

“ledge in the things themselves, nor the approbation they receive from reason, lay us under an indispensable necessity of following those ideas, as the rules of our conduct. That our reason being in reality nothing else but ourselves, nobody, properly speaking, can lay himself under an obligation. From whence they conclude, that the maxims of reason, considered in themselves, and independent of the will of a superior, have nothing obligatory in their nature.”

This manner of explaining the nature, and laying the foundation of obligation appears to me insufficient, because it does not ascend to the original source, and real principles. True it is that the will of a superior obliges those who are his dependants; yet this will cannot have such an effect, but inasmuch as it meets with the approbation of our reason. For this purpose, 'tis not only necessary that the superior's will should contain nothing in itself opposite to the nature of man; but moreover it ought to be proportioned in such a manner to his constitution and ultimate end, that we cannot help acknowledging it as the rule of our actions; insomuch that there is no neglecting it without falling into a dangerous error; and on the contrary, the only means of attaining our end is to be directed by it. Otherwise, 'tis unconceivable how man can voluntarily submit to the orders of a superior, or determine willingly to obey him. Own indeed I must, that according to the language of civilians, the idea of a superior who commands, must intervene to establish an obligation, such as is commonly considered. But unless we trace things higher, by grounding even the authority

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