

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Descartes Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Wolfram von Eschenbach Dickens Schopenhauer Rilke George
Bronner Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Bebel Proust
Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
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Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
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Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
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**An Essay towards Fixing the True
Standards of Wit, Humour,
Railery, Satire, and Ridicule (1744)**

Corbyn Morris

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: Corbyn Morris

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8495-0480-9

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INTRODUCTION

The Essay here reproduced was first advertised in the London Daily Advertiser as "this day was published" on Thursday, 17 May 1744 (The same advertisement, except for the change of price from one shilling to two, appeared in this paper intermittently until 14 June). Although on the title-page the authorship is given as "By the Author of a Letter from a By-stander," there was no intention of anonymity, since the Dedication is boldly signed "Corbyn Morris, Inner Temple, Feb. 1, 1743 [44]."

Not much is known of the early life of Corbyn Morris. Born 14 August 1710, he was the eldest son of Edmund Morris of Bishop's Castle, Salop. (Alumni Cantabrigienses). On 17 September 1727 he was admitted (pensioner) at Queen's College, Cambridge, as an exhibitioner from the famous Charterhouse School. Exactly when he left the university, or whether he took a degree, is not certain.

Morris first achieved some prominence, though anonymously, with A Letter from a By-stander to a Member of Parliament; wherein is examined what necessity there is for the maintenance of a large regular land-force in this island. This pamphlet, dated at the end, 26 February 1741/42, is a wholehearted eulogy of the Walpole administration and is filled with statistics and arguments for the Mercantilist theories of the day. At the time there was some suspicion that the work had been written either by Walpole himself or by his direction. When the Letter from a By-stander was answered by the -2- historian Thomas Carte, an angry pamphlet controversy ensued, with Morris writing under the pseudonym of "A Gentleman of Cambridge." Throughout, Morris showed himself a violent Whig, bitter in his attacks on Charles II and the non-jurors; and it was undoubtedly this fanatical party loyalty which laid the foundation for his later government career.

The principal facts of Morris's later life may be briefly summarized. On 17 June 1743 he was admitted at the Inner Temple. Throughout the

Pelham and Newcastle administrations he was employed by the government, as he once put it, "in conciliating opponents." From 1751 to 1763 he acted as Secretary of the Customs and Salt Duty in Scotland, in which post he was acknowledged to have shown decided ability as an administrator. From 1763 to 1778 he was one of the commissioners of customs. He died at Wimbledon 22 December 1779 (Musgrave's Obituary), described in the Gentleman's Magazine as a "gentleman well known in the literary world, and universally esteemed for his unwearied services and attachment to government."

Throughout his long years of public service he wrote numerous pamphlets, largely on economic and political questions. Merely the titles of a few may be sufficient to indicate the nature of his interests. An Essay towards Deciding the Question whether Britain be Permitted by Right Policy to Insure the Ships of Her Enemies (1747); Observations on the Past Growth and Present State of the City of London (containing a complete table of christenings and burials 1601-1750) (1751); A Letter Balancing the Causes of the Present Scarcity of Our Silver Coin (1757).

-3- It would be a mistake, however, to consider Morris merely as a statistical economist and Whig party hack. A gentleman of taste and wit, the friend of Hume, Boswell, and other discerning men of the day, he was elected F.R.S. in 1757, and appears to have been much respected. In later life Morris had a country place at Chiltern Vale, Herts., where he took an active delight in country sports. One of his late pamphlets, not listed in the D.N.B. account of him, entertainingly illustrates one of his hobbies. The Bird-fancier's Recreation and Delight, with the newest and very best instructions for catching, taking, feeding, rearing, &c all the various sorts of SONG BIRDS... containing curious remarks on the nature, sex, management, and diseases of ENGLISH SONG BIRDS, with practical instructions for distinguishing the cock and hen, for taking, choosing, breeding, keeping, and teaching them to sing, for discovering and caring their diseases, and of learning them to sing to the greatest perfection.

