

# The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. *There is a Wager laid, and it is refer'd to the Decision of your Society, which we desire as soon as can be; tis this — there is no Smoke, but there is some fire, whether truth or not?*

Ans. The Learned have Distinguish'd fire into three Species, 1. *Light*, that is fire in its proper matter, 2. *Flame*, that is fire in moist Air, 3. *Cole*, that is fire in a burnt Stick, or other Desiccated matter; The present Question comes under the second Head, which we may Resolve in the Affirmative, fire and heat (although some wou'd puzzle themselves, and others with the Distinction of *res* and *ratio*) are but one, for if heat be an accident of fire, it may be separated from it, without the Destruction of the pretended Substance, viz. fire, but take away heat from fire, and you take away the very nature of it; for fire is properly discernable but by heat. Now this being prov'd I wou'd ask the Assertor of the Negative, whether there can be any Smoke, without Heat, or warmth, which is a Degree of Heat, he will answer yes, or deny his Senses, and that proves what is before affirmed, perhaps he may Object, how can there be fire in a Sweating Horse-Dunghil, or in other Creatures when they Sweat, so that the Smoke is very visible: The Answer is, we must know things by their Effects; but Smoke is the Effect of Heat, and Heat is Fire. We are not to think there can be no Fire that is Invisible, for Fire works according to the Nature of the Subject it meets with, and according to the intenseness of its own Nature, some things as inflam'd Spirit, &c. are said to be a hotter sort of Fire than other Fire, when there is only a great deal of Fire in a little Room, which the matter by its own Aptitude is Receptive of, the Heat of the Sun (or to speak properly) the Fire it diffuses to the distant Objects of the World, as to impregnate Trees, Herbs, &c. to heat Rocks, Stones, Buildings, &c. it plainly appears, that this Communication of Heat is Fire; because it may grow hotter and hotter, till it appears Visible, as is seen by the Effects of a Burning-Glass, the place which the Contracted Rays settle upon, is first warm, and heats by degrees (that is, grows to be a greater Fire) till it visibly appears by its Effects, from which Arguments 'tis Demonstrative, that even warmth it self is Fire, Remiss, or in a very little Degree.

Quest. 2. *How may I make a number more than one, and less than two, without a Fraction?*

Ans. 'Tis impossible according to the plain Stating of the Question, if there be any Trick or Riddle in't, we think such Fruitless Inquiries below the Fraction of a Minutes Scrutiny.

Quest. 3. *You are of Opinion, N. II. Vol. Q. 5. that Heat produces Rain, if so, why then have we not always more Rain abundantly in the Summer, than in the Winter?*

Ans. If you please to Consult that Answer again, you will find that we never laid down such an Assertion, there is certainly a vast difference betwixt Attraction and Procreation of Showers, not but that at the same, we allow Heat some little Share in the cause of Exhalations, &c. And though the Temperateness of our Climate alters the Case much in respect of the Indies, yet we find that we have the most Rain about April, when the Sun has got the upper hand of those Cold Impressions, which the Winter had lodg'd in the Bowels of the Earth, by driving 'em out in Vapours and Mists, which meeting together, condense into Clouds, till they are too heavy for the Air to buoy up any longer, and so they discharge themselves again upon the Earth and Waters.

Quest. *Whether Vertue is an harder Task to an ill Man, or Vice to a good Man?*

Ans. This is a Question of a large Extent, if Moral Vertue or Vice be understood by the Question, we must return this Answer: That a person that is not prepossess'd by Prejudices and ill habits, can much easilier comply with Vertue, than Vice. Our Reason is, that there is no Evil in Humane Actions; because to Appearance, they are all good and pleasing, otherwise the Will, the Object whereof is that which is good and taking, wou'd not be inclin'd thereto, since good is that which all things desire, and no Man can choose Evil as an Evil, but as a good, in respect of some Evil (either Real or Imaginary) which he

