"THE HIDDEN MYSTERIES of NATURE and SCIENCE"

by

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"The Lecture of this Degree is divided into Five Sections, and these are devoted to the study of human science, and to trace the goodness and majesty of the Creator by minutely analyzing His works. Throughout the First Degree, Virtue is depicted in its most beautiful colours, and the principles of knowledge are impressed on the mind by sensible and lively images; it is, therefore, considered the best introduction to the Second Degree, which not only extends the same plan, but embraces a more diffusive system."

(Introductory Address to Second Lecture.)

Every thoughtful student of the Mystery systems of antiquity cannot fail to be impressed by the fact that in each and all of them may be found very clear intimations that a most important part of the curriculum was instruction in Cosmology, the science of the Universe. The intention of this teaching was to disclose to candidates seeking Initiation into the Mysteries certain traditional knowledge regarding the physical and metaphysical constitution of the world, and to illustrate to them the place and destiny of man in the world order. Accepted pupils were therefore enlightened not only upon the visible aspect of the Universe and themselves, but also upon the physically unseen and impalpable aspect, and they were shown how the complex human organism in fact reproduces the Macrocosm or Great World and summarises it in a Microcosm or miniature. They learned of the continual flux of matter, of the transiency of all bodily forms, and of the abiding permanence of the One Life or Spirit which, they were taught, has descended and embodied itself in an endless and progressive variety of modes of existence from the mineral up to the human, with the purpose of generating eventually a finished product as the result of the mighty process. They were likewise informed of the different levels and graduations of the Universe, the planes and sub-planes, upon which the great scheme is being carried out; which levels and planes, all progressively linked together constitute, so to speak, one vast Ladder comprised of many rounds, stave, or rungs. In the old systems candidates were instructed concerning these matters before being admitted to the more solemn and serious process of Initiation, and the knowledge gained served to explain to them their own nature and constitution, as well as their proper station in the evolving world order. The modern Freemason, however, is entirely without any such instruction, with the result that nowadays Brethren may, or may not, discern for themselves that the symbol of a Ladder displayed on the Tracing Board in the First Degree is intended to covertly emphasise the ancient cosmological teaching.

We need not here attempt to justify this interpretation of what is a familiar Masonic symbol; it must suffice to state that Jacob's Ladder is a well-known symbol of the Universe, and of its succession of step-like planes which reach from the depths to the heights. Moreover, the theory of evolution was also perfectly understood by the ancient teachers, and was a basic feature of the science taught in the Mystery Schools of antiquity. Evolution, the perpetual tendency of things upwards, has now come to be universally accepted as a cosmic process. But does not the capacity for rising imply an antecedent falling? The logical value of the evolutionary hypothesis, as of every hypothesis, can only be appraised by contrasting it with its anti-thesis; and of this truth Jacob's Ladder, with the hosts of descending and ascending lives, is a parable proclaiming both involution and evolution. Translated into Masonic imagery, Jacob's Ladder is represented by a Ladder of many rungs, of which there are three principal, resting on the Sacred Volume and mounting upwards. This simple symbol veils recondite ideas which ordinarily pass unperceived. In the first place, the two sides of the ladder, "
two grand parallel lines" indefinitely protracted, denote the dual principles of positive and negative powers which run through all planes of the Universe, and give it structural support. Secondly, the transverse rungs or staves of the Ladder signify the ascending grades of life through the kingdoms of Nature, and the progressive conscious states which emerge as the ascent proceeds. Each rung represents the degree of evolution attained by a class of beings, or any individual being, climbing the Ladder of return. Thirdly, the gaps between the rungs allude to the subjective phases of life which alternate with the periods of objective existence. Waking and sleeping, birth and death, every creature oscillates between these two states, each of which is as essential to progress as the other; in other words, the gaps are as important as the rungs. At every stage life moves towards death and there finds the gateway to still larger and fuller life. Finally, the whole process rests upon the foundation of immutable Divine Law, and this is signified Masonically by the symbolic Ladder resting on the Sacred Volume which represents that Law. Thus involution teaches that all life has come down the great Ladder and become immersed in form; and evolution demonstrates that all life must again ascend by the dual stages of objective and subjective experience. Only that which has come down from heaven ascends to heaven; "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven" (St. John, chapter 3, verse 13); everything else is to be left behind, just as every Masonic candidate must be divested of "money and metallic substances" before entering the Lodge. The great Sufi sage of the thirteenth century, Jallalu'ddin Rumi, whose teachings contain much of the old initiate teaching, interprets the philosophy underlying the Ladder symbolism, as follows:

"From the moment I came into the world of existence
A Ladder was placed before me that I might escape;
I died as a mineral and became a plant;
I died as a plant and became an animal;
I died as an animal and became a man;
When did I ever grow smaller by dying?
I shall die as a man to become an angel,
I shall die from angelhood to enter the Ocean of being I came from.
If my body has aged, what matter? For the soul is eternally young."

