Contents

Preface		1
PART I		
SCIENTISTS		
1.	Thoughts on the anniversary of the publication of	of
	Copernicus' heliocentric theory	7
2.	(a) Theory of evolution is alive and well	19
	(b) The non-difference between humans and	
	animals	25
	(c) Wills' Way and Wisdom	31
	(d) Uncertain about origins of mankind	37
	(e) DARWIN	41
3.	(a) Thoughts on the 110th anniversary of Alfred	
	Wegener's 'continental drift' hypothesis	53
	(b) A tribute to two great German scientists:	
	Ernst Mayr and Alfred Wegener	63

PART II

OF EARTH AND 'ET' SEARCH

			- 5 3
	4.	(a) Six thousand and twenty-eighth birthday	
		(23 October 2024) of the Earth according to 1	Bishop
		Ussher (1654): A few spill-over thoughts	77

A RELIGIOUS PERSONNEL AND SCIENTISTS ON AGE

(b) Exobiology, Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, Big Bang and Multiverse Cosmologies: A Brief Comment

PART III

HILOSOPI	HERS & A HISTORIAN	95
5.	(a) Spinozist and Toynbeean attempt to salve the	

wounds of the Trump presidency

- (b) Spinoza's philosophical determinism: a brief comparative glimpse
- (c) Spinoza's philosophical determinism juxtaposed and compared with that of Makkhali Gosala. Augustine, Lord Kelvin and Stephen Hawking 111
- 6. (a) Commemorating Bertrand Russell's 150th birthday: is the Universe or the multiverse (un)just? 123

91

97

Dr. Myint Zan

Preface

Glimpses of Modern Personages is a collection of articles, essays and book reviews which I have published in various newspapers, magazines and journals from the year 1990 to 2024. They were published in newspapers and magazines in Malaysia, Australia, South Korea and the United Kingdom. At the end of each article the date the article or review appeared is mentioned.

The personages discussed are only 'glimpses.' They 'glimpse' only a few aspects of the personages' work and contributions to human knowledge in various fields. Needless to say, they are not even minor 'biographies,' A few of them are short and some somewhat longer. With one exception I have not substantively changed the contents of my essays and it is reproduced here as they were published. My article 'A Spinozist and Toynbeean attempt to salve the wounds of the Trump presidency' was first published in Campus Review (Australia) in October 2020 a few weeks before the 2020 United States presidential election. In light of the regrettable 2024 US election results I have updated at the end of my article by means of a comment in August 2025. Apart from that there are no substantial change or updates in the rest of the articles/book reviews.

Why do I use the word 'modern' to describe the personages discussed or 'glimpsed'? In my earlier book Glimpses of Ancient and Medieval Personages most of the personages and their work discussed 'flourished' from over 2400 years ago to about 750 plus years ago. The inclusion in the above book about Spinoza (1632-1677) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was as a result of comparing their philosophies and postulates with those of the ancient and medieval

In this collection the earliest personage discussed is

Nicolas Copernicus (1473-1543). The era that Copernicus flourished can arguably be described as the 'medieval' period. Still, the enlightenment period in Europe had begun even in the 15th century and hence the discussion on Copernicus can also be designated as the modern period. Most of the articles deal with personages from the 16th century to the 19th century. A few of the personages discussed or briefly mentioned were born in the 20th century, not between the 16th and 19th centuries. But they are not the main topic of discussions. I have mentioned them inasmuch as aspects of their work relates to their earlier counterparts. Ernst Mayr, Carl Sagan, Stephen Jay Gould and Simon Conway Morris were all born in the 20th century but I have briefly discussed their mainly scientific views in Part I which is on scientists.

This collection of essays is divided into three main parts. Part I is about scientists who flourished and did their scientific work from the 16th to 19th centuries namely and chronologically Nicholas Copernicus, Giordano Bruno, Johannes Kepler, Charles Darwin, Alfred Wegener and Ernst Mayr. There is a preponderance of articles/book reviews on Charles Darwin and the fact of evolution in this part: as befitting his great scientific contributions.

Glimpses of Modern Personages

time in the 16th century) 5600 years! Interestingly, contemporary scientists Issac Newton and Johannes Kepler also adhered to the view, like Bishop Ussher, that the Earth is about 6000 years old (counting from the early 21st century). Three centuries after the Bishop and the scientists postulated that the Earth's existence then was about 5600 years, in the mid-19th century Lord Kelvin (William Thomson) proposed that the age of the Earth was between 20 million to 400 million years. One notable fact is that except for Bishop Ussher Newton, Kepler and Lord Kelvin were scientists and this indicates that scientist can, at times, be wrong. Nevertheless, unlike most religious doctrines science is self-correcting. This is a lesson that can be taken from the guesses and stipulations of the age of the Earth in the 16th and 17th centuries by various personages.

Part II elaborates on the stipulation by Bishop Ussher on

the Age of the Earth in a 1564 publication to be around (at that

Part III contains glimpses of the philosophical doctrines and historical perspectives of two philosophers Baruch Spinoza and Bertrand Russell and a historian Arnold Toynbee. As reviews of Charles Darwin and his works constitute the plurality of articles in Part I, there are three articles about Spinoza (one juxtaposed with the views of Arnold Toynbee) and one article on Bertrand Russell.

I would like to thank the newspapers and magazines that published my articles and also to the staff of Kyipwayay Press in Mandalay for retyping some of my articles and to U Zu Zu Maw in facilitating the publication of this collection.

Mvint Zan Yangon September 2025