

THE EXCLUDED
MIDDLE
AND
TIME

By Aleister Crowley

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THE EXCLUDED MIDDLE; OR, THE SCEPTIC REFUTED

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A BRITISH MAN OF SCIENCE
AND A CONVERTED HINDU

[This absurdity is a parody upon the serious essay which follows. It is an exceedingly characteristic trait that Crowley himself should have insisted upon this order, and a severe strain upon the devoted band who try to force themselves to study him. The notes are, of course, Crowley's throughout. To elucidate the allusions would require a note to nearly every phrase. The fact seems to be that any one with universal knowledge at the tips of his fingers can read and enjoy Crowley; but few others.]

THE EXCLUDED (OR DIVIDED) MIDDLE

M. Well,¹ Scepticus,² are³ you⁴ restored⁵ to⁶ health⁷? Our⁸ conflict⁹ of¹¹ yesterday¹² was¹³ severe.¹⁴

¹ Plato, *Critias*, 214; Schopenhauer, *Dei Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, xxxii. 76; Haeckel, *Antropogenie*, II. viii. 24; Aeschylus, *Prom. Vincit.*, 873-6; Hegel, *Logik*, lvi. 3; Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, cvii. 29; Mark ii. 8, iv. 16, x. 21; Tertullian, *Contra Marcionem*, cxv. 33; Cicero, *Pro Varrone*, iv.; *De Amicitia*, xii.; Goethe, *Faust*, I. iv. 18; Crowley, *Opera*, i. 216; R. Ischak ben Loria, *De Revolutionibus Animarum*, cci. 14 (see under קְרִיפָה, *et seq.*, q.v. p. iii); O. Wilde, *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, ed. princ., p. 4; Lev. xvii. Further historical authority may be found in Gibbon and others.

² *Punch*, vols. viii., lxvi. Cf. Art. "Burnand" in *Dict. Nat. Biog., scil. Viz. a-u-c*, xlvi., S. P.Q.R.

³ From *Encyc. Brit.*, Art. "Existence," and "Buddha," Mahaparinnibbana Sutta, to whom the author wishes to express his acknowledgements.

⁴ This joke is the old one. Jones asks Smith, "Why are you so late?" Smith wittily answers: "Absurd! I must always come before tea; you can never come till after tea." Here "you" only comes after the "tea" in Scepticus, which shows that Scepticus was a tea-totaller. Mysticus is therefore the drinker; which proves (what Burton and all Eastern scholars affirm) that Omar Khayyam means spiritual wine and not common alcoholic beverages. Cf. Burton, *Kasidah: Love and Safety*, ed. princ., p. 45, &c., &c.

⁵ This word needs little or no explanation.

⁶ Ontogeny can only be misunderstood by thorough study of phylogeny. Crepitation of the bivalves is a concurrent phenomenon. Take away the number you first thought of, and we see that the exostoses of the melanotic pyemata by the river's brim are exostoses and nothing more.

⁷ An unpleasant subject—a great comfort to think of—*vide* Wilde, *op. cit.*, and *A Woman of no Importance*. Also Kraft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, xx.; *The Family Doctor*; Quain, *Anatomy of Grey Matter*, cxlv. 24.

⁸ The 24th part of a (solar) day.

⁹ From French *con*; and Ang. Sax. *flican*, to tickle: hence, a friendly conflict.¹⁰

¹⁰ See 9, above.

¹¹ *Vies imaginaires* (Cratès); also *Eaux-de-Vie réelles* (Martel). There is a fine model at the Louvre (Room Z, west wall), and any number of the most agreeable disposition at Julien's or Delacluze's.

¹² Distinguish from to-day and to-morrow, except in the case of Egyptian gods; from to-day and for ever, except in the case of Jesus Christ; from to-day, but not from to-morrow, in the case of the Hindustani word "kal," which may mean either—not either itself, but "to-morrow" or "yesterday," according to the context. Note the comma.

¹³ From to be, verb intrans. auxil. mood indic. tense imperf. pers. 3rd.

¹⁴ From French *severe*; from Lat. *severus*-a-um; from Greek *σαυροσ*, a crocodile; from Sanskrit *Sar*, a king. Cf. Persian, *Sar*, a king; also W. African and Kentucky, "sar," master; Lat. *Caesar*, Germ. *Kaiser*, Russ. *Tsar*. Cf. Sanskrit *Siva*, the destroyer, or severe one.

S. Cogitavi,¹ ergo fui. To my breezy nature such a controversy as this of ours on “Tessaracts” was as the ozone-laden discharge from a Brush machine.

M. I was not aware that the termination -ozoon was connected with the allotropic form of oxygen.

S. Little boys should be seen, but not obscene.

M. Seen, no doubt for the Arabic form of Samech; in Yetzirah Sagittarius, or Temperance in the Tarot of your ridiculous Rosicrucians.

S. No more so than your Semitic Romeike.

M. Semetic?

S. Ike for Isaac, non est dubium—

M. Quin—

S. God save His Majesty!² but is this Midsummer Night, and are we dreaming?

M. “There are wetter dreams!”³ Let us discuss the Divided Middle!

S. Beware of the Water Jump!

M. Hurrah for Taliganj! I can improve on John Peel’s Map of Asia and that ere dawn. I will map you the lucubrations of the (converted) Hindu intellect upon this vital part of the Hegelian logic. Aum Shivaya vashi!¹⁸

S. Dulce ridentum Mysticum amabo,
Dulce loquentum.

¹ See Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, i. 1; Huxley, *Des Cartes*; and Mucksley, *Night Carts*, published San. Auth., Bombay, 1902. (At this point the damned don who was writing these notes was mercifully struck by lightning. He had intended to annotate every word in this manner in order (as he supposed) to attain a reputation like that of Max Müller *et hoc genus omne*.)

² Auberon Quin, King of England, in a novelette called “The Napoleon of Notting Hill.”

³ Wells, “There are better dreams”; but it turns out to mean that the young man is drowned, and at Folkstone too.

¹⁸ Cf. Prof. Rice. “The waters of the Hoang-Ho rushing by intoned the Kung.”

M. Will you not elide the ‘um’?

S. Then I were left with a bee in my breeches—worse than Plato’s in his bonnet.

M. A Scottish sceptic!

S. A Wee Free, Mysticus. A gaelic-speaking Calvinist with three thousand million bawbees in my sporrán and a brace of bed-ridden cattle-thieves in my kirk. So I withdraw breeks.

M. And you rely not on Plato?

S. Verily and Amen. As the French lady explained, O mon Plate!—she would not say Platon, having already got one rhyme in ‘mon’—and the Italian took her up that omoplat was indeed good to support the head, wherein are ideas. But to our divided middle!

M. As I should have said before I became a Christian:¹ “O Bhavani! be pleased graciously to bow down to thy servants: be pleased to construe our prattlings as Japas, our prayers as Tapas, our mantras as Rudradarshana, our bead-tellings as Devas! be pleased moreover to accept our Badli for Sach-bat, our Yupi for Lalitararira, our subject—O bless our divided middle!—for thine own venerable Yoni. Aum!”

S. I am touched by your eloquence; but Science has not said its last word on Sabapaty Swami and his application of Pranayama to the aberrations of evolutionary retrocessions—flexomotor in type, yet sensorial in function—of the Sahasrara-Chakra, as you urged yesterday.

M. I will not press it. But in the so-affected ambulatory vibrations (as I must insist, and you practically agreed) of the lower chakras may yet be found to lie the solution of our primordial dilemma. What is the divided middle? lest enthymeme ruin our exegesis ere it be fairly started.

¹ This is the invariable invocation used by the pious Hindu before any meditation or holy conference.

S. I will answer you without further circumlocution. The laws of Thought are reducible to three; that of identity, A is A ; that of contradiction, A is not $not-A$; and that of Excluded Middle,¹ A and $not-A$ taken together constitute the Universe.

M. That is a proposition easy to criticise. What of the line of demarcation between A and $not-A$? To A it is $not-A$, I suppose; to $not-A$ it is A .

S. As in defining the boundaries of nations—*Gallia est divisa in partes tres*—we may suppose that half the line is of A , and half of $not-A$.

M. No; for a line cannot be longitudinally split, or bifurcated in a sense parallel with itself. As Patanjali hints in his *Kama Linga Sharira*—that most delicate of Eastern psychologico-physiologico-philosophical satires —“Bare Sahib ne khansamahko bahut rupaiya diya hai.”

S. The Ethic Dative! But your contention is true, unless we argue with Aristotle $\acute{\omega}\kappa\epsilon\epsilon\varsigma$ $\sigma\tau\rho\theta\omicron\iota$ $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota$ $\gamma\alpha\varsigma$ $\mu\epsilon\lambda\alpha\iota\nu\alpha\varsigma$ and so on.

