

## MORE "ARGUMENTS ABOUT IT AND ABOUT"

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THE thought will occasionally strike us that to think about the mysteries of life and of existence in general, and of the hidden power that gives and takes, is futile and purposeless. In especial when confronted with particularly annoying intricacies and difficulties that contribute towards shaping our individual life, we are inclined to listen with a mingled feeling of curiosity and sympathy to the philosopher's wise utterances. Futile and impracticable, we reflect, are his mental activities. Thoughts on the mysteries of existence seem strangely out of place in this ultra-practical life. Who seriously cares about his origin or about his destiny, about an invisible, spiritual world, when the supreme law of self-preservation demands that we shall dispose of our stock in the face of a threatening market, or that we shall make a special effort to raise money in order that we may be able to meet our obligations? We often lack the time, apparently, to seriously devote ourselves to the problem of solving the mystery of our being here.

On certain occasions, however, even the most unphilosophic person seeks surcease of sorrow and peace of mind in philosophic or religious thought. Tragedy, looming upon the horizon of our private life, makes us find the necessary time for asking and answering questions to our own satisfaction concerning the why and the how of things. The melancholy eyes of fate drive us to church and cult, to philosophic and pseudo-religious gathering. In a way, of course, there is something selfish at the bottom of this first thirst of ours for truth. It was Job who observed that when asses have plenty of hay, they do not bray. His observation symbolically expresses the interesting fact that a smooth career of life is not conducive to earnest thinking. On the contrary, it is our trials and tribulations, our days of darkness and grief, the momentary realizations of our

utter weakness and impotence, that stimulate our mind into inquiring into the matter of a possible power that gives and takes, and into that of an individual behavior upon this earth which, alone, will assure us a plentiful supply in our private manger. Even though our first thirst for truth, therefore, is not exactly a thirst for impersonal truth, it being caused by a suffering self which seeks alleviation of its pains, it is nevertheless a highly desirable thirst if philosophic thought, as many maintain, is, itself, desirable. And, considering the more or less efficient manner in which a man's "philosophy of life," no matter how imperfect it may be, propels him through the severest difficulties, we cannot help agreeing that reflections upon the mystery of being own their ultimately useful purpose.

There is another angle from which to view this matter of thinking about things apparently impractical. No man of average intelligence fails to be impressed, at least once during his lifetime, by the supreme facts of birth, life, and death. If he cannot be struck, if only momentarily, by the marvel of it all, his intelligence should be rated below the average. The animal, unconscious life in him predominates, and the intellectual, conscious life has barely awakened. He exists, but he hardly knows that he exists. A little reflection and imagination, only, are required to see life suspended between the whence of birth and the whither of death, both of which are shrouded, apparently, in impenetrable veils of mystery. One way to eliminate the mystery in question from our inquisitive mind is to ignore it. Another method endeavors to lift the mysterious veils for the purpose of discovering what is behind them. Which is the better way? We are tempted to paraphrase: Better to have thought and failed than never to have thought at all.

The lifting of the mysterious veils, however, may not be as easily accomplished as we sometimes imagine. In many, perhaps in the majority of instances, we think that we have found the answer to our urgent query. Although the answer may, for the moment completely satisfy our inquiring mind, it need not constitute the final answer to the great question. The truth is, that we are being answered by degrees, in accordance with the biblical prescription of "milk for babes and meat for the grown man." We inquire to the extent that we are capable of inquiring, and the nature of our answer conforms with that of our being and with that of our intelligence. We are developing creatures, particularly in an intellectual sense, and today's answer may prove entirely inadequate tomorrow. That, however, is something which it is difficult for us to perceive

at present. The answer which our particular intelligence needs at the moment is, naturally enough, the only true answer, in our opinion. No other answer will do. And it is with enthusiasm, also often, unfortunately, with bitterness and enmity, that we combat the answer which other and different minds receive. The fact that the truth which we perceive is exclusively ours, because it constitutes an answer which corresponds with our particular degree of development, is one of which we are seldom aware. It is often with a certain blindness that we advertise our thoughts concerning the mysteries of life and God to the world; a blindness which is expressive of a considerable degree of self-centeredness. That blindness almost invariably results in an overconfidence that we have completely solved the mystery of being. In a way, that overconfidence has its useful purpose. For if, as we maintain, the individual's newly-awakened thoughts constitute the necessary link between what he was yesterday and what he will be tomorrow in an intellectual sense, it is an excellent thing that he clings to them with all the tenacity of blindness.

