

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, July 21. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**hat's the King of France doing at this present?

Ans. We have already given our Judgment against Astrology, and all the Folly of *Horary Questions*, &c. and are as willing to acknowledge as our Enemies to assert, that we are no *Conjurers* — But if the Querist will be content with a *Guess*, he is very welcome to't, and accordingly we answer, That in probability he's *Praying*, for the same Reason, and with the same Devotion that Seamen are when they have six foot water in Hold.

Quest. 2. Why you pretend to such strange things, and yet in effect tell the World nothing but what we all know already?

Ans. There's another of 'em, but we must take the Liberty to say, that we doubt the Gentleman who proposed it is hardly a fair Representative for all the World, since he has chosen himself a *Parliament Man* for the Universe, as *Trinculo*, by his own Vote declar'd himself Viceroy over the *Enchanted Islands*. To be graver, its true in some sence, *Nil dictum quod non dictum prius*, The World is Learned, and we wish it more so. The finest things that can now be said, are little else than *Old Sence* with a *New Turn*; and if ye deny this, all the Orators in it must stand still, and neither *Divines* or *Lawyers* get any more than our *Athenian Mercury*. Yet still, what one Man knows, another does not, and diffusing knowledge is a sort of improving it, perhaps the best way; and besides, we are pretty confident, there are very many *Questions* here, some of moment, which were never before publicly decided, especially in *Morality*, which is by far the most useful part of *Knowledge*; and 'twould be no shame for us, shou'd we own our chief aim in this design, were to convey under a pleasant dress, *Notions* of *Vertue* and *Honour* into the *Commonalty*, and rather to make 'em better than wiser, tho' indeed in one we do both; and cannot doubt in the mean while but the *Curious* and *Ingenious Spirits* will seldom take up our Paper, but they'll find something or other in't that may both divert and please 'em. For the less candid Judges, they have done all they can against it already, but avail nothing — The Paper still lives, and is still like to do so, in spite of all their *Ill-nature*, and find that reception which we will say the the design thereof deserves.

Quest. 3. Why Men dream of things they never thought of?

Ans. We deny they ever do; nay, 'tis impossible they ever shou'd, unless in a *Divine Dream*, and that of such a Nature, that both the *Thing* and the *Notion* thereof should be revealed together, (but of such Dreams see afterwards.) We must here explain our meaning, the *Fancy* we own, has power to join things together, when they are before in the *Mind*, or to *coyn Monsters* and *Impossibilities* out of real things, sleeping as well as waking: For Example, I have the *Notion* of my self, a *Horse*, a *Road*, *Thieves*, *Water*, *Fire*, a *House*, *Night*, or what else you'll name, treasured up in my *Memory*. These my *Fancy* in a *Dream* may chance to shuffle together, and make me think, I'm a *Horseback*, and upon the *Road*, that I there meet with *Thieves*, that I take the *Water* to avoid them, and lodge in an *House*, which in the *Night-time* happens to be a fire. These things we have all thought on before, taken distinctly or asunder, but never just in that very order. So in *Fictitious Beings*, *Beings* of Reason, as some *Metaphysicians*, or more properly of *Fancy*, as others, when we make impossible *Conjunctions* of *Things*. I have seen a *Man*, I have seen a *Dog*; out of these two real things *Fancy* forms one *Fictitious Being*, either sleeping or waking, and makes a monstrous Creature, partly canine, and partly humane, which a *Painter* can describe on Paper, a Wall, &c. tho' it first must have a being in his own *Fancy*. All this we own the *Fancy* has power to perform, but never to start any *Notion* absolutely new, and independent on the *Frame* of *Things* before treasured in the *Memory*:

And for this we appeal to any Man's Experience, and when the Querist (or any other) can instance in any thing he ever dream'd of that he never thought of before, in that sence wherein we have here explained it, we'll then tell him why he does so.

Quest. 4. What is the most delightful thing to a Man in this World?

Ans. Much as he is, — If intemperate and luxurious he delights most in what he ought most to be ashamed of. *Virtuous Men* will take the greatest delight in fair and virtuous Actions, the noblest whereof we esteem to be our obliging a *Friend*, or forgiving an *Enemy*. But were we asked what 'tis we esteem most delightful to the most of Men, we should make no scruple to affirm, 'tis getting Money; since for this only they'll lose their *Pleasure*, part with their *Vertue*, and sell their *Honour*.

Quest. 5. What's the Cause that a Burning-glass contracting the Sun-beams into so narrow a compass, as to fire Cloth, Rope, Tobacco, &c. doth notwithstanding remain perfectly cold?

