

# The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, February 20. 1692.

Quest. 1. **W**hat is the formal difference of one Spirit from another, or what individuates 'em?

Ans. If we shou'd go about to tell every Body what we mean by *Individuation*, perhaps we shou'd leave 'em more in the dark than we found 'em; however, since Definitions are absolutely necessary in all abstruse Notions, we shall do it not only for the satisfaction of such as can understand it, but also for a clearer light in the present Question: *Individuation* (then is) *the Unity of any thing with it self, or that whereby any thing is what it is.* The Definition indeed is something dark, but we having already run thro' the different Orders of visible Beings, and consider'd Individuation in 'em all; any one that has a mind to be farther satisfied about 'em, may see a full Answer to it in *Vol. 2. N. 8.*

Quest. 1. But the formal Difference of Spirits is yet a higher task, and if it cou'd be found out by Study, 'twou'd deserve sometime; but since the Question is not resolvable by Humanity, we may refrain our searches, nay tho' an Angel shou'd come and dictate the Solution, it wou'd be unintelligible to us: All that we can say in Answer to it, is this, that as it cannot be resolv'd, so we can give our Reasons why it cannot; 1. *Because a Spirit is not to be defin'd.* 2. *Because a Spirit is immaterial.* What a Spirit is, we know not, we can as well represent it by a *thought* as any thing else; but seeing we are ignorant of its very being, its very ridiculous to assign the Modifications of what we know not. Again, the words *Form* and *Individuation* necessarily suppose Matter, but a Spirit being immaterial cannot be ty'd to such Terms as are adapted to matter. Hence when we ask, *What is the formal difference of one Spirit from another, or what individuates 'em,* 'tis altogether as improper as to ask, *What is the Audibility of Savors, or the visibility of Sounds?* or plainer yet, *What can that be which is impossible to be?*

Quest. 2. *Whether the Soul doth always actually think?*

Ans. To answer this Question, 'tis necessary that we have a true Definition of the Soul, but ignorance of its Nature denies that, therefore we shan't enquire whether 'tis a *Cogitative Substance*, as some wou'd have it, or what else, but what are the Effects of it. And this we find to be *Abstract Ideas, Ratiocinations and Conclusions*; this is the ordinary Method of the Souls acting, and all this is by means of the Senses, or by means of some Idea formerly had by the Senses; but now to say the Soul acts no other way, or has no other Ideas but what the Sense gives, is to suppose that Children think not at all in their Mothers Womb, or that the Soul is either asleep at its separation from the Body, or that it is void of pain or pleasure in a separate State; but that every one denies, and by consequence grant that the Soul thinks then, for 'tis impossible to resent any thing without thinking: In fine, we must either conclude that the Soul is sometimes asleep, unactive, nay not a Soul, or else that it is always thinking, that being as Natural to a Soul as Vegetation to Vegetables.

Relat. About a fortnight or three weeks, or some such time, before the Death of any person in the Family, there is an Appearance vulgarly called a *Fetch-light*, or a *Dead Mins Candle*, so denominat'd, I presume, from the form or figure of a Candle in which it presents it self. It is observ'd to come first from the Bed whereon the Person whose Death is thereby signified, is to die, and thence to move into all other Chambers of the House where the Body shall be carried, either to be Coffin'd, to lye in State, or, &c. and to rest for some small space at each of those places where the dead Body is to be laid, thence to move

