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Paul to Dario April 8, 1944

Paul Sargent
Dear Dario,

I received your letter today. The Cheney book came several days ago and I am digging in on it. That modern art is a reaction from the hard, cold, emotionless painting of David is clear to see but that does not imply to me that it is necessarily better art. I have seen some of the moderns that was just as cold and lacked the fine drawing of David and others of the masters. Well, I'll hold my final opinion until I am farther along in the book.

So you have migrated eastward. You are several thousand feet above sea level there, a little less than 5,000 I think. I have been through Cheyenne on the train—I remember nothing about that country; it is one of those series of river books—this one "The Powder River." This river is in northeastern Wyoming, I think, although I had no map at hand to be sure. It is an interesting book, much of the history of the west that I have read many times before in other books, yet it is interesting to read again. The development of the west is to me the most interesting phase of American history; more than a hundred years that ended with the cowboy.

Back some sixty or 70 or more years ago the big ranchers were getting established, and a lot of cattle rustling was going on. The cattlemen and others organized a bunch of 50 men or so and left Cheyenne secretly at night to clean out the outlaws in northern Wyoming in the Powder River country. They ambushed and killed a few and found the outlaws (and others opposed to the big ranchers) ready for them. They were lined up about ready to fight a battle of consequence when U.S. Cavalry arrived and prevented.

Dr. Walter Bisson of Charleston lived in that region for several years after 1900. I heard him tell of some shootings he had personally known about—one victim came to him too far gone to live.

Have you seen and been with any Indians while in the army? I have always had a great interest in and respect for the Indians as a race, and I never tire of true tales about them. It has been my great regret that the most interesting life of the
west faded out before I came on the scene, and that I never had the money to travel out there but twice. I have wanted for years to paint a picture of buffalo but to get the studies one has to be where the animals are. More than 20 years ago I thought of a composition of them, not based on any pictures I ever saw of them, and it comes back to me now. Queer how impressions can hang on. But I have found my most successful pictures are born that way— impressions that persist, although maybe never seen in nature. The ideas come both ways—from without and from within. Maybe I’ll get to see and study enough buffalo some day to paint the picture. When I was in Idaho (1912) I found buffalo horns where some hunter long ago had killed them, first for the skin, or maybe just for the tongue—such is the wastefulness of humans. These I found near the Snake River on the edge of the desert.

Perhaps you don’t know that the U.S. back in the 60s and 70s deliberately encouraged the killing of the buffalo so that the Indians could be controlled; their food gone they could not ramble here and there and find buffalo. A girl I knew in Idaho told me that her father killed the single buffalo that was left in her neighborhood. She came from N. Dakota. A few buffalo are killed each fall at the different reservations where they are protected. I have eaten some twice that Mr. Rothschild’s father had killed in S. Dakota by permission. He gave the chunk for an Isaac Walton League supper. The meat was in small chunks in soup—you couldn’t have noticed any difference from beef.

Well, Dario you hit the nail on the head when you asked if war wasn’t just a game played for the interests of the big men at the pain of the little men. I have been convinced of that for years but never said much about it (except to intimates) for fear of being misunderstood and thought unpatriotic.

If you get a chance read a book entitled “The Days of our Years” by a Dutchman named Van Passim. He has written another book since this one but it was a dud to me—I could not finish it. Van P. was in France after the other war, lived there for years, and knew what was going on at the League of Nations meetings in Switzerland. He says that the big business men of France and England (especially of France) encouraged Germany
to rearm so that they, France, could sell them goods and material. Also he tells of barbed wire being shipped from Germany through Switzerland (war going on) to be used against the Germans and things from France to Germany same way. He also tells of a family in France, very rich with coal mines, etc. with relatives in Germany (same name) rich also. When Germany took these mines, etc. in other war, the German family of that name ran them for Germany. I have also read this in other books. It is a very interesting book, travels, strange happenings, etc. other than history. Mr. Lord told us each of us probably had one good book we could write, one in us, but maybe we have just one as Van P. seems to have had.

I guess I have never told you much about my own beliefs in science and religion. I have never been a religious person in the sense that I attended a church. I go sometimes when necessary, to a funeral but otherwise I am not there—it seems to me there is altogether too much lacking between theory and practice in religions as I know them. Don’t misunderstand me, I don’t object to other people going as much as they like, if they receive benefits form it.

The religion and science I believe in most is called the Koreshan religion. My father became immeshed in that about the time I saw the World Fair in Chicago in ’93 I told you about. He never came home to stay very long after that; he began to live in Chicago with the Koreshan organization. In ’94 they moved to Estero, Fla, where they still are, called the Koreshan Society. My father died in 1932, after 35 years with them, even stranger is the belief than ever. I visited him in 1914 and a half dozen times later.

When I was younger (in 1914) I, of course, was not much interested in religion. I liked hunting, and painting was getting my interest in a stronger way. But just the same I was inoculated with the Koreshan bug then, although it didn’t take until years later.

Well I guess I better tell you a few things the Koreshans believe. I get this from years of reading their literature and discussion with the members down there.
Their leader and founder was Cyrus R. Teed; he was a doctor. Mr. Teed went to medical school in New York City, later practiced in that state. When he was 30 yrs. old in 1868 he was experimenting in his laboratory one night. He claims to have discovered the so-called philosophers' stone—how to transform common metals into gold, but more important to the world at that time, he had what he called his illumination—a vision. He was told what to do and from that time began to lecture and organize a colony of his believers.

Well, many people think they are called to preach these days, but Teed is different—he has a deep religion and science back of him; he claims the deep secrets of the universe were revealed to him—and when you read and read his writings in things never touched by common writers, you are forced to believe he did have something the mine-run of us do not have.