laboured under, thus Francis Spira in his Desperate State, desir'd Hell, not as Hell, but as a Retreat from a greater Evil; which he thought he endur'd, to wit, his Conscience: Now all Actions that are Evil, are so accidentally, by a Depravation of the Will and Understanding, which oftentimes choose at all adventure, without a due Inquisition into the Nature of their Choice. Again, Beings and Substances are more amiable than Privations are Odious; because Love respects the things that are Amiable, when Aversion can't possibly be extended to what is not. Whence it follows, that 'tis a greater trouble to do Evil, in regard ignorance of what is not, is not so Charming as a Knowledge of Real goodness, the desire of which is naturally Stamp'd upon our Wills and Affections: Thus much to persons that have Contracted no Habits, but in respect to those that have, (and indeed, to such the Question more particularly belongs,) we Answer, that a General Habit is made up of all the particulars that constitute it, and if we descend to the first, we shall find a greater Freedom of Mind in choosing or refusing, than is commonly taught, so we shall see People naturally mov'd at a Spectacle of Pity, generous to forgive an injury upon Submission, all Admiration and Reverence to Just and Good Men, using the Names of Vertue to cover their Wickedness, which with many more such Instances of pure Natural Instinct, shew that Adams fall has not utterly extinguish'd the Power of Vertue in our Souls. This is farther evinc'd by the Great Morality of several Heathens: And we doubt not, but that Religion was a Trade of present Interest, and the Whole for this World, we shou'd see a great number of Professors and Zealots, who now have set up their end, their God, and Heaven here; the Reason of so much Atheism and Dissolution of Manners amongst us, is the little Practice of Vertue and Piety. But if we move a step higher, and search above the power of Moral Vertue, and Natural Religion, we shall find the Wisest Men Fools, and shut out of Heaven, when the most Illiterate poor wretches are chosen, as if God took a Pleasure in Confounding those that are wise in their own Conceptions, by Exalting others which such People think not worth their notice. Here indeed we are at a loss, and as we admire the Measures of the Almighty's Proceedings, which is against our Reason, so by our Reason, we dare not think fit to Judge or Determine any thing in't, further, than what we have daily Instances in, viz. That many that have appear'd very good, have Apostatiz'd, and many that have been very ill Men, have been Reclaim'd, we hope more of the last; but then the Number that have always lived in one unchangeable State of Impiety, will over-balance the Account, and we fear, give such an Answer, as we had rather think of, than mention.

Quest. *Suppose your Society were put to their Choice, whether had they rather know all that is known, or be ignorant of that, and know all that is yet unknown?*

Ans. Indeed 'tis very Tempting to Recollect many lost Curiosities, as the making of Lamps to burn 12 or 1500 Years, and not extinguish'd but by the letting in of Air, as particularly in the Tomb of Tullia Cicero's Daughter at Padua, the Invention of a perpetual Motion, which animated Archimedes Sphere, and dyed with him, that of Malleable Glass, with its Inventor, who was wretchedly Slain by Tiberius, the melting or making Artificial Stones, such as the Pillars now in Westminster Abby, and many more Curiosities, which by some strange indiligence, death or something else, have escap'd our knowledge; as likewise 't would be no unwelcome Lesson to learn the Wisdom of Demons, who by Natural Causes, effect strange things, only so to us, because we are ignorant of 'em: But after all, when Solomon tells us all is Vanity, Pythagoras, that we know nothing, Pyrrho, that Men must not pretend to know themselves ignorant; but that they must be contented to doubt of it, yea, and to doubt of their very doubting. When we consider these things, we are at a loss, and cannot find our selves, unless we look into the Providences of Heaven, and there a little Learning will teach us to sit down content with his Disposal of things, and think our selves very happy in that we know enough to make us happy; and what absolute need of more, so that we had much rather know what is known, than only know what is yet concealed; Besides there's



there's strange Alterations in Tongues, Confusions of Sciences, and things appearing in new Dresses, which have been formerly, that makes us think our Choice much the better, especially when we consider that the Wisest of Men has told us, that *there's nothing new under the Sun*, but a Repetition of things o're and o're again.

