

'Of Genius', in The Occasional Paper, and Preface to The Creation eBook

'Of Genius', in The Occasional Paper, and Preface to The Creation by Aaron Hill

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INTRODUCTION

The anonymous essay "Of Genius," which appeared in the *Occasional Paper* of 1719, still considers "genius" largely a matter of aptitude or talent, and applies the term to the "mechanick" as well as the fine arts. The work is, in fact, essentially a pamphlet on education. The author's main concern is training, and study, and conscious endeavor. Naturally enough, his highest praise—even where poetry is in question—is reserved for those solid Augustan virtues of "judgment" and "good sense."

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And yet the pamphlet reveals some of the tangled roots from which the later concept of the “original” or “primitive” genius grew. For here are two prerequisites of that later, more extravagant concept. One is the author’s positive delight in the infinite differences of human temperaments and talents—a delight from which might spring the preference for original or unique works of art. The other is his conviction that there is something necessary and foreordained about those differences: a conviction essential to faith in the artist who is apparently at the mercy of a genius beyond his own control. The importance of this latter belief was long ago indicated in Paul Kaufman’s “Heralds of Original Genius.”

While his tone is perhaps more exuberant than that of most of his immediate contemporaries, there is nothing particularly new in our author’s interest in those aspects of human nature which render a man different from his fellows. It is true that the main stress of neoclassical thought had rested on the fundamental likeness of all men in all ages, and had sought an ideal and universal norm in morals, conduct, and art. But there had always been counter currents making for a recognition of the inescapable differences among various races and individuals. Such deviations were often merely tolerated, but toward the close of the seventeenth century more and more voices had praised human diversity. England, in particular, began to take notice of the number of “originals” abounding in the land.

At least as old as the delight in human differences was the belief in the foreordained nature of at least those differences resulting in specific vocational aptitudes. This is the conviction that each man has at birth—innately and inevitably—a peculiar “bent” for some particular contribution to human society. Environment is not ignored by the man who wrote “Of Genius,” for he insists that each man’s bent may be greatly developed by favorable circumstances and proper education, and, conversely, that it may be entirely frustrated by unpropitious circumstances or wilful neglect. But in no way can a man’s inborn talent for one thing be converted to a talent for anything else.

In the works of many Augustan writers, too, it is easy to see how the enthusiasm for individualism, later to become one of the hallmarks of romanticism, actually sprang from an earlier faith in a God-directed universe of law and order. There is a kind of universal law of supply and demand, and the argument is simply that each link in the human chain, like those in the animate and inanimate worlds above and below it, is predestined to a specific function for the better ordering of the whole. Lewis Maidwell, for instance, still employs the medieval and Renaissance analogy of the correspondence between the human body and the social organism (*An Essay upon the Necessity and Excellency of Education*):

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Upon Consideration we find this Difference of Tempers to arise from Providence, and the Law of the Creation, and to be most Evident in al Irrational, and Inanimat Beings ... One Man is no more design'd for Al Arts, than Al Arts for One Man. We are born Confaederats, mutually to help One another, therefor appropriated in the Body Politic, to this, or that Busyness, as our Members are in the Natural to perform their separat Offices.

This same comparison between the body politic and the body human occurs in the essay of 1719, and even the author's chief analogy drawn from musical harmony bears with it some of the flavor of an older system of universal correspondences. His comparison of the force of genius to the pull of gravity, however, evokes a newer picture. Yet it is a picture no less orderly and one from which the preordained function of each individual could be just as logically derived. And his rhapsodic praise of the infinite diversity of human temperaments is based on that favorite comparison with natural scenery and that familiar canon of neoclassical esthetics: ordered variety within unity, whether it be in nature or in art.

The author of the pamphlet of 1719 introduces another refinement on the idea of an inborn bent or genius. A man is born not only with a peculiar aptitude for the vocation of writing, but with a peculiar aptitude for a particular *style* of writing. Some such aptitude had presumably resulted in that individuality of style, that particular "character," which 17th-century Biblical critics were busily searching out in each of the writers of Scripture.

Individuality or originality in the form or plan of a work of art, however, was quite another thing, and praise of it far more rare. Yet there had always been protests against the imposition of a universal classical standard, and our author's insistence that some few geniuses have the right to discard the "Rules of Art" and all such "Leading-strings" follows a well-worn path of reasoning. His scientific analogy, drawn from those natural philosophers who had cast off the yoke of Aristotle and all "other Mens Light," is one which had appeared at least as early as 1661 in Robert Boyle's *Considerations Touching the Style of Holy Scripture*. It had been reiterated by Dryden and several others who refused to recognize an *ipse dixit* in letters any more than in science.

It must be noted, however, that this rejection of authority for a few rare individuals in no way constitutes a rejection of reason or conscious art. The genius has the right to cast off the fetters only after he has well studied them. Only in one instance does our author waver toward another conception. This is when he pauses to echo Rowe's preface to Shakespeare and Addison's famous *Spectator* no. 160. Then indeed he boasts that England has had many "Originals" who, "without the help of Learning, by the meer Force of natural

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Ability, have produc'd Works which were the Delight of their own Times, and have been the Wonder of Posterity." But when he doubts whether learning would have helped or "spoiled" them, it is hard to escape the conclusion that he is still poised on the horns of the typical neoclassical antithesis: that supposed enmity between reason, which was generally thought to create the form of the poem, and the emotions and imagination, which were considered largely responsible for its style.

Only when the admiration for such emotional and imaginative qualities should outweigh the desire for symmetrical form; when "primitive" literature should be preferred to Virgil and Horace; and when this preference should be joined with a belief in the diversity and fatality of literary bents—only then could the concept of original genius burst into full bloom.

In Aaron Hill's preface to the paraphrase of Genesis, published in 1720, we find no preoccupation with the fatality of temperament and style. But we do find a rising discontent with the emptiness and restraint of much contemporary verse, and a very real preference for a more meaningful and a more emotional and imaginative poetry. We find, in fact, a genuine appreciation for the poetry of the Old Testament—a poetry which Biblical scholars like Le Clerc were already viewing as the product of untrained primitives.

Hill was not alone in his admiration for Biblical style, for the praise of the "unclassical" poetry of the Bible, which had begun in the Renaissance, had swelled rather than diminished during the neoclassical age. By the second decade of the 18th century such Augustans as Dennis, Gildon, and Pope were crying up its beauties. Not all agreed, of course, on just what those beauties were. And still less did they agree on the extent to which contemporary poetry should imitate them.

One thing upon which almost all would have agreed, however, was the adoption of the historical point of view in the approach to Hebrew poetry. Yet many of Hill's predecessors had stopped short with the historical justification. Blackmore, for instance, had condemned as bigots and sectarians all those who denied that the Hebrew way was as great as the classical. He had pronounced it a mere accident of fate that modern poetry of Western Europe was modeled on that of Greece and Rome rather than on that of ancient Israel. But he had been perfectly willing to accept that fate—and to remodel the form and style of the book of Job on what he considered the pattern of the classical epic.

Hill is as far as most of his contemporaries from appreciating such a literal translation as the King James Version. On the other hand, he is one of a small group of critics who were beginning to see that at least certain aspects of Biblical style were of universal appeal; that they might be as effective psychologically for the modern Englishman as for

the ancient Jew. And he sees in this collection of ancient Oriental literature a corrective for some of the worst tendencies of a degenerate contemporary poetry.

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Hill's attack upon the current preoccupation with form and polish, and his contempt for mere smoothness, for the padded redundancy of Addison and the elaborate rhetoric of Trapp, are all part of a campaign waged by a small group of critics to make poetry once again a vehicle of the very highest truth. He insists, too, that great thought cannot be contained within the untroubled cadences of the heroic couplet. His own preference led to the freer, though currently unfashionable, Pindaric, the irregularity of which seemed justified by Biblical example, for despite a century and a half of study and speculation the secret of Biblical verse had not been solved and to most critics even the Psalms appeared devoid of any pattern. Indeed, Cowley had declared that in their freedom of structure and abruptness of transition the odes of Pindar were like nothing so much as the poetry of Israel.

In addition, Hill would have the modern poet profit by another quality of Biblical style: its magic combination of a "magnificent Plainness" with the "Spirit of Imagery." This is the Hebrew virtue of concrete suggestiveness, so highly prized by 20th-century critics and so alien to the generalized abstractions and the explicit clarity of much 18th-century poetry.

In consonance with those who believed poetry best communicated truth because it appealed to man's senses and emotions as well as to his logical faculty, Hill praises those "pictur'd Meanings of Poetry" which "enflame a Reader's Will, and bind down his Attention." Yet his analysis of Trapp's metaphorical expansions of Biblical imagery reveals that Hill does not like detailed descriptions or long-drawn-out comparisons. Instead, he admires the Hebrew ability to spring the imagination with a few vividly concrete details. Prior to Hill one can find, in a few paraphrasers and critics like Denham and Lamy, signs of an appreciation of the concrete suggestiveness of the Bible, but most of the hundreds of paraphrasers had felt it desirable to expand Biblical images to beautify and clarify them. Hill was apparently the first to prove the esthetic loss in such a practice by an analysis of particular paraphrastic expansions.

