

“Pleasures of the Imagination” by Joseph Addison

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Joseph Addison, (detail) portrait by Michael Dahl, Library of Congress

About the author...

Joseph Addison (1672-1719), studied classics at Queen’s College, Oxford and subsequently became a Fellow of Magdalen College. During his life, he held several governmental posts but is perhaps best known for his founding of the daily *The Spectator* with Richard Steele. Addison’s *Cato*, a play tracing the Roman statesman and stoic Cato’s opposition to Cæsar, was immensely popular; in fact, George Washington had the play performed for his troops at Valley Forge. Addison’s optimistic writing style constructed with gracious mannerisms is a major reason for his abiding influence in English literature. Samuel Johnson praised his work, “Whoever wishes to attain an

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English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the study of Addison.”¹

About the work...

In his and Richard Steele’s *The Spectator*,² Addison developed an essay style which greatly influenced the writings in eighteenth-century periodicals. In the short well-known passages in our readings on the pleasures of the imagination, Addison clearly notes some first suggestions towards a theory of aesthetics. His contribution represents a shift in emphasis from the creations of the artist to the pleasures of the connoisseur; for this reason, Addison’s essays had great appeal to the rising middle class seeking to improve their refinement and taste. Addison notes that of the pleasures of sense, the understanding and the imagination, only the latter pleasures originate from sight. Whether or not imaginative pleasures derive from the appearance or the ideas of visible objects, the pleasure, he thinks, is due to their expansiveness, novelty, or beauty. He argues that the purpose of such pleasure is attributable to the Supreme Being providing light and color to behold His works. Accordingly, Addison believes beauty in nature surpasses that of art, even though different aspects of beauty in each form enhance the beauty of the other.

From the reading...

“[A] Man in a Dungeon is capable of entertaining himself with Scenes and Landskips more beautiful than any that can be found in the whole Compass of Nature. ”

Ideas of Interest from The Spectator

1. How does Addison distinguish among the pleasures of the imagination, the pleasures of the senses, and the pleasures of the understanding?

1. Quoted in George Birkbeck Hill, ed. *Boswell’s Life of Johnson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887) Vol.1, 255.

2. Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd. 1891. Letters No. 411 Saturday, June 21, 1712; No. 412 Monday, June 23, 1712; No. 413 Tuesday, June 24, 1712; and No. 414 Wednesday, June 25, 1712.

2. Clarify Addison’s distinction among pleasures of the imagination, of sense, and of the understanding. Which of these is the most refined and which the least refined?
3. Describe the salutary effects mentioned by Addison of the imaginative pleasures ultimately arising from the perception of light and color.
4. What qualities of objects in the world does Addison discuss which occasion the pleasures of the imagination?
5. What two main kinds of beauty does Addison describe and what is their origins?
6. What does he think is a final cause of æsthetic pleasure? Why does he think the Supreme Being created mankind with the capacity for experiencing pleasures of the imagination?
7. How does Addison relate the beauty of art to the beauty of nature? Why does he think the artistic beauty inferior to that of nature even though natural beauty embodies æsthetic principles?

The Reading Selection from The Spectator

No. 411 [Pleasures of the Imagination]

*Avia Pieridum peragro loca, nullius ante
Trita solo; juvat integros accedere fonteis;
Atque haurire:—³*

3.
I travel unpathed haunts of the Pierides,
Trodden by step of none before. I joy
To come on undefiled fountains there,
To drain them deep.

—Lucretius, *De reum Natura*, I, 926-8.

—Lucr.

Our Sight is the most perfect and most delightful of all our Senses. It fills the Mind with the largest Variety of Ideas, converses with its Objects at the greatest Distance, and continues the longest in Action without being tired or satiated with its proper Enjoyments. The Sense of Feeling can indeed give us a Notion of Extension, Shape, and all other Ideas that enter at the Eye, except Colours; but at the same time it is very much streightned and confined in its Operations, to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular Objects. Our Sight seems designed to supply all these Defects, and may be considered as a more delicate and diffusive kind of Touch, that spreads it self over an infinite Multitude of Bodies, comprehends the largest Figures, and brings into our reach some of the most remote Parts of the Universe.

It is this Sense which furnishes the Imagination with its Ideas; so that by the Pleasures of the Imagination or Fancy (which I shall use promiscuously) I here mean such as arise from visible Objects, either when we have them actually in our View, or when we call up their Ideas in our Minds by Paintings, Statues, Descriptions, or any the like Occasion. We cannot indeed have a single Image in the Fancy that did not make its first Entrance through the Sight; but we have the Power of retaining, altering and compounding those Images, which we have once received, into all the varieties of Picture and Vision that are most agreeable to the Imagination; for by this Faculty a Man in a Dungeon is capable of entertaining himself with Scenes and Landskips more beautiful than any that can be found in the whole Compass of Nature.

