

UNIVERSALISM

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THE student searching for fundamental principles underlying the apparent diversity of existing things finds no adequate statement of his problem in any one of the numerous and conflicting theological doctrines, philosophical speculations or scientific theories. He must broaden the scope of his inquiry to include study of all theologies, all philosophies and all sciences. In a word, his subject might be called Universalism.

Moved by inherent curiosity or by a "law of necessity," men immemorially have tried to fathom the source and purpose of Existence. As they progressed from instinctive and sub-conscious mentality and consciously began to identify and classify surrounding phenomena, the relationship between cause and effect was recognized. The general prevalence of this relation observed in the physical world eventually led to speculations which crystallized into systems of mythology, theology and philosophy founded upon various deduced interpretations of an assumed law of Causality which transcended the physical or finite world and became Infinite.

Lao Tze imagined the source of all things to be immeasurable and indescribable Space, which he compared to Nothing. In a religious sense, this has been liberally interpreted as Infinite Spirit. He also vaguely apprehended a Creative Principle in the Universe.

Gotama conceived Existence as a process of change—motion—in which all finite values were relative; and the ideal goal of life as Nirvana, an absolute state of peaceful oblivion; or, in modern terms, a surrender of the soul to the Infinite.

Early Greek philosophers spoke of the Infinite, or Space, as the source of existence; some of them regarded it as identical with Spirit, or God, or World-soul, or a Creative Force.

Egyptian and Semitic theologies, from which Christianity and Mohammedanism developed, teach that God is an Infinite Personality, eternal and omnipotent, Creator and Ruler of the world.

Pythagoras conceived Cosmos, wherein harmony and order were expressed in Number.

Modern philosophers speak of a First Cause, Supreme Mind, Force, or Nature; or as Chaos reduced to order by the automatic operation of a law of probability. All these concepts, so diverse in detail, have a common source and end in Infinity.

In all ages religious teachers and philosophers have tried vainly to explore the Infinite; mathematicians have as vainly tried to limit it symbolically, but it remains and will remain inscrutable to finite minds. As natural laws are discovered and interpreted, we may draw new inferences about it, but they are purely speculative. Through our failures to limit the extension of number, or time, or to describe the ultimate boundaries of Space, we can show indirectly that the idea of Infinity is intellectually acceptable; its incomprehensible nature may be demonstrated by our inability to imagine a condition where Space is not. A state without motion or time may be imagined, perhaps, but no idea of non-space is conceivable, whether Space be regarded as a plenum, a void or a mental abstraction.

As facts and knowledge accumulated, the task of interpreting and relating them resulted in specialized studies which developed into the numerous sub-divisions of modern science. The beginnings of science are so embedded in early Oriental systems of religion and philosophy that it is perhaps impossible to trace them. Some of the great early discoveries in mechanics, astronomy, mathematics and chemistry were made by men who will remain unknown to us. Our most authentic information about such subjects comes to us from the Greece of Thales, his contemporaries and successors, the greatest of whom probably was Pythagoras. After the death of Archimedes, the Roman conquest retarded the spread of this culture until the Pax Romana was shattered by the Goths and the Mohammedans revived Science again in Europe.

The first great Western student of the Renaissance was Roger Bacon; next Copernicus, who founded modern astronomy upon a Pythagorean concept. Later came Descartes, Kepler, Gallileo and Gilbert, worthy successors of the Greeks; then Huyghens, Liebniz and Newton; Dalton, Ampere, Faraday, Mendeleef and Meyer; Maxwell and Hertz, their contemporaries and followers in ever increasing number. Lamarck and Darwin developed theories of evolution which revolutionized scientific views and reacted upon all

phases of human thought. The great clues to the mysteries of nature contributed by these men are still only partly understood, but are gradually being unravelled. Following Darwin, able physicists developed the electronic theory of matter and related it to evolution, reducing all natural phenomena to some form of electro-magnetic activity.

The nature of electricity itself remained unexplained. Among the hypotheses advanced as a possible key to the solution of this great problem was one that interpreted electro-magnetism as a complex form of spiral rotation, or spiro-circuitous motion, which was conceived to be the combination of finite time, space and motion as indicated in Kepler's laws, and found to exist in atomic systems. A mathematical relationship between these three factors was traced from the solar system to atoms and hypothetically applied to electro-magnetism. While this concept is more or less metaphysical, actual experiments showed atomic and celestial motions to be similar to electro-magnetic reactions. The origin of these motions was attributed to compression of Space by Cosmic Force.¹

Examination of general phenomena in the light of this hypothesis recalled attention to an aspect of Nature which had been previously observed but not adequately related to a specific cause—the spiral principle, traceable in celestial nebulae, planetary and atomic notions, through organisms in animal and vegetable life on this planet, to the smallest known corpuscles of energy, electrons. It might be called the mechanical principle underlying Evolution. Whether it is applicable to psychology and thus to the historical development of the human race, remains to be proved. As a science, psychology is still new and perhaps now in a stage comparable to the astronomy of thousands of years ago. In a paragraph on invention, as applied to literary composition, Genung describes thought processes analogous to the rotational and radial motions of electricity.

Several writers have outlined a "spiral of progress" in the affairs of men. In religious history the concept of Infinite Being, or God, replaces animism, demonology, nature-worship and polytheism; in philosophy, diversity merges into unity; the mystic Trinity of Lao Tze, Gotama and Pythagoras corresponds to a modern triune entity of Time-Space-Motion, the three inseparable factors of physical existence, which have a spiritual analogue in a religious Trinity of

¹See "A New Cosmic Hypothesis" in *The Open Court*, June, 1927.

