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CREATIVE EFFORT

AN ESSAY IN
AFFIRMATION

By NORMAN LINDSAY

Second Edition



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TO THE FUTURE EFFORT

To whom does one offer the gift of a thought?

To him who already thinks it.

The mission of the thinker is not to enlighten, but to confirm. The material for enlightenment is already there, like a piled-up beacon; the new thought is but a spark that sets it alight.

Anger at the stupidity of common minds is foolish, save in youth, when it is a stimulus.

Yet all high minds wish to offer the gift of thought to mankind, and because it is rejected they become bitter.

But gold is no use to a savage. He prefers iron, which is useful to him. And here the savage is wise. One cannot blame the common mind, because it seeks common thoughts—vulgar utilities—for these things help it.

If the common man is also able to catch a little at higher thoughts, so much the better; but he has caught something in passing not addressed to him.

The message of the Creative Effort is to him whose mission is to carry on the Creative Effort.

so few that in a thousand years, one may count them on the fingers of a hand.

Even you, my progressive friend, have your moments of despair, and yet you exist amid the dust of affairs, which obscures all efforts to see clearly. You believe still that man will some day impose his will on necessity; the belief that sustained you with hope a million years ago!

What was the query? All high minds set out to find a direction for life, and end at the blank wall of despair for man.

We know what caused the despair. The conviction that mankind is unworthy of a high destiny, of futurity, of the eternal force that we call life.

The query must go deeper still. What set the high mind in this quest for man's destiny? The answer lies in the heart of every man that ever breathed—a belief in the immortality of life.

Oh, yes, the text book formulas of negation are all admitted, those denials of the complacent materialists who condemn mankind to the finality of the grave, while making a trifling reservation of immortality for themselves.

But no truly great mind seeks to solve the enigma of man's destiny by digging up an ant's nest. The complacency of the scientific mind goes even beyond that of the religious cretin in all serious issues.

For the truth is, all high minds know that they have within them an inextinguishable element. Their love of life is the evidence of their belief in Futurity.

Therefore the quest of such a mind among the ideals of mankind is a quest into the secret passion of its own heart.

And finding mankind to be what mankind is, aimless and stupid, seeking always its food, the gratification of its senses, its security and its amusements, base or kindly only according to the pressure of its blood, that high quest turns upon itself in bitterness and dismay.

"What, immortality for this mob? Futurity for this human ant bed? A little humanity and kindness sufficient to palliate its vast stupidity and cruelty? A thousand times, No. There is no other end for this thing but the mud from which it sprung!"

And this cry is from an egotism bleeding and in the dust.

"Since there is no Futurity for man, there is no Futurity for me. This is an illusion that I have dreamed, that life might be great, mysterious and beautiful. It is vile and dull. It has no aim, no direction. Eternally renewed, eternally decaying, it has no more significance than the crawling mechanism of the ant, a thing that lives blindly on for ever amid the beauty and terror of space."

Is it proposed to repudiate this cry of despair from the critic of Life? That remains to be seen.

But first we must find wherein the intellectual effort failed.

The problem of intellectual effort to-day is inseparable from the problem of Nietzsche. Never before has man's thought penetrated so deeply, or searched so high a plane.

It is necessary to discard here all that the English say of Nietzsche. On all serious issues of Life the English are incurably frivolous. They have seriousness only for the lesser problem of existence. The Theological passion with them has always been sociological; the

problem of conduct and order. The fear of incurring a social stigma has become for them a code of morality.

It is the communal virtue of the English that they subscribe to all social formulas, while insisting on a high sense of political freedom. In other words, they submit to political slavery in order to maintain an illusion of political liberty.

For this reason they think well on all matters of state removed from human passion. They are equable and tolerant in Law, Government and Religion. But wherever human conditions impinge upon the social structure, they become furtive and ill at ease. The problems of Birth, Death and Sex they shuffle aside as indecent, and this moral weakness has earned for them the European stigma of Hypocrisy. But this is a racial excuse for spleen. The English are not hypocrites; they are only unable to take the higher problem of morality seriously.