From the reading...

“There are, indeed, but very few who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a Relish of any Pleasures that are not Criminal; every Diversion they take is at the Expence of some one Virtue or another, and their very first Step out of Business is into Vice or Folly”

[B]y the Pleasures of the Imagination, I mean only such Pleasures as arise originally from Sight, and that I divide these Pleasures into two Kinds: My Design being first of all to Discourse of those Primary Pleasures of the Imagination, which entirely proceed from such Objects as are before our Eye; and in the next place to speak of those Secondary Pleasures of the Imagination which flow from the Ideas of visible Objects, when the Objects are not actually before the Eye, but are called up into our Memories, or formed into agreeable Visions of Things that are either Absent or Fictitious.

The Pleasures of the Imagination, taken in the full Extent, are not so gross as those of Sense, nor so refined as those of the Understanding. The last are, indeed, more preferable, because they are founded on some new Knowledge or Improvement in the Mind of Man; yet it must be confest, that those of the

Imagination are as great and as transporting as the other. A beautiful Prospect delights the Soul, as much as a Demonstration; and a Description in Homer has charmed more Readers than a Chapter in Aristotle. Besides, the Pleasures of the Imagination have this Advantage, above those of the Understanding, that they are more obvious, and more easie to be acquired. It is but opening the Eye, and the Scene enters. The Colours paint themselves on the Fancy, with very little Attention of Thought or Application of Mind in the Beholder. We are struck, we know not how, with the Symmetry of any thing we see, and immediately assent to the Beauty of an Object, without enquiring into the particular Causes and Occasions of it...

There are, indeed, but very few who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a Relish of any Pleasures that are not Criminal; every Diversion they take is at the Expence of some one Virtue or another, and their very first Step out of Business is into Vice or Folly. A Man should endeavour, therefore, to make the Sphere of his innocent Pleasures as wide as possible, that he may retire into them with Safety, and find in them such a Satisfaction as a wise Man would not blush to take. Of this Nature are those of the Imagination, which do not require such a Bent of Thought as is necessary to our more serious Employments, nor, at the same time, suffer the Mind to sink into that Negligence and Remissness, which are apt to accompany our more sensual Delights, but, like a gentle Exercise to the Faculties, awaken them from Sloth and Idleness, without putting them upon any Labour or Difficulty.

We might here add, that the Pleasures of the Fancy are more conducive to Health, than those of the Understanding, which are worked out by Dint of Thinking, and attended with too violent a Labour of the Brain. Delightful Scenes, whether in Nature, Painting, or Poetry, have a kindly Influence on the Body, as well as the Mind, and not only serve to clear and brighten the Imagination, but are able to disperse Grief and Melancholy, and to set the Animal Spirits in pleasing and agreeable Motions. For this Reason Sir Francis Bacon, in his Essay upon Health, has not thought it improper to prescribe to his Reader a Poem or a Prospect, where he particularly dissuades him from knotty and subtle Disquisitions, and advises him to pursue Studies that fill the Mind with splendid and illustrious Objects, as Histories, Fables, and Contemplations of Nature...

No. 412 [Sources of Pleasures]

—*Divisum sic breve fiet Opus.*⁴

4. Divided the work will thus become brief.

—*Martialis Epigrams*, IV, 82: 8.

—Mart.

I shall first consider those Pleasures of the Imagination, which arise from the actual View and Survey of outward Objects: And these, I think, all proceed from the Sight of what is Great, Uncommon, or Beautiful. There may, indeed, be something so terrible or offensive, that the Horror or Loathsomeness of an Object may over-bear the Pleasure which results from its Greatness, Novelty, or Beauty; but still there will be such a Mixture of Delight in the very Disgust it gives us, as any of these three Qualifications are most conspicuous and prevailing.

From the reading...

