

‘ *phyra* told this Dream to several Women of her Acquaintance, and died soon after. I thought this Story might not be impertinent in this Place, wherein I speak of those Kings: Besides that, the Example deserves to be taken notice of, as it contains a most certain Proof of the Immortality of the Soul, and of Divine Providence. If any Man thinks these Facts incredible, let him enjoy his own Opinion to himself, but let him not endeavour to disturb the Belief of others, who by Instances of this Nature are excited to the Study of Virtue. L.



N^o III. *Saturday, July 7.*

— *Inter Silvas Academi quærere Verum.* Hor.

THE Course of my last Speculation led me insensibly into a Subject upon which I always meditate with great Delight, I mean the Immortality of the Soul. I was yesterday walking alone in one of my Friend's Woods, and lost my self in it very agreeably, as I was running over in my Mind the several Arguments that establish this great Point, which is the Basis of Morality, and the Source of all the pleasing Hopes and secret Joys that can arise in the Heart of a reasonable Creature. I considered those several Proofs drawn.

FIRST, From the Nature of the Soul it self, and particularly its Immateriality; which, tho' not absolutely necessary to the Eternity of its Duration, has, I think, been evinced to almost a Demonstration.

SECONDLY, From its Passions and Sentiments, as particularly from its Love of Existence, its Horror of Annihilation, and its Hopes of Immortality, with that secret Satisfaction which it finds in the Practice of Virtue, and that Uneasiness which follows in it upon the Commission of Vice.

THIRDLY, From the Nature of the Supreme Being, whose Justice, Goodness, Wisdom and Veracity are all concerned in this great Point.

BUT

BUT among these and other excellent Arguments for the Immortality of the Soul, there is one drawn from the perpetual Progress of the Soul to its Perfection, without a Possibility of ever arriving at it; which is a Hint that I do not remember to have seen opened and improved by others who have written on this Subject, tho' it seems to me to carry a great Weight with it. How can it enter into the Thoughts of Man, that the Soul, which is capable of such immense Perfections, and of receiving new Improvements to all Eternity, shall fall away into nothing almost as soon as it is created? Are such Abilities made for no Purpose? A Brute arrives at a Point of Perfection that he can never pass: In a few Years he has all the Endowments he is capable of; and were he to live ten thousand more, would be the same thing he is at present. Were a human Soul thus at a stand in her Accomplishments, were her Faculties to be full blown, and incapable of farther Enlargements, I could imagine it might fall away insensibly, and drop at once into a State of Annihilation. But can we believe a thinking Being that is in a perpetual Progress of Improvements, and travelling on from Perfection to Perfection, after having just looked abroad into the Works of its Creator, and made a few Discoveries of his infinite Goodness, Wisdom and Power, must perish at her first setting out, and in the very Beginning of her Inquiries?

A Man, considered in his present State, seems only sent into the World to propagate his Kind. He provides himself with a Successor, and immediately quits his Post to make room for him.

Heres

Hæredem alterius, velut unda supervenit undam.

He does not seem born to enjoy Life, but to deliver it down to others. This is not surprising to consider in Animals, which are formed for our Use, and can finish their Business in a short Life. The Silk-worm, after having spun her Task, lays her Eggs and dies. But a Man can never have taken in his full measure of Knowledge, has not time to subdue his Passions, establish his Soul in Virtue, and come up to the Perfection of his Nature, before he is hurried off the Stage. Would an infinitely wise Being

ing make such glorious Creatures for so mean a Purpose? Can he delight in the Production of such abortive Intelligences, such short-lived reasonable Beings? Would he give us Talents that are not to be exerted? Capacities that are never to be gratified? How can we find that Wisdom which shines through all his Works, in the Formation of Man, without looking on this World as only a Nursery for the next, and believing that the several Generations of rational Creatures, which rise up and disappear in such quick Successions, are only to receive their first Rudiments of Existence here, and afterwards to be transplanted into a more friendly Climate, where they may spread and flourish to all Eternity?

THERE is not, in my Opinion, a more pleasing and triumphant Consideration in Religion than this, of the perpetual Progress which the Soul makes towards the Perfection of its Nature, without ever arriving at a Period in it. To look upon the Soul as going on from Strength to Strength, to consider that she is to shine for ever with new Accessions of Glory, and brighten to all Eternity; that she will be still adding Virtue to Virtue, and Knowledge to Knowledge; carries in it something wonderfully agreeable to that Ambition which is natural to the Mind of Man. Nay, it must be a Prospect pleasing to God himself, to see his Creation for ever beautifying in his Eyes, and drawing nearer to him, by greater Degrees of Resemblance.

METHINKS this single Consideration, of the Progress of a finite Spirit to Perfection, will be sufficient to extinguish all Envy in inferior Natures, and all Contempt in superior. That Cherubim which now appears as a God to a human Soul, knows very well that the Period will come about in Eternity, when the human Soul shall be as perfect as he himself now is: Nay, when she shall look down upon that Degree of Perfection, as much as she now falls short of it. It is true the higher Nature still advances, and by that means preserves his Distance and Superiority in the Scale of Being; but he knows not how high soever the Station is of which he stands possessed at present, the inferior Nature will at length mount up to it, and shine forth in the same Degree of Glory.

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