Birth and death, then, are seen as two aspects of a single process, the alternating swings of a pendulum. Masonically speaking, they are the summons to "labor" in this "sublunar abode," and "calling off to refreshment" in the environs of the Grand Lodge Above.

It is written elsewhere that: "In my Father's house are many mansions" (St. John, chapter 14, verse 2); many levels and resting places for His children in their different conditions and degrees of progress; and it is these levels, planes and sub-planes, that are denoted by the rungs and staves of the symbolic Ladder. Of these there are, for us in our present state of evolutionary unfoldment, three principal planes; the physical plane, the plane of desire and emotion, and the mental plane which links up to the still higher plane of the spirit. These three levels of the world are reproduced in man. The first corresponds with his material physique, his sense-body; the second with his desire and emotional nature, which is a mixed element resulting from the interaction of his physical senses and his ultra-physical mind; and the third with his mentality, which is farther removed from his physical nature and forms the link between the physical nature and his spiritual being. Furthermore, the Ladder, and its three principal staves, may be seen everywhere in Nature. It appears in the septenary scale of musical sound with its three dominants; in the prismatic scale of light with its three primary colours; in the periodicities known to physics, and to every branch of science. Thus the Universe and man himself are constructed ladderwise, in an organised sequence of steps. According to cosmological doctrine, the one universal substance composing the differentiated parts of the Universe "descends" from the state of ethereality by successive stages of increasing densification until
gross materiality is reached; and thence "ascends - through a similarly ordered gradation of planes to its original place, but enriched by the experience gained by its activities during the process. This cosmic process is exemplified in the dream or vision attributed to Jacob, a prototype of Initiation, and will explain why Jacob's Ladder is given prominence in Masonic symbolism. Stated alternatively, the Initiate is able to: "behold the angels of God ascending and descending" (Genesis, chapter 28, verse 12); that is, he can directly behold the great stairway of the Universe and watch the intricate but orderly mechanism of involution, differentiation, evolution, and synthesis which constitute the Life processes. He can witness the descent of human souls through planes of increasing density and decreasing vibratory rate, gathering around them as they come veils of matter from each, until finally this lowest level of complete materialisation is reached, where the struggle for supremacy between the spirit and the flesh, the real self and the unreal selves, has to be fought out on the chequer work floor of our present existence, among the black and white opposites of good and evil, light and darkness, prosperity and adversity. And he can watch the upward return of those who conquer in the strife, attaining their regeneration and casting off worldly possessions acquired during their descent ascend to their Source, pure and unpoisoned from the stains of this imperfect world. In this sense, then, Jacob's vision and Ladder bear eloquent, although silent, testimony to the attainment of Initiation, and the expansion of consciousness that comes when the Light of the "Centre" is found. But the privilege of cosmic vision is restricted to those who are "well skilled in the noble science," and since we ourselves as students cannot claim to be more than mere novices, we must proceed cautiously in attempting to portray what the Craft ritual cryptically terms "the more hidden mysteries of nature and science."

In the ancient schools of Initiation the maxim "Man know thyself," so often quoted for our guidance, was coupled with another, "Nothing in excess"; the science, it was implied, can only be learned and applied gradually; it will unfold itself more and more as it is diligently studied and pursued. An echo of this admonition to progress by gradual stages is to be found in our present-day Masonic ritual, particularly in the Ceremony of Initiation, where the candidate is informed that "there are several degrees in Freemasonry with peculiar secrets restricted to each," and in the accompanying reminder that these "are not conferred upon candidates indiscriminately, but according to merit and ability." We may well ask, therefore, along what lines should our studies of the Craft system of Initiation be directed? For the purpose of the subject now before us this question is not difficult to answer. On the strength of many accredited authorities we find that there are two methods, and only two methods, by means of which the "hidden mysteries" of the spiritual world may become apprehended by the human mind. The first method, which is relatively swift, immediate, and self-convincing, is by the development of the spiritual consciousness; the second method, which is slow, laborious, and tantalising, is by following the line of scientific research and intellectual investigation. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that the "Logia" of all the Wisdom teachers of the past inculcate self knowledge, or the development of the spiritual self, as the infallible method of cognition of a world other and higher than the physical world. And in all ages this witness of the Teachers has been found to be faithful and true, for always there have been strenuous seekers of "the Kingdom within" to whom a transcendental world has been opened and proved as objective as the physical. Those, however, who become spiritually conscious of the noumenal world are an almost infinitesimal minority; humanity in the mass has always consistently ignored their method and denied the validity of the results. Our modern age is not different from other periods of history in this respect and in consequence the growth of our spiritual culture lags behind the advances in our technological civilisation.

