christianæ*.[1] Lets us enter into 121
our subject, and accord me, if you please, a favourable attention.

1 Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, xvii.6. 'Evidence of the natural Christianity of the soul.' †Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (c. 160–c. 220 CE), early Christian writer.

The whole subject of *decorum* can be reduced to three questions:

1. What is the true idea of it?
2. Is there an eternal law that commands us to observe it as a duty of virtue?
3. How many types are there, and what does each of them demand of us by its own character?

This is the order that we will follow to guide ourselves, from truth to truth, to the solution of the most important problems of civil life.

First, what is the the idea that is called *decorum* in morals? There is nothing so common to confuse it with that of honesty. Cicero himself admitted that the distinction is so subtle, that it is found rather in the thought than in the thing itself: *Decorum cogitatione magis a virtute potest, quam re separari.*[2] But if we want to make the effort of deepening a little these two ideas, we will see there differences that, for being delicate, are not less real. I only ask you, gentleman, to pay a little attention to the most common notions, to make you agree.

We understand by *honesty* in morality, a speech or an action that, in its nature, conforms to reason or to natural law.

We understand by *decorum*, the agreement of this speech or action to the person, to the time, to the place, to the circumstances that accompany it.

Thus by *honesty*, we understand properly something absolute; that is, so to speak, the substance of beauty in morals, which is always the same for all types of person.

| We understand on the contrary, by *decorum*, something relative: it is 122
a collection of proprieties, attentions, or regards, that can be diversified *ad infinitum*, according to the different relationships that we can have in society with one another.

To form in us ideas still more distinct, or at least more sensible, of these two objects, one can say that *honesty* is, in conduct, like the arrangement of a picture, and *decorum* like the agreeable distribution of colours; that *honesty* is, in morals, like beauty in musical tones, and *decorum* like the well assorted chords of a piece of music; that *honesty* is, in an action, like the truth of thoughts in a discourse, and *decorum* like the exactness and the elegance of their expression; finally, that *honesty* is like the basis or the matter of moral beauty, and *decorum* like the form or the fashion that one gives it to appear with all the graces that agree with it.

This is what we will soon put in a clearer light, after we have answered the second proposed question, of knowing if there is an eternal law that commands us to the observation of *decorum* like a duty of virtue.

2 †Cicero, *De Officiis*, i.95. André paraphrases slightly here.

Can one doubt it, gentlemen? and the sovereign Lawgiver, in prescribing duties to us, can he permit us to neglect decency in the way we fulfil them? Sacred and profane philosophers have judged otherwise. The author of the book of Sirach ceaselessly exhorts us, not only to purity of morals, but the care of observing all the proprietries of civil life.[3] Before him, Solomon had put decency in the number of adornments of a strong woman:[4] *Fortitudo et decor indumentum ejus.* The wisest of the Greek philosophers, Socrates, wanted that his just man should also be a decent man; and it is on his example that Cicero, | in his *De Officiis*, includes *decorum* 123
among our duties. But when reason speaks with evidence, what need have we of authority to give us light? We only have to consult attentively the idea of eternal order to discover there two very distinct laws of morals. The Romans called them by two powerful names, with which I may be permitted to strengthen those of our language. The first, which tells us at each moment: here is what must be done, is *oportet*; and the second, that immediately adds, take care: this is what is appropriate, is *decet.* That truth, for example, should always reign in your speech is *oportet*; but that, at the same time, your sincerity should always be seasoned with the salt of discretion is *decet.* That your equity should be incorruptible, universal, without excepting anyone, is *oportet*; but however that it knows how to observe, in practice, all the regards that are demanded by the order of civil life is *decency.* That your friendship embraces all men without excluding a single one from your affection is *oportet*; but, in embracing everyone, that it has however different degrees in your heart and different manners to express it, according to the merit or the quality of persons, is *decet.*

This is not, gentlemen, about examining which of the two laws is a stricter obligation; if suffices me that one recognizes that they are both absolutely indispensable. We only believe that it must be added that, if the first, which is the law of honesty, is a more rigorous obligation, the second, which is the law of *decorum*, has a much wider territory; and the reason for this is manifest.

In the ordinary commerce of life, there are rather few actions that are virtuous by their nature; but none that should not become so, and consequently, we must make them, in so to speak blessing them with our attention, maintain all the proprieties of which they are capable. I do not say these arbitrary ceremonial proprieties | that each people has in its 124
fashion formed; I speak of its essential proprieties commanded to all men by the voice of nature, and whose exact observation is the most beautiful display of society: they give grace to the most austere virtues; they make virtuous the most indifferent actions; they even cover in part the horror of

3 Sirach *per totum.*

4 Proverbs 31:25. †'Strength and beauty are her clothing.'

the most vicious, in keeping even in their vice an air of respect for virtue. It is the constant application of observing them well in conduct that properly makes what is called an honest man; it is, on the contrary, the ignorance or the contempt regarding what they prescribe to us that makes what is called by a name that they prevent me from pronouncing in so respectable an assembly; but whoever deserves it by the indecency of his manners, or by the insolence of his behaviour, may well expect that the public will not be, in this regard, as restrained as I must be. We are in the world as in a theatre, where *decorum* is always the first of the rules; and, any character that we portray, the audience will less willingly forgive us for.

This is, gentlemen, what it was important first to convince ourselves of in general, in order to make us more attentive to the detail that we now enter into.

The famous Roman who first explored the matter of *decorum* was also the first to see that, in order to distinguish its different species, there are four things to consider in man: nature, which is common to us; the person or the character that is our own; the condition of our birth; finally, the position in life or the profession that we have embraced by our choice. These four considerations furnish me with such a natural division of my subject, that in this regard I admit that Cicero has left me nothing but the honour of rendering it into French.

I thus with him divide *decorum* into four general | species, which must 125
appear in turn and sometimes all together in our conduct: *decorum* of human nature, that of the person, that of status, and that of the position in life or voluntary engagements that we took in the world, whether with the public, or with individuals; this is a type of spectacle that we owe on earth to God and to men. Follow me, if you please, in the discussion of each of the characteristics that we have to present. I start with *decorum* of nature, which is the first in every sense, the most general and the most indispensable.

When one directs an actor in the theatre, the first lesson that one gives him is on how to get into the mind of his character. Take care, one tells him, you must think you are who you portray; it is necessary that your air, the tone of your voice, your stance, your gait, all your actions are such as conform to your character, that you should, if it were possible, forget your own person. The Author of nature, in putting us in the theatre of the word, gives us by reason, which is his voice, an almost similar instruction: take care of your essential character. It is necessary that you everywhere portray who you are: you are a man; you are a mind attending to the government of a body in order to have dominion over your senses, to be in command of your passions, to reign over your appetites; in a word, it is a king that you must portray on earth.

It is a long time since man was thus qualified, at least in books:

he is ceaselessly told, in poetry and in prose, that he is the king of the universe (a title perhaps quite contentious). But there is a greater title that is incontestable. He is very certainly born to rule over himself: this is the principle that we have called the *decorum* of human nature.

And, indeed, if a man had enough force of spirit never to lose sign of his natural dignity, he discovers | in this single idea all the proprieties 126
that are agreeable to him. Is he alone? it will never be believed without a witness, and without testimony; his reason, God, his conscience, take the place of the public to contain him within the bounds of decency and modesty. Were he to appear on the stage of the world, he will carry this air of empire on himself, which he will have to know how to maintain in solitude. Will it be necessary to speak? He is master of his language; he always waits for reflection to tell him the speech worthy of a soul that so controls itself. Will he act? He is equally on guard against being precipitate and against being nonchalant; he will let himself be neither carried away by flow of events, nor stopped by obstacles. In vain do his senses want to turn him from his route by the flattering portraits that the make for him of their objects; heonly listens to their testimonies to submit them to the tribunal of his private counsel which is sovereign reason. In vain do his passions want to revolt against this order of nature; he treats them like rebellious subjects, whose propositions he must only listen to when they have laid down their arms. In vain the passions of others undertake to make him complicit in their disorders; master of his own, he takes good care not to submit to the yoke of a foreign power.

But for the rest, must he on occasion have for other men a reasonable condescension, tolerate their defects, accommodate himself to their moods, spare their delicacy? He will be found ready for all this by the rule that he has over his heart; accustomed to winning, he will easily push his victory so far as to honour the dignity of human nature in the most unworthy men. He will not cease from being sensitive, and sometimes even appearing it, in the view of their foibles or their lapses: this is one of the proprieties that is owed to humanity, but by the ascendancy that he has over himself, he will know well to guarantee against a sensitiveness that will reach resentment: this is a propriety still more indispensable that is owed to reason. Most | ancient philosophers scoffed at the stoics, who said that their sage was 127
truly king. Here is a sense in which all men must be.

The first *decorum* that nature commands is, in general, to rule over ourselves. There is a second that it asks of each of us in particular: it is the *decorum* of the person. I will explain.

Do you want to please in society, said the ancient sages to their students? know yourselves. Study the basis of your own character, your genius, your talent, your mood; study to say nothing, to do nothing that you do not agree with. The principle is always that we must only exhibit

what we are. Beware: I say what we are and not what we may become, either by a bad education, or by some vicious habit: the rule is indubitable.

Tu nihil invita dices faciesve Minerva.[5]

I would only ask, gentlemen, of the actors who have to appear on the theatre of the world, for attention to this single rule, to give us the most charming of spectacles, diversified by its characters, sustained by their application never to contradict it, and lifted by the mutual graces that they lend to each other. With what pleasure would we not see them playing on the stage, each with his natural symbol, featuring together, sometimes even contrasting agreeably with each other, like the different flowers of a well-arranged garden: the serious character with the joker; the frank and open character with the reserved one; the simple with the fine; the solid with the brilliant, the bold with the discreet! In a circle of interlocutors thus composed, what initially would be the conversation? Lively temperaments would animate the phlegm of slow tempers, and the latter would serve to keep within bounds the liveliness of the former. Your natural gaiety would break the front of my seriousness, which, in its turn, would perhaps | prevent your 128
enjoyment from degenerating into frolicking; the sturdy would instruct, the brilliant would entertain, the action of the theatre would conform to the dialogue; we would see there, with the same agreement, the different spirits, the different talents of men being produced with honour and without confusion; the talents born for the cabinet would shine in their counsels; those with strength of action would march in campaign or put themselves in the conduct of business; great geniuses would deploy themselves in great undertakings; the mediocre would only try those proportional to their strength; and by the care that they would take not to go beyond it, they would perhaps rise above superior talents. It has been said of a famous great king in the history of the last century, that he has a small mind, but that he knew its limits, and knew how to stop himself. It was perhaps believed that this word diminished his glory; never has it been praised more magnificently.

It is thus that, on the world stage, it would almost certainly succeed, if each were attentive to keep well the *decorum* of his personal character, of his genius, or his talent, of his mood even, insofar as it may be compatible with the laws of society. To convince ourselves still more sensibly, let us change the scene. Let out actors go mad; let each of them suddenly forget who he had portrayed, or let him, dissatisfied with his role, usurp that of another; let the lively temperaments disguise themselves as phlegmatic, phlegmatic ones as passionate, playful as serious, serious as pleasant; let this grave

5 †Horace, *Art of Poetry*, l. 385. 'You must say and do nothing against Minerva.' (Minerva symbolizes inspiration.)

character take on an air of levity; this serious character, a joking tone; this naturally reticent character, free or cavalier manners; finally, instead of maintaining his character, let Alceste transform himself into Philinte,[6] Horatius into Curiatius,[7] Cato[8] into Caesar,[9] or Caesar into Cato, what would be the success of so strange a comedy? Laughter, without doubt. But how many people | would laugh at this spectacle to which we can say, 129
with the poet: *rides? mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur.*[10]

> In seeing these actors who go against nature,
> You laugh; you are right.
> But remember this image
> It only lacks your name.[11]

The comparison of these two scenes could suffice to convince us by sentiment that *decorum* of the person consists in never leaving his nature: let us try to persuade ourselves clearly. Two principles of reason demonstrate it to us. It is only truth that has the right to please us: that is the first. It is only the natural that is true: that is the second. Everything that is managed, everything that is affected, everything that is borrowed, everything that is made up, carries in front of it an air of falsehood that is initially shocking; and if we do not want to believe reason, let us at least believe experience. How many people, otherwise esteemed, sacrifice themselves every day to public scorn, by dint of wanting to shine through foreign qualities! They steal this air here, or that word there; they affect a witticism of one, the countenance of the action of another. Servile imitators, they introduce into morals a new type of plagiarism as contemptible, at least, as that of Montparnasse; and, unfortunately for them, often easier to recognize.

6 †Alceste and Philinte are characters in Molière's play *The Misanthrope* (*Le Misanthrope ou l'Atrabilaire amoureux*). Alceste is the titular misanthrope who is ready to criticize everyone, including himself. Philinte recognizes the importance of occasional discretion.

7 †Livy, *Ab urbe condita libri*, i.24–26 recounts a battle between the Horatii and the Curatii upon whose outcome Rome and Alba Longa had agreed to base the settlement of a war.

8 †Cato the Younger, Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis (95–46 BCE), Roman statesman, noted for his moral integrity and opposition to Julius Caesar's pursuit of power.

9 †Gaius Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE), Roman military leader and statesman, member of the first triumvirate that unofficially ruled Rome, subsequently elected dictator in perpetuity, and assassinated some weeks later.

10 †Horace, *Satires*, i.1, ll. 69–70. '...laugh? Change the name, and the story is yours.'

11 †The original French:

> En voyant ces acteurs qui forcent la nature,
> Vous riez; vous avez raison.
> Mais songez qu'à cette peinture
> Il ne manque que votre nom.

