

METAPHYSICAL.—No. 1.

An Essay read before "The Literary and Polemic Association," (Miss.) by
A Member,

on Thursday Evening Dec'r. 27th, 1838,
on the question—

"Are the mind and soul one and the same thing?"

Mr. Chairman:—It will no doubt be perceived by a little reflection that the question under discussion naturally and necessarily leads us to the inquiries *whence come the mind and soul?*—if they be distinct and separate in their origin and nature—and *how are they produced?* And, if, in prosecuting these inquiries, we shall succeed in settling them, we will, at the same time, be enabled to determine, also, whether or not they are one and the same thing.

Let us then apply ourselves to the investigation of this grave and abstruse subject with that degree of calmness and solemnity which the nature of it requires. And what I shall say in this discussion will be in the affirmative of the question. And, without noticing the almost countless hypotheses of both ancient and modern philosophers, on this subject—most, if not all of which, are as vague and unfounded as they are unsatisfactory and absurd, and none having succeeded in establishing a plain, reasonable and well fortified superstructure into which we can enter and quietly compose ourselves in regard to this fearful and agitating subject; I say, without troubling this Association with these vagaries, I shall proceed, at once, with great deference to the opinions and reasonings of others, but, at the same time, with an equal degree of confidence in my own, to lay before this enlightened Association, an entirely new theory. And, to the end that I may be clearly and fully understood, I will here make a few general observations which I design as the basis of my hypothesis.

And, I remark, in the first place, that we discover by even a cursory investigation of *natural philosophy* or, in other words, by philosophizing a little ourselves, the power, wisdom and goodness of God, as it is manifested in the *creation* of all things pertaining to this world. That there is a regularly connected chain of solids, or, hard formations of mineral substances commonly called rocks, from the most inadhesive or loose formations; rather, the common earth itself, up to the solid and beautiful diamond: That there is a similar chain, [in point of connexion] in the vegetable kingdom, from the coral and cryptogamic organizations, up to the most perfect oak of the forest; or, if you please, the more splendid and beautiful *Cubbeer Bur*; and that there is a similar chain, also, in the animal kingdom, from the *polypus* up to man.

I remark farther, in regard to these three grand chains, that it may be said, in a general sense, they embrace within their scope every thing (attached to this word,) comprehended in the term *matter*.

And it is worthy of remark, also, that such is the imperfection and simplicity of the first formations and organizations of the first or what may be regarded as the first links of the vegetable and animal chains; at least, it ever has been very difficult to determine to which of these two belonged certain individuals. As, for instance, the *zoophyte*; which has been arranged sometimes with the *mineral*, sometimes with the *vegetable*, and sometimes with the *animal*, kingdoms. But the chains being once started we have no difficulty in tracing out a distinct and more perfect formation and higher grade of organization, in each successive link, until we reach the *diamond*, in the first, the *Cubbeer Bur*, in the second and *man*, in the third.

But, by far the most interesting, and I may add, astonishing view of this subject, remains yet to be considered, and that is this: Whilst we reflect that there is but one man, [I mean the species] but one *Cubbeer Bur* and but one *diamond*, in all the world, we discover, that as we descend from each of these down their re-

spective chains, in the same ratio do we also find, as a general rule, the numbers and inferiority of the different species multiply and accumulate; until finally we are amazed and astonished at the almost infinity of insects and animalcula, of an almost infinite variety spread or abounding over all the earth, in the first; the same overwhelming and countless number of plants, of the same astonishing variety, spread over the same wide extent, in the second; and the whole wide-spread earth itself, in the third!

In the mineral kingdom, we discover, that the agents or powers by which this regular and interesting chain of solid substances is produced, cease to exert themselves at a certain point; namely, the perfection of the different species. And hence we find, as a general rule, the *diamond*, the *marble*, the *granite* and so on down to the first imperfect formations, each distinct and peculiar to itself.

These hard substances naturally maintain that state of perfection in which they are left by the occult powers that mediate to produce them. But nothing or but little, at most, naturally results or flows from them, that contributes to the advantage and happiness of man: But on the contrary, most generally present obstructions to both. It is, therefore, most evident to my mind that God intended man should examine into and find out the intrinsic beauty and usefulness of them, by the sweat of his brow. And, to that end we find them more or less, under a peculiarity of circumstances, in every part of the world, ready to be appropriated and made useful and valuable, as their necessities and fancies required.

