

[Gnōthi seauton] Know yourself. A poem / [John Arbuthnot].

Contributors

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Γ Ν Ω Θ Ι Σ Ε Α Υ Τ Ο Ν

K N O W Y O U R S E L F.

A

P O E M.

by J. Arbuthnot, M.D.



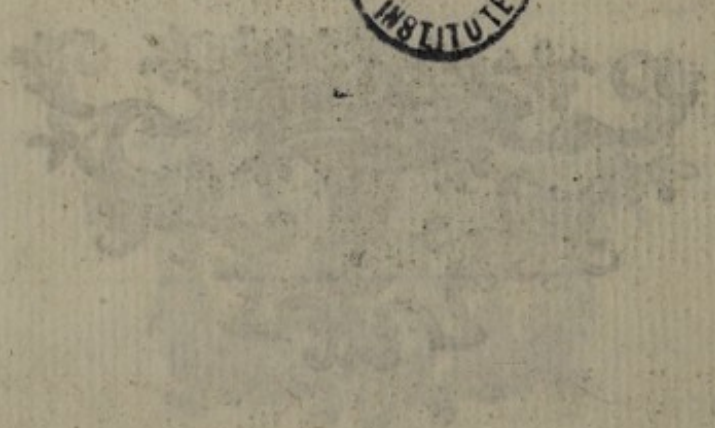
L O N D O N:

Printed for J. T O N S O N in the *Strand*.

M D C C X X X I V.

KNOW YOURSELF

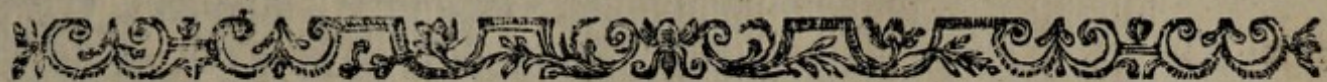
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L O N D O N :

Printed for J. T. ... in the Strand

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

The following Poem was wrote several Years ago: As it may do good to some, and cannot hurt the Reputation of the Author, though he should be known, I have given it to my Bookseller to publish. It contains some Thoughts of Monsieur Pascal, which cannot make it less acceptable to the Publick.



A D V E R T I S E M E N T

The following Poem was wrote several Years ago
it may do good to some, and prevent hurt to
others, the Author, though he should be known
I have given it to my Bookseller to publish. It con-
tains some Thoughts of Mr. John Locke, which
not make it less acceptable to the Publick.



Γ Ν Ω Θ Ι Σ Ε Α Υ Τ Ο Ν .

K N O W Y O U R S E L F .



WHAT am I? how produc'd? and for what
End?

Whence drew I Being? to what Period
tend?

Am I th' abandon'd Orphan of blind Chance;
Dropt by wild Atoms, in disorder'd Dance?
Or from an endless Chain of Causes wrought?
And of unthinking Substance, born with Thought?
By Motion which began without a Cause,
Supremely wise, without Design, or Laws.

Am I but what I seem, mere Flesh and Blood;
 A branching Channel, with a mazy Flood?
 The purple Stream that through my Vessels glides,
 Dull and unconscious flows like common Tides:
 The Pipes thro' which the circling Juices stray,
 Are not that thinking I, no more than They:
 This Frame, compacted with transcendent Skill,
 Of moving Joints, obedient to my Will;
 Nurs'd from the fruitful Glebe, like yonder Tree,
 Waxes and wastes; I call it Mine, not Me:
 New Matter still the mould'ring Mass sustains,
 The Mansion chang'd, the Tenant still remains;
 And from the fleeting Stream repair'd by Food,
 Distinct, as is the Swimmer from the Flood.
 What am I then? Sure, of a nobler Birth,
 Thy Parents Right, I own a Mother, *Earth*;
 But claim superior Lineage by my SIRE,
 Who warm'd th' unthinking Clod with heav'nly Fire:
 Essence divine, with lifeless Clay allay'd,
 By double Nature, double Instinct sway'd;

With Look erect, I dart my longing Eye,
 Seem wing'd to part, and gain my native Sky;
 I strive to mount, but strive, alas! in vain,
 Ty'd to this massy Globe with magick Chain.
 Now with swift Thought I range from Pole to Pole,
 View Worlds around their flaming Centers roll:
 What stiddy Powers their endless Motions guide,
 Thro' the same tractless Paths of boundless Void!
 I trace the blazing Comet's fiery Trail,
 And weigh the whirling Planets in a Scale:
 These Godlike Thoughts, while eager I pursue,
 Some glitt'ring Trifle offer'd to my view,
 A Gnat, an Insect, of the meanest kind,
 Erase the new-born Image from my Mind;
 Some beastly Want, craving, importunate,
 Vile as the grinning Mastiffs at my Gate,
 Calls off from heav'nly Truth this reas'ning Me,
 And tells me I'm a Brute as much as He.
 If on sublimer Wings of Love and Praise,
 My Soul above the starry Vault I raise,

Lur'd by some vain Conceit, or shameful Lust,
I flag, I drop, and flutter in the Dust.

