

Wit is Nature; it instances something that we have all thought, but whose sheer truth the poet now makes compelling through his or her language. True wit is subtle, sharp, and, above all, surprising—a striking image, a vivid metaphor, a paradoxical figure of speech. Addison and Johnson also delve into the nature of wit, but it is Pope who exemplifies the meanings of this complex word and idea more inventively than any other writer in the canon of eighteenth-century English literature.

The most memorable assessment of the Essay remains Samuel Johnson's: "[The Essay] exhibits every mode of excellence that can embellish or dignify didactic composition, selection of matter, novelty of arrangement, justness of precept, splendour of illustration, and propriety of digression." It is a hopeful work, all the more affecting in light of the political quarrels and ferocious literary feuds in which Pope engaged later in his career. These climaxed in his gigantic satire of literary idiosyncrasy, *The Dunciad*, in *Four Books*, published in October 1743. In this great last text of his poetic career, Pope describes the sublime awfulness of hordes of pedants, false poets, and dunces. His dazzling punitive wit here takes on the grotesque grandeur of mock-epic, on a scale eclipsing that displayed in the elegant, highly cultivated early work. *The Dunciad* shows Pope's angry realization of the difficulty in winning wide acceptance for the neoclassical views that he had advocated and had described with both power and grace in *An Essay on Criticism*.

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An Essay on Criticism

—Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum. —HORAT.¹

'Tis hard to say, if greater Want of Skill
Appear in Writing or in Judging ill;

But, of the two, less dang'rous is th' Offence,
To tire our Patience, than mis-lead our Sense:

Some few in that, but Numbers err in this,
Ten Censure² wrong for one who Writes amiss;
A Fool might once himself alone expose,
Now One in Verse makes many more in Prose.

'Tis with our Judgments as our Watches, none
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.
In Poets as true Genius is but rare,
True Taste as seldom is the Critick's Share;

Both must alike from Heav'n derive their Light,
These born to Judge, as well as those to Write.
Let such teach others who themselves excell,
And censure freely who have written well.

Authors are partial to their Wit, 'tis true,
But are not Criticks to their Judgment too?

Yet if we look more closely, we shall find
Most have the Seeds of Judgment in their Mind;
Nature affords at least a glimm'ring Light;

The Lines, tho' touch'd but faintly, are drawn right.
But as the slightest Sketch, if justly trac'd,

Is by ill Colouring but the more disgrac'd,
So by false Learning is good Sense defac'd;

Some are bewilder'd in the Maze of Schools,
And some made Coxcombs³ Nature meant but Fools.
In search of Wit these lose their common Sense,
And then turn Criticks in their own Defence.

1. HORACE (65–8 B.C.E.), *Epistles* 1.6.67–68: "If you know any maxims better than these, be so good as to let me know them; if not, use these as I do."

2. Judge.

3. Pretenders to learning, conceited asses.

30 Each burns alike, who can, or cannot write,
Or with a *Rival's*, or an *Eunuch's* spite.
All *Fools* have still an Itching to deride,
And fain *would* be upon the *Laughing Side*:
If *Mævius* Scribble in *Apollo's* spight,
35 There are, who *judge* still *worse* than he can *write*.
Some have at first for *Wits*, then *Poets* past,
Turn'd *Criticks* next, and prov'd plain *Fools* at last;
Some neither can for *Wits* nor *Criticks* pass,
As heavy Mules are neither *Horse* nor *Ass*.
40 Those half-learn'd *Witlings*, num'rous in our *Isle*,
As half-form'd *Insects* on the Banks of *Nile*;⁵
Unfinish'd Things, one knows not what to call,
Their Generation's so *equivocal*:
To tell⁶ 'em, *would* a *hundred Tongues* require,
45 Or *one vain Wit's*, that might a hundred tire.
But you who seek to *give* and *merit* Fame,
And justly bear a *Critick's* noble Name,
Be sure your *self* and your own *Reach* to know,
How far your *Genius*, *Taste*, and *Learning* go;
50 Launch not beyond your *Depth*, but be discreet,
And mark that *Point* where *Sense* and *Dulness meet*.
Nature to all things fix'd the *Limits* fit,
And wisely curb'd proud *Man's* pretending *Wit*:
As on the *Land* while *here* the *Ocean* gains,
55 In *other Parts* it leaves wide sandy *Plains*;
Thus in the *Soul* while *Memory* prevails,
The solid *Pow'r* of *Understanding* fails;
Where Beams of warm *Imagination* play,
The *Memory's* soft *Figures* melt away.
60 One *Science*⁷ only will one *Genius* fit;
So vast is *Art*,⁸ so narrow *Human Wit*:
Not only bounded to *peculiar Arts*,
But oft in *those*, confin'd to *single Parts*.
Like *Kings* we lose the *Conquests* gain'd before,
65 By vain *Ambition* still to make them more:
Each might his *sev'ral Province* well command,
Wou'd all but *stoop* to what they *understand*.
First follow *NATURE*,⁹ and your *Judgment* frame
By her just *Standard*, which is still the same:¹
70 *Unerring Nature*, still divinely bright,
One *clear, unchang'd*, and *Universal* Light,
Life, Force, and Beauty, must to all impart,
At once the *Source*, and *End*, and *Test* of *Art*.

4. Greek and Roman god of poetry. Mævius: a bad poet (1st c. B.C.E.), to whom both Virgil (*Eclogue* 3) and Horace (*Epode* 10) allude.
5. The ancients believed that forms of animal and insect life were spontaneously generated on the banks of the Nile River.
6. Count.
7. Branch of learning.
8. Pope alludes to a maxim attributed to Hippocrates (469–399 B.C.E.), celebrated Greek physi-
cian: "Life is short, but art [sometimes translated 'science'] is long, opportunity fleeting, experiment dangerous, judgment difficult."
9. The term encompasses the physical world, the sum of human experiences, and the principle of order and coherence in the universe.
1. Compare JOHN DRYDEN's claim in *Parallel between Poetry and Painting* (1695): "For Nature is still the same in all ages, and can never be contrary to herself."