But we must remove all questions of intellect from racial animosity. The English are mentioned here only because they have been loudest in repudiating Nietzsche.

We know where Nietzsche succeeded. He put a final valuation on all that is base in Humanity. He found that the attack on all high impulses, even on Life itself, comes also from Life. He found that wherever there was a determined effort on earth to create a high and enduring social state, the obscure emotion of hatred and resentment that is the stimulus of all lower humanity found a vent in attacking and seeking to destroy the higher effort.

One must pause to question the nature of this levelling instinct in the mob. It is too much to say that this attack is mental. Such obscure impulses are moved by a species of necessity. In truth, the effort to level is an effort to alleviate the struggle for existence. All that

rises above the level implies effort for those who remain below. And the animal in man wishes most of all to feed itself, and to relax.

But this valuation of a lower and higher humanity had never before been clearly understood. Any effort to explain this phenomena found only an outlet in class distinctions and political division.

We owe to Nietzsche the understanding that the human valuation is physiological as well as psychological. We owe to him the knowledge that the aristocratic standard is fixed by Nature—that the higher impulse lives by necessity also.

Here for the first time was affirmed the aristocracy of Beauty, Gaiety, Uprightness; "all that goes on light feet."

Wherever the clarity of Nietzsche's vision rested, it penetrated all that is tawdry and pretentious in the structure of human morality behind which mankind muddles an aimless course between his primitive fear of cold, hunger and darkness, and the retribution of his own tribal laws. To the tottering fabric of Christianity he delivered a gigantic blow, from which there is no recovery for that debased creed. It matters nothing that the shell of that fabric remains, or that the common mind still wears its trappings. The common mind has always worn the trappings of Christianity, thousands of years before it tagged the name of an obscure Jew to its resentment against all efforts to rise above the level of its dictum that all men are equal in the sight of God.

It is true that for all higher minds, any beliefs in Christianity, even as a police court formula, was already dead. But Nietzsche affirmed the unspoken conviction of these minds. And it remained for him to complete his gigantic labours by killing God. If God had been

even as great as man, he could not have survived the withering derision with which Nietzsche pictured his end—"seated by the fireside, withered, grieved because of his weak legs, weary of the world, weary of will, and one day suffocated by his all too great pity . . ."

To think clearly on man's destiny, it was first necessary to clear away these mountains of rubbish that man has accumulated in building the human ant nest. Nietzsche destroyed, but that which he destroyed was refuse.

And having paused at the end of these labours, Nietzsche himself was beset by a doubt. . . . Was man's destiny any clearer now that one viewed it free of obstruction?

For me, I cannot approach the inevitable question that must attend the study of Nietzsche's effort without expressing my reverence for this great mind.

I could no more repay my debt to Nietzsche than I could to Shakespeare, Beethoven, or Rubens. Therefore I approach the one point of his failure with all humility. Failure is too strong a word, perhaps. A mind that did so much for Life cannot have failed. But I believe there was a point where something wilful, something exasperated, made Nietzsche speak obscurely. And this obscurity, wherein he seemed to speak most definitely gave an excuse and a justification to certain base human impulses.

It is a child's argument that credits Nietzsche with the responsibility of the German mind. Mankind has yet to learn that no one can be responsible for an act save he who does it.

Having destroyed, Nietzsche sought to replace. He failed to see that in giving to life his own intellectual effort he had already replaced something beyond comparison with that which he took away.

But it is the evidence of all high effort that it wishes to give more than effort. It wishes to leave the creation of its work in order to help others create.

The impetus of Nietzsche's effort had been intellectual; a vast stimulus to all intellects that had eyes to read him with. And he left this higher direction in order to step down to a lower plane—he allowed the political to impinge upon the intellectual—he allowed the procedure of existence to take precedence of Life.