“Delightful Scenes, whether in Nature, Painting, or Poetry, have a kindly Influence . . . and not only serve to clear and brighten the Imagination, but are able to disperse Grief and Melancholy”

By Greatness, I do not only mean the Bulk of any single Object, but the Largeness of a whole View, considered as one entire Piece. . . . Our Imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for its Capacity. We are flung into a pleasing Astonishment at such unbounded Views, and feel a delightful Stillness and Amazement in the Soul at the Apprehension of them. The Mind of Man naturally hates every thing that looks like a Restraint upon it, and is apt to fancy it self under a sort of Confinement, when the Sight is pent up in a narrow Compass, and shortned on every side by the Neighbourhood of Walls or Mountains. . . . [W]ide and undetermined Prospects are as pleasing to the Fancy, as the Speculations of Eternity or Infinitude are to the Understanding. But if there be a Beauty or Uncommonness joined with this Grandeur, as in a troubled Ocean, a Heaven adorned with Stars and Meteors, or a spacious Landskip cut out into Rivers, Woods, Rocks, and Meadows, the Pleasure still grows upon us, as it rises from more than a single Principle.

From the reading...

“[Novelty] bestows Charms on a Monster, and makes even the Imperfections of Nature please us.”

Every thing that is new or uncommon raises a Pleasure in the Imagination, because it fills the Soul with an agreeable Surprize, gratifies its Curiosity, and gives it an Idea of which it was not before possest. We are indeed so often conversant with one Set of Objects, and tired out with so many repeated

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Shows of the same Things, that whatever is new or uncommon contributes a little to vary human Life, and to divert our Minds, for a while, with the Strangeness of its Appearance: It serves us for a kind of Refreshment, and takes off from that Satiety we are apt to complain of in our usual and ordinary Entertainments. It is this that bestows Charms on a Monster, and makes even the Imperfections of Nature please us. It is this that recommends Variety, where the Mind is every Instant called off to something new, and the Attention not suffered to dwell too long, and waste it self on any particular Object. It is this, likewise, that improves what is great or beautiful, and make it afford the Mind a double Entertainment... .

But there is nothing that makes its Way more directly to the Soul than Beauty, which immediately diffuses a secret Satisfaction and Complacency through the Imagination, and gives a Finishing to any thing that is Great or Uncommon. The very first Discovery of it strikes the Mind with an inward Joy, and spreads a Cheerfulness and Delight through all its Faculties. There is not perhaps any real Beauty or Deformity more in one Piece of Matter than another, because we might have been so made, that whatsoever now appears loathsome to us, might have shewn it self agreeable; but we find by Experience, that there are several Modifications of Matter which the Mind, without any previous Consideration, pronounces at first sight Beautiful or Deformed. Thus we see that every different Species of sensible Creatures has its different Notions of Beauty, and that each of them is most affected with the Beauties of its own Kind. This is no where more remarkable than in Birds of the same Shape and Proportion, where we often see the Male determined in his Courtship by the single Grain or Tincture of a Feather, and never discovering any Charms but in the Colour of its Species... .

From the reading...

“... every different Species of sensible Creatures has its different Notions of Beauty, and that each of them is most affected with the Beauties of its own Kind.”

There is a second Kind of Beauty that we find in the several Products of Art and Nature, which does not work in the Imagination with that Warmth and Violence as the Beauty that appears in our proper Species, but is apt however to raise in us a secret Delight, and a kind of Fondness for the Places or Objects in which we discover it. This consists either in the Gaiety or Variety of Colours, in the Symmetry and Proportion of Parts, in the Arrangement and Disposition of Bodies, or in a just Mixture and Concurrence of all together. Among these several Kinds of Beauty the Eye takes most Delight in Colours. We no where meet with a more glorious or pleasing Show in Nature than what appears in the Heavens at the rising and setting of the Sun, which is wholly made up of those different Stains of Light that shew themselves in Clouds

of a different Situation. For this Reason we find the Poets, who are always addressing themselves to the Imagination, borrowing more of their Epithets from Colours than from any other Topic. As the Fancy delights in every thing that is Great, Strange, or Beautiful, and is still more pleased the more it finds of these Perfections in the same Object, so is it capable of receiving a new Satisfaction by the Assistance of another Sense. Thus any continued Sound, as the Musick of Birds, or a Fall of Water, awakens every moment the Mind of the Beholder, and makes him more attentive to the several Beauties of the Place that lye before him. Thus if there arises a Frangency of Smells or Perfumes, they heighten the Pleasures of the Imagination, and make even the Colours and Verdure of the Landskip appear more agreeable; for the Ideas of both Senses recommend each other, and are pleasanter together than when they enter the Mind separately: As the different Colours of a Picture, when they are well disposed, set off one another, and receive an additional Beauty from the Advantage of their Situation.

