

www.e-rara.ch

Vol. II.

Lecture XXII. Critical examination of the Style in No.413. of the Spectator

www.e-rara.ch

Die Plattform e-rara.ch macht die in Schweizer Bibliotheken vorhandenen Drucke online verfügbar. Das Spektrum reicht von Büchern über Karten bis zu illustrierten Materialien – von den Anfängen des Buchdrucks bis ins 20. Jahrhundert.

e-rara.ch provides online access to rare books available in Swiss libraries. The holdings extend from books and maps to illustrated material – from the beginnings of printing to the 20th century.

e-rara.ch met en ligne des reproductions numériques d'imprimés conservés dans les bibliothèques de Suisse. L'éventail va des livres aux documents iconographiques en passant par les cartes – des débuts de l'imprimerie jusqu'au 20e siècle.

e-rara.ch mette a disposizione in rete le edizioni antiche conservate nelle biblioteche svizzere. La collezione comprende libri, carte geografiche e materiale illustrato che risalgono agli inizi della tipografia fino ad arrivare al XX secolo.

Nutzungsbedingungen Dieses Digitalisat kann kostenfrei heruntergeladen werden. Die Lizenzierungsart und die Nutzungsbedingungen sind individuell zu jedem Dokument in den Titelinformationen angegeben. Für weitere Informationen siehe auch [\[Link\]](#)

Terms of Use This digital copy can be downloaded free of charge. The type of licensing and the terms of use are indicated in the title information for each document individually. For further information please refer to the terms of use on [\[Link\]](#)

Conditions d'utilisation Ce document numérique peut être téléchargé gratuitement. Son statut juridique et ses conditions d'utilisation sont précisés dans sa notice détaillée. Pour de plus amples informations, voir [\[Link\]](#)

Condizioni di utilizzo Questo documento può essere scaricato gratuitamente. Il tipo di licenza e le condizioni di utilizzo sono indicate nella notizia bibliografica del singolo documento. Per ulteriori informazioni vedi anche [\[Link\]](#)

LECTURE XXII.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STYLE IN N^o. 413. OF THE SPEC- TATOR.

“ **T**HOUGH in yesterday’s Paper we considered LECT.
XXII.
“ how every thing that is great, new or beauti-
“ ful, is apt to affect the imagination with plea-
“ sure, we must own, that it is impossible for
“ us to assign the necessary cause of this pleasure;
“ because we know neither the nature of an
“ idea, nor the substance of a human soul, which
“ might help us to discover the conformity or
“ disagreeableness of the one to the other; and,
“ therefore, for want of such a light, all that
“ we can do in speculations of this kind, is, to
“ reflect on those operations of the soul that
“ are most agreeable, and to range, under
“ their proper heads, what is pleasing or displeas-
“ ing to the mind, without being able to trace
“ out the several necessary and efficient causes
“ from whence the pleasure or displeasure arises.

THIS Sentence, considered as an introductory one, must be acknowledged to be very faulty. An introductory Sentence should never contain

LECT. any thing that can in any degree fatigue or puzzle
 XXII. the reader. When an Author is entering on a new branch of his subject, informing us of what he has done, and what he purposes farther to do, we naturally expect that he should express himself in the simplest and most perspicuous manner possible. But the Sentence now before us is crowded and indistinct; containing three separate propositions, which, as I shall afterwards show, required separate Sentences to have unfolded them. Mr. Addison's chief excellency, as a writer, lay in describing and painting. There he is great; but in methodising and reasoning, he is not so eminent. As besides the general fault of prolixity and indistinctness, this Sentence contains several inaccuracies, I will be obliged to enter into a minute discussion of its structure and parts; a discussion, which to many readers will appear tedious, and which therefore they will naturally pass over; but which, to those who are studying composition, I hope may prove of some benefit.

Though in yesterday's Paper we considered — The import of *though* is, *notwithstanding that*. When it appears in the beginning of a Sentence, its relative generally is *yet*: and it is employed to warn us, after we have been informed of some truth, that we are not to infer from it some other thing which we might perhaps have expected to follow: as, "Though virtue be the only road to happiness, yet it does not permit the unlimited gratification of our desires." Now

it

it is plain, that there was no such opposition between the subject of yesterday's Paper, and what the author is now going to say, between his asserting a fact, and his not being able to assign the cause of that fact, as rendered the use of this adverbative particle *though*, either necessary or proper in the introduction. — *We considered how every thing that is great, new, or beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination with pleasure.* — The adverb *how* signifies, either the means by which, or the manner in which, something is done. But, in truth, neither one nor other of these had been considered by our Author. He had illustrated the fact alone, that they do affect the imagination with pleasure; and, with respect to the *quomodo*, or the *how*, he is so far from having considered it, that he is just now going to show that it cannot be explained, and that we must rest contented with the knowledge of the fact alone, and of its purpose or final cause. — *We must own, that it is impossible for us to assign the necessary cause* (he means, what is more commonly called the *efficient cause*) *of this pleasure, because we know neither the nature of an idea, nor the substance of a human soul.* — The substance of a human soul is certainly a very uncouth expression, and there appears no reason why he should have varied from the word *nature*, which would have equally applied to *idea* and to *soul*.