One must bear in mind always in relation to Nietzsche's thought that he never allowed it to falter from the problem of man's destiny on *Earth*. Futurity to him was the futurity of earthly man; eternal recurrence the eternal recurrence of earthly life.

It has already been noted that this conviction brought Nietzsche to despair. He found that the process of existence did not advance, he found even that at times it retrogressed. At certain rare periods, man had been greater, more productive, more upright than at others. But always these spasmodic efforts had lapsed, died away, and been replaced by inertia. Therefore there was borne upon him the conviction that if there was any hope for man, man must dedicate his will to that higher effort. "Man is something that must be surpassed," he cried in despair.

From thence his hopelessness turned even to the past for hope. The Greek had willed the higher effort once—could not the future will it also? But in whose hands place the mission of regeneration? In those of the thinker? No, he may create the idea, he cannot put it into action. The very necessity of action, if the event touches an earthly issue, finds its solution in the man of action.

If the stupid, blind, resentful mob could not find a direction, it must be given one. And the end of that

direction must be to create a great tradition of earthly life, to offer the highest achievement to effort, to build the great and enduring Human State.

At intervals the earth has seen certain men rise by an indomitable power of will and personality, who have been able to impose themselves on their kind as leaders and masters. These alone among all the types of human effort have been able briefly to shape the conditions of the state which they command. Then it must be to one of these, some future conqueror with a great human ideal, that one offered the mission of forcing mankind to become upright, courageous, strong and beautiful.

It was a high dream, but a vain dream. It presupposed that power over others is given to those worthy of power. It never is, for those truly worthy of power disdain to use it. It remains for the half-minds, the vainer and duller egoisms to seize the reins of man's destiny.

The soldier, the conqueror, is never an intellect. Napoleon! How could Nietzsche have mistaken this arrogant, destructive little beast for a great man! What more is needed to make such a creature but foresight, cunning, a colossal vanity, and an indestructible persistence.

In truth, the uproar and dust of such a passage of events blinds and deafens man to any true sense of their significance. Size is still mistaken on earth for greatness; disturbance for importance.

The moral significance of any deed, thought, or work must be in its message to Life. And what did this combination of actor, business man, politician, and beast give to man but the assurance that any others of his kind, given the opportunity, might gorge themselves

with power and vanity at the expense of a few hundred thousand human lives.

I can only believe that Nietzsche found his superman there in a spirit of malice and exasperation. One must turn to supposition for the reason of such a choice. Nietzsche lived in a bad period among a bad people. You place a part of German corruption at Nietzsche's door. I retort to you that it was the German who corrupted Nietzsche. No man detested the worst elements of the German race as Nietzsche did; no man heaped such a scorn upon them; no man, before the war or since, has levelled at them such a terrible accusation: these blond beasts whose primal instinct of hatred has driven them from the beginning of history to attack human civilization. "The will to power." "The will to conquest." Did the German parrot echo these cries from Nietzsche? A great mind may outstrip its generation, but something of the mud of passage will cling to it. The action of all mental effort owes an obscure stimulus to those elements of its generation that react upon all mental effort.

We turn from these minor considerations again to the direction of Nietzsche's intellectual effort. It was his passionate love for Life that made him desire that man might become as great as man might conceive himself to be. In truth, it was a dream that man might become as great as man's thoughts, man's works. It was in striving to believe that on earth the physical aspect of life might become as beautiful as a work of art.

And it seems to me that here, and nowhere else, Nietzsche mistook the road of man's destiny.

His search did not lead him to the one enduring element of man's life—which is creative effort, but to that which is least durable—the created state.

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manent to Life that is built on the service of Existence. To govern a multitude well does not mean that either the ruler or the ruled become higher men ; it only means that they lead a better ordered Existence. Even if we could create the perfect state, a state where laws were just, the burden of toil equally distributed, the architecture beautiful, and the struggle for existence reduced to a minimum ; even if we could banish from this state half the stress of pain and disease, mankind would still be no greater ; man would only become a more comely and graceful creature.

