

The Athenian Mercury :

Numb. 6

Saturday, April, 11. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**hat is the Soul of Man, and whether Eternal?

Ans. 'Tis a known Story of the Philosopher, who being ask'd what God was, took at first a dayes time to answer it, and when that was elaps'd, demanded still more time for the Resolution, 'till at length he was compell'd to acknowledge 'twas an unfathomable Depth wherein he might soon lose himself, but never find a Bottom. The excellent *Epietus* thus accosts his Friend, — "Thy Reason makes thee a kin to GOD—see that thou do nothing unworthy so great a Relation. If then the Soul be so like God, it must be difficult to find that out to perfection, though something may be known of that as well as its Maker. An exact Definition we can't pretend to give, nor perhaps any Man upon Earth, since our actual Knowledge being so short that we understand not Matter it self, no wonder if what we now suppose, and shall endeavour to prove immaterial, shou'd extreamly gravel and confound us: Some tolerable Description then will be as far as we shall pretend to advance, but therein hope to give somewhat distincter Notion of the thing than is usually brought, asserting nothing but what is or shall be made intelligible, and that from such Principles as are either agreed upon by all Sects in Philosophy, or have the as undoubted suffrage of Experience or common Reason, and which we hope will be able to solve most of the Objections brought against this Doctrine; with all requiring thus much Justice of the Reader not to condemn any thing before he has thoroughly consider'd it, and then readily granting him the Philosophical Liberty of making what Objections he pleases.

Our Notion then of the Soul of Man is — That 'tis an Immaterial Substance made after the Image of GOD, which together with a rightly Organiz'd Body, makes a Man — The Explanation whereof will we hope give a tolerable Resolution of this grand Question.

1. 'Tis a Substance, which we prove, 1. By the Definition of a Substance — A thing subsisting by it self, and subject to Accidents. That the Soul subsists by it self, will be granted, if we can prove that 'tis not in any thing as an Accident, that is, so as to be absent without the injury or destruction of the Subject, which will be done anon, when we prove 'tis no Accident. That 'tis subject to Accidents, is plain, and that too as a last Subject; Learning, and a hundred other things are Accidents, yet we see some learned, others unlearned, &c.

2. It must be a Substance, because 'tis no Accident — and one of the two it must be if it be any thing: (and that there is some Principle of Action within us, none deny.) This is prov'd both from the general Notion of an Accident, hinted at before, which denies it to be a last Subject, as the Soul is; and more clearly by removing all those Accidents which are pretended to constitute what we call the Soul of Man. Among which 'twill be sufficient if we prove 'tis no quality or temperament of the Body arising from different qualities and humours. A made Quality can't act, though when in a requisite Subject it may in some sense enable it to act. But this Principle within us does it self act, both upon the Body and Ideas which it has form'd either with or without its aid. And if one Quality cannot act, no more can several, or I know not what Resultance from all together. Further, were this Principle of Action within us, which we call the Soul nothing but such a sort of Crasis of the Body, consisting of, or resulting from its different humours, this Soul must necessarily decay as this Temperament is injur'd or weaken'd by Diseases or approaching Death. But nothing more common than to see Persons just going out of the World, when to be sure the Body is in sufficient disorder, enjoying their Reason, in as high a degree as ever, and not rarely more intensely than while in perfect Health, which not only proves this Principle of Action within (whatever it is) something far nobler than a fleeting kind of I know not what quality or qualities, but leads us fairly to the first and remote Difference of the Soul, its immateriality, that very indigestible Term to some Persons, without fear of whose Censures or Arguments we shall fall on that

Second Branch of our Definition, and endeavour, we hope not unsuccessfully to prove it — An Immaterial Substance. And this we shall do,