On the other hand, the more or less blind conviction that we can read the mystery of life like we can an open book, eventually reveals its disadvantages. The day will come when, to our infinite surprise, we are no longer able to harmonize our theories of existence with the new facts of life with which we have recently become acquainted. We begin to doubt the truthfulness of the answer which we received to our urgent question. Perhaps we momentarily lose hope and faith, sinking back into the depths of despair. Happily, however, our despair is not lasting. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," because thought springs eternal in the human mind. A new answer will pacify the restless, seeking mind, an answer which once more conforms with a being enriched with new experiences and with a mind broadened with new thoughts and viewpoints. The truth of life, we repeat, is perceived by degrees, and the knowledge which is humanity's at present was gathered bit by bit during the last hundred thousand years or so. Undoubtedly, a considerable part of the truth remains to be discovered. When we think of the millions of years required by evolution for the purpose of producing an intelligent human being, and of the comparatively insignificant period of time that separates present intelligence from past stupidity and ignorance, we begin to suspect that the process of discovering truth is at present in full swing. The idea of men having successfully sounded the depths of existence seems more or less absurd. When

analyzing the philosophy of the overconfident truthseeker of modern times, who appeals to the popular fancy with his roseate promises of "health, wealth and happiness," and with the astounding simplicity of his whole scheme of being, we realize that there is a strong tendency in man to eliminate, if necessary by an intellectual "*tour de force*," the element of mystery from existence. But a danger lurks in the philosophy of life which completely satisfies the individual. It is the danger of intellectual stagnation. Our complete satisfaction with the solution of the great problem tends to make us one-sided and narrow in our views, and intolerant of the ideas of others. It prevents us from thinking further and more deeply, for the simple reason that life, for us, no longer holds any mysteries. Yet is it the very mystery with which immensity impresses the soul that stimulates thought. In conformity with the popular method, however, we like to substitute mystery with preconceived ideas, pure assumptions, and catchy pet phrases. The chief error in our chain of reasoning is committed at the very outset. We assume the great unknown to be known, proceed to translate the world and human life into terms of the unknown, and then triumphantly announce that the problem is solved. Were we able to perceive the erroneous method of our reasoning, the most obvious facts pertaining to individual existence would, for us, too, present themselves as soul-overwhelming mysteries.

If anything, we should think, is capable of stirring brain cells into thought, it is the following combination of facts; we came we know not whence or how, we must depart we know not when or whither, and the points of arrival and departure are linked by a trail which is less smooth than most of us desire. We are in the habit of dressing our yesterday in a fairytale, of wrapping our tomorrow in a glorious dream, and to ignore naked and mystifying reality of the present. Minus the fairytale and the dream, individual life seems to be a mere bubble that mysteriously rose to the surface of existence and that, equally strangely, will disappear from the world. What enhances the mystery of it all is the fact that the trail is rough, as a result of which it causes many a cry of anguish to be uttered by the pilgrim on eternity's road. Consider the trials and tribulations of our childhood, the strife and struggle of maturity, the sad experiences which God knows who or what scatters liberally among poor and rich alike. It is not surprising that we are sometimes inclined to ask why in the name of heaven we are and why, being, we are for such a miserably short while. We should

consider, too, let it be granted, the many joys and raptures that light the mysterious gloom of existence. In view of such considerations, however, the question will persist: "Why should spring vanish with the rose . . .?" As far as the mist of beauty is concerned in which many poetically-inclined persons would wrap the ugly facts of life, it is not such a difficult matter to philosophise upon beauty in a corner of our den, to close our eyes in the face of facts, and to hypnotize ourselves into believing that beauty is a universal quality of life. But den-, book-, and pulpit-philosophy often enough lack the seasoning which experience, only, can give to thoughts expressed. Without such experience, we are merely able to present the world with nicely arranged word-corpses, with lifeless thoughts, with knowledge without realization. When we start from the false assumption that the great unknown is known, life *must* be beautiful, and its mysteries *cannot* be mysteries. Life and the universe are moulded by us to conform with a preconceived idea.

