

## Alexander Pope, Outline of "The Essay on Man"

"The Design": describes in prose why he is writing a poem; poetry allows him to construct "system of ethics" and "chain of reasoning" (BABL 18thC: 575).

"Epistle I" (an epistle is a letter)

[I, lines 1-16] Apostrophe to Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke; invites him and the reader to join the poet-speaker upon the philosophical project of understanding "man" in the "abstract", and thus "vindicating" the ways of God to the reader (note significant metaphors of explorer, hunter, and mapmaker)

[II, 17-34] We can only know man's place in God's world by the empirical proof around us; heroic couplet describing the "great chain" (lines 33-34); note the use of rhetorical questions

[III, 35-76] Inaugurates the poem's emphasis upon pride and presumption; note significant analogies in this section; lines 69-70 particularly important

[IV, 77-112] Argues from analogies of the "natural" world that man's natural state is one of ignorance and of "Hope" (again analogies are important here; line 95 also significant)

[Sections 5-7 detail the various "sins" of Human Pride]

[V, 113-130] Addresses the ultimate presumption; that man yearns to the state of God in critiquing his limited sphere in the world; "In pride, in reas'ning pride, our error lies;" (line 123)

[VI, 131-172] The following section concerns the absurdity in believing that Humankind is at the center of the Universe and should operate for our pleasure

[VII, 173-206] Man's desire to have the best qualities of both the Angel and the Beast; here Pope addresses the absurdity of wanting to possess the qualities of both the Angel and the Animal

[VIII, 207-231] Charts out the proper relationships between animal and man; notes the "just gradations" of powers

[IX, 232-258] Returns to a description of the Great Chain of Being and concludes with a warning about the dangers of threatening that cosmic "ORDER"

[X, 259-280] Analogy between the Great Chain of Being and the human frame; all one harmonious whole with specific powers (note anaphora in lines 275-280)

[XI, 281-294] Pope concludes by exhorting the reader to "Submission" to the Deity's plan; continues to construct a prayer ending with a dictate: "Whatever is, is RIGHT"