

LOGIC: OR, THE ART OF THINKING

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The first edition in English was published in 1685 at London and printed by T. B. for H. Sawbridge. The second and third English editions were printed by T. B. for John Taylor in 1693 and 1696 respectively. The following is taken from the third edition which differs but slightly from the second. The translation into English is credited to several hands. Here the spelling has been modernized.

The work itself is divided into four parts. These are:

- (1) Consisting of *Reflections upon Idea*, or upon the *first Operation* of the *Mind*, which is called *Apprehension*, &c.
- (2) Of *Considerations of Men* about *Proper Judgments*, &c.
- (3) Of the *Nature* and various *kinds of Reasoning*, &c.
- (4) Treats of the most *profitable Method* for *Demonstrating* or *Illustrating* any *Truth*.

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PART IV Chapter XIII

*Certain Rules for the guidance of Reason,
the belief of Events that depend upon Human Faith.*

The most customary use of sound Judgment, and that faculty of the Soul by which we discern Truth from falsehood is not employed in speculative Sciences, about which so few Persons are obliged to spend their time, and yet there is no occasion wherein it is more frequently to be made use of, and where its more necessary than in that Judgment which we ought to make of what passes every day among Men.

I do not speak of judging whether an Action be good or bad, worthy of applause or reproof, for that belongs to the regulation of Morality; but of judging of the Truth or Falsehood of human Events, which may only be referred to Logic, whether we consider them as past, as when we only endeavor to know whether we ought to believe them or not? Or whether we consider them as being to come, as when we fear or hope they will come to pass, which regulates our hopes and our fears.

Certain it is, that some Reflections may be made upon this Subject; which perhaps may not be altogether unprofitable, or rather may be of great use for the avoiding of certain Errors into which most People fall, because they do not sufficiently study the Rules of Reason.

[422] The first Reflection is, that there is a vast difference to be made between two sorts of Truths; the one that only relates to the nature of things and their Immutable Essences, abstracted from their existence, the other that relates to things existent that relate to human and contingent Events, which may or may not come to pass when we speak of the future, and may probably never have been, when we talk of what is past. I speak with this

reference to their next causes, making an abstraction of their Immutable order in Divine Providence; because on the one side it does not hinder Contingence, and on the other side being unknown to us, it contributes nothing to make us believe the things themselves.

Now as all things requisite are in truths of the first sort, there is nothing sure, which is not Universally true, and so we must conclude that a thing is false if it be false in any case.

But if we think to make use of the same Rules in human Events; we shall always judge falsely, and make a Thousand false Arguments.

For these Events being naturally Contingent, it would be ridiculous to seek out in them for a necessary Truth. And so that person would be altogether void of Reason, who would believe nothing of such things unless it were made out to him, that it was absolutely necessary they should be so.

Nor would he less deviate from Reason that would require me to believe any particular Event (suppose it were the Conversion of the King of *China* to the Christian Religion) upon this only ground, because it is not Impossible to be so. For seeing that another who should [423] assure me to the contrary may make use of the same Reason; it is clear that Reason alone cannot determine me to believe the one rather than the other.

We must therefore lay it down for a certain and unquestionable Maxim upon this occasion, that the Possibility alone of an Event is not a sufficient reason to make me believe it, and that I may have reason also to believe a thing, though I judge it not impossible, but that the contrary may have come to pass; so that of the Two Events I may rationally believe the one and not the other, though I believe them both possible.

How then shall we resolve to believe the one rather than the other, if we judge them both possible? Observe the following Rule.

To judge the truth of an Event, and to persuade myself into a Resolution to believe, or not to believe a thing; it must not be considered nakedly, and in itself, like a Proposition in *Geometry*; but all the Circumstances that accompany it, as well internal as external, are to be weighed with the same consideration; I call Internal Circumstances such as belong to the Fact itself; and external, those that relate to the Persons, whose Testimonies induce us believe it. This being done, if all the Circumstances are such, that it never, or ever rarely happens, that the same Circumstances are accompanied with Falsehood: Our Understanding naturally carries to believe the thing to be true; and there is a reason for so doing, especially in the Conduct of the Actions of our Life, that never requires a greater assurance than a moral Certainty, and which is satisfied upon most occasions with a great Probability.