There is another road, rarely traveled by thinkers, which, if followed consistently and persistently, eventually leads to conclusions similar to those arrived at by the overconfident truthseeker. The road starts in the very center of life, and is built on a foundation of facts observed. Not unfrequently, the observer, after having listened to the groaning sound of the heavily turning wheel of life, gradually sees the light of beauty dispel the shadows of this human existence. He is progressing with his search after the great unknown. His method, we believe, is the correct one. Too often, thinkers start philosophising in heaven, and finish upon earth. Very little, however, is known of heaven, and even less is known of the nature of the supreme. Humanity has been searching for God during all the life of its existence, and it is still searching. Considering its present condition of comparative immaturity, and its still more or less barbarous behavior upon this earth, we do not believe that it is sufficiently ripe to know the supreme. If it were, it certainly should act differently, more in harmony with the sublime knowledge in question. The reverse method of the one just referred to seems more recommendable. Being of the earth earthy, having our feet on solid ground, it would seem more logical to reason from observable and known facts to the great unknown. True, it is argued that the material world is a more or less base assortment of things, and that it is unworthy of being the foundation of a philosophic structure whose pinnacles reach into heaven. But that remains to be proven. We are better acquainted with matter than we are with

spirit. We see the starlit countenance of the universe every night of our life, but "no man has ever seen the face of God."

Furthermore, this fleeting existence in the flesh, surrounded as it is by matter, is not so despicable but it can make us think much and deeply. The universe which, to all appearances, is our temporary home, constitutes a field of study so immense that a single lifetime hardly permits the intellect to explore an insignificant corner of it. Yet are we sometimes inclined to shut our eyes to the presence of that immensity, thinking that we shall find the secret, not here, but there! However, being businesslike creatures, we should avoid taking chances. Why let the glorious opportunity slip by, the opportunity which knocks but once at the door of mystery, and lets us out into this starlit world, us, beings of intelligence? With Khayyam, we should exclaim, "Make haste!" For this life is nearing its end before we are thoroughly aware of the fact. And is not this a saddening prospect, this prospect of leaving the world behind without in the least suspecting *what* we leave behind? It is sufficiently saddening, we believe, to arouse an urge in us to think about this universe of men and roses and meteors *now*, while it is here, for the reason that *we* are here. Tomorrow? The hereafter? Tomorrow is a soothing fiction that, very awkwardly, endeavors to veil the awful countenance of the eternal Now.

What, we ask, is the most tragic picture in existence? It is the self crossing the stage of life, blindfolded as it were, knowing not whence it came, knowing not when and where and how it is to vanish, and, above all, failing to obtain a glimpse of all that marvelously created scenery which should turn the desert of life into a paradise. We unconsciously think of another tragic picture represented by the hog whose eyes are riveted on his mire, and whose uncertain life is spent in a continuous effort to please the belly. In what respect does the human self differ from that of the animal which lives and eats and dies, which sees not a single scintillating star in the depths of space, nor hears the flapping wing of time? Which of the million different bubbles floating down with the current of existence is privileged with a peep into what is? Is there, or is there not, something which momentarily tears the bandage from the eyes of the living being that crosses the stage of life? It is the modern age that reluctantly answers, mortal mind, with the emphasis on mortal. The answer hints at the fact that the mind is a hopelessly inefficient instrument with which to unravel the mystery of life. It is that, because it is mortal. To which we are inclined to answer.

that we should not speak of infinite and eternal mind until we know what mortal mind is busy with, and what it is capable of doing.

Not only is the mind an inefficient, it is also a deceiving instrument. It marks the world with its stamp of falsehood. The contempt in which we are holding the world as we see it is becoming universal. True, we admire its beauty, discover its laws immutable, and utilize its never-failing forces. Nevertheless, we pronounce it a stupendous lie. In our childish attempts at self-deception we call it, error, in our religious moods we name it the base material, and, philosophically speaking, it is illusion. Think of the strange drama which reasoning man enacts in the heart of immensity! His short-lived life furnishes him the opportunity to lift a tip of eternity's veil for the purpose of seeing—that which is not!