Art from that Fund each *just Supply* provides,
Works *without Show*,² and *without Pomp* presides:
75 In some fair Body thus th' informing Soul
With Spirits feeds, with Vigour fills the whole,
Each Motion guides, and ev'ry Nerve sustains;
It *self unseen*, but in th' *Effects*, remains.
Some, to whom Heav'n in Wit has been profuse,
80 Want as much more, to turn it to its use;
For *Wit*³ and *Judgment* often are at strife,
Tho' meant each other's Aid, like *Man* and *Wife*.
'Tis more to *guide* than *spur* the *Muse's Steed*;⁴
85 Restrain his Fury, than provoke his Speed;
The winged Courser, like a gen'rous Horse,
Shows most true Mettle when you *check* his Course.
Those *RULES* of old *discover'd*, not *devis'd*,
Are *Nature* still, but *Nature Methodiz'd*;
90 *Nature*, like *Liberty*,⁵ is but restrain'd
By the same Laws which first *herself* ordain'd.
Hear how learn'd *Greece* her useful Rules indites,
When to repress, and when indulge our Flights:
High on *Parnassus*⁷ Top her Sons she show'd,
95 And pointed out those arduous Paths they trod,
Held from afar, aloft, th' Immortal Prize,
And urg'd the rest by equal Steps to rise;
Just *Precepts* thus from great *Examples* giv'n,
She drew from *them* what they deriv'd from *Heav'n*.
100 The gen'rous Critick *fann'd* the *Poet's Fire*,
And taught the World, with *Reason* to *Admire*.
Then Criticism the *Muse's Handmaid* prov'd,
To dress her Charms, and make her more belov'd;
But following *Wits* from that *Intention* stray'd;
105 Who cou'd not win the *Mistress*, wou'd the *Maid*;
Against the *Poets* *their own Arms* they turn'd,
Sure to hate most the Men from whom they *learn'd*.
So modern *Pothecaries*, taught the Art
By *Doctor's Bills*⁸ to play the *Doctor's Part*,
110 Bold in the Practice of *mistaken Rules*,
Prescribe, apply, and call their *Masters Fools*.
Some on the *Leaves*⁹ of ancient Authors prey,
Nor Time nor Moths e'er spoil'd so much as they:
Some dryly plain, without *Invention's Aid*,
115 Write dull *Receipts*¹ how Poems may be made:
These leave the *Sense*, their *Learning* to display,
And those explain the *Meaning* quite away.

2. Pope here recalls the familiar Latin maxim *ars est celare artem* (the art is to conceal the art).
3. Wit has a range of meanings, including reason-ing power, intelligence, mental soundness, sanity, astuteness of perception or judgment, and the ability to see relationships between seemingly disparate things. It also can refer to a person of sound judgment and perception.
4. Pegasus, the winged horse of classical mythology, identified with inspiration. Muse: one of the
9 daughters of Memory who preside over the arts and all intellectual pursuits.
5. High spirited, noble.
6. In the manuscript, Pope wrote "monarchy."
7. Mountain in central Greece, sacred to Apollo, the Muses, and Dionysus.
8. Medical prescriptions, "Pothecaries": druggists.
9. Pages.
1. Recipes, prescriptions.

You then whose Judgment the right Course wou'd steer,
Know well each ANCIENT's proper Character,
His *Fable*, Subject, *Scope* in ev'ry Page,
Religion, Country, *Genius* of his Age:
Without all these at once before your Eyes,
Cavil you may, but never Criticize.

120

Be *Homer's Works* your Study, and Delight,
Read them by Day, and meditate by Night,
Thence form your Judgment, thence your Maxims bring,
And trace the Muses upward to their Spring;³
Still with *It self compar'd*, his Text peruse;
And let your Comment be the *Mantuan Muse*.⁴

125

When first young *Maro* in his boundless Mind
A Work t'outlast *Immortal Rome* design'd,
Perhaps he seem'd above the Critick's Law,
And but from *Nature's Fountains* scorn'd to draw:

130

But when t'examine ev'ry Part he came,
Nature and *Homer* were, he found, the same:
Convinc'd, amaz'd, he checks the bold Design,
And Rules as strict his labour'd Work confine,
As if the *Stagyrite's* o'erlook'd each Line.

135

Learn hence for Ancient Rules a just Esteem;
To copy *Nature* is to copy *Them*.

140

Some Beauties yet, no Precepts can declare,
For there's a *Happiness*⁶ as well as *Care*.
Musick resembles *Poetry*, in each

Are *nameless Graces* which no Methods teach,
And which a *Master-Hand* alone can reach.

145

If, where the Rules not far enough extend,
(Since Rules were made but to promote their End)
Some Lucky LICENSE answers to the full
Th' Intent propos'd, that *License* is a Rule.

150

Thus *Pegasus*, a nearer way to take,
May boldly deviate from the common Track.
Great Wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
And rise to Faults true Criticks dare not mend;
From vulgar Bounds with brave Disorder part,
And snatch a Grace beyond the Reach of Art,
Which, without passing thro' the Judgment, gains
The Heart, and all its End at once attains.

155

In Prospects, thus, some Objects please our Eyes,
Which out of Nature's common Order rise,
The shapeless Rock, or hanging Precipice.
But tho' the Ancients thus their Rules invade,
(As Kings dispense with Laws Themselves have made)
Moderns, beware! Or if you must offend

160

2. As the earliest Greek literature, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (ca. 8th c. B.C.E.) were considered the source of all subsequent poetry.

3. Hippocrene, a spring sacred to the Muses on Mt. Helicon, in central Greece.

4. Virgil (70–19 B.C.E.), born near Mantua (his full name was Publius Vergilius Maro). As the author of the greatest Latin epic, the *Aeneid*, he is often linked with Homer.

5. ARISTOTLE (384–322 B.C.E.), born in Stagira (in Macedonia). Later critics derived the "rules" for tragedy and epic from his *Poetics* (see above).

6. Good luck; felicity.

Against the Precept, ne'er transgress its End,
Let it be seldom, and compell'd by Need,
And have, at least, Their Precedent to plead.
The Critick else proceeds without Remorse,
Seizes your Fame, and puts his Laws in force.

165

I know there are,⁷ to whose presumptuous Thoughts
Those Freer Beauties, ev'n in Them, seem Faults:⁸

170

Some Figures monstrous and mis-shap'd appear,
Consider'd singly, or beheld too near,
Which, but proportion'd to their Light, or Place,
Due Distance reconciles to Form and Grace.

175

A prudent Chief not always must display
His Pow'rs in equal Ranks, and fair Array,
But with th' Occasion and the Place comply,
Conceal his Force, nay seem sometimes to Fly.
Those oft are Stratagems which Errors seem,
Nor is it *Homer Nods*,⁹ but We that Dream.