But I want that you would have the art of counterfeiting yourself, to the point that we would take your character for yourself. How long will you support this counterfeit character? Strange colours do not sit well on a background that is not made for them; at least it is certain that they will not stay there long: nature sooner or later breaks through and makes them disappear; they are only allowed to appear to make better felt the disagreement with the subject to which they are applied.

| One may well thus apply oneself to perfecting one's character, orna- 130
menting one's spirit, cultivating, embellishing, extending one's talent; one must do it. Added what is missing, removing what overflows, particularly cutting out what nature could have left of viciousness to exercise our virtue; but in thus working, one must also work to remain always oneself. Let us not lose sight of the wise maxim of our French Horace:

> Intending to repair oneself, one maims oneself,
> And from an original one makes a copy.[12]

A copy is always ugly, however little it appears to be one. Now, how can you remove all appearance of it? you are known; your model will soon be known. Could you prevent the comparison? could you support it? From which it perhaps follows that often it is better to suffer a few small natural defects than to go about showing the world a false mask, that you will always allow to be seen through, and, consequently, that will add to the defect of the character the ridicule of the contrast. Let us go further.

Up to here, gentlemen, we have found in our own bases, in our nature, and in our naturalness all the ideas necessary to explain the two first types of *decorum*. It is necessary to look outside ourselves to discover the principle of the third.

When we start to open our eyes on the spectacle of the world, the first object that strikes us is a certain order of birth or of fortune that we see established among men; kings on the throne to command; ministers to carry their commands to the people; princes, great men, and nobles to defend the state with their arms; magistrates to enforce the laws; men of business or commerce to create wealth; artisans in the towns to | pursue the 131
arts; labourers in the country to cultivate the land. In this order of human conditions, one cannot say that there is no basis. Despite all the different exteriors that we notice between the different organs that compose the body politic, it is always manifest that the chief and the members are all of the same nature, and consequently all equal by the most estimable of

12 †This couplet is from Nicholas Boileau, *Épitres*, ix. The original French is:

> Voulant se redresser, soi-même on s'estropie,
> Et d'un original on fait une copie.

André misquotes, rendering the first line as 'Voulant se redresser souvent on s'estropie'.

their qualities, which is that of being a man; but also, despite this equality of nature, it is evident that Providence has subordinated them all to one another by the inequality of the ranks into which it has led them be born.

Let us not separate two ideas that must be inseparable in the different members of human society, in order to inspire in them all the feelings, maxims, speech, and methods that are convenient for them each in the post to which he has been assigned by the order of the Creator.

This is what I understand by *decorum* of status.

There is no-one who has not his own, determined by his rank of superiority or inferiority with regard to others. I leave the ceremonies of each people to resolve purely external proprieties: the pomp of the sovereign majesty, the titles of the great, the symbols of the magistrates, all the distinctive marks of the different orders of the State. I confine myself to proprieties that must come from the heart. But so that they effortlessly arise, and like from the source, what is necessary? Let us repeat our principle.

I say that *decorum* of status, whether superior or inferior, consists in always giving, despite the inequality of ranks, constant attention to the equality of nature, or, in reverse, in always giving, despite the equality of nature, continual attention to the inequality of ranks that distinguishes us. Two attentions, I admit, quite difficult to unite, or at least to sustain for long, but which certainly cannot be separated for a moment in either one's heart or in one's | conduct without also falling into the most shocking 132
indecencies.

Do we want to have a sensible proof of this? let us indeed separate these two attentions in all the orders of the State. I suppose first that each is only attentive to the inequality of conditions, without thinking of the equality of nature, what will happen? A king, forgetting that he is a man, will regard his royalty as his very essence; his throne as an extension of his being; his palaces, his domains, all his empire as incorporated in his person; his person as a God on earth; his peoples, consequently, not as subjects from whom he has the right to require obedience, but as slaves, or rather as victims whose blood owes him homage. This is the idea that formed Antiochus,[13] Tiberius,[14], Nero,[15], Domitian,[16] all the crowned monsters who bloody our histories. The great subalterns, the most qualified courtesans,

13 †Antiochus IV Epiphanes [*Ἀντίοχος Ἐπιφανὴς*] (c. 215–164 BCE), ruler of the Seleucid Empire 175–164 BCE, who used divine epithets such as 'manifest god', and supported Hellenized Jews against orthodox Jews at the time of the Maccabean revolt.

14 †Tiberius (42 BCE–37 CE), Roman emperor 14 CE–37 CE, whose rule ended in a reign of terror.

15 †Nero (37 CE–68 CE), Roman emperor 54–68 CE, remembered for tyranny, extravagance, and persecution of Christians.

16 †Domitian (51–96 CE), Roman emperor 81–96 CE, who created a personality cult and was despised as a tyrant.

who see themselves every day eclipsed by the brightness of the throne, will become the most servile worshippers. But when, in leaving the court, they come to measure the distance that separates them from the common people, this consideration, which is no longer balanced by the presence of the monarch, will immediately raise them above themselves. They in their turn will take the tone of a master: worshippers at the court, they will want to be adored in the provinces and avenge their past servitude by that to which they will reduce the subjects of their sovereign. This is the ambitious idea that formed Tryphon[17] Sejanus,[18], Rufinus,[19] Eutropius,[20] so many insolent ministers, who have often decried the reign of the best princes. In middling conditions, they will do the same in proportion, each in the extent of his sphere; a first magistrate, in his city; a lord, in his village; a master, in his house; and, in general, it is evident by experience that if one confines attention to the inequality of ranks, without considering the equality of nature, | one will find oneself in some indecent extremity: slave 133
of one's superiors or tyrant of one's inferiors.

This first supposition is thus quite fatal to *decorum*! I now reverse it. If each of the members of the body politic forgets the rank that he holds, only paying attention to the equality of nature, will *decorum* be well-observed? A king will no longer be content with being popular, he will be familiar with everyone; he will no longer be only king on the throne, and, to appear human, he will not fear to show himself more a man. Under this same pretext of humanity, great men will be seen to forget their birth in their speech, in their manners, in the choice of their friends or their confidants; but, in forgetting their birth, they will soon make others forget it. Lesser men, who are always ready to take flight, will forget their own more willingly. You descend to their level by humanity; they raise themselves to yours by the same principle. Thus, the equality of nature, considered alone, will justify every insolence, every sedition, every revolt.

That is to say, in short, that the first supposition makes us fall into tyranny or into slavery, and the second into a state still more baneful, namely anarchy or contempt for authority.

What is thus necessary to put things into a situation favourable to everyone? Let us unite the two ideas, whose separation had caused all

17 †Diodotus Tryphon [*Διόδοτος Τρύφων*] (d. 138 BCE), general of the Hellenistic Seleucid kingdom, who deposed the infant king Antiochus VI Dionysus and seized power.

18 †Lucius Aelius Seianus (20 BCE–31 CE), Roman soldier who became effective ruler of the empire when Tiberius withdrew to Capri and was subsequently executed on suspicion of conspiracy against the emperor.

19 †Flavius Rufinus (d. 395), statesman of the Eastern Roman Empire who became effective ruler under the young emperor Arcadius.

20 †Eutropius (d. 399), official and later consul of the Eastern Roman empire, with a reputation for cruelty and greed.

the disorder. If all the members of the society are ceaselessly attentive to both the equality of nature and the inequality of ranks, there will be no status which that does not find itself elevated by the *decorum* that will be seen reigning everywhere. The attention to the majesty of the throne will impress on the face of a king the air of a master which, without any other herald, will announce to us the presence of the sovereign; but, at the same time, the consideration of natural equality of men will spread throughout his | character a tincture of humanity that will animate our 134
respect through trust. Great men, attentive to the place that they occupy between the sovereign majesty and the inferior status, will compose their air on this double relation, submissive at the foot of the throne, and being respected everywhere else. But in considering that on the other hand, in the body politic, the chief and the members are of the same nature, they will be neither flatterers at the court, nor tyrants in the provinces; they will maintain everywhere the honour of humanity. Finally, those who are called the people will also find in the meeting of these two ideas, the way of maintaining *decorum* that is proper to them; they will take on a humble air and submit in view of their dependence; but, provided that they are willing to consider what is common to all men is greater than what distinguishes them in the world, they will rather relieve the obscurity of their status by the nobility of their sentiments. Religion, probity, and honour are the happy resources that they will always have to hand to put themselves, without leaving their rank, above their fortune.

I agree, gentlemen, in the difficulty of uniting at every moment these two attentions: there is always one of the two that mortifies our self-love; the attention to the equality of nature humiliates great men, and the attention to the inequality of ranks bothers lesser men. But although I agree with the difficulty, it is also necessary to unite them together to form our air and our sentiments upon the order established in the world by the supreme authority of the Creator.

This is the incontestable principle of the third species of *decorum*, which is that of rank. I pass to the fourth: this is what we have called the *decorum* of the position or of the profession.

Providence, in ordaining the diverse status of men, did not so determine their ranks and their places, and leave nothing to their choice and their industry. | In the same order of birth, there are always different 135
posts between which he is free to choose, following his genius, his talent or his inclination. The court, the armies, the tribunals of justice offer to the nobility an infinite number of places to choose or to deserve. Elsewhere, we do not have to live in the sort of government where it is not permitted to pass from one clan to another. Among us, as among the Romans, a plebeian can, without breaking the laws, become a knight, senator, consul, whatever pleases fortune. In our times, how many times have we seen men

of obscure birth who have known how to open a way to the highest places of the robe and the sword! They are similar, if you will permit me this comparison, to certain industrious worms, who, after having for some time crawled on the earth, little by little grew wings to put themselves in the number of the inhabitants of the air. These stunning metamorphoses are always a beauty in the physical order, because they always follow the rule. And why should they not be one in the moral order, provided that they only do so in honourable ways?

It is not thus necessary to condemn a received custom where the public can find its interest in that of individuals. Would it not even be a sort of cruelty, envying in mediocre status this natural resource against the unequal sharing, always sad but necessary, of the common goods of society? The only thing that we believe must be asked of them, as also in general of all those in the world who embrace a chosen profession, is that they observe certain rules of propriety, rules of propriety in the choice of the position wherein they want to succeed, and rules of propriety in the manner of comporting themselves when they have succeeded. Let us motivate our request with sensible reasons.

Although you would undertake, says a great philosopher, | , first judge 136
with your enterprises: *Quotiens conaberis, te simul, et ea quæ paras, metire.*[21] This is a rule of wisdom that you must follow entirely, but principally in the choice of a position. One agrees readily enough in the theory, for it is very manifest that one must agree with the place that one undertakes to fulfil. However, gentlemen, I call this to your acquaintance: despite this rule, what is the most ordinary practice of those who contemplate an establishment in the world?

You aspire to a position; it is allowed; but in what name do you expect it?... I have the finance all ready... That is a merit in buying it; is it one in fulfilling it?... My father possessed it with honour... But have you the right to expect the same success?... Why not? he obtained the succession for me... I mean in obtaining the succession to his position for you, did he also obtain for you the succession of his merit and his talents?... I at least carry his name... That is a bit better than nothing. But when the name is compared with the thing, what do you become?... I will always have an honourable rank in the world... But, how honourable, if you have not the requisite capability to maintain it?... In a word, the position suits me... I understand you; but I ask you if you suit the position? Here is a name that means nothing, and, consequently, what indecency it is to aspire there without any other merit.

Indecency, nonetheless, that would be more shocking, if you did not even have a name to bear; I mean, if you undertook to elevate yourself all

21 Seneca the Younger, *De Ira*, iii.7.

at once from a state of obscurity to a position too brilliant for a man of your birth.

Still, if in wanting to pass from one status to another, you had sufficient respect for public honesty to imitate nature in its metamorphoses, you would be pardoned a modest flight that would make us see that you were not mistaken about yourself. | Take care, please, regarding the model that 137
you propose. How does nature proceed in the transformation of certain crawling things into flying beings? It proceeds by degrees, in making them pass through the state of nymphs or chrysalises before elevating them to the order of butterflies. If you would imitate its example, you would accustom the world to see you grow little by little, to extend yourself, to successively develop yourself; imperceptible nuances that, from your natural obscurity, take you into the sunshine without hurting anyone's eyes. But, what do you do? what speed on the road to fortune! you do not walk, you fly; you seem almost at the same time at the two ends of your path, and it is surprising to see you at the top of the hill without having seen you climb. A new indecency that would surprise you yourself, it you had allowed honour to climb with you.

But in the end, you are seen there; it is no longer time to go back. What is the rule of propriety that you must prescribe to yourself there, to correct any sort of indecency at the first step? The same philosopher[22] that we alluded to above would say to you: *personam induisti, agenda est.* You have undertaken to present to the world a character that was above your own status; at least make it seen that it is not above your capacity: think that because of the disproportion of your birth to your new rank, the public is entitled to require much more from you than from another. A son, who enters barefoot into the position of his father, will satisfy, provided that he does not dishonour his predecessor; but you, who have only so to speak taken your place by climbing, must surpass yourself, in order not to appear inferior. You are asked for more application to your duties, | more scruple 138
in the observation of the rules, more regard for everyone, particularly more modesty in the exercise of authority. Your predecessor, who had a name, could sometimes forget his birth without making others forget it; but you, your have no ancestry, you must continually remember yours, so that it is not remembered, or it is only remembered in order to make thanks in favour of the justice that you render unto yourself. In a word, your predecessor, who was in his natural post, could with impunity carry everywhere the air and the tone of his dignity. For a contrary reason, it is an air and a tone that only agree with you on the stage, when you currently take on your new character. Outside of there, politeness, moderation, and modesty take the place of dignity for you; it is the only way to repair in the eyes of the

22 Seneca the Younger, *De Beneficiis*, ii.17.

public the impropriety that always appears a little in a metamorphosis as strange as yours. The policy is permitted to you; it had its reasons. The world gave you examples that can excuse it; but morality can only pardon you on one condition. Will you permit me to tell you without delay? it is that after the metamorphosis, the butterfly always remembers that it was a caterpillar.

This fourth species of *decorum* obliges us all the more since it is our choice, yet furnishes me with two problems of morality that I must not forget. Nothing is more common among men, especially the young, than to engage oneself, by instinct or by instigation, in positions, in jobs that require neither talent, nor any other quality, to succeed in them. And thence how many subjects are ill-placed in all the orders of the kingdom! Add the ordinary accidents of nature or of fortune, and thence how many more subjects, after having been themselves in their position or their work, have ceased to be!

