

Weak Reason and Irresistible Heterogeneity: Pope's Deviation from Monologism in "An Essay on Man"¹

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ABSTRACT

Pope assumes human reason as the "governing" principle in humanity, and he intends to establish his ethics as a reasonable system. In terms of Bakhtinian dialogism, this is a monologic, authoritative discourse, echoing Pope's belief in the stability of the Great Chain of Being. However, Pope deviates from monologism in at least three aspects: (1) his recognition of the dynamic relationship between reason and its antithetical force(s), (2) his violation of reason, and (3) the insufficiency of reason in the "perfect" Chain of Being. Pope brings heterogeneous voices into his supposed "consistent" discourse, and consequently renders monologic argument impossible.

Keywords: reason, Alexander Pope, Bakhtin, monologism, dialogism, heterogeneity.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. The significance of reason

In “An Essay on Man” Pope attempts to “vindicate the ways of God to man” by reason: he means to argue from what has already been known (1. 18-20) [1], and he believes that we can trace God by learning humanity first (1. 22) [2]. Besides, he declares his intention to hold a moderate position: “in steering betwixt the extremes of doctrines seemingly opposite . . . in forming a temperate yet not inconsistent, and a short yet not imperfect system of ethics” [3]. “Reason” is assumed as a universally approved ability to probe into even the divine mystery. “Pope comes across as the supremely rational poet, the ideal spokesman for the public values of his age . . .” [4]. His vindication of God’s ways, in short, reveals simultaneously his self-assumed identity of “the ideal spokesman” for humanity with human reason as the undeniable standard for value judgment. His “ideal” discourse is allegedly characterized by its consistency and temperance, and its assumed “systematic” argument does not allow the presence of various, disparate voices since they may threaten the authority and validity of his vindication. In terms of Bakhtinian dialogism, this is a monologic, authoritative discourse.

This reliance on reason manifests the influence of humanism. A Renaissance contemplator was viewed as “neither a creature

of earth nor a heavenly creature, but some higher divinity, clothed in human flesh” [5]. Gradually the sacred status dedicated to God in the medieval era was yielding to men of reason in the Renaissance. Humanists believe that reason can be applied to all areas of life [6]. The “core of the religion of humanism” is “a supreme faith in human reason”—its ability to solve problems, to “rearrange both the world of Nature and the affairs of men and women so that human life will prosper” [7]. All the other creatures, Pope considers, surrender to human beings in the hierarchical structure of the Great Chain of Being because human beings possess reason (1. 207-32) [8]. With its commitment to reason, humanism rejects the power of God and nature [9]. This is revealed in the hunting image, when the poet invites Bolingbroke to explore humanity, to “beat this ample field” (1. 9) [10]. Without relying on “revelation” from God, Pope resorts to reason and thus deviates from traditional Christianity. Heterogeneity emerges even in his intention to vindicate God’s ways: he still supports the traditional religious belief even though he attempts to venerate the man-centered worldview.

B. The problems of Pope’s reason-based discourse

Nevertheless, reason does not prevail as the supreme and all-powerful guide in all cases. In the eighteenth century, “[t]he rational individual was also a benevolent and

sympathetic being, a ‘man of feeling’ or a ‘woman of sentiment’; the Augustan discourse, though privileging reason, does not ignore its antithetical force [11]. In other words, reason may be challenged and threatened by its antithetical force; its “authority” is not universally acknowledged. This “antithetical force” in “An Essay on Man” appears in several terms: self-love, instinct, and passion. Reason, identified as weaker than its antithetical force, needs continual cultivation (2. 79-80) [12] so as to become the “governing” principle of humanity (2. 54) [13]. Actually, reason does not “govern” its antithetical power; rather, both sides maintain a dialogic relationship, alleged to cooperate but lapsing more frequently to conflicts. Their relationship, fundamentally dynamic and conflict-ridden, proves “reason” to be not the ultimate governor but one voice among many others. Pope lacks unreserved faith on reason, because he holds it necessary to submit human reason to God in order to avoid “erring reason” (1. 281-94) [14].

With such an ambiguous attitude toward reason, Pope’s ethics can hardly stick to a single voice, and the authority of reason is never firmly established. He notices the tension between reason and its antithetical force(s), a tension that exposes usually the weakness of the former. He proclaims the inferiority of reason to instinct with respect to the survival of mankind (3. 83-172) [15]. Besides, self-love, an antithetical

force against reason, can maintain its self-discipline and lead human beings to judge correctly (3. 270-282) [16]; consequently, the role of reason as the “governing” principle is denied. Moreover, Pope’s criticism of “fools” usually appears vehement, passionate, and devastating—this directly contradicts his proclaimed intention to formulate a “temperate, yet not inconsistent” ethical system [17]. He can neither constantly follow reason in his discourse, nor argue persistently with a reasonable manner. His violation of reason demonstrates the unavoidable impact of polyphony and heterogeneity.

Pope’s recognition of reason’s weakness incurs a fundamental problem: how can reason affirm the existence of God and the Great Chain of Being? Obviously he takes for granted the presence of a Supreme Being and of the universal order despite his attempt to avoid biblical revelation. Besides, how can he ascertain that “’Tis ours to trace him [God] only in our own” (1. 22) [18] since he advises that “Know then thyself, presume not God to scan” (2. 1) [19]? His argument presumes the validity of faith, without which “An Essay on Man” can never come into being. Thus his vindication of God’s ways actually depends on both reason and faith, and thus his discourse contains more than one voice. The necessary “cultivation” of reason implies an essentially lack in humanity and the necessity of

changing—a condition that contradicts the optimistic worldview of the Great Chain of Being: “Whatever is, is right” (1. 294; 4. 145, 394) [20]. This Great Chain assumes all creatures are created the best—“That wisdom infinite must form the best” (1. 44) [21], “And all that rises rise in due degree” (1. 46) [22]—consequently, “change” and “improvement” are not supposed to exist in this static, perfect universe. Thence, Pope’s description of reason brings an alien voice to his supposedly harmonious ethics. Despite his insistence on reason and his avoidance of biblical revelation, Pope still relies on his religious faith in his argument, misinterprets Stoicism and Epicureanism, and holds an ambivalent attitude toward modern science. All these reveal the assumed “universal harmony” of the Great Chain of Being to be a myth. Pope embraces the static and dynamic worldviews without reconciling them.