Despite his theory, however, Hill's own paraphrase seems almost as artificial and un-Biblical as those he condemns. He often forgets the principles he preaches. But even in his preface there is evident a blind spot that is a mark of his age. His false ideas of decorum, admiration for Milton, and approval of Dennis's interpretation of the sublime as the "vast" and the "terrible," all lead him to condemn the "low" or the familiar. And his own efforts to "raise" both his language and his comparisons to suit the "high" Biblical subject, result in personifications, compound epithets, and a Miltonic vocabulary, by which the very simplicity he himself found in the Bible is destroyed.

Another decade was to pass before John Husbands would demonstrate a clear appreciation for the true simplicity of the Bible and praise its "penmen" in terms close to those employed to describe original genius.



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THE

OCCASIONAL PAPER.

VOL. III. NUMB. X.

OF

GENIUS.

The Cartesian Categories are contain'd in these two Verses,

Mens, mensura, quies, motus, positura, Figura, Sunt,
cum materia, cunctarum Exordia rerum.

*The Spiritual Nature, Mens, is at the head of All. It
ought to be look'd on here, as a Transcendent Nature,
quae vagatur per omnes Categorias.*

Bayle's Diction. *on the Heathen Doctrine of
many Genij.* See *CAINITES*.

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OF

GENIUS.

It is a Matter of common Observation, that there is a vast Variety in the Bent of Mens Minds. Some have a Taste of one Way of Living, some of another; some have a Turn



for one kind of Employment, others for what is quite different. Whether this be from the Constitution of the Mind itself, as some Soils are more apt to produce some Plants and Herbs than others; or from the Laws of Union between the Body and Mind, as some Climates are more kindly to nurse particular Vegetables than others; or from the immediate Impulse of that Power which governs the World, is not so easy to determine.

We ascribe this to a difference of *Genius* amongst Men. *Genius* was a Deity worshipped by the Ancient Idolaters: Sometimes as the God of *Nature*; sometimes as the God of a particular *City* or *Country*, or *Fountain*, or *Wood*, or the like; sometimes as the Guardian and Director of a *single Person*.

Exuitur, *Geniumq; meum* prostratus adorat.
Propert. l. 4. El. 9 V. 43.

The Heathens had a Notion, that every Man upon his Birth was given up to the[A] Conduct of some invisible Being, who was to form his Mind, and govern and direct his Life. This *Being* the *Greeks* called[B] [Greek: Daimon or Daimonion]; the *Latins*, *Genius*. Some of them suppos'd a[D] Pair of *Genij* were to attend every *Man* from his Birth; one Good, always putting him on the Practice of Virtue; the other Bad, prompting him to a vicious Behaviour; and according as their several Suggestions were most attended to, the Man became either Virtuous or Vicious in his Inclinations: And from this Influence, which the *Genius* was suppos'd to have towards forming the Mind, the Word was by degrees made to stand for the Inclination itself. Hence[E] *indulgere Genio* with the *Latins* signifies, to give Scope to Inclination, and more commonly to what is none of the best. On the other Hand, [F]_Defraudare Genium_, signifies to deny Nature what it craves.



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[A] *Ferunt Theologi, in lucem editis Hominibus cunctis, Salva firmitate fatali, bujusmodi quedam, velut actus vectura, numina Sociari: Admodum tamen paucissimis visa, quos multiples auxere virtutes. Idque & Oracula & Autores docuerunt praclari.* Ammian Marcel Lib. 21.

[B] [Greek: Hapanti Daimon andri symparistatai Euthys genomeno mystagogos tou biou. Menan]

[C] Scit Genius Natale comes, qui temperat Astrum, Nature Deus Humana. Horat. [Transcriber's Note: This footnote is not seen in the text.]

[D] *Volunt unicuique Genium appositum Damonem benum & malum, hoc est rationem qua ad meliora semper boriatur, & libidinem qua ad pejora, hic est Larva & Genius malus, ille bonus Genius & Lar.* Serv. in Virgil, Lib. 6. v. 743.

[E] *Indulge Genio: carpamus dulcia.* Pers. Sat. 5.

[F] *Suum defraudans Genium.* Terent. Phorm. Act 1.

But a *Genius* in common Acceptation amongst *us*, doth not barely answer to this Sense. The *Pondus Animae* is to be taken into its Meaning, as well as the bare Inclination; as Gravitation in a Body (to which this bears great Resemblance) doth not barely imply a determination of its Motion towards a certain Center, but the *Vis* or Force with which it is carried forward; and so the *English* Word *Genius*, answers to the same *Latin* Word, and *Ingenium* together. [G] *Ingenium* is the *Vis ingenita*, the natural Force or Power with which every Being is indued; and this, together with the particular Inclination of the Mind, towards any Business, or Study, or Way of Life, is what we mean by a *Genius*. Both are necessary to make a Man shine in any Station or Employment. Nothing considerable can be done against the Grain, or as the *Latins* express it, *invita Minerva*, in spite of Power and Inclination, "Forc'd Studies, says[H] *Seneca*, will never answer: The Labour is in vain where Nature recoils." Indeed, where the Inclination towards any Thing is strong, Diligence and Application will in a great Measure supply the Defect of natural Abilities: But then only is in a finish'd *Genius*, when with a strong Inclination there is a due Proportion of Force and Vigour in the Mind to pursue it.

[G] *Ingenium quasi intus genitum.*

[H] *Male respondent ingenia coacta; reluctante natura irritus Labor est.*

There is a vast Variety of these Inclinations among Mankind. Some there are who have no bent to Business at all; but, if they could indulge Inclination, would doze out Life in perpetual Sloth and Inactivity: Others can't be altogether Idle, but incline only to trifling



and useless Employments, or such as are altogether out of Character. Both these sorts of Men are properly good for nothing: They just live, and help to[I] consume the Products of the Earth, but answer no valuable End of Living, out of Inclination I mean; Providence and good Government have sometimes made them serviceable against it.



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[!] *Fruges consumere nati.* Horat.

The better, and in Truth only valuable, Part of Mankind, have a Turn for one sort of Business or other, but with great variety of Taste. Some are addicted to deep Thought and Contemplation: Some to the abstracted Speculations of Metaphysicks; some to the evident Demonstrations of the Mathematicks; some to the History of Nature, built upon true Narration, or accurate Observations and Experiments: Some to the Invention of *Hypotheses*, to solve the various *Phenomena*. Some affect the study of Languages, Criticism, Oratory, Poetry, and such like Studies. Some have a Taste for Musick, some for History and those Sciences which must help to Accuracy in it: Some have Heads turned for Politicks, and others for Wars. Some few there are of such quick and strong Faculties, as to grasp at every thing, and who have made a very eminent Figure in several Professions at once. We have known in our Days the same Men learned in the Laws, acute Philosophers, and deep Divines: We have known others at once eloquent Orators, brave Soldiers, and finished Statesmen. But these Instances are rare.

The more general Inclination among Men is to some Mechanical Business. Of this there is most general Use for the Purposes of Human Life, and it needs most Hands to carry it on. The bulk of Mankind seem turned for some or other of these Employments, and make them their Choice; and were not such a multiplicity of Hands engaged in them, great part of the Conveniencies of Human Life would be wanting. But even the Multitude of these Employments leaves room for great variety of Inclinations, and for different *Genij*, to display and exert themselves.

This is an admirable and wise Provision to answer every End and Occasion of Mankind, for a sure and harmonious Concurrence of Mens Actions to all the necessary and useful Affairs of the World. When in very different Ways, but with equal Pleasure and Application, they contribute to the Order and Service of the whole. Mr. *Dryden* has given an Hint, how we may form a beautiful and pleasing Idea of this from the Powers of Musick, that arise from the Variety and artful Composition of Sounds.

*From Harmony, from Heavenly Harmony,
This Universal Frame began.
From Harmony to Harmony,
Thro' all the Compass of the Notes it ran,
The Diapasm closing full in Man.*

There seems to be a wonderful Likeness in the natural Make of Mens Minds to the various Tones and Measures of Sounds; and in their Inclinations and most pleasing Tastes to the several Styles and Manners of Musick. Something there is in the Mind, of alike Composition, that is easily touch'd by the kindred Harmony of Musick,

*For Man may justly tuneful Strains admire,
His Soul is Musick, and his Breast a Lyre.*



We have all the Materials of Musick in the Tones and Measure. For the infinite Variety Composition admits of, can be nothing else, but higher or lower Tones, stronger or softer Sounds, with a slower or swifter Motion. The Artist, by an harmonious Mixture of these, makes the Musick either strong and martial, brisk and airy, grave and solemn, or soft and moving.