In these two cases, so common in life, what is the rule that prescribes *decorum* to us? It is, in the circumstances, | for us to decide. Can we leave 139
a position with which we do not agree, or a job that we no longer agree with? Let us leave in good grace, rather than dishonour ourselves on a badly-extended point of honour; let us take our leave before it is given to us, or let us give freely our demission before it is demanded of us.

This is the counsel of decency, when it is permitted to change positions; but, if necessity seizes us by an unbreakable grasp, then, said the wisest of the Roman philosophers,[23] we have only one course to take; let us employ our care, all our attention, all our diligence to ensure if we cannot fulfil the functions of our position with complete decency, we would acquit ourselves, at least, without indecency, or with as little indecency as possible: *Omnis adhibenda erit cura, meditatio, diligentia, ut ea si non decore, at quam minimum indecore facere possimus.* We should not be put there, but we are, the sacramental words are said, the vow is made, our engagement is irreversible. I suppose it. Let us make an inviolable law to be content, and to appear it; being content is a propriety that one owes to oneself by reason, and appearing it is an air that one owes to the world by honour.

It seems, gentlemen, that the subject of *decorum* extends itself as we advance in our career. Despite the care that I took in explaining all the species, how many important omissions could I perhaps be reproached for at this moment! of having spoken of neither the proprieties of age, nor those of blood of or parentage, nor those of the daily commerce of civil life, nor those that can be born from an established reputation of merit and virtue? But would it be necessary to exhaust your patience in order to exhaust my subject? *Decorum* itself would not permit it to me; and, | , after 140

23 Cicero, *De Officiis*, i.31.

having posited all the principles, I think I must count on your incisiveness for all the consequences that can naturally be deduced.

A slight attention will show you, effortlessly, the proprieties of the different ages of life. One can relate them to those of rank or of birth, since indeed youth, maturity, and old age can be considered as the three natural orders of human society. You will doubtless conclude, with the same ease, that the proprieties of blood and those of parentage or of alliance arrange themselves under the *decorum* of nature, which always speaks quite highly in all attentive hearts. The proprieties of the daily commerce of civil life reduce easily under the rules of common humanity and of personal character, which prescribe to us jointly the most agreeable way to fulfil duties. You have a good reputation established in the world by some rare talents or by some beautiful features of virtue; it is not necessary to degenerate from yourself; it is a propriety that is a natural sequence io principles that we come to expose in the choice of a position in life or of a profession.

Thus, the only thing that remains for me to do, in order to finish, is to conclude in general that all the different characters we assume in the world, whether by the order of Providence, or by our own choice, must each have its particular influence on our sentiments, on our air, on our manners, even on our language, on all our conduct. I mean that reason must always appear with its natural empire over the senses, that the personal character must spread its skill and its own attitude, that status must modestly show the livery that agrees with it, that the position or the job must also carry its specific symbol; in a word, that all this assembly of different attentions is absolutely | necessary for us to give to the world the spectacle of propriety 141
that we owe to God and to men, following these beautiful words of a sacred author, which contain all the principles of my discourse: *Omnia autem honeste et secundum ordinem fiant.*[24]

24 I Corinthians 14:40. 'Let all things be done decently and in order.'

Seventh Discourse

On the graces

7

Gentlemen,

If there were ever a subject that merited the attention of an Academy of literature, it is that which I propose to examine today. My design is to speak to you of graces. To this name alone, how many agreeable ideas first awaken in the mind! also presented are charms, attractions, appeals, a brilliance, a lustre, a certain affability, or, if I may be permitted the term, a certain amiability spread through the objects that we call graceful. It would be desirable also that these ideas were as clear as they are agreeable, or at least that we could find in the authors what will clarify them, because we see well enough at first glance that this is not a matter on which we can hope to make new discoveries. We have always heard of graces in the world; we have always had eyes to see them, and a heart to be touched by them; there have even been, in every era, people of intellect and of taste who have curiously researched their nature. The ancient philosophers, the poets, the orators, and the painters have made a particular study; the latter, to express them in their works, and the philosophers, to discover | their 142
essential attributes; in what do they agree with beauty, and in what are they different; what they add to it, and what they presuppose. But in the end, what has so much research led to? Despite so much effort, it does not appear that they have penetrated much into the sanctuary of the graces. With as much spirit, perhaps, as it is permitted to have, they have been reduced to giving us some notion, to present them to us under some images that envelop them, under allegories that veil them, under symbols, under emblems that disguise them, under the most beautiful descriptions of the world, in order to make us feel their capability, but not a single definition to explain their nature.

However, gentlemen, as I find nothing better in the moderns, I start by showing to you the picture that ancient wisdom has left to us of the graces. The curious of antiquity doubtless saw them with pleasure, and the most indifferent would agree perhaps that, if the ancients have not taken the effort to define them for us, at least they have presented them to us under images that do not disfigure them.

The first author who had dared to portray them a little large, is

Hesiod,[1] in his *Theogony*, which is an allegorical poem on the genealogy of the gods. After having described the birth of Minerva, who came fully armed from the head of Jupiter,[2] he recounts that of the Graces,[3] who came from his heart under more human figures. He distinguishes three, to which he gives different names to characterize them, each by its particular agreement: the first, whom he called Aglaea,[4], for brilliance; the second, who is Euphrosyne,[5], for sweetness; the third, who is Thalia,[6] for vivacity, or according to the propriety of the Greek word, by an affability similar to that of a newly opened flower. Orpheus accords them the same attributes in a beautiful hymn that he made in their honour. Sculptors and painters, other types of poets, who in those times were also philosophers, | added 143
new features that Seneca,[7] and after him Natalis Cornes,[8] kept for us. They portray three Graces of a fine and delicate size, all holding hands, all happy and all young, but at the same time always wise and modest, particularly decently dressed, without any ornament on their heads but beautiful hair, and without any other adjustment but a flowing robe, light, a little diaphanous, of which an elegant simplicity made all the richness.

Such was the picture of the Graces that Socrates, the most ingenious of the ancient philosophers, would be exposed to in the acropolis of Athens, on entering the temple of Minerva. It is there that he would send his disciples to learn good grace at the school of the Graces themselves. And indeed, in the view of these symbolic representations, one would only have to ask oneself why each thing was put there, in order to find the whole philosophy of pleasantness? Why make for the Graces a form so fine and delicate? it is that the pleasantness consists, not in grandeur, nor even exactly in the regularity of features, but in their fineness and delicacy. Why do they hold hands? it is that the most beautiful qualities, without union between them, do not make a whole that can please us for long. Why are they always happy? it is that nothing is more opposed to the Graces than a sombre air. But why always young? it is not to exclude from their empire the other ages of human life; it is to show us that they rejuvenate all

1 †Hesiod [*Ἡσίοδος*] (*fl.* c. 700 BCE), early Greek poet.

2 †Hesiod of course writes of the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus. André uses the names of the Roman gods who were identified with them.

3 †The Graces, or *Charites* [*Χάριτες*] (singular *Charis* [*Χάρις*]) were Greek goddesses of beauty, charm, creativity, and fertility, and normally numbered three.

4 †Aglaea, also Aglaïa [*Αγλαΐα*] literally means 'splendour' or 'brilliance'.

5 †Euphrosyne [*Εὐφροσύνη*], meaning 'mirth'.

6 †Thalia [*Θαλία*], meaning 'abundance'.

7 Seneca the Younger, *De Beneficiis*, i.3.

8 †Natalis Comes [= Natalis de Comitibus, Natale Conti] (1520–1582), Italian poet and historian, whose major work *Mythologiae* became a standard reference on classical mythology.

by their natural gaiety. It is not necessary to ask why they are portrayed as modest; they were supposed to be all virgins, without which the wise Minerva would soon have chased them far from her temple. Still less, is it necessary to ask why they are shown decently dressed? *decorum* is the essence of the graces.

But after all, gentlemen, it is only philosophy | in painting there. Let 144
us see if, in examining the graces with the new manner of the philosopher, we cannot reach ideas that are clearer and more capable of enlightening us, only to return to our picture when there is nothing better to do.

First, what it the proper meaning of the word *grace*? Do not be surprised, gentlemen, if I enter into a philosophical examination by a grammatical discussion: it appeared necessary to explain myself without ambiguity.

We understand here by *grace*, not precisely the absolute beauty of an object, but that sort of sensible beauty the sight of which spreads in the soul an impression of joy or of contentment. From there the Greeks, whose language is so replete with proper expressions, named them Graces, *charites*, a name taken from *chara*, which means joy or gaiety. The Latin word *gratia*, which comes from *gratum*, pleasant or delectable, bears the same idea in the mind, and one sees well enough that our word *grace*, which is derived from it, has not degenerated on the road from its ancient origin. Among us, as among the Greek and the Romans, whoever says graceful, means a quality not only pleasing to the mind, but agreeable to the heart, and this is the reason why, in our tongue, the word *grace* and that of agreement are always taken for synonyms.[9]

The question is now to know what is the nature of the graces in objects that are called graceful.

Be careful. We say in objects, for we talk of neither imaginary graces that each attributes to what seems good to him, in accordance with his being affected, nor of those graces of pure caprice of which fashion makes today a necessary pleasantness, to make tomorrow it an intolerable unpleasantness. We speak only of real graces, which are of the general taste of nature.

But before answering the proposed question, we still have some other ambiguities to clarify. We | express by the word *graces* pleasantness of the 145
body or of the mind, and, although these two substances have nothing in common, we do not avoid letting the same terms serve us in speaking of graceful qualities of the one and the other. We transfer, at every moment, those of the body to the mind and those of the mind to the body. We can never explain them to ourselves except by tricky metaphors, lacking

9 †In this paragraph, André is of course discussing the etymology of the French word *grâce*. Since *grâce* entered the English language as *grace*, the argument is still valid for English. In the last sentence, the French word *agrément*, rendered here as 'agreement', can also mean 'approval', 'pleasure', or 'charm': there is no suitable exact English equivalent.

the proper expressions to distinguish them well. It is an inconvenience of language that is inevitable; but we could prevent errors that could otherwise arise if we neglected to pay attention.

After this warning, I think, gentlemen, it is henceforth possible to speak of the graces, as normal, counting on you to listen as philosophers.

To proceed in an orderly way, we will examine:

1. The nature of the graces of the body, which are the first whose sensible light has touched us.
2. The nature of the graces of the mind, that we only came to know a long time afterwards, but with a pleasure of reason that is much more satisfying.

Permit me to ask you, in the name of the Graces that I will have the honour of presenting to you, a gracious attention.

First part: The graces of the body

When, gathered into ourselves, we meditate as philosophers on the structure of the world, we only perceive there differently arranged matter: here solid, there fluid, arranged in a beautiful order, transformed by rules to produce millions of periodic phenomena, of which the course is always the same, although always varied *ad infinitum.* We only conceive in the world beauties that are purely intelligible or that are only for a pure mind. Let me leave | 146
meditation, and open my eyes into the full light. Immediately I perceive myriad beauties of another type: sensible beauties with which the Creator has ornamented the earlier ones to give us a spectacle that is not only admirable, but pleasant, brilliant, sweet, happy, and full of affability; this is what we call the graces of the body.

Their existence is as evident as the light and the colours that make them manifest to us. We see them distributed with profusion in all types of bodies that compose the different realms of the material world: in inanimate bodies, in those that have a type of life, in those that have a type of soul, and principally in man, who, having a wholly spiritual soul, has a separate realm more graceful than any other. This is the gradation that the author of nature observed in the distribution of graces of the body. We cannot do better that to follow the same order in examining them. But to give some bounds to a subject that does not have them, we will content ourselves with a small number of examples of each type.

Among inanimate bodies, that which offers itself the most pleasantly to sight is the rainbow. Why has it only to appear to attract so many spectators? and by what charm does it appeal to us to be considered? It

is not only by the elegance of its circular shape: entirely white rainbows have been seen; entirely red ones have been seen, which seem more rare than agreeable. It is not more precisely by the multitude of its colours; there are cut stones that have the advantage in that respect and that please us less. It is still not by the great number of differently-coloured arcs that we distinguish: if they were excessively distinguished, if there separation was too abrupt, their colours would be too harsh, as painters say, and, consequently, they would divide the glance too much to fully content the eye. Thus, in the end, in what do we see consisting the true pleasantness of the rainbow? | we have just suggested it. We see all the differently-coloured 147
arcs that compose it united by the delicate nuances that join their colours without mixing them, and which distinguish them without separating them; which resemble each other enough to group themselves in a single glance; in a word, nuances that give them this gracious unity in which resides the essential form of beauty, as we said elsewhere. Yes, gentlemen, I call on all attentive observers of the rainbow: there is the true principle of its pleasantness, the true cause of the pleasure that we take in contemplating it, the unity of the spectacle, despite the diversity of the decoration. And there doubtless is what the ancient painters wanted when they portrayed the three Graces as three inseparable sisters who are always holding hands.

That is enough on the nature of the pleasantness of which inanimate bodies are capable; it can only please the eye without interesting us otherwise. Let us climb to another, more noble, type of graces: to those of bodies which, having a sort of life, must naturally interest us further. Flowers will serve us as an example: they offer us an idea of much happier graces, and a more distinct idea, which is we principally seek. This is the first observation that we will make about them.

A tree appears to us beautiful when it lifts its trunk vertically, when its branches climb into the air in a symmetrical pattern. But when does it start to appear graceful to us? When it is covered in flowers: this is the moment of birth of its graces. We love to see greenness in a prairie; but if you take away the covering of flowers, our regards will not make a long stay. I see a garden with artfully-traced divisions, elegant borders, well-order fields: this is still only the sketch of a picture that awaits colours. I see buds | form everywhere: this is still only a hope of pleasantness. The 148
beautiful season comes, which makes them open: now the graces expand like the flowers. Consider them from far off: what gaiety in the first glance! Approach to observe from nearby: carnations, roses, tulips, anemones; what polish, what luster on their surface! what fineness in the cut of the edges! what exactness in the form of their heads! what variety in their colours, in the tints and halftones that make up the painting! Above all, what a unity in the resulting total! for, it is a principle to which we must always return in the subject of beauty. But there is in flowers another point

that seems to me still more touching.