Which might help us, our Author proceeds, to discover the conformity or disagreeableness of the one to the other. — The *which*, at the beginning of

LECT. this member of the period, is surely ungramma-
 XXII. tical, as it is a relative, without any antecedent in all the Sentence. It refers, by the construction, to the *nature of an idea, or the substance of a human soul*; but this is by no means the reference which the Author intended. His meaning is, that *our knowing* the nature of an idea, and the substance of a human soul, might help us to discover the conformity or disagreeableness of the one to the other: and therefore the syntax absolutely required the word *knowledge* to have been inserted as the antecedent to *which*. I have before remarked, and the remark deserves to be repeated, that nothing is a more certain sign of careless composition than to make such relatives as *which*, not refer to any precise expression, but carry a loose and vague relation to the general strain of what had gone before. When our sentences run into this form, we may be assured there is something in the construction of them that requires alteration. The phrase of discovering *the conformity or disagreeableness of the one to the other* is likewise exceptionable; for *disagreeableness* neither forms a proper contrast to the other word, *conformity*, nor expresses what the author meant here (as far as any meaning can be gathered from his words), that is, a certain unsuitableness or want of conformity to the nature of the soul. To say the truth, this member of the sentence had much better have been omitted altogether. "The conformity or disagreeableness of an idea to the substance of a human soul," is a phrase which conveys

to the mind no distinct nor intelligent conception whatever. The author had before given a sufficient reason for his not assigning the efficient cause of those pleasures of the imagination, because we neither know the nature of our own ideas nor of the soul: and this farther discussion about the conformity or disagreeableness of the nature of the one, to the substance of the other, affords no clear nor useful illustration.

LECT.
XXII.

And therefore, the sentence goes on, "for want of such a light, all that we can do in speculations of this kind, is to reflect on those operations of the soul that are most agreeable, and to range under their proper heads what is pleasing or displeasing to the mind.—" The two expressions in the beginning of this member, *therefore*, and *for want of such a light*, evidently refer to the same thing, and are quite synonymous. One or other of them, therefore, had better have been omitted. Instead of *to range under their proper heads*, the language would have been smoother, if *their* had been left out;—"without being able to trace out the several necessary and efficient causes from whence the pleasure or displeasure arises." The expression, *from whence*, though seemingly justified by very frequent usage, is taxed by Dr. Johnson as a vicious mode of speech; seeing *whence* alone, has all the power of *from whence*, which therefore appears an unnecessary reduplication. I am inclined to think, that the whole of this last member of the sentence had better have been dropped. The

LECT. period might have closed with full propriety,
 XXII. at the words, *pleasing or displeasing to the mind*. All that follows, suggests no idea that had not been fully conveyed in the preceding part of the sentence. It is a mere expletive adjection which might be omitted, not only without injury to the meaning, but to the great relief of a sentence already labouring under the multitude of words.

HAVING now finished the analysis of this long sentence, I am inclined to be of opinion, that if, on any occasion, we can adventure to alter Mr. Addison's Style, it may be done to advantage here, by breaking down this period in the following manner: "In yesterday's paper, we
 " have shown that every thing which is great,
 " new, or beautiful, is apt to affect the ima-
 " gination with pleasure. We must own, that it
 " is impossible for us to assign the efficient cause
 " of this pleasure, because we know not the
 " nature either of an idea, or of the human
 " soul. All that we can do, therefore, in
 " speculations of this kind, is to reflect on the
 " operations of the soul, which are most agreeable,
 " and to range under proper heads, what is
 " pleasing or displeasing to the mind."—We proceed now to the examination of the following sentences.

"Final causes lie more bare and open to our
 " observation, as there are often a great variety
 " that belong to the same effect; and these, though
 " they are not altogether so satisfactory, are
 " generally more useful than the other, as they

" give us greater occasion of admiring the good- L E C T.
 " nefs and wisdom of the first contriver. XXII.