We are prone to confidently assert that the last four centuries are centuries of unprecedented scientific discovery. Undoubtedly they are; but it is chastening to our intellectual pride to acknowledge that so far the attempt of scientists
to explain the Universe in terms of physical energy has brought us to an impasse. This wholesome admission suggests the proposition whether we may not have far ed better had we reversed the proceedings and taken as our point of departure, i nstead of the atomic structure of matter and the law of the conservation of ener gy, the construction of our own wills and the system of ends of which consciousnes s in essence consists. Time is ill spent in bemoaning lost opportunities, but we can scarcely refrain from reflecting what our knowledge of the Universe migh t have been to-day, and how our sociological conditions might have stood at pres ent, had psychology rather than physics been our chief study. We may, indeed, fa irly insist that rightly viewed the epoch of modern scientific investigation whic h began over four centuries ago, and the end of which is not yet, should be cla ssed not so much as one of discovery as of disillusionment. The commencement of the progressive process of disillusionment was the recognition of the crude fac t that the earth is not flat but globular. Then the geocentric theory of the ear th's position proved to be illusory, and from a situation of supposed paramountc y in the Universe our world became degraded to an insignificant, ephemeral mite, floating in a void. Man and his habitation, under the development of astronomi cal science, appeared to compared with the cosmic bulk. Turning his attention b e of no account, so infinitely small were he and it as from the abyss of space t he scientist centred his thought on the material constitution of our world, only to meet with fresh surprises. Matter which had been reduced to a number of ele ments, elements which had been resolved to primal atoms, now became dissolved al together and disappeared into an invisible, intangible substance, called ether. What was known about the ether? As Lord Salisbury said, speaking of this "all p ervading entity" in the nineteenth century, it was, and it stubbornly remained, "simply the nominative of the verb to undulate." The atom was found capable of b eing split; analysis of the atom led to the discovery of the electron and the pr oton; and analysis of these showed them to be not physical matter but charges of electricity. Newtonian principles of physics were found inadequate to it the ne w facts. In consequence the attention of physicists next became concentrated on light, electricity, and magnetism, to see whether they could be brought under s ome vast generalisation which would include also material movements already acco unted for by the law of gravitation. The results of this search disclosed more illusions. Light was found to behave both as a wave in the ether, and as a corp uscle according to Newton's corpuscular theory. The new characteristic, in orde r to describe it, had to be given a hybrid name "wavicle"; a name and a descrip tion which had no more reference to the shape or behaviour of any sense size obje ct than has a "hippogriff" to any animal in the Zoo. Further, it was discovered that light did not go in a stream, but in droplets of energy, the photons.

Thus the physicist who not long ago believed himself to be dealing with ponderab le ultimates, and who was constrained, almost against his will, to become a mate rialistic philosopher, is to-day fully aware that, as regards his ordinary sense perceptions, he might as well be a blind man; he knows himself to be concerned with material so attenuated, subtle, and elusive as, of itself to afford him no philosophic foothold; and to be engaged in abstractions so refined as to require the use of faculties that transcend the normal utilitarian. Moreover, if to th e conclusions of inorganic physics we add those of biology or organic physics, w e are presented with some additional significant findings. Biologists have in r ecent years revealed that in our brains, the organs through which our consciousn ess operates, there is found to be a surplusage of cerebral development beyond t he needs of the material struggle for life which Darwin postulated in his theory of evolution. This leaves the door open for the possible solution of many psyc hical phenomena the genuineness of which is scientifically established, as well as giving promise of the eventual maturing of other and higher faculties latent within us. Indeed, another induction of biology is that the method of Nature is to create the organ long in advance of the capacity of the owner to use it full y. It may be instructive to note that in Eastern philosophy the doctrine of Kar ma is associated with two supplementary conceptions: (a) that the world as we se e it is "Maya," an illusion, a partial construction made from insufficient data,
and therefore unreal; (b) that this partial construction is made under stress of, and is wholly limited by, craving or desire. Biology likewise indicates that all organs have been evolved by the continual striving of the organism to express certain fundamental urges. The world, then, as we normally see it is a world created by desire and, as it must appear quite different to beings without our cravings, it is true to say that what the ordinary man calls reality is an illusion. But there is no need to be downhearted; it is man who has deposed himself from a significant place in the Universe by an absent-minded use of that very instrument, scientific thought, which depends for its strength and validity upon the kinship of the mind of man with the principles of the Cosmos. Let us look out upon this world of ours, even as science has taught us to do, with steady eyes, and we may receive assurance that man's highest hopes are not illusions, but have come through to him from Reality. Life, we may say, is relationship; the relation of the organism with its material world the relation of the spirit with the spiritual world. Man does not truly live if his life is merely physical digestion and breathing; man only truly lives when he shares the life of God.