Although there is little surviving evidence of Morris's purely literary

interests, a set of verses combining his economic and artistic views appeared in a late edition of The New Foundling Hospital for Wit (new edition, 1784, VI, 95). Occasioned by seeing Bowood in Wiltshire, the home of the Earl of Shelburne, the lines are entitled: "On Reading Dr. Goldsmith's Poem, the Deserted Village."

This was the man who at the age of thirty-three brought out AnEssay-towardsFixingtheTrueStandardsofWit, Humour, Raillery, Satire, andRidicule. That it was ever widely read we have no evidence, but at least a number of men of wit and judgment found it interesting. -4- Horace Walpole included it in a packet of "the only new books at all worth reading" sent to Horace Mann, but the fulsome dedication to the elder Walpole undoubtedly had something to do with this recommendation. More disinterested approval is shown in a letter printed in the DailyAdvertiser for 31 May 1744. Better than any modern critique the letter illustrates the contemporary reaction to the Essay.

Christ Church College, Oxford,

SIR:

I have examin'd the Essay you have sent me for fixing the true Standards of Wit, Humour, &c. and cannot perceive upon what pretence the Definitions, as you tell me, are censured for Obscurity, even by Gentlemen of Abilities, and such as in other Parts of the Work very frankly allow it's Merit: the Definition of Wit, which presents itself at first, you say is, particularly objected to, as dark and involv'd; in answer to which I beg Leave to give you my plain Sentiments upon it, and which I apprehend should naturally occur to every Reader: In treating upon Wit, the Author seems constantly to carry in his View a Distinction between This and Vivacity: there is a Lustre or Brilliancy which often results from wild unprovok'd Sallies of Fancy; but such unexpected Objects, which serve not to elucidate each other, discover only a Flow of Spirits, or rambling Vivacity; whereas, says

he, Wit is the Lustre which results from the quick Elucidation of one Subject, by the just and unexpected Arrangement of it with another Subject.--To constitute Wit, there must not only arise a Lustre from the quick Arrangement together of two Subjects, but the new Subject must be naturally introduced, and also serve to elucidate the original one: the Word Elucidation, though it be not new, is elegant, and very happily applied in this Definition; yet I have seen some old Gentlemen here stumble at it, and have found it difficult to persuade them to advance farther:--I have also heard Objections made to the Words Lustre and Brilliancy of Ideas, though they are Terms which have been used by the Greeks and Romans, and by elegant Writers of all Ages and Nations; and the Effect which they express, is perfectly conceiv'd and felt by every Person of true Genius and Imagination.

The Distinctions between Wit and Humour, and the Reasons why Humour is more pleasurably felt than Wit, are new and excellent: as is the Definition of an Humourist, and the happy Analysis of the Characters of Falstaff, Sir Roger de Coverly, and Don Quixote; But, as you say, the Merit of these Parts is universally allowed; as well as the Novelty, -5-and liberal Freedom of the [word apparently omitted]; which have such Charms in my Eye, as I had long ceased to expect in a Modern Writer.

25 May, 1744

I am, &c

J---- W----

[not identified]

If the "Gentlemen of Abilities" of the day found some of Morris's definitions obscure, modern readers will find them more precise than

those of most of his predecessors. All who had gone before--Cowley, Barrow, Dryden, Locke, Addison, and Congreve (he does not mention Hobbes)--Morris felt had bungled the job. And although he apologizes for attempting what the great writers of the past had failed to do, he has no hesitation in setting forth exactly what he believes to be the proper distinctions in the meanings of such terms as wit, humour, judgment, invention, raillery, and ridicule. The mathematician and statistician in Morris made him strive for precise accuracy. It was all very clear to him, and by the use of numerous anecdotes and examples he hoped to make the distinctions obvious to the general reader.