1 By removing any suppos'd absurdity or contradiction in

those Terms. The World has seen a set of Philosophers who will pretend to regulate both the thoughts and words of all Mankind by their own Notions and Whimsies. Mr. Hobbs would fain teach Aristotle to speak, and will neither let him nor us call a spade a spade, because he thinks a hand-barrow wou'd be a proper word for't. Never had Man grosser Notions, though he pretends to be the most refin'd of Men, and neither to speak or think without a demonstration, this mayn't be so much digression as some will be apt to call it. The common Idiom of our Language and the vulgar Discourse generally use the word substance in the grosser sense, for something they can feel, and which for that reason they generally call substantial, making the very dullest of of their senses the sole Judge of what is so very Nice, that even in the Judgment of Mr. Hobbs himself it often flies our senses, and perhaps in some Cases our very Reason — Nor do the People, for this very Cause, ever dream that the Air is a Substance, (making that and Ghost terms convertible though we are sure 'tis so, as that the Earth it self is. However this Notion extreamly pleas'd those short-thinking Persons who were glad to find any opportunity of laughing at what they did not understand, and was accordingly improv'd by the forenam'd Gentleman. But should we sift this matter to the bottom, 'tis the thing, not the word they are angry with, and if we once prove there is such a thing as an immaterial substance, which is just as great an impropriety as rational Animal, they may grieve their Hearts out, before they make us think the words absurd or ridiculous.

That the Soul is a substance we have already prov'd that it may without any absurdity be an immaterial substance, we have endeavour'd to show, that it is such a substance we shall thus proceed to evince.

The Essences of things are known by their Properties and Operations: Whatever then acts beyond the power of matter cannot be matter, is something above matter, is immaterial. This the Soul of Man does, therefore it deserves that Title.

The grand Question it must be confess'd, is still, How far the Power of Matter reaches? or if that ben't so proper a Term, How far Matter may be modify'd by a superiour Agent, and to what finess it may be reduc'd and how curious Machines may be found out of it: That we don't pretend to resolve, but this we may venture to say, that if we can find something which has no relation, or congruity with Matter, or at least is not such; upon such an Object we may conclude Matter cannot naturally act. But such Notions and things we are sure are within us: As for Example — Conjunction and Division, or Affirmation and Negation; still continu'd-Reflection, with a possibility of still drawing it finer and finer almost infinitely: These things meer Matter, seems not capable of, how subtle and fine soever you'll suppose it, because it acts only by Images, but we have no Image of Affirmation and Negation, or Reflection either; Actions we are sure pass within us, and which we learnt not from abroad, but cou'd exercise as long since as we are able to remember. The Words indeed by which we express those Actions we receive from abroad, but not the things; I have a Notion of a Tree, a House, a Man, in my Fancy, and can shut my Eye and reflect vividly enough on the shapes of 'em depicted in my Brain; but desie all the World to show me a Picture of that Reflection, and so onward, or to tell me in what Colours — the Act of Affirmation and Negation, I will and I will not, are inscrib'd in the Fancy.

Nay further, the very Notion or Idea of an immaterial or spiritual substance, which we find much after the same manner with those before mention'd instampt on our minds wou'd be a very considerable Argument of the truth and reality of the thing it self, cou'd we once prove it innate, and not receiv'd from outward Images by Discourse or Reading — But this 'tis Possible in a great measure to perform; for we find no beginning in History of this Notion. No Age, nor perhaps Place where 'tis not believ'd; confusedly or not is not the Question, since 'tis enough we are thus far certain — that a State after Death has been universally credited, and that we have something in us wch survives our Bodies: But the Politick Institutions and Laws of perhaps all Nations in the World we can track and discover; of this we can never find the root, nor ever shall any where but in our selves; how long soever we continue the fruitless Enquiry.

The next Member of our *Description* of the *Soul* is, That 'tis made after the Image of God] Nor will that be found so loose or indistinct a Notion as some will at the first glance perhaps imagine it. I believe *Moses* wrote as a *Philosopher* as well as a *Divine*, and at least in what concerns the *Happiness of Man*, under which some competent knowledge of his own Soul seems to be included, gives as just Notions of things: He tells us, that *Man was Created after Gods Image*; this I don't expect should pass with those who pretend themselves so averse to Authority without Reason — 'Tis from *Experience* then, both of others and themselves we are to argue with'em. Accordingly we say that *Man* was made with a dependance on, subserviency to, and Image of God, as Beasts bear the same Relation to Man; and add, that this Image will very much explain the Nature of the humane Soul, and give us some of those incommunicable Properties there, of which no Beast can ever pretend to, though they have some sort of image or resemblance of them