180

Still green with Bays' each ancient Altar stands,
Above the reach of Sacrilegious Hands,
Secure from Flames, from Envy's fiercer Rage,
Destructive War, and all-involving Age.

185

See, from each Clime the Learn'd their Incense bring;
Hear, in all Tongues consenting Pæans ring!
In Praise so just, let ev'ry Voice be join'd,³
And fill the Gen'ral Chorus of Mankind!

190

Hail Bards Triumphant! born in happier Days;
Immortal Heirs of Universal Praise!

Whose Honours with Increase of Ages grow,
As Streams roll down, enlarging as they flow!
Nations unborn your mighty Names shall sound,
And Worlds applaud that must not yet be found!

195

Oh may some Spark of your Cœlestial Fire
The last, the meanest of your Sons inspire,
(That on weak Wings, from far, pursues your Flights;
Glow while he reads, but trembles as he writes)
To teach vain Wits a Science little known,

T'admire Superior Sense, and doubt their own!

200

Of all the Causes which conspire to blind
Man's erring Judgment, and misguide the Mind,
What the weak Head with strongest Byass⁴ rules,
Is *Pride*, the never-failing Vice of Fools.

Whatever Nature has in Worth deny'd,
She gives in large Recruits⁵ of needful *Pride*;
For as in Bodies, thus in Souls, we find
What wants in Blood and Spirits, swell'd with Wind;
Pride, where Wit fails, steps in to our Defence,

205

7. That is, I know there are those.

8. Pronounced "fawts."

9. Compare Horace, *Ars Poetica*, lines 358–59:

"even . . . good Homer goes to sleep" (often translated "nods").

1. Laurels, associated with Apollo and thus with poetry.

2. In harmony.

3. Pronounced "jined."

4. Bias, a term from lawn bowling: the irregularity in the shape of the ball that causes it to swerve.

5. Supplies, troops, reinforcements.

210 And fills up all the *mighty Void of Sense!*
If once right Reason drives that *Cloud* away,
Truth breaks upon us with *resistless Day*;
Truth not your self; but your Defects to know,
Make use of ev'ry *Friend*—and ev'ry *Foe*.

215 A *little Learning* is a dang'rous Thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the *Pierian*⁶ Spring;
There *shallow Draughts* intoxicate the Brain,
And drinking *largely* sobers us again.
Fir'd at first Sight with what the *Muse* imparts,
In *fearless Youth* we tempt' the Heights of Arts,
While from the bounded *Level* of our Mind,
Short *Views* we take, nor see the *Lengths behind*,
But *more advanc'd*, behold with strange Surprise
New, distant Scenes of *endless Science* rise!

225 So pleas'd at first, the tow'ring *Alps* we try,
Mount o'er the Vales, and seem to tread the Sky;
Th' Eternal Snows appear already past,
And the first *Clouds* and *Mountains* seem the last:
But *those attain'd*, we tremble to survey

230 The growing Labours of the lengthen'd Way,
Th' *increasing Prospect tires* our wandering Eyes,
Hills peep o'er Hills, and *Alps* on *Alps* arise!

235 A perfect Judge will read each Work of Wit
With the same Spirit that its Author writ,
Survey the *Whole*, nor seek slight Faults to find,
Where *Nature moves*, and *Rapture* warms the Mind;
Nor lose, for that malignant dull Delight,
The *gen'rous Pleasure* to be charm'd with Wit.

240 But in such *Lays*⁸ as neither *ebb*, nor *flow*,
Correctly cold, and *regularly low*,
That shunning Faults, one quiet *Tenour* keep;
We cannot *blame* indeed—but we may *sleep*.
In Wit, as Nature, what affects our Hearts
Is not th' Exactness of peculiar Parts;

245 'Tis not a *Lip*, or *Eye*, we Beauty call,
But the joint Force and full *Result* of all.
Thus when we view some well-proportion'd *Dome*,⁹
(The *World's* just Wonder, and ev'n *thine O Rome!*)
No single Parts unequally surprise;
All comes *united* to th' admiring Eyes;

250 No monstrous Height, or Breadth, or Length appear;
The *Whole* at once is *Bold*, and *Regular*.
Whoever thinks a faultless Piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.

255 In ev'ry Work regard the *Writer's End*.
Since none can compass more than they *Intend*;
And if the *Means* be just, the *Conduct* true,

260 Applause, in spite of trivial Faults, is due.¹
As Men of Breeding, sometimes Men of Wit,
T' avoid *great Errors*, must the *less* commit,
Neglect the Rules each *Verbal Critick* lays,
For *not* to know some Trifles, is a Praise.

265 Most Criticks, fond of some subservient Art,
Still make the *Whole* depend upon a *Part*,
They talk of *Principles*, but Notions prize,
And All to one lov'd Folly Sacrifice.

270 Once on a time, *La Mancha's* Knight,² they say,
A certain *Bard* encountering on the Way,
Discours'd in Terms as just, with Looks as Sage,
As e'er cou'd *Dennis*,³ of the *Grecian* Stage;
Concluding all were desp'rate Sots and Fools,
Who durst depart from *Aristotle's* Rules.

275 Our Author, happy in a Judge so nice,⁴
Produc'd his Play, and beg'd the Knight's Advice,
Made him observe the *Subject* and the *Plot*,
The *Manners*, *Passions*, *Unities*,⁵ what not?
All which, exact to *Rule* were brought about,
Were but a *Combat* in the *Lists*⁶ left out.

280 *What! Leave the Combat* out? Exclaims the Knight;
Yes, or we must renounce the *Stagyrite*.
Not so by *Heav'n* (he answers in a Rage)
Knights, *Squires*, and *Steeds*, must enter on the Stage.
So vast a Throng the Stage can ne'er contain.
Then build a *New*, or act it in a *Plain*.

285 Thus Criticks, of less Judgment than *Caprice*,
Curious,⁷ not *Knowing*, not exact, but nice,
Form *short Ideas*; and offend in Arts
(As most in *Manners*) by a *Love to Parts*.

