

"Bees in young Bill's bonnet"

—says Uncle Chris.



"How doth the little busy bee," I said musingly.
 "Pity some humans weren't as industrious," said young Bill Wilkes.
 "You know Uncle, if we organised society like a beehive, things would be . . ."
 "Dreadful," I broke in.
 "Well, you'd have security, efficiency and maximum production."
 "You would not," I countered.
 "Why not?" said young Bill.
 "Well, for many reasons but, first and foremost, because me 1 are not bees!

"You know it's as simple as that. Despite what the scholarly reformers say, you can't make men into bees or ants or numbers. The hive works because individuals are completely unimportant. Now Bill Wilkes starts most sentences with the word 'I'. He's interested in Bill Wilkes. He believes deep down that anything you can do, Bill Wilkes can do better. In short he's a typical young individual who is going to do something for his world and his world is going to reward him.

"This individualism, this striving to excel, is the seed and course of human progress. What a pity then that some good intellects are busy devising ways to restrict, hamper, channel and control instead of fostering man's free enterprising spirit.

"I feel that all 'individuals' must resist any further encroachment on individual freedom."

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Enigma Variations

PEOPLE who listen to four talks on the basis of belief in a future life, details of which are given on page 15, will not expect to hear a final answer to one of the oldest questions asked by man. Everybody knows that there can be no certainty, though individuals may believe or deny with equal confidence. Yet the question must be asked: indeed, it is thrust upon us from the moment we begin to discover ourselves as separate persons in a strange and wonderful world. Many will say that they have no opinion and that they are able to get themselves through life without having to decide where they stand. It may be true that we can live and work and even die in a state of suspended judgment; but beneath our neutrality we may be closer to conviction than we realise.

Some thinkers declare that the world would be a better place if we could cease to trouble ourselves with an enigma which cannot be solved. But this attitude may need a faith in the continuance of the human species. As Archdeacon L. G. Whitehead reminds us in the second talk of the series, "To talk about the immortality of the race is to fly in the face of what science tells us is probably true of the future of mankind." We cannot be sure of the future; but we know something of the past, and we know from history that the vision of another life—crude and naive though it may often have been, and expressed inevitably in terms of human experience—has been in all ages a strong and sustaining influence. It is felt more powerfully at some times than at others. The scientific temper may not always be compatible with it, though this does not mean that it must go out of favour in an "age of reason." Human reason has never been used to better purpose than in classical Athens; and Plato's *Phaedo* is still one of the

noblest arguments for personal immortality. Admittedly, Plato was a poet as well as a philosopher, and artists have always found it easier than most people to believe that beauty, goodness and truth are absolute values which open for us the horizons of a larger world. Moreover, they do not feel obliged to accept the view that nothing is real unless it can be seen or proved: their own visions, far brighter than the faint glow they are able to bring into words, colours and music, take them to margins of experience where description falters. Above all, they see around them so much wonder and miracle in earthly life that a future existence becomes a rational expectation.

These things cannot be proved: they can only be declared, believed or rejected. It is, however, a little comforting to know that the supreme enigma will be forever outside the range of science. We are so much in love with technical skills nowadays that we are in danger of falling into the false humility which turns man into a manikin, tied fast to the earth and of no account in the cosmic scheme. It is wiser, perhaps, to remember man's upward struggle, and to remember also that the nerve and brain which allowed the adventure to be possible were not of his own design and manufacture. There is no arrogance in the conviction that it is a tincture of the divine which permits man to contain the universe in his mind and to look beyond it to a further destiny. In this way human personality transcends the physical and becomes valuable for its own sake—an attitude which, in spite of the incursions of darkness, keeps the light upon our faces. We may argue as we will about life and death; and our freedom to deny, as well as to affirm, is part of the dream. But without the dream—or the true vision—there might have been no history.

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