My Philosophy of Life
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A mature philosophy of life originates in a natural thoughtfulness. To live without thinking is to fail in the proper use of the powers and faculties with which we have been endowed. To think without applying our thoughts to the conduct of our affairs is to substitute mere intellectualism for intelligence. It is seldom possible to perfect a personal philosophy without study, through which we become familiar with the deepest and noblest convictions of mankind. We must also call upon daily experience by which we can convince ourselves of the reality and integrity of certain basic principles, ever-present and forever true. Beyond both study and experience are the internal faculties of the soul and these must bestow final certitude upon our convictions. If, therefore, we live simply and wisely, seeking first the improvement of our inner lives, reserving an open heart and mind, we shall be guided and directed according to our needs and understanding.

Each person must discover his own philosophy of life, and it is not fair or right to impose our codes upon others. It is also our responsibility, however, to share one with another such experiences as may have common value. We desire, therefore, not to convert or convince, but to invite such a sharing with the sincere hope that some mutual good will be accomplished.

My life has been devoted to the consideration of those essential doctrines that have most advanced the human state. Yet it would not be entirely fair to say that I have borrowed my convictions from antiquity, or addicted myself to the words or thoughts of the famous or the illustrious. I have chosen, rather, a course tempered by observation and experience, and mellowed by reflection. Weighing all things, I have chosen to cling to that which was good for me and most serviceable for those who have sought my help and guidance.

From my search for the good and the necessary, I have come to the following convictions: I believe in one supreme and absolute power at the source of life; the cause of all living; and that this ineffable principle may justly and truthfully be named The One and The Good. Whether men call this Universal Divinity, God or Allah, or Brahma, or Dao is of no great concern. For such terms and titles reveal differences of language, but not divergence of ideas. Man has come to know this sovereign good through the seeking of his mind and the longing of his heart. It seems to me, however, that believing in good and a God everywhere existing, and forever the source of wisdom, justice, truth and love, we must, in the end, come to the realization that all the workings of this creative power are necessary, beautiful and virtuous.

The universe in which we live is one of numerous manifestations of the Divine Will. The world, therefore, must be essentially good, for it is not conceivable that a principle shall create contrary to its own nature. If, then, there shall appear to be injustice, inequality and calamity in the world, they must originate not in the Divine understanding, but in human misunderstanding. If it is not given to us to know all things, and to solve all mysteries, we must seek through faith, hope and charity for The Beautiful and The Good.

The will of the Eternal Power is revealed to us through the laws governing the formation, generation, growth, unfoldment and improvement of created things. Through reflection, we may experience the realities of these laws, and discover them to be both wise and kind. We venerate eternal principles through obedience and through a cheerful acceptance of the lessons of daily living. The end of all learning, the fruits of all labors and endeavors, and the consummation of the deepest and most devout instincts and intuitions of our souls are that we shall come to honor and obey the rules of the vast plan of which we are the conscious and separate parts. All arts, sciences, philosophies, religions, crafts and trades can enrich our inward lives to the degree that we realize that through them the sovereign laws of existence are variously revealed and manifested for our advancement and enlightenment.

I believe that human consciousness is a *being* separate from the body which it inhabits, and that this consciousness existed prior to embodiment, and will survive the disillusion of its physical form. I am convinced of this, not only by the authority of religion and philosophy, but also by a natural sense within myself. This belief is reasonably sustained by the circumstances of living. It is difficult to rationally maintain that man is born, suffers and dies without reason or purpose, nor is it conceivable that experience, knowledge and understanding, which are obviously and undeniably the richer fruits of living, should cease and be utterly dissolved by the phenomenon of death. Neither can I accept the doctrine of an eternal judgment

with everlasting rewards and punishments meted out at the end of one frail and imperfect span of years in this world. In the economy of nature, and in the benevolence of an abiding Providence, all creatures possessing within them the life of the Creator must have an eternal continuance of themselves or in Universal Being. Life as we know it must therefore be an episode in a larger existence. For this and other reasons, I believe in the doctrine of rebirth as a pattern of life most honorable for man, most suitable to things known and seen, and best calculated to reveal the eternal goodness of the Sovereign Being.