There is an advantage attached to the process of transmutting that which we see and know into that which we cannot see and cannot know in the ordinary manner. The process enables us to hold the floor unmolested, unchallenged, even. What thinker is prepared to investigate the nature of substance which is immaterial, or to consider the extraordinary problem of a thing which both is and is not? Theories of things intangible, of occult processes by which reality is perceived without the assistance of the mind, of conditions that prevail after the gates of death shall have closed behind us, unduly preponderate in our modern popular philosophies of existence. They are unassailable from a standpoint of logic, of course. There is, in fact, nothing to assail. Belief, not knowledge, faith, not understanding, are required to tint them with the hues of reality and truth. But, what man capable of knowing can conscientiously believe, what mind capable of understanding can have faith in that which it does not understand? Man believes because he does not know, and he has faith because he cannot grasp. And although belief and faith are excellent temporary crutches for the seeking soul to lean upon, we do well in at least permitting our adventurous mind to wander in freedom through this vast labyrinth of *ponderable* marvels. It is soon enough, we think, to philosophise upon the nature of a theoretical spirit after we shall have realized what a fearful thing the body, what sublime instrument the mind is. This, too, we consider sound advice: Let us cease arguing about the supreme until we shall know something about its creation. The sacred spring is found, if it is to be found at all, by following the stream of creation unto its source.

The modern desire to be spiritual is fulfilled at the expense of intelligence. The first stages of the development of human intelli-

gence are marked by an ability on the part of the individual to be aware of the presence of objects and of the occurrence of phenomena in the external world. During one of the later stages, the individual reflects upon the nature of the objects and phenomena perceived, classifies and relates the latter, to finally weave them into a rational whole. Strangely enough, many of us are better acquainted with deity than with the world of objects and phenomena. Of the more simple facts of science we are ignorant, though we claim to be able to penetrate the veil of matter, and to behold the real and spiritual world beyond. We babble about the eternal and the infinite, and we are unacquainted with our world of limitation and mortality. The reason for this must be sought in the fact that we are more or less selfishly interested in the nature of the mysterious life-giver and in that of the relationship which exists between the life-giving power and our self.

Occasionally, much is made of the religious instinct and of man's natural craving for his God. But the religious instinct, though it should sense the supreme existence of truth, beauty and reality, in the majority of instances is not an instinct at all, but rather a product of fear and anxiety. And the craving for deity, unfortunately enough, is generally aroused by our private troubles and sorrows. The two mysteries that hem in our shortlived lives, the mystery of yesterday and the equally profound mystery of tomorrow, are eliminated by a satisfactory conception of the supreme. The conveniently conceived relationship between the supreme and our self prescribes a certain conduct for the individual which will avoid private calamity and catastrophe. The mysterious ruler, and the manner in which we are being ruled, are the things in which we are more deeply interested. The universe does not, to a great extent, hold our attention. Our anxious inquiries into the nature of things have been made in the interest of self. Having received reassuring answers to our questions, there is little urge to discover that our planet belongs to a solar system, or that energy is indestructible, or that the amount of matter in the universe remains for ever the same. Hence our general ignorance concerning the world below, and our startling knowledge concerning things divine.

We miss a sublime source of inspiration, however, by ignoring the stream of creation in our over anxiety to discover the sacred spring. The stars in the blue-black vault of night breathe a message which our unreceptive mind is unable to accept. Our too "spiritually" inclined being prevents us from fully appreciating the quality



of mystery which pervades that material glory. Dust, no matter how radiant, is more or less contemptible. It is not this world, but the world behind, beyond this one which chiefly interests us. But the laws of *this* world some day will close in upon us, and rudely awaken us to the fact that *it* should immediately concern us. We stand aloof from the uglier noises of life, preferring the softer melodies of a Chopin or a Beethoven. But we underestimate life's spiritual possibilities. The grinding drill of the miner, the cleaving axe of the woodsman, and the most commonplace activities of life, may prove to produce spiritual music of the highest order. We haunt the churchsteps, and ransack the libraries in search after spiritual knowledge. But the commonest life of labor and struggle will unexpectedly offer spiritual nourishment which is easily assimilated and to the highest degree strengthening. And God, Himself, in His far-off, extraneous abode, will become less unapproachable when we shall see His body in this infinitive universe of golden stardust.