For the earth already teaches us this lesson. Greatness of effort, creative effort, survives the greatest stress that earth can put upon it—survives by reason of the stress upon it.

Imperfect as the history of man is, it presents one indisputable anomaly. With all the vast display of administrative energy, methods of government, codes of morality and conduct, man himself remains unaltered. From the beginning of time, cave man and intellectual man have marched shoulder to shoulder down the centuries. Universal education, universal culture—all this talk is idle. Intellect, wherever it is manifest, arrives without these aids.

One thing alone in existence is manifest, permanent, indestructible, and that is the individual effort to create thought and beauty. This passion to create something finer than the creator himself is the one permanent and enduring element in man, and since creative effort is the rarest, most difficult achievement, it remains the greatest stimulus to high development—and this development is Life.

And by Life one comprehends an indestructible thing.

But here all intellectual scepticism draws back ashamed. Since the baser mind has never hesitated to claim immortality for itself, how can the higher mind join issue ? The pride of intellect alone must disdain immortality shared by hodmen and millionaires. But might not Intellect pause to ask if hodmen and millionaires will be permitted to share the immortality of intellect. *The* immortality, be it understood ; for even hodmen and millionaires contain an inextinguishable spark of life, a mere ember, perhaps, as undeveloped as any other protoplasm, but nevertheless, heir to the universal Futurity. It has not developed *here*—Well, it may have the chance to develop *there* . . .

THE ESSENTIAL STRUGGLE

WE have travelled with the critic of Life till man's destiny on earth leads to the blind alley of pessimism and despair.

But if one's love for life endure, this moment of despair may turn again to courage, if hardly exaltation.

If there is any man to-day who believes that the object of the eternal struggle for existence will evolve a higher type, an aristocracy of class, nation or race, that man has failed to read the history of mankind. In other words, he is a hopeless optimist.

And the reason for man's failure to achieve a permanent state of existence must be stated. It is essential to effort that existence should be hard, painful and uncertain. It is essential that the *struggle* should endure, for it is by the struggle man develops. If it ceased, and life became perfect—effort would cease; Life would cease.

For Life is effort.

Surely this much is understood. If perfection of earthly life were an end, and therefore possible, man would have achieved it a million years ago. Since a million years has not seen it achieved, the answer returns like a blow. It will never be achieved. And why?

Because the stress of existence is the condition under which the soul of man develops, and it is essential that

the stress should endure, in order that each generation should succeed to the same problems, the same difficulties, the same dangers, the same death. Wars, cataclysms, epidemics, these things are accidents and incidents. The sociological structure is an incident. The one thing that is not accidental or incidental is effort. For this, like life, continues. It does not progress. It continues!

Each generation, striving, questioning, examining, forgets always in the bustle and uproar of existence that every other generation has done the same. It is because effort moves by struggle, by the propinquity of man to man, that mankind has no memory.

Only in stepping aside and looking on from afar may we divine a little how sterile and aimless is the direction of this earthly existence. And only in stepping aside may we divine how deep, mysterious and eternal the impulse of Life is.

If we stop short at the spectacle of man, we stop short at despair.

To step forward with the problem of man's destiny, one must step across the grave.

There is no other way.

To such a statement Materialism sends up its troubled cry of negation. But we understand why the Materialist must repudiate belief in futurity beyond earth. He, most of all, needs the pressure of conviction that earth life is an end in itself, for this is his stimulus to make the best of Life.

The ant is his memento mori. He must confound man with all perishable mortality, as the spur to advance from primitivism. But the Materialist is our very evidence of the incomplete, preparatory nature of Life

on earth. Who but he insists that life here is an end in itself. Who but he proves by centuries of failure that there is no end to reach.

The history of man turns upon him in derision. Its answer is written at large. There is no futurity of accomplishment on earth—no finality. There is no promise even of a better condition by his efforts for future man.

For again let it be repeated, if perfection were possible, life would have achieved its end, and would cease to exist, and the materialist would find his justification in the grave.