Ans. First, Because the *Glass* is not the Object upon which the contracted Sun-beams are terminated, but something beyond it. — Secondly, Because *Nature* never acts in vain, as to make use of *Ducts* and *Conveyances*, where the end might be attained without 'em; as, when one looks through a *Telescope*, the visual Rays of the Eye (which else wou'd dilate and scatter in every side as Lines do from a Center) are contracted, and therefore represent the Object stronger; yet no one asks why the Instrument (which is the Medium of Conveyance) does not imbibe the *Visuality*, and officiate the Operations of the Eye by it self, this would invert second Causes, and make all Medium or all End; — Besides, Experience shows that *Glass* receives the Impression of the *Sun's* heat as all other Bodies do, differenced only in this, that Bodies are more or less susceptible of heat, as they have more or less of *Continuity*, or as distinguish'd by *Magnitude*: Which two qualities (every one knows) make 'em resist the *Sun's* heat longer than those Bodies which are porous or small.

Quest. 6. What becomes of *Smoke*?

Ans. It ascends into the Air, and if in great Quantity, forms a sort of a *Cloud*, as we may see if we'll but take the pains to go half a Mile out of *London*; if in smaller, is dissipated by the *Winds*, or lost in the vast Tracts of Air, as a little *Water*, when spilt on great heaps of *Dust*: For that 'tis annihilated, none can be so foolish to conceive.

Quest. 7. Why do you trouble your selves and the World with answering so many silly Questions?

Ans. Because the World will trouble us, and never let us or Mr. Smith the *Coffee-man* alone, unless we'll give 'em an Answer, which sometimes we are forc'd to do, as to *Biggars*, meerly to get rid of them. Besides, what's silly to one is not so to another; at least 'tis very likely that every one who sends any Question thinks both himself and his Question as wise as he that sent this.

Quest. 8. Why Sounds ascend?

Ans. For the same Reason that a Ball does, by *Repercussion*, or a sort of *Reflection*. The Air being moved by the Sound, (or rather a Sound being made by the Motion of the Air) moves still forward till the first force be spent, or it meets with something that hinders it: Now the first thing it strikes against in its circular, or quaquaversal Motion, is the Earth, whence it rebounds, and must ascend into the Air, as was first asserted.

Quest. 4. Whether the Letters and Story of the Turkish Spy be a Fiction or Reality? if true, whether pass'd, and how long since?

Ans. If all a Fiction, as we are most inclinable to believe, 'tis yet so handsomly manag'd, that one may rather suspect than prove it so. Whoever writ it, 'tis plain

plain he was exquisitely acquainted with the Oriental Customs and Languages; he appears a Person of clean Sense, Wit, and very good Humour, and has a valuable Collection of History by him. The Objection by some brought against it, that many Passages therein, contradict the publick Accounts of the Transactions which the World has seen, has but small force, for though both may in some Instances be false, a secret historian seems not generally speaking to have that Temptation to Lying, which those have who write a Publick Chronicle. But supposing it true, it would necessarily follow that it must be pass'd, because it is a History of such Persons and Actions as are sometime since gone off the Stage; unless any would fancy there's a sort of Mystery in it, for which we can yet see no Reason.

Quest. 10. How to know when God reveals himself in a Dream, and when we only dream, he reveals himself?

Ans. There may be more Poison in this Question than at first sight appears; and we are apt to believe 'tis grounded on a Notion of Mr. Hobbs, ——— 'That when the Scripture relates the extraordinary Dreams, Visions and Revelations of Holy Men, the true meaning is, that they only dreamt they saw such Visions, or heard such Revelations. But as 'tis plain enough that this strikes directly at the Destruction of all Reveald Religion; so no Christian Ear can endure it. However, lest the Objector should think it unanswerable, we shall say somewhat concerning it.

——— If he means, how we shall know at present when a Dream is from God? We answer, There is no such thing now to be expected. The Canon of the Holy Scripture is compleated, and we have the Light of Revelation and assisted Reason to direct us, nor seems there any need of more. We confess we dare not absolutely pronounce, that there are never any such things as divine Notices and Warnings given to some good Men, even in this Age, by Supernatural Intelligences; and should be our selves a little concern'd, if in any thing of moment we should have such a Dream as would oblige us to desist from any Action or otherwise, not only firmly impress'd but repeated several times exactly in the same manner. ——— But this we are pretty sure of, that no such thing as this is either to be commonly expected, or much depended on, nor ever ought to hinder an honest Man from discharging what he knows to be his indispensable Duty. As for Example ———