M. I was sure you would not seriously defend so untenable a position.

S. The eleemosynary functions of the—Jigar, I fancy the Vedas have it—

M. Yes—

S. Forbid.

M. Then do you accept the conclusions of the Hegelian logic?

S. My logic begins with the Stagyrite and ends with a manual *kunt*. I shall not surrender without a struggle. I am not an Achilles to be wounded in the heel.

¹ Sir W. Hamilton's proposed quantification of the predicate would serve in this instance. We have to combine the propositions:

All A is all A .

All A is not all $not-A$.

No A is not no $not-A$.

Fantastic as it seems, this is the simplest of the eighty-four primary ways of expressing these three laws in a single proposition.

No $not-A$ is not no some $not not-A$.

M. Then the wound is healed? Forgive me if I trespass on the preserves of Max Beerbohm,^a and your other ripping cosmopolitan wits!

^a A distinguished author on philosophical and kindred subjects. See his "works." John Lane,^b 1894.

^b Lane—a long one, with neither variableness nor shadow of turning. Christian name John.^c

^c Not to be confused with John, the beloved disciple, who wrote "Caliban^d on Patmos."^h

^d A dwarfish miscreate, celebrated in the works of Browning and Shakespeare (W.).^e

^e Dramatic author, flourished A.D. 1600 *circa*; wrote *The Tempest*, *Susannah*; or, *The Two Gentlemen of Veronica's Garden*, *The Manxman*, and other plays.

^f A garbled version of this was misbegotten in A.D. 1904 on a London stage; the worst actor of a dreadful crew, in spite of his natural aptitude for the part of Caliban (*q.v. supra, note d*) being one Beerbohm Tree.^g

^g Tree, because such a stick. Beerbohm—*vide supra, note a*. I take this opportunity to introduce my system of contin-uous footnotes, on the analogy of continuous fractions. In this case they are recurring—a great art in itself, though an error in so far as they fail to subserve the great object of all footnotes, viz., to distract the attention of the reader.

^h Text appended:—

CALIBAN ON PATMOS

Being the Last Adventure of the Beloved Disciple.

[COME, kids, lambs, doves, cubs, cuddle! Hear ye John
Pronounce on the primordial protoplast
Palingenetic, palæontologic,
And beat that beggar's bleeding בראשית
With truth veracious, aletheiac, true!
John ye hear. Cuddle, cubs, doves, lambs, kids, come!]

First God made heav'n, earth: Earth gauche, void; deep, dark.
God's Ghost stirred sea. God said 'Light!' 'Twas. 'Saw light,
Good, split off dark, call'd light 'day,' dark 'night.' Eve,
Morn, day I. 'Said "Twixt wets be air, split wets!"
'Made air, split wets 'neath air, wets top air; so.
Call'd air 'heav'n.' Eve, morn, day II. 'Said, "Low wets,
Cling close, show earth." So. Call'd dry 'earth,' wet 'sea.'

[Here John was seized

By order of Augustus. He maintained,
In spite of the imperial holograph,
"My seizer must be Caesar," with a smile:
And for persisting in his paradox
Was disembowelled: so Genesis got square.]

S. No, for I say that the line is, like the Equator, imaginary.

M. But is not imagination to be classed as either *A* or *not-A*?

S. *Vae victis!* as Livy says. I admit it.

M. And its products?

S. *Me miserum!* I cannot deny it.

M. Such as lines? *Namo Shivaya namba Aum*—to quote our holiest philosopher.

S. I am done. But no! I can still argue:

- (a) There is no line of demarcation.
- (b) There is a line, but it does not exist.
- (c) There is more than one line—since it is not straight and so cannot enclose a space—and *more than one thing* cannot form part of a universe, since *unus* implies a whole.

M. I should reply.

- (a) It is true that there is no line of demarcation, but that that non-existing line is after all just as much a part of the (non-existing) universe as any other non-existing thing.

We divide the universe into

- (1) Existing things.
- (2) Non-existing things.

If *A* exists, the line must be *not-A*: and vice versa.

Which we know to be false.

- (b) It is true that there is a line, and that it does not exist, but—

S. Let us settle (a) first, and return at leisure. You fail utterly to make the important distinction between mere absence of line and presence of a non-existing line, which is as gross a fallacy as to argue that a man who has gone out to lunch has been annihilated.

M. But he *has* been annihilated, from the point of view of the emptiness of his bungalow.

S. No! for the traces of his presence remain and will do so for ever.

M. Then a mehta's broom may be as mortal as a femme-dé-ménage!

S. A trois: πατηρ—ύιος, the λογος—and πνευμα άγιον.

M. Then you surrender? The tripartite anatomy of Tat Sat is granted me? Hegel is God, and Zoroaster his prophet? "The mind of the Father said 'Into 3!' and immediately all things were so divided!"?

S. Arrahmanu arrahima al maliku al qadusu as salamu—Vete cabron! Chinga su madre! I give in on that issue.

M. Alhamdolillah! For there are four letters in Allah الله. A for Ab—Father, L for Logos—double, for he is both God and man, and H for Holy Ghost.

S. The language of your Notariqon is tripartite too! On point (ι) though, 'twas but by a slip. I fell: I was not pushed. Can you controvert my second defence?

M. It is not a defence at all. It is a trick to lure me away from the question. I admit that there is such a line, and that it does not exist—but might it not *negatively subsist*, in the Ain, as it were? Further, whether it is or is not a concept, a noumenon, a psychosis, an idea—anything! does not matter. For since it is a subject with or without predicates and the possibility of predicates, they are themselves predicate¹ which copulate with it even the impossibility of assigning predicates to it, with the exception—you are bound to urge—of itself. But this would violate your law of identity, that a predicate should exclude itself from its own category, even were it non-existent, inconceivable, bum. Consequently, thinkable or un-thinkable, our creation of it subjectively has fixed it eternally in the immeasurable void.

¹ *Litera scripta manet.* Do not steal it, or *tertia poena manet.*

S. Your argument is convincing as it is lucid. But to my third fortress!

M. Dorje Vajra Samvritti! As to your third line of defence, I must admit that my difficulties are considerable. Yet, Bhavani my aid, I will essay them. You said, I think—

S. There is more than one line, since the line is not straight (otherwise it could not enclose a space).

M. I do not see this!

S. A curved line is not truly a line, since a line must have length without breadth, and a curved line may certainly have breadth, for it need not lie in one plane.¹

M. True.

S. Hence we may conclude that the line of demarcation between *A* and *not-A* is many and not one. Now a universe is that which turns to one,² when truly considered. Our line does the reverse of this, for it appeared one at first, and split up on examination.

M. Exactly; but that is where I have you in a corner.

S. Dollar wheat! Dollar wheat! Dollar wheat!

¹ The mathematical proof of this is simple. A surface is composed of an infinite number of parallel straight lines touching each other. Now for parallel straight lines place a single convoluted chortoid with a parabolic direction of $\pi^{n-\theta} + n^{\theta-\pi}$. At all the foci will be ellipses of the form $\frac{(n-1)(n+m+1)\sqrt{-1}}{(p+v) \pm \sin \theta^{-1} \cos \alpha}$.

Now since $p+v$ is in this case unity and $m=n$, we have—

$$\left\{ \frac{c \left[\tan \theta - O \cos(\pi + \alpha) \sqrt{-\pi} \right] \left[\sin \theta \varepsilon^{\theta} - \varepsilon^{\theta \pi} + K \right]^{-1}}{[c \cos \theta + u \sin \theta][u \tan \theta + t \sec \theta]} \right\}^{-1}$$

If the chortoid lie in one plane this expression=0; but if not, it = $\sin \theta^{-1} \cos \theta^{-2}$, θ being the angle subtended by the common arc of the original curve, by Halley's theorem, or $\sin \frac{\theta}{\pi}$, in which case the expression is unreal, and may be neglected.

² Two or more things cannot form part of any one thing, in so far as they remain two. Considered in relation to that of which they form part, they become fractions.

M. It is the 'reverse' which does you.¹ If you turn a man fourth-dimensionally round, his hemispherical ganglia will prove interchangeable?

S. No doubt, for they are symmetrical.

M. His polygonal fissures are identical with themselves?

S. I admit it, for they are ambidextrous.

M. His hypertrophied constrictor Cunnii will feel nothing?

S. No; it is medial.

M. Then how is he changed?

S. Fourth-dimensionally; no more.

M. Yet his right optic nerve will see through his left eye?

S. Of course.

M. Then of an event, an argument, a dialectic euhemerism, protoplasmic or blastodermic?

S. I see what you mean. You would say that duality irresolvable into unity has no parallel in the regions of pure intelligence, seeks no corollary from the intuitive organic reactions of the hyperbolic cells?²

M. I would.

S. The devil you would!

M. I would. Our line becomes single?

S. In the higher sense.

M. So that the Mind of the Father riding on the subtle guiders got it right after all?

S. Pretty right.

M. And all things are divisible into Three, not into Two?

S. Into *A*, *not-A*, and the dividing line.

M. Though the Reason of Man has boggled often enough at this, the intuition of Woman has always perceived it.

¹ Cf. A. B. Douglas, *Reminiscences*.