The Essay shows what a man of some evident taste and perspicacity, with an analytical mind, can do in defining the subtle semantic distinctions in literary terms. Trying to fix immutably what is certain always to be shifting, Morris is noteworthy not only because of the nature of his attempt, but because he is relatively so successful. As Professor Edward Hooker has pointed out in an Introduction to an earlier ARS issue (Series I, No. 2), his is "probably the best and clearest treatment of the subject in the first half of the eighteenth century." It may be regretted that political and economic concerns occupied so much of his later life, leaving him no time for further literary essays.

-6-In the present facsimile edition, for reasons of space, only the Introduction and the main body of the Essay are reproduced. Although Morris once remarked to David Hume that he wrote all his books "for the sake of the Dedications" (LettersofDavidHume ed. Greig, I, 380), modern readers need not regret too much the omission of the fulsome 32 page dedication to Walpole (The Earl of Orford). Morris insists at the beginning that the book was inspired by a fervent desire of "attempting a Composition, independent of Politics, which might furnish an occasional Amusement" to his patron. The praise which follows, in which Walpole is said to lead "the Empire of Letters," is so excessive as to produce only smiles in twentieth century readers. Walpole is praised for not curbing the press while necessarily curbing the theatre, his aid to commerce, indeed almost every act of his administration, is lauded to the skies. The Church of England, in which "the Exercise of Reason in the solemn Worship of God, is the sacred

Right, and indispensable Duty, of Man," receives its share of eulogy. In every connection the Tories are violently attacked.

The Dedication ends in a peroration of praise for Walpole's public achievements which "shall adorn the History of Britain," and for his "PrivateVirtues and all the softerFeatures" of his mind. His home of retirement is referred to in the lines of Milton:

"Great Palace now of Light!
Hither, as to their Fountain, other Stars
Repairing, in their golden Urns, draw Light;
And here [sic] the Morning Planet gilds her Horns."
[P.L. 7. 363-66]

"Thus splendid, and superior, your Lordship now flourishes in honourable Ease, exerting universal Benevolence...." But in dedications, as in -7-lapidary inscriptions, as Dr. Johnson might have agreed, a writer need not be upon oath.

At the end of the Essay Morris reprinted two essays from The Spectator, Nos. 35 and 62, and William Congreve's "An Essay concerning Humour in Comedy. To Mr. Dennis" (Congreve's Works, ed. Summers, III, 161-68). Since these are readily available, they have not been included in this edition.

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James L. Clifford

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INTRODUCTION.

AN Attempt to *describe* the precise *Limits* of Wit, Humour, Railery, Satire and Ridicule, I am sensible, is no easy or slight Undertaking. To give a *Definition* of Wit, has been declared by Writers of the greatest Renown, to exceed their Reach and Power; and Gentlemen of no less Abilities, and Fame, than *Cowley, Barrow, Dryden, Locke, Congreve,* and *Addison,* have tryed their Force upon this Subject, and have all left it free, and unconquered. This, I perceive, will be an Argument with some, for condemning an *Essay* upon this Topic by a young Author, as rash and presumptuous. But, though I desire to pay all proper Respect to these eminent Writers, if a tame Deference to great Names shall become fashionable, and the Imputation of Vanity be laid upon those who examine their Works, all Advancement in Knowledge will be absolutely stopp'd; and *Literary Merit* will be soon placed, in an *humble Stupidity,* and *solemn Faith* in the Wisdom of our Ancestors.

ii

Whereas, if I rightly apprehend, *an Ambition to excell* is the Principle which should animate a Writer, directed by a *Love of Truth,* and a *free Spirit of Candour* and *Inquiry.* This is the *Flame* which should warm the rising Members of every Science, not a poor Submission to those who have preceded. For, however it may be with a *Religious Devotion,* a *Literary One* is certainly the Child of *Ignorance.*

However, I must acknowledge, that where I have differed from the great Authors before mentioned, it has been with a Diffidence, and after the most serious and particular Examination of what they have delivered. It is from hence, that I have thought it my Duty, to exhibit with the following *Essay,* their several Performances upon the same Subject, that every Variation of mine from their Suffrage, and the Reasons upon which I have grounded it, may clearly appear.

The following *Ode* upon Wit is written by Mr. *Cowley.*

iii

O D E
O F
W I T.