290 Some to *Conceit*⁸ alone their Taste confine,
And glitt'ring Thoughts struck out⁹ at ev'ry Line;
Pleas'd with a Work where nothing's just or fit;
One *glaring Chaos* and *wild Heap* of Wit:

295 Poets like Painters, thus, unskill'd to trace
The *naked Nature* and the *living Grace*,
With *Gold* and *Jewels* cover ev'ry Part,
And hide with *Ornaments* their *Want of Art*.
True Wit is *Nature* to Advantage dress'd,
What oft was *Thought*, but ne'er so well *Express'd*,

300 *Something*, whose Truth convinc'd at Sight we find,
That gives us back the Image of our Mind:
As Shades more sweetly recommend the Light,

1. Compare John Dryden, "The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry" (1677): "Tis malicious and unmanly to snarl at the little lapses of a pen, from which Virgil himself stands not exempted."

2. Don Quixote, title character of the work by Miguel de Cervantes (1605, 1615); but Pope's story is taken from a spurious sequel to Don Quixote written by Don Alonso Fernandez de Avellaneda (trans. 1705).

3. John Dennis (1657–1734), English critic and

playwright.

4. Precise, overrefined.

5. The neoclassical unities (of action, time, and place) thought to govern drama; see PIERRE CORNEILLE, *Of the Three Unities*. (1660; above).

6. Field for jousting.

7. Particular; difficult to satisfy.

8. The extravagant use of similes and metaphors.

9. Produced by a stroke of invention.

6. Belonging to the Pierides, another name for the Muses (the spring is Hippocrene).

7. Attempt, dare.

8. Songs; narrative poems or ballads.

9. Specifically, the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome (16th c.).

So modest Plainness sets off sprightly Wit:
For Works may have more Wit than does 'em good,
As Bodies perish through Excess of Blood.¹

Others for Language all their Care express,
And value Books, as Women Men, for Dress:
Their Praise is still—*The Stile is excellent!*
The Sense, they humbly take upon Content.²
Words are like Leaves; and where they most abound,
Much Fruit of Sense beneath is rarely found.

False Eloquence, like the *Prismatic Glass*,
Its gawdy Colours spreads on ev'ry place;³
The Face of Nature we no more Survey,
All glares alike, without *Distinction* gay:

But true *Expression*, like th' unchanging Sun,
Clears, and improves what'er it shines upon,
It gilds all Objects, but it alters none.

Expression is the *Dress of Thought*, and still
Appears more *decent* as more *suitable*;
A vile Conceit in pompous Words express,
Is like a Clown in regal Purple dress;

For different Styles with different Subjects sort,
As several Garbs with Country, Town, and Court.
Some by Old Words to Fame have made Pretence;
Ancients in Phrase, meer Moderns in their Sense!
Such labour'd Nothings, in so strange a Style,
Amaze th'unlearn'd, and make the Learned Smile.

Unlucky, as *Fungoso*⁴ in the Play,
These Sparks with awkward Vanity display
What the Fine Gentleman wore Yesterday!
And but so mimic ancient Wits at best,
As Apes our Grandires in their Doublets dress.
In Words, as *Fashions*, the same Rule will hold;
Alike Fantastick, if too New, or Old;
Be not the first by whom the New are try'd,
Nor yet the last to lay the Old aside.

But most by Numbers⁵ judge a Poet's Song,
And smooth or rough; with them, is right or wrong;
In the bright Muse tho' thousand Charms conspire,
Her Voice is all these tuneful Fools admire,
Who haunt *Parnassus* but to please their Ear,
Not mend their Minds; as some to Church repair,
Not for the Doctrine, but the Musick there.

These Equal Syllables alone require,
Tho' oft the Ear the open Vowels tire,⁶
While Expletives⁷ their feeble Aid do join,

1. Standard medical practice of Pope's time included bleeding patients to reduce their "excess of blood."

2. Accept on authority.

3. An allusion to Isaac Newton's *Optics* (1703), which discusses the prism and spectrum.

4. A poor student in Ben Jonson's play *Every Man out of His Humour* (1599), who tries without success to keep up with the fashions.

5. Meters.
6. That is, when a word ending in a vowel is followed by a word beginning with one (e.g., "the open"). Throughout this passage, Pope exemplifies in his verse the fault or virtue discussed.

7. Words used to complete the number of feet needed in a line of verse without adding to the sense.

And ten low Words oft creep in one dull Line,
While they ring round the same unvar'd Chimes,
With sure Returns of still expected Rhymes.
Where-e'er you find the cooling Western Breeze,
In the next Line, it whispers thro' the Trees;
If *Chrystal Streams* with pleasing Murmurs creep,
The Reader's threaten'd (not in vain) with Sleep.
Then, at the last, and only Couplet fraught
With some unmeaning Thing they call a Thought,
A needless *Alexandrine*⁸ ends the Song,
That like a wounded Snake, drags its slow length along.
Leave such to tune their own dull Rhimes, and know
What's roundly smooth, or languishingly slow;

And praise the *Easie Vigor* of a Line,
Where *Denham's* Strength, and *Waller's* Sweetness join.⁹
True Ease in Writing comes from Art, not Chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.
'Tis not enough no Harshness gives Offence,
The Sound must seem an *Eccho* to the Sense.

Soft is the Strain when *Zephyr's* gently blows,
And the smooth Stream in smoother Numbers flows;
But when loud Surges lash the sounding Shore,
The hoarse, rough Verse should like the Torrent roar.
When *Ajax*² strives, some Rock's vast Weight to throw,
The Line too labours, and the Words move slow;

Not so, when swift *Camilla*³ scours the Plain,
Flies o'er th'unbending Corn, and skims along the Main.
Hear how *Timotheus*⁴ vary'd Lays surprise,
And bid Alternate Passions fall and rise!

While, at each Change, the Son of *Lybian Jove*⁵
Now burns with Glory, and then melts with Love;
Now his fierce Eyes with sparkling Fury glow;
Now Sighs steal out, and Tears begin to flow:
Persians and Greeks like *Turnus of Nature*⁶ found,
And the World's Victor stood subdu'd by Sound!
The Pow'r of Musick all our Hearts allow;
And what *Timotheus* was, is *Dryden* now.

Avoid Extremes; and shun the Fault of such,
Who still are pleas'd too little, or too much.
At ev'ry Trifle scorn to take Offence,
That always shows *Great Pride*, or *Little Sense*;
Those Heads as *Stomachs* are not sure the best
Which nauseate all, and nothing can digest.