² Both colloid, caudate, and epicycloid, of course.

S. But she has gone too far, placing the importance of that dividing middle above all other things in earth or heaven. We hold the balance fair and firm.

M. (glad). How blessed is this day, Scepticus!

S. (*Conceding the point, and catching the glow*). Let us make a night of it!

M. (Enjoying his triumph). We will. Do not forget twilight!

S. (*In holy rapture*). Into Three, Mysticus, into Three!

M. (Ditto, only more so). Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

S. (*In the trance called Nerodha-Samapatti*). As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

M. (Ditto, after an exhilarating switch-back ride through the Eight High Trances). AMEN.

TIME*

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A BRITISH SCEPTIC AND AN INDIAN MYSTIC

“He (Shelley) used to say that he had lived three times as long as the calendar gave out, which he would prove between jest and earnest by some remarks on Time—

“That would have puzzled the stout Stagyrite”

—*Prefix to the “Wandering Jew” in “Fraser’s Magazine.”*

[The philosophical premises of this and the other essays in this volume should be studied in

Keynes. Formal Logic.

Erdman. History of Philosophy.

Berkeley. Three Dialogues κ.τ.λ.

Hume. Works.

Kant. Prolegomena, Critique of Pure Reason.

Locke. Human Understanding.

Huxley. Essays (Philosophical).

Patanjali. Aphorisms.

Bhikkhu Ananda Metteya. Essays (principally in the quarterly “Buddhism”).

The Tao Teh King and the Writings of Kwang Tze.

The Sufis, to whom chiefly Crowley is indebted for the foundations of his system of sceptical mysticism.]

* It must not be supposed that the author of this dialogue *necessarily* concurs in the views of either disputant, even where they are agreed. — A.C.

TIME

Scepticus. Well, my dear Babu, I trust you have slept well after our fatiguing talk of yesterday.

Mysticus. Ah, dear Mister, if you will forgive my adopting what is evidently your idiom, I found it on the contrary, invigorating. What is it the Psalmist says? That the conversation of the wise is like unto good wine, which intoxicates with delight, while it hurts not the drinker? The balm of your illustrious words, borne like spice upon the zephyr—

Scept. Shall we not rather renew our inquiries into the nature of things, than, in unfruitful compliment, waste the few hours we snatch away from death?

Myst. Willingly. But lately you were the “sahib” asking questions concerning Indian Philosophy as a great prince who should condescend to study the habits of horses or dogs—yesterday we changed all that.

Scept. I have but one apology to offer—that of Dr. Johnson.¹

Myst. Pray forbear! Yet it may be for a moment instructive to notice the consideration which led you to assume a happier attitude; viz., that such identities of thought (implying such fine parallelisms of brain structure) were discovered, that, in short, you admitted the Indian (as you have been compelled to admit the Gibbon)² to classification in your own genus.

Scept. You are hard upon my insolence.

Myst. Only to make the opportunity of remarking a further parallelism: that the said insolence is matched, maybe surpassed, by my own. A witty Irishman, indeed, observed of the natives of the Tongue of Asia that “the Hindu, with all his faults, was civilised, like the Frenchman: the Musulman, with all his virtues, was, like the Englishman, a savage.”

¹ Taunted with having describe a horse’s “pastern” as his “knee,” the great lexicographer pleaded “Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance.”

² See Huxley, “Man’s Place in Nature,” and elsewhere.

And indeed we are too apt to think of you only as red-faced, drunken, beef-eating boors and ruffians, with no soul and less sense, as if you were all soldiers; or as prim, conceited, supercilious, opinionated prigs, as if you were all civilians; or as unspeakable stupidity incarnate in greedy oiliness, as if you were all missionaries. Your highest place woman make virtuous our courtezans by a comparison of costume and manners; if our advices be true, the morality test is still in favour of our light ones. Your law wisely forbids your own venal woman to set foot on Indian soil; a rumour is even got about that you have no such women: but political economy is to be thanked, if it be so.¹ Now, though you know that I am aware that India is the refuse-head for your vilest characters and your dullest brains, I see that you so little appreciate the compliment I am trying to pay you, that your foot is already itching to assault my person, and to cause me to remember that your cook never forgets to spit into your honour's soup, were it not that we may find a refuge from difference of caste and race, custom and language, in the supreme unity, that of the ultimate force of which this universe is the expression.

Scept. I have listened with patience to what is after all (you must admit) a rather spiteful tirade—

Myst. Forive me if I interrupt. Do me the honour to remember that it was said in self-blame. I tried to give your honour “the giftie” (as one of your worst poets has said) “to see yoursel as ithers see you,” the “ithers” in this case being the average Hindus, as ignorant of your real character as you confess your untravelled folk to be of ours.

Scept. Pray spare me Burns! We are—that is, you and I—on a better understanding now. Let us return, if you will, to the subject we too lightly touched on yesterday; that of TIME, and

¹ Cf. Crowley, *Epigrams* (1550 A.D.)—

“The bawds of the stews be turnèd al out;

But some think they inhabit al England throughout.”—A.C.

the real signification of that mysterious word, which is in the mouth of children, and which to affect not to understand is to stamp oneself, in the opinion of the so-called intellectual classes, as a fantastic.

Myst. Yet who of us does understand it? I, at least, am at one with you in declaring its mystery.

Scept. You are of the few. Even Huxley, the most luminous of modern philosophers, evidently misunderstands Kant's true though partial dictum that it is subjective, or, in the pre-Kantian jargon, a form of the intellect.

Myst. Lest we involve ourselves in controversy, Homeric body-snatchers of Patroclus Kant, let us hastily turn to the question at issue itself. The scholastic method of discussing a point by quotation of Brown's position against Smith may do for the weevilly brain of a University don, but is well known to bring one no nearer to solution, satisfactory or otherwise, of the original problem.

Scept. I heartily agree with you so far. We will therefore attack the question *ab initio*: I await you.

Myst. As exordium, therefore, may I ask you to recall what we agreed on yesterday with regard to *Tat Sat*, the existent, or real?

Scept. That it was one, unknowable, absolute.

Myst. Objective?

Scept. Without doubt.

Myst. Did I not, however, observe that, however that might be, all intuitions, if knowable, were subjective; if objective, unknown?

Scept. You did: to which I pointed out that Spencer had well shown how subjectivity, real or no, was a mere proof of objectivity.

Myst. And *vice versa*.¹ Ah! my friend, we shall be tossed about, as the world this 2500 years, if we once enter this vortex. Let us

¹ This is not an *ignoratio elenchi*, but a criticism, too extended in scope to introduce here.—A.C.

remain where all is smooth in the certainty that the Unknowable is Unreal!

Scept. We agreed it to be real!

Myst. Oh never! The word “real” implies to us subjectivity; a thing is only real *to us* in so far as it is known by us; even its Unknowability is a species of knowledge of it: and, by Savitri! when I say real *to us*, I say real absolutely, since all things lie to me in the radius of my sensoriu,. “To others” is a vain phrase,—

Scept. True; for those “others” only exist for you inasmuch as, and in so far as, they are modifications of your own thought-stuff.¹

Myst. Agreed, then; instead of looking through the glasses of the metaphysician, we will content ourselves with the simpler task of measuring our thoughts by the only standard which is unquestionably valid, *i.e.*, consciousness.

Scept. But if that consciousness deceive us?

Myst. We are the more deceived! But it is after all indifferent; for it is we who are deceived. Idle to pretend that any other standard can ever be of any use to us, since all others are referred to it!

Scept. Ah! this is equally a branch of the former argument.

Myst. That is so. However, we may defer consideration of this problem, though I suspect that it will sooner or later force itself upon our notice.

Scept. No doubt. This is very possibly the ultimate unknown and infinite quantity, which lurks unsuspected in all equations, and vitiates our most seeming-certain results.

Myst. But, for Heaven’s sake, let us postpone it as long as possible, eh?

Scept. Indeed, it is the devil of a subject. But we wander far—By the way, how old are you? You appear young, but you know much.

¹ The physical basis of thought, as distinguished from its physical mechanism. A Hindu conception. Sanskrit, Chittam.

Myst. You are too polite. I am but an ultimate truth, six world-truths, fourteen grand generalisations, eighty generalisations, sixty-two dilemmas, and the usual odd million impressions.

Scept. What is all this? You are surely—

Myst. No, most noble Festus. Put me to the test, and I the matter will reword: which madness would gambol from.¹ How old may your honour be?

Scept. Forty-five years.

Myst. Excuse the ignorance of a “Babu,” but as Mr. Chesterton² well knows, we do not easily grasp Western ideas. What is a “year”?