But on the other side, [424] if these Circumstances are such as are frequently accompanied with Falsehood; Reason requires us to suspend our Belief; or that we should look upon as false what is told us, when we see no likelihood, that it should be true, though we do not find any absolute Impossibility.

For Example, we demand, whether the History of the Baptism of *Constantine* by *Silvester* be true, or false? *Baronius* believe it true; but Cardinal *Perron*, Bishop *Spondanus*, *Petavius*, *Morinus*, and the most eminent of the *Roman* Church believe it false. Now if we insist upon the whole Possibility, we have no reason to reject *Baronius*. For his opinion contains nothing absolutely impossible; and to speak absolutely, it is also possible, that *Eusebius*, who affirms the contrary, affirmed an untruth in favor of the *Arrians*; and that the Fathers that followed him were deceived by his Testimony. But if we make use of the Rule already laid down, which is to consider what are the circumstances both of the one and the other Baptism of *Constantine*, and which are those that carry the greatest marks of Truth, we shall find them to be the latter. For on the one side, there is no great reason to rely upon the Testimony of a Writer, as fabulous as the Author of the Acts of *Silvester*,

who is the only Person of Antiquity, who has spoken of *Constantine's* being Baptized at *Rome*. And on the other side there is no likelihood that a Person so Serious and Learned as *Eusebius* should presume to report an untruth relating to a thing so remarkable, as the Baptism of the first Emperor, that restored the Church to her Liberty and which ought to have been spread over all the [425] World, at the same time that he wrote, which was not above four or five hundred years after the Death of the said Emperor.

Nevertheless there is an Exception to this Rule, by which we ought to be satisfied with the possibility or likelihood. That is, when an action, which is otherwise sufficiently attested, is contradicted by Incongruities and apparent contrarieties with other Histories.

For then it suffices that the Solutions brought to enervate these Repugnances be possible and probable; and it would be unreasonable to require other positive Proofs; for that the Act itself being sufficiently proved, it is not equitable to require that we should prove all the Circumstances in the same manner. Otherwise we might call in question a thousand most certain Histories, which we cannot make agree with others of less Authority, but by Conjectures which it is impossible to prove positively.

For Example, we cannot bring to an agreement what is delivered in the *Kings* and *Chronicles* concerning the years of the Reigns of several of the Kings of *Juda* and *Israel*, but by assigning to some of the Kings, two beginnings of their Reigns, the one during the Life of the Reigning Prince, and the other after the Decease of their Parents. Now if it be asked what Proof we have that such a Prince reigned for some time with his Father; we must confess there is none Positive. But it suffices that it is a thing Possible, and which has often come to pass at other times, to make it Lawful for us to suppose it, as a Circumstance necessary to reconcile Histories otherwise certain.

[426] And therefore there is nothing more ridiculous than the endeavors of some persons of this latter Age, to prove that St. *Peter* was never at *Rome*. They cannot deny this Truth to be attested by all the Ecclesiastical Writers, and those the most ancient; as *Papias*, *Dionysius of Corinth*, *Caius*, *Irenaeus*, *Tertullian*; against whom there is not any one that has made the least Contradiction.

Nevertheless they imagine they can ruin this Truth by Conjectures; for example, because St. *Paul* makes no mention of St. *Peter* in his Epistles written at *Rome*; and when they are answered that St. *Peter* might be then absent from *Rome*, in regard he is not said to have fixed his Seat there, as being one that often Traveled abroad to Preach the Gospel in other places; they reply that this is urged without any Proof, which is Impertinent, because the Act which they oppose, being one of the most confirmed Truths in Ecclesiastical History, it is sufficient for those that uphold it to reconcile these pretended contrarieties, as they do those of the Scripture itself; for which, as we have showed, Possibility is sufficient.

Chapter XIV

An Application of the Preceding Rule to the Belief of Miracles.

The *Rule* which we have explained is without doubt of great Importance for the well regulating of our Reason in the belief of particular Acts. For want of the due Observation of which we are in [422] great danger of falling into the two dangerous extremities of Credulity and Incredulity.