At this juncture we should perhaps legitimately enquire, what is the place and destiny of man amid this everlasting flux of matter, this kaleidoscopic world of illusion? What guarantee has man that his extending knowledge of the physical world is not more illusory; that even primordial ether and the inferences drawn from it will not in turn prove to be illusions that will give way under further research? To answer truly we must admit—there is no sure guarantee; it is more likely than not that we shall continue to be undeceived. Mathematical analysis of the ether already suggests that, abstraction though it be, more remote and refined physical substrata must be imagined in order to make good existing conceptions, for its presumed rigidity must be secured by the hypothetical motion of some still more primal material. There are, it seems, ethers within the ether, which calls to mind that by Hindu philosophers five ethers, with their respective vibratory qualities, are known, of which only one, the luminiferous, is at present apprehended by us. Yet, despite this bewildering thought, we must accept the dictum of the psychologist, that notwithstanding this shadow-play of the unreal, and the exposed trickeries of sense, the revelation of fresh and possibly equally fallacious aspects of the material world, human consciousness may stand firm and unblenched. The mind has a reality of its own quite outside the physical order—a mental plan, from the security of which it may contemplate, without fear of being overwhelmed, the shadow-dance of matter, and watch the wondrous unfoldings of world upon world without end. We would also remind ourselves that physics, in first of all postulating the presence of an all-pervading medium, and then resolving gross matter into that medium as its primal constituent, has opened up to us some of the most extraordinary mental pictures it has ever been the fortune of the human intellect to contemplate. It invites us, as Hegel once said of the study of philosophy, to stand on our heads, and our amazement increases as we behold the abstract technicalities of science to be invested with an undreamed-of moral value. We have not yet become habituated to the conception, so utterly subversive of all preconceptions based on the evidence of our sense faculties, that we live and move, not in a void but in a solid, not in a "vacuum" but in a "plenum." We are, however, now beginning to perceive that by the intellectual investigation of the remoter parts and more secret laws of Nature, physical science has come at last to those eternal principles which have been proclaimed throughout the ages. Like the harmless, necessary phagocytes that swarm within our bodies, microscopic beings to which the confines of our blood vessels constitute all their universe, we human mites and all the stellar systems are conceived as ranging about within the stupendous organism of some vast Being for whose well-being we too are necessary. The familiar words of St. Paul: "In Him we live and move and have our being," take on a new significance, deeper and more profound.