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There seems to be in Man a Composition of natural Powers and Capacities, not unlike to these. From hence I would take the first Original of their distinguishing *Genij*. The Words by which they are usually explain'd, have a manifest Allusion hereto. Thus we say of some Men, they have a brisk and airy *Genius*; of others, they have a strong and active *Genius*, a quick and lively Spirit, a grave and solemn Temper, and the like. The different readiness of Apprehension, strength of Judgment, vivacity of Fancy and Imagination, with a more or less active Disposition, and the several Mixtures of which these Powers are capable, are sufficient to explain this. They may shew us how some have a particular *Genius* for Wit and Humour, others for Thought and Speculation. Whence it is, some love a constant and persevering Application to whatever they undertake; and others are continually jumping from one Thing to another, without finishing any thing at all.

But we do not only consider in Musick these Materials, as I may call them, of which it is composed; but also the Style and Manner. This diversifies the *Genius* of the Composer, and produces the most sensible and touching Difference. There is in all Musick the natural difference of Tone and Measure. They are to be found in the most vulgar Compositions of a Jig or an Hornpipe. But it is a full Knowledge of the Force and Power of Sounds, and a judicial Application of them to the several Intentions of Musick, that forms the Style of a *Purcel* or *Corelli*. This is owing to successive Improvements. The Ear is formed to an elegant Judgment by Degrees. What is harsh and harmonious is discovered and corrected. By many Advantages, some at last come to find out what, in the whole Compass of Sounds, is most soft and touching, most brisk and enlivening, most lofty and elevating. So that whatever the Artist intends, whether to set an Air, or compose a *Te Deum*, he does either, with an equal *Genius*, that is, with equal Propriety and Elegance. Thus long ago,

*Timotheus to his breathing flute, and sounding Lyre,
Could swell the Soul to Rage, or kindle soft Desire.*

And,

*Thus David's Lyre did Saul's wild Rage controul,
And tune the harsh Disorders of his Soul.*

This may direct us to another Cause, from whence a *Genius* arises: A *Genius* that is formed and acquired. For the Turn that Education, Company, Business, the Taste of the Age, and above all, Principles of vitious or virtuous Manners, give to a Man's natural Capacities, is what chiefly forms his *Genius*. Thus we say of some, they have a rude unpolish'd *Genius*; of others, they have a fine, polite *Genius*. The manner of applying the natural Powers of the Mind, is what alone may produce the most different and opposite *Genij*. Libertine Principles, and Virtuous Morals, may form the *Genius* of a *Rake*, from the same natural Capacity, out of which Virtuous Principles might have form'd an *Hero*.



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There is certainly in our natural Capacities themselves, a Fitness for some Things, and Unfitness for others. Thus whatever great Capacities a Man may have, if he is naturally timorous, or a Coward, he never can have a Warlike *Genius*. If a Man has not a good Judgment, how great soever his Wit may be, or polite his Manners, he never will have the *Genius* of a Statesman. Just as strong Sounds and brisk Measures can never touch the softer Passions. Yet as the Art and Skill of the Composer, is required to the *Genius* of Musick, so is a Knowledge of the Force and Power of the natural Capacity, and a judicious Application of it to the best and most proper Purposes, what forms a *Genius* for any Thing. This is the effect of Care, Experience and a right Improvement of every Advantage that offers. On this Observation *Horace* founded his Rules for a Poetical *Genius*.

*Versate diu quid sere recusent
Quid valeant humeri.
And,
Ego nec studium sine divite vena,
Nec rude quid profit video ingenium.*

*To speak my Thoughts, I hardly know
What witless Art, or artless Wit can do.*

The same Observation in another kind is elegantly described by Mr. *Waller*.

*Great Julius on the Mountains bred,
A Flock perhaps, or Herd had led.
He that the World subdued, had been
But the best Wrestler on the Green.
'Tis Art and Knowledge that draw forth
The hidden Seeds of Native Worth.
They blow those Sparks, and make 'em rise
Into such Flames as touch the Skies.*

The High and Martial Spirit of *Cesar* would have inclined and fitted him, to gain the Prize of Wrestling above any Country Sport. But it was the Circumstance of his own Birth and Fortune, the State and Condition of the Commonwealth, and the Concurrence of many other Advantages, which he improv'd with great Care and Application, that made him a finish'd *Genius*, both in Arms and Policy.

There is yet another Thing of Consequence to a true *Genius* in Musick. A Knowledge of the Compass and peculiar Advantages of each several Instrument. For the same Composition will very differently touch both the Ear and the Mind, as perform'd by a Flute, or Trumpet, an Organ, or a Violin. A difference of which, all discern by the Ear, but which requires a judicious Observation in the Composer. Mr. *Hughes* has thus express'd their different Powers.



*Let the Trumpet's shrill Voice,
And the Drum's thundering Noise
Rouse every dull Mortal from Sorrow profound.*

*And_,
Proceed, sweet Charmer of the Ear,
Proceed, and through the mellow Flute,
The moving Lyre,
And Solitary Lute,
Melting Airs, soft Joys inspire,
Airs for drooping Hope to hear.*

*And again,
Now, let the sprightly Violin
A louder Strain begin:
And now,
Let the deep mouth'd Organ blow,*

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Swell it high and Sink it low.
Hark! how the Treble and the Base
In wanton Fuges each other chase,
And swift Divisions run their Airy Race.
Thro' all the travers'd Scale they fly,
In winding Labyrinths of Harmony,
By turns They rise and fall, by Turns we live and die._

One might not unfitly compare to this difference of Instruments, the different Make and Constitution of Mens Bodies, with the Influence they have, and the Impression they make on their Minds, Passions and Actions. From hence alone they may know much, how to direct their own proper Capacities, and how they are to suit each Person they are to use, to the most proper Employment. As Mr. *Pope* Speaks of the Instruments of Musick.

*In a sadly pleasing Strain,
Let the warbling Lute complain.
Let the loud Trumpet sound,
Till the Roofs
all around The shrill Echo's rebound.
While in more lengthen'd Notes and slow,
The deep, majestick, solemn Organs blow.*

Harmony, in its most restrain'd Sense, is the apt and agreeable mixture of various Sounds. Such a Composition of them as is fitted to please the Ear. But every thing in a more extended Sense is harmonious, where there is a variety of Things dispos'd and mix'd in such apt and agreeable Manner. Things may indeed be thrown together in a Crowd, without Order or Art. And then every thing appears in Confusion, disagreeable and apt to disgust. But absolute Uniformity will give little more Pleasure than meer Confusion. To be ever harping on one String, though it be touch'd by the most Masterly Hand, will give little more Entertainment to the Ear, than the most confused and discordant variety of Sounds mingled by the Hand of a meer Bungler. To have the Eye for ever fix'd on one beautiful Object, would be apt to abate the Satisfaction, at least in our present State. Variety relieves and refreshes. It is so in the natural World. Hills and Valleys, Woods and Pasture, Seas and Shores, not only diversify the Prospect, but give much more Entertainment to the Eye, that can successively go from one to the other, than any of them could singly do. And could we see into all the Conveniencies of things, how well they are fitted to each other, and the common Purposes of all, we shou'd find that the Diversity is as usefull as it is agreeable.



It is the same also with the World of Mankind. If all had a like Turn or Cast of Mind, and all were bent upon one Business or way of Living, it would spoil much of the present Harmony of the World, and be a manifest Inconvenience to the Publick. Perhaps one Part of Learning, or Method of Business, would be throughly cultivated and improved; but how many others must be neglected, or remain defective? And it would create Jealousy and Uneasiness among themselves. As Men are forc'd to juttle in a Crowd. For there would not be sufficient Scope for every one to exert and display himself, nor so much Room for many to excel, when all must do it in one Way. Variety of Inclination and Capacity is an admirable Means of common Benefit. It opens a wide Field for Service to Others, and gives great Advantage to Mens own Improvement.



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And it is surprising to consider how great this Diversity is. It is almost as various as that of bodily Features and Complexion. There is no Instance of any kind of Learning or Business; any Thing relating to the Necessity or Delight of Life; not the meanest Office or the hardest Labour, but some or other are found to answer the different Purposes of each. They are carried through all the Difficulties in their several Ways, by the meer Force of a *Genius*: And attempt and achieve that, with an high relish of Pleasure, which would give the greatest Disgust to others and utterly discourage them. This stirs up an useful Emulation, and gives full Scope for every one to show Himself and appear to advantage. And it is certainly for the Beauty and Advantage of the Body. As many Hands employed in different Ways about some noble Building, yet all help either to secure its Strength, or furnish out all the Convenience, or give a State and Grandeur to it.

