

# The Athenian Mercury:

Resolving WEEKLY all the most

Nice and Curious Questions

Propos'd by the INGENIOUS.

Licensed and Entred according to Order.

Quest. 1. **W**Hat sort of Creatures the World in the Moon may be supposed to be inhabited by? Whether they are governed by revealed Laws as we are, and whether they have bodies like ours, and what sort of Nourishment or Life they have?

Ans. We won't be so uncivil to the Gentleman who sends this Question, as to call him a *Lunatick* one, as some of the Fathers do that upon which the old Controversie about *Easter* depended. All we shall say is, that the Question makes a little too much haste, and supposes on faster than any probability can follow it. Indeed we must take leave to say that the matter will hardly bear a grave Answer, since we have not so much as *one footstep* of either Experience or Reason to guide us therein, and we don't pretend to Revelation. Whether the *Moon* be a World or no like ours, all our Telescopes cannot yet give us any tolerable certainty. We see indeed *Spots* upon the Face of it, some transient, others permanent, but can make little of 'em; thus far perhaps we may go, and I'd be unwilling to venture a step farther, because 'tis an easie matter to *stumble in the dark*,—That by what appears to us it may be habitable, since the *Shades*, and *Light*, &c. wou'd persuade us 'tis a solid body, perhaps in it self opacous too; nor have we any Reason to think it should have so much as any light of its own, nor an igneous or luminous Orb as the Sun is, because we can't find the least sensible heat proceeding from its rays, though both shining in their own full vigour, and contracted in a Burning-Glass, whereas we have seen Glasses made of that exquisite Perfection as to gather the scattered Rays of the Sun at a North-window in a dark day when its body was clouded, so as to give a sensible warmth.—Habitable therefore we deny not but it may be, but what sort of *Inhabitants* dwell there, what their Knowledge, Laws, Customs and Manner of Life, we think it no great disgrace to confess our Ignorance in, and believe no man can resolve the *Querist*, unless he'll please to consult *Domingo Gonzales*, or *Bergerac's* true History of those Regions, where he may meet with a very satisfactory Account as to all the Points in Question.

Quest. 2. Where was the Land of Nod? &c.

Ans. This Question has been sent in twice or thrice, by some Persons who seem to think themselves very witty, and their Objections unanswerable. But a thousand things which

at first sight appear much more difficult than these, are blown off at the first thought. In answer to this, what if we shou'd say the Land of *Nod* was *no where*, or *every where*,—'twould serve well enough to puzzle those who pretend to do as much by others. It may be an *apellative* only, signifying a wandering and vagabond sort of Life, as some of the greatest Commentators explain it. But if it be a proper Name, we may be most likely to find it there where we find the City *Enoch*, soon after built by *Cain*. Now this City being the first City in the World, the Name, Scituation, and Memory of it might very easily be preserved by *Noah* and his Sons after the Flood, and the Country thereabouts in after Ages be called by that Name. Accordingly we find the *Henochians* in several Places in the earliest Ages about *Pontus*, *Colchis*, *Uz*, East of *Eden*, as this Land is described, where if a determin'd Place, we shall fix the Land of *Nod*, till we see any reason to the contrary.

As for *Cain's* going from the Presence of the Lord, it may fairly enough be interpreted—his losing Gods Favour and protecting presence by his sins. This the forementioned ingenious Gentleman thinks the sense of the words, but with all respect due to so great a man, there's another, which to us, seems more probable, namely,—That he only was removed from the publick Service of God, than exercised in his Father *Adams* Family. Both senses are safe, let the Impartial Reader chuse which he likes best.

Quest. 3. Where extinguish'd Fire goes?

Ans. The more gross excrementitious parts of it fall down to the Earth, and the more subtle and pure mount up to its Element; the reason why we cannot see it so soon as ever its nourishment and combustible matter is taken from it, is very satisfactorily answered, *Jul. Scal. Excer. 9. viz. n̄ diaphanū sive perspicuum, nisi condensetur est adeo quia visum non terminat*, that is a *Diaphanous* or transparent Body, except it be condens'd (as fire is when 'tis nourish'd with matter) is not visible.

Quest. 4. Whether there's any such thing as true Friendship in the World, and wherein it consists?

Ans. I look upon this as one of the most difficult Questions yet propos'd, though 'tis worded a little preposterously.—We shall therefore invert the order of it, and then endeavour to give it Satisfaction.—In order to which



which let us first enquire into the Notion thereof, or find out wherein it consists. In the Description whereof we'd avoid two Extreams, one the explaining it by Terms more dark than the thing it self, as an *unaccountable* I know not what *Sympathy* whereinto some will resolve it; the other tying our selves to the strict rigid Definitions that the Philosophers give us of it, who make *Virtue* so much of its Essence, that none can according to them be *Friends* besides good Men, which seems too fine and narrow a Notion, and contradicted by our common Experience, which often enough presents us with Instances of the highest Faith, Generosity and Kindness towards each other in those who are of a far different Character.