It is a certain air of life that we perceive there. It seems that they breathe; and there are even great philosophers who are persuaded of it. Whatever the case, it is manifest that they have an air of sensible life, which gives them more gracefulness than inanimate bodies, the same superiority of pleasantness that we discover in a true flower as compared to a painted flower. It is sometimes surprising to see curious people who conceive for flowers a kind of passion, or rather a declared passion, since they give themselves the name of lovers *par excellence*. I am almost no longer surprised: flowers have lively graces, which not only charm the eyes, but which touch the heart in some way. We are so naturally touched that orators and poets will, in order to please us, borrow thence their most beautiful metaphors: the flower of the age, a florid hue, a flowery style, a flourishing state. It could be said, to understand them, that in creating pleasantness there is nothing in nature above flowers. They will permit me to doubt it.

The sovereign Father of graces did not exhaust himself to ornament our gardens: he reserved more striking ones to the kind of body that has a type of soul and of feeling. How many animals do we see born clad in a | magnificence that all our luxury could not equal? how many, which 149
add to the elegance of their figure and to the beauty of their colours, other pleasantnesses more lively than those of the most brilliant flowers? I need not go as far as the Indes to supply you with examples: leopards, tigers, serpents covered in myriad richnesses; their fearsome spectacle could prevent you from recognizing all the graces. The most common birds in Europe furnish me with a proof more agreeable to my proposition; let us draw the parallel with flowers. I am going to portray for you a war of graces between two great empires: between the realm of plants and the realm of animals; or, if it is permitted to speak poetically in a matter that is itself quite poetic, between the empire of Flora[10] and that of the inhabitants of the air.

Flowers boast to us, with reason, the brilliance, the softness, and the liveliness of their hue. But, to forget all this brilliance, we have only to consider the plumage of the peacock: has the sky more stars, or the spring more flowers? its tail all alone is a complete garden. Our most beautiful flowers only have fixed colours, and each has its own invariably. Throw your eyes on the neck of a pigeon that struts in the sun, you will see there in turn an infinity: this is a natural silk that changes its lustre in all the different angles of the light; the brightest colours are seen there suddenly becoming nuances, and the darkest nuances become colours, according to the different points of view in which it is pleased to show itself. Flowers, attached to the earth by bonds they cannot break, only have a life without

10 †Flora was the Roman goddess of flowers and of spring.

soul and without movement: they cannot emphasize their graces by an agreeable allure. Look, on the contrary, at the king of the poultry-yard: that illuminated crest that rises like a crown, that air of headship, that walk, that stance: each pace presents to you a spectacle of new graces. Finally, and perhaps most | remarkably, the flowers are blind: they receive 150
our regards without returning them. Do you want to assist in a spectacle that gives you spectators? observe the birds in flight, or only a cygnet that swims on the waters: see how he advances gravely, head up, looking all around him with indulgence; could it not be said that he is aware of the honour of your regards, and that, in recognizing them, he tries to deserve them? We have already elevated the brilliance of flowers by this air of life that they breathe; but it will be admitted that blood and minds are an entirely new force that animates the beauties of the animal realm; that the faculty of moving themselves, accorded by nature to the subjects of this empire, adds a new lustre to all the other pleasantness that they have received; in a word, that the graces that have as principle a kind of soul and of sentiment, must appear to us incomparably more graceful; more graceful, as the soul that they announce to us is more perfect. This is what remains for me to prove in speaking of the graces of man.

Now, gentlemen, without flattering our species, it is not evident, from the sole exterior structure of the human body, that the wisdom of the Creator proposed to construct a palace worthy of a rational soul? I do not say this only by majesty of its features, I say it by the multitude and by the nature of the graces that are spread there, in its face, in its stance, in its manners; there is such a great number, that we must be content with indicating the main ones.

First, his face alone does not appear shaped to be the seat of all the graces? The serenity of his brow, which announces to you an easy manner; the gentleness of his eyes, which promises you a favourable welcome; lively eyebrows that rise at your presence; the smiles of his mouth, which precede speech to assure you of the pleasure that he has to see you; the whole enclosed in a subtle and transparent | envelope, which reveals to, as a 151
through a fine gauze, all the sentiments of his soul. We do not see, it is true, as many colours as in our gardens, on in the plumage of certain birds: white and red artfully dotted make up all the colours. The reason is entirely natural: too many colours would banish much more estimable graces. It is necessary to have, if I may say so, an empty or lightly coloured canvas, to receive at any moment new shades, according to the circumstances, and to make more touching expressions.

His stance is not as susceptible to such a great number of pleasantnesses as his visage. How many however can it not have, when attention is paid to enjoying the gifts of nature? For, what does a graceful stance demand? an erect posture without affectation, an easy attitude, a cheerful

and modest countenance, a walk that is firm but not heavy, and light but not precipitate, a certain flexibility to easily take all the airs fit to the regards that are owed to civil society. Now, the body of man has, from his infancy, a disposition so natural for this, that forming it into a habit it only needs a quite mediocre attention, provided that it is sustained a little.

The third type of exterior graces is that of manners. It is only properly man who is capable of these. There is beauty in training the tamest animals, one can give them some airs or some quite pleasant allures; but because these are only body-minds, as the ingenious La Fontaine[11] put it, one always perceives, in their most regular movements, some sort of weight, which is felt too stupid to deserve the name of manners. What is necessary to have them? Let us consider an honest man who wants to please in the world: we will see in his whole exterior a well-distributed composure of movements of the head, eyes, arms, hands, | supported by a visible effort 152
to attest his esteem for you and to merit yours. This is properly what is called having manners. They suppose an intelligent soul that knows how to rule with propriety all the movements of the body that it animates. You know, gentlemen, the pleasantness that they spread in society. It is a sort of eloquence of the body that does most of giving pleasure and winning hearts: they form in the world this amiable quality that we call politeness; they can compensate for most corporeal defects. They can even, up to a certain point, compensate for those of the mind. How many examples could be cited at the court and in the city! how many owe a their reputations as people of wit to their graceful manners!

It will perhaps be said to me: how many more are there that have none of these pleasantnesses of the body of which I have just spoken! and there are those who appear to have no aptitude to acquire them! I know that there are men who, by their exterior form, seem born in spite of the Graces. What must they do to appease them? I will say to them like Plato and Xenocrates:[12] Go sacrifice to the Graces before showing yourself to the world! This advice would not be very graceful. I will thus say to them that there is a surer remedy for exterior unpleasantness; it is of replacing the graces of the body with those of the mind. But to apply this remedy, it is necessary to know its nature. Let us enter into this new source of graces.

11 Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695), French poet.

12 Xenocrates of Chalcedon [*Ξενοκράτης*] (c. 396–c. 314 BCE), Greek Platonic philosopher and mathematician.

Second part: The graces of the mind

There are people who make appear in their speech a manner of thought, a sentiment, a turn of phrase so pleasant, the we cannot listen to them without being touched by their words; this is in general what we call | graces 153
of the mind, the beauties, or rather the pleasantnesses of the speech, which not only please us by the sense of the words, but which make us pleased by the way in which they are used. The conversation of honest people of the world, particularly when they know how to add a little culture to a sound foundation of natural genius, furnishes us with examples of every type. However, it is not only in such free speech that we will consider graces of the mind; for, apart from only being able to show themselves, so to speak, in their negligence, they are ordinarily seen there so mixed up with the pleasantness of manners, that it is very difficult to distinguish them. It is necessary to form less confused ideas of them, to envisage them all alone in coherent and prepared discourses, where it is permitted that they appear in all their brilliance; I mean in the discourses that are called works of the mind.

It is thus there, gentlemen, that we believe one must consider the graces of which I speak, in order to reveal their true character. But as I do not know that I have acquired in the republic of letters any right to pronounce on a matter so delicate, I will be careful to advance nothing except on the faith of the greatest masters of good taste, ancient and modern.

Never was their agreement so unanimous. They have all at first posed as a principle, that a word of the mind cannot please without the Graces. Hesiod gives them as company all the Muses; Theocritus[13] invokes them to dictate their verse to him; Cicero wants that his orator adorns his eloquence with them and, for the strongest reason, the poets must regard them as essentials to their art. This, said Horace, is an indispensable law in poetry:

Non satis est pulchra esse poemata: dulcia sunto.[14]

You have made a poem full of beauties; this is not enough to please, it is necessary that these beauties should be touching | and gracious: *dulcia* 154
sunto. Our French Horace gives to our poets the same lesson in his *Art of Poetry*:

Countless figures brighten your work:
That all present to the eyes a happy image;

13 †Theocritus [Θεόκριτος] (*fl.* 3rd century BCE), Greek bucolic poet.

14 †Horace, *Art of Poetry*, l. 99.

Without all ornaments the verse falls into languor,
The poetry is dead, or crawls without vigour;[15]

The necessity of graces, in a work of the mind, is thus incontestable. A little more attention will be necessary to discover in what they consist, what are their natural sources, and finally what are the subjects or the sciences that are susceptible to them. Three important questions that we are going to try to settle, or at least to put them in a state of being resolvable by attentive minds.

To decide the first, I pray you, gentlemen, to recall the picture of the Graces. There are three of them, whose symbolic names mean brilliance, sweetness, liveliness; who all hold hands; always happy, young and virgin; decently dressed, simply, but with elegance; in robes that are flowing, light, and of a slightly diaphanous material.

It is an enigma that we have already explained in general. Here the question is to apply the symbolism to works of the mind in particular. Why three Graces? to show us that, in a discourse, a single pleasantness does not suffice to keep our attention for long. Brilliance alone fatigues; sweetness along dulls; liveliness alone stuns. The three Graces must thus hold hands in a composition: that is to say that the brilliant must be sweet, sweetness lively, and liveliness sweet and bright; they are always happy, because it is gaiety of the mind that gives birth to them; always young, for they are of the nature of the soul that age does not weary; always virgin, but otherwise they would no longer be graces of the mind, but unworthy courtesans of our | regards; they are decently dressed, for how could the most beautiful 155
thought or feeling please us, if the words, which are like their clothes, were not agreeable? But, in the remainder, they do not ask for much affectation; the propriety of terms, with a little elegance, makes all the trimmings. For the same reason, they walk in flowing robes, because a little negligence does not ill-become the Graces, whose principal care must be to imitate nature. Finally, their robes are light and of a slightly diaphanous material: could this be to teach us more ingeniously two great rules of the oratorical art? The first, that if a discourse must have ornaments, it is not necessary that it have too many; the second, that if it can tolerate some obscurities, it is necessary that the thought of the author effortlessly reveals itself through

15 †This quotation is actually from two separate parts of Boileau, *Art of Poetry*, iii, ll. 287–8 & 190–1. The original French text is:

De figures sans nombre égayez votre ouvrage;
Que tout y fasse aux yeux une riante image;
Sans tous ces ornemens le vers tombe en langueur,
La poésie est morte, ou rampe sans vigueur;

André misquotes the second line as 'Que tout présente aux yeux une riante image'. The translation of these lines in Cook, *The Art of Poetry* is very free.

them.

I do not fear, gentlemen, that people a little versed in the allegorical philosophy of the ancients will say to me that these applications of their picture of the graces to works of the mind are arbitrary; they are too exact not to be the first intention of the painter. But if anyone has some scruples about the above, we have something to dissipate them.

Let us consult further the oracles of the literary graces. We see them portrayed with the same features in the authors who are most studied. Horace, the finest mind in the court of Augustus,[16] the most spiritual who has ever been, describes them to us in the portrait of Virgil. Varius,[17] he says, had a strength, and energy, a liveliness of composition that made him always admired; but the Muses[18] had accorded to Virgil that easy and pleasant turn that means one always reads him with a new pleasure:

> *... forte epos, acer,*
> *Ut nemo, Varius ducit. Molle, atque facetum*
> *Virgilio annuerunt gaudentes rure Camœnæ.*[19]

| Notice, please, these two qualities that Horace unites in the idea 156
of a graceful composition: *Molle atque facetum*, that is to say a sweet and piquant style; two qualities opposed in appearance, but that one must know how to make agree together, or else renounce graces in discourse. Otherwise, what would happen? The sweetness of style alone becomes too bland. Is this not the way of most ancient and modern elegies? Piquant style alone perhaps displeases us still more by too much salt. Is this not the way of those fussy authors who only speak through epigrams? What thus to do in the end, to be sure of pleasing? Temper the one with the other; it is only well-managed accord of the sweet and the piquant that can form what is called a graceful composition. And apparently it is from there that one of our poets has taken this beautiful definition of French poetry:

> The art of seizing without stress,
> Without being a slave to rhyme,
> This easy turn, this playfulness,
> Only this can make the sublime.[20]

16 †Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus, formerly Gaius Octavius Thurinus (63 BCE–14 CE), first ruler of the Roman Empire, adopted heir of Julius Caesar.

17 †Lucius Varius Rufus (c. 74–14 BCE), Roman poet, friend of Virgil and of Horace.

18 †In Greek mythology, the Muses [*αἱ μοῦσαι*] inspired the creation of art and literature.

19 †Horace, *Satires*, i.10, ll. 43–45.

20 †The quotation is from Guillaume Amfrye, 'Épitre a M. le Marquis de la Fare'. In: *Œuvres de Chaulieu.* Paris: La Haye, 1777, p. 226. The original French text is:

> L'art d'attraper facilement,

Seneca[21] depicts the graces of the oratorical genre under almost the same colours. Read Cicero, he says to his friend Lucilius;[22] his composition is always a unity, sustained but not constrained, numerous, flowing, ornate, supple, gentle, but without falling into the infamy of an effeminate weakness: *Lege Ciceronem: compositio ejus una est, pedem serval, curata, lenta, et sine infamia mollis.* There would be nothing lacking in this portrait of the oratorical graces, if the author had added the *facetum* of Horace, which in its full extent agrees better with Cicero than with Virgil.

