

SCIENCE

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THE UNIVERSE AS A WHOLE¹

By Professor A. S. EVE

MCGILL UNIVERSITY

In Nature's infinite book of secrecy

A little I can read

—*Antony and Cleopatra*

THINKING COSMICALLY

Most men to-day are engrossed in some one particular profession or occupation, that may involve monotonous drudgery, or may require special skill, technical knowledge, long experience and, more rarely, profound thought.

But it is doubtful if any group of men, except perhaps a few philosophers, is engaged in fitting together the jig-saw or patchwork puzzle of the multitudinous discoveries and theories of all our diverse branches of knowledge. Thought is thus divided into water-tight compartments, between which the communications are blocked.

¹ Presidential address before the Royal Society of Canada, given on May 20, 1930.

Indeed, the further question arises whether the different parts of the puzzle will, in the present state of our knowledge, fit together at all; whether the gaps and misfits are not too wide and too great to permit of the undertaking. It is pertinent to remark that many of the great advances to-day are made by those who are fortunate and able enough to be expert in two subjects, for example, in physics and in physiology, or in mathematics and physics, or in physics and chemistry, or in physics and philosophy. Borderlands are prolific.

There is a further difficulty in finding a man with a sufficiently catholic taste to consider all the realms of knowledge as a unity. Who indeed is equipped mentally for such a giant's task? Who can say nowadays with Bacon that he "takes all knowledge for his province"?

Certainly not the present writer! The fitness rather rests with the audience, for the Royal Society of



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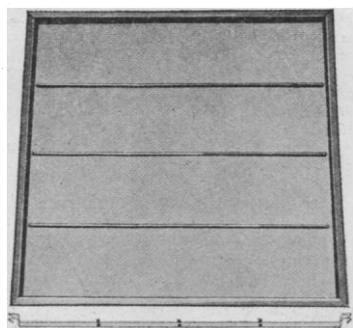
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