From the latest scientific mental picture of the material Cosmos two important conceptions emerge clearly: Firstly, it is a unity; whether finite or infinite in magnitude, and despite its myriad modifications of form, it is a true "Unum-ve
rsum," in which (except relatively to sense perceptions) there is no up or down, no near or far, no past or future; in which no part can be intrinsically greater or less than another, and the inherent energy and/or material substance of which, however gross or rare for the time being, must be eternally conserved, as physical science indeed claims that they are. Secondly: if, by the displacement of the geocentric theory, our world may be deemed to have lost dignity, that seeming loss is restored by the knowledge that it is also one knit in a community of constitution and material with the rest. Admittedly, the mechanical laws of that all-pervading entity postulated by physical science are not yet known with any degree of certainty, but something of its potentialities is obvious from the phenomena of light and of the frequencies of electro-magnetic force artificially generated for the purpose of radio telegraphy. When, however, these laws of the ether come to be generally understood, and it is possible to link up the further knowledge thence derived with that of psycho-physics, there will doubtless be at our disposal an intelligible explanation of those complex interactions of mind and matter classified by the parapsychologist as telepathy, clairvoyance, and psychometry, which still remain outside the pale of official science through the absence of any known principle coordinating them with other recognised and accepted phenomena. In other words, our relation to the psychic, and the difference which exists for us between the physical and the psychic, will be more correctly defined when we sufficiently grasp the extremely intricate connection and interdependence of physical and superphysical matter. The modern physicist who draws the analogy between the structure of the atom and the solar system may, or may not, have been consciously influenced by the analogy of the individual man in his relations with the social whole but it cannot be without significance that the individual man, the social atom, possesses in his consciousness an image of society. In the individual man as a person, then, is the unit of human nature to be sought, but in the response of that unit to the unitary nature of the whole is to be found the ever-acting force which maintains, repairs, and transforms human life. This brings us to a brief consideration of the auxiliary road of approach which has been opened by mental science. The main problem of modern psychology is: Given an Ego with an imperishable reality of its own, independent of the physical order, and functioning through the limitations of the mortal brain; what does it perceive, and how far are its perceptions likely to be true or false to other fundamental realities? Psychologists find that the two chief obstacles to right thinking and larger mental vision are our ideas of Space and Time, which although useful enough conceptions for utilitarian purpose, have no real existence in themselves. Space has been defined as "room to move about," but we must obviously accord to this definition the utmost liberty of interpretation. We must conceive of Space not alone as room to move ponderable bodies in; this conception must be extended to include room to think, to feel, and to overtake felicities and knowledges unguessed by experience and preposterous to common sense. Space is, then, not measurable; we attribute dimensionality to Space because such is the method of the mind; and the dimensionality we attribute to Space is progressive because progression is a law of the mind. It is here that an abstruse question arises: Is it not possible to infer that the physical is separated from the psychic by four-dimensional Space, i.e., that a physiological process, passing into the domain of a fourth dimension, produces there effects which we call feeling or thought? Our conception of Space is called three-dimensional because it takes three numbers (measurement in three mutually perpendicular directions) to determine and mark out any particular point from the totality of points. Time also, as the individual experiences it, is called one-dimensional for an analogous reason, one number is all that is required to determine and mark out any particular event of a series from all the rest. Space and Time, therefore, are instruments of the mind, and despite appearances to the contrary they are not realities; they only afford us the possibility for a comprehensive coordination of sense elements; of time-ing and space-ing physical things. In short, dimensionality is the mind's method of mounting to the idea of the infinity of Space, and when we speak of the fourth dimension what w
e mean is the fourth stage in the apprehension of that infinity. We might as le
gitimately speak of a fifth dimension, but the profitlessness of discussion of a
fifth and higher stages lies in the fact that they can only be intelligently ap
proached through the fourth, which is still largely unintelligible. We carry ou
r Time with us, and it is through its intermediary that we construct the Univers
e and Space. In a remarkable story by H. G. Wells, a traveller in Time says: "T
here is no difference between Time and any of the Three dimensions of Space, exc
ept that our consciousness moves along it" ("The Time Machine"). The fourth dim
ension, as already stated, only represents the existence of the three others, th
e existence of the trihedron of Euclidean space, or any other system of referenc
e. It simply indicates the birth in our consciousness of the notion of three-di
mensional space. The phenomena have a point of departure; they evolve; our sense
s and our memory register them, and draw conclusions and laws from them. They a
re alive for us; suppress Time and nothing remains. The antithesis can be found
in Herodotus; "Let time be lavished and all that is possible will come to pass.
" The theory of probability gives this sentence a profound meaning.