Scept. Hm! Well, ah, the earth moves round—

Myst. How long have you been a sectary astronomical?

Scept. Er—what?

Myst. You are then an astronomer?

Scept. I? Goodness gracious bless my soul, no!

Myst. Then how do you know all this about the earth?

Scept. Astronomers are paid, insufficiently paid, it is true, but still paid, to calculate the movement of the various heavenly bodies. These, being regular, or regularly irregular, which comes to the same thing, serve us as standards of time.

Myst. A strange measure! What is the comparison in one of your poets between “Fifty years of Europe” and “a cycle of Cathay”?

Scept. You know our poets well.

Myst. Among my loose tags of thought are several thousand useless quotations. I would give much to have my memory swept and garnished.

Scept. Seven other devils wait at the door. But you were saying?

¹ I am not mad, most noble Festus. Acts xxvi. 25. The rest is from *Hamlet*. There are many other such apt or perverted quotations in the essay.

² [“Mr Crowley and the Creeds” and “The Creed of Mr Chesterton”, *etc.* (appeared as an extended footnote here in *Collected Works*), moved to end. – T.S.]

Myst. That an astronomer might perhaps justly compute the time during which his eye was actually at the telescope by the motion of the planets, or by the clockwork of his reflector, but that you should do so is absurd.

Scept. Yet all men do so and have ever done so.

Myst. And all are absurd in doing so, if they really do so, which I doubt. Even the lowest dimly, or perhaps automatically, perceive the folly thereof—

Scept. As?

Myst. A man will say “Since the Derby was run” more intelligibly than “since May such-and-such a day”; for his memory is of the race, not of a particular item in the ever changing space-relation of the heavens, a relation which he can never know, and of which he can never perceive the significance: nay, which he can never recognise, even by landmarks of catastrophic importance.

Scept. One might be humorous on this subject by the hour. Picture to yourself a lawyer cross-examing a farm hand as to the time of an occurrence. “Now, Mr. Noakes, I must warn you to be very careful. Had Herschell occulted α Centauri before you left Farmer Stubbs’ field?” while the instructed swain should not blush to reply that Halley’s Comet, being the sole measure of time in use on his farm, was 133° S., entering Capricorn, at the very moment of the blow being struck.

Myst. I am glad you koin me in ridicule of the scheme; but do you quite grasp how serious the situation has become?

Scept. I confess I do not see whither you would lead me. Your own computation strikes one as fantastic in the extreme.

Myst. Who knows? Think, yourself, of certain abnormal and pathological phenomena, whose consideration might law down the bases for a possible argument.

Scept. There are several things that spring instantly into the mind. First and foremost is the wonderfully suggestive work, misnamed fiction, of our greatest novelist, H. G. Wells. This

man, the John Bunyan of modern scientific thought, has repeatedly attacked the problem, or at least indicated the lines on which a successful research might be prosecuted, in many of his wonderful tales. He has (I say it not to rob you of your discoveries, but in compliment, and I can imagine none higher) put his finger on the very spot whence all research must begin: the illusionary nature of the time-idea. But I will leave you to study his books at your leisure, and try to give a more direct answer to your question. We have cases of brain disorder, where grave local mischief survives the disappearance of general symptoms. One man may forget a year of his life; another the whole of it; while yet another may have odd patches effaced here and there, while the main current flows undisturbed.

Myst. He is so much the poorer for such losses?

Scept. Certainly.

Myst. Did the stars efface their tracks to correspond?

Scept. Joshua is dead.

Myst. Yama¹ be praised!

Scept. Amen

Myst. You have also, I make no doubt, cases where the brain, from infancy, never develops.

Scept. True: so that a man of thirty thinks and acts like a child: often a stupid child. Our social system is indeed devised to provide for these cases; so common are they: the Army, the Cabinet, are reserved for such: in the case of women thus afflicted they are called "advanced" or "intellectual": the advantages of these situations and titles is intended to compensate them for Nature's neglect. Even sadder it is when young men of great parts and talent, flourishing up to a certain age, have their brained gradually spoiled by the preposterous system of education in vogue throughout the more miasmal parts of the country, till they are fit

¹ The Hindu Pluto.

for nothing but “chairs” and “fellowships” at “universities.” The schools of philosophy are full of these Pliocene anachronisms, as the responsible government departments are of the congenitally afflicted: in both cases thinking men are disposed to deny (arguing from the absence of human reason and wit, though some of the creatures have a curious faculty resembling the former, shorn of all light-quality) to those unfortunates and conscious life worthy of the name, or to the capacity to increase with years in the wisdom or happiness of their more favoured fellow-creatures.

Myst. Yet the stars have a regular rate of progression?

Scept. I see what you would be at. You would say that of two men born on a day, dying on a day, one may be young, the other old.

Myst. Ay! But I would say this to vitiate the standard you somewhat incautiously set up.

Scept. Abrogate it then! But where are we?

Myst. Here, that we may determine this most vital point; how so to act that we may obtain the most from life; or, if existence, the word of which intuitions are the letters, be as the Buddhists pretend, misery, how to obtain the least from it.

Scept. Let us not speak ill of a noble religion, though we lament the paradoxical follies of its best modern professors!

Myst. A truce to all controversy, then. How shall we obtain the best from life? It is this form of the question that should give you a clue to my goal.

Scept. It is so difficult to determine whether Sherlock Holmes¹ is dead or no that I will take no risks. But the answer to your query is obvious. *He lives the longest who remembers most.*

Myst. Insufficient. There are lives full of the dreariest incident, like a farmyard novel, or a widow in Thrums, or the autobiography of the Master of a College,² who lives ninety years

¹ A detective in sensational fiction of the period.

² The gibe is at Butler, Master of Trinity during Crowley's residence.

and begets sons and daughters, and there is an end of him by-and-by, and the world is nor richer nor poorer, scarce for an anecdote! Add to your "number of impression remembered" (and therefore not expunged) the vividness of each impression!

Scept. As a coefficient rather. Let us construct a scale of vividness from a to n , and we can erect a formula to express all that a Man is. For example he might be: $10a + 33125b + 890c + 800112658e + 992f + \dots + \dots + \dots n$, and if we can find the ration of $a : b : c : d : e : f : \dots : n$, we can resolve the equation into a single term, and compare man and man.

Myst. I catch the idea. Fanciful as it of course is in practice, the theory is sound to the core. You delight me!

Scept. Not at all, not at all. Further, I see that since the memory is a storehouse of limited capacity, it follows that he who can remember most is he who can group and generalise most. How easy it is to conjugate your Hindustani verbs! Because one rule covers a thousand cases. How impossible it is to learn German genders! Because the gender of each word must be committed arbitrarily to memory.

Myst. He then is the longest-lived, and the wisest, and the worthiest of respect, who can sum up all in one great generalisation.

Scept. So Spencer defines philosophy, as the art of doing this.

Myst. But you leave out this "vividness." He is greater who has generalised the data of evolution than he who did the same thing for heraldry: not only because of the number of facts covered, but because of the greater intrinsic value and interest of each fact. Not only, moreover, is the philosopher who can sum up the observation "All men are mortal," "All horses are mortal," "All trees are mortal," and their like, into the one word Anicca, as did Buddha, a wise and great man; but Aeschylus is also wise and great who from this universal, but therefore commonplace generalisation, selects and emphasises the particular "Oedipus is mortal."

Scept. Your Greek is perhaps hardly equal to your English; but you are perfectly right, and I do wrong to smile. Since we agree to abandon the mechanical device of the astronomer, all states of consciousness are single units, or time-marks, by which we measure intervals. That some, no longer than others, are more notable, just as the striking of a clock emphasises the hours, though the escapement maintains its rate, is the essential fact in counting.

Myst. And what is the test of vividness?

Scept. I should say the durability of the memory thereof.

Myst. No doubt; it is then of importance to class these states of "high potential"—may I borrow the term?

Scept. It is a suggestive one, though I must say I am opposed to the practice of Petticoat Lane in philosophical literature. The broad-minded Huxley's aversion to "polarity" is not his least bequest to psychologists. Of course, to begin our classification, all states of normal waking consciousness stand in a class above any other—

Myst. I have known dreams—

Scept. Wells says: "There are better dreams!"—and a damned good way to look at death, by heaven!

Myst. Yes! But I meant that some dreams are more vivid than some waking states, even adult states hours long. You remember the "Flying dream," though I daresay you have not experienced it since childhood: it is part of your identity, a shape or defining part of your mind: but you have forgotten the picnic at—where you will.

Scept. There is something to be thankful for in that. Then, there are incidents of sport—

Myst. Mysteries of initiation—

Scept. Narrow escapes—

Myst. The presence of death—

Scept. Shocks—

Myst. Some incidents of earliest childhood—

Scept. Memories which can be classed, and therefore fall under great headings; intellectual victories—

Myst. Religious emotions—

Scept. Ah! this minute too, for I group them! All these are intuitions which come near, which touch, which threaten, which alarm, the Ego itself!