In the vegetable kingdom, we discover, that the organization and specific existence of the various plants, herbs, shrubs and trees is equally distinct and perfect as are the formations, in the mineral kingdom. But their perfect structure and specific existence is not the only *natural* peculiarity they exhibit. Every species, (as a general rule) of organic vegetation produces *naturally*, directly and as a necessary consequence of its organization, something entirely different from, in many material respects, and, in most cases, greatly superior to—in texture, delicacy and beauty, that which mediately gives it existence. I deem it almost useless to say to you, Mr. C. and the intelligent members of the Association, by way of explanation that I allude to the foliage, flowers and fruits of the vegetable kingdom.

In the animal kingdom, we discover, not only a still higher order of organized matter and a greater complexity of organization, alike specific and perfect as in the vegetable and mineral kingdoms; but we find also, results or effects flowing naturally and necessarily from each distinct species, in the exact proportion or ratio of its progressive grade, from the *polypus* which link, so to term it, may be regarded as being the one half vegetable and the other half animal—tracing out the chain through all the variety of animated nature, until we, at length, arrive at man. A being who has been emphatically styled *the lord of this world*.

Thus we trace the general outlines of the philosophy, and, at the same time, discover the beauty, harmony and grandeur of all created *matter*—as it is found to exist on this *terrene Globe*; in strict conformity to the *cosmogony*, as recorded by *Moses*.

This being the basis of my hypothesis, the application of what has been said, in reference to the subject before us, analogically considered and determined upon philosophical principles, in strict conformity to immutable natural laws, is what now remains to be investigated and settled.

Having premised thus much, I will now proceed to the consideration of the questions, "whence come the *mind* and *soul*?" and "how are they produced?"

I affirm that what is usually intended to be represented by the terms "*MIND* and *SOUL*," is a unit: that its essence or first principle, is inherent with the peculiar organization of the human system: that it bears the same

relation to and emanates or issues from that system precisely as the glitter of the *diamond*, in the mineral, the foliage, flowers and fruits of the vegetable and instinct, in the animal kingdoms, exist with and emanate from their respective bodies: that the brain is its immediate origin and dwelling place: that it is different from and dependant upon what is called the "*PRINCIPLE OF LIFE*," and that the term *MIND* is its apt, natural and philosophical representative.

The term *soul* is intended to represent a being co-existing with but diametrically opposite in its nature and essence, to the human body. A shadowy spirit, with all the form and features of the human body. The invisible—impalpable—inner man—and, is made to imply immortality.

With this definition of the soul before us, let us see what discoveries may be made in regard to its origin.

In our endeavours to detect this confined and yet wandering ghost, called the soul, and ascertain whence it comes and whither it goes, our labors and researches invariably and inevitably—naturally and necessarily terminate in the discovery of what is, by philosophers, emphatically denominated, *the principle of life*. A latent and quickening power, in its nature, like those of *gravitation*, *electricity* and *caloric*, the essential essences of which never have been and perhaps never will be discovered and ascertained.

Man has been very significantly called *microcosm*—a little world. And in this view of him, *the principle of life*, as I understand it, bears the same relation to and exists with him precisely as *gravitation* does, with the material world. Keeping up the analogy, then, we know that all matter has a natural tendency towards the centre of the earth; or, if you please, on a larger scale, the sun. And, so it is, in a most striking and beautiful analogy, in reference to a certain very material fluid, in the human system. I allude to the blood, which, it is believed is the principle of life itself, and supported with some plausibility by some gentlemen, or rather, I should say philosophers, because it has several remarkable peculiarities in it; and which, has a natural and eternal tendency towards the heart. Which latter, I contend, is, and, in the nature of things must be, the seat and dwelling place of the principle of life. And although it may be denied, quite easily, will be found very difficult to disprove.

This analogy is the more striking when we reflect that no matter what position the body is in; whether it be in its natural erect, a horizontal or an inverted one; the blood flows in the same regular and unceasing current towards the heart: the grand nucleus of the system, from whence it is driven out again, into every part of the body, giving life and health to all its members.