But one must pardon this omission of Seneca's in favour of another type of graces, whose necessity he recognized in | composition, and which I 157
admit appears to me the most beautiful of the graces of the mind: exactness. What! this exactness that we abandoned so willingly to the mathematicians to dispense with it in all other types of writing? Yes, gentlemen, I take exactness for a grace in discourse in all types of compositions, and I mean this in relation to yourselves, when you have taken the effort to understand Seneca.

Do you want to know, says a witty philosopher, what pleased me in your letter? You have words at your command; they never drag you away from your goal, like those authors who wander all about their subject running after some brilliant word: this is a pitfall whose beautiful appearance does not tempt you. In your way of writing, all is concise, all comes exactly to your subject; everywhere you say exactly what you want to say, and everywhere you make understood more than you say: *Audi quid me in epistola tua delectaverit. Habes verba in potestate: non effert te oratio, nec longius, quam destinasti, trahit. Multi sunt, qui ad id quod non proposuerant scribere, alicujus verbi decore placentis vocentur; quod tibi non evenit. Pressa sunt omnia, et rei aptata. Loqueris quantumvis; et plus significas, quam loqueris.*[23] This passage is a little long, but it is substantial, lively, full, and there are no lost words there. It is what we understand by exactness in discourse; exactness in thought, to clarify to us without dazzling us with an excess of brilliance; exactness in the turn that accompanies it, to apply us to it without distracting us by too-lively sentiments; exactness in expression, to give us the truth without obscuring it by a heap of superfluous or too-figurative words. This is how all the masters of the art have judged in the beautiful eras of natural good taste. Now, what do we infer from this?

> Sans être esclave de la rime,
> Ce tour aisé, cet enjoûment,
> Qui seul peut faire le sublime.

Guillaume Amfrye, abbé de Chaulieu (1639–1720), French libertine poet.

21 The Younger, *Epistulae*, 100.

22 †Lucilius Junior (*fl.* c. 65 CE), Roman governor of Sicily, the addressee of Seneca's *Epistulae.*

23 †Ibid., liv.4–5.

My conclusion is that we must put exactness in the number of the graces of discourse; and there would even be no | difficulty in finding the 158
symbol of this in the fine and slender figures that Socrates gives them in his picture.

Up to here, gentlemen, I have let myself be guided by the authority of the masters of the art in order to establish the true idea of the graces of the mind. It is time to consult reason itself to answer our two other questions. What are the natural sources of the graces of discourse? and what are the subjects most susceptible to it? I will answer both by the same principle.

It is evident that since men are composed of mind and body, the commerce that they have together through speech is not a purely intellectual commerce, but a commerce of the mind into which enters the sensible, giving something, if I may put it thus, from the body to the thoughts: this is the principle. And, to restrict myself to considered discourses, which are here my principal subject, is it not universally agreed that all composition must be a painting, and an animated painting in order to sustain the attention of the reader of the listener? Let us draw the consequence. Composition is a painting: images are thus necessary there; it is an animated painting: feelings are thus necessary. But from what sources are we going to draw these images and these feelings? The author of nature has put them in us in giving us two faculties entirely appropriate for spreading them in our paintings: I mean imagination and the heart; imagination to hold the brush, and the heart to guide it. There we have the two natural sources of pleasantness in discourse.

That imagination is one, its name alone is proof. It is the mother of images and of turns that are called ingenious; it furnishes orators and poets with beautiful figures of speech; through it, to help myself to the words of Boileau, the poet:

> Adorns, lifts, embellishes, enlarges everything,
> And finds in his hand flowers ever opening.[24]

| We know that a great philosopher of our era made war on it in all 159
his works, like a public poisoner. But, if he won over it some victories, as we cannot doubt, it is to imagination itself, as well as to its reasonings, that he has been beholden; for one can say that never did imagination serve better that while he fought it. *He was an ingrate*, says Mr de Fontenelle, *for whom it worked despite him, and adorned his reason while hiding itself from it.* Thus, more persuaded by his example than by his reasoning, we will

24 †Boileau, *Art of Poetry*, iii, ll. 175–176. The original French text is:

> Orne, élève, embellit, agrandit toutes choses,
> Et trouve sous sa main des fleurs toujours ecloses.

André misquotes the first line as ‘Que l’esprit orne, élève, embellit toutes choses’.

not miss recognizing imagination as the first source of the pleasantness of discourse.

The heart is the second one, we even dare say that it is the principal source of it in all compositions, whose goal is making the soul affectionate to the object that are presented to it: in truth, for example, in justice, in religion, in the purity of morals. In vain does the most beautiful imagination spread for us the most brilliant paintings, the heart must often takes the brush to animate them with feeling: this is a rule of eloquence known to everyone. Do you want to touch me? known how to touch yourself: it is only the heart that knows how to speak to the heart. It is only the heart that knows how to touch the true strings that stir us by the natural sympathy of our souls; it alone knows how to find in its own fire the most proper features to kindle ours, this enthusiasm of the great poets, this moving strength or gentleness of the great preachers.

Here, gentlemen, I seem to hear some murmur among our philosophers: is it thus that you abandon the Graces to be guided by two blind men, to the imagination, which is a fool, and to the heart, which is an imbecile, always enslaved, either by its fury, or by its feebleness? Let us not blaspheme against the gifts of the Creator. We have already foreseen the difficult of putting exactness in the number of the graces necessary in discourse; so necessary although | without exactness, we claim that the 160
most brilliant images of the poets, the most moving figures of the orators, the most pompous or most florid description of the historians, gave only a frivolous brightness, similar to those nocturnal fires that, after having dazzled us for some moments, suddenly leave us in the darkness.

But after having accorded to the philosophers, or rather demanded from them, this fundamental point of composition, tell me, gentlemen, will you forbid an exact thought that is presented to us, from taking on the tincture of imagination or of the heart in order to appear in public with more grace? Will you forbid us dressing ideas of reason in some images to make them more interesting, or in some sensitivity to make them more likable? Will you forbid us even adding to them, if they are found to hand, elegance of terms and harmony of style, in order to introduce the truth into the mind with more pleasantness? And thus for what are the graces of discourse made, if not to serve to adorn the truth?

By this principle, which is indubitable, my third question is more than half resolved. What are the subjects of the sciences that are susceptible to graces of discourse? I am no longer afraid to say it: there is no subject so serious where the graces cannot penetrate, sometimes one, sometimes others, and sometimes all together. I will still perhaps be accused of advancing a paradox. Paradox or not, I claim that it is a truth, whose proof is not difficult. And indeed, what is the subject or the science that one can exclude from the empire of the graces?

Is it philosophy, that which contemplates such beautiful objects? the reason that illuminates us, the order and the rule of morals, the great spectacle of the universe, which is at the same time so graceful? But since when have philosophers renounced the mind? The first savants, who founded the study of philosophy, also founded the study of the graces. | Plato 161
knew how to spread the salt of his Atticism, Cicero, all the pleasantness of Roman urbanity. And without going so far to seek examples of a graceful philosophy, we have an author who knew how to dress ideas of the most abstract metaphysics in the happiest images, and to animate them, if I may put it thus, by the gentlest feelings that the beauty of eternal wisdom could inspire in its lovers.

Could it be said that at least the mysteries of religion are inaccessible to the graces of discourse? Boileau said somewhere:

> The terrible mysteries a Christian must believe,
> Disdain lively ornaments to receive.[25]

But if, from there, he would claim to banish all the graces from Christian discourse, we have the example of the Fathers of the Church to oppose him. Among the Greek Fathers, St Basil,[26] St John Chrysostom,[27] St Gregory of Nazianus,[28] did not believe in debasing our mysteries in treating them in a style that the golden age of Athens would not have disavowed disavowed. Among the Latins, St Cyprian,[29] St Ambrose,[30] Lactanctius,[31], Minucius Felix,[32] the great St Augustine himself, did not believed in enfeebling the proofs of the Christian religion, in mixing them sometimes with the flowers of their eloquence. Among us, the Massillons and the Cheminais[33] did not believe in degrading the pulpit in carrying this elegant and ingenious influence that draw all France to their sermons. But why cite these disciples, when we have the master to produce in

25 †Boileau, *Art of Poetry*, iii, ll. 199–200. The original French text is:

> De la foi d'un chrétien les mystères terribles,
> D'ornements égayés ne sont pas susceptibles.

26 †Basil of Caesarea [*Βασίλειος*] (330–379 CE), bishop of Caesarea Mazaca 370–379 CE.

27 †John Chrysostom [*Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος*] (c. 347–407 CE), archbishop of Constantinople 398–404 CE.

28 †Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329–c. 389 CE), archbishop of Constantinople 379–381 CE.

29 †Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus (c. 200–258 CE), bishop of Carthage c. 248–258 CE.

30 †Aurelius Ambrosius (c. 340–397), bishop of Milan 374–397 CE.

31 †Lucius Caelius Firmianus Lactantius (c. 240–c. 320 CE), Christian convert and author.

32 †Marcus Minucius Felix (*fl.* 160–300), Christian apologist.

33 †Referring to Timoléon Cheminais de Montaigu (1652–1689), French Jesuit preacher and orator.

testifying? It is he of whom it was said that grace was spread over his lips. Images, feelings, likable morals, how many divine pleasantnesses in all his discourses! They could be heard in the desert; it was protested that never could a mortal speak in that way; in a word, all were rapt in admiration of the words of grace that came from his | mouth: *Mirabantur omnes in verbis* 162
gratiæ, quæ procedebant de ore ipsius.[34]

Finally, what do we say about mathematics, which we have long been sure refuses ornaments of discourse? A sort of proverb has even been made:

Ornari res ipsa negat, contenta doceri.[35]

Is there thus a reason to exclude it from the number of the sciences that can be made graceful? I oppose it in the name of the Académie royale. And why would we exclude it? Is there a law that forbids the mathematical Muses from laughing sometimes? or rather, is it not true that they should always laugh, since they are sure of victory? I agree that it has its thorns, but thorns that soon transform themselves into roses. Is not the science of numbers, by which they start to instruct us, replete with diverting problems that ask only an ingenious trick to give them grace? Geometry, by which they continue to illuminate us, presents to the imagination the most elegant figures to put it in a good mood. Do not the sensible parts of mathematics, optics, music, astronomy, geography, in revealing to us everywhere a beneficent intelligence that ceaselessly tends to our needs and even to our pleasures, offer to the heart objects that are the most capable of stirring its affections? What more does this beautiful science need to be susceptible to the graces of discourse? It has been a long time since Archimedes[36] started putting ease and lightness into the mathematical style. Aratus,[37] the Greek poet, even knew how to join it to the pleasantness of poetry. The famous Galileo[38] is not less pleasant in his dialogues on the system of the world. The great Descartes adorned his music and his dioptric, the deepest principles of | his physics, his meteors, 163
even his vortices, with the most graceful images. Father Pardies[39] gave us elements of geometry and of statics of an elegance that does not cede much

34 Luke 4:22. 'And all [...] wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.'

35 †Marcus Manilius, *Astronomicon*, iii, l. 39. 'The subject requires no ornament; to have it apprehended is all.' Marcus Manilius (*fl.* 1st century CE), Roman poet and astrologer,

36 †Archimedes of Syracuse [Ἀρχιμήδης] (c. 287–c. 212 BCE), Greek mathematician and engineer.

37 †Aratus [Ἄρατος] (c. 310–240 BCE), Greek poet whose major extant work describes celestial phenomena.

38 †Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), Italian mathematician, physicist, and astronomer.

39 †Ignace-Gaston Pardies (1636–1673), French Jesuit scientist.

to that of Vaugelas.[40] The marquis de l'Hôpital,[41] in the most sublime geometry, showed us, in his clean and concise style, all the good grace of a beautiful mind of quality. The brilliant Fontenelle found the way of mixing his playfulness, and made mathematics not only cheerful, but happy. How many other trials of fact could we cite to show that this beautiful science is not so austere that is refuses the graces of discourse. But it is time to finish.

After having explained the nature of the graces of the mind, after having indicated the sources, after having brought all the sciences under their empire, what still remains to do, if not to also bring in all the savants? It is an enterprise, gentlemen, worthy of your zeal; and we believe it is possible to say that the execution is already well advanced in this city since the establishment of your academy by the cares of an illustrious protector, who has only to show himself to make us see all the graces, and to speak to make them understood to us.

40 †Claude Favre de Vaugelas (1585–1650), French man of letters, one of the original members of the Académie française.

41 †Guillaume François Antoine de l'Hôpital (1661–1704), French mathematician.

Eighth Discourse

8 On the love of beauty, or the power of the love of beauty over the human heart

Gentlemen,

When I had the privilege, in the preceding discourses, of bringing into daylight the idea of beauty, I had still only executed half of my design. The intellect might be content, but would the heart be, | if we said nothing 164
on the love of beauty? The love of beauty is without question the most beautiful of our inclinations; it is the principle behind our noblest feelings; it is a sacred fire that lifts us ever higher to join us to its source. It must be confessed, however, that after the corruption of our origin, it is quite often only a fire hidden in the cinders, that dwells without heat or light in the heart of the majority of men. Let us try, if possible, to rekindle it.

We have seen elsewhere the different objects that naturally excite the love of beauty, whether we contemplate the spectacle of nature, or works of art, or the order of reason in mores. It remains for us to examine this love itself, its particular character, to distinguish it from our other natural affections, and its excellence, to give it the place it merits in our hearts. The difficulty of a subject where there will be more interior feelings to consult than clear ideas to follow has not repelled me. I refuse no trouble, provided I may be allowed to hope that it will be useful to the world. Let us proceed to our topic.