Quest. 6. *Whether Fruition Diminishes Love?*

Ans. 'Tis according to the Nature on't, and the Resolution is Various according to the Qualifications, both of the Love, and the Subject Loved. If the Love Terminates upon the Senses, and fixes not upon the Soul, we must aver, that *Humane weakness is soon weary, and naturally carryed to a Change, the Familiarity of it breeds Contempt*. But such a Love as centers upon Vertue, Modesty, and the gifts of the Mind, can't be pall'd and cloy'd; because 'tis always encreasing, and the Mind always as Active. To question whether we love such a Subject, when we possess it, is to ask whether Love be Love, what proportion there is betwixt a Picture, and the Mistress, the same is found betwixt such Mistress, when she permits her Servant no Privacy; and her self, when she is Married to him; the Actions of one being but the Shadow of the other, which is discovered by Fruition; We may say therefore, that passion before Enjoyment, is desire, but Possession alone is capable to produce true Love. Now the Perfection of any thing must be its Completion, and not Destruction; Friendship (or to use another's Expression, Grateful Friendship) is by Act encreased, and we doubt not, but if there was occasion, there might be found many Married Persons that wou'd not stick to imitate the Noble Contention of Gracchus and Cornelia, by choosing to die for one another.

Quest. 7. *Several Persons who died, and were buried, very quietly have by Revolutions of State, and sometimes by other Accidents, been taken out of their Graves, abused, and treated Ignominiously: Quere, whether the Soul hath any knowledge of the usage the Body meets with upon such occasions?*

Ans. To Answer this Question, and some others of the same Nature, we ought to premise that Man consists of two parts, a Soul and Body, and that the powers of the Soul, as to understand, will, &c. act by the Powers of the Body, which are the Sence and Passions, and are common to Brutes, for as to all Material Objects, the old Maxim holds true, that *there's nothing in the Intellect which is not first in the Sences*. Now the Soul knowing and working by the powers of the Body, as its proper Instrument, when these are taken away from it, it ceases such its Operation, and its knowledge is confus'd, being only Potential and Imaginary, as a good Musician cou'd play, if he had an Instrument to play on, and if you bid him play without an Instrument as well as he can, he can only tell you, that he has the power of playing; but wants the means of putting it into Act, and all that he can do, is to Imagine, Suppose, or Reflect from former Ideas; which is only a confus'd Notion of Musick in General: Thus much to every Bodies Apprehension, but if this fall into a Philosophers Hands, I wou'd add, that *Generals are known by Reason, and Particulars by sense*, to prove which, the beginning of Particularity in Material things, is individual Matter, hence the Sence acts directly, (for no more is requir'd for seeing; but an immediate Union between the Visive Power, and the thing seen) but the Intellect indirectly by reflexion, or by Abstracting the intelligible Species, or phantasm from such Matter as is Represented by the Sence; but that which is Abstracted from Individual Matter, is Universal, as above, from whence we conclude, that the Soul separated from the Body, does know all Material things Potentially, as a Musician does Musick, though he plays not; but not particularly, and in Act, for then we shall bring it to Individual Matter, which is the Object of Sence, when the Soul only knows Abstractedly as before, for 'tis the greatest Nonsense imaginable, to suppose there must not be a Coherence and Proportion betwixt a Power and its Object. But the Intellect is immaterial, therefore the Object of its Knowledge must be immaterial, and such is the Ratio Abstract or Quiddity of Matter. Hence the Soul, unless inform'd by an Angel or Sprit, knows not what particular Treatment its Body meets with, when separated from it.

Quest. 8. *Who was that Cain feared should slay him, after he had killed his Brother Abel?*

Ans. There was not many People indeed to fear, but not one having died a Natural Death, Cain might well think of living a great while, and having his Father to instruct him, he might understand how the World was to be Peopled, to wit, by Adam, Cain, and such as should in a little time be born of 'em. So that he was afraid of his Brothers that were to be Born, or their own, or his own Sons, or Grand-Children.