I am willing to accept the challenge of growth, to believe that I have lived before and will live again. My present state is the sum of my previous existences, and I am endowed with the powers and potentials of improvement by which I may advance my destiny according to my deserts and merits. I seek neither to be forgiven for my mistakes, nor applauded for my attainments, but take my refuge in a law of eternal good which gives me the right to work out my salvation with diligence.

I do not believe in a principle of evil, for I cannot reconcile such a doctrine with the eternal good which rules the universe with absolute power. Yet I must explain, to the satisfaction of my own conscience, those appearances of evil which surround me. By experience and observation, I have satisfied myself that evil is another name for ignorance. Through ignorance, man becomes selfish, critical, and destructive; and from these abuses and misuses of his divine and natural resources, he causes corruption and discord in the way of life which he has fashioned. When man violates natural law, or disobeys the code of his own kind, he brings upon himself certain retributions which appear to him to be unreasonable punishment. In the broad pattern of mortal existence, discord reveals the need for concord; selfishness, the need for unselfishness; cruelty, the need for kindness; and ignorance, the need for the tireless search after truth and beauty. Thus what we call evil is a servant of good, for it causes us, in the end, to depart from error, and cling to reality.

I believe in the inalienable right of every man and woman to worship his God, and to seek truth according to the instincts and inclinations of his own heart and mind. Careful study has convinced me that all the great religions of the world, past and present, teach the same essential code of conduct. They all believe in the existence of a Sovereign Power or Being. They teach in one way or the other, the immortality of the soul, and they affirm the ultimate victory of good over evil; light over darkness; truth over error. It seems to me that as the earth has many climates suitable for the development of living creatures, so faith may have many names; but named or nameless, it comforts and inspires those of sincere spirit who seek the consolation of devout belief. I would, therefore, never seek to convert a man from his faith or to another, but, rather, would help him in any way that I can to find the richness and fullness of his own religion. In time he will realize that as one light can be manifested through many colors, so one truth can be sought and found through the several colors of sincere believing. It may happen, however, that different religions have advanced and specialized certain parts, tenets and doctrines of the one and eternal religion.

Therefore, it seems to me, through the study of comparative religion, we come nearer to the complete truth which is the one and eternal faith. Conflict between beliefs, therefore, confuses and obscures man's natural instinct to worship the Supreme Good. For the same reason, I believe that all races and creatures are parts of one plan, and should not be regarded as in any way separate or distinct from that plan. All men, regardless of their races or nations, their colors or conditions, share one life, exist in one world, and are the children of One Creating Power. Therefore, I shall measure a man not by his complexion, but by his works, and will decline to hold any attitude which disparages him because of circumstances arising from birth or social estate. I am ensured by my own conscience that if I cannot find the good in myself and in my fellow man, I shall in no way discover it in space or beyond the stars.

I sincerely believe that I have been endowed with faculties, powers and perceptions for the use of which I am morally responsible. It is my duty to myself, to my world, and to the Eternal Power by and in which I exist, to govern my temper, subdue my appetites, refine my emotions, inform my mind, and increase my understanding. Failure to advance these causes must leave me a victim to my own intemperances, and expose me to the just censure of my associates. Because I am a conscious being, and not required to follow the immediate instincts and impulses of my disposition, I can be kind, just, gentle, forgiving, compassionate and self-sacrificing even under the most trying and difficult circumstances. Both by observation and experience, and by the testimony of the ages, I

inwardly know right from wrong, and good from bad. I may not attain to an absolute definition of these terms, but I understand them as they apply to me and to my own conduct. I cannot, therefore, claim to be wise, virtuous or devout unless by my actions I sustain such pretensions.

It seems to me that the purpose of philosophy and psychology is to guide me in the moderation of my conduct. They teach me to be strong in the works of good because they have brought me an understanding of The Good. Philosophy is not merely a branch of learning; it is a way of life. Unless I practice that way, I have no part in philosophy, or in true science, or in pure religion, for they all teach the same. I, therefore, shall judge that man to be good, to be wise, and to be devout, who, according to his own abilities and limitations, is striving to live well, and to bring his own thoughts and emotions under the control of enlightened understanding. Words without works are dead. And a beautiful belief that does not lead to gentleness of spirit is fruitless. It may well be that we shall all fall short, but we shall count that man a hero who does his best. For we know that his sincere effort will be rewarded with greater insight.