The Wisdom and Beauty of Providence appear at once in this Variety and Distinction of Powers and Inclinations among Mankind. It is a very wise and a necessary Provision for the common Good, and the Advantage and Pleasure of particular Men. It answers to all the Ends and Occasions of Mankind. They are in this Way made helpful to one another, and capable of serving Themselves, and that without much trouble or fatigue. Business by this Means becomes a Pleasure. The greatest Labours and Cares are easy and entertaining to Him who pursues his *Genius*. Inclination still urges the Man on: Obstacles and Oppositions only sharpen his Appetite, and put Him upon summoning all his Powers, that He may exert Himself to the uttermost, and get over his Difficulties. All the several Arts and Sciences, and all the Improvements made in them from Time to Time; all the different Offices and Employments of humane Life, are owing to this variety of Powers and Inclinations among Men. And is it not obvious to every Eye how much of the Conveniences and Comforts of humane Life spring from these Originals? It is a glorious Display and most convincing Proof of the Interest of Providence in humane Affairs, and the Wisdom of its Conduct, to fit Things in this Manner to their proper Uses and Ends. And so to *sort* Mankind, and suit their Talents and Inclinations, that all may contribute somewhat to the Publick Good, and hardly one Member of the whole Body be lost in the Reckoning, useless to it self, or unserviceable to the Body. Were it otherwise, what large Tracts of humane Affairs would lie perfectly waste and uncultivated? Whereas now all the Parts of humane Learning and Life lie open to Improvement, and some or other is fitted by Nature, and dispos'd by Inclination, to help towards it.



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And as Providence gives the Hint, Men should take it, and follow the Conduct of *Genius* in the Course of their Studies, and Way of Employment in the World; and in the Education and Disposal of their Children. Men too often in this Case consult their own Humour and Convenience, not the Capacity and Inclination of the Child: And are governed by some or other external Circumstance, or lower Consideration; as, what they shall give with them, or to whom to commit the Care of them, &c. Thus they after contrive unsuitable Marriages, on the single View of worldly Advantage. From this Cause proceed fatal Effects, and many young Men of great Hopes, and good Capacities, miscarry in the after Conduct of Life, and prove useless or mischievous to the World. They turn off from a disagreeable Employment, and run into Idleness and Extravagance. If People better consider'd the peculiar *Genius* or proper Talents of their Children, and took their Measures of Treatment and Disposal thence, we should certainly find answerable Improvements and lasting good Effects. The several Kinds of Learning and Business would come to be more advanced, and the Lives of Men become more useful and significant to the World.

I have known a large Family of Children, with so remarkable a Diversity of *Genius*, as to be a little Epitome of Mankind. Some studious and thoughtful, and naturally inclin'd to *Books* and *Learning*; Others diligent and ambitious, and disposed to *Business* and rising in the World. Some bold and enterprizing, and loved nothing so well as the *Camp* and the *Field*; or so daring and unconfined, that nothing would satisfy but *going* to *Sea* and visiting Foreign Parts. Some have been gay and airy, Others solid and retired. Some curious and Observers of other Men; Others open and careless. In short, their Capacities have been as various as their Natural Tempers or Moral Dispositions.

Now what a Blunder would be committed in the Education of such a Family, if, with this different Turn of Mind in the Children, there should be no difference made in the Management of them, or their Disposal in the World. If all should be put into one Way of Life, or brought up to one Business. Or if in the Choice of Employment for Them, their several Biass and Capacity be not consulted, but the roving *Genius* mew'd up in a Closet, and confounded among Books: And the studious and thoughtful *Genius* sent to wander about the World, and be perfectly scattered and dissipated, for want of proper Application and closer Confinement. Whereas, one such a Family wisely educated, and dispos'd in the World, would prove an extensive Blessing to Mankind, and appear with a distinguished Glory; was the proper *Genius* of every Child first cultivated, and he then put into a Way of Life that would suit his Taste.



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Genius is a part of natural Constitution, not acquir'd, but born with us. Yet it is capable of Cultivation and Improvement. It has been a common Question, whether a Man be born a Poet or made one? but both must concur. Nature and Art must contribute their Shares to compleat the Character. Limbs alone will not make a Dancer, or a Wrestler. Nor will *Genius* alone make a good Poet; nor the meer Strength of natural Abilities make a considerable Artist of any kind. Good Rules, and these reduc'd to Practice, are necessary to this End. And Use and Exercise in this, as well as in all other Cases, are a second Nature. And, oftentimes, the second Nature makes a prodigious Improvement of the Force and Vigour of the first.

It has been long ago determined by the great Masters of Letters, that good Sense is the chief Qualification of a good Writer.

Scribendi certe sapere est & Principium & Fons.

Horat.

Yet the best natural Parts in the World are capable of much Improvement by a due Cultivation.

*Doctrina sed vim promovet insitam,
Rectique cultus Pectora roborant.*

Horat.

The Spectator's golden Scales, let down from Heaven to discover the true Weight and Value of Things, expresses this Matter in a Way which at once shews, a *Genius*, and its Cultivation. "There is a Saying among the *Scots*, that an Ounce of Mother-Wit, is worth a Pound of Clergy. I was sensible of the Truth of this Saying, when I saw the difference between the Weight of natural Parts and that of Learning. I observ'd that it was an hundred Times heavier than before, when I put Learning into the same Scale with it."

It has been observ'd, of an *English* Author, that he would be all *Genius*. He would reap the Fruits of Art, but without the Study and Pains of it. The *Limae Labor* is what he cannot easily digest. We have as many Instances of Originals, this way, as any Nation can produce. Men, who without the help of Learning, by the meer Force of natural Ability, have produced Works which were the Delight of their own Times, and have been the Wonder of Posterity. It has been a Question, whether Learning would have improved or spoiled them. There appears somewhat so nobly Wild and Extravagant in these great *Genij*, as charms infinitely more, than all the Turn and Polishing which enters into the *French Bel Esprit*, or the *Genius* improved by Reading and Conversation.

But tho' this will hold in some very rare Instances, it must be much for its Advantage in ordinary Cases, that a *Genius* should be diligently and carefully cultivated. In order to

this, it should be early watched and observ'd. And this is a matter that requires deep Insight into Humane Nature. It is not so easy as many imagine, to pronounce what the proper *Genius* of a Youth is. Every one who will be fiddling, has not presently a *Genius*



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for Musick. The Idle Boy draws Birds and Men, when he should be getting his Lesson or writing his Copy; *This Boy*, says the Father, *must be a Painter*; when alas! this is no more the Boy's *Genius* than the *Parhelion* is the true Sun. But those who have the Care of Children, should take some Pains to know what their true *Genius* is. For here the Foundation must be laid for improving it. If a Mistake be made here, the Man sets out wrong, and every Step he takes carries him so much farther from Home.

The true *Genius* being discovered, it must be supplied with Matter to work upon, and employ it self. This is Fuel for the Fire. And the fitting a *Genius* with proper Materials, is putting one into the Way of going through the World with Wind and Tide. The whole Force of the Mind is applied to its proper Use. And the Man exerts all his Strength, because he follows Inclination, and gives himself up to the proper Conduct of his *Genius*. This is the right way to excel. The Man will naturally rise to his utmost Height, when he is directed to an Employment that at once fits his Abilities, and agrees with his Taste.

Care must also be taken, that a *Genius* be not overstrain'd. Our Powers are limited. None can carry beyond their certain Weight. Whilst we follow Inclination, and keep within the Bounds of our Power, we act with Ease and Pleasure. If we strain beyond our Power, we crack the Sinews, and after two or three vain Efforts, our Strength fails, and our Spirits are jaded. It wou'd be of mighty Advantage towards improving a *Genius*, to make its Employment, as much as possible, a Delight and Diversion, especially to young Minds. A Man toils at a Task, and finds his Spirits flag, and his Force abate, e'er he has gone half thro'; whereas he can put forth twice the Strength, and complain of no Fatigue, in following his Pleasures. Of so much Advantage is it to make Business a Pleasure, if possible, and engage the Mind in it out of Choice. It naturally reluctates against Constraint, and is most unwilling to go on when it knows it *must*. But if it be left to its own Choice, to follow Inclination and pursue its Pleasure, it goes on without any Rubs, and rids twice the Ground, without being half so much tired.

Exercise is also very necessary to improve a *Genius*. It not only shines the more, by exerting it self, but, like the Limbs of an Humane Body, gathers Strength by frequent and vigorous Use, and becomes more pliable and ready for Action. There must indeed sometimes be a Relaxation. Our Minds will not at present bear to be continually bent, and in perpetual Exercise. But our Faculties manifestly grow by using them. The more we exert our selves, if we do not overstrain our Powers, the greater Readiness and Ability we acquire for future Action. A *Genius*, in order to be much improv'd, should be well workt, and kept in close Application to its proper Pursuit.

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All the Foreign Help must be procured, that can be had, towards this Improvement. The Instruction and Example of such as excell in that particular way, to which a Man's Mind is turned, is of vast Use. A good Master in the Mechanical Arts, and careful Observation of the nicest and most dextrous Workmen, will help a *Genius* of this sort. A good Tutor in the Sciences, and free Conversation with such as have made great Proficiency in them, must vastly improve the more liberal *Genius*. Reading, and careful Reflection on what a Man reads, will still add to its Force, and carry the Improvement higher. Reading furnishes Matter, Reflexion digests it, and makes it our own; as the Flesh and Blood which are made out of the Food we eat. And Prudence and the Knowledge of the World, must direct us how to employ our *Genius*, and on all occasions make the best Use of it. What will the most exalted *Genius* signify, if the World reaps no Advantage from it? He who is possess'd of it, may make it turn to Account to himself, and have much Pleasure and Satisfaction from it; but it is a very poor Business, if it serves no other Purpose, than to supply Matter for such private and narrow Satisfaction. It is certainly the Intention of Providence, that a good *Genius* should be a publick Benefit; and to wrap up such a Talent in a Napkin, and bury it in the Earth, is at once to be unfaithful to God, and defraud Mankind.

