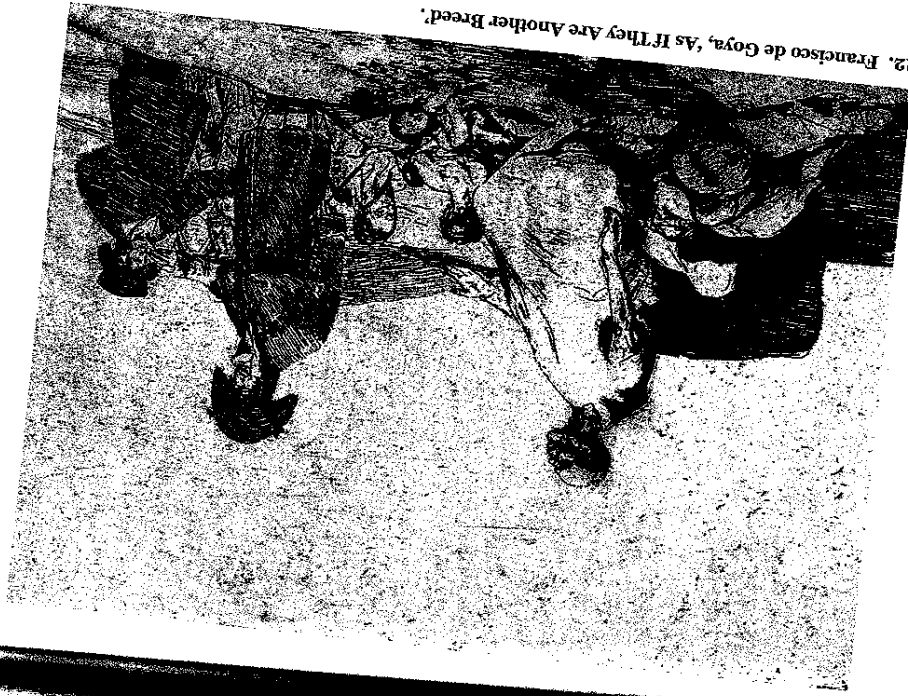


benefit them, and on this account, these will be the paths of virtue. Generally speaking, people do well by doing good, or at least by avoiding doing bad.

So far so good, but it is surely a mistake to think that an equation between living as we would wish and living virtuously is somehow written into things by nature. Insofar as it is approximately true, it is because it is written into things by culture. It is in the first place an *educational* and also a *political* achievement, and one that needs constant attention. This is for at least three reasons. First, it takes education to instill into the subject the sense of respect and self-respect which will turn a profit made by selling his soul into a loss. A sufficiently barefaced villain just won't care. Second, it takes a secure and stable political or social system to generate bad effects on the villain, such as loss due to discovery, or loss of reputation. When things are in flux, the villain will be able to cheat and move on. Third, it takes a culture or politics properly to identify a lapse from virtue in any case.

To see this last point, return to our examples of oppressive societies. Suppose women systematically lack opportunities and resources that the men have. Men (and women) in such a society may not be conscious of anything wrong here. They have internalized the traditional values. Their conception of a woman flourishing will be that she is nicely subservient or obedient to the men. In such a world, the man oppressing the woman has no bad conscience, and suffers no loss of respect from those he cares about - mainly other men. He can flourish in his own eyes, and in his friends' eyes, and even in the eyes of the women. The case would be more obvious if we took behaviour towards people outside the community. We have already mentioned the tree that flourishes by depriving other trees of light, and the Western white person who flourishes because of the economic and educational deprivations of people, including children, in the Third World. It takes something more than a desire to flourish to motivate concern for *them*. We may measure our flourishing only amongst *ourselves* (Goya knew this)



12. Francisco de Goya, 'As If They Are Another Breed'.