To return again to physics; in the domain of physics more than in any other, sci
entific theories differ from ordinary life conceptions, and this is mainly beca
use for a direct orientation in the world of phenomena it is necessary to disting
uish matter from energy. In ordinary life the three generally accepted states o
f physical matter (solid, liquid, and gaseous) can be distinguished indisputably
when they appear in their "classical" forms. For example: a piece of iron; the
water in a river; the air we breathe. Very often, therefore, we do not know exa
ctly when one state passes into the other, and we cannot draw a definite line of
demarcation between them. We presume that different states of matter are depen
dent upon the speed and properties of molecular motion, but we distinguish these
states solely by their external traits, which are inconstant and often become i
ntermixed. We have, then, to learn to discriminate between appearances and real
ities; and when regarding a given object, not to say: "This is definitely so and
so because it so appears to me," but to ask: "What are the limitations of my mi
nd which make me thus perceive this?"; and so gradually to clarify our minds for
seeing things in their true selves and not merely their outward forms. If we d
o not understand the true methods of perception of physical things, how shall we
be able to judge of the transcendental and the superphysical? The ordinary man,
equipped for the material struggle in the arena of life, and unconscious of a
ny but utilitarian ends, is as a rule satisfied with the world as it appears to
him; the world is real to him since he lives in it; he knows, and wants to know,
no more. But, if he be constrained to take consciousness to pieces and examine
its content, he finds it adjusted to rudimentary purposes, and that what he has
regarded as real and objective is so only upon its own plane; from the higher p
lane, to which "ex hypothesi" lie truly belongs, the three-dimensional world is
unreal and subjective. And to him may come an experience which is an echo of th
e voice of the Wisdom-teacher bidding him, Renounce; rid yourself of deceptive p
reconceptions if you would be "born again," and look with larger vision. The ch
ange in intellectual outlook intimated here has been well called the process of
"casting out the self," for it is by the removal of obstructing factors from our
thought, and by seeing things in their abstract essence, that we learn to see t
hem as they really are; while in doing so we lose sight of self and develop inev
itable altruism. Moreover, if response to the infinite environment is the condi
tion of the spiritually developed man, then men are continually closing the path
of their own development; this they do by ignoring an essential element of thei
r own nature, and then denying it to the Universe as unscientific. True knowled
g, however, comes only to those who are fitted and willing to receive it, and o
ur Initiation into "the hidden mysteries of nature and science" demands progress
ive obedience to the fundamental law of self-sacrifice. In the Mystery systems
of antiquity there existed a consecutive and graduated order of progress; the ca
didate to be advanced to a higher degree had to pass through a definite course
of preparation; he was then subjected to certain tests, and only after he had sa
tisfactorily passed, and had proved that his preparation had been on the right l
ines, was he allowed to proceed. This progress by "merit and ability" is reflected in our modern system, but it is generally overlooked that the method of ceremonial advancement of the candidate through the three Degrees implies an intention on his part to convert the significance of each into corresponding spiritual attainment in his own life experience.

One of the first things that the candidate in the old systems learned was the impossibility of following a path of his own choice; he was warned of the danger which awaited him if he did not carry out all the preparatory rituals and ceremonies which were prescribed before the actual Initiation was conferred. The ancients understood far better than we do to-day that the reception of a new idea requires special preparation; they also understood perfectly that an idea caught in passing can easily be seen in the wrong light, or received in the wrong way, and they were aware that a wrongly received idea can produce undesirable and even disastrous results. We may observe the same gradual preparation for the reception of new ideas in the rituals of magic; indeed, a strict and unswerving observance of various small rules, which often appear incomprehensible, is uniformly demanded by all the rituals of ceremonial magic. There are many accounts of the penalties imposed for the violating of the secrets of the Mysteries, and many legends of magicians who invoked a spirit but lacked the power to control it. All these instances, of men who broke the ritual of Initiation in the Mysteries, or of magicians who invoked spirits stronger than themselves, equally represent, in allegorical form, the position of a man in relation to new ideas which are too strong for him, and which he cannot handle because he has not had the required preparation. In our modern system, although the Degrees are permitted to be taken rapidly, it is neither probable nor to be expected that in so brief a time the candidate will assimilate their implications to the full. The safeguards are provided in each Degree and the candidate is warned that in the outworking of the instruction given there will be "serious trials" of his fortitude and fidelity; while the necessity of his coming "properly prepared" for advancement is solemnly enjoined. In practice, quickening of consciousness, where it occurs at all, manifests slowly and gradually emerging as the result of study and reflection upon the doctrine and symbolism, and faithful effort to pursue the path charted by the three ceremonies. The old psychology understood that the mind is incapable of receiving ideas of different kinds simultaneously or out of the right order, and that it cannot pass without preparation from ideas of one order to ideas of another order. Modern thought does not recognise this at all; existing psychology and the theory of knowledge fails to discriminate between different orders of ideas, and neglects to point out that some ideas are very dangerous and cannot safely be approached without long and complicated preparation. Yet in other domains we moderns do in fact understand this perfectly; we concede that it is impossible to handle a complicated machine without adequate knowledge; that it is impossible without knowledge and practice to drive an express train; that it is impossible without knowing all the details to touch the numerous parts of a high-powered electric machine. An idea is also a machine of enormous power, but this is exactly what modern thought does not realise; every idea is a complicated and delicate machine, and in order to know how to handle it, we must first possess a great amount of purely theoretical knowledge combined with a large amount of experience and practical training. This is why in each Degree of the Craft system the candidate is theoretically in possession of certain qualifications, and the test questions prescribed are designed for the purpose of judging his reaction to the ideas already implanted in his mind. It is a law of life that there can be no advancement unless there is first a strong inward desire for it; no growth of vegetation or faculty occurs in Nature apart from an impelling urge towards larger self-expression, and whoso desires an increase of Light in the Masonic sense must first be actuated by that urge in his own heart.