Imperfection. Failure. Uncertainty. These are the essentials to earthly Life, by these alone we strive to become Perfect, to Succeed, to remove Doubt. But on earth we never succeed in one of these things. Then does earthly Life exist only in order that we should perpetually strive with Imperfection, Failure, and Uncertainty, and end as a piece of rotten manure?

The proportion of effort has no relation to such an obscure finality. If you find an end in themselves in Imperfection and Failure, you are a great simpleton.

They are a beginning, no more.

The struggle of an Earth existence affords material for a moral valuation, but in itself, no moral value can be evolved from it.

For the people, doubtless, it is a serious matter. Whatever power of consciousness they possess can only be stirred into action by the immediate pressure of passion and events. They eternally need the whip.

But for us, who seek a definite imagery in self-projection, this muddle of Earth affairs can never be of other significance than the material for Art, for Art

alone can extract that formative imagery from it which can become a formative substance of mind.

Therefore, for us, there can be no seriousness in labels dealing with greatness of Race, greatness of State, greatness of Nationality.

There can be greatness *only* in the utterance of an Individual Mind.

For this alone can keep alive moral action of self knowledge in the eternally static condition of an Earth existence. It alone can evolve an indestructible substance in Being from the shadow show of actuality.

All the pompous pageant by which states, groups, nations, races, make their passage through the illusion of Absolute Time is a process as ephemeral as a pattern formed in smoke. These, as they rise and fall, move higher and thither among Earth localities, can leave nothing stable behind to record their passage save the works of a few individual Minds.

These alone carry the thread of upward life, for without the effort of higher minds, common minds would all relax back to the animal.

And the impulse of this high effort, having achieved its aim of raising the standard of earthly effort; of keeping alive the problem of effort—has accomplished its mission on earth. But the problem of its own individual effort has only begun. On earth, it has acquired the impetus of fresh effort.

THE DIRECTION

THE effort of Creative Art, Creative thought, is for higher mankind also. That is understood. But in achieving the Creative effort, the creator has already gone beyond mankind.

He has made his statement, given us his inner vision, taught us to know human passion, exaltation, despair, gaiety, and beauty. He has brought home to us some understanding of those mystic things, Light and Spirit.

And then, you say, he dies.

Then why the Achievement of his effort?

In order that mankind may still go on achieving endlessly, aimlessly?

In order that few should strive eternally to bring each generation of mankind to a sense of the serious things of Life, so that it, too, might die, aimlessly, endlessly?

In truth, such a supposition touches the very abyss of absurdity.

It is to throw man back utterly to the animal, for if there is no direction in the restless striving of mankind, why torture the mind with the enigma of the Universe? Better a thousand times to serve only the impulse to seek food and satisfy lust, for these are a sufficient reward, if the Grave is the end of Life. To insist that the grave is the end of Life is to state that the Earth is an end in itself. Then to that insistence we ask, what end?

The Materialist's answer is inevitable. "That by continued effort in material progress, the Earth may reach a high state of civilization."

Then Art, by which stimulus alone civilization may be achieved, is but a service to the condition it creates?

My friend the Aesthetic Materialist, you are looking through the wrong end of the telescope at this problem. The enormous energy of cause here is out of all proportion to the triviality in effect.

Civilization, since it is but the automatic surface effect of Mind energy, cannot be an end in itself. Nor can it be assumed as a condition of progress, since the moment mind energy is removed from it, it collapses.

Nor can any moral value be extracted from it, since it is no more than a process which orders and decorates the action of existence.

Let the ruins of the past teach despair to the artless assumption that the earth is an end in itself. It has known civilization upon civilization, wiped out relentlessly by cataclysm and earthquake, and laboriously begun afresh from an apparently primitive genesis.

Already Man has scratched from the earth's surface sufficient evidence of the vast civilization which preceded his present effort; of which there remain only masses of stone-work too gigantic for the upheaval to destroy.

