

patible with our nature; then is there something within us, which, however obscured or ill-informed, points to a higher destiny: and in asking for motives, we must quit the province of morals, and enter on that of religion; and in its hopes, faint and feeble as they may often be, we may not only find an answer to our question, but a reason why such high feelings and capacities are implanted in us; leading us, as they do, into acts opposed to the strongest instincts of our nature, and above the sanction of all ordinary moral rules.

It is, I think, certain that the study of an ethical system, grounded on the moral and social feelings, and exemplified by that course of action which in all ages has been honoured by the virtuous and the wise, is not only a good practical training for the mind (which in the busy commerce of life has often more to do with moral than with physical reasoning), but prepares it for the acceptance of religious truth. Whether this opinion be true or false, it is at least certain, that many of the writers of antiquity had correct notions on the subject of natural religion. The argument for the being of a God, devived from final causes, is as well stated in the conversations of Socrates, as in the Natural Theology of Paley. Nor does Socrates merely regard God as a powerful first cause, but as a provident and benevolent being: and he tells us, that as man is the only animal with a soul capable of apprehending a God, he is the only being by whom God is worshipped—that prayer and sacrifice are our duty—that by such services we may learn some of the secrets concealed from men, and know, that the Divinity sees every thing, hears every thing, is present every where, and cares for all his works.