the very same way, and about the same distance from the ground as the Body is to be carried untill it comes to the Church; it observes with such exactness the motion of the Body, that some persons who have seen these Lights, and afterwards the Body carried to the Grave, affirm, that now and then they took notice that the Light halted for a short time, in the very same place or places where the Body was afterwards stop't either to change Bearers, or upon some other occasion; to satisfy you further with what preciseness this Light imitates, and as it were Apes the motion of the Body, I shall give you this instance from the mouth of a Gentleman of unquestionable Credit, now in this Town. He was some Years ago in Bed at a Relations house in *Carmarthen-shire*, and being fully awake about one or two of the Clock in the morning, he observ'd a Light to come into the room, at the door which was on the left hand as he lay; it came not immediately on the Bed on that side which was next the door, but moved round the Bed, and came upon it on the other side which was farthest from the door, whereas it might have come at that side which was next the door; after this it fix'd upon that part of the Quilt which lay on his Breast, and after a short stay went out of the room. About a Fortnight after a Gentleman dyed in an upper room in the house, and the Gentlewoman of the house (knowing nothing of this Light) order'd the Body to be brought down into this Chamber, and the person who had seen this Light hapned to be then also there, and observ'd the Servants to carry the Body about the Bed, and to put it in on the farther side according to the motion of the Candle. That these Lights do appear is a most certain Truth, and can be attested by several Gentlemen now in Town, whose Reputation no Man will dispute, and by almost an infinite number in the Countrey where they appear. Dr. *Nicholson*, after Bishop of *Glocester*, and Bishop *Taylor*, who both lived in *Carmarthen-shire*, could not believe that there were such things, untill afterwards they were convinc'd by Ocular demonstration, as they themselves own'd. There was a Man that used to keep late hours in coming home, who frequently saw them, and particularly one Night acquainted the Family that he had seen five or six move at some distance from one another over such a Moor near the Church; they seem'd to question the Truth of his seeing so many at once, but about 3 weeks or a month after, he call'd his Brother out of the house, and shew'd him so many Bodies as he had seen Candles at that time, carrying to be interr'd all at once in sight. These Lights have been seen to rest in Highways where some men afterwards dyed, and upon the face of water where some one was afterwards drown'd, as also upon Trees where men hang'd themselves. I dare not take upon me to affirm that these Lights are seen no where else, but I assure you I could never hear that they ever appear'd in any place out of the Bishopricks of *St. Davids*, nor in any part of that so frequently, if at all, as in the County of *Carmarthen*, where there is hardly any one dies, but some one or other sees his *Light* or *Candle*. Now Gentlemen, for my part I can find no Reason either in *Nature* or *Religion* for this, and therefore I've had it long in my thoughts to desire yours upon it, and upon the whole state of the case then I put these Questions:

Quest. 1. *What the Nature of these Lights is?*

2. *To what end they appear, since they are never (as I could hear) seen by those whose Death they portend, but by others.*

3. *How this Phenomenon comes to be confin'd to the Diocess of St. Davids, and for the most part, if not altogether, to the County of Carmarthen?*

Ans.

*Ans.* We wou'd desire the Querist that he wou'd add to this particular Relation, an account of the time of these *Fetch-lights* appearing; if 'tis in the night only, we may suppose it to be natural, as *Will-it-h-wisp*, &c. which are common in all Marshy places in England; if in the day-time, 'tis unnatural; till we hear again we suspend our Judgments, promising our Thoughts upon the next information.

Quest. 4. *Whether there be any Liquid so buoyant as to bear up an Egg, or any thing whose Gravity shall be more than the like Quantity of the same Liquid?*

*Ans.* No — To give a fuller Answer, wou'd be more than the Author of this Query cou'd expect, if he reflects what a scurrilous Preface there was to it; but this only by the by, to let the Author know, that as we are below resentments, so we are above the requital of an Affront. — The Reason then is this. Where Bodies are Tenuous or lax, by reason of the Soluble adhesion of their particles, as are all Fluids, experiment shows that in a mixture of such Bodies, the more gross and heavy parts subside and press through the rest towards their Center: Thus in a Viol fill'd with several sorts of Liquids, as is very common in your Apothecaries *Fuleps*, and other Liquid Compositions, if you shake the Glass there's a mixture of all together, which as it settles you'll find 'em separate, and the lightest, as Oyl, &c. will mount uppermost; not that it wou'd not tend to the Center as well as the rest, but because the other being heavier, force their way through the lighter, and there being no penetration of Bodies, they are forced upwards. This is the Reason why any Glass or Vessel full of Liquor, runs over when you put any Body into it that is heavier than the same quantity of the Liquor into which it is put. But the Question yet recurs, *What is the occasion of all Bodies tending towards the Center?* To which we answer, that our Modern Virtuoso's say, 'tis from a pressure of the Atmosphere, which pressing always downward toward the Center of the Earth, it takes all Bodies along with it; and such as are the least porous, as Gold, Silver, Iron, &c. fall, or to speak properly are press'd down faster than other Bodies, because the Atmosphere can take faster hold of 'em, being solid, whereas it pierces and flies through the other, being looser and more expanded; but tho' this reason has something of plausibility, we are sure 'tis erroneous, till the Patrons of this fine thought tell us what it is that also presses down the Atmosphere, besides other Objections which we shall soon take occasion to treat more largely of; but the Question however is answer'd by the Experiment above.