Perhaps Intention has allowed these fire blackened ruins to survive the destruction of the humanity that once called them a Civilization, so that a later generation of the species might stumble on them, and sound a vague alarm in the buried depth of its own primitive memory.

May one pause to hint at the cause of these past evidences of universal cataclysm. At least that hint must destroy any hope of stability in the action of civilization as an end in itself.

Already science is cautiously arriving at an observation of the action of atomic energy ; already that basic energy is reduced to a system in electro dynamics ; already Light is perceived to be the one stable binding power in matter that holds together all other disintegrated chemical elements in unity.

And the one governing principle in these elements is Mind, since Mind alone is able to evolve the conception of a governing principle.

And Mind, also, is a substance in that very matter of which it is the governing principle.

Disintegrate Mind, then, and one may guess at what must happen to the constituents of Matter surrounding it, and governed by it.

From Chaos, Mind is a projection of Form in Matter. To Chaos matter must return, if Form ceases to be the governing principle in Mind.

We have seen an Earth surrender to hate in war, and primitivism in Art, both conditions of the same thing, therefore both evidences of a disintegration of Form in Mind. How far that disintegration has gone we do not yet know ; the answer must lie between a New Renaissance of Art, or another layer of fire blackened ruins for a far distant future archaeologist of the species to dimly speculate on.

But enough of this. To whatever hell of hate and disintegrated matter Man may submerge on earth is no concern of ours. Where Mind is a formed substance, it has power of movement beyond the temporary chaos of this blood puddle. To the action of the Form image which alone can bring stability to that substance we address our attention, and this most emphatically repudiates any assumption that Creative Effort is directed to the establishment of an earth civilization as

an end in itself, though the existence of that civilization depends wholly on Man's response to express Creative Energy.

If only for the dignity of Art, our morality repudiates for ever the artless assumption that Praxiteles gives us the Venus of Melos as a garden ornament. Shakespeare the divinity of Cleopatra for an evening's amusement, and Beethoven the Ninth Symphony for the leisured moments of an audience.

The Giants of Creative Effort do not labour for the puerile end of man's entertainment, nor can aggrandizement or reward be conferred on them by inferior minds. The powers of Destiny that project the aesthetic of an Earth have other ends in view when they allow the completed Form image in Art to be defined in the presence of Man. If from that Form image and all its attendant revelation of self and passion, man is able to also mould the substance of his own being, that is his affair. So much the better for him if he takes the direction of Creative Effort to himself, but that direction goes beyond him to a profounder Intention.

And that Intention displaces any insolent assumption that Man and Earth have any power to reward the utterance of a Great Mind, or that either of these are ends in themselves, accepting as a right the service of Creative Effort. For what value could Man and Earth advance that might compensate a Great Mind for the unhappiness of suffering the spectacle of Man, and of experiencing the tragic futility of an Earth. Is it an arrogance here to direct attention to this arrogant assumption in Man, the Earth born, who for ever raises that dismal cry of vanity, " I am the beginning and end of Life ; with me, all Life must die."

It is well politely to avert the face here, and turn elsewhere for an understanding that allies creative

utterance temporarily with the Earth, and by that alliance, restores to earth a significance in Moral value.

It is for a physical reason first of all that Mind endures the experience of an Earth.

For only by an earth birth can the individual ego be liberated for its adventure into all unknown futures.

Secondly, the definition of the Form-image on earth is an essential condition of the projection of a Universe in Form. That this definition must take place as a condition of physical birth becomes inevitable, since only as a perfected structure in Form can the individual ego move beyond the limitation of an Earth Space.

Thus, though a Great Mind uses the earth solely for its own purposes of self-liberation, its definition of Self while on Earth becomes the sole means of liberating other Minds also.

If we accept these two profundities: the Creation of Mind, and the Liberation of Mind, as the basic significance for the existence of an Earth, we are in the presence of the highest principle of Creative Morality.

That principle accepted, we must turn by an inevitable logic to its antithesis in value; that point of attack on it which becomes our deepest conception of Evil.