No. 413 [Final Causes of Beauty]

—*Causa latet, vis est notissima*—⁵

—Ovid

Though . . . we considered how every thing that is Great, New, or Beautiful, is apt to affect the Imagination with Pleasure, 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 displeasing to the Mind, without being able to trace out the several necessary and efficient Causes from whence the Pleasure or Displeasure arises.

Final Causes lye more bare and open to our Observation, as there are often a great Variety that belong to the same Effect; and these, tho’ they are not altogether so satisfactory, are generally more useful than the other, as they give us greater Occasion of admiring the Goodness and Wisdom of the first Contriver.

5. The cause is secret, but the effect is known.

—Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4: 287.

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One of the Final Causes of our Delight, in any thing that is great, may be this. The Supreme Author of our Being has so formed 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 naturally delight in the Apprehension of what is Great or Unlimited. Our Admiration, which is a very pleasing Motion of the Mind, immediately rises at the Consideration of any Object that takes up a great 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 circumscribed by Time nor Place, nor to be comprehended by the largest Capacity of a Created Being.

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 after Knowledge, and engage us to search into the Wonders of his Creation; for every new Idea brings such a Pleasure along with it, as rewards any Pains we have taken in its Acquisition, and consequently serves as a Motive to put us upon 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 where-ever Nature is crost 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.

From the reading...

“The Supreme Author of our Being has so formed the Soul of Man, that nothing but himself can be its last, adequate, and proper Happiness.”

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 Satisfaction and Complacency. 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 Supernumerary Ornaments to the Universe, and make it more agreeable to the Imagination? We are every where entertained

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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 at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing Delusion, and we walk about like the enchanted Hero of a 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 fantastick Scene breaks up, and the disconsolate Knight finds himself on a barren Heath, or in a solitary Desert. 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; tho 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 Impressions of the subtle Matter on the Organ of Sight...

No. 414 [The Art of Nature]

—*Alterius sic Altera poscit opem res et conjurat amicè.*⁶

—Hor.

If we consider the Works of Nature and Art, as they are qualified to entertain the Imagination, we shall find the last very defective, in Comparison of the former; for though they may sometimes appear as Beautiful or Strange, they can have nothing in them of that Vastness and Immensity, which afford so great an Entertainment to the Mind of the Beholder. The one may be as Polite and Delicate as the other, but can never shew her self so August and Magnificent in the Design. There is something more bold and masterly in the rough careless Strokes of Nature, than in the nice Touches and Embellishments of Art. The Beauties of the most stately Garden or Palace lie in a narrow Compass, the Imagination immediately runs them over, and requires something else to gratifie her; but, in the wide Fields of Nature, the Sight wanders up and down without Confinement, and is fed with an infinite variety of Images, without any certain Stint or Number. For this Reason we always find the Poet in Love with a Country-Life, where Nature appears in

6. Each by itself is vain but together their force is strong and each proves the others friend.

—Horace, *Ars poetica*, 410-11

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the greatest Perfection, and furnishes out all those Scenes that are most apt to delight the Imagination...



Formal Garden at Tangley Manor (detail), E. Author Rowe⁷

But tho' there are several of these wild Scenes, that are more delightful than any artificial Shows; yet we find the Works of Nature still more pleasant, the more they resemble those of Art: For in this case our Pleasure rises from a double Principle; from the Agreeableness of the Objects to the Eye, and from their Similitude to other Objects: We are pleased as well with comparing their Beauties, as with surveying them, and can represent them to our Minds, either as Copies or Originals. Hence it is that we take Delight in a Prospect which is well laid out, and diversified with Fields and Meadows, Woods and Rivers; in those accidental Landskips of Trees, Clouds and Cities, that are sometimes found in the Veins of Marble; in the curious Fret-work of Rocks and Grottos; and, in a Word, in any thing that hath such a Variety or Regularity as may seem the Effect of Design, in what we call the Works of Chance.

From the reading...

“There is something more bold and masterly in the rough careless Strokes of Nature, than in the nice Touches and Embellishments of Art.”

If the Products of Nature rise in Value, according as they more or less re-

7. In Tymer Vallance, *Art in England During the Elizabethan and Stuart Periods*, Ed. Charles Holme (New York: Offices of the Studio, 1908), 30.

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semble those of Art, we may be sure that artificial Works receive a greater Advantage from their Resemblance of such as are natural; because here the Similitude is not only pleasant, but the Pattern more perfect. . . .