Thus we are enabled to discover and even approach and enter, to use a figure, the vestibule of the citadel of the principle of life. But still, we are not strong enough to force its bars and enter into and behold the mysterious and sacred asylum—and familiarize ourselves with its life-giving and heaven-born resident. But it is a pleasing fact to know that our labor is not without benefit. For, whilst we fail to discover what the principle of life is, we do most certainly ascertain where it is located. And we discover also, by strong inference, if not by demonstration, that the blood itself, is not the principle of life, or, in other words, does not contain the principle of life, in the human system, any more than that controlling influence which inclines every thing, in the material world towards the centre, is itself, *gravitation*. To contend for which would be as absurd as to say that heat is the fire that produces it, and that light is the sun, from whence it emanates. And, besides, we perceive, at once, that the blood itself is put in motion by the vibrations of the heart, which, is immediately put in motion by some occult power. And, therefore, I conclude, that it is not that refined and sublimated yet powerful essence, appropriately denominated the principle of life: though it is, no doubt, highly impregnated with vitality.

CHINESE SKILL.

In the art of engraving the Chinese excel. The rapidity with which they carve their intricate and complicated characters is really surprising and not to be imitated by European artists. In the same style of execution, and at the same low prices, London Engraver was surprised when he learned, that what would cost sixty or eighty shillings in England, might be accomplished by a Chinese workman for half a crown. In seal engravings they are not behind our own countrymen and ivory and ebony tortoise shell and mother of pearl the order of carving surpasses that of most other artists. The celebrated Chinese balls, one in the other, to the amount of seven or nine, all exquisitely carved have puzzled many of our English friends; who have been at a loss to know whether they were cut out of a solid piece or cunningly introduced by some imperceptible opening one within the other. There can be no doubt however of their having been originally but one piece, as cut underneath from the various apparatus, which the balls contain until one after another is dislodged and turned and then carved like the first. The ivory work-boxes and fans commonly sold in Canton, exhibiting the various figures standing out in very bold relief, may be considered as fair specimens of Chinese skill.

In the useful arts, the Chinese are by no means deficient; and in what contributes to the necessities, comforts, and even elegances of life, show themselves to be as great adaptors as their neighbours. The manufacture of silk has been long ago established among them; and thousands of years ago, when the inhabitants of England were going about with naked bodies, the very plebeians of China were clothed in silk; while the nobility thereof vied with each other in the exhibition of gold and embroidery, not much inferior to what they now display. In the fabled days of the Yellow Emper, at the commencement of the Chinese monarchy, "the empress taught her subjects to rear the silk-worm, and unwind the cocoons to make dresses, so that the people were exempted from cold and chilblains." When Confucius arose, the Chinese had long been in the habit of cultivating the silk-worm, and the general rule then was for "every family that possessed five acres of ground, to plant the circumference with mulberry-trees in order that all above a certain age might be clothed in silk." Down to the present age, the Chinese are still celebrated for the abundance, variety, and beauty, of their silk fabrics equaling in the richness of their colours, and the beauty of their embroidery any thing that can be manufactured in France or England, while the crapes of China still surpass the product of this western world. But they are not only skilled in making, they are also attached to the wearing of gay apparel; the Chinese are confessedly a well-clothed nation, and except where poverty prevents, the people are seen attired in silks and crapes, as commonly as we appear in cloth and leather. Their fashions differ indeed from ours, but the dress of a Chinese gentleman or lady is as elegant in its way, as the external appearance of a modern belle or beau in Europe.—*Medhurst*.

Robert Matthews, alias the Prophet Mathias, who so splendidly humbugged the wise men of Gotham a few years since and saved certain of them in a way peculiar to himself, has recently been shaved himself in the most approved Arkansas manner. The Little Rock State Gazette, says he paid that city a visit on his return from Texas, in which country he had been wandering displaying his new lights, and exciting sedition among the Indians; but he could not shine in Arkansas. He was most unceremoniously seized by certain naughty boys, and subjected to the tonsorial operation with Bowse knife and Shears. It was proposed, that he might not take cold from the loss of his shaggy covering, that its place should be supplied with a coat of tar; but this motion was overruled and he was suffered to depart, with the prudent admonition never again to let his beard grow so long as that his health should be endangered from losing it, all at a single operation. Had such a course been earlier adopted with this arrant knave and impostor he might by this time have been cured.