We all then acknowledge, that that adorable perfection who made the World is unbounded or Infinite in all his attributes. We shall instance in some of them, and shew the Resemblance our Souls bear towards them, both as to their extent and perfection; and these are the knowledge of God; his Power and Sovereignty; and his Justice and Love of order. Now the Soul has a lively Image or Resemblance of the first of these in its infinite Capacity and unbounded desire of Knowledge, which, whatever the Sea may have, has hardly any Shore to which it shall go and no further, nor can ever be satisfied with less than an Infinite Object. It has secondly an Image of the Sovereignty and Power of God, in that Empire it has over it self and the visible World, and that noble Liberty it has towards represented Objects: This desire too is inexpleable by all the World, and carries a sort of an infiniteness with it. Lastly, it bears about with it an Image of the Justice of God, in its natural Love to Order, and that Conscience which it can never totally efface, but which sits enthron'd in the Mind, is absolute and Sovereign there, can never be forc'd or control'd, but passes Judgment within its self both of a mans own Actions, and those of all the Universe.

Nor is any of this suppos'd only, 'tis plain undeniable matter of Fact, and what all the World must acknowledge, if they be either just or ingenious.

But none of all these Divine Signatures are, that we know of, in Brute Creatures, which are but meer modify'd matter, nor ought we to grant any powers in them which cannot be prov'd and clear'd by such Acts as are not equivocal and uncertain. Their Knowledge, if they have any thing can be call'd so, has nothing like Infinite in it, nor so much as a Capacity thereunto. 'Tis but the faint Image of ours, as ours of a higher, and must needs be as dilute and weak as the Rays of the Sun when reflected and refracted several times from one Object to another. 'Tis only or principally for the Service of man, to whom 'tis of much more use than to themselves: 'Tis limited one way, for one direct use and end. There appears no consciousness of it, nor Reflection upon it, abstractedly considered, as we are sure we have in our own, and can never prove in theirs; and so in the other Instances mentioned.

The last Clause of the Description is this, [which united with a fitly organiz'd body, constitutes a man.] As what went before distinguish'd it from meer matter, so this does from meer spirit, or Angel. — As for the latter branch of the Question, Whether this Soul be Eternal? If what's already prov'd stands firm, that will hardly be deny'd For if by eternal is intended only Immortal, as I presume the Querist only means, or eternal a parte post as the Schools call it; it must unavoidably be so, because 'tis immaterial; for I can conceive no means of its ceasing to be, because I can have no notion of a dissolution where there are no parts, or none without each other.

* * * I was resolv'd to have discuss'd another great Question nearly ally'd to this of the Soul of man, namely concerning the knowledge of Brutes, and what Principles they are act'd by in those strange things they perform. — But this now dispatcht being of great moment, and taking up more time than was designed, that must be postponed to the next Tuesday.

Quest. 2. Do words express things as they are in their own Nature?

Ans. Yes they do; for if our words express not the things which we conceive in our Minds, as they are in their own Natures, then our Conceptions are erroneous, and our words improper or false; and if there be not an adequation of our Conceptions with the things we conceive, there can be no metaphysical truth in us; wick consisteth in the agreement of our thoughts with the things, as eibical truth doth in the consent of our words to our thoughts, Our Conceptions are our internal words which represent real things, and our external words represent these Con-

ceptions, and, by consequence, they express things as they are in their natures; So Adam in Paradise gave Names to the Creatures according to their Natures, and so have wise men ever since. The Latines call the Sea Mare, quasi amarum, from its saltness or bitterness, for it is so in its own nature.

Quest. 3. Whether Judicial Astrology is lawful?

