

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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ELSEWHERE!

DEAR FRIENDS:



HERE IS A MYSTERIOUS REALM, just beyond the boundaries of the commonplace which poets, mystics, and small children have called "ELSEWHERE." Prosaic thinkers often deny the existence of Elsewhere, or else consider it merely an extension of Here and Now. There is a popular belief that babies coming into this world descend from Elsewhere, and that the aged departing from mortal existence return to Elsewhere. Small boys running away from home (usually to escape family discipline) think they will do better Elsewhere. Little dogs often have the same inclinations. Families are constantly moving from one community to another in search of Elsewhere, and the Utopians of four hundred years ago sailed out into the unknown ocean hoping that Elsewhere was beyond the blue horizon. There is a native discontent in each of us, and we wander down through the years ever hoping that we will find those isles of Somewhere, the blessed places where dreams come true.

There is an old belief that the human mind cannot think beyond the possible. If we can conceive that a Shangri-la exists, it is because inner consciousness can sometime transform a hope into a reality. It is the abiding faith in the unattained that gives us the courage to build foundations under dreams. Fancies and facts are more closely linked together than we are inclined to believe. It is very important that we should consider the unknown and the invisible as benevolent. Those who believe this mortal sphere to be suspended in a vacuum limit their own growth. Some populate the unseen dimensions of existence with evil sprites. Others consider the unknown to be so vast and overwhelming

that ordinary creatures can find no solace there. The human heart, however, is convinced by some power within itself that Elsewhere is beautiful. The very concept of it is sustained by observation and reflection. Great snow-peaked mountains are symbols of a universal magnificence, and castles in the Bavarian Alps seem to stand on the threshold of Elsewhere. Artists especially have an awareness of universal sublimity. A Chinese painter captured upon the surface of his silk a scene from the Islands of the Blessed. A customer, considering purchase of the picture, nodded his head sadly, observing, "Alas, there is no such a place, the scene is not real." The artist, slightly offended, replied, "There is such a place, and it is real." The skeptic then asked: "Then, where is it"? The reply was, "It is here, right on my silk. Therefore it exists." The old painter was evidently a Zen master. He might have added that if beauty exists in man's own soul, it is more real than any visible or tangible fact of living.

Elsewhere must first be experienced in our own hearts. It is not so easy these days when fears and anxieties dominate our attitudes, but in the course of time each individual must come to understand the substance of things unseen. This was the burden of the philosophy of the great Chinese sage, Mencius. Each person in his own way and in his own time must come to understand that there are realities far greater than facts. Of all the creatures that we know, humanity alone can make dreams come true. By an alchemy of insight, the basic elements of existence must be transmuted and transformed by the redeeming power of love. Those whose affections are deep and true are already approaching the promised land of Elsewhere. Sometimes it takes a little philosophy to reform our own interpretations of the universal plan and purpose. Those who are bound to the cycle of necessity lose sight of that which is most necessary. They may believe in God, but they have never truly tried to understand the Divine Purpose. Their minds, confused and disturbed by immediate difficulties lack the spiritual courage to raise themselves above the level of collective conduct. They wish that things could be different and realize the need for a deeper vision, but have lost hope in themselves and for society. Mencius was convinced that the dispirited are old before their time, but the child heart is forever young. To many, heaven is the sublime Elsewhere, and Christ reminded his disciples that it is children who will inherit the kingdom of heaven. There is a great difference between the childishness of the young and the childlikeness of the wise.

It is sad indeed that human beings can grow old without growing up. The child heart is an ever-flowing fountain of faith and hope, and what we have mis-called maturity is too often a matter of biology.

To the troubled peoples of Europe the discovery of the Western Hemisphere became the answer to the mystery of Elsewhere. At last the blessed isles of the Hesperides far beyond the ocean became realities. The Spaniards sailed forth in search of wealth and fame. The religiously oppressed made the perilous journey to those distant shores where they could worship God according to the dictates of conscience. Merchants dreamed of new markets, and the Church rejoiced at the prospect of saving heathen souls. Unfortunately, however, each group carried its prejudices and antagonisms with it, and those in search of tolerance soon themselves became intolerant. The seventeenth century Utopians were dominated by inflexible convictions of their own. In his Christianopolis, Andrae describes a republic based upon the cantonal system of

Switzerland, but he rejected Calvinism, the faith of the Swiss people. More's Utopia envisioned Elsewhere as solidly protestant, while to Campanella, the earthly paradise had a decidedly Roman Catholic flavor. The New Atlantis of Lord Bacon was a philosophic empire, largely devoted to the advancement of the scientific method. The eighteenth century humanists regarded the Western Hemisphere as a vast region of opportunity where each could build according to his own fancy. It was inevitable that this conglomerate of conflicting hopes should run into difficulty. Omar Khayyam, the Persian pessimist, came to the conclusion that every Eden has a serpent.

Experience has proven that our Elsewheres are projections of ourselves, and this dilemma continues to plague us. The present "fun" generation would like to view the world as a vast amusement park. The principal end to be attained is pleasure, which in turn makes possible complete freedom from responsibility. Some forty years ago the emphasis was upon escape from useful labor. Machines were to liberate us all and mankind was destined for a career of leisure. Working hours were shortened and it was taken for granted that our society could be maintained on one working day a week. The rest of the time could be set aside for the joys of self-improvement. Aristotle's admonition that leisure was the heaviest burden that humanity could bear was given little consideration. The "sweet do-nothing," as the Spaniards call it, simply ended in unemployment. The tragic end of indolence is clearly stated by Homer in his description of Land of the Lotus Eaters, the inhabitants of which lived in a drug-ridden dream. When we realize the continually increasing use of sedations, tranquillizers, and hypnotic drugs, we appreciate more fully Homer's fable. Elsewhere is only here and now projected into the future.

The celestial realms of Buddhism are a considerable improvement over the prevailing opinions of today. In Amida's Western Paradise, souls go to school, but receive better instruction than is available in contemporary curricula. The dead, like the living, continue their search for the eternal Elsewhere. Those who dream that somewhere, sometime, there is an end of suffering, dream true, but to attain their end, they must walk the Noble Eight-Fold Path. Until we can live happy and constructive lives, we are not ready for Elsewhere. There is no royal road to enlightenment--no easy way out of the dilemma of selfishness. Elsewhere is part of a universal plan governed by divine and natural laws. Happiness and security are the proper byproducts of a practical and dedicated idealism. We can escape problems only by outgrowing them. Growth is natural and proper, and when accepted with true insight it is a privilege and not a burden. Milton tells us how paradise was lost, but he also wrote in Paradise Regained, how it can be restored. When the best part of the human being becomes the leader of the lesser parts, we can live together in a better world than we have ever known.

Most sincerely yours,

Mandy P. Hall

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