We have before observed, that there is generally in Nature something more Grand and August, than what we meet with in the Curiosities of Art. When therefore, we see this imitated in any measure, it gives us a nobler and more exalted kind of Pleasure than what we receive from the nicer and more accurate Productions of Art. On this Account our English Gardens are not so entertaining to the Fancy as those in France and Italy, where we see a large Extent of Ground covered over with an agreeable mixture of Garden and Forest, which represent every where an artificial Rudeness, much more charming than that Neatness and Elegancy which we meet with in those of our own Country. . . .

From the reading. . .

“[W]ide and undetermined Prospects are as pleasing to the Fancy, as the Speculations of Eternity or Infinitude are to the Understanding.”

If the Writers who have given us an Account of China, tell us the Inhabitants of that Country laugh at the Plantations of our Europeans, which are laid out by the Rule and Line; because, they say, any one may place Trees in equal Rows and uniform Figures. They chuse rather to shew a Genius in Works of this Nature, and therefore always conceal the Art by which they direct themselves. They have a Word, it seems, in their Language, by which they express the particular Beauty of a Plantation that thus strikes the Imagination at first Sight, without discovering what it is that has so agreeable an Effect. Our British Gardeners, on the contrary, instead of humouring Nature, love to deviate from it as much as possible. Our Trees rise in Cones, Globes, and Pyramids. We see the Marks of the Scissars upon every Plant and Bush. I do not know whether I am singular in my Opinion, but, for my own part, I would rather look upon a Tree in all its Luxuriancy and Diffusion of Boughs and Branches, than when it is thus cut and trimmed into a Mathematical Figure; and cannot but fancy that an Orchard in Flower looks infinitely more delightful, than all the little Labyrinths of the finished Parterre. . . .

Related Ideas

*The Spectator Project*⁸ This interactive site for the study of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* and other eighteenth-century periodicals, now located at Montclair State University, provides the database with various search procedures for scholarly access to eighteenth century English periodicals.

The Spectator Volumes 1, 2, and 3, by Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele⁹ is a ebook provided by *Project Gutenberg* 1891.

*Steele and Addison*¹⁰ This site at *Bartleby.com Great Books Online* includes sections on Addison’s writing style, *The Spectator*, religious topics, literary criticism, and extensive bibliography.



Chinese Garden, Library of Congress

From the reading...

“[We] find the Works of Nature still more pleasant, the more they resemble those of Art”

8. *The Spectator Project* (<http://meta.montclair.edu/spectator/>)

9. *The Spectator* (<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/12030>)

10. Howard Routh’s thorough analysis of the works and lives of Addison and Steele from *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, Vol IX, on *Steele and Addison* (<http://www.bartleby.com/219/index.html#2>)

Topics Worth Investigating

1. The essays in this reading are sometimes cited as having an influence on David Hume’s *Of the Standard of Taste*. Specifically, which of Addison’s points do you think most influenced Hume?
2. Addison’s series of articles on the pleasures of the imagination is sometimes cited as the dawn of modern aesthetic theory. Prior to the publication of these essays in *The Spectator* in 1712, little sustained thought on aesthetics had been forthcoming in Western literature. Do you think the rise of the middle class and the resulting increase in leisure activities can be historically and economically associated with the development of modern aesthetics?
3. Explain what Addison means when he writes loathsome and offensive objects might still bring a kind of delight if the qualities of greatness, novelty, and beauty are present:

whatever is new or uncommon . . . serves us for a kind of Refreshment, and . . . bestows Charms on a Monster, and makes even the Imperfections of Nature please us. (No. 412)

How can this analysis of the beauty of a “Monster” be rendered consistent with Addison’s argument for the beauty resulting from the fixity of biological species¹¹:

[The Supreme Being] 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 where-ever Nature is crost 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 . . . (No. 413)

4. Addison assumes the teleological source of the pleasures of imagination is the Supreme Creator. Do you think it would be possible to construct a basis for final causes of these pleasures in terms of biological or natural origin instead of basing them on God?
5. Even though Addison asserts that “unless all Animals were allured by the Beauty of their own Species, Generation would be at an End, and the Earth unpeopled,” Darwin points out:

Slow though the process of selection may be, if feeble man can do much by artificial selection, I can see no limit to the amount of change, to the

11. The term “fixity of species” refers to the notion that biological creatures are unchanged since the world was created. *Eds.*

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beauty and complexity of the coadaptations between all organic beings ... which may have been effected in the long course of time ...¹²

Certainly, as Darwin points out, “the gradual process of improvement” by crossing different varieties of flowers “may plainly be recognized in the increased size and beauty which we not see in the varieties” of “rose, pelargonium, dahlia, and other plants, when compared with the older varieties ...” Yet, recent experiments have shown, in the words of researcher Piotr Winkielman:

