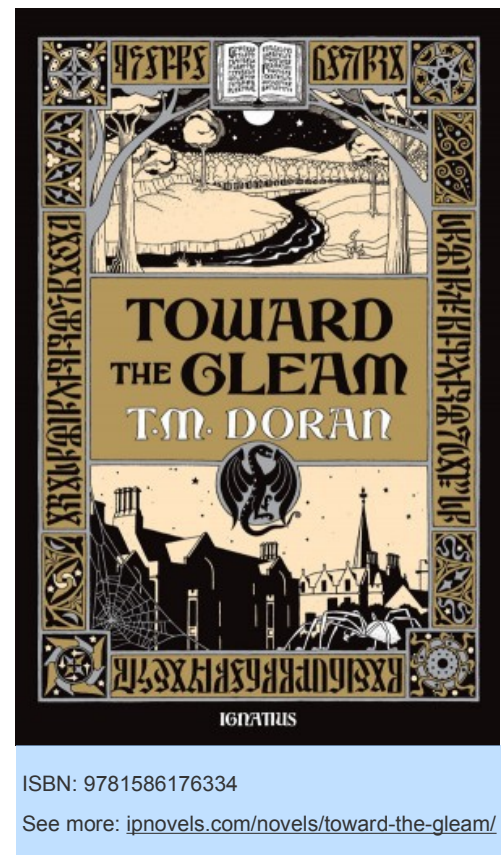


Discussion Questions for *Toward the Gleam*

1. Contrast the concept of human dignity expressed by John Hill and his allies with the materialistic philosophies in the book, especially utilitarianism, relativism, Epicureanism, and positivism.
2. How do the scenes with John and Jacob Basile, and with John Hill and Gosdier Jones advance the story? How are reason, science, and progress viewed by each of these characters?
3. What do the puzzle-plot mysteries—Sir Richard Hope and The Count's Gaming Table—reveal about characters in the story?
4. Identify thematic and dramatic parallels between *Toward the Gleam* and *The Lord of the Rings*.
5. In what sense is Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings* an heir to the ancient civilization described in *Toward the Gleam*?
6. What manner of beings are the characters referred to as the Necromancer and the Pilgrim? Are they *super-scientiae*, as Alembert asserts, or something else?
7. What does the encounter between Gilbert and Alembert reveal about both men?
8. How does E.M.'s art transform her and her relationship with John as the story progresses?
9. In what sense is John a co-creator of the manuscript along with its author(s)?
10. Of the veiled characters—John Hill, E.M., Gilbert, Jack, Owen, Edith, Agatha, and Drake—whose historical counterpart would you be interested in learning more about?
11. What is the significance of the names Hill, Adler (also, the variation produced by substituting for one letter in this name), Agnes CurLio, Drake, and Christopher?
12. The Kreiger character was an actual historical character in an early version of the story. Who might that historical character have been? Hint: a prominent, but not first-tier German National Socialist.
13. Who are the two men in the September 21, 1929 chapter, and what does this short chapter reveal?
14. How is the relationship between transformation and human freedom explored in the story, especially in relation to Agnes, Alembert, and Greta?
15. What is the significance of the last word in the story? How might this word be applied to events in the story?
16. Who is Edith's historical counterpart and how was that person connected to the philosophers Edmund Husserl and Max Scheler? Where did her quest for truth take her?
17. Who is the unmentioned later-20th century philosophical giant who is lurking behind the themes of human freedom, dignity, and responsibility, and how was this person formed by his confrontation with the "anthropological errors" (flaws in the understanding of the nature and dignity of the human person) that John Hill and his allies opposed?



18. How does E.M. influence John's response to Alembert, and how is E.M. affected by John's response to Alembert? What can be said about their relationship?
19. How (and where) is the tension between human freedom, responsibility, and temptation explored in the story?
20. According to John Hill and his allies, how are movements like Soviet Marxism and German Nazism, and the Jacobins before them, connected at the roots?
21. Identify mysteries, big and small, in the story. How many of these mysteries are resolved? Are there unsolved mysteries, and what are possible solutions?
22. There are few clues about the book that changes Agnes' life. Who are possible authors of this book?
23. What might be said about Alembert's and Christopher's relationship, and Alembert's and Agnes' relationship?
24. How are the malignant animals in the story connected to the book's primary themes and ideologies? What is the significance of Alembert's attraction to butterflies and stick insects?
25. How does Gregory Alembert influence the story and the main characters?
26. How do Hermann's, Edith's, and Kuiper's views speak to the zeitgeist of early 1930s Germany?
27. What are the parallels between Alembert and the powerful enemies of the ancient civilization in the book; that is, the Necromancer and the Traitor?
28. Explore the role that science occupies in the story: the climatology, geography, and biology of the ancient civilization; Einstein's and Godel's ideas, and how is science connected to the philosophies and ideologies in the book?
29. What is the explicit connection between Alembert and Conan Doyle's Moriarity?
30. How closely was the adventurous Drake aligned with his pre-WWII historical counterpart, and how closely was Drake's worldview aligned with John Hill's?
31. How does the dust jacket art complement the story?