I believe it to be right and proper to venerate The Good as it is revealed through those who have served it lovingly and well. Therefore, I respect and admire the great philosophers, spiritual leaders, sages and saints who have gone before. I do not worship them, nor do I desire to copy any one of them. For I believe that each has his own destiny which must be unfolded and perfected. If we should respect our parents who are the sources of our being, should we not also respect the wise, who are the sources of our well-being. I am therefore grateful that good men and women have lived, and I gladly bestow upon them the recognition and appreciation which were denied to most of them while they lived. I believe we may outgrow our teacher, but never our duty to remember him with gratitude. I find a great consolation in the realization that these good and great leaders were mortals like ourselves, with short-comings like our own. For by these facts and signs I realize that it is possible for an imperfect man to be so dedicated to truth that he may serve others and contribute to the dissemination of eternal realities.

I believe that it is just and proper that we should take full advantage of all new discoveries in every branch of learning. I cannot condemn science or education or modern philosophy because of their short-comings. I know that they must be served by imperfect mortals, who, like myself, are seeking to grow and explore the mysteries of life, time and space. I feel it unwise to criticize or condemn, lest I cause others to copy my attitudes, or to feel that they are justified in agreeing with me. I have learned from experience that constructive words, kindly appreciation, and a full recognition of good intentions contribute more to the growth of others than fault-finding and disparagement. I am inclined, therefore, to be silent if I cannot commend.

A good life must have communion with the inner parts of itself. It is right and proper that we should cultivate quietude and set aside some part of our time to gentle reflection. I believe that the eternal being within us makes known its purposes most immediately and fully through the peaceful heart and the quiet mind. It is, therefore, of the greatest utility to experience the presence of the Eternal Good as a benediction upon the spirit, inclining us naturally to peace of soul. There can be no peace without faith, for through faith alone do we discover the truth and reality of peace.

I believe that the philosopher should be a law abiding citizen, and should keep the statutes of the nation and community in which he lives. And if he be unable to so accept and acknowledge them, he should depart to some other region more suitable to his inclinations. Advancement in learning causes us to wonder about the goodness of things, and to appreciate growth and progress. This does not mean, however, that we are unmindful of faults and failings. It is better to be inspired to correct a condition than to allow ourselves to become mere critics. As we cultivate integrity in ourselves, we strengthen and enrich society thus gradually making possible all reasonable reforms.

I have observed that those of cheerful disposition, well disposed toward others, naturally slow to anger, and quick to forgive, tolerant and inclined to cultivate peace and concord are most likely to enjoy good health. Happiness and security must be earned by conduct, and are reserved for those who merit such rewards. Thus it seems that the laws of the universe assert themselves, and make known the divine plan for man. Moderation is a virtue; for both abstinence and indulgence are extremes, and nature requires a middle course.

I believe that possession is a conceit of the human mind. We are not here to exercise ownership, but to accept a certain stewardship. We cannot possess other

persons without injuring them, and even more afflicting ourselves. To have more than we need is a burden to the soul, and a constant temptation to excess and extravagance. Those with many worldly goods have slight time or incentive for the cultivation of character. They become the servants of their own belongings, and are deluded with a false sense of security.

It is good for every person to work. Love of religion or philosophy or the effort to acquire spiritual graces should never prevent an individual from being a self-sustaining member of society. To be skilled in a craft or a trade is to participate in the experience of creativeness, and to retain honor and to preserve dignity of person. Nor can I conceive one useful labor to be more excellent than another. Or that humble endeavor should be looked down upon or despised. Honest toil is as much a part of religion as the most elaborate ritual in the Church or the Cathedral.