For example, there are some, who make a Conscience of questioning any Miracle; because they have a Fancy, that they should be obliged to question all, should they question any; and for that they are persuaded, that it is enough for them, by knowing that all things

are possible with God, to believe whatever is told them touching the Effects of his Omnipotency.

Others as ridiculously imagine, that it is in the Power of the Understanding to call all Miracles in question, for no other reason, because so many have been related that have proved to be false, and therefore there is no more reason to believe the one than the other.

The Inclination of the first is much more tolerable than that of the latter; though true it is, that both the one and the other argue equally amiss.

They both depend upon Common Places. The first upon the Power and Goodness of God; upon certain & unquestionable Miracles, which they bring for proof of those that are called in question; and upon the Blindness of *Libertines*; who will believe nothing, but what is proportional to their Reason. All this is very good in itself; but very weak to convince us of a particular Miracle. For God does not always act according to his Power; nor is it an Argument that a Miracle was wrought, because others of the same Nature have been wrought. And we may do well to believe, what is above our Reason, without being obliged to believe all that Men are pleased to obtrude upon us, as being above our Reason.

[428] The latter makes use of common Places of another sort.

*Truth, says one of them, and Falsehood appear with Countenances alike; the same Gate, the same Steps we behold with the same Eyes. I have seen the rise of several miracles in my Time. And though they vanished in the Birth, yet we cannot but foresee the Train they would have gathered, had they lived to their full Age. For it is to but to find out the end of the Thread, and to cut it into as many pieces as we please, and there is not a greater distance between nothing and the smallest thing in the World, than there is between this and the greatest. Now the first that were intoxicated with this beginning of Novelty, coming to spread their History, find by the opposition which they meet with, where the difficulty of Persuasion lodges, and make it their business to Focus over that part of a false Piece. Particularly Error first causes public Mistake, and afterwards public mistake causes particular Error. Thus the whole Structure of the miracle by some pulled down, by others upheld, and by addition enlarged at length grows up to a considerable Pile. So that the most remote Witness is better instructed than he that lives close by, and the last heard of it, better confirmed than the first Publisher.*¹

This Discourse is ingenious and may be profitable to prevent us from being led away with every Idle Report. But it would be an Extravagance from hence to conclude generally that we ought to suspect whatever is said of Miracles. For certain it is, that what is here alleged relates only to those things which are taken up upon common Fame, without enquiring into the original cause of the Report. And we have no reason [429] to be confident of what we know upon no better grounds.

But who so blind as not to see that we may make a common place opposite to this, and that at least upon as good a Foundation?

For as there are some miracles that would deserve but little credit, should we enquire into their Original, so there are others that vanish out of the Memories of men, or which find but little credit in their judgments, because they will not take the pains to inform themselves. Our understanding is not subject only to one sort of distemper, but several, and those quite contrary. There is a sottish stupidity, that believes all things the least probable. But there is a conceited presumption that condemns for false, whatever surpasses the narrow limits of the understanding. Sometimes we hunt after trifles, and neglect things of greatest moment. False stories spread themselves everywhere, while true ones can hardly get liberty to creep abroad.

¹Montaigne, *Essays*, Book III, Chapter 11.

Few Persons have heard of the miracle that happened in our time at *Faremoutier*, in the Person of a Nun, so blind, that hardly the Balls of her Eyes were left in her Head, who recovered her sight by touching the Relics of St. *Fara*, as I am assured by the Testimony of a Person that saw here in both conditions.

St. *Augustine* affirms, that many real miracles were wrought in his time, that were known but to few; and which, though most remarkable and wonderful, spread no further than from one end of the Town to the other. Which induced him to write, and relate in his Sermons [430] to the People, such as were most certain. And he observes in his *Twenty Second Book of the City of God*, that in the single City of *Hippo*, near Seventy Miracles were wrought within two years after the Building of a Chapel in the Honor of St. *Stephen*, besides a great number of others which he did not commit to writing, which however he testifies to be true upon his knowledge.

We therefore see that there is nothing more irrational, than to guide ourselves by common places, upon these occasions; whether it be in rejecting all Miracles, or embracing all. And therefore we must examine them by their particular Circumstances, and by the credit and knowledge of the Reporters.