THE SURFACE PROBLEM OF EVIL

GOOD and Evil as priestly valuations have been for ever dispensed with, even by the barbarous systems that still automatically retain the priest.

In all higher minds to-day, there is an invincible repugnance to even define a value in these two symbols, and in that shudder we recognize Memory, effort to repress a knowledge of the bestial excesses practised by the Good and the Just of all ages in the service of their special God of Hatred.

Whatever concepts of Good and Evil exist to-day are vaguely sociological; dealing in the hope of some universal system of exchanges between the little barbarous "Nationalities" of Earth which will dispense with incessant bloodshed and industrial disorder.

Unquestionably, the Earth needs some regulating principle here, but that principle can only come into existence as the effect of a higher principle working beyond it.

It is useless striving to regulate disorder by regulations against it, for no regulation has power to enforce order on disorderly minds.

If the small groups of higher minds which exist more or less in all centralized localities can be stirred to the perception of a high principle of Morality, they will be sufficient to diffuse a certain moral vitality through the

WHEN the essay under the title of *Creative Effort* was written, it seemed clear that something more was needed beyond its affirmation in general terms of a belief in Life and Art.

All such terms as Life, Death, Existence, Mind, Art, Vision, Consciousness, are not capable of finite definition. They must remain the symbols of an individual expression of mind, as diverse in application as they are diverse in human understanding.

The truth would seem to be that an exact communication of thought is impossible on earth, save only in those rare instances where there is an equal understanding of the same symbols of thought.

There is involved here a subtlety, which adds to the power to understand the *right* to understand. If we could grasp fully the nature of this division between mind and mind, we might know more of that profound inequality of mind which would seem to be the basis of all high morality.

But in the present state of low human development, which we call Civilization, confusion must attend all efforts to define an individual vision of Life.

Where all symbols of thought are fluid, automatically discarded and re-adjusted by each generation, any attempt to arrive at a universal statement of belief is out of the question.

To do so, it would be necessary to re-write the dictionary, or be content to talk the language of another planet.

Nevertheless, having embarked on an effort to affirm belief, it becomes inevitable that one must make a further effort to define the nature of this affirmation, and so *The Hidden Symbol* was written as analysis of *Creative Effort*.

It is hoped that the statement of belief made here will not be mistaken for any desire to proselytize. All efforts to arrive at an understanding of man's destiny on earth can do no more than define a personal vision of Life and Mind on Earth.

At the best they remain a problem of self analysis, which seeks to define what cannot be explained.

Yet the belief stated in these essays is sufficiently definite to expect repudiation. It is offered with the paradox that its best affirmation must come from those who reject it. Those who can affirm any such individual expression of belief, have already affirmed it.

If that mysterious element we call consciousness is at all understood here, the self-protective impulse in humanity must reject any effort to arouse it to consciousness.

We see clearly that the struggle to exist on earth has forced opacity on the human mind.

Man does not seek Truth because he dare not.

Stupidity is his opiate against all that is terrible and unknown. That which is sought in religion is not a belief, but a narcotic. The demand is physical, not mental; and if that over-stressed system of nerves and blood pressure which is mistaken on earth for Mind, rejects a stimulant too painful for it, one can do no more than endorse the rejection before it is uttered.

N.L.

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THE HIDDEN SYMBOL

THE Earth exists solely to produce Life.
The Social structure exists solely to protect Life.
Life exists to develop Mind.

Let these statements remain at present merely affirmative. They are the basis of a problem we must attack.

Two suppositions have always existed side by side to explain the existence of life on earth, towards each of which man has leaned for the support of a logical conclusion.

One has supposed a materialistic creation of life by natural forces. The other has sought a mystic conception of creation by divine agency.

The materialistic theory reaches by induction from finite causes in search of a first cause.

The mystic theory begins by a supposition of a first cause, which it denies by accepting also finite causes.

Both arrive at the same enigma; both complete the circle of complete ignorance.

