INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

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WE DO NOT always stop to consider that the changes which man has wrought upon the earth in the short time of a few thousand years are little less than miraculous. Even less than a century ago, no railroads crossed the continents, no steamships the ocean. The streets of the city were not noisy with the honk-honk of the automobile and with the clang of the street-car bell. No telephone operator kept you waiting for your party, no elevator shot you up to the twentieth floor of a skyscraper. The glare of electric lights was absent, and moving pictures had still to be dreamed about. That was less than a hundred years ago! Now let us consider conditions of ten thousand years ago, ten thousand years that amount to less than a century in the history of the earth. There were no cities or roads, no castles or homes, no indications whatsoever of human civilization. Man lived in caves and in underground holes, and the world was as still as the jungle with its unseen inhabitants. A column of smoke, rising up through the soil apparently, was perhaps the only indication that intelligence dwelt upon the earth. A hundred or two hundred thousand years ago, insignificant periods of time in the hundred million year existence of this planet, even the smoke that must reveal intelligence was absent, and the cave was inhabited by wild beasts. That which was to be man, swung itself from tree to tree. Nevertheless, the earth looked earthly, with the wild beasts roaming the forests, the mountains looming high, and the streams pouring themselves into the lakes. Even this more or less familiar scene was gradually created in the course of several millions of years. Time was when the earth was a desert of granite and water, with the beginnings of life concealed in the depths of its seas.

Marvelous changes, these! But still more marvelous is the force, or are the forces, that brought about these changes. Modern thought has, with a few exceptions, dropped the notion of an extraterrestrial force that spontaneously created man and beast, and then launched them on their respective journeys of life. Scientific researches point at the fact that the forces which aimed at the development of the individual were present on this earth from the beginning. This does not imply, as some people who are prejudiced against science and its discoveries are overanxious to assert, that the scientist altogether rejects the notion of a supreme Author. Only an utterly brainless person will do that. What science does is dispense with the necessity of deity suddenly becoming active with the occurrence of an event, important or insignificant as it may be. In other words, it pushes mystery farther and farther into the background, fully realizing, however, that it is mystery which it is pushing back. Where the ancients, for example, heard the angry voice of deity in the rumble of thunder, and saw the flash of his eye in the bolt of lightning, science explains such phenomena without requiring the intervention of supernatural agencies. But it stops short at mystery, and it faces a more or less ultimate, when it asks the question: What is electricity which causes the flash of lightning, which in turn causes the sound of thunder? In considering the process of individual development, therefore, it accepts given conditions on this earth at a given time, realizing that the conditions emerged from an infinity of existence, and time from the bosom of eternity. It cuts the changing film of terrestrial life from the endless film of eternity, and attempts to make clear what occurred between the two lines that separate it, at one end, from an unknown origin and, at the other end, from an unknown destiny.

The theory of evolution considers, or should consider, rather, two factors in the process of individual development. The first is the nature of the individual, the second, the nature of its surroundings. Especially when applied to the case of man, the modern age is inclined to dispense with either the one or the other. The part which the individual plays in the process is often ignored by the theory-of-circumstance advocates. Several modern thought movements, on the other hand, would eliminate the influence which surroundings exert upon the individual. But, the lines, "I am captain of my soul, and master of my fate," though inspiring, do not altogether express the truth. They

exclude the presence of an external world and, consequently, ignore its reaction upon the soul. Nor do Khayyam's lines, "Ah, love, could only you and I with Him conspire, etc.," suggest the complete truth. The role which the individual plays in this "sorry scheme of things" is not even hinted at. A homely illustration will perhaps make clear how surroundings react upon the individual. When fire is held against a piece of paper, the paper will be consumed. When we let the paper represent the individual, and the fire the external world, then the external world destroys the individual. Now, there are two things that make the destruction of the piece of paper possible. The first is the flame, and the second is the nature of the object that is being consumed. If the flame which is capable of consuming the paper is held against a steel bar, destruction does not result. It is undoubtedly true that the nature of man's surroundings changes his being. But the nature of his being determines to what extent and in what manner his being shall be changed. Similar external conditions affect different human beings in a different manner. All of which makes human evolution a highly intricate problem, especially when considering that, today at least, no two individuals are alike.

