

A
Trritical Essay
UPON THE
Faculties of the Mind.

August the 6th. 1707.

To -----

SIR,

BEING so great a Lover of Antiquities, it was reasonable to suppose you would be very much obliged with any thing that was New. I have been of late offended with many Writers of Essays and Moral Discourses, for running into Stale Topicks and Threadbare Quotations, and not handling their Subject fully and closely: All which Errors I have carefully avoided in the following Essay, 5 which I have proposed as a Pattern for Young Writers to imitate. The Thoughts and Observations being entirely New. The Quotations untouched by others, the Subject of mighty Importance, and treated with much Order and Perspicuity. It has cost me a great deal of Time, and I desire you will accept and consider it as the utmost Effort of my Genius.

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title *August the 6th. 1707.] August 6. 1707 1713; om. 1727, 1735, 1754*
 4 *Stale] S, 1735, 1754; State 1711, 1713, 1727 7 New. The] New, the 1713+*
7 untouched] S, 1735, 1754; untaught 1711, 1713, 1727 8 Perspicuity. It] perspicuity,
it 1754 9 Time, and] Time: And 1713; Time; and 1727, 1735, 1754

The text is taken from David Woolley's copy (EC 8142) of *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (London: John Morphew, 1711), pp. 247-59 (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN 2 [1b]). It has been collated with *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, 2nd ed. (London: John Morphew, 1713), pp. 245-57 (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN 2 [2]); *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse: The First Volume* (London: Benjamin Motte, 1727), pp. 249-60 (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN 25 [1a]); *The Works of J.S. D.D. D.S.P.D.: In Four Volumes* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1735), I, 140-47 (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN 49); *The Works of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin*, ed. John Hawkesworth, large 8vo, 12 vols (London: C. Bathurst, 1754), III, 245-55 (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN 88). Swift's manuscript corrections in his own copy of *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse: The First Volume* (London: Benjamin Motte, 1727) (THE ROTHSCHILD LIBRARY, I, 366, 368 [1421, 1422]; LINDSAY, p. 84 [SwJ 478]) are indicated by S.t

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Tritical Essay, &c.

PHILOSOPHERS say that Man is a Microcosm or little World, resembling in Miniature every part of the great; And in my Opinion the Body Natural may be compared to the Body Politick: And if this be so, how can the Epicureans Opinion be true, that the Universe was formed by a fortuitous concourse of Atoms, which I will no more believe, than that the accidental jumbling of the Letters in the Alphabet would fall by chance into a most ingenious and learned Treatise of Philosophy, *Risum teneatis amici. Hor.* This false Opinion must needs create many more; 'tis like an Error in the First Concoction, which cannot be Corrected in the Second; the Foundation is weak, and whatever Superstructure you raise upon it must of necessity fall to the Ground. Thus Men are led from one Error to another, till with *Ixion* they Embrace a Cloud instead of *Juno*, or like the Dog in the Fable, lose the Substance in gapeing at the Shadow. For such Opinions cannot cohere; but like the Iron and Clay in the Toes of *Nebuchadnezar's* Image, must separate and break in pieces. I have read in a certain Author, that *Alexander Wept* because he had no more Worlds to Conquer; which he need not have done, if the fortuitous concourse of Atoms could create one; But this is an opinion fitter for that many-headed Beast the Vulgar to entertain, than for so Wise a Man as *Epicurus*; the corrupt Part of his Sect only borrowed his Name as the Monkey did the Cat's Claw to draw the Chesnut out of the Fire.

