

# The Athenian Mercury :

Dumb. 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 *Crisis 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 sence, 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 instampts 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 wick 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 we 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 undenyable *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.

\* \* \* T was resolv'd to have discuss 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 *eternal 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, Quartile, 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 *Zodiack*, 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 *Quartile*, 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 Zodiack* in *Heaven*, or if ye will, no *Heaven*, for such a *Zodiack* where these *Impostors* would have *Houses tenable* by *Trigons, 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 *Aequinoxes*, have fram'd an *Heaven above Cælum Stellatum*, and a *Zodiack* that did not recede from *East to West* as the *starry Zodiack* does, which some of the most learned *Astrologers* are so ingenious as to confess. Whereupon it appears that all the noise of *Exaltation, Triplicity, Trigons, 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 *Duelists* 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 *Liar*, 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 pudicitia; ita tamen ut, si necessitas Reip. conservandæ id exegerit, debeant milites juvare; & si principes scæminæ fuerint, eas posse exercitui interesse, & aliquomodo præesse, ut exemplum Deborah Judic. 4. & aliarum docuit: ordinarie vero militia studere non debent.