

THE BOOK OF SELF

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The Book of Self by James Oppenheim

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JAMES OPPENHEIM

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OF SELF**

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ASPHALT

By Orrick Johns

MUSHROOMS

By Alfred Kreymborg

THE BOOK OF SELF

By James Oppenheim

THE COLLECTED POEMS

of William H. Davies

OTHERS (1926)

*An Anthology of the New
Verse*

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By JAMES OPPENHEIM



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THE Twentieth Century may be known later as a great religious epoch. The Nineteenth Century is now seen as a period of gestation, stormy with a passionate unbelief and tragic with its gropings. The creeds of the world, riding the previous eras on diverse currents, were all shipwrecked on the rocks of Science. They went down before the Machine and the Laboratory.

For suddenly the body of man, hitherto only strong in destruction, became massive with creative power. Man's body is just as large as his tools, for a tool is merely an extension of muscle and bone: a wheel is a swifter foot, a derrick a greater hand. So, as it were, overnight, in the early part of the century, the race found itself with a new gigantic body. It was as if all the Past — a truly great and wise Mother — had given birth to this huge babe. And through this birth the race had to suffer that humiliation and helplessness which is the fate of life new-born.

That the mother continue in the child, the child must first crawl in the dust, must for a while be all

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body, must have its epoch without a soul. Such was the Nineteenth Century: the race crawling in the dust of industrialism, suffering itself to examine again the facts of life, Science humbly piecing together atom with atom: an epoch all body: but a new body. A glance at Pittsburgh, at the New York skyline, at a mammoth ocean ship, reveals the outline of new man. . . .

The growth of Old Man was a growth through intuition and accidental experience: Wisdom came subjectively and was clouded with dream and myth: the genius of the race was greater in what it was, than in its knowledge. But the growth of New Man is also a growth through conscious vision and experimental experience: it is a growth through Science. The flashlight of intuition is supplemented by the searchlight of intellect. And so Science which began humbly with the chemical facts now turns again to the ancient task, takes up the burden again, resumes the labour of Old Man, by turning its steady and probing light on the psyche, the vast subjective realm.

From the outside it finds what was once found from the inside. It does not destroy the old intuitions, but fulfils them beyond their own power: and by analysing and breaking up the supernatural it raises the natural into new meanings. By lowering heaven it raises earth: and so the eyes of man, already taken from

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Beyond-Earth by the humble tasks of a century of materialism, sees now in Earth all and more than the ancients saw in the thin air of the supernal. Man was never wrong in the revelations of intuition: the error came in his interpretations, which were subjective wholly, the wishes of his heart. By correcting these, Science lifts up man himself to a new place in the world.

Psychology is the name of that science which has the inner life for its kingdom: and it is through analytic psychology that the surface of the modern is again connected with the ancient roots.

This little book owes its best to that science, especially as it is developed by Dr. Carl Jung in Zürich and Dr. Beatrice M. Hinkle in New York. To the latter is due even a certain sort of phrasing. Nevertheless the responsibility for the book is wholly mine, and none of its shortcomings may be laid against any one but myself.