

**Pope's Ethical Thinking**  
by Dr Christopher Tilmouth  
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QUOTATIONS

Here lye two poor Lovers, who had the mishap  
Tho very chaste people, to die of a Clap.  
    'Epitaph on the Stanton-Harcourt Lovers'

Who sees him act, but envies ev'ry deed?  
Who hears him groan, and does not wish to bleed?

*Britons* attend: Be worth like this approv'd,  
And show, you have the virtue to be mov'd.  
    'Prologue to Mr Addison's Tragedy of *Cato*', ll. 25-6, 37-8

But while her Pride forbids her Tears to flow,  
The gushing Waters find a Vent below:  
Tho' secret, yet with copious Grief she mourns,  
Like twenty River-Gods with all their Urns.  
    'On a lady who Pissed at the Tragedy of *Cato*', ll. 2-5

I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought;  
I mourn the lover, not lament the fault;  
I view my crime, but kindle at the view,  
Repent old pleasures, and solicit new.

Unequal task! a passion to resign,  
For hearts so touch'd, so pierc'd, so lost as mine.  
...  
But let heav'n seize it, all at once 'tis fir'd,  
Not touch'd, but rapt, not waken'd, but inspir'd!  
Oh come! oh teach me nature to subdue,  
Renounce my love, my life, my self – and you.  
    *Eloisa to Abelard*, ll. 183-6, 195-6 & 201-4

Lo these were they, whose souls the Furies steel'd,  
And curs'd with hearts unknowing how to yield.  
    'Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady', ll. 41-2

The Furies that relentless breast have steel'd,  
And curs'd thee with a heart that cannot yield.  
    'The Iliad of Homer, translated by Alexander Pope', XXII.447-8

The surest Virtues thus from Passions shoot,  
Wild Nature's vigor working at the root.  
What crops of wit and honesty appear  
From spleen, from obstinacy, hate, or fear!  
See anger, zeal and fortitude supply;  
Ev'n av'rice, prudence; sloth, philosophy.  
    *An Essay on Man*, Epistle II, ll. 183-8

Pope: As L'Esprit, Rochefoucauld, and that sort of people prove that all virtues are disguised vices, I would prove all vices to be disguised virtues.

(Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men Collected from Conversation*, ed. James M. Osborn, no. 517)

If white and black blend, soften, and unite  
A thousand ways, is there no black or white?  
Ask your own heart, and nothing is so plain ...

The learn'd is happy nature to explore,  
The fool is happy that he knows no more;

...

See the blind beggar dance, the cripple sing.  
The sot a hero, lunatic a king;  
The starving chemist in his golden views  
Supremely blest, the poet in his muse.

*An Essay on Man*, Epistle II, ll. 213-5, 263-4 & 267-70

Hence the Fool's paradise, the Statesmen's scheme,  
The air-built Castle, and the golden Dream,  
The Maids romantic wish, the Chymists flame,  
And Poets vision of eternal fame.

*The Dunciad Variorum*, III.9-12

Above all things I lov'd *Ease*, and of all Philosophers those who reason'd most *at their Ease*,  
and were never angry or disturb'd, as those call'd *Sceptics* never were.

Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, quoted by Pope in *The Dunciad in Four Books*,  
IV.489-90

Is not this in truth somewhat Gothic? And has not our philosopher in appearance something of  
the savage, that he should use philosophy [thus]?

Sir! ... We are beholden to you for your instruction. But, pray, whence is this zeal in our  
behalf? What are we to you? ... Is there then such a thing as natural affection? ... It is directly  
against your interest to undeceive us and let us know that only private interest governs you ...

Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein, pp. 42-3

This whimsical piece of work ... is at once the most a satire, and the most inoffensive, of  
anything of mine. People who would rather it were let alone laugh at it, and seem heartily  
merry, at the same time that they are uneasy. 'Tis a sort of writing very like tickling.

Pope to Mrs or Miss Marriot, 28 February 1713/14

[The Dull] are not ridicul'd because Ridicule in itself is or ought to be a pleasure; but because  
it is just, to undeceive or vindicate the honest, unpretending part of mankind from imposition.

'A Letter to the Publisher', *The Dunciad Variorum*

Flow Welsted, flow! like thine inspirer, Beer,  
Tho' stale, not ripe; tho' thin, yet never clear;  
So sweetly mawkish, and so smoothly dull;  
Heady, not strong, and foaming tho' not full.

*The Dunciad Variorum*, III.163-6

Tho' deep, yet clear; tho' gentle, yet not dull;  
Strong, without rage; without o'erflowing, full.

John Denham, *Cooper's Hill*, quoted by Pope in *The Dunciad Variorum*

Renew'd by ordure's sympathetic force,  
As oil'd with magic juices for the course,  
Vig'rous [Curl] rises; from th'effluvia strong  
Imbibes new life, and scours and stinks along ...

*The Dunciad Variorum*, II.95-8

... the following Vision is ... not a real or intended satire on the Present Age, doubtless more learned, more enlighten'd, and more abounding with great Genius's in Divinity, Politics, and whatever Arts and Sciences, than all the preceding.

Martinus Scriblerus in *The Dunciad Variorum*, III.5-6

You grow *correct* that once with Rapture writ,  
And are, besides, too *Moral* for a Wit.

But *Horace*, Sir, was delicate, was nice;

...

His sly, polite, insinuating stile  
Could please at Court, and make AUGUSTUS smile.

These, may some gentle, ministerial Wing  
Receive, and place for ever near a King!  
There, where no Passion, pride, or Shame transport,  
Lull'd with the sweet *Nepenthe* of a Court ...

*Epilogue to the Satires*, ll. 3-4, 11 & 19-20, 95-8

Me, let the tender Office long engage  
To rock the Cradle of reposing Age,  
With lenient Arms extend a Mother's breath,  
Make Languor smile, and smooth the Bed of Death,  
Explore the thought, explain the asking Eye,  
And keep a while one Parent from the Sky!

*Epistle to Arbuthnot*, ll. 408-13