In short, the problems of reason in Pope’s discourse emerge in three aspects: (1) the dynamic relationship between reason and its antithetical force(s), (2) Pope’s violation of reason, and (3) the insufficiency of reason in the supposedly perfect Chain of Being. The poet’s assertion of reason does not eventually guarantee a temperate, consistent ethical system as he proclaims, while polyphony and heterogeneity prevail in his discourse. From the perspective of Bakhtinian dialogism, I aim at exploring the

problems of reason incurred by Pope’s argument in “An Essay on Man.”

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REASON AND ITS ANTITHETICAL FORCE(S): THE TENSION BETWEEN THE CENTRIPETAL AND THE CENTRIFUGAL FORCE(S)

A. The veneration of reason

Pope’s veneration of reason was nothing new in history. This veneration is found before and after the emergence of the Renaissance humanism [23]. Pope boasts of his achievement of “An Essay on Man” in “steering betwixt the extremes of doctrines seemingly opposite, in passing over terms utterly unintelligible, and in forming a temperate, yet not inconsistent, and a short, yet not imperfect, system of ethics” [24]. In other words, he declares himself to be a poet of reason, and his poem to be a reasonable discourse [25]. His ambition to vindicate the ways of God also depends on human reason, an ambition that also manifests a humanistic attitude, since “Complete reason in the divine world is recognisable through and by analogy with the limited reason of human intellect. For human reason to function properly it must be recognised as part of an analogically conceived complete rationality” (Jones 128) [26]. The finite human reason is even believed to be able to probe into

the infinite wisdom of God's creation.

Nevertheless, Pope does not conceive reason as omnipotent. Reason must cooperate with its antithetical force(s) in order to achieve happiness. Actually he describes this supposed "cooperation" more than he demonstrates the ideal supremacy of reason. In other words, the monologic authority of reason vanishes in the "dialogue" between reason and its antithetical force(s), while the interaction of disparate forces illustrates the inevitability of heterogeneity. Reason, though hailed as the "governing" principle, does not really dominate its antithetical force(s). Pope intends to highlight "the harmonious marriage of opposites"—to affirm that humans are both rational and passionate, "a contradiction that obsessed early eighteenth-century writers" [27]. Both share the same goal: to avoid pain and to acquire pleasure (2. 87-88; 4. 395) [28]. They are identified as "elements of life" (1. 170) [29]; reason and self-love are two principles in human nature (2. 53-54) [30]: the former is the "governing" principle, while the latter is the "moving" principle (2. 54, 59-60) [31]. Both must collaborate, or human beings may be destroyed (2. 57-58) [32]. Reason must treat passion as a friend, not a foe (2. 164) [33]. "Self-love acts as perception, reason as the interpretative faculty . . . deriving mediate from immediate perceptions, deriving possible future goods from sure present goods. The

interpretative power of these balancing human principles is evidence of God's providence" [34]. Reason alone "is a very poor guide to matters of value and judgment"; emotion is "the seat of judgment"—reason accompanied by responsible emotion can help people survive, while the interaction of both is indispensable (Ehrenfeld) [35]. The ascendancy of reason over emotion does not appear naturally; it happens as a result of continual cultivation. This dream, once fulfilled, will lead to monologism—the official culture that Bakhtin criticizes: "cold rationalism," "logical authoritarianism," "the didactic and utilitarian spirit," and "narrow and artificial optimism" [36]. Yet this is nothing but a "dream" in Pope's argument, and the poet can never evade the impact of passion.

Moreover, Pope even identifies both reason and its antithetical force(s) as essentially one quality (3. 95-96) [38]; he blames some scholars who ruin the proper functions of reason and passion (2. 81-82) [39] and who split reason and passion (2. 83) [40]. All beings, whether blessed with reason or instinct, enjoy the most appropriate power (3. 79-80) [41]—this echoes his conclusive remark, "Whatever is, is right." Thence Pope does not insist on the absolute supremacy of reason over its antithetical force(s). Since he asserts the stability of the status quo, neither reason nor passion/instinct/self-love should be weakened and marginalized. In Pope's words, the discord between reason and its

antithetical forces may exist as “harmony not understood” (1. 192) [42], a blessing in disguise that carries God’s transcendental will.

B. Reason as a centripetal force

In Bakhtinian terms, reason and its antithetical power(s) interact like the centripetal force and the centrifugal force respectively. The attempt to impose order on the messy, heterogeneous state is the centripetal force, while the centrifugal force will disrupt the imposed order and structure. The former means to centralize and unify languages, while the latter promotes decentralization and disunification [43]. Pope attempts to formulate his ideas by manipulating “the centripetal forces of language”—the imposition of order on an essentially heterogeneous world [44]. Pope takes for granted that reason, the “governing” principle, enables human beings to subdue all the other creatures (1. 229-32) [45]. Reason must be the head (2. 56, 60) [46]. It is worshipped as the authority for directing human behavior. “The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. . . . Its authority was already acknowledged in the past” (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 342) [47]. Pope means to present “sheer common sense, what every thinking man must accept” [48]. The authority of reason, in other words, should be

universally and continually approved.

Essentially reason does not “govern” passion, self-love, or instinct as the definite authority; rather, their clashes are too obvious to be neglected. Reason works like “the card,” whereas passion, “born to fight” (2. 111) [49], blows like “the gale” (2. 108) [50] or “the tempest” (2. 105) [51]. Self-love, recognized as stronger than reason, cares for the near objects and sees only the “immediate good” (2. 71, 73) [52]; reason looks to “the future and the consequence” (2. 74) [53]. Despite the brutal power of passion, Pope asserts not to eliminate it, but to master it: God “mounts the storm, and walks upon the wind” (2. 110) [54]. Similarly, human beings must mount above passion with the restraining power of reason. In short, passion must yield to reason (2. 98) [55]. Without the restraint of reason, man can be ruined (2. 201-02) [56]. Their relationships correspond to the interaction between the centripetal and the centrifugal forces.

[A]t the heart of existence, a ceaseless battle between centrifugal forces that seek to keep things apart, and centripetal forces that strive to make things cohere. This Zoroastrian clash is present in culture as well as nature, and in the specificity of individual consciousness; it is at work in the even greater particularity of individual utterances [57].