Deity, Eternity, Infinity. In science theories of physics, astronomy, chemistry and evolution, succeed magic, astrology, alchemy and metempsychosis; electronomy supplants atomism. All these changes transpire in a series of recurrent cycles in which modifications of the original concepts reappear from age to age.

That the political progress of mankind may conform to such a principle is suggested by the expression "History repeats itself," to describe the recurrence of similar conditions and events, or similar causes producing similar effects. The evolution of government might be compared to the growth of families; patriarchy, or absolute parental rule, developing into family democracy as when the children mature. Throughout history we see some form of absolutism alternating with some form of democracy. Despotic monarchies, dynastic empires, and dictatorships, ever becoming more liberal, are recurrently succeeded by democratic states, until today many countries have complete adult suffrage and none is without some kind of electorate. Government by philosopher-kings dreamed of by Confucius and Plato, is taking the form of federations largely influenced by ideals of the wise and virtuous men of the past. When the problems of government are studied more scientifically, progress in this direction may be accelerated.

Besides many noble ideals, Jesus taught the doctrine of the equality of men before God. Applied politically, this doctrine corresponds to the democratic principle of equality of all men before the law, and the law is the practical application of the collective will of society, continually being amended as experience dictates. But the equality of men is not altogether a matter of political rights. The value of any man is not measurable solely by his status in the society of his time. We honor great men, but who knows their remote ancestry? or who can determine the sources of their inspiration? Men and women today living humbly and obscurely will be the progenitors of the great to come, the geniuses through whose minds will flow scientific discoveries, and inventions, masterpieces of music, literature and other arts; and those leaders who will translate into action the religious and social ideals of the future.

Civilization advances as confidence is built up in Causality. Anti-social acts, strife and war are temporary lapses of faith in, or a failure to appreciate, a beneficent relation between cause and effect. They are retrogressions from intelligence and reason to unintelligent instinct; reversions to the time when primitive man hunted

for his living and could devise no better means of obtaining food than to fight his neighbors for possession of desirable hunting grounds. The Machivellian view that "They take who may and hold who can" by force, treachery or chicane, has been found destructive and inimical to the welfare of society. As trade supplants conquest, more and more men come to recognize that sincerity, generosity and kindness beget trust, loyalty and affection; and conversely, that hypocrisy, selfishness and greed beget distrust, resentment and hate; cruelty breeds fear. The whole structure of commerce and the modern fabric of credit rest upon the belief that honesty inspires confidence. The democratic principle of voluntary co-operation may be applied to business eventually, as well as to government, in the interest of our common welfare. It may not be too much to expect that the time will come when the measure of merit among men will be maximum service for minimum reward: when individuals will compete to promote the happiness of others without considering their own material interests.

Belief in Infinity may be related inferentially to the finite law of Causality with which we are familiar. Since we can find no effect without a cause in the physical world, we may infer that if finite existence is an effect which cannot be traced to an ultimate cause, it must have an Infinite source. If religion be interpreted as acceptance of the idea of Infinity, whether as Being, Spirit, Mind, God, Power, Force, State or Condition, pervading and transcending the physical Universe, incomprehensible to finite beings, then all men may be considered religious, regardless of affiliation or non-affiliation with theological organizations. According to their purely relative standards, men may disagree about material and spiritual ideals, creeds, ethics, law, history, politics, art, science and other things, but fundamentally they agree upon Infinity. On that all are equally ignorant and none may successfully claim to speak with authority.

If we hold in abeyance different interpretations of the Infinite as advanced by conflicting theological and philosophical systems, we find that similar codes of ethics and rules of conduct were developed more or less concurrently by religious teachers and philosophers as society emerged from barbarism. The "Golden Rule" is a paraphrase of the "Silver Rule" of Lao Tze and Confucius.

The concept of a personal God might proceed from the view that the Universe is the product of a Creator or Infinite Mind, which has endowed man with purposeful creative faculties in addition to

the instinctive mental attributes common to other creatures; and with intelligence capable of recognizing a universal law of Causality and its corollaries. Conception of our relation to the Infinite might be called an attribute of Soul. If we relate the source of existence to an Infinite Cause, we may also relate the end or purpose to Infinite effect. As creative evolutionary processes impart individuality to physical organisms, so may the soul, innately of relation to the Infinite, be evolved or created. May not the purpose of existence be to give identity to Soul? As attempts to interpret the Infinite differ, so do religious views; they are chiefly matters of education or training. Theologies have changed or passed but religion endures.

Harmony and beauty are everywhere evident in Nature. Infinite Mind has provided bountiful gardens for the use and pleasure of all creatures. We can all to ever increasing enjoyment of them through interpretation and intelligent application of natural laws as they are discovered. At present we know only a few of them. There are countless conflicting opinions on all subjects, much skill in the use of natural forces around us, considerable learning, little knowledge as yet, and less wisdom.

The flash of consciousness we call life, whether measured by the age of man or by geologic or astronomic time, is but a moment in Eternity. What preceded or will succeed that moment can be known only to an Infinite Mind. Beneficence, beauty, harmony and love in this world, inspire hopes of a higher state in the future.

Let us unite in the cultivation of Faith, through the tolerant pursuit and dissemination of Knowledge.