Piety does not oblige a Man of Sense to believe all the Miracles in the *Golden Legend* or the *Metaphrastes*: In regard those Books are so full of Fables, that there is nothing to be credited upon their Authority: As Cardinal *Bellarmino* has made no scruple to confess of the last.

But I affirm, that every Man of Sense, bating his Piety, ought to acknowledge for true the Miracles which St. *Augustine* recites in his Confessions and his Book *de Civitate Dei*, some of which he saw, and others of which he was informed by the Persons themselves, in whose sight they were wrought. As of a Blind Man cured at *Milan* before all the People, by touching the Relics of St. *Gervase* and *Protase*, which he reports in his Confession, and of which he speaks in the 22nd Book of *de Civitate Dei*, Chap. 8. *A certain Miracle was wrought at Milan, when we were there, when a Blind Man [431] was restored to his Sight, which could not be unknown to Thousands; For it is a large City, and there was then the Emperor; and the thing was done before a vast Multitude of People crowding to the Bodies of the Martyrs, St. Gervase and Protase.*

Of a Woman cured in *Africa* by Flowers that had touched the Relics of St. *Stephen*, as he testifies in the same Book.

Of a Lady of Quality cured of a Canker by the sign of the Cross which she caused to be made upon the Sore, by one that was newly Baptized according to a Revelation which she had had.

Of a Child that died Unbaptized, whose restoration to Life the Mother obtained by her Prayers to St. *Peter*, in the strength of her Faith, invoking him in these words, *Holy Martyr restore me my Son: thou knowest, I ask his Life for no other reason, but because he should not be eternally separated from God.*

Now if these things may be supposed to have happened as they are related, there is no rational Person but must acknowledge these things to be the Finger of God. So that all their Incredulity could do, would be to doubt the Testimony of St. *Augustine*, and to believe him a falsifier of the Truth, to gain a Veneration of the Christian Religion among the *Pagans*. Which is that which they have no color to imagine.

First, because it is not likely that a Person of his judgment would have told an untruth in things so Public, wherein he might have been convinced of falsehood by infinite Numbers of Testimonies, which would have redounded to the Ignominy of the Christian Religion.

Secondly, because there was never any Person more a professed Enemy of Falsehood, than this Holy Man, especially in matters of Religion, having made it the work of entire Treatises, to prove that it is not only unlawful to tell a lie; but a thing so detestable, that it is not to be made use of, though for the Conversion of Men to the Christian Faith.

I have the more enlarged myself upon this remarkable Example, of the judgment that is to be made in the Truth of Actions, to serve as a Rule upon the like occasions, because we most commonly deviate in those things. For everyone thinks, that it is sufficient for the decision of those to make a common Place, which for the most part is only composed of Maxims, which not only are not Universally True, but not so much as probable when they are joined with the particular Circumstances of Actions, that fall under Examination. And therefore Circumstances are to be compared and considered together, not considered a part. For it often happens, that an Act which is not very probable in one Circumstance, ought to be esteemed and taken for certain, according to other Circumstances: And, on the other side, an Action which appears to us true, according to one Circumstance which is usually joined with truth, ought to be deemed false, according to other weakening Circumstances, as we shall make out in the following Chapter.

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Chapter XV

Other Remarks upon the same Subject, of the Belief of Events.

There is yet one other Remark of great Moment, to make upon the Belief of Events. Which is, that among those Circumstances which we ought to consider, that we may know whether credit be to be given to the Fact, or no; there are some which we may call *common Circumstances*, because they frequently occur; and are far oftener joined to Truth than Falsehood, and then if they be not Counter-balanced by other particular Circumstances, that ruin the motives of belief drawn from common Circumstances, we have reason to believe those Events, if not to be certain, yet at least to be probable; which probability is sufficient, when we are bound to pronounce our opinion in such cases. For as we ought to be satisfied with a moral assurance, in things not capable of Metaphysical certainty; so when we cannot obtain a full moral assurance, the best we can do, when we are to resolve, is to embrace the most probable; for it would be contrary to reason to embrace the least probable.