Our principal philosophic error is that we look beyond. We should endeavor to focus our mind on the here and the now. Even if this world eventually should prove to be an utterly worthless illusion, a shining and vividly colored immensity of concentrated baseness, we must not let the film of life roll by without scrutinizing it. It might hold the key that unlocks the door of mystery. It might be the illusion that helps discover reality. Our golden hopes concerning an existence beyond should not overshadow the importance and the sacredness of life on this side of the Stygian river. Let us consider that eternity, if it be a fact, also includes the present. Eternity is here and now. Our faith-dreams concerning the infinite, the eternal and omnipresence are perhaps realities which are readable in the starlit countenance of the universe. Perhaps, too, we were launched from unknown shores for the purpose of discovering *here* the divine secret of being.

In most of our spiritual philosophies the important fact is overlooked that knowledge is impossible without intelligence and mind. We are able to state that we are, because we know that we are. We are in a position to say that we know, because we know that we know. The abilities in question are always linked with a present existence. As far as knowledge of a past existence is concerned, we do not possess any whatsoever. Only under abnormal conditions, a thousand people or so are able to remember that they were Napoleon, or Caesar, or Louis Quatorze, or some other distinguished historical

personage. Barring such exceptions, however, we do not begin to know until a certain period has elapsed after birth. As regards our ability to know in a future existence, it seems to be, at the very least, an improbability. If our knowledge is blotted out in sleep when the brain temporarily ceases to function, what may be expected from an existence after death when the instrument which enables us to know has been destroyed? We may, therefore, pay more than passing attention to the fact that we know that we are, and to the one that we know that we know. Only the human being is blessed with such knowledge. The tree standing deep-rooted in the soil, swaying mechanically on the breath of the wind, represents life, and no more. The beast in the jungle treading insensibly on the beauties of the world, aware only of the nearness of its prey, represents life, and little more. And man, feeling the presence of a billion distant suns, measuring and weighing things invisible, conquering distance and space, years and time, represents life, and much more. Why much more? Because he knows that he is, and because he knows that he knows. He is capable of carrying an entire universe within his mind, of giving speech to immensity, of uttering the fact that a supreme exists. The supposition that supreme wisdom has furnished him with a marvelous instrument, itself a gay deceiver, that is able to weave a fabric of philosophy across the brow of an immensity which is a sad illusion, would seem to be a more or less extraordinary one. The importance of the instrument, sometimes disparagingly called, mortal mind, becomes apparent when we consider that the universe in general represents mere existence and that, if it were not for the presence of intelligent man, the universe for all practical purposes might just as well not be. Who or what would know about it? Who or what would praise it, or sing its glory? In the mind of man life finds itself, and sees itself reflected. Through the instrumentality of the mind it is transmuted from mere life into conscious life.

Now, we are all agreed that the instrument in question is far from perfect. Its present inferior quality produces dim and hazy pictures of that which is. That fact, alone, however, does not justify us to pronounce the mind utterly worthless and incapable. It reflects, and a semblance of reality is discernible. Moreover, an encouraging fact concerning its ability to reflect is that it steadily increases in the course of time. In the past, intelligence produced grotesque contortions of reality. Today, it at least vaguely hints at truth. The modern age, however, is impatient with the slowness of its achievement.