The greatest riddle that humanity has ever had to face is the problem of Time; religious revelation, philosophical thought, scientific investigation, and occult knowledge, all converge at one point, that is, on the problem of Time; and all
come to the same view of it. Time does not exist; everything exists always. The
re is only one eternal present, the eternal Now, which the weak and limited huma
n mind can neither grasp nor conceive. The world is a world of infinite possibi-
lities; our mind follows the development of possibilities in one direction only;
but in fact every moment contains a very large number of possibilities and all
of them are actualised, only we do not see it and do not know it. We always see
only one of the actualisations, and in this lies the poverty and limitation of
the typically human mind. Where, then, are we to seek for a true understanding
of Time and infinity? This is a question to which modern thought gives no answer
; but human thought has not always been helpless in the face of the problem; the
idea of the "higher self" is one that belongs to the Mystery systems, and is ad
missible only in relation to "higher consciousness" connected with the degrees o
f Initiation. The answer of the ancient teaching is that "time" and "infinity"
are to be found in the soul of man; everything is within man, and there is nothi-
g outside him. How are we to understand this? Time is not a condition of the U
iverse, but only a condition of the perception of the world by our psychic appa-
ratus, which imposes on the world conditions of time, since otherwise the psychi-
c apparatus would be unable to conceive it. We are, however, unable to conceive
infinity without relation to Space and Time; therefore, if Space and Time are f
orms of our perception and lie in our soul, it follows that the roots of infinit
y are to be sought also within us, and we may perhaps define it as an infinite p
ossibility of the expansion of consciousness. Nevertheless, there is a very nec
essary condition of approach to ideas which seek to express in symbolism the "ki
ngdom within"; the peculiarity and distinctive feature of ideas of the "real" wo
rd (i.e., of the world "as it is"), are that, viewed in the light of materialis
m, they appear to be absurd. This condition, and the necessity for it, is seldo
m properly understood, with the result that ideas of a "world of many dimensions"

frequently produces on students a bad, or even a nightmare, effect; and for th
is reason an intellectual approach to the idea of the spiritual world is possibl
e only after a long and persistent training of the mind. Ability to think is de
clared to be the first stage of Initiation, but this means to be able to think d
ifferently from the way in which we are accustomed to think, to enable us to con
ceive the world in new categories. We may revert for a moment to what physical
science has learned from the discovery of the ether and all that it implies. Fr
om the precipitation of inorganic nature from a supersensuous abstraction into g
ross matter, liable at any moment to resolution again into its primal state, are
we not justified in drawing an analogy in regard to ourselves? May we not imag
ine a prenatal, post-mortal, humanity, which as it moves through the seen and un
seen spheres along the mighty spiral of evolutionary development, is, in the per
sons of its microcosmic units, fulfilling the same macrocosmic law? The secret
fundamental verities of the Universe reveal themselves in startling parallels.
"Natural religion," said Emerson, "supplies all the facts which are disguised un
der the dogmas of popular creeds," and since the most important verity ever esta
lished by science is the fact that the material world is a projection from a sp
iritual plane, is not the inevitable inference that the human spirit (like its D
ivine prototype and exponent, the Word-made-flesh) came down from heaven, and in
the course of long evolution was "made man" - a process still in operation and
not yet perfected; that it suffers constriction in the conditioning-house of ear
th life; buried as it is in dense matter and physical limitations; and that at l
ength it, too, shall arise again to its true and pristine place of being?