Reason “strive[s] to make things cohere”—therefore, “order” does not exist as the essential feature of the world. Mess and disorder predominate (Morson and Emerson 30) [58], and thus passion or instinct appears stronger since “to keep things apart” does not violate the messy reality.

Bakhtin indicates the universality of the centripetal-centrifugal interaction: “Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance . . .” [59]. Also, reason and its antithetical force(s) are labeled as “elements of life,” fighting in every “concrete utterance.” The detailed analysis of an utterance may expose “a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language” [60]. Reason for Pope may be defeated by passion: “What reason weaves, by passion is undone” (2. 42) [61]. This alludes to Penelope’s strategy to delay her response to her suitors in Homer’s *Odyssey*: she destroys every night what she has woven in the daytime. Pope’s use of this allusion implies the endless battles between reason and passion. Reason intends to impose order and discipline on the status quo, while passion/self-love/instinct tends to disrupt this order and invites heterogeneity to the status quo. The centripetal forces, hostile to

heteroglossia and ignorant of the disunity of language, can be found in the poetics of Aristotle, Augustine, the medieval church, and neoclassicism [62]. Bakhtin’s statement corresponds to our general understanding of the neoclassical age as the “Age of Reason.” Pope himself endeavors to regulate literary creativity and judgment by proposing his supposed Nature-inspired poetics in “An Essay on Criticism,” and then to establish a “temperate” and “not inconsistent” ethical system by satirizing “fools” in “An Essay on Man”—both are noted for his apparently *reasonable* argument. Nevertheless, the “centrifugal forces of language” always resist the hegemony of the centripetal forces and exposes the problem of the “verbal-ideological centralization and unification” [63]. The centrifugal forces work so powerfully that even Pope himself surrenders to them and violates reason.

III. POPE’S VIOLATION OF REASON AND THE IRRESISTIBLE CENTRIFUGAL FORCE(S)

A. The weakness of reason

Pope acknowledges the existence of “erring reason” (1. 293) [64] and the problem of reasoning “but to err” (2. 10) [65]. Reason is a “weak queen” (2. 150) [66], “A sharp accuser, but a helpless friend” (2. 154) [67]. “Reason, however able, cool at best, / Cares not for service, or but serves when press’d, / Stays till

we call, and then not often near” (3. 85-87) [68]. Reason does not serve human beings long, but instinct always stays with them (3. 93) [69]. By contrast, instinct (or passion, self-love) “is th’ unerring guide” (3. 83) [70], willing to help people (3. 88) [71]. Animals, with their instincts alone, can survive and evade dangers (3. 99-108) [72]. Consequently, nature demands human beings to learn from animals: “To copy instinct was reason’s part; / Thus then to man the voice of nature spake” (3. 170-71) [73]. Therefore, Pope totally subverts the elevation of reason and recognizes the irresistibility of the centrifugal forces. “The poem adheres to reason while departing from it. Only when passion already belongs to rational comportment can it be conceptualized in opposition to reason. Thus Pope both excludes and includes passion in the field of rational activity” (Cutting-Gray and Swearingen 490) [74]. In other words, Pope means to rationalize the irrational force, and consequently renders his discourse in heterogeneity. Pope’s description of reason corresponds to Hume’s: “that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will; and . . . that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will” (413) [75]; “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passion . . .” (415) [76]. Bakhtinian dialogism affirms that the centrifugal and the centripetal “are not of equal force . . . centrifugal forces are clearly more powerful and ubiquitous Unifying, centripetal forces are less powerful” [77].

Likewise, reason in “An Essay on Man” appears less powerful than its antithetical forces.

Reason, incarnated in didactic poetry, was used to promote “social normativity, driving people towards a conformity with a dominant and centred ‘norm’ of behavior” [78]. “Rationalism and classicism clearly reflect the fundamental traits of the new official culture; it . . . was also authoritarian and serious” [79]. Such a culture promoted stability and “one single tone of seriousness” [80]. Under the dominance of reason, “in the most imaginative flights there is always a holding back, a reservation. The classical poet never forgets this finiteness, this limit of man” [81]. The “self-consciousness of the classical verse is that of someone obliged to behave according to a certain code, who would feel himself disgraced or humiliated if he went outside it” [82]. Reason and didacticism, usually expressed by heroic couplets (“aphoristic thinking” in Bakhtin’s discussion), always work as the monologic authority to curb the imagination in the neoclassical poetry. Bakhtin appreciates Dostoevsky’s art in which “man is free, and can therefore violate any regulating norms which might be thrust upon him” [83]. The authority of reason extolled by Pope brings only suppression and stagnancy—a monologic condition that corresponds to the “stability” of the Great Chain of Being.

Pope asserts that reason can be raised over

instinct; however, he also indicates, God directs instinct, while man directs reason (3. 97-98) [84]. That is, instinct never goes wrong, while reason may err. If submission to God is necessary, then it is “reasonable” to yield to instinct. Therefore, the cultivation of reason turns out to contradict this “reasonable” submission. This contradiction again reveals the irresistible impact of heterogeneity despite Pope’s ambition to construct a consistent ethical system. The exaltation of reason above instinct now amounts to blasphemy: it presupposes that human beings can transcend the God-set boundary and have their own ways. Of course Pope does not hold absolute confidence in this cultivation: reason may labor in vain to gain happiness (3. 92) [85]. This failure proves that the centripetal force is indeed less powerful than the centrifugal.

B. The assumed self-discipline of self-love: the negation and the semi-carnivalization of the guidance of reason

Although reason is venerated as the “governing” principle, self-love can also restrain itself so as to render the guidance of reason unnecessary.

The same self-love, in all, becomes the cause

Of what restrains him, government and laws.

For, what one likes, if others like as well,

What serves one will, when many wills rebel?

How shall he keep, what, sleeping or awake,

A weaker may surprise, a stronger take?

His safety must his liberty restrain:

All join to guard what each desires to gain.

Forced into virtue thus by self-defence,

Even kings learn’d justice and benevolence;

Self-love forsook the path it first pursued,

And found the private in the public good.
(3. 271-82) [86]

Reason is totally absent in this passage. Self-love can judge *reasonably* and find “the private in the public good” (3. 282) [87]. In order to protect one’s own profit and safety, self-love can withhold to desire to rob the others and call for justice and order—an argument that characterizes “self-love” like “reason.” The second and the third epistles “demonstrate that sociability and morality are derived from self-love,” while “the plenitude of creation” and the “harmony” of the world are related to it [88]. Pope’s subversion of reason is so drastically as to turn emotion to be the better guide to action [89].