Quest. 9. *Who it was that Cain took to Wife, when he went into the Land of Nod?*

Ans. His own Sister; the Rabbins say, that Adams Children were Twins, a Brother and a Sister born together, See Vol. N. Q. We desire our Querists to run over the Index of our Volumes, that we may not be troubled by Duplicates, or the same questions over and over.

Quest. 10. *Whether or no, Cain had any help to build his City?*

Ans. Yes; every one knows how old they lived in the beginning of the World, and if ye allow only 600 years for a Life, one Male might have above 110000 come from him and his Children in that time, upon supposition, that every one might get seven Males in one Hundred Years, as you may see by a Trial of Multiplication, so that Cain cou'd not want persons to be afraid of, nor persons to assist him in his Building.

Quest. 11. *Suppose there was a certain place set out for all Night-Walkers to meet in at a certain Hour, as at Amsterdam, whether it might not prove a great means to disappoint great Mischiefs that ensue upon Night-Walking?*

Ans. 'Tis a very Unchristian Maxim, to necessitate one Evil, to avoid two, tho' indeed if you leave Religion out, tis a pretty sort of policy, and many Evils would be avoided by it; but we hope there's much better Measures on foot, agreeable both to Christianity, and Civil Politicks, and therefore we need not to choose one that's dissonant to either, nay, to that which is really both, I mean Christianity.

Quest. 12. *What was that Bounty which Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba.*

Ans. Perhaps the sence of asking more useful Questions than this.

Quest. 13. *Is there any punishment great enough for Ingratitude, and what?*

Ans. A Disdaining to take other notice of it, than by Discontinuing Converse.

Quest. 14. *If a person under the effects of too much Drink, shall happen to express himself unkindly, or to offer an Injury to a Friend, for whom by the whole Course and Series of his Life, he cannot but be judged to have a great Love and Affection, and at all other times to have been Expressive of it, whether this person should be judged to be truly of that Intention or Disposition to his aforesaid Friend, wherein he expressed himself in his Drink, it being supposed that Men speak truth in their Drink, tho' when they are sober, they may for their Credit or Interest, only Dissemble and hide their Natural Dispositions.*

Ans. We can't think this a sufficient Instance to destroy Friendship, no more than other Actions, which People are guilty of in their Drink, and hate when they are Sober, shou'd be a Standard to Judge and Determine the Actions of a Mans whole Life. We take not the Depth of a River, by an accidental Flood or Draught; but according to the Natural and Ordinary Current in its Channel, and herein we imitate Heaven, who takes an Estimate of our Vertues or Vices, according to our Habits and Usual ways of Acting, and not by a few, single, good or bad Actions, but that the Querist may be better satisfied about the Nature of Friendship, let him consult our paper, Vol. — N. — Q.

Quest. 15. *A Gentleman lays a Wager, that King Williams forces take Galloway in such a time, and within the time 'tis Surrendered to 'em upon Articles: Quere, whether the Gentleman wins the Wager, the Town not being taken, but Surrendered.*

Ans. Yes, the Gentleman wins, for their Majesties Forces did take it, though it was surrendered, Galloway was unwilling to be overcome, was unwilling to give or Surrender it self to its Enemies, now 'tis all one as to the Action of Surrendering, whether it Surrendered by being forc'd to it by Fighting, or Surrendered through Fear, and certain Arguments of being beat, tis confess 'twas Surrendered; but it could not be Surrendered, unless the Surrender was taken by the Forces to whom it was Surrendered: Again a not taking, had made this Gentleman a loser, and a not Surrendering, had made this Gentleman a loser: Therefore it follows, that either taking or surrendering, makes him a Winner. But if the other Gentleman had a design to Equivocate, and stand upon words, he ought to have said he would do so at the time he laid the Wager, for what Reason is there I should lay a Wager, and not know what my Antagonist means, tis suppos'd this Wager was laid amongst other persons that overheard it, therefore in that Sence that they took it, all the World would take it, words being expressive of thoughts; but all the World wou'd adjudge it to the Gentleman who laid that Galloway wou'd be taken, for we are not to judge at Reserves, but of things as they appear in their own Nature.