I.

*Tell me, oh tell!, what kind of Thing is Wit,
Thou who Master art of it;
For the first Matter loves Variety less;
Less Women love't, either in Love or Dress.
A thousand diff'rent Shapes it bears,
Comely in thousand Shapes appears;
Yonder we saw it plain, and here 'tis now,
Like Spirits in a Place, we know not how.*

II.

*London, that vents of false Ware so much Store,
In no Ware deceives us more;
For Men, led by the Colour, and the Shape,
Like Zeuxis' Bird, fly to the painted Grape.
Some things do through our Judgment pass,
As through a Multiplying Glass:
And sometimes, if the Object be too far,
We take a falling Meteor for a Star.*
iv

III.

*Hence 'tis a Wit, that greatest Word of Fame,
Grows such a common Name;
And Wits, by our Creation, they become;
Just so as Tit'lar Bishops made at Rome.
'Tis not a Tale, 'tis not a Jest,
Admir'd with Laughter at a Feast,
Nor florid Talk which can that Title gain;
The Proofs of Wit for ever must remain.*

IV.

'Tis not to force some Lifeless Verses meet,

*With their five gouty Feet.
All ev'ry where, like Man's, must be the Soul,
And Reason the inferior Pow'rs controul.
Such were the Numbers which could call
The Stones into the Theban Wall.
Such Miracles are ceas'd, and now we see
No Towns or Houses rais'd by Poetry.*

V.

*Yet 'tis not to adorn, and gild each Part,
That shews more Cost than Art.
Jewels at Nose, and Lips, but ill appear;
Rather than all Things Wit, let none be there.
Several Lights will not be seen,
If there be nothing else between.
Men doubt; because they stand so thick i' th' Sky.
If those be Stars which paint the Galaxy.*

v

VI.

*'Tis not when two like Words make up one Noise;
Jests for Dutch Men, and English Boys.
In which, who finds out Wit, the same may see
In An'grams and Acrostiques Poetry.
Much less can that have any Place,
At which a Virgin hides her Face;
Such Dross the Fire must purge away; 'Tis just
The Author blush, there where the Reader must.*

VII.

*'Tis not such Lines as almost crack the Stage,
When Bajazet begins to rage;
Not a tall Metaphor in th' bombast Way,
Nor the dry Chips of short-lung'd Seneca.
Nor upon all Things to obtrude,
And force some odd Similitude.
What is it then, which like the Pow'r Divine,
We only can by Negatives define?*

VIII.

*In a true Piece of Wit, all Things must be,
Yet all Things there agree;
As in the Ark, join 'd without Force or Strife,
All Creatures dwell; all Creatures that had Life.
Or as the primitive Forms of all,
(If we compare great Things with small)
viWhich without Discord or Confusion lie,
In the strange Mirror of the Deity.*

IX.

*But Love, that moulds one Man up out of two,
Makes me forget, and injure you.
I took You for Myself, sure when I thought
That You in any thing were to be taught.
Correct my Error with thy Pen,
And if any ask me then,
What thing right Wit, and Height of Genius is,
I'll only shew your Lines, and say, 'Tis this.*

The *Spirit* and *Wit* of this *Ode* are excellent; and yet it is evident, through the whole, that Mr. *Cowley* had no clear *Idea* of *Wit*, though at the same time it *shines* in most of these *Lines*: There is little *Merit* in saying what *Wit* is *not*, which is the chief *Part* of this *Ode*. Towards the *End*, he indeed attempts to describe what *it is*, but is quite vague and perplex'd in his *Description*; and at last, instead of collecting his scatter'd *Rays* into a *Focus*, and exhibiting succinctly the clear *Essence* and *Power* of *Wit*, he drops the whole with a trite *Compliment*.