In addition, virtues may also derive from passion as well. People are willing to take care of their aged parents because they remember their parents' love in the past and would like to be taken care of in the future—self-love and social love combine in this case (3. 141-49) [90]. Because of self-love, human beings care for animals (3. 57-59) [91]. Self-love appears so dynamic and prominent that it is actually “at the heart of the whole system of the *Essay*” [92]. Reason is “decrowned” as self-love is “crowned” as the suitable guide for humanity. Pope’s praise of the independent power of self-love not only rejects the supremacy of reason but also renders the cultivation of reason futile. Nevertheless, Pope portrays self-love, antithetical to reason, as another centripetal force that means to bring order into the messy reality. As he deviates from one authority, he moves unawares toward another. His wavering gesture demonstrates that the messy state and heterogeneity actually haunt language, as Bakhtin affirms [93].

Indeed the supposedly ideal image of reason is carnivalized. To be precise, reason is semi-carnivalized—not totally carnivalized in the Bakhtinian sense. With the affirmation that God directs instinct, reason is deprived of its loftiness and its authority as the “governing” principle. The “profanation” of reason contains both the crowning and decrowning of this centripetal power: to recognize it as the

“governing” principle and as a weaker force than its antithetical force(s). This is not the genuine carnival proposed by Bakhtin, since Pope never utters the crowning/decrowning of reason in a joyful tone. Pope exposes the *relativity* of reason’s power and status, but an authentic carnival is characterized by the *joyful relativity* of all hierarchies and structures. Moreover, carnival “is a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators” [94]. Although reason is “turned inside out,” Pope still anticipates the cultivation of reason into the supreme authority with a serious tone, and obviously he neither enjoys nor affirms the continual conflict-ridden relationship between reason and its antithetical force(s). Mature reason, Pope hopes, can successfully control passion and instinct, and finally eliminate discord. Yet carnival means to eliminate separation and hierarchy: “The behavior, gesture, and discourse of a person are freed from the authority of all hierarchical positions . . .” [95]. Pope’s ideal supremacy of reason resists this carnival condition. Besides, reason in Pope’s discourse never undergoes the “all-annihilating and all-renewing time” [96]. The cultivation of reason presumes the inadequacy of the centripetal force, but it is not a process of renewal through annihilation—Pope endeavors to develop reason, not to destroy it. Reason must not be replaced by anything else—this attitude rejects Bakhtinian carnival that “celebrates the shift itself, the very process of

replaceability” [97]. As a result, Pope merely semi-carnivalizes reason, recognizing its weakness and intending to strengthen it.

C. Pope’s vehement criticism of the “fools”

Usually reason works with a moderate tone and expression, and certainly Pope attempts to impress his reader with this feature most of the time. Yet as his argument proceeds, “it becomes more apparent that the moderation tactics are being employed to convey a set of positions that are not necessarily ‘moderate’” [98]. He often attacks his enemies fiercely. He reproaches the proud people: “Presumptuous man” (l. 35) [99]; “Vile worm!--oh madness! pride! impiety!” (l. 258) [100]. Indeed, “passions are the elements of life” (l. 180) [101]. In 1730s, Pope’s satires become “too personal, too involved with score-settling and neglecting the satirist’s more exalted calling of reforming the manners of the age [102]. Moderation was “political camouflage under which he could disguise views that might indeed be considered extremist” [103]. In the 1730s, his poetry became a weapon against Sir Robert Walpole “due to the influence of Henry St John, Lord Bolingbroke” (Hammond 32) [104]. Pope’s “moderation and the middle way became politicized and was integrated into a specific political platform” (Hammond 32) [105]. In other words, Pope may be led by the centrifugal force(s) and renounces his reason while

criticizing his enemies. The cooperation of reason and passion/instinct/self-love does not constantly prevail in his discourse, and passionate language may burst in his supposedly rational argument.

The identification of “fools” in Pope’s poetry does not stem from his reasonable judgment. He attacks John Dennis in “An Essay on Criticism,” and mocks Daniel Defoe, Lewis Theobald, Colley Cibber, and many of his contemporaries in “The Dunciad”—yet his superb satires reveal less his rational thinking than his bitter grudge. He looked down on Defoe because of the novelist’s obscure social status; he hated Theobald because the latter had pointed out some errors in Pope’s edition of Shakespeare; he despised Cibber because this actor had teased *Three Hours after Marriage*, a play collaborated by John Gay and Pope. What he intends to weave by reason is really undone by his passion. Pope neither recognizes his own mistakes nor defends his works with reasonable arguments; rather, he counterattacks by ridiculing them with sour and slanderous satires. In this light he does not really believe in “Whatever is, is right” because he does not treat the attacks from Theobald, Cibber, and Dennis as “harmony not understood.” Reason does not guard Pope from prejudice and bitterness, nor guide him to argue with temperance.

Thus Pope—the self-assumed spokesman

of Nature—cannot resist the impact of the centrifugal force(s). His violation of reason manifests the irresistibility of those forces. He subverts the supposed sacredness of reason by indicating its weakness to resist passion or instinct. Self-love, in addition, can achieve self-discipline and avoid disasters, so it does not need the guard and guide of reason at all. Besides, his harsh criticism of “fools” exposes that passion, the centrifugal power working with his prejudice against his enemies, actually predominates in his discourse. All these testify to the existence of heterogeneous voice(s) in his “consistent” vindication of God’s ways.

IV. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF REASON IN THE “PERFECT” GREAT CHAIN OF BEING

In the “perfect” Chain of Being, all creatures and situations are believed to be in the best, and therefore “change” or “improvement” is alien to this ideal system. However, Pope’s argument about reason negates this “perfection” in four aspects: (1) the need to cultivate reason, (2) Pope’s reliance on reason and faith simultaneously, (3) Pope’s misinterpretations of Stoicism and Epicureanism, and (4) Pope’s ambiguous attitude towards modern science.