Let us discard both theories; they serve no end. Man has beaten his head long enough at the blank wall of supposition to explain himself by the evidence of

God or the evidence of matter. Both theories are useless, for they overlook the prime problem, which is life itself.

Not where life comes from, nor where life goes to, but what life *is*. That is the problem for us who exist on earth, for our existence is in itself both the question and answer to its own enigma.

An effort has been made elsewhere to posit the duality of man's destiny on earth, between the bare struggle for existence and the higher effort of intellectual development.

The lower process we call Existence—the higher, Life.

And the construction of man himself is in part with this duality; the cause of his duality.

For to an animal organism, germinated by the conditions of earth, subject to its laws of growth and decay, man has added another process, distinct from the first, yet existing by it; obsessed by it, yet always at war with it; hating it and loving it; struggling to contain himself by it and against it; in short, the eternal paradox of that effort to conquer the problem of intellect by the senses which obstruct the effort, but without which the effort cannot be made.

In the confusion of these two processes: life and existence, spirit and brute, all earthly effort is involved. But the threads of each are inextricably mixed. Whatever takes us from one leads us to the other. Whatever the one affirms, the other denies. We are carried forward only to be dragged back again; the head spins at this ceaseless advance and recoil, and in despair of being one or the other we cease to be either.

Well, this problem of mind and matter, spirit and brute, life and existence, this is the insoluble problem of intellect, and because it is insoluble it must be attacked;

for the test of intellect is not the investigation of finite knowledge, but the investigation of infinite ignorance. The attack has never succeeded yet, but it must be made, for without this prime effort intellect must decay on earth.

Perhaps if we find only a new direction for the attack something will be gained, but to gain that the effort must be long and sustained.

Furthermore, we must be prepared to think alone, and when thought takes a lonely course we must be prepared to be misunderstood. To be easily understood one must think on the level of accepted belief, and all accepted belief is the evidence of a lack of thought.

For of all directions that human effort may take, thought must be the manifestation of a single mind, not the chorus of a thousand minds.

When all have agreed to think alike, all have agreed to give up the effort to think. Therefore all minds hesitate at this unknown door, which may lead to the only place of isolation on earth, that of the mind that thinks alone.

At the threshold of every enquiry into the destiny of man there stands the enigma of that symbol we call Mind.

We know what is the effect of Mind, we do not know what Mind is. We know what Mind can create, we do not know what inspired the impulse to create. We know why we arrive at thought, we do not know the basis from which we set out to think.

The history of man does not begin with man, but with Mind. Man is an ephemeral thing, blown upon by every wind of chance, necessity, and passion. The history of events might be written any way, for they might have happened any way; but Mind manifests

itself in one way, as one thing. Its stability is greater than the attack of accident. All that can disrupt man, all that can disturb existence, all this cannot affect Mind.

For Mind is the symbol of a perfection that goes beyond earth life. Whatever its earthly expression may be, itself remains hidden.

If we cannot explain the symbol of Mind, we have much that Mind reveals. Therefore our search must go to understand the nature of that revelation.

TRUTH—KNOWLEDGE

NO two symbols are so commonly confused as these. This is inevitable, for these two symbols might be exchanged for Life, and Existence.

Truth is a thing sought ; Knowledge a thing found.

Existence is served by finite knowledge.

Life by the search for truth.

Since existence on earth is casual, accidental, at the mercy of necessity, finite knowledge is its first essential, for by it we understand its material problems and are able to force some sort of order upon its primitive disorder. By finite knowledge we arrive at comfort, security, certainty.

But the search for truth leads away from these things.

It presents us with darkness, uncertainty, insoluble problems. It is by the stimulus of these difficulties that intellect is matured. Therefore it is not in finding, but in seeking, that we understand what the symbol of Truth is.

We understand that truth is an element which must not be known, but which must be known to exist.

Truth, in short, is a problem, not of development, but of developing.

The dictum of science rejects all that cannot be proved by demonstrable evidence. It seeks finite knowledge, all visible and coherent phenomena that