The learned *Dr. Barrow*, in his *Sermon against foolish Talking and Jestings*, gives the following profuse *Description* of *Wit*.

vii

But first it may be demanded, What the Thing we speak of is? Or what the Facetiousness (or Wit as he calls it before) doth import? To which Questions I might reply, as Democritus did to him that asked the Definition of a Man, 'Tis that we all see and know. Any one better apprehends what it is by Acquaintance, than I can inform him by Description. It is indeed a Thing so versatile and multiform, appearing in so many Shapes, so many Postures, so many Garbs, so variously apprehended by several Eyes and

Judgments, that it seemeth no less hard to settle a clear and certain Notion thereof, than to make a Portrait of Proteus, or to define the Figure of the fleeting Air. Sometimes it lieth in pat Allusion to a known Story, or in seasonable Application of a trivial Saying, or in forging an apposite Tale: Sometimes it playeth in Words and Phrases, taking Advantage from the Ambiguity of their Sense, or the Affinity of their Sound: Sometimes it is wrapp'd in a Dress of humorous Expression: Sometimes it lurketh under an odd Similitude: Sometimes it is lodged in a sly Question, in a smart Answer, in a quirkish Reason, in a shrewd Intimation, in cunningly diverting, or cleverly retorting an Objection: viii Sometimes it is couched in a bold Scheme of Speech, in a tart Irony, in a lusty Hyperbole, in a startling Metaphor, in a plausible Reconciling of Contradictions, or in acute Nonsense; Sometimes a scenical Representation of Persons or Things, a counterfeit Speech, a mimical Look or Gesture passeth for it. Sometimes an affected Simplicity, sometimes a presumptuous Bluntness giveth it Being. Sometimes it riseth from a lucky Hitting upon what is Strange; sometimes from a crafty wresting obvious Matter to the Purpose. Often it' consisteth in one knows not what, and springeth up one can hardly tell how. Its ways are unaccountable, and inexplicable, being answerable to the numberless Rovings of Fancy, and Windings of Language. It is, in short, a Manner of Speaking out of the simple and plain Way (such as Reason teacheth, and proveth Things by) which by a pretty, surprizing Uncouthness in Conceit or Expression, doth affect and amuse the Fancy, stirring in it some Wonder, and breeding some Delight thereto. It raiseth Admiration, as signifying a nimble Sagacity of Apprehension, a special Felicity of Invention, a Vivacity of Spirit, and Reach of Wit, more than vulgar; it seeming to argue a rare Quickness of Parts, that one can fetch in remote Conceits applicable; a notable Skill that he can dextrously accommodate them to the Purpose before him; together with a lively Briskness of Humour, not apt to damp those Sportful Flashes of Imagination. (Whence in Aristotle such Persons are termed epidexioi, dexterous Men, and eutropoi, Men of facile or versatile Manners, who can easily turn themselves to all Things, or turn all Things to themselves.) It also procureth Delight, by gratifying Curiosity with its Rareness, or Semblance of Difficulty. (As Monsters, not for their Beauty, but their Rarity; as juggling Tricks, not for their Use, but their Abstruseness, are beheld with Pleasure;) by diverting the Mind from its Road of serious Thoughts, by instilling Gaiety, and Airiness of Spirit; by provoking to such Disposition of Spirit in Way of Emulation, or Complaisance; and by seasoning Matters otherwise distasteful or insipid, with an unusual and thence grateful Tange.

This Description, it is easy to perceive, must have cost the Author of it a great deal of Labour. It is a very full Specimen of that Talent of entirely *exhausting* a Subject, for which Dr. *Barrow* was remarkable; and if the *Point* was, to exhibit all the various Forms and Appearances, not of Wit only, but of *Raillery, Satire, Sarcasms*, and of every Kind of *Poignancy* and *Pleasantry* of Sentiment, and Expression, he seems to have perfectly succeeded; there being perhaps no Variety, in all the Extent of these Subjects, which he has not presented to View in this Description.--But he does not pretend to give any *Definition* of Wit, intimating rather that it is quite impossible to be given: And indeed from his Description of it, as a *Proteus*, appearing in numberless various Colours, and Forms; and from his mistaking, and presenting for Wit, other different Mixtures and Substances, it is evident that his Idea of it was quite confused and uncertain: It is true, he has discovered a vast Scope of Fertility of Genius, and an uncommon Power of collecting together a Multitude of Objects upon any Occasion, but he has here absolutely mistaken his work; for instead of exhibiting the Properties of Wit in a clearer Light, and confuting the *false Claims* which are made to it, he has made it his whole Business to perplex it the more, by introducing, from all Corners, a monstrous Troop of new unexpected *Pretenders*.