A. The need to cultivate reason

Pope admits the insufficiency of reason: “Heav’n from all creatures hides the book of Fate, / All but the page prescribed, their present state” (1. 77-78) [106]. Reason can only see

the present, so it is the starting point for all arguments: “What can we reason but from what we know? / Of man, what see we but his station here, / From which to reason, or to which refer” (1. 18-20) [107]. The first epistle of “An Essay on Man” “begins its main task of limiting the ambition of human reason”; it suggests, “if one is to proceed rationally, one must first recognise the limitations of rational inquiry” [108]. Being comparatively weaker than passion, reason itself must be cultivated: it is not created perfect (2. 79-80) [109]. “Reason, however able, cool at best, / Cares not for service, or but serves when press’d, / Stays till we call, and then not often near” (3. 85-87) [110]. To cultivate reasons presumes the essential deficiency of reason. Reason, according to Pope, must be made up by faith, attention, habit, and experience (2. 79) [111].

The necessity of cultivating reason denies the taken-for-granted stability of the Great Chain of Being on the one hand and the presumed perfection of God’s creation on the other. If it is true that “Whatever is, is right,” then the “insufficiency” of human reason should be held as necessary and beneficial, and any attempt to “improve” it should be regarded as a challenge against God’s creation. Pope urges his reader to submit to the divine grace without complaint (1. 281-94) [112], and this submission can resist pride and “erring reason.” This argument corresponds to the presumed cosmic order of the

Great Chain of Being: the harmony of the universe rests on the acceptance of all creatures with regard to their God-appointed status in this Chain, while the attempt to transcend this status will “leave a void” in the Chain and brings universal catastrophe (1. 241-46) [113]. Human beings had better accept “blindness, weakness” bestowed on them by heaven (1. 284) [114]. Any “cultivation” of the weak reason violates the claim for God’s “perfect” creation; Pope should have asserted the “proper” use of one’s “weak” reason and the “proper” interaction between reason and its antithetical force(s), not to claim for “improving” it to be the “governing” principle. To strengthen the original “weak” reason means to deny God’s perfect creation, to add something to the supposedly self-sufficient. The “perfect” Chain leaves no room for change; change always presupposes imperfection. Therefore, Pope’s demand for the cultivation of human reason directly exposes an essential “lack” in humanity, and exists as a heterogeneous voice in his vindication of God’s ways to man. The call for submission to God’s arrangement and the demand for the cultivation of reason, though mutually contradictory, weigh the same in Pope’s argument, while the poet never endeavors to reconcile them [115].

However, the recognition of the insufficiency of reason is the first step for mankind to enter into a dialogic relationship with others. The veneration of reason as God

of some supreme guide denies the necessity of dialogue, and will consequently lead to monologism. For Bakhtin rationalism implies death, “it finalizes what in fact requires for its meaningful existence to be open, living, unfinalizable” [116]. Rationalism characterizes the official culture in Enlightenment, an authoritarian, monologic dominance [117] that promises stability of the hierarchical social structure and one single tone of seriousness [118], with the danger of impoverishing the world [119]. Pope indicates that one can know the validity of God’s creation only when he/she observes every part of the whole universe (1. 23-28) [120]. Yet he also points out: “can a part contain the whole?” (1. 32) [121]—in other words, it is impossible for human beings, with limited perspective and ability, to understand the mystery of the whole universe and “the ways of God to man.” He recognizes the existence of “some sphere unknown” in the Great Chain of Being (1. 58) [122]—Pope confesses the limit of his reason as well. “’Tis but a part we see, and not a whole” (1. 60) [123]. Only an all-knowing person can fully explain the mystery of God’s creation (1. 23-28) [124]; therefore, the understanding of God’s ways means actually an unending process or even an impossible dream. “Reason” must continue its dialogue with the whole world so as to be cultivated. Eighteenth-century writers knew the complexity of the whole universe—therefore, “[m]an must become habitually mindful of the limitations of

his mental powers . . ." [125]. The Great Chain of Being presumes a stable and static order, while the need to cultivate reason leads to a dynamic and dialogic worldview. This cultivation negates the "perfection" of the status quo, and anticipates "changing" and "becoming" as the "norm." This will not guarantee reason to be the "governing" principle; rather, reason can only be one voice among many others in a heterogeneous environment.

B. Pope's simultaneous reliance on reason and faith

Pope proposes the necessity of submitting to the divine power: this is the way to avoid pride and "erring reason" (1. 285-94) [126]. Thus the "right" reason is closely connected to religious faith. The unconditional acceptance of the status quo resembles religious faith. Such a recognition has been affirmed by Descartes: "God is supremely good and cannot err, the faculty he has given us of distinguishing truth from falsehood, cannot lead us into error so long we use it properly . . ." [127]; reason and faith are not incompatible: "we should never allow ourselves to be persuaded except by the evidence of our reason" [128], while "the existence of God is the first and the most eternal of all the truths there can be" [129]. Despite his avoidance of biblical revelation in his argument, "Pope always claimed that his brand of Catholicism was moderate non-doctrinal, in the ecumenical spirit of Erasmus" [130].

"The medieval and Renaissance Catholic theologians and writers whom Pope admired emphasised that unaided human reason was a weak instrument for finding one's way in the world, if it was not rooted in a traditional, family-based piety" [131]. He tries to argue with human reason, but he also exposes the limit of reason: this contributes to the dialogue and cooperation between reason and faith in his discourse.

The result of this dialogue is a deist discourse. The deists "aimed at a secular, social ethics which could be defended 'by reason,' i.e., without appeal to supernatural revelation, and which would therefore be universal and secure" [132]. The limited human reason, oddly enough, can observe God's infinite reason in "how system into system runs" (1. 25) [133]. "And such a recognition is not a complete refusal to employ reason, but an introduction to the appropriate use of reason" [134]. Pope's deist inclination promotes "the appropriate use of reason," and "faith" still weighs a lot in his intention to "vindicate the ways of God to man."

The cooperation of reason and faith, however, does not contribute to his ideal "consistent" ethics. He maintains that we know nothing about the future (1. 85) [135]; nonetheless, he soon affirms that we can find rest in heaven after death (1. 95-98) [136]. His "knowledge" of the afterlife obviously stems

from his faith alone, and his reason merely takes this for granted. He still recognizes the importance of “hope” for paradise—a Christian voice, mingled with his incorporation of Indian (pagan) belief that one may wander with a faithful dog in the afterlife (1. 99-112) [137]. Mysteriously Pope “knows” something about the future. The voice of reason—that we know nothing about the future—yields totally to the voice of faith, a gesture that echoes his advice to avoid pride and “erring reason” by submitting to the divine power (1. 285-94) [138].