Here is something of his teachings.

He says the world—the physical and the people—moves in long cycles of time, repeating conditions at regular intervals of time. The signs of the zodiac represent the changes the universe goes through every 24,000 years—2000 years to each sign—I 2 of them. Any given time of that long period corresponds to similar periods in these cycles—similar conditions obtain in each. So, bringing it down to earth, 24,000 years ago there was a world war on hand as it is now, and every 24,000 that has happened in the eternal past and will happen in the eternal future.

Well there isn't war all the time. The 24,000 years are divided into 6000 years of hell here on earth with us, and 6000 years of heaven also with us here, with 2000 years of transition period between the extremes of heaven and hell. According to Teed we are ending a period of 6000 years of hell; the climax is here now in this big war. We are due for a rather sudden change to the conditions of heaven, which will last 6000 years, then the gradual change from good to worse conditions to make the cycle. We have never known in our history anything but hell—war, war, war going back into the very dim past. So some of us think war is a normal state for humans. Well, it is normal for devils living in hell, such as we are at present.
The heaven will be brought about by the arrival of the sons of God, 144,000 of them that the Bible tells about, each the equal of Christ. They will be made of the man and woman who are ready for the god king down at the end of each 24,000 year period of time—no more no less than that figure. They will govern the common humans during the 6000 years of the golden age; then after that these super-humans will gradually begin to disappear from the natural world and will go into the brains of the common living humans. Conditions change for the worse so they are not in harmony with the living humans. My father thought that at least one of these super-humans was here 6000 years ago when the great pyramid in Egypt was constructed. He says that the measurements of that pyramid are so fine that no ordinary mortal could plan and build it, and that it was a prophecy in stone, made to last 6000 years of hell, from the good times of the past to the good times of the future, bridge the hell. If you have read about the pyramid, there is a tunnel starting down, then rises up to a room. (This is symbolic of descent into hell we are in.) This room when first entered contained just an empty sarcophagus. My father said this was the symbol of the resurrection to come now, 6000 years ahead. The empty sarcophagus—the body had risen or gone.

The signs of the zodiac represent 2000 years—each. Two thousand years ago was the end of the Jewish age, and began the age just ending called the Christian age. We are just about to enter—the Koreshan age (will be called) which is the age of Acquarius, thy water carrier. To the Keroshans the bible is written in the language of symbols and had to be interpreted that way. So water as used in the bible is the symbol for intelligence; water the universal solvent (in the picture in almanac) is being poured out on the ground, water (intelligence) is made to work turn a wheel and so Acquarius with the pitcher of water is the symbol for science—intelligence put to work. So Acquarius is the symbol of the age just to come—the age of science. We have seen it developing fast. Also the sign of Aries, the ram, is coming into Acquarius and that being God’s own sign, indicates the coming of God in the time of that sign.
Of course astrology is looked down at by the scientists—but as Teed says “that isn’t all they don’t know.” The zodiac goes so far back in the dusty ages that there is no beginning to be found. So it seemed that it has been preserved and handed down from times more intelligent than ours. Teed says we are living in the most ignorant age of history in hell.

You may be finding all this tiresome but I have to get it out my system.

Dario, have you ever thought some fine morning maybe when you wanted to paint, why is there anything and what are we here for, anyhow? Well, it must be all for our own good, otherwise we would not be here. I believe in a just universe and it would not be fair for us to be turned over here, with all our faults and failings if there was not chance to ever rise above our conditions. So I don’t believe in an eternal hell for anybody as that would not be fair. We know hell now and will never be worse off than we are here and now.

The universe, and universes, have always existed. Maybe you don’t think so? Can you imagine a time when there was nothing and then something, a universe, came from it. More argue that God is all powerful and can do anything. I can’t see how God would exist before the universe, or after it, for that matter. God must not be all powerful otherwise he could create a two-year-old calf in a minute. But he can’t—it takes two years to produce a two-year-old calf. With this paragraph I should remind you of the verse in the bible where it says “one generation comes and another generation goes, but the earth abideth forever.” In the past for eternity and the future also.

How do you like the idea of re-embodiment? That is that we have lived in the past as other personalities and shall live in the future as other people. We don’t learn enough in one life time to do us any good so we must have other experience to live and learn the difference between good and evil. To live as other people in another physical body must be the real brotherhood of man. When we have lived as people through all the grades of humans down the ages of time, we begin to know things and can really be a brother to man; when we have been negroes, Chinese, Japs, fijis or what have you. That’s our school of education.
Then it seems we go down into the planet and animal kingdoms, to the universal, then our spirit comes back reembodied again as a human. Then this is what the poets have sung for ages—the reverse of nature to man and to God. When we have made the circuit down and up, we are ready for the God kingdom and our troubles are over. Let us hope we are on our way up!!!

All this is Koreshan science and religion. Think it over Dario and if it stirs up curiosity—I am more than pleased to explain all I know about it. Also this man Teed says all life comes from an egg or cell (no exception); so the universe is a big cell or egg with everything on the inside, nothing outside, not even space. The sun is in the centre; it corresponds to the nucleus in the plant or animal cell and all life comes from it—it is our physical representative of God. Keep your mind keyed up—big things beside war are in the making, big things in science, art, and religion a new world. What I have written is only a little of Koreshanism. In my honest belief it will remake the world. I hope this isn't tiresome to read.

p.s. I did not say what I thought of big business. Briefly, it is a necessary evil stage this world has to go through. Big business will not exist long after the war. It has had its day under evil day. Good and evil are the two poles of the world battery. Can explain next time more fully.