b2xi

Dryden, in the Preface to his Opera, entitled, *The State of Innocence, or Fall of Man*, gives the following *Decree* upon Wit.

The Definition of Wit, (which has been so often attempted, and ever unsuccessfully by many Poets) is only this: That it is a Propriety of Thoughts and Words; or in other Terms, Thoughts and Words elegantly adapted to the Subject.

If Mr. *Dryden* imagined, that he had succeeded *himself* in this *Definition*, he was extremely mistaken; for nothing can be more distant from the Properties of Wit, than those he describes. He discovers no Idea of the *Surprize*, and *Brilliancy* of Wit, or of the sudden *Light* thrown upon a Subject. Instead of once pointing at these, he only describes the Properties of clear *Reasoning*, which are a *Propriety of Thoughts and Words*;--Whereas Wit, in its sudden *Flashes*, makes no Pretension to *Reasoning*; but is perceived in the pleasant *Surprize*

which it starts, and in the *Light* darted upon a Subject, which instantly vanishes again, without abiding a strict Examination.

The other Definition he gives, which is, *Thoughts and Words elegantly adapted to the Subject*, is very different from the former, but equally unhappy.

xii

For *Propriety*, in *Thoughts and Words*, consists in exhibiting *clear, pertinent Ideas*, in *precise and perspicuous Words*.

Whereas *Elegance* consists in the *compt, well pruned and succinct Turn* of a Subject.

The Object of the *First*, is to be *clear, and perspicuous*; whence it often appears in pursuit of these, not *compt* or *succinct*: Whereas the *Essence* of *Elegance* is to be *compt* and *succinct*, for the Sake of which *Ornaments* it often neglect *Perspicuity*, and *Clearness*.--In short, a *Propriety* of *Thoughts and Words*, may subsist without any *Elegance*; as an *Elegance* of *Thoughts and Words* may appear without a perfect *Propriety*.

The last *Definition*, as it is thus very different from the former is also equally unhappy: For *Elegance* is no *essential* Property of *Wit*. *Pure Wit* resulting solely from the *quick Elucidation* of one Subject, by the sudden *Arrangement*, and *Comparison* of it, with another Subject.-If the two Objects *arranged* together are *elegant*, and *polite*, there will then be superadded to the *Wit*, an *Elegance* and *Politeness* of *Sentiment*, which will render the *Wit* more amiable. But if the Objects are *vulgar, obscene*, or *deformed*, provided the *first* be *elucidated*, in a lively Manner, by, the sudden *Arrangement* of it with the *second*, there will be equally *Wit*; though, the *xiii* *Indelicacy* of *Sentiment* attending it, will render such *Wit* shocking and abominable.

It is with the highest Respect for the great Mr. *Locke*, that I deliver his *Sentiments* upon this Subject.

And hence, perhaps, may be given some Reason of that common Observation, that Men who have a great deal of Wit, and prompt Memories, have not always the clearest Judgment or deepest Reason: For Wit lying most in the Assemblage of Ideas, and putting those together with Quickness and Variety, wherein can be

found any *Assemblance* or *Congruity*, thereby to make up pleasant Pictures, and agreeable Visions in the *Fancy*. Judgment, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side; in separating carefully one from another, Ideas, wherein can be found the least Difference, thereby to avoid being missed by *Similitude*, and by *Affinity* to take one thing for another. This is a Way of proceeding quite contrary to *Metaphor* and *Allusion*; wherein for the most Part lies that *Entertainment* and *Pleasantry* of Wit, which strikes so lively on the *Fancy*, and therefore is acceptable to all People, because its Beauty appears at first Sight, and there is required no Labour of Thoughts *xiv* to examine what Truth, or Reason, there is in it. The Mind, without looking any further, rests satisfied with the Agreeableness of the Picture, and the Gaiety of the *Fancy*. And it is a kind of an *Affront* to go about to examine it by the severe Rules of Truth, and good Reason, whereby it appears, that it conflicts in something that is not perfectly conformable to them.