This submission exposes two problems. First of all, reason does not function as the “governing” principle while working with faith. Pope honors human reason, but simultaneously he does not hold absolute confidence in it. Secondly, if faith works indeed more wonderfully than reason, why does he not treat it as the “governing” principle in humanity? He never explores the power of faith as emphatically as he investigates reason in “An Essay on Man.” He also urges that reason and passion must both follow Nature (1. 162) [139], not faith. This is a typical deist argument: faith, sin, salvation through Jesus, and all the other elements of Christianity must be either neglected or marginalized—though the existence of God is not challenged and denied—while human reason must be affirmed and praised. No wonder even Voltaire criticizes that the system held by Bolingbroke and Pope “undermines the very

foundations of the Christian religion, and explains nothing at all” [140]. Consequently, though Pope declares to vindicate the ways of God and to submit one’s reason to the divine power, he can merely deal with ethics with an insistence on reason. Pope does not negate faith; rather, he retains both faith and reason in his discourse, and reveals indirectly the insufficiency of reason as a centripetal force. The expected “governing” principle is affirmed and suppressed in his deist pronouncement.

C. Pope’s misinterpretations of Stoicism and Epicureanism

Pope’s veneration of reason does not lead him to understand and interpret Stoicism and Epicureanism correctly. Both are denounced as “blind” to the way to happiness (4. 19) [141]. Epicureans degenerated into beasts, while Stoics wished to become gods (4. 23-24) [142]—in other words, Pope regards them as sinners against the Great Chain of Beings for their rejection of the God-assigned status of human beings. Both bring nothing but disorder and conflicts. The poet assumes himself to stand on “nature’s path,” and rejects Stoicism and Epicureanism as “mad opinion[s]” (4. 29) [143]—as if his philosophy were more excellent than both.

For Pope, Epicureans regards happiness as pleasure (4. 22) [144] and “find pleasure end in pain” (4. 23) [145]; however, Epicurus never

extols hedonism, while pleasure in their eyes means the absence of pain: “The limit of the greatness of the pleasures is the removal of everything which can give pain” [146]. This assertion anticipates Pope’s argument that both reason and passion collaborate to avoid pain and to obtain pleasure (2. 87-88; 4. 395) [147]. True pleasure does not involve in overindulgence: “It is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently, and honourably, and justly” [148]. To live prudently requires stable reason and sound judgment, an ideal similar to Pope’s veneration of reason as the “governing” principle. “The happiest men are they who have arrived at the point of having nothing to fear from those who surround them” (Epicurus) [149]—it has nothing to do with sensuous desires. Even Seneca, one of the stoic philosophers, praises that “the teaching of Epicurus was upright and holy” since “to obey Nature” is the key to find the true pleasure in his teaching [150]. Moreover, human reason in Epicurean philosophy, without relying on religious faith, can liberate us “from the fears relative to eternity” and guarantee “all the happiness of which life is capable” [151]. Compared with Alexander Pope, Epicurus argues with a more radical humanist perspective since reason alone is regarded as being able to bring happiness. Epicurus is significant to humanists because “he develops an approach to leading a good life entirely independently of any concerns about gods or the supernatural” [152].

Pope’s denunciations of Epicurus can hardly be justified as the voice of “reason.”

On the other hand, Pope asserts, Stoics find happiness “in ease” (4. 21) [153] and boast their virtue that “fix’d as in a frost” (2. 101-02) [154]. They are treated as lazy, lukewarm, and unwilling to take actions (2. 101, 104) [155]. Actually, Stoics emphasizes fortitude, a feature that must be actively practiced in daily life. If we lose anything, they believe, we must regard it as “given back” to heaven, or as “the price paid for freedom from passion” (Epictetus) [156]. To bear with loss with such an attitude is definitely not “in ease.” “Ease” does not appeal to them; rather, “harmony with nature,” an ideal that also characterizes Pope’s ethics and literary criticism, is indeed the core of Stoicism. Pope condemns both Stoics and Epicureans as “mad”; he urges his readers to follow nature (4. 29) [157]. Thence, in Pope’s view, both Stoics and Epicureans deviate from Nature.

Nevertheless, this condemnation manifests nothing but Pope’s ingratitude, because the main ideas in “An Essay on Man” owe greatly to those Greek philosophers. For Stoics, “life according to reason rightly becomes the natural life. For reason supervenes to shape impulse scientifically” [158]. This sounds exactly the same as Pope’s argument; Pope inherits Stoic ideas without acknowledgement. Zeno of Citium, the first stoic philosopher, proposes as the end “life in agreement with nature,” which

means “a virtuous life”—so do Cleanthes, Posidonius, and Hecato [159]. Later on, Chrysippus also maintains “living virtuously is equivalent to living in accordance with experience of the actual course of nature”; “nature” denotes both human nature and the universe (Laertius) [160]. For Seneca, a happy life “is one which is in accordance with its own nature.” He emphasizes the importance of following nature: “true wisdom consists in not departing from nature and in moulding our conduct according to her laws and model”; “it is Nature whom we ought to make our guide: let our reason watch her, and be advised by her” [161]. Likewise, Pope also speaks as the mouthpiece of nature: “Suffice that reason keep to Nature’s road” (2. 115) [162]; “First follow nature” (68) [163]. Aurelius also asserts that life in harmony with the universe is good (*Meditations*) [164]. Pope believes that Stoics “confess even virtue vain” (4. 24) [165]; however, both Stoics and Pope always associate virtue and happiness. Virtue’s prize is “[t]he soul’s calm sunshine, and the heartfelt joy” (4. 168-69) [166]; “Virtue alone is happiness below” (4. 310; cf. 4. 397) [167]. This is almost a paraphrase of Aurelius’s idea in *Meditations*: “Thou wilt one day be sensible of their happiness, whose end is love, and their affections dead to all worldly things” [168]. Aurelius feels honored for learning from his grandfather to “refrain from all anger and passion”; the cultivation of fortitude can

strengthen one’s mental power: “For the nearer everything is unto unpassionateness, the nearer it is unto power” [169]. To bear misfortune generously, Aurelius also affirms, “is certainly great happiness” [170]—this certainly negates Pope’s accusation of Stoics as holding happiness in “ease.” Seneca also suggests that virtue should lead the way to happiness: “True happiness, therefore, consists in virtue” [171]. This is by no means “in ease”: one must endure the assaults of evil and stick to the good faithfully. Russell pinpoints the essence of stoic philosophy: “virtue is the sole good”; “every man has perfect freedom, provided he emancipates himself from mundane desires” (277-78) [172]. It is incredible that Pope, sharing so many similar ideas with Stoics, misunderstands and misinterprets their philosophy so drastically, while he declares his ethics to be temperate and reasonable. Evidently this “governing” principle does not govern Pope’s comments on Stoics and Epicureans. Reason appears impotent in his arguments, while his misinterpretations of those Greek philosophers mock his own claim for a “temperate” and “not inconsistent” discourse.