THOUGH some difference might be traced between the sense of *bare* and *open*, yet as they are here employed, they are so nearly synonymous, that one of them was sufficient. It would have been enough to have said, *Final causes lie more open to observation*.—One can scarcely help observing here, that the obviousness of final causes does not proceed, as Mr. Addison supposes, from a variety of them concurring in the same effect, which is often not the case; but from our being able to ascertain more clearly, from our own experience, the congruity of a final cause with the circumstances of our condition; whereas the constituent parts of subjects, whence efficient causes proceed, lie for most part beyond the reach of our faculties. But as this remark respects the thought more than the style, it is sufficient for us to observe, that when he says, " a great variety that belong to the same effect," the expression, strictly considered, is not altogether proper. The accessory is properly said to belong to the principal; not the principal to the accessory. Now an effect is considered as the accessory or consequence of its cause; and therefore, though we might well say a variety of effects belong to the same cause, it seems not so proper to say, that a variety of causes belong to the same effect.

" One of the final causes of our delight in
 " any thing that is great may be this: The

LECT. "Supreme Author of our being has so formed
 XXII. "the soul of man, that nothing but himself can
 "be its last, adequate, and proper happiness.
 "Because, therefore, a great part of our happiness
 "must arise from the contemplation of his being,
 "that he might give our souls a just relish of
 "such a contemplation, he has made them natur-
 "ally delight in the apprehension of what is
 "great or unlimited."

THE concurrence of two conjunctions, *because*,
therefore, forms rather a harsh and unpleasing
 beginning of the last of these Sentences; and, in
 the close, one would think, that the Author
 might have devised a happier word than *apprehen-*
sion, to be applied to what is *unlimited*. But that
 I may not be thought hypercritical, I shall make
 no farther observation on these Sentences.

"Our admiration, which is a very pleasing
 "motion of the mind, immediately rises at the
 "consideration of any object that takes up a
 "good deal of room in the fancy, and, by
 "consequence, will improve into the highest
 "pitch of astonishment and devotion, when we
 "contemplate his nature, that is neither circum-
 "scribed by time nor place, nor to be compre-
 "hended by the largest capacity of a created
 "being."

HERE, our Author's Style rises beautifully
 along with the thought. However inaccurate he
 may sometimes be when coolly philosophising,
 yet, whenever his fancy is awakened by descrip-
 tion, or his mind, as here, warmed with some

glowing sentiment, he presently becomes great, and discovers, in his language, the hand of a master. Every one must observe, with what felicity this period is constructed. The words are long and majestic. The members rise one above another, and conduct the sentence, at last, to that full and harmonious close, which leaves upon the mind such an impression, as the author intended to leave, of something uncommonly great, awful, and magnificent.

“ He has annexed a secret pleasure to the idea of any thing that is new or uncommon, that he might encourage us in the pursuit of knowledge, and engage us to search into the wonders of creation; for every new idea brings such a pleasure along with it, as rewards the pains we have taken in its acquisition, and, consequently, serves as a motive to put us upon fresh discoveries.

THE Language, in this Sentence, is clear and precise: only, we cannot but observe, in this, and the two following Sentences, which are constructed in the same manner, a strong proof of Mr. Addison's unreasonable partiality to the particle *that*, in preference to *which*--- “annexed a secret pleasure to the idea of any thing that is new or uncommon, that he might encourage us.”---Here the first *that*, stands for a relative pronoun, and the next *that*, at the distance only of four words, is a conjunction. This confusion of sounds serves to embarrass Style. Much better, sure, to have said, “the idea of any thing which

LECT. "is new or uncommon, that he might encounter age."-- The expression with which the sentence concludes--"a motive to put us upon fresh discoveries"-- is flat, and in some degree, improper. He should have said, "put us upon making fresh discoveries"-- or rather, "serves as a motive inciting us to make fresh discoveries."
 "He has made every thing that is beautiful in our own species, pleasant, that all creatures might be tempted to multiply their kind, and fill the world with inhabitants; for, 'tis very remarkable, that wherever nature is crossed in the production of a monster (the result of any unnatural mixture) the breed is incapable of propagating its likeness, and of founding a new order of creatures; so that, unless all animals were allured by the beauty of their own species, generation would be at an end, and the earth unpeopled."

HERE we must, however reluctantly, return to the employment of censure: for this is among the worst Sentences our Author ever wrote, and contains a variety of blemishes. Taken as a whole, it is extremely deficient in unity. Instead of a complete proposition, it contains a sort of chain of reasoning, the links of which are so ill put together, that it is with difficulty we can trace the connection; and, unless we take the trouble of perusing it several times, it will leave nothing on the mind but an indistinct and obscure impression.