Were I resolv'd to assist or succour a Friend who needed my Aid; or to serve my Prince or my Countrey in any difficult Emergency. ——— Here we say, or on such Occasions, not a thousand Dreams or Deaths either, ought now to hinder me from the Prosecution of what I designed. If by the Question is intended, How we shall know those Dreams related in the Scriptures were from God, and not meer casually Dreams arising from common Natural Causes? We answer, By the highest Authority that can be, that of God himself, who sent them, and tells us he has done so in Holy Scriptures; which we have formerly proved to be Gods Word, and as such Infallible. Thus in the Cause of Joseph, we are told in the first Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, That the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a Dream. And who dares but a Blasphemer change that Expression into ——— *He dreamt that the Angel of the Lord appeared to him.* If it be further ask'd, How those Persons should know one of these Dreams from the other? We answer, That does not at all concern us, who have such of them as were really sent from God, when he himself thought fit, transmitted to us in his own Oracles. ——— But that those concern'd did know the difference, we can't doubt, since otherwise any such Warnings would have been in vain Nor is it at all impossible for God to reveal his Will to his Creature, sleeping as well as waking; nor that the manner of such Revelation should carry its own Evidence with it, that it comes from God. For as we easily discern a humane Voice from another, why may we not that of God from Man? Nor can any think that 'tis not possible for him to make such Manifestations of himself, either by a more eminent and distinct degree of Glory, or otherwise, as may have incommunicable Characters of Divinity inramt upon them.

Quest. 11. Utrum Androgyna sit capax ——— ultimi finis vivens?

Ans. Videtis super hac re narrationem Androgyna cuiusdam satis curiosam per D. Tho. Allen Latine editam inter Acta Soc. Reg. Vol. 2. p. 624. ——— Ubi sic ——— Ad

tertium supra decimum annum pro femella habuit: est tum vero in subigendo pane cum operam strenue navabat, Priapus erumpit. ——— Ad utrumque sexum comparatum se afferuit, motusque venereos sentire tum ad masculos tum ad Fœminas, &c.

Quest. 12. Whether the Gentlemen of the Athenian Gazette will engage to maintain whatever they assert?

Ans. Yes, if what they assert is Truth and Reason; if otherwise, they shall be glad of better Information; and when it appears, will very willingly retract their Errors.

Quest. 13. How long do you intend to continue your Athenian Project, since some one or other may always be putting in some Nice and curious Questions?

Ans. As long as such Questions shall be put in, and perhaps a little longer, we having some Three thousand upon the File already, expecting their several Answers.

Quest. 14. It having been experienced by several Persons that upon Pronouncing the word One after the First time the Hiccough comes, it never returns. ——— Query the Reason thereof.

Ans. Unless the Querist had sent an Experiment to bring the Hiccough, as well as to drive it away, we know not what to say of what he advances. ——— But as soon as we have an Opportunity to try the Matter of Fact, we'll endeavour to find out the Reason thereof.

Quest. 15. Whether Vertue does not consist in Intention?

Ans. We don't very well take the Gentleman's meaning. If by Intention he would have us understand the End which a Man propotes to himself in any Action, 'tis granted by all good Casuists, That it can make an Action bad, but not good, since 'tis a common Axiom, Bonum ex qualibet causa, malum ex defectu: All Circumstances must concur to make an Action properly virtuous or good, one only suffices to make it evil. However, an Action with a good Intention, and bad means or Circumstances, has less of evil than where both are bad, and a less Degree of Vice is a comparative Vertue. If he means by Intention, Application, or a sort of Attention of the Mind, fixing it self upon Objects as proposed to be refused or chosen, and comparing 'em with themselves and one another, wherein some ingenious Men have placed the Root of Liberty; we reply of this as well as that, That if it be not Vertue, we at least can't see how Vertue can any way consist without it.

* * We have this Week receiv'd the following Question; viz. I have long indulg'd my self in a resistless Habit, which I now find contradictory to my reason and would leave it. I'll not be particular, because the Answer may be of use to every body, who are not without the Allurements of some darling Sin: Query, What an Habit is, whether to be overcome, and what are the Methods in order to it? This Question, which as the Querist well observes, may be of Use to every body, shall be Answered next Tuesday.

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THE Supplement to the First Volume of the Athenian Gazette, containing the Transactions and Experiments of the Foreign Virtuoso's; as also their ingenious Conferences upon many Nice and Curious Questions. To which is added an Account of the Design and Scope of most of the considerable Books Printed in all Languages, and of the Quality of the Author, if known: The whole being a Translation of what is most rare and valuable in the *Par Journal des Scavans*, the *Acta Eruditorum Lipsie*, the *Universal Historical Bibliothek*; and in the New Book, Entitled, *Entretiens Seriesis & Galantes*, &c. Published for the improving of Natural, Moral and Divine Knowledge. Printed for John Dunton, at the Raven in the Poultry; where is to be had the First Volume of the Athenian Gazette, Resolving all the most Nice and Curious Questions in Divinity, Physick, Law, Philosophy, History, Trade, Mathematicks, &c. Proposed by the ingenious of either Sex, from Tuesday, March 17th. to Saturday, May the 30th. 1691. (or single ones to this time.)

In this Supplement, and also in our First Volume is Answered many of the Ingenious Questions lately sent us; and as for the rest, they shall be Answer'd at the End of our Second Volume.