Myst. Yet in those great ecstasies of love, poetry, and their like; the Ego is altogether abased, absorbed in the beloved: the phenomenon is utterly objective.

Scept. To be abased is to be exalted. But we are again at metaphysics. The Ego and the non-Ego are convertible terms. We are agreed that one of the two is a myth; but we might argue for months and æons as to which of the two it is.

Myst. Here Hindu practice bears out Western speculation, whether we take the shadowy idealism of Berkeley, or the self-refuted¹ Monism of Haeckel. All these men got our results, and interpreted them in the partial light of their varied intellect, their diverse surrounding and education. But the result is the same physiological phenomenon, from Plato and Christ to Spinoza and Çankaracharya,² from Augustine and Abelard, Boehme and Weigel in their Christian communities to Trismegistus and Porphyry, Mohammed and Paracelsus in their mystic palaces of Wisdom, the doctrine is essentially one: and its essence is that existence is one. But to my experience it is certain that in Dhyana the Eog is rejected.

Scept. Before enquiring further of you: What is this Dhyana? let me say, in view of what you have just urged: How do you know that the Ego is rejected.

¹ Haeckel, postulating a unity, is compelled to ascribe to it a tendency to dividuality, thus stultifying his postulate. See the "Riddle of the Universe."

² Hindu reformer (about 1000 A.D.) who raised the cult of Shiva from that of a local phallic deity to that of a universal God. The Tamil Isaiah.

Myst. Peccavi. My leanings are Buddhistic, I will confess: indeed the great majority of Eastern philosophers, arguing *à priori* from the indestructibility of the Ego—a dogma, say I, and no more!—have asserted that in the Dhyanic state the Object is lost in the Ego rather than *vice versâ*, and they support this conclusion by the fact of the glorification of the object.

Scept. But this is all *à priori*. For be it supposed that Dhyana is merely a state of more correct perception of the object than that afforded by normal inspection—and this is a reasonable view!—the argument simply goes to prove that matter, as the Ego, is divine. And this is our old vicious circle!

Myst. Also, since the object may be the Infinite. All Dhyana proves is that “things are not what they seem.”

Scept. Not content with our poets, you seem to have wandered into Longfellow.

Myst. Also Tennyson.

Scept. I can sympathise: there is a blot on my own scutcheon. You are just, though, in your statement that the glorification of one of two factors—

Myst. At the moment of the disappearance of their dividuality—

Scept. So?

Myst. Surely. They also themselves disappear, just as carbon, the black solid, and chlorine, the green as, combine to form a limpid and colourless liquid. So it might be absurd to assert either that Subject or Object disappears in Dhyana to the advantage of the other.

Scept. But at least this glorification of the consciousness is a proof that reality (as shown in Dhyana) is more glorious than illusion (as shown in consciousness).

Myst. Or, that illusion—

Scept. Of course! We are then no further than before.

Myst. Indeed we are. Glory, real or false, is desirable. Indeed we are too bold in saying “real or false” by virtue of our

previous agreement that the Subjective is the Knowable, and that deeper inquiry is foredoomed futile.

Scept. Unless, admitting Physiology,¹ such glory is a phantom, poisonous, and your Dhyana a debauch.

Myst. You will at least admit, as a basis for the consideration of this and other points that Dhyana is more vivid than any of the normal dualistic states.

Scept. I must. I have myself experienced, as I believe, this or a similar condition, and I find it to be so; intensely so.

Myst. I suspected as much.

Scept. But pray, lest we talk at cross purposes, define me this Dhyana.

Myst. The method is to concentrate the attention on any object (though in Hindu estimation some objects may be far more suitable than others, I believe Science would say any object)—

Scept. That was my method.

Myst. Suddenly the object disappears: in its stead arises a great glory, characterised by a feeling of calm, yet of intense, of unimaginable bliss.

Scept. That was my result. But, more remarkable still, the change was not from the consciousness “I behold a blue pig”—the object I have ever affected—to “I behold a glory,” but to “There is a glory,” or “Glory is.”

Myst. Glory be! Exactly. That is the test of Dhyana. I am glad to have met you.

Scept. Same here. Be good enough to proceed with your exposition.

Myst. In a moment. There are other Westerns who study these matters?

Scept. To follow up the line of thought you gave me but just now, we have a great number of philosophers in the West who

¹ As represented by Huxley, who, I fancy, spoke from imperfect knowledge of the facts. But *vide infra*.—A. C.

have enunciated ideas which to the dull minds of the common run of men seem wild and absurd.

Myst. You refer to Idealism.

Scept. To more; to nearly all philosophy, save only that self-styled "of common sense," which is merely stupidity glossing ignorance. But Berkeley—

Myst. The devout, the angelic—

Scept. Hegel—

Myst. The splendid recluse! The lonely and virtuous student who would stand motionless for hours gazing into space, so that his pupils thought him idle or insane—¹

Scept. Spencer—

Myst. The noble, ascetic, retired spirit; the single-hearted, the courageous, the holy—

Scept. Yes: all these and many others. But what mean your comments?

Myst. That extreme virtue is a necessary condition for one who is desirous of attaining this state of bliss.

Scept. There, my friend, you generalise from three. Let me stand forth (like Ananias) and tell you that after many vain attempts while virtuous, I achieved my first great result only a week after a serious lapse from the condition of a Brahmacharyi.²

Myst. You?

Scept. The result of despair.

Myst. That may serve you as an excuse before Shiva.

Scept. Quit not the scientific ground we walk on!

Myst. I regret; but my astonishment annulled me. On the main point, however, there is no doubt. These Westerns did,

¹ Cf. Plato, *Symposium*: Diotima's description of the Vision of absolute Beauty, identical with Hindu doctrine; and Alcibiades' anecdote of Socrates at Potidæa.—A. C.

² Chastity is probably referred to, though Brahmacharya involves many other virtues.

more or less, pursue our methods. Why doubt that they attained our results?

Scept. I never did doubt it. Certain of our philo-sophers have even imagined that “self-consciousness,” as they style it, is the very purpose of the Universe.

Myst. They were so enamoured of the Ananda—the bliss—

Scept. Presumably. Far be it from me to set myself up against them; but I may more modestly take the position that “self-consciousness” is a mere phenomenon; a by-product, and no more, in the laboratory of life.

Myst. Alas! I can think no better of you for your modesty: whoso would make bricks without straw may as well plan pyramids as hovels.

Scept. Your stricture is but too just. Teleology¹ is a science which will make no progress until the most wicked and stupid of men are philosophers, since like is comprehended by like: unless, indeed, we excuse the Creator by saying that, the Universe being a mere mechanism, that it should suffer pain (an emotion He does not feel) is as unintelligible to Him as that a machine should do so is to the engineer. Strain and fatigue are observed by the latter, but not associated by him with the idea of pain: much more so, then, God.

Myst. You are bold enough now! Our philosophers think it not fitting that man should discuss the ways of the inscrutable, the eternal God.

Scept. I have you tripping fairly at last! What do you mean be “eternal”? You who have uprooted my idea of time, answer me that?

Myst. A woodcock to mine own springe, indeed. I am justly caught with mine own metaphysic.

¹ The science of the Purpose of Things.

Scept. Throw metaphysic to the dogs! I'll none of it. I will resolve it to you, then, on your own principles. The term, so constantly in use, or rather abuse, by your devotees as by ours, is meaningless. All the can mean is a state of consciousness which is never changed—that is, one unit of time, since time is no more than a succession of states of consciousness, and we have no means of measuring the length of one against another: indeed, a “state of consciousness” is atomic, and to measure is really to furnish the means for dissolution of a molecule, and no more. Thus in the New Jerusalem the song must be either a single note, or a phenomenon in *tiem*. Length without change is equivalent to an increase in the vividness, as we said before. And after all the Ego can never be happy, for happiness is impersonal, is distinct from the contemplation of happiness. This quite unchanging, this single vivid state, is as near “Eternity” as we can ever get—it is a foolish word.

Myst. That state is then impersonal?

Scept. Ah!—Yes, I have described Dhyana.

Myst. The heaven of the Christian is then identical with the daily relaxation of the Hindu?

Scept. If we analyse their phrase, yes. But Christians mean “eternal time,” a recurring cycle of pleasant states, as when a child wishes that the pantomime “could go on for ever.”

Myst. Why, do they ever mean anything? . . . But how does this eternal time differ from ordinary time? Our guarantee against cessation is the fact that the tendency to change is inherent in all component things.

Scept. Our guarantee indeed! Rather the seal upon the tomb of our hopes! But to sing, even out of tune, as the Christian does, that “time shall be no more,” is, indeed, to cease to mean anything. The dogma of the Trinity itself is not less inane, the only thing that saves it from being blasphemous.

Myst. To be intelligible is to be misunderstood.