But if on the other side, these common Circumstances, which would have induced us to believe a thing, be joined with other particular Circumstances that ruin the motives of belief, drawn from common Circumstances, or be such as are rarely [434] found without falsehood, we are not then any longer to believe that Event. But either we remain in suspense, if the particular Circumstances enfeeble the weight of common Circumstances, or we believe the action to be false, if the Circumstances are such as are usually the marks of Falsehood.

For example, it is a common Circumstance, for many Contracts to be signed by two public Notaries; that is, by two public Persons, whose chiefest Interest it is to be just and true in their employments, because not only their Conscience and Reputation, but their Lives and Estates lie at Stake. This consideration alone is sufficient, if we know no other particularities of the Contract, to make us believe that the Contract is not Antedated. Not but that it might to so; but because it is certain, that of a Thousand Contracts, Nine Hundred Ninety Nine are not. So that it is infinitely more probable, that this Contract is one of the

Nine Hundred Ninety Nine, than the only Antedated Contract of a Thousand. So that if withal, the integrity of the Notary that signed it be known to me, I shall most certainly believe, that there is no foul play in the Writing.

But if to this common Circumstance of being signed by two Notaries, there are joined other particular Circumstances, as that the Notaries are Persons of no Conscience or Reputation, so that they might be instrumental in falsifying the deed, yet shall not this make me conclude that the deed is antedated. But if besides all these, I can discover other proofs of the [435] Antidate, either by Witnesses or convincing Arguments as the Inability of the Person to lend Twenty Thousand Crowns, at a time when it shall be demonstrable that he had not a Hundred in cash, I will then resolve to believe the Contract to be falsified, and it were unreasonable for any Person to believe me to believe otherwise; and I should do ill, to suspect others, where I did not however see the same marks of Falsehood, not to be false, since they might be as well Counterfeited as the other.

We may apply all this to several matters that cause frequent disputes among the Learned. We demand if such a Book were written by such an Author whose Name was always to it? And whether the Acts of a Council are True or Counterfeit.

Certain it is, that we ought to give Sentence for the Author, whose Name has been long acknowledged and affixed to the Work; and for the Acts of a Council which we read every day; nor are we to believe the contrary but upon very strong Reasons.

Therefore a most learned Person of this Age, being to prove, that the Epistle of *Cyprian* to Pope *Steven*, about *Martien* Bishop of *Arles*, was none of the Holy Martyrs, he could not convince the Learned, his Conjectures not seeming sufficient to deprive St. *Cyprian* of a Piece that had always carried his Name, and which has a perfect resemblance of Style, with the rest of his Works.

In vain also it is, that *Blondel* and *Saumaize*, not [436] able to answer the Argument drawn from the Epistles of *Ignatius*, for the superiority of Bishops above Priests, in the Infancy of the Church, pretend those Epistles to be Counterfeit, though as they were Printed by *Vossius* and *Usher*, from the Ancient Manuscript in the *Florentine* Library: Insomuch that they have been refuted by those of their own party. For that confessing as they do, that we have the same Epistles which were cited by *Eusebius*, St. *Jerome*, *Theodoret*, and *Origen* himself, there is no likelihood that the Epistles of *Ignatius*, being collected by *Polycarp*, that the true Epistles should have disappeared, and others be counterfeited in the time between *Polycarp* and *Origen* or *Eusebius*. Besides that those Epistles of *Ignatius*, which we have now wear such a Character of the holiness and simplicity, so proper to the Apostolic Times, that they justify themselves against the vain accusations of being false and counterfeit.

Lastly, all the difficulties that Cardinal *Perron* proposes against the Epistles of the Council of *Africa*, to Pope *Celestine*, touching Appeals to the See, cannot prevail with us to believe otherwise now than before, but that those Epistles were really written by the Council.

But it happens sometimes that particular Circumstances carry more weight in Persuasion, than long Possession.

So that although the Epistle of St. *Clement* to St. *James* Bishop of *Jerusalem* be translated by *Ruffinus*, near upon thirteen hundred Years ago, and that it [437] is cited and owned for St. *Clement* by a Council of *France*, about twelve Hundred years ago, yet we can hardly believe it otherwise than Counterfeit. In regard that St. *James* being Martyred before St. *Peter*, it is impossible that St. *Clement* should write after the Death of St. *Peter*, as the Epistle supposes.

