

more exclusively within the pale of our private consciousness. Now one of the greatest plagues connected with the individual Life of our age is its tendency to externalism. When men and women are starting in Life, they are too prone to think less of what they shall *be*, than of what they shall *seem* to be — to think less of what Life they shall actually live in their own private consciousness, than of that which they shall seem to live in the sight of the world around them. When this mistake is made, it opens up a highway to a multitude of other mistakes, more than I can name or number. It is like taking the wrong branch of the fork at the parting of the ways. False standards of Life and enjoyment are seen at every step. We are mocked and bewildered, intoxicated, perhaps, but not satisfied. When the end of life's journey is reached in this way, we sink down weak, exhausted, and disappointed; and out of the depths of dissatisfied souls, take up the language of the ancient Sage, and cry out, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

This tendency to externalism has shown itself in all ages; and in all ages has produced, as its fixed result, false forms of human Life. It has its root in vanity. Its blossom is "a vain show," and the fruit thereof hollowness and bitterness. Sacred and secular history alike, from Nebuchadnezzar to Napoleon, give their testimony to its various development, and have shown the highest human fame, and the highest human magnificence, in close connection with the highest human dissatisfaction. But in a matter of this sort, we are slow to learn from history as we ought, for the root of the evil is in our nature, and has its fibres closely entwined with our self love. We identify ourselves with a factitious entity, so to speak, instead