It may, on first consideration, appear to be a more or less startling fact that the external world assumes the attitude of the consuming fire towards the individual. The creature and the universe are fundamentally antagonistic. Yet should we not conceive life to be a battle consciously waged between two enemies. The struggle is a natural, and therefore a necessary one, and neither of the combatants is aware of the identity of its opponent, or conscious of the nature of the struggle. The simple truth is, that wherever life is present there is also activity. And activity in the universe involves friction, opposition, antagonism. That is to say, individual activity in a universe consisting of billions of creatures that possess different constitutions and widely divergent aims, necessarily results in friction. The direction in which a particular member of the universe travels is determined by the nature of its being. Its progress, however, is constantly interfered with by members of a different nature whose aims oppose its own. The result is that the individual is compelled, every now and then, to deviate from its original course. That compulsion constitutes a source of experience for the individual, and

results in physical or intellectual change, in accordance with the circumstances.

Both physical and intellectual development may thus be conceived to have resulted from interference on the part of the external world with the progress of the individual. The first living things that inhabited the primordial seas were eventually opposed by changing external conditions. They were threatened with harm and with destruction, even. Their individual constitution determined whether they were doomed to perish or whether they were to adapt themselves to the conditions of a new external world. The process of adaptation consisted of a slow and gradual reconstruction of the organism, of the acquisition of new organs, and the final result was a new creature which was better able to face conditions and circumstances. Stating the matter in the foregoing manner, however, is merely touching its surface. At the bottom of he whole question of individual development lies a very interesting fact. It is this: the developing individual comes in touch with a constantly-growing external world. In a previous chapter we observed that the beginnings of individual existence are marked by an intense degree of self-centeredness, and by an almost total absence of awareness of not-self, or the external world. The universe of things and creatures, we stated, was wrapped in sleep, a sleep which is the more profound in the lower degrees of development. The being's degree of awakeness is determined by the nature and the variety of the impressions which it is capable of receiving from its surroundings. The more simply constructed the creature is the fewer are the impressions that reach it. Now, the friction resulting from contact with an antagonistic world arouses the individual from its state of lethargy. The phenomena, conditions and living beings that are capable of threatening its existence, constitute its source of experience. They compose its particular universe, of which it is ever so dimly aware. They arouse the cells of the body to creative activity, and cause a physical reconstruction to answer the urgent call of necessity. The reconstruction of the body generally implies a greater freedom of movement, so that the individual henceforth must come in touch with a larger and a more intricate external world. The number and the variety of impressions will increase in proportion, as a result of which the creature's world of experience will widen considerably. The new

experiences, in turn, will again arouse the creature, to a small extent, from its profound natural sleep.

In the very beginnings of physical evolution, therefore, we may discover an unconscious search on the part of the individual for the universe. The search in question is aided by the creature's natural surroundings whose antagonistic features eventually prove to be an urge to create. The light of the world penetrates into the self little by little as the individual is urged, coaxed, or threatened to become to a less extent aware of self, and to a larger extent aware of the external world. In this connection, evolution's immediate object is a greater ability on the part of the individual to move about. Her ultimate aim is the perfection of a body that enjoys as large a freedom of movement as possible. Thus we see primordial sea-life cast upon a hostile shore where, in due time, it develops into a creature that is able to live both in the water and on shore. This greater freedom of movement develops into a still greater one when the amphibious creature becomes a land animal as a result of wandering into the interior. And, finally, evolution accomplishes her million year old task of fashioning a body which, in co-operation with an instrument yet to be created and developed, will enable the individual to be in touch with the universe in all its infinite entirety.