D. Pope’s ambiguous attitude toward science

In addition, Pope’s proclaimed reliance on reason brings him neither correct scientific knowledge nor a clear and reasonable understanding of modern science. He believes

that lions have a defective sense of smell (1. 213) [173]; that the lynx's acute vision depends on rays sent out from its eye (1. 212) [174]; that honey is a dew that falls on flowers (1. 220) [175]; that Man's sight, unlike that of animals, is formed to look upwards (1. 196) [176]; that odours communicate with the brain through streams of invisible particles or "effluvia" (1. 199) [177]—all these are incorrect. He looks down on science (2. 19-22, 31-42) [178] just like Jonathan Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*. He describes science as "proud" (1. 101) [179], and believes that science leads human beings to "stray" to the milky-way (1. 101-02) [180]. In short, his prejudice against modern science stems from his misunderstanding of scientific studies.

For Pope, it is presumptuous to "measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides" (2. 20) [181]; the study of the planetary orbits or of the solar system turns out to be blasphemous, to "[i]nstruct the planets in what orbs to run" (2. 21) [182] or to "regulate the sun" (2. 22) [183]. Such an understanding derives from his man-centered perspective and his belief in the Great Chain of Being. At the beginning of the first epistle, Pope indicates that "[w]hat can we reason but from what we know?" (1. 18) [184], and that it is impossible to know the mystery of God's creation: "can a part contain the whole?" (1. 32) [185]. Scientists (Newton and Halley) can propose "rules" to "bind" the comet's way,

but cannot describe the movement of the mind (2. 36) [186], nor the beginning and ending of one's life (2. 38) [187]. The study of heavenly bodies for Pope means to explore the unknown, and reveals nothing but an intention to transcend the human status imposed by God in the Great Chain of Being. Evidently the value of the "inner world" is exalted above that of the "external world." Pope's unreasonable blame of modern science perhaps discloses his awareness of its destructive threatening toward the Great Chain.

In order to modify his harsh criticism of modern science, Pope in the 1743 edition of "An Essay on Man" added a section (2. 43-52) [188] in which he urges scientists to be modest. However, his modification still carries his misconception of science. Scientists had better eliminate the "pride" (2. 44) [189], "vanity" (2. 45) [190], and "idleness" (2. 46) [191], and all vices (2. 50) [192] as if these negative features were found in their studies—an accusation that sounds biased, blind, and irrational nowadays. Pope still extols some vague transcendental values which can guide humanity forever: "Then see how little the remaining sum, / Which served the past, and must the times to come" (2. 51-52) [193]. In other words, the scientists' exploration will be proved futile since the eternal truth has been discovered.

Ironically, he declares that his "science of human nature, like all other sciences," can be

reduced to a few clear points [194]. The poet intends to formulate his ethics and his vindication of God's ways like a discourse of science. Contrary to his condemnation of natural science, his sincere endorsement of science here appears all the more ironic and queer. Thence his attitude towards science is characterized by self-contradiction and heterogeneity; his negation and affirmation of science bring a carnivalesque flavor. His contempt of science in the first epistle manifests the weakness of human reason to acquire truth and to maintain impartiality. In his own words: he reasons but to err (2. 10) [195]; "In pride, in reas'ning pride, [his] error lies" (1. 123) [196]. His "erring reason" fails to shed light to truth—to see science with open-mindedness and objectivity—though he still yearns for some transcendental guide, some monologic, authoritative power. Nevertheless, his praise and contempt of science—also the self-subversion of reason—renders such a guide and such a power impossible. Again this is merely a semi-carnivalization of reason, because Pope's praise and contempt of science are both uttered in a serious, didactic tone, without any trace of self-mockery that characterizes the Bakhtinian carnival expression. He does not mean to bring "joyful relativity" through the all-annihilating and all-rejuvenating process.

The appropriate role of reason, in Bakhtin's view, lies not in its potential to

regulate the messy reality or to impose order on disorder. "Rationality is but a moment of answerability" [197]. This "answerability" is an ability to maintain a dialogic relationship. Only in dialogue can human reason and its antithetical force(s) work dynamically; the sheer dominance of reason will bring a stagnant, monologic official culture attacked by Bakhtin. Pope intends to "crown" reason as the supremacy, but he also unintentionally "decrowns" it by indicating the necessity of cultivating it and its dependence on faith. Moreover, his prejudice against Stoicism and Epicureanism and his ambiguous attitude toward modern science prove his inability to stick to reason. The centripetal power is downgraded in being apotheosized, and it can only exert its power when interacting continually with the centrifugal power(s). This actually corresponds to Pope's recognition of the limit of humanity (1. 18-32) [198]. His hope for the establishment of the authority of reason ends in the manifestation of heterogeneity.

V. CONCLUSION

Pope's ethics, far from resting on the single voice of reason, embrace heterogeneous elements so much as to disrupt its assumed "systematic" discourse. The existence of the antithetical force(s), Pope's self-contradictory and carnivalesque descriptions of reason, his vehement criticism of his enemies, and his attitudes towards science, Stoicism, and

Epicureanism—all bring heterogeneous voices to his allegedly consistent ethics. He attempts to impose reason, a monologic, centripetal force, on the conflict-ridden reality, but actually reason appears powerless before its antithetical force(s). He indeed acknowledges the tension between both sides, and the superior power of the latter—just as Bakhtin maintains that the centrifugal force may overwhelm the centripetal. As Pope highlights the self-discipline of self-love and the “guide” of instinct for humanity, he simultaneously exposes the futility of cultivating reason, downgrades its sacredness, and carnivalizes this centripetal force. The tension between reason and its antithetical force(s) also demonstrates the instability of the Great Chain of Being, and Pope’s reason does not enable him to understand Stoicism, Epicureanism, and modern science correctly. This “failure” proves the impossibility of monologism even in the supposedly reasonable discourse, and Pope’s intention to establish a temperate, reasonable ethical system is negated by his own argument in “An Essay on Man.” Later in “The Dunciad,” Pope totally loses his confidence on reason and nature, with a pessimistic and satirical vision of the prevalence of dullness over the world.