BESIDES this general fault, respecting the meaning, it contains some great inaccuracies in

Language. First, God's having made every thing which is beautiful in our own species (that is in the human species) pleasant, is certainly no motive for all creatures, for beasts, and birds, and fishes, to multiply their kind. What the Author meant to say, though he has expressed himself in so erroneous a manner, undoubtedly was, "In all the different orders of creatures, he has made every thing, which is beautiful, in their own species, pleasant, that all creatures might be tempted to multiply their kind." The second member of the Sentence is still worse. *For, it is very remarkable, that wherever nature is crost in the production of a monster, &c.* The reason which he here gives, for the preceding assertion, intimated by the casual particle *for*, is far from being obvious. The connection of thought is not readily apparent, and would have required an intermediate step, to render it distinct. But, what does he mean, by *nature being crost in the production of a monster*? One might understand him to mean, "disappointed in its intention of producing a monster," as when we say, one is crost in his pursuits, we mean, that he is disappointed in accomplishing the end which he intended. Had he said, *crost by the production of a monster*, the sense would have been more intelligible. But the proper rectification of the expression would be to insert the adverb *as*, before the preposition *in*, after this manner—*wherever nature is crost, as in the production of a monster*,—the insertion of this particle *as*, throws so much

LECT. light on the construction of this member of the
 XXII. sentence, that I am very much inclined to believe, it had stood thus, originally, in our Author's manuscript; and that the present reading is a typographical error, which, having crept into the first edition of the Spectator, ran through all the subsequent ones.

“ In the last place, he has made every thing
 “ that is beautiful, in all other objects, pleasant,
 “ or rather has made so many objects appear
 “ beautiful, that he might render the whole
 “ creation more gay and delightful. He has given,
 “ almost, every thing about us the power of
 “ raising an agreeable idea in the imagination;
 “ so that it is impossible for us to behold his
 “ works with coldness or indifference, and to
 “ survey so many beauties without a secret satis-
 “ faction and complacency”.

THE idea, here, is so just, and the Language, so clear, flowing, and agreeable, that, to remark any diffuseness which may be attributed to these Sentences, would be justly esteemed hypercritical.

“ Things would make but a poor appearance
 “ to the eye, if we saw them only in their proper
 “ figures and motions: and what reason can we
 “ assign for their exciting in us, many of those
 “ ideas which are different from any thing that
 “ exists in the objects themselves (for such are
 “ light and colours), were it not to add super-
 “ numerary ornaments to the universe, and make
 “ it more agreeable to the imagination?”

OUR Author is now entering on a theory, which he is about to illustrate, if not with much philosophical accuracy, yet, with great beauty of fancy, and glow of expression. A strong instance of his want of accuracy, appears in the manner in which he opens the subject. For what meaning is there in things *exciting in us many of those ideas which are different from any thing that exists in the objects?* No one, sure, ever imagined, that our ideas exist in the objects. Ideas, it is agreed on all hands, can exist no where but in the mind. What Mr. Locke's philosophy teaches, and what our Author should have said, is, *exciting in us many ideas of qualities which are different from any thing that exists in the objects.* The ungraceful parenthesis which follows, *for such are light and colours*, had far better have been avoided, and incorporated with the rest of the Sentence, in this manner: — “exciting in us many ideas of “qualities, such as light and colours, which “are different from any thing that exists in the “objects.”

“We are every where entertained with pleasing “shows, and apparitions. We discover imaginary “glories in the heavens, and in the earth, and “see some of this visionary beauty poured out “upon the whole creation: but what a rough “unsightly sketch of nature should we be entertained with, did all her colouring disappear, “and the several distinctions of light and shade “vanish? In short, our souls are delightfully “lost and bewildered in a pleasing delusion; and

LECT. "we walk about like the enchanted hero of a
 XXII. "romance, who sees beautiful castles, woods,
 "and meadows; and, at the same time, hears
 "the warbling of birds, and the purling of streams;
 "but, upon the finishing of some secret spell,
 "the fantastic scene breaks up, and the discon-
 "solate knight finds himself on a barren heath,
 "or in a solitary desert."

AFTER having been obliged to point out several inaccuracies, I return with much more pleasure to the display of beauties, for which we have now full scope; for these two Sentences are such as do the highest honour to Mr. Addison's talents as a writer. Warmed with the idea he had laid hold of, his delicate sensibility to the beauty of nature, is finely displayed in the illustration of it. The Style is flowing and full, without being too diffuse. It is flowery, but not gaudy; elevated, but not ostentatious.

