

A man's way of expressing himself should not be _enigmatical_, but he should know whether he has something to say or whether he has not. It is an uncertainty of expression which makes German writers so dull. The only exceptional cases are those where a man wishes to express something that is in some respect of an illicit nature. As anything that is far-fetched generally produces the reverse of what the writer has aimed at, so do words serve to make thought comprehensible; but only up to a certain point. If words are piled up beyond this point they make the thought that is being communicated more and more obscure. To hit that point is the problem of style and a matter of discernment; for every superfluous word prevents its purpose being carried out. Voltaire means this when he says: _l'adjectif est l'ennemi du substantif_. (But, truly, many authors try to hide their poverty of thought under a superfluity of words.)