From the Bakhtinian perspective, neoclassical authors experienced “an irresistible temptation to impose monological unities upon their work” [199]. Pope’s ambition of vindicating the ways of God to man stems from

his endorsement of such “monological unities” of nature and the Great Chain of Being. Poetry for Bakhtin represents a centripetal force because it “was accomplishing the task of cultural, national and political centralization of the verbal-ideological world in the higher official socio-ideological levels, on the lower level . . .” [200]. Pope plans to propose a universally accepted discourse—a centripetal, monologic, and authoritative voice from the Bakhtinian perspective—with the belief in a transcendental guide, be it nature or God. His ideal—the dominance of reason (the centripetal force) and consequently the rule of monologism—remains nothing but a dream, since reason and its antithetical forces continually interact, and neither of them actually becomes the supreme head. The centripetal and the centrifugal never cancel each other out, but proceed in a conflict-ridden, dialogic relationship: “Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward” [201]. Reason itself can never become the unchallenged authority in humanity, nor can the balance and harmony between reason and passion/instinct/self-love prevail as the “norm”—because this “balance” anticipates the dominance of another transcendental authority.

Pope’s ambiguous attitude toward reason

is treated as normal in Bakhtinian dialogism. This “verbal give-and-take” prevents the poet from “giving himself up wholly to either of them” [202], and illustrates the necessity of heterogeneity in discourse: Our speech “is filled with others’ words” [203], and we “cannot make ends meet even in the deepest and most intimate spheres of his own spiritual life, he cannot manage without *another* consciousness” [204]. “Truth” for Bakhtin does not reside in the apotheosis of human reason, but in dialogue [205]. An idea begins to exist “only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas” The realm of the existence of an idea “is not individual consciousness but dialogic communion *between* consciousnesses” [206]. With one viewpoint one cannot fully comprehend truth [207]. Judgment “involves not merely applying the universal principle according to which it is judged, but co-determining, supplementing, and correcting that principle” [208]. Only in continual dialogue can each critic probe into truth, not in the passive, static reliance on some ambiguous standard [209]; moreover, “[t]here is no acknowledged self-equivalent and universally valid value” [210]. Language, in addition, “is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the coexistence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so

forth” [211]. Therefore, Pope’s ambition to establish rational discourse on ethics is doomed to fail. “The word wants to be heard, understood, responded to, and again to respond to the response, and so forth *ad infinitum*” [212]. “There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context”; meanings, which were generated in the past, can never remain stable and will change in the future [213].

Therefore, it is more practical “to bring the past into the present and the present to confront the past” and “to free himself from the tyranny of the present and the tyranny of the past” [214]. Pope means to establish a monologic and authoritative ethics, but he deviates from this “ideal” because of his inability to eliminate heterogeneous voices from his own discourse. In order to avoid the “erring reason” and pride, Pope should have suggested his reader to submit to dialogue with open-mindedness.

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- [16] Pope, "An essay on man."
- [17] Pope, "Design," p. 343.
- [18] Pope, "An essay on man."
- [19] Pope, "An essay on man."
- [20] Pope, "An essay on man."
- [21] Pope, "An essay on man."
- [22] Pope, "An essay on man."
- [23] Zeno, the first Stoic philosopher, treats reason, General law, Zeus, and God as the same; this supreme power pervades everything (Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy and Its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. George Allen and Unwin, 1947, p. 279). Cleanthes indicates that God directs the "Universal Reason," which "Moves thro' the Universe" (E. H. Blakeney, ed., *The Hymn of Cleanthes, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*, 1921, pp. 18-20), and that "One everlasting Reason" reigns in good and evil things and ultimately brings harmony (Blakeney pp. 28-30). Epictetus praises that Socrates attained perfection because he focused on "nothing but reason." Shakespeare praises humanity for being "noble in reason" (*Hamlet* 2. 2. 301). Spinoza argues, "if men could be guided by reason, all desires that arises from passive emotion would be ineffective" (*Ethics, Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, and Selected Letters*. Hackett, 1992, p. 188). Similar assertions never cease to be proclaimed.
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- [25] Pope insists on the importance of moderation continually: "He knows to live, who keeps the middle state, / And neither leans on this side nor on that" ("The Second Satire of the Second Book of Horace" 61-62); "My head and heart thus flowing through my quill / . . . / Like good

- Erasmus, in an honest mean, / In moderation placing all my glory” (“Imitation of Horace, Satire I” 63, 66-67); “Avoid extremes; and shun the fault of such, / Who still are pleased too little or too much. At ev’ry trifle scorn to take offence, / That always shows great pride, or little sense” (“An essay on criticism” 384-87); “Extremes in Nature equal ends produce, / In Man they join to some mysterious use; / Tho’ each by turns the other’s bound invade” (2. 205-07). Pope extols that reason can improve the mutual relationships among all beings (3. 133) and can change a tyrant to a benevolent monarch (2. 197-98).
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- [113] Pope, "An essay on man."
- [114] Pope, "An essay on man."
- [115] Pope's demand for the cultivation of reason brings deconstruction to his presumed perfection of God's creation. Humanity emerges as the best that God can create, and therefore it is reasonable to accept it and not to call it "imperfection" (1. 281). The cultivation of reason, however, serves as a "supplement" to God's creation. The place of a supplement "is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness" (Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, John Hopkins UP, 1976, p. 145). It is "exterior, outside of the positivity to which it is super-added, alien to that which, in order to be replaced by it, must be other than it" (Derrida, 145). If this cultivation can function as an ideal supplement to God's creation, then this creation does not claim to be complete, self-sufficient, and ultimate, since "supplementation is possible only because of an originary lack" (Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, Routledge, 1982, p. 105). Because of Pope's recognition of the necessity of the cultivation of reason, the presence of God's perfect creation in his discourse is deferred, and the ultimate self-sufficiency of the Great Chain becomes problematic. Moreover, the cultivation of reason is a supplement to humanity, while faith, attention, habit, and

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