Those who have such a Trust put into their Hands, should be very careful that they do not abuse it, nor squander it away. The best *Genius* may be spoiled. It suffers by nothing more, than by neglecting it, and by an Habit of Sloth and Inactivity. By Disuse, it contracts [J]Rust, or a Stiffness which is not easily to be worn off. Even the sprightly and penetrating, have, thro' this neglect, sunk down to the Rank of the dull and stupid. Some Men have given very promising Specimens in their early Days, that they could think well themselves; but, whether from a pusillanimous Modesty, or a lazy Temper at first, I know not; they have by Degrees contracted such an Habit of Filching and Plagiary, as to lose their Capacity at length for one Original Thought. Some Writers indeed, as well as Practitioners in other Arts, seem only born to copy; but it is Pity those, who have a Stock of their own, should so entirely lose it by Disuse, as to be reduc'd to a Necessity, when they must appear in Publick, to borrow from others.

[J] Otium ingera rubig. [Transcriber's Note: "rubig" not readable, may be the word for rust or stiffness.]



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Men should guard against this Mischief with great Care. A *Genius* once squandered away by neglect, is not easily to be recovered. *Tacitus* assigns a very proper Reason for this. “[K]Such is the Nature, saith he, of Humane Infirmity, that Remedies cannot be applied, as quick as Mischiefs may be suffered; and as the Body must grow up by slow Degrees, but is presently destroyed; so you may stifle a *Genius* much more easily than you can recover it. For you’ll soon relish Ease and Inactivity, and be in Love with Sloth, which was once your Aversion.” This can hardly fail of raining the best Capacity, especially, if from a neglect of severer Business, Men run into a Dissolution of Manners, which is the too common Consequence. The greatest Minds have thus been often wholly enervated, and the best Parts buried in utter Obscurity.

[K] Natura infirmitatis humanae, tadiaora sunt remedia quam mala; & ut corpora lente augescunt, cito extinguuntur, sic ingenia studiaque oppresseris, facilius quam revocaveris; subit quippe ipsius inertiae dulcedo, et invisā primo desidia postremo amatur. Tacit. Vit. Agricol. c. 3.

Though the Rules of Art may be of great Service to improve a *Genius*, it is very prejudicial, in many Cases, to fetter it self with these Rules, or confine itself within those Limits which others have fixed. How little would Science have been improv’d, if every new *Genius*, that applies himself to any Branch of it, had made other Mens Light, his *ne plus ultra*, and resolved to go no farther into it, than the Road had been beaten before him. No doubt there were Men of as good natural Abilities in the Ages before the Revival of Learning, as there have been since. But they were cramped with the Jargon of a wordy and unintelligible Philosophy, and durst not give themselves the Liberty to think in Religion, without the Boundaries fixed by the Church, for fear of Anathemas, and an Inquisition. Till those Fetters were broken, little Advance was made, for many Ages together, in any useful or solid Knowledge. In truth, every Man who makes a new Discovery, goes at first by himself; and as long as the greatest Minds are Content to go in Leading-strings, they will be but upon a Level with their Neighbours.

On the other Hand, Capacities of a lower size must be obliged to more of Imitation. All their Usefulness will be spoiled by forming too high Models for themselves. If they will be of Service, they must be content to keep the beaten Road. Should they attempt to soar too high, they will only meet with *Icarus’s* Fate. A common *Genius* will serve many common Purposes exceeding well, and render a Man conspicuous enough, tho’ there may be no distinguishing Splendor about him to dazzle the Beholders Eyes. But if he attempts any Thing beyond his Strength, he is sure to lose the Lustre which he had, if he does not also weaken his Capacity, and impair his *Genius* into the Bargain. So just in all Cases is the Poet’s Advice to Writers.



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*Sumite Materiam vestris qui scribitis aquam
Veribus.* Horat.

*Weigh well your Strength, and never undertake
What is above your Power.*

And this brings to Mind another very common Occasion of ruining many a good *Genius*; I mean, wrong Application. Nothing will satisfy Parents, but their Children must apply their Minds to one of the learned Professions, when, instead of consulting the Reputation or Interest of their Children, by such a preposterous Choice, they turn them out to live in an Element no way suited to their Nature, and expose them to Contempt and Beggary all their Days; while at the same Time they spoil an Head, admirably turn'd for Traffick or Mechanicks. And he is left to bring up the Rear in the learned Profession, or it may be lost in the Crowd, who would have shined in Trade, and made a prime Figure upon the Exchange. Many have by this Means *run their Heads against a Pulpit*, (as a Satirical *Genius* once expressed it) *who would have made admirable Ploughmen*.

There is a different Taste in Men, as to the learned Professions themselves, which qualities and disposes them for the one, but would never make them appear with any Lustre in another. This has been often made evident in the different Figures, which some, who lived in Obscurity before, have made upon a lucky Incident that led them out of the mistaken Track into which they were first put. Where Providence does not relieve a *Genius* from this Error in setting out, the Man must be kept under the Hatches all his Days.

There are very different Manners of Writing, and each of them just and agreeable in their Kind, when Nature is followed, and a Man endeavours Perfection in that Style and Manner which suits his own Humour and Abilities. Some please, and indeed excel in a Mediocrity, [L]who quite lose themselves if they attempt the Sublime. Some succeed to a wonder in the Account of all Readers whilst they confine themselves to close Reasoning; who, if they are so ill advise'd, as to meddle with Wit; only make themselves the Jest. [M]That is easy and agreeable which is natural; what is forc'd, will appear distorted and give Disgust.

[L] *Dum vitat humum, nubes et inania captet.* Horat.

[M] *Ingenio, sicut in Agro, quanquam alia diu Serantur
atque elaborentur, gratiora tamen quae sua sponte nascuntur.*
Tacit. de Orator, c. 6.

It is of fatal Consequence to a good *Genius* to grasp at too much. "A certain Magistrate (says *Bruyere*) arriving, by his Merit, to the first Dignities of the Gown, thought himself qualified for every Thing. He printed a Treatise of Morality, and published himself a Coxcomb." Universal *Genij* and universal Scholars are generally excellent at nothing.

He is certainly the wisest Man, who endeavours to be perfectly furnished for some Business, and regards other Matters as no more than his Amusement.



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A *Genius* being thus observed, humoured and cultivated, is to be kept in Heart, and upon proper Occasions to be exerted. Without this, it may sink and be lost. All Habits are weakened by Disuse. And Men who are furnished with a *Genius*, for publick Usefulness, should put themselves forward; I mean, with due Modesty and Prudence, and not suffer their Talents to be hid, when a fair Opportunity offers to do Service with them. Indeed it is too common an Unhappiness for Men to be so placed, as to have no Opportunity and Advantage for shewing their *Genius*. As Matters are generally managed in the World, Men are for the most part staked down to such Business, in such Alliances, or in such Circumstances, that they have no proper Occasions of exerting themselves; but instead of that, are continually tugging and striving with things that are cross and ungrateful to them. And that must be a strong Mind indeed, that shall break through the Censures and Opposition of the World, and dare to quit a Station, for which a Man has been brought up, and in which he has acted for some Time, that he may get into another Sphere, where he sees he can act according to the Impulses of his *Genius*. Tho' such as have had the Courage and Skill to follow those Impulses, till they have gain'd the Stations which suited their Taste and Inclination, have seldom fail'd of appearing considerable. But Multitudes, by this Situation of Affairs, have been forc'd, in a manner, to stifle a *Genius*, because they could have no fair Opportunity of exerting it.

A crazy Constitution, and a Body liable to continual Disorders, call off the Attention of many a great Mind, from what might otherwise procure very great Reputation and Regard. Their *Genius* no sooner begins a little to exert itself, but the Spirits flag, and one unhappy Ail or other, enfeebles and discourages the Mind.

Lust and Wine mightily obstruct all Attempts that require Application; and will neither allow a Man duly to furnish his Mind, nor rightly to use that Furniture he has. An Intrigue or a Bottle may sometimes give an Opportunity for a Man to shew his *Genius*, but will utterly spoil all regular and reputable Exertings of it. He who would put forth his *Genius* to the Advantage of Himself or the World, should give into no Pleasures that will enervate or dissolve his Mind. He must keep it bent for Business, or he will bring all Business to nothing.

Conceit and Affectation on one hand, and Peevishness and Perverseness of Temper on the other, will lay the best *Genius* under great Disadvantages, and raise such Dislike and Opposition, as will bear it down in spite of all its Force and Furniture. A graceful Mixture of Boldness and Modesty, with a Smoothness and Benignity of Temper, will much better make a Man's Way into the World, and procure him the Opportunity of exerting his *Genius*.



