

# IS THERE A WORLD BEYOND OUR SENSES?

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## THE GROLIER SOCIETY

Nobody knows anything at all can doubt that there is a world beyond our senses. From the beginning of time men have felt that there were things beyond their dreams, which they can neither see nor hear nor feel. But the nature of that world is part of the mystery of life itself, and of that we know little more than the ancients knew. We speak sometimes as if the ancients were ignorant people, dwelling in barbarism; but, in truth, they were wise in many things beyond the wisdom of our own day.

They measured the earth, they had their ideas about the solar system; even the law of gravitation was not unknown to them. The mystery of life absorbed their attention as it absorbs the attention of our own thinkers; and in this matter they were hardly behind us to-day. And so we are faced with the thought that for over 2,000 years the mind of a man has remained almost stationary concerning the great mystery of life. Do we know more about it than the philosophers who lived in Alexandria hundreds of years before Christ, and the philosophers who lived in Athens hundreds of years before Alexandria? Do we understand better than they did the mystery of existence, the great riddle of the universe? Are we able to prove anything more than they knew?

It is a strange thought that the whole human race may have really been standing still for more than two thousand years. So far as ultimate knowledge of life is concerned, we are indeed in exactly the same place as those far-off men of Alexandria and Athens.

But quite recently a hope has come to men that at last we are really beginning to advance. And this hope is founded on the realization that our natural senses are not sufficient for reading the riddle of the universe. The eye, wonderful and exquisite as is its mechanism, is a clumsy vehicle of sight. The microscope reveals to us unsuspected beauty in minute things; the telescope opens to our gaze a flooding glory from immensity. "The native senses," says one American writer, "give us but a slight notion of the real world about us; they are crude, coarse, inaccurate, unreliable, prone to delude."

And so we have reached a time when man has outgrown his senses. This is the real miracle of our day. This is the fact, so little realized even by those who insist upon it, which proves that man is immortal. For there is in man something so infinite that it cannot be content with the finite. Man wishes to know, and sets himself to know, more than his body can possibly accomplish. Have you thought what that means? Does it

not prove to you that the spirit of man is like a tenant in a house, and that man, every time that he invents a new machine, is really declaring that his house is not big enough for him. His eyes cannot read the stars, so he invents the telescope. His hands are not strong enough to lift iron, so he invents the lever. Everywhere we look, we perceive that science has only advanced where man has called to his aid mechanical inventions for improving his physical powers.

We shall all do well to reflect upon this truth. It is certainly a humbling thought that we know nothing more about the mystery of life than did the ancients of Athens and Alexandria; and it certainly looks as if the mind of man has been standing still for a great space in human history. But let it be grasped by our minds that to-day is the birth of a new era, the beginning of a fresh discovery, and we shall not be depressed by our almost total ignorance.

Man, for the first time in his long and wonderful history, has reached the need for tools in investigating mystery. The test-tube of the chemist holds within it secrets which will carry us far on our journey. We have had to outgrow our eyes, or ears, and our hands before we could see, hear, and handle the truth of existence, and no man can say what really lies in the world beyond our senses.

