

Mirrors of Life

By Frater Achad

We may often wonder why there should be such a number of conflicting opinions in regard to the simplest facts of life, to say nothing of its deeper problems. Come with me, and I will try to show you some of the reasons for this, and possibly give you a hint of the solution of the puzzle.

We have all been to "Coney Island" or some similar place of amusement, and while there have doubtless visited the side-shows which abound in such places. One of the old popular favorites is the "Hall of Mirrors" wherein variously curved glasses are so arranged that we may see ourselves and our friends in the most fantastically distorted forms. We laugh as we come out again, little realizing the tragedy as well as the comedy of that which we have witnessed; without knowing that we have been looking at one of the great symbolic mysteries of life.

Let us go back again, together, and see just what we can learn from our visit. We first pass through a narrow maze of mirrors, fairly bumping into our own reflections in our eagerness to reach the chamber of mystery. In the case of our friends we are hardly able to distinguish which is the reality and which the reflection. All seem strangely multiplied yet in more or less natural proportion.

So is life to the eyes of a little child whose vision has not yet become distorted and false. The child, on coming here, has arrived in a world of mysterious reflections. It has been pointed out by one celebrated author -- Sydney Klein -- that at first it must be quite impossible for the child whose eyes are just opened, to tell whether the objects seen are not actually touching the retina of the eye. Only after certain mental adjustments have taken place can it come to realise that things exist "outside" itself. Whether or not this is the beginning of distorted vision I must leave it for others to decide, but we do know that all we see is really within us; that which causes the appearance of any object is a problem too deep to be entered upon here.

But to return to our "House of Mirrors". After passing through the maze we suddenly arrive at a mirror which makes us jump with surprise. All is changed and we may look short and fat, or perhaps long and thin, as we delightedly dance in front of the glass and enjoy making grimaces at this at this new aspect of ourself. Of course it seems a joke to us, for we feel we are not really like that so we don't mind amusing ourselves at our own expense. After awhile we get tired of that particular form of distortion, it no longer seems so funny to us, and we pass on to another mirror. This time our head is enormously too large for our tiny sylph-like body. How funny it seems as long as we remember who we really are and what we are really like, and why we came to the Hall of Mirrors. But supposing for a moment we had forgotten these things as we strolled aimlessly on amid the distorted images, thinking ourselves first one kind of a being and then another, with no standard to guide us as to which was the Real Self. Think what that would mean to an

intelligent human being. Yet amid the Mirrors of Life who can answer these three simple questions "Who am I?", "What am I?", "Why do I exist here?"

Before discussing these very important questions as to Who, What, and Why we are, let us once again glance into the Hall of Mirrors. It may be, that when for a moment we cease to be occupied with looking at ourselves we notice the reflections of others in the same mirror. These people may be strangers to us and we probably never take the trouble to turn round and face them squarely. To us, as we remember them afterwards, the reflection we saw in the mirror is our sole recollection of them, and it comes to represent to us that person or thing. Later in life, if they should be mentioned we may proudly remark "O yes, I met so-and-so years ago. What a silly fat-head he is." or, "Do you mean that pot-bellied Mr X, I remember him well, a man of no brains and very large feet".

We must not forget that while we are engaged in admiring ourselves in one mirror, thinking what nice people we are, others may also be seeing quite a different view of us in another. It is little wonder, therefore, that "after the story has gone the rounds" we sometimes hear strange accounts of ourselves and are unable to conceive how people would have been so maliciously foolish as to have thought and talked of us thus. But it's all a part of the mystery of the Mirrors of Life, and we must learn to put up with it until we have found the solution.

We shall have to admit that although we are not exactly living a Coney Island side-show where our physical bodies appear distorted, we are living on a planet under conditions which cause our "Mental Mirrors" to show us very differing pictures from time to time.

Over night, that great showman, the Press, is able to distort or improve the souls of humanity, and does not hesitate to do so. We wake up one morning to find certain headlines in the daily papers and before the day is out a Nation, of which perhaps we previously knew little or nothing, has suddenly taken on the appearance of a fierce and horrible enemy. We soon begin to hate these "rogues and scoundrels" -- our brothers -- and become quite convinced that even our close friends of that nationality, although we never noticed it before, are slightly tarred with the same dirty brush as all the rest of their fellows over the seas.