The naked, blinding, complete truth of life is being desired. Intelligence, revealing but a meager glimpse of it, is pushed into the background, and another, more efficient, instrument is being searched for. A current of thought is at present diverting from the main stream of scientific thought which has flown calmly and self-reliantly for a considerable number of years. The leaders of this new movement are not self-styled teachers of the masses, but authorities in the world of thought. They advertise the incompetency of the human mind, not because they are ignorant of scientific facts, or incapable of scientific analysis, but because they are sufficiently intelligent to perceive the present limitations of human intelligence. If they would let the matter rest there, no serious harm could result. Instead, they desire to replace the limitations of the mind with a deep-hidden and mysterious ability of the soul to intuitively perceive the utmost truth of existence. In other words, they deny that the process of discovering truth and reality is a gradual one, and they deny that the carefully laid plans of evolution play a part in the matter. They plunge into a bottomless pool of metaphysic and mysticism whose mysterious depths harbor many fascinations for those who, consciously or unconsciously, fear or resent the naked reality of life. The mind failing as an instrument of life-interpretation, intuition is made to replace the intellect. Intuition, with its instantaneous grasp of the truth of reality, dispels the gloom in which incompetent intelligence wraps the human soul. The gloom originates in the fact that the mind is not fully able to fathom the depths of life, and in the one that an intellectual analysis of existence invariably points at an absence of individual freedom.

Apart from the question whether or not freedom is a possibility in this universe, we should consider that the theories of inner revelation and of intuition are carefully spun by incompetent intelligence, itself. The very men that belittle the powers of the intellect and endeavor to demonstrate the superior ability of the soul in the matter of grasping truth, cannot escape the necessity of expressing with the aid of the intellect, and of translating in terms of intelligence, that which is supposedly known in a flash of intuition. The simple truth is, that there can be no *knowledge* without the mind. The intuitive philosophy does little more than hint at the fact that the intellect is as yet unable to solve the problem of existence to the satisfaction of reality-seeking man. It is a result of his impatience with the slow progress which the mind is making in the direction of solving the problem. But the intellect, considering the fact that it

is constantly developing and evolving, should be given a fair chance. After all, history is little more than a record of the growth of the human mind. And it cannot be denied that the intellect has constantly made giant strides forward. It has arrived at a certain point of its progressive career, the present, and it is with pride and satisfaction that it can look back upon its former fumbblings and stumblings in the darkness of an utter incompetency. And it is, consequently, with hope and courage that it should face a future which will probably be radiant with its competency to solve the sublime mystery of God.

Even if we should agree, however, that here and now, assisted by our intellect, we should knock at the door of mystery, the question arises, Of what earthly or heavenly use is our obtaining a glimpse of the truth? That question invariably presents itself in connection with reflections upon death. If our senses and our mind, as we may reasonably assume, eventually must vanish with the physical self, what may be the purpose of our gathering pearls of truth? What, indeed, we continue to ask, is the ultimate useful purpose of all that we do and feel, of our struggles and aspirations, of our moments of anguish and of our moods of laughter? Do human activity, feeling and thought represent so much senseless waste of energy expended in the hollow emptiness of ever-brooding time? The answers to these questions do not easily suggest themselves, especially not when we separate ourselves in thought from the past and the future, and from the rest of the world. Individual activity, physical, moral or mental, and impression and experience, seem purposeless when linked with a mysterious origin and an unknown destiny. But even if we should not be able to discover our ultimate origin, we are at least able to trace our self to a relative and immediate one. Something belonging to the ancestor, and something that constitutes the future generation, slumber in our deepest soul. The boundary line of our individuality, though we often ignore the fact, is made almost indistinguishable by the ever-murmuring sea of humanity. We are products of the past in the same sense that we are instrumental in shaping tomorrow's human material. We are part of a progressing humanity. We contribute our share, insignificant as it may be, towards making humanity what it is. That fact urges upon us the necessity of a study of history, not merely of a study of its surfaces, but indeed of its soul and inner meaning. A survey of history will convince us that no human thought or action represents wasted energy. On the contrary, a cry of anguish and

a peal of laughter, alike, disturb the smooth surface of the ocean of time, and vibrate upon it eternally. The products of thought and effort, and of human activity in general, do not follow the individual into oblivion. They become evergreen leaves on the growing tree of humanity. They serve as footholds on the slippery slope of progress by means of which a human race manages to climb to loftier heights. The present human world sends its taproot into the ancient soil of a long-forgotten humanity.