8. A line of 12 syllables (rather than the usual 10), like line 357.

9. Pope, like Dryden before him, admired the English poets John Denham (1615–1669) and, especially, Edmund Waller (1606–1687) for having improved English versification (in particular, the heroic couplet, the form used in this poem).

1. The west wind; a gentle breeze.

2. A Greek hero in the *Iliad*, known for his great strength.

3. A woman warrior who fought against the Trojans in Italy. In *Aeneid* 7.808–11, Virgil describes her ability to skim over ears of wheat (i.e., "corn") and over the sea.

4. Greek poet (ca. 450–ca. 360 B.C.E.).

5. Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.E.), who liked to claim that Zeus (identified with the Roman Jupiter) was his father. Priests of the celebrated oracle of Zeus Ammon in Siwa, north of the Libyan desert, greeted Alexander as the son of Zeus.

6. Alternations of feelings.

390 Yet let not each gay Turn thy Rapture move,
For Fools *Admire*, but Men of Sense *Approve*;⁷
As things seem large which we thro' Mists descry,
Dulness is ever apt to *Magnify*.

395 Some foreign Writers, some our own despise;
The *Ancients* only, or the *Moderns* prize:

(Thus Wit, like Faith, by each Man is apply'd
To one small Sect, and All are damn'd beside.)

400 Meanly they seek the Blessing to confine,
And force that Sun but on a Part to Shine;

Which not alone the *Southern Wit* sublines,⁸
But ripens Spirits in cold *Northern Climes*;

Which from the first has shone on *Ages past*,
Enlights the *present*; and shall warm the *last*:

(Tho' each may feel *Increases* and *Decays*,
And see now *clearer* and now *darker Days*)

405 Regard not then if Wit be *Old* or *New*,
But blame the *False*, and value still the *True*.

Some ne'er advance a Judgment of their own,
But catch the *spreading Notion* of the Town;

410 They reason and conclude by *Precedent*,
And own *stale Nonsense* which they ne'er invent.

Some judge of Authors' Names, not *Works*, and then
Nor praise nor blame the *Writings*, but the *Men*.

415 Of all this *Servile Herd* the worst is He
That in *proud Dulness* joins with *Quality*,⁹

A constant Critick at the Great-man's Board,
To *fetch and carry* Nonsense for my Lord.

What *woful stuff* this Madrigal wou'd be,
In some starv'd Hackney Sonneteer,¹ or me?

420 But let a Lord once own the *happy Lines*,
How the *Wit brightens*! How the *Style refines*!

Before his sacred Name flies ev'ry Fault,
And each *exalted Stanza* teems with *Thought*!

The *Vulgar* thus through *Imitation* err;
As oft the *Learn'd* by being *Singular*;

425 So much they scorn the Crowd, that if the Throng
By *Chance* go right, they *purposely* go wrong;

So Schismatics² the *plain Believers* quit,
And are but damn'd for having too much Wit.

430 Some praise at Morning what they blame at Night;
But always think the *last Opinion* right.

A Muse by these is like a Mistress us'd,
This hour she's *idoliz'd*, the next *abus'd*,

435 While their weak Heads, like Towns unfortify'd,
Twixt Sense and Nonsense daily change their Side.

Ask them the Cause; *They're wiser still*, they say;
And still to Morrow's wiser than to Day.

We think our *Fathers* Fools, so wise we grow;
9. People of high rank.

1. Hiring poet.
2. Sectarians in religion.

440 Our *wiser Sons*, no doubt, will think us so.
Once *School-Divines*³ this zealous Isle o'erspread;

Who knew most *Sentences*⁴ was *deepest read*;
Faith, Gospel, All, seem'd made to be *disputed*,

445 And none had *Sense enough* to be *Confuted*.
Scotists and *Thomists*,⁵ now, in Peace remain.

Amidst their *kindred Cobwebs* in *Duck-Lane*.⁶
If *Faith* it self has *different Dresses* worn,

What wonder *Modes* in *Wit* shou'd take their Turn?
Oft, leaving what is Natural and fit,

450 The *current Folly* proves the *ready Wit*.⁷
And Authors think their Reputation safe,

Which lives as long as *Fools* are pleas'd to *Laugh*.
Some valuing those of their own *Side*, or *Mind*,

Still make themselves the measure of Mankind;
Fondly⁸ we think we honour Merit then,

455 When we but praise *Our selves* in *Other Men*.
Parties in *Wit* attend on those of *State*,

And publick Faction doubles private Hate.
Pride, *Malice*, *Folly*, against *Dryden* rose,

460 In various Shapes of *Parsons*, *Criticks*, *Beaus*;⁹
But *Sense* surviv'd, when *merry Jest* were past;

For rising Merit will *buoy up* at last.
Might he return, and bless once more our Eyes,

465 New *Blackmores* and new *Milbourns*¹ must arise;
Nay shou'd great *Homer* lift his awful Head,

*Zoilus*² again would start up from the Dead.
Envy will *Merit* as its *Shade* pursue,

But like a Shadow, proves the *Substance* true;
For envy'd Wit, like *Sol* Eclips'd, makes known

470 Th' *opposing Body's* Grossness, not its *own*.
When first that Sun too powerful Beams displays,

It draws up Vapours which obscure its Rays;
But ev'n those Clouds at last adorn its Day,

475 Reflect new Glories, and augment the Day.
Be thou the *first* true Merit to befriend;

His Praise is lost, who stays till *All* commend;
Short is the Date, alas, of *Modern Rhymes*;

And 'tis but just to let 'em live *betimes*.⁴
No longer now that Golden Age appears,

3. Medieval theologians.

4. A reference to Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences* (ca. 1145–51), which in a long series of questions presents the views of the fathers and doctors of the church on complex doctrinal matters; it became the standard theological text of the Middle Ages.

5. The two main schools of medieval philosophy were the followers of Duns Scotus (ca. 1270–1308) and of THOMAS AQUINAS (1225–1274).

6. A London street where old books were sold.

7. Facile, clever expression.

8. Foolishly.

9. John Wilmot (1647–1680) second earl of Rochester, and George Villiers (1627–1687), second duke of Buckingham. "Parsons": these

included Jeremy Collier (1650–1726), whose *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) targeted Dryden. "Criticks": these included Thomas Shadwell (ca. 1642–1692), an English dramatist and poet who savagely attacked Dryden in the 1680s.