What you like is a function of what your mind has been trained on. A stimulus becomes attractive if it falls into the average of what you’ve seen and is therefore simple for your brain to process. In our experiments, we show that we can make an arbitrary pattern likeable just by preparing the mind to recognize it quickly.¹³

This phenomenon is termed the “beauty-in-averageness effect” Does prototypicality then reflect health and fitness value of potential mates as Addison suggests? Or do these conflicting results suggest beauty is independent of biological explanation? Addison writes, “[We] immediately assent to the Beauty of an Object, without enquiring into the particular Causes and Occasions of it.”(No. 411)

6. Explain clearly why Addison believes the necessary conditions for the experience of the pleasures of the imagination, including the experience of beauty, cannot be discovered? Why does he think we cannot know the nature of ideas or the mind? To what extent do you think he is following John Locke’s analysis that by “putting together the ideas of thinking and willing, or the power of moving or quieting corporeal motion, joined to substance, of which we have no distinct idea, we have the idea of an immaterial spirit”¹⁴
7. Do you think that Addison makes a mistake in attributing the pleasures of the imagination as proceeding from sight alone?¹⁵ Why do you suppose he does not include pleasures of sense and pleasures of understanding as imaginative also? Indeed, Addison emphasizes that beauty is enhanced by the ideas of other senses such as music or fragrance.¹⁶ Could not he

12. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* 6th ed. (London: John Murray, 1882) 85.

13. Piotr Winkielman, et al, “Prototypes are Attractive Because they are Easy on the Mind,” *Psychological Science* 17 No. 9 (2006) 799-806.

14. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1841), 196.

15. Undoubtedly, Addison is following John Locke who assumes, “[S]ight [is] the most comprehensive of all our senses, conveying to our minds the ideas of light and colours, which are peculiar only to that sense; and also the far different ideas of space, figure, and motion, the several varieties whereof change the appearances of its proper object, viz. light and colours; we bring ourselves by use to judge of the one by the other.”Locke, *Essay*, 188.

16. Addison, No. 413.

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argue that different pleasures of the imagination derive from different “intelligence” types such as those proposed by Howard Gardner?¹⁷ That is, beauty in words and language stem from linguistic ability; beauty in numbers and logic is accounted for by logico-mathematical skill; beauty in music and rhythm originate from musical talent; beauty in structure and form of sculpture are attributable to tactile-kinesthetic experience and so forth, just as beauty in spatial perception derives from spatial-visual ability.

8. How do you think Addison’s account of the delight afforded by horrible or monstrous effects of pleasures of the imagination relate to Edmund Burke’s analysis of the sublime where Burke states, “Another source of the sublime is infinity; . . . [i]nfinity has a tendency to fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect and truest test of the sublime.”?¹⁸
9. William Temple, in his essay “Upon the Gardens of Epicurus” contrasted the natural expression of Chinese gardens to disadvantage of the symmetry and order of English gardens, and for a time altered the practice of design landscape of English gardens.¹⁹ Pope also criticized the English formal landscape garden:

His Gardens next your admiration call;
On ev’ry side you look, behold the Wall!
No pleasing Intricacies intervene;
No artful wildness to perplex the scene;
Grove nods at grove, each Alley has a brother,
And half the platform just reflects the other.²⁰

Although the Chinese influence is reflected in Addison’s account of the influence of natural beauty in artistic construction, can it be effectively argued against Addison that the Chinese influence would not endure since historically those pleasures depended upon the factor of novelty more so than those of greatness or æsthetic beauty?²¹

10. Addison writes, “We are pleased as well with comparing their Beauties [of works of nature], as with surveying them, and can represent them

17. Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

18. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. David Womersley (New York: Penguin, 1999), 115.

19. Albert Forbes Sieveking, *Sir William Temple Upon the Gardens of Epicurus, with other XVIIth Century Garden Essays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908).

20. Alexander Pope, “Epistle IV, to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington” in *Moral Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1904), 260.

21. As indeed the Chinese influence began to disappear after 1760. Cf., F. H. Taylor, *The Taste of Angels* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1948), 479.

to our Minds, either as Copies or Originals.”(No. 414) Examine closely whether or not Addison views beauty as resulting from nature or from the recognition of the originality of nature. Does the delight stem from the imposition of pattern and order from the mind upon nature or from the effects of the natural form and arrangement of natural objects upon the attentive mind?

*

Revision History

Revision 0.68 03.07.08

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