HOWEVER, the first step to the Cure is to know the Disease, and tho' Truth may be difficult to find, because as the Philosopher observes she lives in the bottom of a Well, yet we need not like Blind Men grope in open Daylight. I hope I may be allowed among so many far more Learned Men to offer my Mite, since a stander by may sometimes perhaps see more of the Game than he that Plays it. But I do not think a Philosopher obliged to account for every Phænomenon in Nature, or Drown himself with *Aristotle* for not being able to solve the Ebbing and Flowing of the Tide, in that fatal Sentence he past upon himself, *Quia te non capio, tu capies me.*

title A *Critical Essay, &c.*] om. 1754 4 Epicureans] epicurean's 1754
6 than] 1713+; then 1711 7 would] 1711, 1713, 1727; could 1735, 1754
8 amici.] amici? 1754

WHEREIN he was at once the Judge and the Criminal, the Accuser and Executioner. *Socrates* on the other hand, who said he knew nothing, was pronounced by the Oracle to be the Wisest Man in the World.

BUT, to return from this Digression, I think it as clear as any Demonstration in *Euclid*, that Nature does nothing in Vain, if we were able to dive into her Secret Recesses, we should find that the smallest Blade of Grass, or most contemptible Weed, has its particular Use, but she is chiefly admirable in her minutest Compositions, the least and most contemptible Insect most discovers the Art of Nature, if I may so call it; tho' Nature which delights in Variety, will always triumph over Art: And as the Poet observes,

Naturam expellas furca licet, usq; recurret. Hor.

BUT the various Opinions of Philosophers have scattered thro' the World as many Plagues of the Mind, as *Pandora's Box* did those of the Body, only with this difference, that they have not left Hope at the Bottom. And if Truth be not fled with *Astræa*, she is certainly as hidden as the Source of *Nile*, and can be found only in *Utopia*. Not that I would reflect on those Wise Sages; which would be a sort of Ingratitude, and he that calls a Man Ungrateful, sums up all the Evil that a Man can be guilty of,

Ingratum si dixeris omnia dicis.

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BUT what I blame the Philosophers for (tho' some may think it a Paradox) is chiefly their Pride; nothing less than an *Ipse dixit*, and you must pin your Faith on their Sleeve. And tho' *Diogenes* lived in a Tub, there might be for ought I know as much Pride under his Rags, as in the fine-spun Garment of the Divine *Plato*. It is reported of this *Diogenes* that when *Alexander* came to see him, and promised to give him whatever he would ask, the Cynick only answered; *Take not from me what thou canst not give me, but stand from between me and the Light*; which was almost as extravagant as the Philosopher that flung his Money into the Sea, with this remarkable saying.

25

HOW different was this Man from the Usurer, who being told his Son would Spend all he had Got, replied, *He cannot take more Pleasure in Spending than I did in getting it*. These Men could see the Faults of each other but not their own; those they flung into the Bag behind; *Non videmus id manticæ quod in tergo est*. I may be perhaps censured for

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35 be perhaps] perhaps be 1713^t

my free Opinions, by those carping Momus's, whom Authors Worship as the *Indians* do the Devil, for Fear. They will endeavour to give my Reputation as many Wounds as the Man in the Almanack, but I value it not, and perhaps like Flies they may buzz so often about the Candle, till
5 they burn their Wings. They must pardon me if I venture to give them this Advice, not to rail at what they cannot understand, it does but discover that self-tormenting Passion of Envy, than which the greatest Tyrant never invented a more cruel Torment.

Invidia Siculi non invenere Tyranni

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T tormentum majus — Juven.

I must be so bold to tell my Criticks and Witlings, that they are no more judges of this, than a Man that is born Blind can have any true Idea of Colours. I have always observed that your empty Vessels sound loudest: I value their Lashes as little as the Sea did when *Xerxes* Whipt it.
15 The utmost Favour a Man can expect from them, is that which *Polyphemus* promised *Ulysses*, that he would Devour him the last: They think to subdue a Writer as *Cæsar* did his Enemy, with a *Veni, vidi, vici*. I confess I value the Opinion of the Judicious Few. A *R----r*, a *D---s*, or a *W----h*, but for the rest, to give my Judgment at once, I think the long dispute
20 among the Philosophers about a Vacuum, may be determin'd in the Affirmative, that it is to be found in a Critick's Head. They are at best but the Drones of the Learned World, who devour the Honey; and will not Work themselves, and a Writer need no more regard them than the Moon does the Barking of a little sensless Cur. For in spight of their terrible
25 Roaring, you may with half an Eye discover the Ass under the *Lyon's* Skin.
BUT to return to our Discourse, *Demosthenes* being askt what was the First part of an Orator, replied, *Action*, what was the Second, *Action*, what was the Third, *Action*, and so on *ad infinitum*. This may be true in Oratory, but Contemplation in other Things exceeds Action. And therefore a Wise
30 Man is never less alone than when he is alone:

Nunquam minus solus quam cum solus.

11–12 they are no more judges] they can no more judge 1754 14 as the Sea did when *Xerxes* Whipt it] as the sea did those of *Xerxes*, when he whipped it 1754

18 Few. A] Few, a 1713+ 18 *R----r*] *Rymer* 1754 18 *D---s*] *Dennis* 1754

18 *W----h*] *W—k* 1713+ 26 Discourse, *Demosthenes*] Discourse. *Demosthenes* 1713; Discourse: *Demosthenes* 1727+

AND Archimedes the famous Mathematician was so intent upon his Problems, that he never minded the Soldier who came to Kill him. Therefore not to detract from the just Praise which belongs to Orators, they ought to consider that Nature which gave us Two Eyes to See, and Two Ears to Hear, has given us but One Tongue to Speak, wherein however some do so abound, that the Virtuosi who have been so long in search for the Perpetual Motion, may infallibly find it there. 5

SOME Men admire Repubicks, because Orators flourish there most, and are the great Enemies of Tyranny; But my Opinion is, that One Tyrant is better than a Hundred; Besides these Orators enflame the People, whose anger is really but a short fit of Madness. 10

Ira furor brevis est — Hor.

AFTER which, Laws are like Cobwebs which may catch small Flies, but let Wasps and Hornets break through. But in Oratory the greatest Art is to hide Art. 15

Artis est celare Artem.

BUT this must be the work of Time, we must lay hold on all Opportunities, and let slip no Occasion, else we shall be forced to Weave Penelope's Web, unravel in the Night what we did in the Day. And therefore I have observed that Time is Painted with a Lock before, and Bald behind, 20 signifying thereby that we must take Time (as we say) by the Forelock, for when 'tis once past there is no recalling it.

THE Mind of Man is at first (if you will pardon the Expression) like a Tabula rasa, or like Wax, which while it is Soft is capable of any Impression, 'till time has hardened it. And at length Death that Grim Tyrant stops us in the midst of our Career. The greatest Conquerors have at last been Conquered by Death, which spares none from the Scepter to the Spade. 25

Mors Omnibus Communis.

ALL Rivers go to the Sea, but none return from it. Xerxes Wept when he beheld his Army, to consider that in less than a Hundred Years they would be all Dead. Anacreon was Choakt with a Grape-stone, and violent

10 a Hundred] an Hundred 1735 19 what we did] what we spun 1735+

31 a Hundred] an Hundred 1735+

Joy Kills as well as violent Grief. There is nothing in this World constant but Inconstancy; yet *Plato* thought that if Virtue would appear to the World in her own native Dress, all Men would be Enamoured with her. But now since Interest governs the World, and Men neglect the Golden
5 Mean, *Jupiter* himself, if he came on the Earth would be Despised, unless it were as he did to *Danae* in a Golden Shower. For Men now a-days Worship the Rising Sun, and not the Setting.

Donec eris fælix multos numerabis amicos.

THUS have I in obedience to your Commands, ventured to expose
10 my self to Censure in this Critical Age. Whether I have done right to my Subject, must be left to the Judgment of the Learned Reader: However I cannot but hope that my attempting of it may be an Encouragement for some able Pen to perform it with more Success.

F I N I S.

FINIS.] om. 1727+