1. Luke Milbourn (1649–1720), a clergyman whose *Notes on Dryden's Virgil* (1698) criticized the translation. Sir Richard Blackmore (1654–1729), physician and poet who criticized Dryden in *Satire against Wit* (1700).

2. Awe-inspiring.

3. A 4th-century B.C.E. philosopher and grammarian notorious for his bitter attacks on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

4. Before it is too late.

When *Patriarch-Wits* surviv'd a *thousand Years*;
Now Length of *Fame* (our *second Life*) is lost,
And bare Threescore is all ev'n That can boast:
Our Sons their Fathers' *failing Language* see,
And such as *Chaucer* is, shall *Dryden* be.⁵

So when the faithful *Pencil* has design'd
Some *bright Idea* of the Master's Mind,
Where a *new World* leaps out at his command,

And ready Nature waits upon his Hand;
When the ripe Colours *soften* and *unite*,
And sweetly *melt* into just Shade and Light,
When mellowing Years their full Perfection give,
And each Bold Figure just begins to *Live*;
The *treach'rous Colours* the fair Art betray,
And all the bright Creation fades away!

Unhappy Wit, like most mistaken Things,
Attunes not for the Envy which it brings.

In *Youth* alone its empty Praise we boast,
But soon the Short-liv'd Vanity is lost!
Like some fair *Flow'r*: the early *Spring* supplies,
That gaily Blooms, but ev'n in blooming *Dies*.

What is this Wit which must our Cares employ?
The *Owner's Wife*, that *other Men* enjoy,
Then most our *Trouble*: still when most *admir'd*,

And still the more we *give*, the more *requir'd*;
Whose Fame with *Pains* we guard, but lose with *Ease*,
Sure *some* to vex, but never *all* to *please*;

'Tis what the *Vicious fear*, the *Virtuous shun*;
By *Fools* 'tis *hated*, and by *Knaves undone*!

If Wit so much from *Ign'rance* undergo,
Ah let not *Learning* too commence its *Foe*!
Of *old*, those met *Rewards* who cou'd excel,
And such were *Prais'd* who but *endeavour'd well*;

Tho' *Triumphs* were to *Gen'als* only due,
Crowns were reserv'd to grace the *Soldiers* too.⁶

Now, they who reach *Parnassus'* lofty Crown,
Employ their Pains to spurn some others down;
And while Self-Love each jealous Writer rules,
Contending Wits become the *Sport of Fools*:
But still the *Worst* with most Regret commend,
For each *Ill Author* is as bad a *Friend*.

To what base Ends, and by what abject Ways,
Are Mortals urg'd thro' *Sacred* *Lust of Praise*!
Ah ne'er so *dire* a *Thirst of Glory* boast,
Nor in the *Critick* let the *Man* be lost!

Good-Nature and *Good-Sense* must ever join;
To Err is *Humane*,⁷ to Forgive, *Divine*.

5. Like others of his day, Pope believed that changes in the English language would eventually make Dryden's verse seem as distant and strange as Chaucer's.

6. At the time of the Roman general's triumph—

a formal procession celebrating an important victory—various crowns were awarded to those of his soldiers who had won distinction.

7. Accused.

8. Human.

But if in Noble Minds some Dregs remain,
Not yet purg'd off, of Spleen and sow'r Disdain,
Discharge that Rage on more Provoking Crimes,
Nor fear a Dearth in these Flagitious⁸ Times.

No Pardon vile *Obscenity* should find,

Tho' Wit and Art conspire to move your Mind;
But *Dulness* with *Obscenity* must prove
As Shameful sure as *Impotence* in *Love*.

In the fat Age of Pleasure, Wealth, and Ease,
Sprung the rank Weed, and thriv'd with large Increase;
When *Love* was all an easie Monarch's¹ Care;
Seldom at *Council*, never in a *War*:

Nay Wits had *Pensions*, and young *Lords*² had Wit:
The Fair state panting at a *Courtier's Play*,
And not a Mask³ went *un-improv'd* away.

The modest Fan was lifted up no more,
And Virgins *smil'd* at what they *blush'd* before—

The following Licence of a Foreign Reign⁴
Did all the Dregs of bold *Socinus*⁵ drain;

Then Unbelieving Priests reform'd the Nation,
And taught more *Pleasant* Methods of Salvation;
Where Heav'n's Free Subjects might their *Rights* dispute,
Lest God himself shou'd seem too *Absolute*.

Pulpits their *Sacred Satire* learn'd to spare,
And *Vice admir'd*⁶ to find a *Flatt'ring* there!

Encourag'd thus, Witt's *Titans*⁷ brav'd the Skies,
And the Press groan'd with *Licenc'd Blasphemies*—
These Monsters, Criticks! with your Darts engage,
Here point your Thunder, and exhaust your Rage!

Yet shun their Fault, who, *Scandalously nice*,
Will needs *mistake* an Author *into Vice*;
All seems Infected that th' Infected spy,
As all looks yellow to the Jaundic'd Eye.⁸

LEARN then what *MORALS* Criticks ought to show,
For 'tis but *half a Judge's Task*, to *Know*.

'Tis not enough, Taste, Judgment, Learning, join;
In all you speak, let Truth and Candor⁹ shine:

That not alone what to your *Sense* is due,

All may allow; but seek your *Friendship* too.

Be *silent* always when you *doubt* your *Sense*;

9. Extremely wicked, heinous.

1. Charles II (1630–1685).

2. These include George Villiers, John Wilmot, and Charles Sackville, sixth earl of Dorset (1638–1706). "Jilts": harlots, here Charles's mistresses.

3. "Farces": Villiers, *The Rehearsal* (1671); Sir Charles Sedley, *The Mulberry Garden* (1668); and Sir George Etherege, *The Man of Mode* (1676).

4. Fashionable women often wore masks to the theater.

5. England's William III (1650–1702), whose policies increased toleration toward religious Nonconformists, came from the Netherlands.

5. Faustus Socinus (1539–1604), who developed a doctrine rejecting the divinity of Christ that was first espoused by his uncle, the Italian theologian Laelius Socinus (1525–1562).

6. Was amazed.

7. Giants born of Earth and Heaven, whom Zeus and the Olympian gods defeated in battle.

8. The Romans believed that to those suffering from jaundice (a yellow discoloration of the skin and the whites of the eyes), everything takes on a yellow tinge.