Physical development has, roughly speaking, ceased. Nature, at a certain moment in the history of this planet, seemed satisfied that her attempts at body-fashioning were triumphantly successful when she produced the human body. She proceeded to devote her ability to the problem of creating and developing an instrument which would allow the individual to discover a universe still larger than the one with which his body could acquaint him. That instrument was the human mind. The various steps taken by nature in her million year task of moulding the human body are still traceable in our present vegetable and animal kingdom. The noblest result of her efforts was placed by her among her lesser creations, after which he proceeded to fight his way to glory.

Intelligence introduced itself when the external world caused the individual to become aware of its presence. In earlier stages of development, the creature responded to the impressions which it was capable of receiving from its surroundings in much the same manner that a photographic plate responds to the stimulus of light. There was hardly question of awareness. It did not

know that an external world existed, nor that it impressed its being. It merely automatically responded to its touch. The intelligent individual, on the contrary, not merely received impressions, but knew that it received them, and in the course of further development began to reflect upon the nature of the world of which it was aware. Natural surroundings failed to act as a stimulus for physical creation upon a body which an age-long process of improvement had rendered incapable of further modification. A threatening external world, in the particular case of the individual who was ripening into an intelligent creature, meant destruction for the latter unless he met the emergency with a flash of reason instead of with physical adaptation. The employment of reason marks a departure from the old way of reshaping the body to comply with the tyrannical demands of nature. With the appearance of intelligence, the absolute rule of nature came to an end, and the rule of man was being established.

That the wholesale destruction of the brute man who in inconceivably far-off days stood on the threshold of intelligence did not take place, is due to the fact that every individual possesses an unconscious desire to continue to exist. That desire, in the earlier stages of development, resulted in physical adaptation, and in maturer stages, in the ability to reason. The nature of the brute man's surroundings harmonized with the coarse nature of his groping soul. Immense and dangerous forests, ferocious beasts of monstrous size, thunder and lightning, torrents and floods, constituted the surroundings into which he fitted. Nature in her wildest aspect, nature with her ominous frown and her roaring displeasure, was the original blunt instrument that began to mould intelligence. The deep-hidden desire to exist, rising to the surface in the face of threats of destruction, struck the first spark of intelligence in the hitherto dormant brain of our hair-covered ancestor. When the stone for the first time assumed the shape of a weapon that would protect him from the attacks of possible enemies, intelligence henceforth was to accompany him on his terrestrial journeys. The bitter cold drove him into the caves which the wild beasts showed him afforded shelter and warmth. The fur of the animal averted the danger of freezing to death. Indeed, the very threats of nature resulted in his gradual conquest of her.

The method employed by evolution in her scheme of developing intelligence was similar to the one used in the process of physical development. Again we observe that an antagonistic external world constituted a stimulus for creation. But, in this instance the creation was not of a physical but of an intellectual nature. And, again, we remark that surroundings rudely awoke the individual from his intense sleep of self-centeredness, and drew his attention partly from self to a world of not-self. The unconscious search for a world beyond self met with considerable success when the first human beings became aware of their surroundings. That awareness meant infinitely more than the mere response to external stimuli on the part of the purely physical creature. It meant, figuratively speaking, the opening of the individual's eyes, resulting in a condition of half-awakeness. For the first time in the history of this planet, a creature was in a position to remark that it existed, and that something else beyond its self existed. Before that glorious moment, the universe had been a dream, a sleep, an utter darkness.

But, this ability to be aware of an external world represented merely the first step in the direction of true intelligence. At a later date, the individual, besides receiving impressions, and besides being aware of the thing that impressed his soul, acquired the abilty to reflect upon the nature of the external world of which he was aware. Before the acquisition of the latter power, man lived, in a physical sense, only, in the universe which he particularly noticed. Those things and phenomena drew his attention which stood in immediate relationship to his physical well being. In other words, the world of immediate contact, the world that furnished his experiences, was the universe in which he dwelt. It is hardly necessary to observe that the universe in question was of an extremely limited nature, and that it contained but comparatively few objects and phenomena. The actual universe of infinite intricacy and size was looked at but not seen by him.