It is to be observed that Mr. *Locke* has here only occasionally, and passantly, delivered his Sentiments upon this Subject; but yet he has very happily explained the chief Properties of Wit. It was his Remark *First*, that it lies for the most Part in assembling together with *Quickness* and *Variety* Objects, which possess an *Affinity*, or *Congruity*, with each other; which was the *first* just Information obtained by the literary World, upon this Subject.

As to what he adds, That the Intention, and Effects, of this *Assemblage* of similar Objects, is to make up pleasant Pictures, and agreeable Visions in the *Fancy*, it is, as I humbly apprehend, not quite perfect: For the Business of this *Assemblage* is not merely to raise pleasant Pictures in the *Fancy*, but also to enlighten thereby the original Subject.--This is evident; because in such *xv* *Assemblages*, the only Foundation upon which the new Subject is suddenly introduced, is the *Affinity*, and consequently the *Illustration*, it bears to the *first* Subject.--The Introduction of pleasant Pictures and Visions, which present not a new *Illustration*, and *Light*, to the original Subjects, being rather wild Sallies of *Vivacity*, than well-aimed, apposite Strokes of Wit.

It is Mr. *Locke's* Conclusion, at last, That Wit consists in something that is not perfectly conformable to Truth, and good Reason.--This is a Problem of some Curiosity; and I apprehend Mr. *Locke's* Determination upon it to be right:--For the Direction of Wit is absolutely different from the Direction of Truth and Good Reason; It being the Aim of Wit to strike the *Imagination*; of Truth and Good Reason, to convince the *Judgment*: From thence they can never be perfectly coincident.

It is however true, that there may be Instances of Wit, wherein the Agreement between the two Objects shall be absolutely just, and perceived to be such at the first Glance. Such Instances of Wit, will be then also *Self-evident* Truths. They will both agree in their obvious, and quick *Perspicuity*; but will be still different in this, that the Effort of the *One* is to strike the *xvi* *Fancy*, whereas the *Other* is wholly exerted in gratifying the *Judgment*.

The Sentiments of Mr. *Addison* upon Wit, are professedly delivered in the *Spectator* N^o. 62. annexed to the following *Essay*. He has there justly commended Mr. *Locke's* Description of Wit; but what he adds, by Way of Explanation to it, that the *Assemblage* of Ideas must be such as shall give *Delight*, and *Surprize*, is not true, in regard to the Former, *Delight* being no essential Property of Wit; for if the original Subject be unpleasant, or deformed, the sudden unexpected Arrangement of a similar Object with it, may give us *Surprize*, and be indisputably Wit, and yet be far from creating any *Delight*.

This Gentleman has also given the following Example, in order to illustrate the Necessity there is, that *Surprize* should be always an Attendant upon Wit. "When a Poet tells us, the Bosom of his Mistress is as white as Snow, there is no Wit in the Comparison; but when he adds, with a Sigh, that it is as cold too, it then grows to Wit." --To compare a Girl's Bosom to Snow for its Whiteness I apprehend to be Wit, notwithstanding the Authority of so great a Writer to the contrary. For there is a *Lustre* resulting from the natural and *cxviii* splendid Agreement between these Objects, which will always produce Wit; such, as cannot be destroyed, though it will quickly be rendered *trite*, by frequent Repetition.

This Problem, How far *Surprize* is, or is not, necessary to Wit, I humbly apprehend, may be thus solved.--In Subjects which have a natural and splendid Agreement, there will always be Wit upon their Ar-