The Description then which we rather chuse of Friendship is, — *That 'tis an intimate Union of Minds between two Persons, founded either on Similitude or Benefits, and productive of the most noble and generous Actions.*

'Tis an *Union of Minds*: ] A thing easily enough understood, though hard to explain, every one knows it when he feels it, and for this we may appeal to every one who has it. That 'tis not a *Union of Body*, that it consists not in kind Expressions and great Protestations, we have as much certainty of, as that there are *thousands married who are not Friends*, and ten thousand will complement you very handsomely, who at the same time if they had a handsome opportunity, would cut your Throat.

*It must be of two Persons only.* ] 'Twill be readily granted that many Persons may behave themselves friendly towards each other, and so be said to have a sort of *partial Friendship*. But yet still one thing is certain, as was urg'd formerly in the case of *Polygamy*, that the more *Sharers* there are in a Heart, the smaller must the parts be which every one possesses. But we speak here of *Friendship* in its height and vigour, not so *dilute* and weak as what we find in common Converse, or ordinary Acquaintance, and therefore it admits of no more than *two* at once as the Subject of it — for in any other Circumstances the Union could not be so strict and *intimate* as the Definition here, and the Nature of the thing it self requires.

*It must be founded either on mutual Similitudes or Benefits:* ] The only Reasons and Seeds of Friendship. On Similitude, for no man loves, at least intensely, what is unlike him, though sometimes perhaps he may honour it; and this Similitude may affect without distinct reflection thereon, though generally we observe something alike in those we make our Friends, either in Body, Circumstances, Humour, or manner of Life. Though after all, I think *Benefits* are the Foundation of many more Friendships than the other, unless we'll chuse to say that a man principally and usually confers Benefits where he finds some likeness or congruity to himself. Expect not such a thing as a *perfectly disinterested Friendship in the World*, 'tis impossible, 'tis ridiculous, nay, I question whether the *Angels* themselves wou'd love one another, were it not for the Pleasure they find in so doing.

Lastly, 'Tis *productive of the most noble and generous Actions*: ] That's the effect and end of it, nothing is a greater Contradiction, or greater Nonsense, than a *barren Friendship*. — 'Tis the most restless thing in the World, and just contrary to its opposites, Hatred or Envy, which are never pleas'd, but when doing Mischief, is never well satisfied but while 'tis doing of good, and conferring of Benefits — and those of the highest Nature. A *poor man* may be really as magnanimous as a *Cresus* or a *Cesar*, and no benefit in the World like Counsel, Comfort, Sympathizing with Sorrow or Joy, which are in the Power of all men to dispose of where they see convenient.

Thus have we endeavour'd to give a rude kind of sketch or some few *outlines* of this noble Virtue. If now we are ask'd whether there be any such thing in the World, we answer, there may be, because the notion on't is not impossible, but where it *actually* is we won't pretend to discover.

Quest. 5. *Why may there not be invented a perpetual Motion?*

Ans. *Archimedes* that indefatigable Inquirer into Mathematical Speculation, having this Question propos'd unto him, viz. *Whether he could remove the Globe of this World*, he made this Answer, *That if the proposer could find another Basis to fix the foot of his Engine upon, he would undertake to remove it.* In like manner we say, *Find us Bodies or Matter that are qualified for a perpetual Motion, and we'll undertake the affirmative of the Question.* But if upon a particular search of every individual Particle of the Creation, we find nothing but what is subject to change (*not by flux of time, for time destroys nothing, but by*) Motion and Antipathies in Nature, then it follows that *the impossibility of perpetual duration, necessitates the impossibility of a perpetual Motion.*

Quest. 6. *What is to be thought of the Transmigration of Souls?*

Ans. The Notion that we have of it is, that the great Propagators of that Doctrine, as *Plato, Pythagoras, Plotinus, &c.* taught it (not because they believed it, but) to stir up their Auditors to a desire of great and vertuous Actions, by telling them if in habits of Vertue their Children should be born, the Souls of the greatest Heroes would chuse them as proper Mansions for their actuation, and so on the contrary; but it appears so ridiculous a Doctrine to any thinking Persons, that 'tis scarce worth the Confutation; however for the Inquirers sake (who perhaps may think he has got the Soul of *Empedocles*) I will throw away one Argument to proselyte him, viz. In a Transmigration of one Soul in and out of several Bodies, which of all these Bodies must the Soul be joyned to at the day of Judgment? and if it has acted some that have been wicked and some good, how can it justly undergoe one Sentence.

#### Advertisement.

**T**HIS is to satisfy the Gentleman that desired to know whether he or his Friends might propose their Questions in French or Dutch, because they could not write English, that they may (or in any other Language) and shall have Answers to them as soon as we have dispatch'd those Questions we have already received, which we hope to do by the 20th. of this Instant; after which time All curious Inquirers may begin to send in their New Questions as directed in the first Gazette, viz. to be left at Mr. Smith's Coffee-house in Stocks-market. Likewise those Gentlemen that sent us one Mathematical, and three Latin Questions this Week, shall soon hear from us to their full Satisfaction.

✂ This Paper will be published every Tuesday and Saturday.