I believe that love is an eternal power, and a natural part of the Sovereign Good. If all things be created by wisdom, and supported by strength, they shall be perfected by love. Wherever the redeeming power is present in the world, working the mysteries of regeneration and redemption, there we shall find love. It is a medicine for the sickness of the mind, the debility of the soul, or the exhaustion of the body. By love, all things are tempered and subdued, and their perfect works are revealed. For man, there can be no proof of love, except that he shall love. By the power of love he is induced to sacrifice himself, and to place the happiness of others above his own. If he loves truly, he will act nobly. He will find no excuse for unkindness or discord, but will forgive his enemy, and sustain his friend. There can be no peace in this world, no tranquility within man, no sharing in the grace of the eternal without love. By it, wisdom shall be made alive, knowledge shall be used for the common good, science will become the servant of progress, and religion will end its doctrine of fear. Love is not to be declared, or uttered, or spoken, but shall be revealed by deeds. By it we are moved to do those things which bring joy to those we care for. True love can never be selfish or self-seeking, but gives of itself utterly and completely.

I have further observed that it is most difficult to apply wisdom to simple things. It is easier to explain the universe, than to understand the conduct of a friend. It is easier to plan reformation of society, than to build a good home, or bring laughter to the eyes of the sorrowful. Therefore, it seems to me, the truth seeker should first put in order that which is nearest to him self. He discovers the wisdom and folly of his beliefs immediately if he attempts to live these beliefs. If, however, he shall ignore his own life, and seek larger fields of endeavor, he may live for many years addicted to false doctrines without the truth being evident to him. Nor should he ever expect others to love and respect him, if he does not love and respect them. Two wrongs will never make a right, and it is against the greater good when we permit dissension to continue among ourselves.

I firmly believe that religious experience is good and necessary, but I shall tell no man what faith to follow. We all need the consolation of the spirit, which comes to those who humbly acknowledge their indebtedness to a Sovereign Power. The form of the faith is less important than its reality, but through forms, men seek the formless which is the source of all. Likewise, therefore, it is good to pray; not for the things that we want, but for that depth of understanding which we need. Let us, therefore, pray that we shall live without offence; that we shall serve the good; that in all things we shall be kind, and that in the end we shall know our God.

I believe that those who keep the law will be kept by the law. In the fullness of time, the human soul, vestured in righteousness and abundant in grace, shall return to the Eternal Being from which it came; and it shall abide in ever-lastingness, and shall know the peace that surpasses understanding. I do not believe that souls can be lost; that an ultimate evil can obscure the works of good, or that the nature of being is anywhere within itself a source or cause of pain or terror. It also seems to me that the world in which we live, with all its creatures and parts is a growing and unfolding being, and that in the fullness of time, the grace within man shall so shine from him that he can build a beautiful society in which he can live peacefully, happily and harmoniously. In those days there will be good government, freedom from crime and want, and mankind will collectively be aware of its own purpose, and will gloriously and gladly serve that purpose. Until such a time, I shall do what I can, according to the means I possess, to make this possible with no expectations of immediate reward.

I believe that it is the duty and privilege of those in such special professions as are immediately concerned with the essential growth of man to be honest, sincere and honorable. I believe that they cannot, without the

gravest injury to themselves and others, allow selfishness or self-interest to influence them. It seems to me that we should be especially mindful in the educating of lawyers, doctors, statesmen, theologians, philosophers and psychologists, doing all in our power to help them to understand the natural divinity and dignity of human life. For as these exercise a wide influence upon the popular mind, they should realize that it is in their power to minister to the inner needs as well as the outer necessities of those who depend upon them.

I believe that greatness of knowledge and wisdom lead to faith, and that without faith, knowledge is a madness and an affliction to the soul. I believe that if I follow the path of wisdom as revealed to me by the teachers of the race, by the inward instincts and intuitions of my consciousness, supported by the observations and experiences of living, I may live in a manner acceptable to truth. If I so live, I will earn and merit the right to a larger knowledge and understanding, but I am not entitled to more than is sustained by my conduct. Furthermore, if I devote myself to works of friendliness, refraining insofar as I am able from destructive actions and thoughts, I may face the future with serenity of spirit. I shall live without fear, and die without fear; for I shall have justified my faith.

Believing in a universe of truth and beauty, I shall meet each day without question or doubt. I shall remember the past without regret or remorse. And I shall look to the future for the fulfillment of all good things. Beyond this, I do not know, and I cannot do. But I have faith that when it is necessary, I shall know, and I can do. I ask no more, and I accept no less.