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But there is nothing lies as an heavier Weight upon a Man, or hinders Him more from shewing Himself to Advantage, and employing his great Abilities for the Service of Others; than the Quarrels and Contentions of Parties. Many have their Talents imprison'd, by being of the hated and sinking Side. Their Light is wholly smother'd and suppress'd, that it may not shine out with a Lustre on the Party to which they belong, whether it be in Politicks or Religion. And all Struggles of a *Genius* are vain, when a Man is born down at once by Clamour and Power.

This is very discouraging to a Man who has taken much Pains in cultivating his *Genius*; and many have, without doubt, been tempted wholly to neglect themselves, from the Dread of these Discouragements. I own this Neglect is not to be excused altogether, though it grieves one that there should be any Occasion given for it. There is still Room for Men to follow and improve a *Genius*, and hope by it to benefit Mankind, and procure Regard to Themselves. And it is hard to say, what Way of exerting it will turn most to Account. Peculiar Honours are due to those who appear to Advantage in the *Pulpit*. Numerous Applauses and Preferments attend those who acquit themselves well at the *Bar*. There is a great deal of Renown to those who are eminent in the *Senate*. There are high Advantages to such as excel in *Counsel* and on *Embassies*. Immortal Lawrels will crown such as are brave, expert and victorious in *Arms*. There are the Blessings of Wealth and Plenty to those who manage well their *Trades* and *Merchandize*. The Names of the skilful *Architect*, the cunning *Artificer*, the fine, exact and well devising *Painter*, are sometimes enrolled in the Lists of Fame. The learned, experienced and successful *Physician*, may become as considerable for Repute and Estate, as one of any other Profession. *Musick* also may have its *Masters*, who shall be had in lasting Esteem. The *Poets* Performances may be [N]more durable than Brass, and long lived as Time it Self. Every *Science* may have Professors that shall shine in the learned World. With all the Discouragements that may damp a *Genius*, there is yet a wide Field for it to exert it self, and Room to hope it will not be in vain.

[N] Exegi monumentum aere perennius
Regalique situ pyramidum altius,
Quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens
Possit diruere aut innumerabilis
Annorum series et fuga temporum:

Horat

I was going to add something of exerting one's *Genius* as an *Author*. But I found, it would fill up too much Room in my Paper, should I enlarge on the several Ways of Mens appearing considerable. And I was so apprehensive of the Reputation, which the Divine, the Historian, the Critick, the Philosopher, and almost all the other Authors, have above us *Essay-Writers*, that I thought I should but lessen the Regards to my own *Genius*, should I have set to View the Advantages of Others. It will sufficiently gratify my Ambition as an Author, if the World will be so good natured as to think I have

handsomely excus'd my self; that I am tolerably fitted, in the Way in I am, to give Entertainment to my Readers, and do them some Service.



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FINIS

ERRATA [Transcriber's Note: Not readable]

THE

CREATION.

A

Pindaric Illustration
OF A

POEM,

Originally written by

MOSES,

On That SUBJECT.

WITH A

PREFACE to Mr. POPE,

CONCERNING

The Sublimity of the Ancient HEBREW POETRY,
and a material and obvious Defect in the ENGLISH.

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PREFACE to MR. POPE



Sir,

About two Years ago, upon a slight Misapprehension of some Expressions of yours, which my Resentment, or perhaps my Pride, interpreted to the Disadvantage of a Poetical Trifle, I had then newly publish'd, I suffer'd myself to be unreasonably transported, so far, as to inscribe you an angry, and inconsiderate Preface; without previous Examination into the Justness of my Proceeding. I have lately had the Mortification to learn from your own Hand that you were entirely guiltless of the fact charg'd upon you; so that, in attempting to retaliate a suppos'd Injury, I have done a real Injustice.

The only Thing which an honest Man ought to be more asham'd of than his faults, is a Reluctance against confessing them. I have already acknowledg'd mine to yourself: But no publick Guilt is well aton'd, by a private Satisfaction; I therefore send you a Duplicate of my Letter, by way of the World, that all, who remember my Offence, may also witness my Repentance.

Sir,

I am under the greatest Confusion I ever felt in my Life, to find by your Letter, that I have been guilty of a Crime, which I can never forgive Myself, were it for no other Reason, than that You have forgiven it. I might have learnt from your Writings the Extent of your Soul, and shou'd have concluded it impossible for the Author of those elevated Sentiments, to sink beneath them in his Practice. You are generously moderate, when you mitigate my Guilt, and miscall it a Credulity; 'twas a passionate, and most unjustifiable Levity, and must still have remain'd unpardonable, whatever Truth might have been found in its mistaken Occasion. What stings me most, in my Reflection on this Folly, is, that I know not how to atone it; I will endeavour it, however; being always asham'd, when I have attempted to revenge an Injury, but never more proud, than when I have begg'd pardon for an Error. If you needed an Inducement to the strengthening your Forgiveness, you might gather it from these two Considerations; First, The Crime was almost



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a Sin against Conviction; for though not happy enough to know you personally, your Mind had been my intimate Acquaintance, and regarded with a kind of partial Tenderness, that made it little less than Miracle, that I attempted to offend you. A sudden Warmth, to which, by Nature, I am much too liable, transported me to a Condition, I shall best describe in Shakespear's Sense, somewhere or other.

Blind in th' obscuring Mist of heedless Rage,
I've rashly shot my Arrows o'er a House,
And hurt my Brother....

A Second Consideration is, the Occasion you have gather'd to punish my Injustice, with more than double Sharpness, by your Manner of receiving it. The Armour of your Mind is temper'd so divinely, that my mere Human Weapons have not only fail'd to pierce, but broke to pieces in rebounding. You meet Assaults, like some expert Arabian, who, declining any Use of his own Javelin, arrests those which come against him, in the Fierceness of their Motion, and overcomes his Enemies, by detaining their own Weapons. 'Tis a noble Triumph you now exercise, by the Superiority of your Nature; and while I see you looking down upon the Distance of my Frailty, I am forc'd to own a Glory, which I envy you; and am quite asham'd of the poor Figure I am making, in the bottom of the Prospect. I feel, I am sure, Remorse, enough to satisfy you for the Wrong, but to express it, wou'd, I think, exceed even your own Power.

Yours, whose sweet Songs can rival Orpheu's Strain,
And force the wondring Woods to dance again,
Make moving Mountains hear your pow'rful Call,
And headlong Streams hang list'ning in their Fall.

No Words can be worthy to come after these; I will therefore hasten to tell you, that I am, and will ever be, with the greatest Truth and Respect,

SIR,

Your Most Humble,

and Most Obedient Servant,

A. Hill.

I have now attempted, as far as I am able, to throw off a Weight, which my Mind has been uneasy under. I cannot say, in the City Phrase, that I have balanc'd the Account, but you must admit of Composition, where full Payment is impossible. I shall be so far from regretting you the old Benefit of Lex talionis, that I forgive you heartily, beforehand,



for any thing you may hereafter think fit to say, or do, to my Disadvantage; nay, the Pleasure I enjoy by reflecting on your good Nature, will degenerate to a Pain, if one Accident or other, in the Course of your Life, does not favour me with some Occasion of advancing your Interest.

Having said thus much to you, in your Quality of a Good Man, I will proceed to address you, in your other Quality, of a Great Poet; in which Light I look up to you with extraordinary Comfort, as to a new Constellation breaking out upon our World, with equal Heat, and Brightness, and cross-spangling, as it were, the whole Heaven of Wit with your milky way of Genius.



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You cou'd never have been born at a Time, which more wanted the Influence of your Example: All the Fire you bring with you, and the Judgment you are acquiring, in the Course of your Journey, will be put to their full stress, to support and rebuild the sinking Honours of Poetry.

It was a Custom, which prevail'd generally among the Ancients, to impute Celestial Descent to their Heroes; The Vanity, methinks, might have been pardonable, and rational, if apply'd to an Art; since Arts, when they are at once delightful and profitable, as you will certainly leave Poetry, have one real Mark of Divinity, they become, in some measure, immortal. And as the oldest, and, I think, the sublimest Poem in the World, is of Hebrew Original, and was made immediately after passing the Red-Sea, at a Time, when the Author had neither Leisure, nor Possibility, to invent a new Art: It must therefore be undeniable, either that the Hebrews brought Poetry out of Egypt, or that Moses receiv'd it from God, by immediate Inspiration. This last, being what a Poet should be fondest of believing, I wou'd fain suppose it probable, that God, who was pleas'd to instruct Moses with what Ceremony he wou'd be worship'd, taught him also a Mode of Thinking, and expressing Thought, unprophan'd by vulgar Use, and peculiar to that Worship. God then taught Poetry first to the Hebrews, and the Hebrews to Mankind in general.