The tow'ring Lark, thus, from her lofty Strain,
Stoops to an Emmet, or a Barley Grain.

By adverse Gusts of jarring Instincts tost,
I rove to one, now to the other Coast;

To Bliss unknown my lofty Soul aspires,
My Lot unequal to my vast Desires.

As 'mongst the Hinds a Child of Royal Birth
Finds his high Pedigree, by conscious Worth;
So Man, amongst his Fellow-Brutes expos'd,
Sees he's a King, but 'tis a King depos'd:

Pity him, Beasts! you by no Law confin'd,
Are barr'd from devious Paths, by being blind;
Whilst Man, through op'ning Views of various Ways
Confounded, by the Aid of Knowledge, strays;
Too weak to choose, yet choosing still in haste,
One Moment gives the Pleasure and Distaste;
Bilk'd by past Minutes, while the present cloy,
The flatt'ring future still must give the Joy.

Not happy, but amus'd upon the Road,
 And (like you) thoughtless of his last Abode,
 Whether next Sun his Being shall restrain,
 To endless Nothing, Happiness, or Pain.

Around me, lo, the thinking, thoughtless Crew
 (Bewilder'd each) their diff'rent Paths pursue;
 Of them I ask the Way; the first replies,
 Thou art a God; and sends me to the Skies.
 Down on this Turf (the next) thou two-legg'd Beast,
 There fix thy Lot, thy Bliss, and endless Rest:
 Between those wide Extremes the length is such,
 I find I know too little or too much.

“ Almighty Pow'r, by whose most wise Command,
 “ Helpless, forlorn, uncertain here I stand;
 “ Take this faint Glimmering of thy self away,
 “ Or break into my Soul with perfect Day!”

This said, expanded lay the sacred Text,
 The Balm, the Light, the Guide of Souls perplext:
 Thus the benighted Traveller that strays
 Through doubtful Paths, enjoys the Morning Rays;

The nightly Mist, and thick descending Dew,
 Parting, unfold the Fields, and vaulted Blue.
 “ O Truth divine! enlightned by thy Ray,
 “ I grope and guefs no more, but see my way;
 “ Thou clear’st the Secret of my high Descent,
 And told me what those myftick Tokens meant;
 Marks of my Birth, which I had worn in vain,
 Too hard for worldly Sages to explain;
Zeno’s were vain, vain *Epicurus’* Schemes,
 Their Systems false, delufive were their Dreams;
 Inskill’d my two-fold Nature to divide,
 One nurs’d my Pleasure, and one nurs’d my Pride:
 Those jarring Truths which Human Art beguile,
 Thy facred Page thus bid me reconcile.
 Offspring of God, no lefs thy Pedigree,
 What thou once wer’t, art now, and ftill may be,
 Thy God alone can tell, alone decree;
 Faultlefs thou dropt from his unerring Skill,
 With the bare Pow’r to fin, fince free of Will:

Yet charge not with thy Guilt, his bounteous Love,
 For who has Power to walk, has Power to rove ;
 Who acts by force impell'd, can nought deserve ;
 And Wisdom short of infinite, may swerve.
 Born on thy new-imp'd Wings, thou took'st thy Flight,
 Left thy Creator, and the Realms of Light ;
 Disdain'd his gentle Precept to fulfil ;
 And thought to grow a God by doing ill :
 Though by foul Guilt thy heav'nly Form defac'd,
 In Nature chang'd, from happy Mansions chac'd,
 Thou still retain'st some Sparks of heav'nly Fire,
 Too faint to mount, yet restless to aspire ;
 Angel enough to seek thy Bliss again,
 And Brute enough to make the Search in vain.
 The Creatures now withdraw their kindly Use,
 Some fly thee, some torment, and some seduce ;
 Repast ill suited to such diff'rent Guests,
 For what thy Sense desires, thy Soul distastes ;
 Thy Lust, thy Curiosity, thy Pride,
 Curb'd, or deferr'd, or balk'd, or gratify'd,

Rage on, and make thee equally unblest'd
 In what thou want'st, and what thou hast possess't;
 In vain thou hop'st for Bliss on this poor Clod,
 Return, and seek thy Father, and thy God:
 Yet think not to regain thy native Sky,
 Born on the Wings of vain Philosophy;
 Myst'rous Passage! hid from human Eyes;
 Soaring you'll sink, and sinking you will rise:
 Let humble Thoughts thy wary Footsteps guide,
 Regain by Meekness what you lost by Pride.

F I N I S.