First, gentlemen, to exclude superfluous questions, I do not believe it is necessary to consider whether there exists in our heart a natural love of beauty distinct from the love of the good or of the purely delightful good. I honour human nature by being persuaded that there is no man so stupid as to never feel that he naturally likes the light of the sun, and the beautiful order that reigns in the universe, proportion and conventions in works of art, symmetry in an edifice, harmony in a concert, sincerity in a discourse, probity, justice, decency in morals. It is a truth of experience that has pierced through the dark ages of paganism; and Plato, the most ancient of the philosophers whose writings we have, presents it to us, in one of

his dialogues on beauty, as an axiom of good natural sense. Returning
| to our heart, said Socrates to Phaedrus,[1] there we will see clearly two 165
principles of action, two loves that dominate us and ceaselessly drive us: a love of instinct that pulls us towards the pleasures of sense, and a love of reason that carries us towards that which is good for the soul, towards the beautiful, the excellent, the perfect. These two loves, though of a character so different, are in certain regards quite in agreement with each other. But it must be admitted that they are most often at war. Sometimes one gains victory, and sometimes the the vanquished wins in its turn over its rival. Thus, our soul experiences successively all the vicissitudes of an empire where there are two contenders for the throne. When the love of beauty is the strongest, the soul finds itself in a state of liberty that we call wisdom, moderation, virtue. When, on the other hand, the love of sensible things is the victor, the soul falls into a state of servitude that we call vice, passion, disturbance. But, though often enslaved so deeply as to love its servitude, it always keeps at the bottom of its heart a principle of returing to virtue in the idea of the supreme beauty that recalls it to order, and whose love can never be entirely extinguished in a rational soul.

This is the system of Plato on the nature of the will. It admits two natural loves that are, so to speak, its two driving forces. And we have only to consider our heart with the same attention, to find them there, like him, with the same certainty.

The existence of the love of beauty in all men being assumed as an obvious fact, I will limit myself to the only questions that may offer some difficulty

1. What is its origin or the time of its birth in out heart?
2. What is the principle of this love of predilection that we observe in certain souls for one type of beauty rather than for another?
3. | What is the power of the love of beauty over all men in general, 166
and in particular over those who have the courage to adopt it as the rule for their conduct?

Please follow me, gentlemen, in a discussion that interests us closely, it is the most beautiful part of our soul whose foundation we are concerned to penetrate.

First, what is the origin of the love of beauty in our heart? We found it there without having seen it born, and we still find it there without having the power to mark exactly the precise moment of its birth. We know only, and I am ashamed to admit it, that the first of our loves was that of the goods of the body, that our first cries tearfully demanded them, that our

1 †Phaedrus is a character in three dialogues of Plato: the *Symposium*, the *Protagoras*, and of course the *Phaedrus*.

first efforts searched eagerly for them, that out first joys arose in possessing them, our first regrets in leaving them, and out first angers when we were deprived of them, in a word, that in our first years our soul, immersed in the body, only followed those tastes with which instinct blinds feeling. But finally those days of darkness gave way to the light; we became capable of reflection. The sun of intelligence, as a holy author said, appeared, and immediately our soul saw itself transported into a sort of new world. We discovered there, as if in a distant space, ideas purer than those of the senses: the luminous ideas of numbers, which illuminated us in our little calculations; those of geometric figures, from which we like to see regularity in objects; the idea of a ruler of heaven and earth, superior to our minds; that of one law that would require our obedience.; the idea of order and of rule, of honour and of propriety, of reason and of reasoning. We did not yet know how to define these beautiful ideas, but we had already seen them. We did not yet know how to explain well the thoughts that they had given us; but we knew how to answer when we found any Socrates who knew how to ask. This | sunrise was not yet without clouds; but we could 167
already perceive through them that there were goods other than those of the body. The truth started to please us; the beauty of a work of art or of nature drew our attention; a beautiful historical treatise filled us with admiration; a beautiful thought struck us; a beautiful feeling touched us; the prudence that foresees dangers; the courage that overcomes them; the justice that gives to each his own; the generosity by which he gives up his own to benefit others, thenceforth appeared to us not only creditable virtues, but lovable and desirable.

Permit me here, gentlemen, to support this with your memory: is it thus that you formerly sensed the love of beauty being born in your heart with reason? Or if the time of its birth seems to you too distant to remember it clearly, I call upon the experience that children give us daily. The love of beauty, like reason, can be born in some sooner, in others later; but it is certain that we always see this love born with reason, and, if you doubt it, the proof is very easy.

Take a child of a slightly open spirit; present to him some beautiful idea proportional to his intelligence; show him, for example, a beautiful portrait; make him listen to a beautiful piece of music; recount to him a beautiful story full of noble sentiments or marvellous feats, what will be his first object of attention? Despite his natural levity, he becomes still; he looks; he listens; he applies himself wholly to his object. Does that mean, in a child, such a serious mood? A new philosopher, he has retired into himself to compare the object with which you have presented him with the rules of beauty, that his reason starts to discover. Finding them observed there, his face brightens immediately. He admires; he is charmed, above all by certain lucid traits. Consider his attitude, you see in the joy that

bursts in his | eyes, that at the same his mind is applied there, his heart is 168
attached there so naturally that he easily concludes from it that no new love has struck him, but an old inclination has re-awoken with a new abode. He could tell you precisely, neither what touched him, nor why. We have always, mainly at this age, many more ideas than expressions in which to render them. He could not even later, or he would not dare to declare to you what type of beauty charms him most. But, if only you would observe this child closely, you would discover it without much effort, by the more or less attention that you see him give to certain objects; by the more or less pleasure that you see him take in considering them; by the more or less opening that you find in him for understanding the true point of perfection; finally, by the greater or lesser liveliness by which he asks you for one thing or the other to consider it anew.

A long time ago we find the art of casting the horoscopes of children: there it is. It is not necessary to consult their destiny, neither the stars nor the astrologers. We only have to witness, in the first days of their dawning reason, from what side appears in their heart the natural love of beauty. This only can we call their star, and if we knew how to follow it in its course with a little constancy, we would rather see there, if not their destiny, at least their destination; for what sciences they are born, in which arts they could excel, in which profession they could distinguish themselves, of which moral or political virtues they could one day become the models.

This is the answer to the first proposed question. The love of beauty is born with reason, as the day is with the sun. But, reason being equal in all men, from where comes this amazing diversity in the particular inclinations that carry us so rapidly, some to one type of | beauty, the others to another? 169
What is the principle of this predilection so marked in certain minds? Does it come from the self or from some foreign source?

This is our second question, which perhaps would not be one if we did not have philosophers who have the talent of obscuring reason by reasoning. Where do they look, indeed, to seek the cause of the phenomenon we are examining?

Among the new followers of the philosophy of chance, there are those who suggest the general maxim that education shapes everything, even our idea of beauty in the arts and in morals. This is blind pretension, whose ridiculousness we have demonstrated elsewhere. There are among them others, a little less unreasonable, who happily want to admit that the idea of beauty is infused, and the love that we thus carry is natural; but they support at the same time that education is the only cause that makes us prefer one particular type of beauty to another. Why does each nation have its favourite science or virtue? The Italians, music, painting, politics; the French, politeness, valour, good manners and elegance; the Spanish and the Portuguese, magnificence and solemnity; the Germans, the military arts;

the Dutch, the peaceful arts; the English, navigation. Should it surprise us? they say, that the first lesson that they receive from our parents, the first discourses that they hear, the first examples that they see; all the objects that surround us conspire to direct us this way?

I do not ignore, gentlemen, the strength of education; it forms, without doubt; the dominant taste of each people for a certain type of beauty that prevails over its neighbours. But, without speaking of the natural dispositions that must always precede education to assure its success, I ask what is the principle behind the diversity of inclinations, the spirits, and the tastes that | are noted between different subjects of a single nation? 170
Can one say that education made them all? can one say, for example, that it is education that shaped in ancient Greece, or, if one wants to go further back, in Chaldea, Phoenicia, in Egypt, the first inventors of the sciences and the arts? can one say that it is education that shaped among the Scythians the philosopher Anacharsis in a barbaric setting, where one would could not know there was philosophy in the world? is it education that formed among us do many rare spirits, who abandoned what they had received to give themselves an entirely opposite education? The famous Descartes, son of a councillor of the court of Rennes, was raised to study law; the Marquis de l'Hôpital, from a wholly military family, was destined for the army, to which, indeed, he gave his first years; the celebrated Fontenelle, nephew of the great Corneille, was, in his youth, applies to poetry, where he sometimes shone. But the spirit of mathematics, for which they had been born, rather forced their education to yield its place. The spirit of war fetched Fabert[2] from the depths of a printing-house to make him a marshal of France. The Marquis de Racan,[3] raised in ignorance to be a gentleman, found himself a poet without ever having cultivated a muse. D'Ossat,[4] never having seen the court, seemed suddenly in that of Henry the Great,[5] and also in that of Rome, to be the most skilled politician in Europe. Prince Eugene of Savoy,[6] destined for an ecclesiastical life, showed himself a born soldier in sight of a military exercise, and captained his first campaign almost from leaving school. In all the histories, how many such examples are there of heroes of the mind and the heart, who were able to decide for themselves without the support of their masters. It is thus evident that we must seek elsewhere than in education the principle behind this admirable variety of inclinations and of tastes that we see in the world respecting beauty.

2 †Abraham de Fabert, Marquis d'Esternay (1599–1660).

3 †Honorat de Bueil, Seigneur de Racan (1589–1670), French poet and dramatist.

4 †Arnaud d'Ossat (1537–1604), French diplomat and Cardinal.

5 †King Henry IV of France, (1553–1610, reigned 1589–1610).

6 †Prince François Eugène of Savoy (1663–1736), military commander for Austria.

| To discover the true cause of it, have we recourse to the diverse 171
temperaments of men? could we seek the reason for the difference in souls in the different conformation of the bodies they animate? I do not mean their external conformation: this would be a gross error; I mean in their internal conformation, in the different construction of the heart or head, in fineness or coarseness, in the softness or hardness of the fibres that compose the tissues, in the abundance or dearth of spirit; finally, who knows? in a certain harmony, in a certain sympathy, in a certain concord of our organs with certain objects, from which there would result in our souls diverse inclinations, diverse secret likings for one certain type of beauty rather than another.

There is a type of philosophizing that is quite in fashion. We know that, among those called great writers, there are spirits so embedded in the material that they want to find there the reason for everything. Slaves to their senses, they do not have the strength to rise higher, and when they map the anatomy of a body, they believe they have analysed the their soul. We do not even pretend that this type of philosophizing on the diversity of our natural inclinations is absolutely and wholly false: one can agree, for example, that the temperament of the body inclines our tastes in respect of good of the body. This is in the order of nature, but this is not our question.

In regard to finding the cause of our diverse spiritual tastes, from this love of preference that we sometimes feel born with reason for a certain type of science, for a certain type of virtue; in a word, for these types of sublime beauty, and, so to speak, obstacles, that one cannot surmount by hard work that costs | the body too much to undertake them without being 172
directed thus by a superior force. With regard to sensible goods, we feel them only too often; it is the body which drags the soul in their pursuit; but here, on the contrary, we feel that it is the soul that drags the body despite itself in research which only the body can do, and which the body knows well how to discipline when the soul applies itself with too much ardour: an opposition of desires that shows us at every hour of the day the great fallacy of those philosophers who go to seek in the body the cause of the difference in minds.

Having abandoned modern philosophers, let us consult the ancients. Plato, the only one we know of who entered into this question in detail, has, on the cause of the love of beauty in our hearts, a system that doubtless appears to us paradoxical, and in which I even agree there are some errors, but which at least assigns an entirely mental cause to an entirely mental effect.

He supposes that our souls, before being united with the body, were admitted by the creator to the contemplation of essential beauty. That is to say that, in another entirely mental life that preceded our birth, our

souls saw in itself this exemplary and universal beauty that contains, as in a picture, all the models of the most perfect works of nature, all the rules of the sciences, all the laws of virtue; that in this contemplation of universal beauty some have been more struck by one certain type of beauty, others by another; this one, for example, by the beauty of philosophy or geometry; that one, by political or economic beauty; some, by the beauty of the spirit and the arts; others, by that of the heart and civil virtues; that each having thus received from the universal cause his particular impression, | they 173
have been sent into bodies where they always retain it like the mark of the worker stamped on his work; that the mind accepts the idea; that the heart maintains its love: the one and the other, it is true, first buried in the shadows of infancy as if in a deep sleep; but that as soon as reason comes to dispel these shadows, the soul awakens from its slumber, that it seeks beauty in all objects presented to it, from which it follows, continues Plato, that if reflection produces traces in the mind some ideas, or if the spectacle of nature produces some striking images, its heart instantly flies to meet it with rapidity, particularly to meet that particular beauty that was formerly the most charming in the universal beauty, and for which the soul always keeps a declared predilection through reminiscence on its first love.

In this portrayal, although more fitting for a poet than a philosopher, one does not fail to recognize, as observed by the fathers of the church, that Plato has read the texts of the Hebrews, particularly Moses and Solomon: Moses, for he admits a creator God, and Solomon, for he admits a wisdom, a word, a beauty eternal. But we see at the same that that he has tainted the doctrine with his particular ideas, perhaps to hide his thefts. Whatever it is, his preëxistence of souls, his reminiscence of another life, where we have seen beauty before being born, and all that that entails, are manifest errors. It is thus necessary to seek a more solid response to the second proposed question.

After having seen the insufficiency of the particular causes, physical or moral, to which we would like to attribute the phenomenon we are examining, what prevents us from resorting to the universal cause? Let us begin with an incontestable principle.

It is the author of nature who, in shaping the body, distributed this infinite variety of different traits, which forms one | of the greater beauties 174
of the sensible world. It gave us an easy way to distinguish one from the other. Cannot one say, for the same reason, that God, in creating our souls, had wanted to put there a similar diversity to vary the charms of the intelligible world, which was certainly his main design in the construction of the universe? It is, gentlemen, this thought that I propose you examine; but it is necessary that I explain myself in greater detail.