If there be a solution of the mystery of life, one of its keys is a clear comprehension of the meaning of history. We cannot discover ultimate reality when we live, in thought, in the present, only. Both we and our present conception of deity originate from inferior products, and the process of becoming has been an inconceivably long and painful one. Within the last fifty centuries, countless deities have ruled the destinies of men and even today our conception of the supreme is subject to constant change. If it is *the* truth that we seek, and not our particular brand of truth, it is desirable that we start our inquiries without either sacred books or deity. We should face merely the rugged rocks of the world and the naked facts of life. Our intellect should then expand towards time and space, towards the past and towards the universe. From the immediacy of our self, and from the present which is interesting because it is ours, we should tear ourselves, realizing that there are, and that there were, other selves from which our own differs widely. Beyond our individual environment, we should seek a universe that will acquaint us with objects, phenomena and laws for which we seek in vain within the narrow limits of our little world of self-centeredness. The secret of the supreme is not found without our wandering through the catacombs of the past, nor is it discovered without taking into consideration the sun-dotted depths of the universal immensity. A supreme concerning itself mainly with the insignificant individual cannot be much more than a provincial conception. Only when we are capable of thinking in terms of infinite universes and eternally rolling ages, the supreme of our conception becomes worthy of the name, God.

In sounding the depths of history's meaning, we simultaneously explore the vastness of the universe. Human history is, for one thing, the history of the mind's development. And one of the chief activities of mortal mind has been the taking of journeys into the unexplored vastnesses of the external world. From the nature of such journeys, and from the success or the disaster in which they

ended, we may learn something concerning the mind's ability in the past to solve the riddle of life. In the light of past accomplishments and failures, we may draw our conclusions regarding the possibility of complete success in the matter of translating into words and thoughts the great secret of being. We are, furthermore, enabled to roughly estimate the distance which man has covered, and the one which he yet must cover, on his journey towards a final goal. And, perhaps, as a final result, we will assume a more modest attitude in the matter of unravelling mysteries of boundless universes, and we will grant that we are as yet children groping in the half-darkness of a dawning understanding. On the surface of things, there is no harm in knowing "all about it and about." Our conception of existence, however, is intimately associated with our actions, in particular, with our moral and ethical behavior. Imaginary possession of wisdom is often more harmful than the rankest ignorance. It makes the individual unshakably narrow in his views, and intolerant of the views and the actions of his fellow being. There is also a logical objection to the claim of full knowledge and understanding of the supreme. The supreme, in order to be supreme, should eternally hide behind a veil of mystery. That which bars our intelligence from grasping the nature of the supreme may be of the thinnest material possible. But it constitutes a barrier, nevertheless. Our intelligence can merely inform us of the fact that deity necessarily exists behind the veil. But what deity is, it cannot tell. He who knows the supreme, in all its fulness unwittingly places himself on the supreme's divine level. Man knows of deity, but never can he know deity.

Man's intellectual accomplishments in the past should influence our conclusions regarding the possibility of his solving the mystery of being. Before proceeding with the discussion of the accomplishments in question, however, we should make clear our views concerning the real meaning of history. Generally speaking, a man's interpretation of history is strongly colored with the hues of his personality. Being artistically inclined, we discover in history the birth and the development of art. The religious person sees religion blossom from the seed into the institution which it is today. Others, impressed with the material facts of life, discover in it an attempt on the part of man to make this earth a comfortable place to live in. The moralist cheerfully talks about a gradual progress towards a condition of peace and brotherly love. And the pessimist sees history carry man, slowly but inevitably, towards a final crash of doom.

We experience difficulty in viewing the facts of life from an impersonal, scientific and philosophic standpoint. Pet theories and pre-conceived ideas persist in partly crowding out scientific facts, in order that the final product of our conceptions may agree with what we are and with what we think. The mathematician, if philosophically inclined, founds his theory of life on a mathematical basis. The physician applies his dissecting knife to immensity. We invariably blend that which we are with our opinions, judgments and theories. The impartial viewpoint is rare, resulting as it does from a desire to discover truth for truth's sake rather than for our own. Such a desire is awakened in the soul which is capable of living beyond the limits of its immediate surroundings and beyond those of the present. Can we travel back into the past without taking with us our prejudices and our unreasonably predominant notions? If we can, we shall be able to see man develop from the being that he was into the creature that he is at present. We shall be able to discover the nature of his principal mental activities, and to judge about their results, gratifying or discouraging, as the case may be. And from the past we shall be able to build a vision of the future.