9. Impartiality.

And *speaks*, tho' *sure*, with *seeming Diffidence*:

Some positive persisting Fops we know,

Who, if *once wrong*, will needs be *always so*;

But you, with Pleasure own your Errors past,

And make each Day a *Critic!* on the last.

'Tis not enough your Counsel still be *true*,

Blunt Truths more Mischief than *nice Falshoods* do;

Men must be *taught* as if you taught them *not*;

And Things *unknown* propos'd as Things *forgot*:

Without Good *Breeding*, *Truth* is disapprov'd;

That only makes *Superior Sense below* d.

Be Niggards of Advice on no Pretence;

For the worst *Avarice* is that of *Sense*:

With mean Complacence? ne'er betray your Trust,

Nor be so *Civil* as to prove *Unjust*;

Fear not the Anger of the Wise to raise;

Those best can *bear Reproof*, who *merit Praise*.

'Twere well, might Criticks still this Freedom take;

But *Appius*³ reddens at each Word you speak,

And *stares*, *Tremendous!* with a *threatning Eye*,

Like some *fierce Tyrant* in *Old Tapestry!*

Fear most to tax an *Honourable Fool*,

Whose Right it is, *uncensur'd* to be dull;

Such without *Wit* are Poets when they please,

As without *Learning* they can take *Degrees*.⁴

Leave dang'rous *Truths* to unsuccessful *Satyrs*,⁵

And *Flattery* to fulsome *Dedicators*,

Whom, when they *Praise*, the World believes no more,

Than when they promise to give *Scribbling* o'er.

'Tis best sometimes your Censure to restrain,

And *charitably* let the Dull be *vain*:

Your Silence there is better than your *Spite*,

For who can *rail* so long as they can *write*?

Still humming on, their drowzy Course they keep,

And *lash'd* so long, like *Tops*, are lash'd *asleep*.⁶

False Steps but help them to renew the Race,

As after *Stumbling*, *Jades*⁷ will *mend* their Pace.

What Crouds of these, impenitently bold,

In *Sounds* and jingling *Syllables* grown old,

Still *run on* Poets in a raging Vein,

Ev'n to the Dregs and *Squeezings* of the *Brain*;

Strain out the last, dull droppings of their Sense,

And Rhyme with all the *Rage of Impotence!*

Such shameless *Bards* we have; and yet 'tis true,

There are as mad, abandon'd *Criticks* too.

The Bookful Blockhead, ignorantly read,

With *Loads of Learned Lumber* in his Head,

lors) could receive university degrees without fulfilling any requirements.

5. Satires.

6. When tops spin rapidly they "sleep," seeming not to move.

7. Worn-out horses.

1. Critique of, commentary on.

2. Desire to please.

3. John Dennis; Appius, in his tragedy *Appius and Virginia* (1709), was highly sensitive to criticism.

Dennis frequently used the word "tremendous."

4. Those in certain positions (e.g., privy council-

With his own Tongue still edifies his Ears,
And always *List'ning* to *Himself* appears.

All Books he reads, and all he reads assails,

From *Dryden's Fables* down to *Durfeys Tales*.⁸

With *him*, most Authors steal their Works, or buy;

*Garth*⁹ did not write his own *Dispensary*.

Name a new *Play*, and *he's* the Poet's *Friend*,

Nay show'd his Faults—but when would Poets mend?

No Place so Sacred from such Fops is barr'd,

Nor is *Paul's Church* more safe than *Paul's Church-yard*.¹

Nay, fly to *Altars*; *there* they'll talk you dead;

For *Fools* rush in where *Angels* fear to tread.

Distrustful *Sense* with modest Caution speaks;

It still looks *home*, and *short Excursions* makes;

But *ratling Nonsense* in full *Vollies* breaks;

And never shock'd, and never turn'd aside,

Bursts out, resistless, with a thundring *Tyde!*

But where's the Man, who Counsel can bestow,

Still *pleas'd* to *teach*, and yet not *proud* to *know*?

Unbiass'd, or² by *Favour* or by *Spite*;

Not *dully prepossess*, nor *blindly right*;

Tho' Learn'd, well-bred; and tho' well-bred, sincere;

Modestly bold, and Humanly severe?

Who to a *Friend* his Faults can freely show,

And gladly praise the Merit of a *Foe*?

Blest with a *Taste* exact, yet unconfin'd;

A *Knowledge* both of Books and *Humankind*;

Gen'rous Converse;³ a *Soul* exempt from *Pride*;

And *Love* to *Praise*, with *Reason* on his Side?

Such once were *Criticks*, such the Happy *Few*,

Athens and *Rome* in better Ages knew.

The mighty *Stagyrite* first left the Shore,

Spread all his Sails, and durst the Deeps explore;

He steer'd securely, and discover'd far,

Led by the Light of the *Mæonian*⁴ Star.

Poets, a Race long unconfin'd and free,

Still fond and proud of *Savage Liberty*,

Receiv'd his Laws,⁵ and stood convinc'd 'twas fit

Who conquer'd *Nature*, shou'd preside o'er *Wit*.

Horace still charms with graceful Negligence,

And without Method *talks* us into Sense,

Will like a *Friend* familiarly convey

The *truest Notions* in the *easiest way*.⁶

He, who Supream in Judgment, as in Wit,

Might boldly censure, as he boldly writ;

8. *Tales Tragical and Comical* (1704), by Thomas D'Urfey (1653–1723). *Dryden's Fables: Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1700), a set of verse translations.

9. Sir Samuel Garth (1661–1719), later a friend of Pope's, was (wrongly) accused of falsely claiming authorship of the mock-heroic *The Dispensary* (1699).