I consider the Creator, in the formation of the mental world, as the distributor of spirits, of talents, of virtues, impressing first in all souls that

came from his hands the love of beauty in general, to gather them all by the same inclination, and inspiring each of them in particular with a love of predilection for a certain type of beauty, to distinguish them from one another; to these ones, the dominant love of the truth, which makes great philosophers and great geometers; to those ones, the love of order, which makes great kings, good magistrates, loyal citizens; to some, the love of the useful arts, which forms artists of industry, great architects, wise captains, skilled navigators; to others, the love of the arts which serve the pleasures of life, painting, music, even poetry, which seem to have the sole goal of pleasure, but which great minds know always relate to the public good, according to the intention of the Creator; that is to say, in a word, that even though there is a certain temperament of the body which, according to the laws of nature, directs our tastes to support the good of the body, there is also a certain temperament of the soul which, according to the views of Providence, directs our tastes to the good of the spirit.

To the rest, gentlemen, what I put forward is not a paradox. Nothing more conforms to the most common ideas, and even so common that it has been made a proverb: Happy, we say, are well-born souls: *gaudeant bene naît.*[7] | Solomon was pleased to have shared well in the distribution 175
of souls: *puer autem eram ingeniosus, et sortitus sum animam honam.*[8] It is still the sense of the maxim universally received that, to succeed in a science, in an art, in a state or in a job, that it is necessary to have been formed for it by the hand of nature. Thus, in the view of these diverse mental tastes that characterize men in respect of beauty, one does not seek another cause; one says without fear, with the Sage, to the glory of the Creator: It is the father of beauty, who, according to the various designs of his providence, has established this admirable diversity in minds as in bodies: *speciei generator hæc omnia constituit.*[9]

But in the end what is the power of the love of beauty over the human heart? It is this last question that remains for us to examine.

If we consult the primitive order of nature, we will clearly see there that the love of the good, of the pleasant or the useful must be, in our heart, subordinated to the love of beauty, of the honest, and of the decent. But if, on the other hand, we consider the ordinary conduct of men, we would regret to see that, in most of their actions, what must be is not. After the corruption of our original, this beautiful order is reversed; it is pleasure or interest that has become the dominant motive of the human heart. We sadly agree in this. But does it follow that there, as claimed by certain misanthropic authors, that the love of beauty is today thus enslaved to the

7 †Latin proverb: 'let those of high birth rejoice'.

8 Wisdom 8:19. †'For I was a witty child, and had a good spirit.'

9 Wisdom 13:3. †'for the first author of beauty hath created them'.

love of sensible things, that it has entirely lost its power over our souls? No, without doubt; it is weakened, but it is not destroyed, and we have in all the histories manifest proofs that its power not only always subsisted in the world, but that is often erupts through | the most heroic acts, factual 176
evidence with which I am content.

I draw these from three sources: from the first lawgivers who undertook to civilize people; in the first discoverers of the sciences and the arts, who have polished morals through cultivating the mind; finally, in those great souls, who, on the most sensitive occasions, have sacrificed pleasure and interest to honour and to virtue.

We put the first lawgivers at the head of workers of beauty: it is the place that they fit. They had for beauty not only love, but zeal to show this love to the people that they undertook to civilize: we see with what success.

I must perhaps start with the most ancient of all: with the divine lawgiver of the Hebrews who drew for us the plan of the most beautiful republic of which the idea had ever been conceived: a republic in which God had made himself, if I may say so, the first magistrate; where he would rule, where he would direct all; instituting pontiffs to maintain his people in the true worship; sending to it prophets to shape its morals; rousing the generals of the army to defend it against its enemies; establishing a supreme council to be the depositary of its ordinances; its subaltern magistrates to execute these in his name; and an eternal oracle in its sanctuary to interpret them in cases of doubt. It would be easy to prove that it is the love of sovereign beauty, or rather the sovereign beauty himself who dictated to Moses such a beautiful arrangement. But, because one could say that the love of the beauty that inspired this great prophet is of another type than that that here suggested, I want to restrain myself to terrestrial lawgivers. It is not possible to enumerate them all. I am content with those who gave to their republics a character of beauty most celebrated in history.

| The first which presents itself is that of the Spartans, whom the 177
Hebrews[10] honoured as brothers. Lycurgus, a strong and vigorous spirit, severe, temperate, disinterested to the point of refusing a crown that would have cost an injustice, formed the Lacedaemonians on this model of virtue; just, sober, hardworking, patient, more concerned with doing good than speaking well; lovers of peace, but always ready for war, for which their practice was their games of their childhood, and the sole study permitted by their laws; communally rich, individually poor, where they were content with the simple necessities, with a neatness that was modest and without art; less ambitious to expand than jealous to retain; but otherwise ardent and tough to support their legitimate rights, preferring the cruelest death to a life without honour. It was a type of dark beauty that passes from the

10 I Maccabees 12:22. †'And we are right glad of your honour.'

heart of Lycurgus to those of the Lacedaemonians, or, as Seneca said, a terrible beauty: *Speciosum ex horrido.*[11]

Solon,[12] of a milder character, but at least as noble, wise without austerity, firm without hardness, brave without ferocity, polished, pleasant, adorned with the most beautiful knowledge, drew up the new plan for the republic of Athens. It admitted there all the fine arts that the Lacedaemonians had forbidden as useless occupations. It even had a law that gave action against idle citizens to oblige them all to show their talents. It added gymnastics to give them both strength and skill; mental struggles to raise souls through emulation; military exercised to arm justice against violence. In all this it succeeded, and while Athens observed the laws of Solon, she passed for being, and was effectively the most beautiful school of the mind and good taste, of politeness and of | valour which existed in the world. It 178
was a gracious beauty that he impressed these traits in everybody of his nation.

Could we not find these two characters in the same people? It would take more than a lawgiver to embody this alliance. Romulus,[13] a born captain and politician, in shaping the first form of Rome, established there three orders: the king, the senate, and the people; safety within by a consul armed with the sword, and security without by the admirable military discipline that always contributed more than their arms to their conquests. His successor, Numa Pompilius,[14] the philosopher king, added respect for religion, as the strongest link of society through the view of an omnipresent master, a link necessary to unite them in conscience. After the expulsion of the kings, Brutus[15] and Publicola[16] inspired in the Romans a second principal of union: love of country, which was so long the resort of the state against all misfortunes. Love of country would be the first lesson that infants received from their fathers; strengthened by a thousand examples at home; and finally, to fix in them this love, they drew up the famous Law of the Twelve Tables, which finished in impressing in the soul those noble feelings of natural equity, of constancy, and of moderation, that would make them one day masters of the world. It was a majestic beauty that joined the strength of Lacedaemon to the graces of Athens, but greater, as befitted a people destined by Providence for the universal monarchy.

As one thus reviews all the civilized nations that have shone in the past,

11 The Younger, *Epistulae*, xli.6. †In the passage to which André refers here, Seneca discusses the soul. Neither Lycurgus nor Lacedaemonia is mentioned.

12 †Solon [*Σόλων*] (c. 638–558 BCE), Greek statesman and lawgiver in Athens.

13 †Mythical joint founder and first king of Rome.

14 †Numa Pompilius (c. 753–c. 673 BCE), semi-mythical king of Rome c. 717–c. 673 BCE).

15 †Lucius Junius Brutus (*fl.* c. 509 BCE), founder of the Roman republic.

16 †Publius Valerius Publicola (d. 503 BCE), co-consul and colleague of Brutus.

or which still shine in the world, one finds in the form of their government the image of some species of beauty, the love of which has assembled them into a body politic. It must be agreed that the interest of collective security is also for many in design of their first association. But there is another type of beauty, whose love is purer: it is | this that animated the first inventors 179
of the sciences and of the arts; I mean the love of the truth.

How many obstacles was it necessary to overcome to discover it beyond the thick shadows that enveloped it in these early times! and when one had discovered it, how many pain to assure oneself of its possession by the title of an incontestable science! Let us see, by the difficulties of the project, the force of love that has triumphed.

To establish an incontestable science in a time when there was still nothing that could serve as a model, how could it be done? what rule to follow? what object to adopt? and after having chosen one, the way of shedding enough light on it to dispel all our doubts through absolutely irresistible evidence? Let us enter into detail.

We have ideas of two sorts; ideas that are pure and abstract, which are the only ones capable of being seen clearly; and sensible ideas, which can only be seen in a quite deceiving light. It was thus first necessary to resolve to accuse the testimony of the senses: already this was a great effort of reason.

Among our pure ideas, there are some so contrary to the passions of men, those, for example, or religion or morality, that one can hold little hope of paying them enough attention to recognize fully all the evidence; one could argue eternally on the truths that mortify our pride. Thus it is necessary, to establish an absolutely incontestable science, to chose a topic that is least subject to contradiction: it would have to present pure ideas to men, but they must not produce in them any interest in rejecting the light when it comes to appear, and to which, on the contrary, they would be very eager to apply themselves. One takes those of numbers and of geometric figures: those of numbers which are continually needed in the commerce of life, and those of geometric | figures knowledge of which is so necessary 180
in practice of the arts.

The choice could not fall on objects more suited to our intelligence; but no sooner had we started to think about it, that we discovered that with the exception of the first truths of arithmetic and of geometry, which are self-evident, that all others appear in far too much darkness to admit them without proof. I do not say without probabilities, which never fail in more doubtful subjects: I say, in demonstrative proofs, capable not only of convincing the intellect, but of forcing conviction. It was thus necessary in the end to find an infallible method for casting light there: it was necessary only to take as principles common notions of good sense, the primitive ideas of numbers, of lines, of figures; to follow the nature

of the material, in starting from the simplest before passing to the more complex; to define all terms to avoid the surprises of ambiguity so fatal to science; to distinguish each thing by its individual properties; to speak always properly, leaving figures of speech to the orators, sensible images to the poets, vague expressions to the philosophers, to proceed without detour from the first known natural principles known to their first consequences, from these first consequences to their immediate conclusions, and from those still others *ad infinitum*, by an uninterrupted chain of truths: this is the method that is called geometric.

The method was the more admirable for being wholly natural; but the as we became distant from the first principles, we saw that it required more courage to follow it steadily than genius to discover it. Its march is slow, and from the start we would like to be already at the goal; its rules are scrupulous, and in science, as in morals, we hate | nothing so much as 181
scruples: they are abstract, and we like the sensible; above all they demand firm attention; and our heart, naturally flying, is not pleased, if I may say so, with fluttering from object to object without anything further. A beautiful spirit of the last century said that it is necessary to love intensely the truth to buy it at this price. So what was the strength of this love in the first geometers, to support them in their search for the truth by such a thorny path; and after having made the discovery, to send it to us in their works that save us almost all the pain that it cost them?

In the past we built altars to heroes less useful to the world. Let us at least do justice to these first lovers of mathematical beauty by erecting in their memory a monument of knowledge of such beautiful discoveries from which we profit: the list would not be long, for the number of superior minds is never very large.

Thales[17] was the first who had the courage to apply the rigorous method of the geometers to the fundamental properties of lines, angles, and figures. Pythagoras applied them to numbers, invented the theory of proportions, and proved the most beautiful theorems on the area of surfaces. Aristaeus[18] founded the study of the solids; but these were still scattered results. Euclid[19] discovered the links between them, and conceived the design of forming a connected corpus that could serve as a universal key to all parts of mathematics. Archimedes carried his views further than his predecessors: he tried to solve the problem of the quadrature

17 †Thales of Miletus [Θαλῆς] (c. 624–c. 546 BCE), Greek pre-Socratic philosopher, sometimes viewed as the founder of Greek philosophy and the deductive method in mathematics.

18 †Aristaeus the Elder (*fl.* 370–300 BCE), Greek mathematician whom Pappus of Alexandria credits with a treatise entitled *Five Books concerning Solid Loci*.

19 †Euclid [Εὐκλείδης] (*fl.* c. 300 BCE), Greek mathematician who wrote the geometrical and mathematical treatise called the *Elements*, the earliest extant treatment of mathematics in an axiomatic deductive manner.

of the circle, and effectively discovered the parabola. He was the first to measure the surface of the sphere, the most beautiful discovery, or at least the most useful that had been made in geometry since its birth. He developed the theory of centres of gravity, that of floating bodies, the admirable screw that bears his name, and many other | surprising machines 182
that made him so dangerous to the Romans during the siege of Syracuse. Diophantus of Alexandria[20] laid the first foundations of algebra. The love of mathematical beauty took Hipparchus[21] to a still higher flight: he carried geometry into the sky; Eudoxus[22] drew up the first star-chart; and the famous Eratosthenes[23] drew from the stars the first measure of the earth that had been achieved mathematically.

After having given the ancients their dues, let us consider also the moderns. After so many centuries, how could the love of mathematical beauty not have produced new discoveries? The ingenious Copernicus[24] found a new system of astronomy in order to dispel the shadows of the ancient astronomy; Galileo, a new heaven and new stars to expand knowledge; Kepler,[25] the new rules to calculate their movements; Descartes, a new geometry and algebra to ease the solution of problems; Cavalieri[26] and Wallis,[27] the new science of infinity, which the ancients had only glimpsed from afar. The two Cassinis[28] undertook, with success, to surpass all the astronomers of antiquity. The father climbed infinitely above Hipparchus in his astronomical tables, and the son above Eratosthenes in his measure of the earth. Finally, in mechanics, the celebrated Huygens has been, by his new inventions, the Archimedes of our era. In a word, there is no academy in Europe where the love of mathematical beauty has not given in our days new conquests to the kingdom of truth.

20 †Diophantus of Alexandria [*Διόφαντος*] (between 200 and 214–between 284 and 298 CE), Greek mathematician and author of the *Arithmetica*, a partially-extant treatise on solving equations.

21 †Hipparchus [*Ἵππαρχος*] (c. 190–c. 120 BCE), Greek mathematician and astronomer, developer of spherical trigonometry and its use to model astronomical phenomena.

22 †Eudoxus of Cnidus (c. 410 BCE–c. 350 BCE), Greek mathematician and astronomer.

23 †Eratosthenes of Cyrene [*Ἐρατοσθένης*] (c. 276–c. 195 BCE), Greek mathematician, geographer, and astronomer, famed for his calculation of the circumference of the earth.

24 †Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), astronomer and modern developer of heliocentric cosmology.

25 †Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), German mathematician and astronomer, developer of his three laws of planetary motion.

26 †Bonaventura Francesco Cavalieri (1598–1647), Italian mathematician.