Quest. 5. *My Wife kept Company three months with an ill Man, by whom she received an Injury, but revealing of it to me I freely forgave her, spar'd no cost for a Chyrurgeon, and kept it private; which Clemency she insulted over, and still kept him Company abroad, nay when I found it out by undoubted Witnesses, she again and again deny'd it; this incens'd me against any farther reconciliation, and being willing to part with her privately, I gave her three days notice to provide her wearing Apparel, but she refus'd it till I forced her away: The next day came two of her Friends to moderate the matter, to whom I consented again, and received her the same Night, but the day following (being the 29th. of last January) I was decoy'd to a Breakfast, and in my absence she ran away with all my Plate; I am threatned by her Friends to be Ruin'd, and do expect to be run in Debt by her, she being in Southwark, and likewise I am afraid of a decay in Trade, (keeping a publick House :) I pray your advice in this sad Calamity?*

*Ans.* The first thing you do, put her into the *Gazette*, declaring for Reasons best known to your self, that no one give Credit to her, either as to Money or Commodities, as also give notice that all your Creditors (if any) do forthwith in some short time bring in all their Bills, Bonds, Obligations, &c. to whom you now stand indebted. Also for preventing other Mischiefs, send us in the Names of such persons, the place,

where they live, and their Employ, whom you suspect of any ill design, and you shall hear further from us. As for the words, or any other Advice, if you'll come to our Bookfeller, we'll assist you further.

Quest. 6. *Are there Mathematicians of your Society, and if a Question in Algebra should be proposed, would you answer it Analytically?*

*Ans.* If you please to make tryal, we'll answer you, or own our ignorance.

Quest. 7. *Whether a Person concluding his private devotions with the Lords Prayer, is to say Our Father, or My Father?*

*Ans.* Read John 17. 21, 22, 23. and you'll be satisfied that you ought to repeat *Our Father*.

**T**hat we may effectually make good our first Promise of Answering all manner of Questions sent us, we design to print an APPENDIX to be added to every five Volumes of our Athenian Mercury, which said Appendix shall consist of 120 sheets, and contain Answers to all those ingenious Questions and Occurrences, &c. which we have not room to insert either in our 18 weekly Mercuries or 12 Numbers that compleat 'em, or Supplements to 'em, which said Supplements are now to contain Answers to Questions, as well as the Rarities of England, &c. This is therefore to desire all our Querists to continue sending in their Questions as formerly to Smiths Coffee-house in Stocks-Market, and when we have received Questions enough (with what we have already by us) to fill up the foremention'd Appendix, we shall give publick Notice thereof. To carry on this great and difficult Work, we have in our Society several Cambridge and Oxford Scholars, on purpose to render our Undertaking compleat, and to give full satisfaction to all our Querists. The Appendix here promis'd we shall add an Alphabetical Table, comprehending the Contents of all our Mercuries and Supplements.

\* \* That Gentleman that sent word he has several Poems, and other remarkable things by him in reference to those that suffer'd in the West, &c. is desired to send 'em with all speed to John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry, we having already receiv'd several Occurrences to compleat the *Black Affizes*, &c. will soon have it in the Press.

\* \* The Fifth Volume of the Athenian Mercury is now publish'd, resolving all the most Nice and Curious Questions propos'd by the Ingenious of either Sex, from Tuesday December 1st. to Saturday January 30th. 1691. Price 2 s. 6 d. This Fifth Volume is neatly done up in Marble Paper, with a General Title, Preface and Index to it. Printed for John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry; where are to be had the First, Second, Third and Fourth Volumes of the Athenian Mercury; (and the Supplements to 'em) and also the Preface, Index and 12 Numbers alone that compleat the first 18 Numbers of the Fifth Volume, or any of the single Mercuries from the first publication to this time.

## Advertisements.

**T**he Good Old Cause: Or the Divine Captain Characteriz'd. In a Sermon not preach'd, nor needful to be preach'd in any place so properly as in a Camp. By Edmund Hickeringill Rector of the Rectory of All Saints in Colchester, Printed for J. Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry.

\* \* The New Wish, in two Parts. To the Tune of the former Wish, *If I live to grow old*. Printed for Tho. Burdet.

The Ladies Question will be answered next Tuesday, and the Poetical Questions next Saturday.

||| Some considerable time since we received a small piece of Fire-Turfe, in order to make an Experiment, we desire the same Opportunity again, together with the Name of the place whence it comes.

**T**his is to give Notice, That Dr. Cafarelli an Italian Missioner, will preach every Sunday in the Afternoon at Guild-hall Chappel, continuing next Sunday of this present February, where will also be Prayers according to the usage and Liturgy of the Church of England.

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