The evolutionary process consists, as the Craft system so ably demonstrates, in
the development of the higher and spiritual at the expense of the lower and phys
ical, and its purpose, the "far off divine event," will be gradually accomplis
ed by the harmonising of the seen and unseen portions of the Universe. There see
ms to-day clear proof that we are at the end of an Age through which purely phys
ical evolution has extended. Indeed, faced with this conclusion many have decid
ed that man is decadent; that there is no further evolution possible for him, an
he will either fall into degeneracy or rapidly destroy himself; the latter see
ning the more probable. Yet man can be saved, and will be saved, as Life has sa
ved itself before, by a sudden and radical mutation. We know that over a vast per
riod of time, and with constantly accelerated skill and advanced mental power, m
an has developed his powers by technical progress. Thus it may be shown that ma
n advances mentally or technically by modifying his environment to suit his need
s, and by this means wins himself a new span of evolutionary life and further de
velopment, but one involving a change with increasing speed and increasingly psy
chological. In support of this contention, it can be demonstrated that whereas
every other animal species seems to have entered on a decline, man alone is obse
ved to be capable of change, and, for the carrying out of that change, he alone
has an immense store of still unused, undifferentiated vital energy. We know t
his from the fact of his capacity for suffering and pain, which indicate a high
degree of sensitiveness and nervous tension, and also his enormous sexual capaci
ity; a capacity in itself, as sexual energy "per se," quite unnecessary to slow b
reeding and careful rearing. It can further be shown that this store of vital e
nergy can have appropriate advanced mental channels of expression. The highly d
veloped intellectual type of man tends to find when in complete intellectual ab
sorption that he becomes indifferent to sex, while the development of additional
psychological powers, such as extra-sensory perception, leave him free of all a
cute physical sensation. Man must, then, resume once more the task of enlarging
his consciousness, which, in retrospect, will be seen to have been interrupted
by the triumph of the analytic method and the rise of mechanism. After more tha
n four centuries, during which the most active communities have worked with a pr
ofound and deadly complete misapprehension of reality, we must now go back and p
ick up again the true line of spiritual advance. This is, however, no blind rea
ction, nor need we regard as wasted all the devoted labour of physical and mecha
nical research. The knowledge at our disposal nowadays, imperfect as it is, lead
s up at all events to an outlook upon the Universe that is juster, more comprehe
nsive and satisfying, than has at any previous time been possible to the intellect; fo
r the analytic method has taught mankind the great value of detached experiment
and careful comparative record. Moreover, in consequence of the magnificent adv
ances made in theoretical physics since the beginning of the twentieth century,
our views on natural phenomena have undergone a complete transformation. And ju
st as the conception of matter lost its original meaning as the result of the el
ectron theory, so two other fundamental conceptions in philosophy, those of Time
and Space, have been completely changed by the principle of relativity. Mankind
d certainly remains in the highest degree subordinate in the vast step-ladder th
at leads us from the atom to the Universe, but how immense his mind appears, whe
n we consider that he has succeeded in advancing theoretical knowledge to the sm
allness of atoms on the one hand, and to the immensity of the Universe on the ot
her, and all this in spite of the limitations of the human senses.

We see from our brief study of "the hidden mysteries of nature and science," a s
elf-contained and self-conserving Cosmos, one in essence; dual, even multiple, i
aspect; a fraction of it, finite and conditioned, is perceptible to human sens
organs; the remainder of its immeasurable bulk is eternal, unconditioned, and
unmanifest to sense perception, but it is lying close at hand, waiting to be sti
ll further perceived by faculties of consciousness the seeds of which are latent
in us, and are destined to mature in the patient course of evolution. Separate
and wholly different sets of laws are seen to prevail in Nature's manifested an
d unmanifested planes; "that which is flesh is flesh, and that which is spiri
s spirit"; and through the intermixture in man of a physical nature, subject to
laws applicable to the physical plane, and a spirituality whose true home is the
unconditioned, where other laws obtain, there is, and must needs be, perpetual
lapses, illusion, and conflict-conflict which is the concomitant of growth, and
which becomes apparent in all forms of individual and social unrest. The vast e
volutionary process is an alternating current, and accordingly there occur stage
s of racial growth when the higher and spiritual tends to predominate markedly o
ver the lower and physical. Such a stage seems now to have been reached, for we
are, as a race, and despite all appearances to the contrary, definitely on our
way towards some new knowledge; indeed, the world expectancy to-day shows that we stand on the verge of a new revelation. It is because a new condition, a new quality of social life is gradually coming into existence; one more homogeneous, one in which the parts are more closely interdependent, and more responsive than ever before to spiritual currents infused into it. We do not overlook the fact that at present we are still passing through a "state of darkness" - the "dark night of the soul" of humanity; but, nevertheless, out of this night "the morning cometh," and must come; the morning of a larger, clearer day of the cosmic work of human re-creation. In the eternal rhythm of life, every morning is succeeded by its complemental night, wherein the works of the morning are tried and tested; until at length comes that last night of all, "the Night of Brahm," when the manifested Universe with all its ingarnered works will sink into its Sabbath of rest in the incomprehensible Abyss of God, and the incomparable splendour of that supreme darkness which is His Uncreated Light. Before that last night comes, however, much remains to be perfected, much raising to be accomplished of what is now dead, much consciousness to be evolved and sublimated out of what is now refractory and torpid. The function of the morning about to dawn will be, it is prophesied, the purification and coordination of the divers kingdoms of this world preparatory to their synthetisation in that higher unity which we call the Kingdom of God. For the coming of this we may all aspire; and whoso labours, who thinks even, towards this great consummation is already unconsciously praying and helping the fulfilment of his prayer: "In earth as it is in heaven;" As above, so below."

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come;
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home."

SO MOTE IT BE.