27 †John Wallis (1616–1703), English mathematician.

28 †Giovanni Domenico [= Jean-Dominique] Cassini (1625–1712), Italian-French astronomer, and his son Jacques Cassini (1677–1756), French astronomer. The next two generations of the family also produced astronomers.

It is true, gentlemen, that this is not the model to propose to everyone: there the love of the moral will supply us more generally. Still a moment of attention.

Nothing demonstrates more evidently the power of the lover of moral beauty over the human heart, than seeing it survive despite all the enemies that attack it from within and | without. Within, all the passions war; 183
the love of pleasure want to destroy the idea of honesty; and ambition substitutes ceaselessly a thousand hosts of honour to destroy it still further. Without, we only hear maxims that preach to us the useful and the pleasant, as the only objects worthy of pleasing us; and we see almost everywhere that mores conform to this base moral. Formerly, idolatry went further: it consecrated vices in its gods to abandon them there without scruple; impotent efforts: nature, stronger than the loved vice, never could allow neither that it be esteemed in oneself, not that it be loved in others.

This is the general proof of the natural power of the love of moral beauty over the human heart. Let us give particulars. I have promised you famous examples from history. There is hardly a nation that does not provide me with them, but there is above all one which merits having a distinguished place here, because the love of beauty in all types of moral beauty seems to me to have survived there for longest, and more strikingly than elsewhere: I speak of the ancient Romans. We admire the greatness of their empire; their sentiments were still greater.

I start with the love of essential moral beauty, which is honesty and decency. All history attests that, in the early times of the republic, this was, in a manner of speaking, the soul of the body of the nation. For, what other love could inspire them to such sublime laws? The thought, for example, of establishing for the ministry of the altars an order of virgins, as the most proper to gain the favours of heaven by their innocence; of placing work and poverty amongst the virtues, as the best way to effect purity of mores; of inviolably keeping their word, even at the cost of their life, even to their perfidious enemies, as it being more reasonable that a | 184
part of mankind perish, than to break, through reciprocal perfidy, the bond of general society, which is good faith; to set, as the foundation of their politics, this spirit of moderation and equity that drew so many peoples, and even holy people[29] into their alliance; of imposing on their magistrates that beautiful rule of justice that saved the life of St Paul,[30] of condemning no-one without a hearing; finally, in brief, of constructing a temple to its

29 i Maccabees 8:1. †'Now Judas had heard of the the Romans, that they were mighty and valiant men, and such as would lovingly accept all that joined themselves unto them, and make a league of amity with all that came unto them.'

30 Acts 25:16. †'To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.'

honour, but where one could only enter through the temple of virtue.

These were the great maxims that love of honesty had inspired in the ancient Romans. Maxims of virtue of which they were so profoundly persuaded, that, Fabricius[31] having heard from Cineas,[32] the ambassador of Pyrrhus,[33] that there was in Greece a philosopher who wanted to make pleasure the general motive of all the actions of men, he regarded this opinion as a monster in morality: *Cum Cyneam narrantem audisset Atheniensem quemdam, clarum sapientia, suadere, ne quid aliud homines, quam voluptatis causa, facere vellent, pro monstro eam vocem accepit.*[34]

The love of natural moral beauty, that is to say general humanity, and the amity that prescribes *jus sanguinis*,[35] had no less power over the hearts of the Romans. Cicero remarks, in his *De Officiis*, that they called peopled with whom they were at war, not enemies, but only strangers, to temper, he says, the horror of the thing by the mildness of the expression: *Lenitate verbi tristitiam rei mitigante*[36] The Laws of the Twelve Tables expressly forbade starting any war, without having previously demanded satisfaction for the injury received; even after having been refused this, still forbade starting | hostilities without a formal declaration of war; even after the 185
declaration, forbade any citizen, not undertaking military service, from fighting the enemy. And after the victory, how did the Roman laws want the vanquished treated? often as citizens, always as men. The generous victors became in Rome the patrons of the defeated peoples, whose name they sometimes took to declare themselves publicly their protectors.

Indeed, if the law of general humanity had much power over the Roman, how much more that of blood appealled higher. You can judge by an example chosen from a thousand others.

The brave Coriolanus,[37] who had saved his country in the war against the Volsci, exiled by the ingratitude of its citizens, surrendered to his resentment: he marched on Rome at the head of this same people, beat the Romans, pursued his victory, besieged the city; he is was almost ready to take it and abandon it to pillage. The Romans, in despair, sent his

31 †Gaius Fabricius Luscinus (*fl.* 284–275 BCE), Roman statesman and ambassador.

32 †Cineas, emissary of Pyrrhus, sent to Rome to sue for peace, famed for his prodigious memory.

33 †Pyrrhus of Epirus [*Πύρρος*] (319–272 BCE), Greek general, later King of Epirus 306–302 BCEand 297–272 BCE, and King of Macedon 288–284 BCEand 273–272 BCE), military opponent of Rome.

34 Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium*, iv.3.6. †André does not quote exactly here.

35 †The notion that citizenship is dependent on one's ancestry (as opposed to one's place of birth or residence).

36 Cicero, *De Officiis*, i.12. †André does not quote exactly here.

37 †Gaius Marcius Coriolanus, legendary Roman general.

friends to him to calm his anger; they received no audience. They sent ambassadors: they received no hope of mercy. They send priests and pontiffs: 'The gods of Rome are no longer mine.' Who could bend this inflexible will? They sent to him his mother, the illustrious Veturia. After having listed to her: Mother, he said to her, you ask for my death: it is inevitable, if I offend my army by agreeing to peace with you; but you have given me life, go tell the Romans that they owe to you their salvation. His prediction was fulfilled: he died happy having been disarmed by the law of nature.

We must not forget the love of civil and political beauty: thus we can call love of country. We know that it was all-powerful in the heart of the Romans. From it came, in all the orders of the republic that attention, and that admirable concert to uphold what they called | the majesty of the 186
empire, the authority of the senate and the liberty of the people. But above all from it came, in the perils of the state, that greatness of soul that made insignificant all their personal injuries, only to think as one of the salvation of their country. We have in their history a host of examples. One will suffice me.

The generous Camillus,[38] exiled, like Coriolanus, by the faction of the enemies of his glory, first like him resented it, through weakness or through honour. But in the depths of his exile he saw his country in danger: he felt it no longer. The Gauls, profiting from his disgrace, had beaten the Romans, routed their armies, taken Rome by assault, slain the senate, burnt the city, besieged the Capitol, which was already ready to rescue itself by a disgraceful treaty. Where was Camillus? they asked. You will see. He flew to Rome with a small number of friends and allies assembled in haste. Created dictator, he broke the treaty, fell on the Gauls, chased them from Rome and from Italy. This is not all: after having triumphed over the enemies of the state, he pardoned his own, rebuilt the city, reëstablished the republic in its early light; in a word, he only avenged the injuries that he had received by the striking testimony of a love that tested ingratitude.

I shall not dwell on the strength that the love of civil and political beauty had in Rome. The Romans are well-known enough in that way: good citizens, great men of the state. I end with the power over them of the love of personal moral beauty, which makes the honest man, the virtuous and decent man. It is necessary here to restrict ourselves to a single example, but which contains in the highest degree all that the Roman spirit ever produced.

The great Scipio,[39] endowed with all the advantages of birth, of the

38 †Marcus Furius Camillus (c. 446–365 BCE), Roman statesman and soldier who at times served as consul, tribune, censor, and dictator.

39 †Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (235–183 BC), Roman statesman and general during

mind, of the heart, and of the body, was fond, in his youth, of the love of the beauty of mores. His maxim was first that the first victory of man must be | that over himself:[40] *Vince animum*; that was his saying, and we will see 187
the effects.

Victor in Spain over the Carthaginians, he took a young prisoner who was engaged to a lord of the country. Already master of himself at the age of twenty-four, he refused to see her, for fear, said Florus, of injuring her modesty by a single glance:[41] *Ne quid de virginitatis flore vel oculis delibasse videretur.* It is true that he received the ransom, but it was only to increase her dowry, and to make her more dear to her husband through this new agreement. The peoples of Spain, charmed by his virtue, publicly gave him the title of king. He rejected it,[42] happy, he said to them, to be remembered in your hearts, if you judge me worthy. Victor over Hannibal[43] in Africa, he took Carthage. He sent all its treasures to Rome, without reserving anything from his conquest but the name of Africanus:[44] *Nihil ex ea, nisi cognomen referena.* Victor over Antiochus[45] in Asia, where, after having been Consul twice and having received a triumph, he was pleased to serve under his younger brother,[46] in the capacity of lieutenant general, with the same integrity, and same disinterest. He contented himself with having won for him the name of Asiaticus, with the honour of a triumph. So much glory could not avoid rousing his enemies, and therefore accusers.[47] He could not be attacked on grounds of self-interest. They accused him of ambition: that during the war with Antiochus he had comported himself as a dictator rather than a lieutenant of the consul; that he alone had settled the conditions of peace with the defeated king; that he seemed only to have undertaken this expedition to show to the third part of the world of what he had already persuaded two others, that he was the single chief of the Roman empire; that he had | even taken control of the treasures of 188
Asia, or at least connived in their squandering by his brother. Two factious tribunes called him to appear before the people to answer in full to all

the Second Punic War.

40 Livy, *Ab urbe condita libri*, xxx.14. †André refers to *Ab urbe condita libri* xxi–xxx as *De bell. Pun.* i–x.

41 Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, ii.6. †Florus actually tells that there were several such prisoners whom Scipio refused to see. Florus (*fl.* c. 100 CE), Roman historian.

42 Livy, *Ab urbe condita libri*, xxvii.19.

43 †Hannibal (248–c. 182 BCE), Carthaginian military commander.

44 Maximus, *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium*, iii.7.1. †André does not quote exactly here.

45 †Antiochus III [*Ἀντί χ ος*] (c. 241–187 BCE), ruler of the Seleucid empire 222–187 BCE).

46 †Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus (*fl.* 200–183 BCE), Roman military commander and statesman.

47 Livy, *Ab urbe condita libri*, xxxviii.50.

these accusations. Scipio knew how to win battles, but he did not know how to be a defendant: *Major animus erat, quam ut reus esse sciret.*[48] He appeared nevertheless on the appointed day. He climbed to the tribunal to harangues: Tribunes, he said, you accuse me! Romans, listen to my defence. On such a day as today, I vanquished Hannibal and I made you masters of Carthage. The gods have accorded you, under my auspices, several other beautiful days. Let us all go to the Capitol to make solemn thanks, and pray to them, with me, that they give you many princes who serve you as faithfully as I. His defence, which was entirely Roman, pleased the Romans: all the orders of the state followed him to the Capitol. Friends, enemies, the tribunes themselves seeing themselves abandoned, were obliged to accompany his triumph. But this was still not the most beautiful triumph of his life. Master of the senate and of the people, master of the armies, he could easily have oppressed by force the enemies of his glory. No. 'I have shown them that I can, doing what I must.' Civil war would be inevitable if, after such brilliance, he remained in Rome. He retired that same day to his country house to save his country, a second time, by a retreat more beautiful than all his victories.

Is this enough, gentlemen, to demonstrate the power that the love of order or of moral beauty has kept in the world despite the general corruption? I have only taken my example from the most nations most famed for their politeness. I could have shown it to you in the midst of barbarism, and you know that Alexander[49] found it | even among the 189
Scythians: the love of order is a fire lit in our hearts by a divine breath; no other force could ever extinguish it. In vain men have raised up against it the most violent passions, there will always remain some spark deep in their soul; and often it only takes one spark to relight it suddenly and brilliantly, at least by passing acts of heroic virtue, resembling those flames emerging between the ashes of a smouldering blaze. It is a barrier that Providence has opposed in every age to the progress of corruption. God has let people wander in their views by an effect of his justice. But, by an effect of his goodness, he has set bounds to their errors; it is he himself who assures us of it. He has inspired legislators to give them laws that keep them in order by the natural love of justice and of society: *Per me reges regnant, et legum conditores justa decernunt.*[50] He has illuminated sages to instruct them, revealing in their hearts the love of wisdom, of science and of virtue: *Ego habito in consilio, et eruditis intersum cogitationibus.*[51]

48 Livy, *Ab urbe condita libri*, xxxviii.52. †'His spirit was too high for him accept the position of a defendant'. André does not quote exactly here.

49 Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Historiae Alexandri Magni*, vii. †Quintus Curtius Rufus (*fl.* c. 41–54 CE), Roman historian.

50 Proverbs 8:15. †'By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.'

51 Proverbs 8:12. †'I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.'

And because laws without mores, because instructions without examples, are defences too weak against the torrent of vices, he has roused among them generous souls to arrest their progress through traits of moderation, of equity, of prudence, of strength and of courage so striking, that they could not help but recognize there something divine: ***Meum est consilium, et æquitas, mea est prudentia, mea est fortitudo.***[52] Socrates attributed to an intimate impression by the Divinity on his heart the love that he carried for wisdom. The Romans attributed to the same principle the virtues of the great Scipio. Seneca the philosopher even made it a general maxim in his famous passage: ***Miraris hommes ad Deos ire? | Deus ad homines venit.*** 190 ***Imo, quod propius est, in hommes venit. Nulla sine Deo bona mens est.***[53] And to what other cause can we attribute the victories that even the pagans sometimes won over nature, when they were pleased to listen to reason? Despite the distance of place and time, we are still struck by these great examples of virtue, when we read them in history: we are moved often to tears: great souls by sympathy, more common souls by emulation; nay, even the most vicious, by a remainder of reason that always makes them esteem the virtue, that they have abandoned, more than the vices that they follow. This is my last proof of the natural power of the love of moral beauty over the human heart, which was my principal proposition.

André does not quote exactly here. The correct Latin is 'ego sapientia habito in consilio et eruditis intersum cogitationibus'.

52 †Proverbs 8:14. 'Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.'

53 The Younger, *Epistulae*, lxxiii.16. †'Do you marvel that man goes to the gods? God comes to men; nay, he comes nearer – he comes into men. No mind that has not God, is good.'

Colophon

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