But, however this may have been, there is, apparently, a divine Spirit, glowing forcibly in the Hebrew Poetry, a kind of terrible Simplicity; a magnificent Plainness! which is commonly lost, in Paraphrase, by our mistaken Endeavours after heightening the Sentiments, by a figurative Expression; This is very ill Judg'd: The little Ornaments of Rhetorick might serve, fortunately enough, to swell out the Leanness of some modern Compositions; but to shadow over the Lustre of a divine Hebrew Thought, by an Affectation of enliv'ning it, is to paint upon a Diamond, and call it an Ornament.

It is a surprizing Reflection, that these noble Hebrew Poets shou'd have written with such admirable Vigour three Thousand Years ago; and that, instead of improving, we should affect to despise them; as if, to write smoothly, and without the Spirit of Imagery, were the true Art of Poetry, because the only Art we practise. It puts me in Mind of the famous Roman Lady, who suppos'd, that Men had, naturally, stinking Breaths, because she had been us'd to it, in her Husband.

The most obvious Defect in our Poetry, and I think the greatest it is liable to, is, that we study Form, and neglect Matter. We are often very flowing, and under a full Sail of Words, while we leave our Sense fast aground, as too weighty to float on Frothiness; We run on, upon false Scents, like a Spaniel, that starts away at Random after a Stone, which is kept back in the Hand, though It seem'd to fly before him. To speak with Freedom on this Subject, is a Task of more Danger than Honour; for few Minds have

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real Greatness enough to consider a Detection of their Errors, as a Warning to their Conduct, and an Advantage to their Fame; But no discerning Judgment will consider it as ill Nature, in one Writer, to mark the Faults of another. A general Practice of that Kind wou'd be the highest Service to poetry. No Disease can be cur'd, till its Nature is examin'd; and the first likely Step towards correcting our Errors, is resolving to learn impartially, that we have Errors to be corrected.

I will, therefore, with much Freedom, but no manner of Malice, remark an Instance or two, from no mean Writers, to prove, that our Poetry has been degenerating apace into mere Sound, or Harmony; nor ought This to be consider'd as an invidious Attempt, since whatever Pains we take, about polishing our Numbers, where we raise not our Meaning, are as impertinently bestowed, as the Labour wou'd be, of setting a broken Leg after the Soul has left the Body. The Gunners have a Custom, when a Ball is too little for the Bore of their Canon, to wrap Towe about it, till it fills the Mouth of the Piece; after which, it is discharg'd, with a Thunder, proportionable to the Size of the Gun; But its Execution at the Mark, will immediately discover, that the Noise of the Discharge was a great deal too big for the Diameter of the Bullet. It is just the same thing with an unsinewy Imagination, sent abroad in sounding Numbers; The Loftiness of the Expression will astonish shallow Readers into a temporary Admiration, and support it, for a while; but the Bounce, however loud, goes no farther than the Ear; The Heart remains unreach'd by the Languor of the Sentiment.

Poetry, the most elevated Exertion of human Wit, is no more than a weak and contemptible Amusement, wanting Energy of Thought, or Propriety of Expression. Yet we may run into Error, by an injudicious Affectation of attaining Perfection, as Men, who are gazing upward, when they shou'd be looking to their Footsteps, stumble frequently against Posts, while they have the Sun in Contemplation.

In attempting, for Example, to modernize so lofty an Ode as the 104th Psalm, the Choice of Metaphors shou'd, methinks, have been considered, as one of the most remarkable Difficulties. There seems to have been a Necessity, that they shou'd be noble, as well as natural; and yet, if too much rais'd, they wou'd endanger an Extinction of the Charms, which they were design'd to illustrate. That powerful Imagination of 'the Sea, climbing over the Mountains Tops, and rushing back, upon the Plains, at the Voice of God's Thunder,' ought certainly to have been express'd with as much Plainness as possible: And, to demonstrate how ill the contrary Measure has succeeded, one need only observe how it looks in Mr. Trapp's Metaphorical Refinement.

“The Ebbing Deluge did its Troops recal,
Drew off its Forces, and disclos'd the Ball,
They, at th' Eternal's Signal march'd away.”



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Who does not discern, in this Place, what an Injury is done to the original Image, by the military Metaphor? Recalling the 'Troops' of a Deluge, 'Drawing off its Forces'; and its 'Marching away, at a Signal,' carry not only a visible Impropriety of Thought, but are infinitely below the Majesty of That God, who is so dreadfully represented thundering his Commands to the Ocean; They are directly the Reverse of that terrible Confusion, and overwhelming Uproar of Motion, which the Sea, in the Original, is suppos'd to fall into. The March of an Army is pleasing, orderly, slow; The Inundation of a Sea, from the Tops of the Mountains, frightful, wild and tumultuous; Every Justness and Grace of the original Conception is destroyed by the Metaphor.

In the same Psalm, the Hebrew Poet describing God, says, '....He maketh the Clouds his Chariots, and walketh on the Wings of the Wind.' Making the 'Clouds his Chariots,' is a strong and lively Thought; But That of 'walking on the Wings of the Wind,' is a Sublimity, that frightens, astonishes, and ravishes the Mind of a Reader, who conceives it, as he shou'd do. The Judgement of the Poet in this Place, is discernable in three different Particulars; The Thought is in itself highly noble, and elevated; To move at all upon the Wind, carries with it an Image of much Majesty and Terror; But this natural Grandeur he first encreas'd by the Word 'Wings,' which represents the Motion, as not only on the Winds, but on the Winds in their utmost Violence, and Rapidity of Agitation. But then at last, comes that finishing Sublimity, which attends the Word 'walks!' The Poet is not satisfied to represent God, as riding on the Winds; nor even as riding on them in a Tempest; He therefore tells us, that He walks on their Wings; that so our Idea might be heighten'd to the utmost, by reflecting on this calm, and easy Motion of the Deity, upon a Violence, so rapid, so furious, and ungovernable, to our human Conception. Yet as nothing can be more sublime, so nothing can be more simple, and plain, than this noble Imagination. But Mr. Trapp, not contented to express, attempts unhappily to adorn this inimitable Beauty, in the following Manner.

"Who, borne in Triumph o'er the Heavenly Plains,
Rides on the Clouds, and holds a Storm in Reins,
Flies on the Wings of the sonorous Wind, &c."

Here his imperfect, and diminishing Metaphor, of the 'Rains,' has quite ruin'd the Image; What rational, much less noble Idea, can any Man conceive of a Wind in a Bridle? The unlucky Word 'Plains' too, is a downright Contradiction to the Meaning of the Passage. What wider Difference in Nature, than between driving a Chariot over a Plain, and moving enthron'd, amidst That rolling, and terrible Perplexity of Motions, which we figure to our Imagination, from a 'Chariot of Clouds'? But the mistaken Embellishment of the Word 'flies,' in the last Verse, is an Error almost unpardonable; Instead of improving the Conception, it has made it



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trifling, and contemptible, and utterly destroy'd the very Soul of its Energy! 'flies' on the Wind! What an Image is That, to express the Majesty of God? To 'walk' on the Wind is astonishing, and horrible; But to 'fly' on the Wind, is the Employment of a Bat, of an Owl, of a Feather! Mr. Trapp is, I believe, a Gentleman of so much Candour, and so true a Friend to the Interest of the Art he professes, that there will be no Occasion to ask his pardon, for dragging a Criminal Metaphor, or two, out of the Immunity of his Protection.

Mr. Philips has lately been told in Print, by one of our best Criticks, that he has excell'd all the Ancients, in his Pastoral Writings; He will, therefore, be apt to wonder, that I take the Liberty to say, in downright Respect to Truth, and the Justice due to Poetry, that I have not only seen modern pastorals, much better than His, but that his appear, to me, neither natural, nor equal. One might extend this Remark to the very Names of his Shepherds; Lobbin, Hobbinol, and Cuddy are nothing of a Piece, with Lanquet, Mico, and Argol; nor do his Personages agree better with themselves, than their Names with one another. Mico, for Example, at the first Sight we have of him, is a very polite Speaker, and as metaphorical as Mr. Trapp.

“This Place may seem for Shepherds Leisure made,
So lovingly these Elms unite their Shade!
Th'ambitious Woodbine! how it climbs, to breathe
Its balmy Sweets around, on all beneath!”

But, alas! this Fit of Eloquence, like most other Blessings, is of very short Continuance; It holds him but Just one Speech: In the beginning of the next, he is as very a Rustick, as Colin Clout, and has forgot all his Breeding.

“No Skill of Musick can I, simple Swain,
No fine Device, thine Ear to entertain;
Albeit some deal I pipe, rude though it be,
Sufficient to divert my, Sheep, and Me.”

There is no Transformation In Ovid more sudden, or surprizing; He has Reason indeed to say, that, when he “pipes some deal,” his 'Sheep' are 'diverted' with him. His Readers, I am afraid too, are as merry as his Sheep; If he was but as skilful in Change of Time, as he is in Change of Dialect, commend me to him for a Musician! The pied Piper, who drew all the Rats of a City out, after his Melody, came not near him for Variety.