Thus though the Commentaries upon St. *Paul* are attributed to St. *Ambrose*, and cited under his Name by a great number of Authors, together with that imperfect Work upon St. *Matthew*, under the name of *Chrysostome*. All Men however at this day agree that they belong to neither, but to other ancient Authors full of many Errors.

Lastly, the Acts of the two *Sinuessan* Councils under *Marcellinus*, and two or three at *Rome*, under *Silvester*, and another at *Rome* under *Sixtus* III might be sufficient to persuade us of the verity of those Councils, if they contained nothing but what were congruous to reason, and which might be proper for the times, wherein they are said to be celebrated; but they contain so many absurdities, so disagreeable from those times, that there is great likelihood of their being false and counterfeit.

And these are the Remarks which may serve for these sorts of judgments. But we must not imagine them to be of such great use, as always to free us from the danger of being deceived. All that they can do at most, is to guard us from the more gross and apparent Absurdities, and to enure us not to be carried astray by common Places, which [438] containing something of general Truth, cease not however to be false upon many particular occasions, which is one of the chiefest sources of human Error.

Chapter XVI

Of the Judgments we ought to make of Future Accidents.

These Rules that serve us to judge of Things past, may be applied to things to come. For as we probably judge a Thing to have come to pass, when the certain Circumstances which we know to be usually joined to the Fact; we may as probably believe that such a thing will happen, when the present Circumstances are such as are usually attended by such an Effect. Thus the Physicians judge of the good or bad success of Diseases; Captain of the future Events of War; and that we judge in the world of the most part of contingent Affairs.

But as to these Accidents of which we are some part ourselves, and which we may either promote or prevent by our care and foresight, in avoiding or exposing ourselves to harm or danger; it happens that most persons fall into many errors, so much the more grievous, by how much they seem to be guarded by reason; because they only set before their Eyes, the Grandeur and Consequence of [439] the advantage which they wish for, or the mischiefs that they fear, not considering the likelihood and probability that this advantage or inconvenience happen or not happen.

In like manner, when it is any great misfortune which they fear, as loss of Life or Estate, they think it prudence not to take any care to prevent it. Or if it be any great advantage which they expect, as the gain of a Hundred Thousand Crowns, they think they act wisely to endeavor the gaining of it, if the Venter cost but little, let the probability of success by never so small.

By such a Ratiocination as this it was, that a Princess hearing that some Persons had been overwhelmed by the fall of a Roof, would never go into a House, until she had all the Roofs first viewed; and she was so fully persuaded, that she had a reason for so doing, that she accounted all other imprudent, that did not as she did.

It is also this appearance of Reason, that engages several Persons into inconvenient and excessive cautions for the preservation of their Health. This is that which renders others distrustful even in little Things; for that having been sometimes deceived they believe they shall be deceived in all their other Business.

This is that which inveigles so many People to Lotteries, to gain, cry they, Twenty Thousand Crowns for one Crown, is not that a very great advantage? And every one

believes himself shall be that happy Person, upon whom this great Fortune shall shower itself: Never considering, [440] that though the Lots promise Twenty Thousand for One, it is Thirty times more probable to every particular person, that he shall be a loser than a winner.

And this is the Defect of this Ratiocination; for that we may judge what is fit to be done, to obtain the good and avoid the evil, we ought not only to consider the good and the evil in its self; but also the probability whether it may happen or no; and Geometrically to consider the Proportion which the things hold together; which may be demonstrated by this Example.

Ten Men at play, stake every one a Crown, there is but one can win the whole Stake, all the rest are losers. So that every one has these two chances, either to lose One Crown or win Nine. Now if we should consider only the gain and loss in themselves, it might seem that all had an equal advantage: But we are to consider moreover, that if everyone may win Nine Crowns, and can only lose one, it is also nine times more probable in respect of everyone, that he shall lose his One, than win the Nine; while every Man has Nine Degrees of Probability to lose one Crown, and but one degree of Probability to gain Nine; which equals the hopes and fear of Gain and Loss.