1. Where booksellers had stalls.

2. Either.

3. Well-bred conversation.

4. Of Maconia (region of Asia Minor), where Homer was said to have been born.

5. Rules for literary composition.

6. Least formal, highly accessible.

Rome's ancient *Genius*,⁹ o'er its *Ruins* spread,
Shakes off the *Dust*, and rears his rev'rend Head!
Then *Sculpture* and her *Sister-Arts* revive;
Stones leap'd to *Form*, and *Rocks* began to *live*;
With *sweeter Notes* each *rising Temple* rung;
A *Raphael* painted, and a *Vida*¹⁰ sung!
Immortal *Vida*! on whose honour'd Brow
The Poet's *Bays* and Critick's *Ivy*¹¹ grow:
*Cremona*¹² now shall ever boast thy Name,
As next in Place to *Mantua*, next in Fame.
But soon by Impious Arms from *Latium*¹³ chas'd,
Their *ancient Bounds* the banish'd Muses past;
Thence Arts o'er all the *Northern World* advance;
But *Critic Learning* flourish'd most in *France*.
The *Rules*, a Nation born to serve, obeys,
And *Boileau*¹⁴ still in Right of *Horace* sways,
But *we*, brave Britons, *Foreign Laws* despis'd,
And kept *unconquer'd*, and *unciviliz'd*,
Fierce for the *Liberties of Wit*, and bold,
We still defy'd the *Romans*, as of old.
Yet some there were, among the *sounder Few*,
Of those who *less presum'd*, and *better knew*,
Who durst assert the *juster Ancient Cause*,
And here *restor'd Wit's Fundamental Laws*.
Such was the Muse, whose *Rules* and *Practice* tell,
Nature's chief Master-piece is writing well.¹⁵
Such was *Roscomon*¹⁶—not more *learn'd* than *good*,
With *Manners* gen'rous as his *Noble Blood*;
To him the *Wit of Greece* and *Rome* was known,
And ev'ry Author's *Merit*, but his own.
Such late was *Walsh*,¹⁷—the Muse's Judge and Friend,
Who justly knew to blame or to commend;
To *Failings mild*, but *zealous* for *Desert*;
The *clearest Head*, but *the sincerest Heart*.
This humble Praise, lamented *Shade*! receive,
This Praise at least a grateful Muse may give!
The Muse, whose early Voice you taught to Sing,
Prescrib'd her *Heights*, and prun'd her tender *Wing*,
(Her Guide now lost) no more attempts to rise,
But in low Numbers short Excursions tries:
Content, if hence th' Unlearn'd their *Wants* may view,
The Learn'd reflect on what before they knew:
Careless of *Censure*, nor too fond of *Fame*,

1. Guardian or protective spirit of a place.
2. Marco Girolamo Vida (ca. 1480–1566), Italian poet who wrote in Latin; Raphael: Raffaello Santi (1483–1520), Italian painter.
3. Symbol of poetry and learning.
4. City in northern Italy.
5. Italy. Rome was sacked by Hapsburg mercenaries in 1527; Pope suggests that learning then fled to other parts of Europe, especially France.
6. Nicolas Boileau (1636–1711), French critic and poet; his works include the poem *L'Art poétique* (1674).
7. Wentworth Dillon (ca. 1633–1685), fourth earl of Roscommon, poet and critic; author of the *Essay on Translated Verse* (1684).
8. William Walsh (1663–1708), whom Dryden praised as "the best critic of our nation"; he was Pope's friend and mentor.
9. Quoted from the *Essay on Poetry* (1682), by Pope's friend and supporter John Sheffield (1648–1721).
10. Wentworth Dillon (ca. 1633–1685), fourth earl of Roscommon, poet and critic; author of the *Essay on Translated Verse* (1684).
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Yet judg'd with *Coolness* tho' he sung with *Fire*;
His *Precepts* teach but what his *Works* inspire.
Our *Criticks* take a contrary Extream,
They judge with *Fury*, but they write with *Fle'me*.⁷
Nor suffers *Horace* more in wrong *Translations*.
By *Wits*, than *Criticks* in as wrong *Quotations*.
See *Dionysius*⁸ *Homer's* Thoughts refine,
And call new Beauties forth from ev'ry Line!
Fancy and Art in gay *Petronius*⁹ please,
The *Scholar's Learning*, with the *Courtier's Ease*.
In grave *Quintilian's*¹⁰ copious Work we find
The *justest Rules*, and clearest *Method* join'd;
Thus *useful Arms* in *Magazines*¹¹ we place,
All rang'd in *Order*, and dispos'd with *Grace*,
But less to please the Eye, than arm the Hand,
Still fit for Use, and ready at Command.
Thee, bold *Longinus*!¹² all the *Nine*¹³ inspire,
And bless their *Critick* with a *Poet's Fire*.
An ardent *Judge*, who Zealous in his Trust,
With *Warmth* gives Sentence, yet is always Just;
Whose own *Example* strengthens all his *Laws*,
And *Is himself* that great *Sublime* he draws.
Thus long succeeding *Criticks* justly reign'd;
License repress'd, and *useful Laws* ordain'd;
Learning and *Rome* alike in Empire grew
And Arts still follow'd where her *Eagles*¹⁴ flew;
From the same Age saw *Learning* fall, and *Rome*.
With *Tyranny*, then *Superstition* join'd,
As that the *Body*, this enslav'd the *Mind*;
Much was *Believ'd*, but little *understood*,
And to be *dull* was constru'd to be *good*;
A second Deluge Learning thus o'er-run,
And the *Monks* finish'd what the *Goths* begun.¹⁵
At length, *Erasmus*,¹⁶ that great, injur'd Name,
(The *Glory* of the Priesthood, and the *Shame*!)
Stemm'd the wild Torrent of a *barb'rous Age*,
And drove those *Holy Vandals* off the Stage.
But see! each *Muse*, in *Leo's*¹⁷ Golden Days,
Starts from her Trance, and trims her wither'd Bays!

7. Phlegm, thought to cause sluggishness and indifference; it was one of the four humors in early physiology.
8. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Greek rhetor and historian active in Rome ca. 30–7 B.C.E.
9. Petronius Arbiter, the author of the *Satyricon* (1st c. C.E.); he may have been the courtier Petronius who was the judge on questions of taste at the court of Nero (emperor 54–68).
10. Roman rhetorician (ca. 30/35–100 C.E.); his "copious work" is the 12-volume *Institutio Oratoria* (see above).
11. Storehouses.
12. Greek rhetorician (1st c. C.E.), to whom the treatise *On Sublimity* is attributed (see above).
13. The 9 Muses.
14. Emblems on the Roman army's banners.
15. That is, the medieval theologians put the finishing touches on the damage done to learning by the Goths and Vandals, the Germanic peoples who had earlier sacked Rome.
16. Dutch scholar and philosopher (1466–1536), author of *The Praise of Folly*, a humanist satire on the abuses of learning. He was "the glory of the priesthood" because of his erudition and goodness, and his "shame" in that he was persecuted.
17. Pope Leo X (1475–1521), a patron of learning and the arts during the Italian Renaissance.