Scept. To be unintelligible is to be found out.

Myst. To be secretive is to be blatant.

Scept. To be frank is to be mysterious.

Myst. I wish your poet-martyr¹ (I do not refer to Chatterton) could hear us.

Scept. To return, I would have you note the paradox that unconsciousness must be reckoned as a form of consciousness, since otherwise the last state of consciousness of a dying person is for him eternity. That this is not do is shown by the phenomena of anaesthesia.

Myst. Is it, though? Is the analogy so certain? Is there nothing in the attempt of all religions to secure that a man's last thoughts should be of triumph, peace, joy, and their like?

Scept. I have been reading that somewhat mawkish book "The Soul of a People." Disgusted as I was by its ooze of sentimentality, I was yet not unobservant of its cognisance of this fact, and I was even pleased—though this is by the way—to see that the author recognises in the ridiculous First Precept of the Buddhist Faith, or rather in the orthodox travesty of Buddha's meaning, a mere survival of some fetichistic theophagy.

Myst. Doesn't it say somewhere that "Long words butter no parsnips"?

Scept. It ought to. But pray proceed with your defence of religion—for I presume it is intended as such.

Myst. I was saying that if unconsciousness be not reckoned as consciousness, the death-thought is heaven or hell, as it chances to be pleasant or painful. But, on the other hand, if it be so reckoned, if that and that alone has in death no awakening, no change, then is it not certain that there is the Great Peace? Disprove immortality, reincarnation, all survival or revival of the identical—

¹ The reference, presumably ironical, is to the late Oscar Wilde.

Scept. Identical? Hm!

Myst. —of the consciousness which the man called “I”—

Scept. Which Haeckel has pretty effectively done.

Myst. And Nirvana is ours for the price of a packet of arsenic, and a glass of Dutch courage.

Scept. In a poem called “Summa Spes,” a gifted but debauched Irishman has grossly, yet effectively, stated this view. “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!” is the Hebrew for it. But if we survive or revive—

Myst. The problem is merely postponed. If “death is a sleep”: why, we know what happens after sleep.

Scept. The quesiton resolves itself, therefore, into the other which we both of us have anticipated and feared: What is this “identical consciousness” which is the cause of so much confusion of thought. We have in the phenomena of mind (*a*) a set of simple impressions; (*b*)¹ a machinery for grasping and interpreting these; of sifting, grouping, organising, co-ordinating, integrating them; and (*c*) a “central” consciousness, more or less persistent, that is to say, united to a long series of central states by the close bond of the emphatic idea, I, which “central” consciousness takes notice of the results presented to it by (*b*). A state which can be summoned at will—

Myst. What then is “will”?

Scept. You know what I mean. God knows I am bothered enough already without being caught up on a word! Which can be summoned at will: which in a succession of simple, though highly abstract states, observes the results (forgive the repetition!) presented to it by (*b*). But if we turn the consciousness upon itself, if we add a sixth sense to the futile five?

¹ This (*b*) may be divided and subdivided into certain groups; some, perhaps all of them, liable, in the event of the suppression of (*a*), to become (automatically?) active, and prevent (*c*) from becoming quiet.—A. C.

Myst. It is resolved after all into a simple impression, indistinguishable, so far as I can see, from any other. That is, logically.

Scept. An impression, moreover, on what? It is not the (*c*) that is really examined; for (*c*) is the examiner: and you have merely formulated a (*d*) expressible by the ratio $d : c :: c : a$ —an infinite process. The final factor is always unknowable; yet it is the one thing known.

Myst. And because it is always present, therefore it is unkenned.

Scept. We are now nearer Spencer than appeared. For the fact that it must be there, unchanging in function, while consciousness persists, gives the idea of a definite substratum to subserve that function.

Myst. I cannot but agree; and I would further observe that, when in Dhyana, it ceases to examine, and apperceives, the “relative eternity,” *i.e.* the intense vividness of the phenomenon gives as a further argument in favour of its permanence.

Scept. But that it should persist after death is a question which we should leave physiology to answer, as much as the obvious question whether sight and taste persist. And the answer is unhesitatingly “No.”

Myst. Yet the mystic may still reply that the association of consciousness with matter is as incredible as the contrary conception. Cause and effect, he will say, are if anything less likely (*à priori*) than concomitance or causality. Even occasionalism is no more improbably than that the material should have a manifestly immaterial function.

Scept. Yet it is so!

Myst. Ah! would it serve to reply that it is so! But no! the materialistic position, fully allowed, is an admission of spirit.¹

¹ Maudsley, “Physiology of Mind,” asks why it should be more unlikely that consciousness should be a function of matter than that pain should be of nervous tissue.

They must conceive spirit and matter both as unknowable, as irresolvable, like x and y in a single equation (whose counterpart we seek in Dhyana), so that we may eternally evolve values for either, but always in terms of the other.

Scept. Just so we agreed lately about subject and object.

Myst. It is another form of the same Protean problem.

Scept. Haeckel even insists upon this in his arrogant way.

Myst. Huxley, at once the most and the least sceptical of philosophers, urges it. There is only one method of investigating this matter. Reason is bankrupt; not only Mansel the Christian but Hume the Agnostic has seen it.

Scept. We all see it. The Bank being broken, we do not put what little we have saved into the wildcat stock Faith, as Mansel counsels us; but add little to little, and hoard it in the old stocking of Science.

Myst. Well if no holes!

Scept. We expect little, even if we hope for much. We are pritty safe; 'tis the plodding ass that is Science, and the fat priest rides us still.

Myst. We offer you a Bank, where your intellectual coin will breed a thousandfold.

Scept. What security do you offer? Once bit, twice shy; especially as your business is known to be patronised by some very shady customers.

Myst. Do you offer to stop my mouth with security? We give you all you can wish. Let Science keep the books! I say it in our own interest; the slovenly system that has prevailed hitherto has resulted in serious losses to the shareholders. One of our best

True. So also Huxley extended the meaning of "nature" to include the "supernatural" in order to deny the supernatural.

So also I (maintaining that darkness only exists) meet the cavil of the people who insist on the separate existence of light by showing that light is, after all, merely a subsection of one kind of darkness.—A. C. This note is of course ironical.

cashiers, Christ, went off and left mere verbal messages, and those only too vague, as to the business that passed through his hands. Too many of our most brilliant research staff keep their processes secret, and so not only incur the suspicion of quackery, but leave the world no wiser for their work. Others abuse their position as directors to further the ends of other companies not even allied to the parent firm: as when Mohammed, the illuminated of Allah, lent his spiritual force to bolster up the literal sense of the Bible, thus degrading a sublime text-book of mystic lore into the merest nursery, or too often bawdy-house, twaddle and filth. You will alter all this, my friends! Let Science keep the books!

Scept. For a cross between a plodding ass and an old stocking, she will do well! And what dividends do you promise?

Myst. In the first year, Dhyana; in the second, Samadhi; and in the third, Nirvana.

Scept. It is not the first year yet. Is this coin current?

Myst. Ah! I remember now your phrase "Dhyana a debauch." You are of course familiar with the name of Maudsley, perhaps the greatest living authority on the brain?

Scept. None greater.

Myst. By rare good fortune, at the very moment when this aspect of the question was confronting me, and I was (so any one would have imagined) many thousand miles away from expert opinion, I had the opportunity of putting the matter before him. Our conversation was pretty much as follows: "What is the cause of the phenomenon I have described." (I had just given such a sketch as we have drawn above, and added that it was the most cherished possession of all Eastern races. The state was familiar to him.) "Excessive activity of one part of the brain; excessive lethargy of the rest." "Of which portion?" "It is unknown." "Is the phenomenon of pathological significance?" "I cannot say so much: it would be a dangerous habit to acquire: but since recovery is spontaneous, and is apparently complete, it is to be

classed as physiological.” I obtained the idea, however, that the danger was very serious, perhaps more so than the actual words used would imply. A further enquiry as to whether he could suggest any medical, surgical, or other means, by which this state might be produced at will, led to no result.

Scept. This is most interesting: for the very doubts which I did entertain as to the safety of mental methods directed to attaining this result, are dispelled by what is a cautious, if not altogether unfavourable, view from a naturally-inclined-to-be-unfavourable Western mind. (My mother was of German extraction.) How so? Because my teacher, himself a Western scientific man of no mean attainments, thought no trouble too great, no language too violent (though he is ordinarily a man of unusual mildness and suavity of manner) to be used, to impress upon me the extreme danger of too vigorous attempts to reach the state of concentration. “If you feel the least tired in the course of your daily practice,” he never wearied of repeating, “you have done too much, and must absolutely rest for four-and-twenty hours. However fresh you feel, however keen you are to pursue the work, rest you must, or you will but damage the apparatus you are endeavouring to perfect. Rest longer if you like, never for less.” This adjuration recurs with great force to my mind at the present moment. Our Western “Adepts”—if you were a Western I would ask you to forgive the word—know, as the great brain specialist knows, the dangers of the practice; the dangers of training, the dangers of success.