All Plays of this Nature, are as equitable as Plays can be, but all that are not under this Equality of Lots are unjust. And hence it is that it may be plainly made out, that there is an evident Injustice in all sorts of Lotteries; for the Matter of the Lottery usually claiming the tenth part of the whole [441] Fund for his own share, the whole crowd of those that play is cheated in the same manner, as if a Man playing at a Game, wherein there were as much likelihood of winning as losing, should Play nine Pistoles to one. Now if this be disadvantageous to the whole Crowd, it must be also the same to every particular Person, because the Probability of losing, far more surpasses the Probability of gaining, than the advantage we hope for, the disadvantage of Losing.

Sometimes there is a little likelihood in the success of a thing, that how advantageous soever it be, and how small soever the hazard of winning, it is better not to hazard. Thus it would be a foolish thing to play twenty *Sols* against ten Millions of *Livres*, or against a Kingdom, upon condition he should not win, unless such an Infant taking out the Letters out of a Printers Case by accident, did also of a sudden Compose the first twenty Verses of *Virgil's Aeneid*. For indeed there are few Moments escape us, wherein we do not run the Risk of losing more, than a King that should stake his Kingdom to such a Condition.

These Reflections seem of little value, and are so indeed if we stop here; but we may make use of them in matters of greater Importance; and the chiefest use we can make of them is to render us more rational in our hopes and fears. For Example, there are some Persons that are in a Panic dread when they hear it Thunder; which clatter and hurly-burly in the Sky, if it put them in mind of God and Death, it is well; but if only the fear of being Thunder struck, causes this extraordinary [442] apprehension, then it will easily appear how little Reason they have. For of two Millions of Persons it is very much if one be killed in that manner: and we may also aver, that there is no sort of violent Death happens so rarely. Since then the fear of mischief ought to be Proportionable to the greatness of the danger, and the Probability of the Event, as there is no sort of danger that so rarely befalls us as to be killed with Thunder, so have we the least reason to fear it; since that fear will no way avail us to avoid it.

Hence Arguments may be produced not only to undeceive such People as are so over morosely and unseasonably cautious in the Preservation of their Health and Lives, by showing them that those Precautions are much more mischievous than the danger so remote

from the accident which they fear; but also to disabuse another sort that always argue thus in other affairs, there is danger in this Business, therefore it is evil. (There is Profit in this, therefore it is good:).² In regard we are not to judge of those things, either by the danger or the advantage, but by their proportion one with another.

It is the Nature of things Finite to be exceeded, how bulky soever they be by the least of things, if multiplied often enough; or if the little things are far more Superior to the great ones in probability of Event, than they are inferior to them in bigness.

[443] For an Atom may exceed a Mountain if it be sufficiently multiplied, or if this great Good we wish for is so difficult to be obtained, that it surpasses the little one more in Magnitude, than the little one surpasses the greater in facility of being obtained. The same is to be said of those mischiefs which we fear; that is, that the least Evil may be more considerable than the greatest Evil, which is not Infinite, if it surpasses it according to this Proportion.

There are nothing but Infinite things that can be equaled by any temporal advantage, and therefore they are never to be put in the Balance with any of the things of this World. And therefore the least degree of Facility for a Man to save himself is worth all the felicities of this World joined together. And the least danger of losing it is more considerable than all temporal mischiefs, if only looked upon as Misfortunes.

And this may be sufficient, for all rational persons to draw from what has been said, this Conclusion, with which we will end our Logic. *That the greatest of all Imprudence, and highest of all Madnesses is this, to spend our Lives and our Time in anything else than in what may be serviceable to acquire us a Life that never shall have an end.* Since the Good and Evil of this Life is nothing, if compared to the felicity and sufferings of the other; and the danger of falling into the one is as great as the difficulty of acquiring the other.

[444] They who draw this Conclusion, and follow it in the Conduct of their Lives, are Prudent and Wise, let them be never so unlearned in Arguments concerning the Sciences. Whereas they who neglect it, though never so Learned in other things, are called in Scripture Fools, Madmen, and make but an ill use of Logic, Reason or their Lives.

²This is omitted from the third edition.