Ans. Amongst all Sciences I know not of any one so ridiculous; the Art being a superstructure upon false Foundations. The whole is too much to treat on here, I will only expose the Ground-work, and leave the World to judge what that building must be which is erected on such stuff. — The first business of the Astrologers is to take the Position of the Planets, and examine their Aspects, Dignities, Debilities, &c. An Aspect is the difference of degrees between such and such Planets, as a Trine, Quatile, Sextile, &c. A Dignity or Debility (according to Oliganus) is the increase or decrease of the innate Vertue of the Planet by being in such or such a sign of the Zodiac, besides Retrogradation, Station, Direction have their Dignities and Debilities assigned 'em, &c. too tedious to repeat: But by the way, why should a Station be charged with two debilities, whereas in reason it ought to have Dignities, being stronger in influence (if any) by its fixing. Why should a Cazimi be five fortitudes, and yet Combustion, which is nearer the Sun, and by consequence of a greater influence (if any) have five Debilities. And how should a Sextile and Trine be good, and a Quatile, which is between both, and farther from an Opposition than a Trine, be bad. Again, Saturn, Jupiter and Mars from their Conjunction of the Sun to their Opposition have two Fortitudes, and from their Opposition to their Conjunction have two Debilities: And yet in the great Semi-circle that carries from Opposition to Conjunction, they are far nearer the Sun, and therefore (if at any time) much stronger than in the beginning of that Semicircle that leads from their Conjunction to their Opposition. — Again, Mars is hot because 'tis red, Saturn cold because pale, &c. Now 'tis demonstrable that Stars are opaque and dark bodies, only they borrow their light from the Reflection of the Suns beams upon the Earth, and are probably as cold as the Earth it self, it being remarkable that the greatest Frosts happen when the Skye appears the most Starry; all which Suppositions want reason as much as they do demonstration. — But to ruine the whole body of Astrology at once, We assert that there is no real Zodiac in Heaven, or if ye will, no Heaven, for such a Zodiac where these Impostors would have Houses tenantable by Trignons, Triplicities, &c. 'Tis an old Error of Ptolomy and his Followers, who, not understanding the true System of the World, and the Motion of the Earth, in which is solv'd the Anticipation of the Equinoxes, have fram'd an Heaven above Cælum Stellatum, and a Zodiac that did not recede from East to West as the starry Zodiac does, which some of the most learned Astrologers are so ingenious as to confess. Whereupon it appears that all the noise of Exaltation, Triplicity, Trignons, Aspects, &c. are a fardel of Gibberish Nullities, invented on purpose to abuse the Credulity of Children and Fools.

Thus much for Astrologers and Scholars to judge of, and for the sake of others, we add if the Stars could infer a necessity of such and such Events, Mans endeavours are fruitless. — That all born at the same Moment should have the same Fortunes; That two Duellists desiring to know their Fate, and coming to an Astrologer at the same time, should by one Position of the Heavens be resolv'd they both should be Conquerors, or both conquered. — That Astrologers, for all their knowing what Climate is best to live in, when to travail, &c. can never tell the best for themselves, but are generally mean, little needy fellows, whose Life gives their Pretensions the Lye. That though these pretend to foretel the greatest Events, as the rise and fall of Kingdoms, they are ignorant in little ones, as their own Fate. — This Art takes all men off from their dependance on Heaven, teaching them to attribute to the Creatures what is due to the Creator. An Astrologer is the most notorious Lyar, by saying Venus causes Adultery, Mars Murder, Jupiter Righteousness, &c. I have done, only I will propose one Query to the Astrologers, and if they answer it, and tell me by what Rule, I promise an open Recantation of all I have said; the Query is, Who is the Author of this Answer?

Quest. 4. An liceat mulieribus bellum gerere?

Ans. Philosophi voluerunt, ut alia exercitia ita bella mulieribus cum viris esse communia; verum Scriptura docet ordinarie eas familiam curare debere, & rationem habere pudicitiae; ita tamen ut, si necessitas Reip. conservandæ id exegerit, debeant milites juvare; & si principes foeminae fuerint, eas posse exercitui interesse, & aliquomodo præesse, ut exemplum Deborah Judic. 4. & aliarum docuit: ordinarie vero militiæ studere non debent.