Myst. Blavatsky’s mysteriously-phrased threats were to this effect. Maybe she knew.

Scept. Maybe she did. Well, what I wished to point out was that, had you pressed Dr. Maudsley, he might possibly have admitted that scientific precaution, under trained guidance and watching, might diminish the danger greatly, and permit the student to follow out this line of research without incurring the

stigma—if it be a stigma—of risking his sanity, or at least his general mental welfare?¹

Myst. It may be; in any case I follow knowledge; if my methods be absurd or pernicious, I am but one of millions in the like strait. Nor do I perceive that any other line of action offers even a remote chance of success.

Scept. The problem is perennial. It must be attacked on scientific lines, and if the pioneers fall,—well, who expects more than a forlorn hope? Time will show.

Myst. We have wandered far from this question of time.

Scept. Even from that of consciousness; itself a digression, though a necessary one.

Myst. An elusive fellow, this consciousness! Is he continuous, you, who declare him permanent?

Scept. Do I, indeed? I gave a possible reason for thinking so; but my adhesion does not follow. The lower consciousnesses,

¹ Dr Maudsley, to whom I submitted this portion of the dialogue, was good enough to say that it represented very much what he had said, and to add that "the 'ecstasy,' if attained, signifies such a 'standing-out,' ἐκ-στασις, quasi-spasmodic, of a special tract of the brain as, if persisted in, involves the risk of a permanent loss of power, almost in the end a paralysis of the other tracts.—Like other bad habits, it grows by what it feeds on, and may put the fine and complex co-ordinated machinery quite out of gear. The ecstatic attains an illumination (so-called) at the expense of sober reason and solid judgement."

Mysticus would not, I think, wish to contest this view, but rather would argue that if this be the case, it is at least a choice between two evils. Sober reason and solid judgement offer no prize more desirable than death after a number of years, less or greater, while ecstasy can, if the facts stated in this dialogue are accepted, give the joys of all these years in a moment.

But for the sake of argument he would say that there are certainly many men who have practised with success from boyhood, and who still enjoy health and a responsible and difficult position in the world of thinking men. This would suggest the idea that there may be men with special aptitude for, and immunity in greater or less degree against the dangers of, this practice. He would cheerfully admit that the common mystic is an insufferable fool, and that his habits possibly assist the degenerative process. But he would submit that in such cases the brain, such as it is, is not worth protecting. At the same time, it is true, the truest type of Hindu mystic regards the ecstasy as an obstacle, since its occurrence stops his meditation; and as a temptation, since he is liable to mistake the obstacle for the goal. — A. C.

which I called (*a*), are of course rhythmic. The biograph is a sufficient proof of this.

Myst. Were one needed. Spencer's generalisation covers this point?

Scept. *À priori.* That the higher (*c*) are also rhythmic—for we will have no *à priori* here!—is evident, since the (*a*)s are presented by (*b*) no faster than they come. Even if (*a*), being fivefold, comes always to fast as to overlap, no multitude of impacts can compose a continuity.

Myst. But these reasons for permanence were very strong.

Scept. Strong, but overcome. Is it not absurd to represent anything as permanent whose function is rhythmic?

Myst. Not necessarily. It is surely possible for a continuous pat of butter to be struck rhythmically, for example. That it is inert in the intervals is unproved; but if it were, it might be continuous. That a higher consciousness exists is certain; that it is unknowable is certain, as shown just now, unless, indeed, we can truly unite (*c*) with itself: *i.e.*, without thereby formulating a (*d*).

Scept. But how is that to be done?

Myst. Only, if at all, by cutting off (*c*) from (*a*): *i.e.*, by suspending the mechanism (*b*). Prevent sense-impressions from reaching the sensorium, and there will at least be a better chance of examining the interior. You cannot easily investigate a watch which is going; nor does the reflection of the sun appear in a lake whose surface is constantly ruffled by wind and rain, by hail and thunderbolt, by the diving of birds and the falling of rocks. To do this, thus shown to be essential to even the beginning of the true settlement of the time problem, and the solution of the paradoxes it affords—

Scept. How to do this is then a question not to be settled offhand by our irresponsible selves, but one of method and research.

Myst. And as such the matter of years.

Scept. I have long recognised this. That it should be started on a firm basis by responsible scientific men; that it should be placed on equal terms in all respects with other research: such is the object of my line.

Myst. But of mine the research itself.

Scept. I applaud you. You are the happy one. I am the martyr. I shall sow, but not reap; my eyes shall hardly see the first-fruits of my labour; yet something I shall see. Also, to construct one must clear the ground: to harvest, the plough and harrow are required. First we must rid us of false phrase and lying assumption, of knavery and ignorance, of bigotry and shirking. Let us pull down the church and the Free Library;¹ with each stone torn thence let us build the humble and practical homes of the true "holy men" of our age, the austere and single-minded labourers in the fields of Physics and Physiology.

Myst. Here, moreover, is the foundation of race harmony; here is the possible basis for a genuine brotherhood of man! He will never be permanently solidarised—excuse the neologism!—by grandiose phrase and transitory emotion; but in the Freemasonry of the Adepts of Dhyana what temple may not yet be builded?

Scept. Not made with hands — ἐν τοῖς οὐρανίοις αἰώνιος.

Myst. Has not this mystical bond brought you and me together, us diverse, even repugnant in all other ways, yet utterly at one in this great fact?

Scept. We have talked too lightly, friend. Silence is best.

Myst. Let us meditate upon the adorable light of that divine Savitri!

Scept. May she enlighten our minds!

¹ The sarcasm is perhaps against the popularity of the worthless novel, as shown in Free Library statistics; or against the uselessness of any form of reading to a man not otherwise educated.

MR. CROWLEY AND THE CREEDS
AND
THE CREED OF MR. CHESTERTON

WITH A POSTSCRIPT ENTITLED
A CHILD OF EPHRAIM*
CHESTERTON'S COLOSSAL COLLAPSE

[This material was originally printed as an 8-page pamphlet and inserted into the first edition of Crowley's *Why Jesus Wept*. In vol. ii of Crowley's *Collected Works* it was reproduced as an extended footnote to "Time" (pp. 269-272). "Mr. Crowley and the Creeds," Chesterton's review of *The Sword of Song*, was originally published in the *Daily News* on the 24th September, 1904. — T.S.]

* The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned them back in the day of battle.

MR. CROWLEY AND THE CREEDS

BY G. K. CHESTERTON

Mr. Aleister Crowley publishes a work, "The Sword of Song: Called by Christians 'The Book of the Beast,' " and called, I am ashamed to say, "Ye Sword of Song" on the cover, by some singularly uneducated man. Mr. Aleister Crowley has always been, in my opinion, a good poet; his "Soul of Osiris," written during an Egyptian mood, was better poetry than this Browningsque rhapsody in a Buddhist mood; but this also, though very affected, is also interesting. But the main fact about it is that it is the expression of a man who has really found Buddhism more satisfactory than Christianity.

Mr. Crowley begins his poem, I believe, with an earnest intent to explain the beauty of the Buddhist philosophy; he knows a great deal about it; he believes in it. But as he went on writing one thing became stronger and stronger in his soul—the living hatred of Christianity. Before he has finished he has descended to the babyish "difficulties" of the Hall of Science—things about "the plain words of your sacred books," things about "the panacea of belief"—things, in short, at which any philosophical Hindoo would roll about with laughter. Does Mr. Crowley suppose that Buddhists do not feel the poetical nature of the books of a religion? Does he suppose that they do not realise the immense importance of believing the truth? But Mr. Crowley has got something into his soul stronger even than the beautiful passion of the man who believes in Buddhism; he has the passion of the man who does not believe in Christianity. He adds one more testimony to the endless series of testimonies to the fascination and vitality of the faith. For some mysterious reason no man can contrive to be agnostic about Christianity. He always tries to prove something about it—that it is unphilosophical or immoral

or disastrous—which is not true. He can never say simply that it does not convince him—which is true.

A casual carpenter wandered about a string of villages and suddenly a horde of rich men and sceptics and Sadducees and respectable persons rushed at him and nailed him up like vermin; then people saw that he was a god. He had proved that he was not a common man, for he was murdered. And ever since his creed has proved that it is not a common hypothesis, for it is hated.

Next week I hope to make a fuller study of Mr. Crowley's interpretation of Buddhism, for I have not room for it in this column today. Suffice it for the moment to say that if this be indeed a true interpretation of the creed, as it is certainly a capable one, I need go no further than its pages for examples of how a change of abstract belief might break a civilisation to pieces. Under the influence of this book earnest modern philosophers may, I think, begin to perceive the outlines of two vast and mystical philosophies, which if they were subtly and slowly worked out in two continents through many centuries, might possibly, under special circumstances, make the East and West almost as different as they really are.