If the late excellent Mr. Addison, whose Verses abound in Graces, which can never be too much admir'd, shall be, often, found liable to an Overflow of his Meaning, by this Dropsical Wordiness, which we so generally give into, it will serve at the same time, as a Comfort, and a Warning; and incline us to a severe Examination of our Writings, when



we venture out upon a World, that will, one time or other, be sure to censure us impartially; In That Gentleman's Works, whoever looks close, will discover Thorns on every Branch of his Roses; For Example, we all hear, with Delight, in his celebrated Letter from Italy, that, there,

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... The Muse so oft her Harp has strung,
That not a Mountain rears its Head unsung.

But, he adds, in the very next Line, that every shady Thicket too, grows renown'd in Verse; now one can never help remembering, that Thickets are Births, as it were of Yesterday; the mere Infancy of Woods! and that the oldest Woods in Italy may be growing on Foundations of ruin'd Cities, which flourish'd in the Times he there speaks of; whence it must naturally be inferr'd, that to say, the Italian Thickets grow renown'd in Roman Verse, though the Mountains really do so, is to make Use of Words, without Regard to their Meaning; A Lapse of dangerous Consequence, because, when the Understanding is once shock'd, this most rapturous Elevation of the Mind (as when cold Water is thrown suddenly upon boiling) sinks at once to chilling Flatness, and is considered as mere Gingle and childish Amusement.

No Man, I believe, has read without Pleasure, his fine and lively Descriptions of the Nar, Clitumnus, Mincio, and Albula, but the worst of it is, he winds us so long, in and out, between these Rivers, that he loses himself in their Maeanders, and brings us, at last, to a strange Stream indeed, which is 'immortaliz'd in Song,' and yet 'lost In Oblivion.'

"I look for Streams, immortaliz'd, in Song,
Which lost, and buried in Oblivion lie."

The Thought, in this Place, is very lively and just, but quite obscur'd by the Redundancy and Wantonness of the Expression. Had he only said 'lost,' and 'buried,' It might have been urg'd, that the Rivers were dry'd up, and no longer to be found, in their old Channels. But, let them be lost, as to Existence, as certainly as he will, they can never be lost in 'Oblivion,' if they are 'immortaliz'd' in Poetry. 'Immortal' is a favourite Word in this Gentleman's Writings, and leads him, as most Favourites are apt to do, into very frequent Errors.

It is naturally unpleasant, to be detain'd too long in the Maziness of one tedious Thought, express'd many Ways successively. When we read that the 'Tiber is destitute of Strength,' what else can we conclude, but that its Stream is a weak one? But we are oblig'd to hear, also, that it 'derives its Source from an unthrifty Urn': Well, now, may we go on? No; its 'Urn' is not only 'unthrifty,' but its 'Source' is unfruitful. By this time, one can scarce help, enquiring, what new Meaning is convey'd to the Apprehension, by the Multiplication of the Phrases? And not finding any, we have no Reflection to satisfy ourselves with, but, that the strongest Flow of Fancy, is most subject to Whirlpools.

It is from the same unweigh'd Redundancy, and Misapplication of Words, that we so often find this excellent Writer falling into the Anticlimax. As where, for Example, he informs us of Liberty, that she is a Goddess,

“Profuse of Bliss, and pregnant with Delight,
Eternal Pleasures, in her Presence reign.”



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After 'Profusion of Bliss,' that is to say, the heap'd Enjoyment of all Blessings to be wish'd for; how does it cool the Imagination, to read of being 'pregnant with Delight'? Had she been brought to Bed of 'Delight,' it had been but a poor Delivery: For what imports 'Delight,' in Comparison with 'Bliss'? And how much less too is pregnant with 'Delight,' than 'Delight' in Possession! But then again, after both these, what cou'd the Author hope to teach us, by adding, that 'Pleasure reigns in her Presence.' Can there be 'Bliss' without 'Delight'? Was there ever 'Delight' without 'Pleasure'? It shou'd gradually have ascended thus, Pleasure, Delight, Bliss; But to turn it the direct contrary Way, Bliss, Delight, Pleasure, is setting a poor Meaning upon its Head, and the same thing as to say, Mr. Addison writ incomparably, finely, nay, and tolerably. A Praise, which, I dare say, he wou'd have given no Body Thanks for. One wou'd think there were a kind of Fatality in Liberty, since scarce any Body can meddle either with the Word or the Thing, but they turn all topsey turvey.

But I am sliding insensibly into a Theme, that requires rather a Volume, than a Page or two; I hasten therefore to present you a Paraphrase on the Six Days Work of the Creator, as described to us by Moses, in the First Chapter of Genesis, which, you know, was written, originally, in Verse. It wou'd be difficult, I am sure, to match the Greatness of that inspired Author's Images, out of all the noble Writings, which have honour'd Antiquity; and whose most remarkable Excellencies have been found, in those Parts of their Works, which they elevated, and made more solemn, by a Mixture of their Religion. Our Poetry, in so able a Hand as Yours, might receive heavenly Advantages, from a Practice of like Nature. But I am of Opinion, that no English Verse, except that, which we, I think a little improperly, call Pindaric, can allow the necessary Scope, to so masterless a Subject, as the Creation, of all others the most copious, and illustrious; and which ought to be touch'd with most Discretion, and Choice of Circumstances.

Mr. Milton, Mr. Cowley, Sir Richard Blackmore, and now, lately, a young Gentleman, of a very lively Genius, have severally tried their Strength in this celestial Bow; Sir Richard may be said indeed to have shot farthest, but too often beside the Mark; He will permit me the Liberty of owning my Opinion, that he is too minute, and particular, and rather labours to oppress us with every Image he cou'd raise, than to refresh and enliven us, with the noblest, and most differing. He is also too unmindful of the Dignity of his Subject, and diminishes it by mean, and contemptible Metaphors. Speaking of the Skies, he says they were

Spun thin, and wove, on Nature's finest Loom.

Longinus is very angry with Timaeus for saying of Alexander, that he conquer'd all Asia, in less Time than Isocrates took to write his Panegyric, "Because, says the Critick, it is a pitiful Comparison of Alexander the Great with a Schoolmaster." What then wou'd he have said of Sir Richard's Metaphorical Comparison of the CREATOR Himself, to a Spinster, and a Weaver? The very Beasts of Mr. Milton, who kept Moses in his Eye, carry Infinitely more Majesty, than the Skies of Sir Richard.



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The Grassy Clods now calv'd; and half appear'd
The tawny Lyon, pawing to get free
His hinder Parts; then springs, as broke from Bonds,
And, rampant, shakes aloft, his brinded Main!
The heaving Leopard, rising, like the Mole,
In Heaps the crumbling Earth about him threw!

These animated Images, or pictured Meanings of Poetry, are the forcible Inspirers, which enflame a Reader's Will, and bind down his Attention. They arise from living Words, as Aristotle calls them; that is, from Words so finely chosen, and so Justly ranged, that they call up before a Reader the Spirit of their Sense, in that very Form, and Action, it impressed upon the Writer. But when the Idea, which a Poet strives to raise, is in itself magnificent and striking, the Dawb of Metaphor, or any spumy Colourings of Rhetoric can but deaden, and efface it.

If Sir Richard had said, concerning the Skies, on any other Subject but This, of the Creation, that they were 'spun thin, and wove, on Nature's finest Loom,' the Thought had been so far from Impropiety, as to have been pleasing, and praise-worthy; But when the Image he wou'd set before us, is the Maker of Heaven and Earth, in all the dreadful Majesty of his Omnipotence, producing at a Word, the noblest Part of the Creation, and 'spreading out the Heavens as a Curtain'; In this tremendous Exercise of his Divinity, to compare him to a Weaver, and his Expansion of the Skies, to the low Mechanism of a 'Loom,' is injudiciously to diminish an Idea, he pretends to heighten and illustrate.

I will end with a Word or two concerning the different Measure of the Verse, in which the following Poem is written; and which is apt to disgust Readers, not well grounded in Poetry, because it requires a fuller Degree of Attention than the Couplet, and, as Mr. Cowley has said of it,

... Will no unskilful Touch endure,
But flings Writer and Reader too, that sits not sure.

I have, in another Place, endeavoured by Arguments to demonstrate the Preference of this Kind of Verse to any other; I will here observe only, from my Experience of other Writers, that it wins, insinuates, and grows insensibly upon the Relish of a Reader, till the little seeming Harshness, which is supposed to be in it, softens gradually away, and leaves a vigorous Impression behind it, of mixed Majesty and Sweetness.

A Man, who is just beginning to try his Ear in Pindaric, may be compared to a new Scater; He totters strangely at first, and staggers backward and forward; Every Stick, or frozen Stone in his Way, is a Rub that he falls at. But when many repeated Trials have embolden'd him to strike out, and taught the true Poize of Motion, he throws forward his Body with a dextrous Velocity, and becoming ravish'd with the masterly Sweep of his



Windings, knows no Pleasure greater, than to feel himself fly through that well-measured Maziness, which he first attempted with Perplexity. But I will detain you no longer, and hasten now to the Poem, which has given me this pleasing Opportunity of telling you how much I am,



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Sir,

Your Most Humble
and Obedient Servant,

A. HILL

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