The next day, maybe, we are told by the same papers, it was all a mistake and that so-and-so is the guilty party who is responsible for most of the misery of the world. We soon adjust ourselves to this new view-point and learn to concede to the next victim a full measure of hate.

Or, let us look in another mirror. This one makes the centre of the picture look very large and the surroundings very small. Here we see OUR Country; how fine it looks compared with the other little insignificant one we have heard about but never visited. This is OUR religion; what a wonderful Truth we possess compared with that of the "benighted heathen" we know nothing about. This is OUR wealth, how much cleaner were the processes by which we obtained it than those shift methods adopted by others- our rivals.

But there is yet another mirror which makes our own good actions appear small in our eyes, while others see them in a different light.

Sometimes our very best qualities are those we never knew ourselves to possess. The only danger lies in having them pointed out to us, when we may come to exaggerate, and so spoil them. Our bodies are healthy while we remain unconscious of their detailed workings. When we begin to notice that we have a heart, or lungs, or a liver, something is already out of order and if we keep on looking in that "mirror" we shall soon find ourselves one mass of diseased organs. Then we read the quack medical advertisements with avidity, and proudly feel that we, of all people, have got every kind of disease and probably some pet one never yet discovered by physicians. We are so "proud" of this that we think it best not to tell the family doctor in case he should think us fit subjects for experiment in the name of science, and so we go on harboring it and wondering why life looks like hell instead of heaven.

Most of our heart troubles are caused by indigestion and a little soda would cure them if we had the sense to take it, instead, perhaps, we go to a Christian Scientist who tells us we have no heart, and while admitting that money is but a delusion of mortal mind, takes his fee without questioning.

Coué comes along, and we find a lot of people saying they are getting better and better, while at the same time they have no idea who they really are. After a time we find quite a few who have got worse, both in their own estimation and that of others.

Such things are to be seen in the Mirrors of Life, and every day in every way they keep changing, whether we like it or not.

Now let us examine the cause of the trouble as best we may. We have been looking in the distorted mirrors outside when we should have been looking within ourselves, in the first instance, at any rate. Has it not been written Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven, and The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.

The Soul of Man, his Heaven or Hell, is a plastic medium between body and spirit. It is equipped with a personal will which is capable of causing it, through the power of imagination, to take any desired form.

This will was given to man in order that he might develop the sense of freedom. He learns this in most cases by making mistakes. Only when he is willing to align this personal will with the Divine or Universal Will which brought him into being, does the puzzle begin to resolve itself and the astigmatism of the eye of the Soul begin to disappear. But this correction of our distorted vision is a task that each individual must accomplish for himself. While he relies on another to do it for him he is obsessed by one of the phantoms in the Mirror.

Some people, the showmen, do all in their power to keep man in this deluded condition, but once a glimmer of truth has come to the darkened soul, the spell is broken, even

though it may require much effort to make a complete and perfect adjustment with Reality.

We must cease to worry about what we look like to others, who see us in the distorted mirrors of their own minds, and turn our attention first of all to minding our own business. We must ask ourselves Who, What, and Why we are ?. These questions are hard to answer, but they must be faced. The answer lies within ourselves, not outside. We shall discover that we are each here for a certain purpose, and that the purpose of each individual is different. The true Will within us, which is the Will of God for us, we must discover and learn to DO, with one-pointedness, detachment and peace. We have each a particular part to play in the great Drama of Life, and we must be prepared to play it, and play it WELL. We must learn that true Freedom only comes through Order. We must discover the Order of the Universe and our right place and motion therein.

These truths may not be learned in a day, but we can start now, and soon, very soon, we shall begin to notice a difference; a fairer form will appear in the Mirror. We shall begin to remember Who, What, and Why we are, to realize that we have been stuck in a Side-show for a very long time and that it is well for us to get back to things nearer the truth. Come, my children, just outside are the roundabouts, whereon free and joyous we may travel like Stars in the sky, feeling ourselves to be free and in tune with the Heavenly Spheres.