THE CREED OF MR. CHESTERTON

BY ALEISTER CROWLEY

When a battle is all but lost and won, the victor is sometimes aware of a brilliancy and dash in the last forlorn hope which was lacking in those initial manœuvres which decided the fortune of the day.

Hence it comes that Our Reviewer's apology for Christianity compares so favourably with the methods of ponderous blunder on which people like Paley and Gladstone have relied. But alas! the very vivacity of the attack may leave the column without that

support which might enable it, if checked, to retire in good order; and it is with true pity for a gallant opponent—who would be wiser to surrender—that I find myself compelled to despatch half a squadron (no more!) to take him in flank.

Our Author's main argument for the Christian religion is that it is hated. To bring me as a witness to this colossal enthymeme, he has the sublime courage to state that my "Sword of Song" begins with an effort to expound Buddhism, but that my hatred of Christianity overcame me as I went on, and that I end up literally raving. My book is possibly difficult in many ways, but only Mr. Chesterton would have tried to understand it by reading it backward.

Repartee apart, it is surely an ascertainable fact that while the first 29 pages* are almost exclusively occupied with an attack on Christianity as bitter and as violent as I can make it, the remaining 161 are composed of (a) an attack on materialism, (b) an essay in metaphysics opposing advaitism, (c) an attempt to demonstrate the close analogy between the canonical Buddhist doctrine and that of modern Agnosticism. None of these† deal with Christianity at all, save for a chance and causal word.

I look forward with pleasure to a new History of England, in which it will be pointed out how the warlike enthusiasm aroused by the Tibetan expedition led to the disastrous plunge into the Boer War; disastrous because the separation of the Transvaal which resulted therefrom left us so weak that we fell an easy prey to William the Conqueror. Our Novelist should really make a strong effort to materialise his creation in "The Napoleon of Notting Hill" of the gentlemen weeping by the graves of their descendents.

* [Refers to the original pagination of *The Sword of Song*. Pages 1-29 comprised the poem "Ascension Day."]

† [Respectively, the poem "Pentecost", the essay "Berashith" and the essay "Science and Buddhism"]

Any sound philosophy must be first destructive of previous error, then constructive by harmonising truths into Truth.

Nor can the human mind rest content with negation; I honour him rather whose early emotion is hatred of Christianity, bred of compulsion to it, but who subdues that negative passion and forces his way to a positive creed, were it but the cult of Kali or Priapus.

Here, indeed, modern Agnostics are at fault. They sensibly enough reject error; but they are over-proud of their lofty attitude, and, letting slip the real problems of life, busy themselves with side-issues, or try to satisfy the spiritual part of the brain (which needs food like any other part) with the husks of hate.

How few among us can reach the supreme sanity of Dr. Henry Maudsley in such a book as "Life in Mind and Conduct"!

Hence I regard Agnosticism as little more than a basis of new research into spiritual facts, to be conducted by the methods won for us by men of science. I would define myself as an agnostic with a future.

But to the enthymeme itself. A word is enough to expose it.

Other things have been hated before and since Christ lived—if he lived. Slavery was hated. A million men* died about it, and it was cast out of everywhere but the hearts of men.† Euripides hated Greek religion, and he killed the form thereof. Does Our Logician argue from these facts the vitality of slavery or Delphi? Yes, perhaps, when Simon Legree and the Pythoness were actually making their money, but to argue their eternal truth, or even their value at that time, is a further and false step. Does the fact that a cobra is alive prove it to be innocuous?

* In the American Civil War, 1861-64. But they were not men, only Americans.

† This is mere rhetoric. Crowley was perfectly familiar with the conditions of "free" wage labour.

With the reported murder of Jesus of Nazareth I am not concerned; but Vespasian's "Ut puto Deus fio" is commonly thought to have been meant as a jest.

Our Romanticist's unique and magnificent dramatisation of the war between the sceptic or lover of truth, and the religious man or lover of life, may well be quoted against me. Though Vespasian did jest, though Christ's "It is finished" were subjectively but the cry of his physical weakness, like Burton's "I am a dead man," it is no less true that millions have regarded it as indeed a cry of triumph. That is so, subjectively, for them, but no more, and the one fact does not alter the other.

Surely Our Fid. Def. will find little support in this claim on behalf of death. We all die; it was the Resurrection and Ascension which stamped Christ as God. Our Philosopher will, I think, fight shy of these events. The two thieves were "nailed up like vermin" on either side of Christ by precisely the same people; are they also gods? To found a religion on the fact of death, murder though it were, is hardly more than African fetichism. Does death prove more than life? Will Mr. Chesterton never be happy until he is hanged?

These then are the rear-guard actions of his beaten and retreating army.

The army itself is pretty well out of sight. There is a puff of artillery from afar to the effect that "no man can contrive to be agnostic about Christianity." This is a very blank cartridge. Who is agnostic about the shape of the earth? Who prides himself upon a profound reserve about the colour of a blue pig, or hesitates to maintain that grass is green? Unless under the reservation that both subject and predicate are Unknowable in their essence, and that the copula of identity is but a convention—a form of Agnosticism which after all means nothing in this connection, for the terms of the criticism require the same reservation.

Our Tamburlaine's' subsequent remark that the poor infidel (failing in his desperate attempt to be agnostic) "tries to prove something untrue" is a *petitio principii* which would be a blunder in a schoolboy; but in a man or Our Dialectician's intelligence can only be impudence.

The main army, as I said, is out of sight. There is, however, a cloud of dust on the horizon which may mark its position. "Does Mr. Crowley suppose that the Buddhists do not feel the poetical nature of the books of religion?" I take this to mean: "You have no business to take the Bible literally!"

I have dealt with this contention at some length in the "Sword of Song" itself (Ascension Day, lines 216-247): but here I will simply observe that a poem which authorises the Archbishop of Canterbury to convel Dr. Clifford's pet trowels, and makes possible the Gilbertian (in the old sense of pertaining to W. S. Gilbert) position of the Free Kirk to-day, is a poem which had better be burnt, as the most sensible man of his time proposed to do with Homer, or at least left to the collector, as I believe is the case with the publications of the late Isidore Liseux. Immoral is indeed no word for it. It is as criminal as the riddle in "Pericles."

That our Pantosympatheticist is himself an Agnostic does not excuse him. True, if every one thought as he does there would be no formal religion in the world, but only that individual communion of the consciousness with its self-consciousness which constitutes genuine religion, and should never inflame passion or inspire intolerance, since the non-Ego lies beyond its province.

But he knows as well as I do that there are thousands in this country who would gladly see him writhing in eternal torture—that physiological impossibility—for his word "a casual carpenter," albeit he wrote it in reverence. That is the kind of Christian I

* Not to confuse with Tambourine or alter into Tamburlesque.

would hang. The Christian who can write as Our Champion of Christendom does about his faith is innocuous and pleasant, though in my heart I am compelled to class him with the bloodless desperadoes of the "Order of the White Rose" and the "moutons enragés" that preach revolution in Hyde Park.

When he says that he will trace "the outlines of two vast and mystical philosophies which if they were subtly and slowly worked out, &c., &c.," he is simply thrown away on Non-conformity; and trust I do not go too far, as the humblest member of the Rationalist Press Association, when I suggest that that diabolical body would be delighted to bring out a sixpenny edition of his book. I am not fighting pious opinions. But there are perfectly definite acts which encroach upon the freedom of the individual: indefensible in themselves, they seek apology in the Bible, which is now to be smuggled through as a "poem." If I may borrow my adversary's favourite missile, a poem in this sense is "unhistorical nonsense."

We should, perhaps, fail to appreciate the beauty of the Tantras if the Government (on their authority) enforced the practices of hook-swinging and Sati, and the fact that the cited passages were of doubtful authority, and ambiguous at that, would be small comfort to our grilled widows and lacerated backs.

Yet this is the political condition of England at this hour. You invoke a "casual camel-driver" to serve your political ends and prevent me having eighteen wives as against four: I prove him an imposter, and you call my attention to the artistic beauty of Ya Sin. I point out that Ya Sin says nothing about four wives, and you say that all moral codes limit the number. I ask you why all this fuss about Mohammed, in that case, and you write all my sentences—and your own—Qabalistically backwards, and it comes out: "Praise be to Allah for the Apostle of Allah, and for the Faith of Islam. And the favour of Allah upon him, and the peace!"

War, I think, if those be the terms.

POST-SCRIPT

War under certain conditions becomes a question of pace, and I really cannot give my cavalry as much work as our Brer Rabbit would require. On the appearance of the first part of his article "Mr. Crowley and the Creeds" I signified my intention to reply. It aborted his attack on me, and he has not since been heard of.

*In the midst of the words he was trying to say,
In the midst of his laughter and glee,
He has softly and suddenly vanished away—*

I supposed I always was a bit of a Boojum!