AMIDST this blaze of beauties, it is necessary for us to remark one or two inaccuracies. When it is said, towards the close of the first of those Sentences, "what a rough unsightly sketch of nature should we be entertained with" the preposition *with*, should have been placed at the beginning, rather than at the end of this member; and the word *entertained*, is both improperly applied here, and carelessly repeated from the former part of the Sentence. It was there employed according to its more common use, as relating to agreeable objects. "We are every where entertained with pleasing shows." Here, it

would have been more proper to have changed the phrase, and said, "with what a rough
 "unfightly sketch of nature should we be presented." — At the close of the second Sentence, where it is said, "the fantastic scene breaks up," the expression is lively, but not altogether justifiable. An assembly *breaks up*; a scene *closes* or *disappears*. L E C T. XXII.

BATING these two slight inaccuracies, the Style, here, is not only correct, but perfectly elegant. The most striking beauty of the passage arises from the happy simile which the Author employs, and the fine illustration which it gives to the thought. The *enchanted hero*, the *beautiful castles*, the *fantastic scene*, the *secret spell*, the *disconsolate knight*, are terms chosen with the utmost felicity, and strongly recal all those romantic ideas with which he intended to amuse our imagination. Few authors are more successful in their imagery than Mr. Addison; and few passages in his works, or in those of any author, are more beautiful and picturesque, than that on which we have been commenting.

"It is not improbable, that something like
 "this may be the state of the soul after its first
 "separation, in respect of the images it will
 "receive from matter; though, indeed, the
 "ideas of colours are so pleasing and beautiful
 "in the imagination, that it is possible the soul
 "will not be deprived of them, but, perhaps,
 "find them excited by some other occasional
 "cause, as they are, at present, by the different

LECT. "impressions of the subtile matter on the organ
XXII. "of sight."

As all human things, after having attained the summit, begin to decline, we must acknowledge, that, in this Sentence, there is a sensible falling off from the beauty of what went before. It is broken, and deficient in unity. Its parts are not sufficiently compacted. It contains, besides, some faulty expressions. When it is said, "some-thing like this may be the state of the soul," to the pronoun *this*, there is no determined antecedent; it refers to the general import of the preceding description, which, as I have several times remarked, always renders Style clumsy and inelegant, if not obscure — "the state of the soul after its first separation," appears to be an incomplete phrase, and *first*, seems an useless, and even an improper word. More distinct if he had said, — "state of the soul immediately on its separation from the body" — the adverb *perhaps*, is redundant, after having just before said, *it is possible*.

"I have here supposed, that my reader is acquainted with that great modern discovery, which is, at present, universally acknowledged by all the enquirers into natural philosophy; namely, that light and colours, as apprehended by the imagination, are only ideas in the mind, and not qualities that have any existence in matter. As this is a truth which has been proved incontestibly by many modern philosophers,

“ and is, indeed, one of the finest speculations
 “ in that science, if the English Reader would
 “ see the notion explained at large, he may
 “ find it in the eighth chapter of the second book
 “ of Mr. Locke’s Essay on the Human Under-
 “ standing.”

LECT.

XXII.

IN these two concluding Sentences, the Author, hastening to finish, appears to write rather carelessly. In the first of them, a manifest tautology occurs, when he speaks of what is “ universally acknowledged by all enquirers.” In the second, when he calls “ a truth which has been incon-
 “ testibly proved;” first, a *speculation*, and afterwards, a *notion*, the Language surely is not very accurate. When he adds, “ one of the finest
 “ speculations in that science,” it does not, at first, appear what science he means. One would imagine, he meant to refer to *modern philosophers*; for *natural philosophy* (to which, doubtless, he refers) stands at much too great a distance to be the proper or obvious antecedent to the pronoun *that*. The circumstance towards the close, “ if
 “ the English Reader would see the notion
 “ explained at large, he may find it,” is properly taken notice of by the Author of the Elements of Criticism, as wrong arranged, and is rectified thus: “ the English Reader, if he
 “ would see the notion explained at large, may
 “ find it, &c.”

IN concluding the Examination of this Paper, we may observe, that, though not a very long

LECT. one, it exhibits a striking view both of the
 XXII. beauties, and the defects, of Mr. Addison's
 Style. It contains some of the best, and some of
 the worst Sentences, that are to be found in his
 works. But upon the whole, it is an agreeable
 and elegant Essay.