The world in which ancient man lived, however, grew and became more intricate as he, himself, experienced and developed. And the moment arrived when it not only represented the physical world of immediate contact, but also the world upon which he reflected. The moment arrived when he lived in a world of his own both in a physical and in an intellectual sense. At first, the experience furnishing world was also the one thought about.

Gradually, however, imagination took wing, and wove its fancies about a universe that exceeded in size the world of immediate contact. We may formulate the general rule, however, that the world in which man thought that he lived was limited, and its nature was ill-conceived, in proportion to the smallness of the world of experience. Primitive man probably thought about ten objects that constituted, chiefly, his immediate surroundings. The Sumerians pondered over the mystery of the sun's presence and its nightly disappearance, over the phenomenon of the moon's phases, and over the brilliancy of Venus. Their thoughts traveled beyond their world of experience into the vastness of the deep. Today, we sit in our office reading the latest news from Siberia and the South Sea Islands, and reports about the birth of a new star in the unfathomable depths of space.

The farther back we penetrate into the past, the smaller becomes man's universe, and the more absurd are his interpretations of its phenomena. Being, at first, an almost purely physical creature, only those objects and phenomena that, directly or indirectly, concerned his physical self drew his attention and eventually stimulated his thought. The plain fact is, that man's belly first discovered the universe. Prehistoric man, for instance, was deeply interested in the phenomena of wind and rain, of sunshine and clouds, of heat and cold. Such phenomena had a decisive voice in the matter of reaping a harvest or of facing a crop failure. His universe of objects was as limited as his world of phenomena. He was aware of the prominent and of the to him important features of his immediate surroundings. The soil that lifted the green blade above the surface, the bulky mountain that rose in the vicinity, the tree under whose spreading foliage he found protection from the scorching sun, the spring that generously bubbled up its cool treasure, such things naturally interested him.

There is something wonderful, we think, about the method employed by the secret Author of man in the process of developing his intelligence. Ancient man was a human brute whose senses and whose brain were almost completely cut off from the presence of a scintillating universe of law, order and divinity. He was deeply absorbed in self, and his sole concern in life was his belly. And, yet, it was this vulgar life's concern of his that compelled him to pay attention to the existence of an outside world, and that subsequently induced him to reason about it. His

explanations of phenomena observed, and his conceptions of the nature of objects perceived, were ridiculously false. Prehistoric man discovered a magical, divine power in the raindrops that vivified his perishing crop, in the earth that pushed the green blade through the surface, in the remains of his fellow man that fertilized the soil. In time, he transferred the seat of this magic power to one of his brothers, whom he carefully guarded as the "divine man" with a view to sacrificing him at the appointed time to the corn-producing soil. Absurd notions and customs, these, of course! However, existence in those days had its narrow limits, and comparatively few things occurred therein. The mind of the infant man was like that of the child which is chiefly absorbed in self and, as a consequence, incapable of being aware of the innumerable and beautiful things that constitute its surroundings. The truth of the universe is never approached by limiting thought to an infinitely small section of it. Although the ancient man's interpretation of the external world, however, was highly absurd, let us reflect that it represented the first speech uttered in a hitherto silent universe. What becomes of the ugliness of man's yesterdays when we consider his baby talk concerning his wind-swept and sun-lit home in that light? It was speech, we say, no matter how inarticulate! It marked the first awakening after an eternity of sleep, and it introduced the first conscious life in an infinite universe of unknowing life!

We remarked that developing man became to a greater extent aware of the existence of a universe as his self-centeredness decreased. His growing ability to become universe-conscious constituted his real and inner development. Poetically visioned, his original being was like the soul of a flower dwelling within the darkness of its closed petals. Seen in the light of cold facts, it was the soul of a more or less intelligent animal whose interest was chiefly centered in its physical comfort. We roughly outlined the method by which evolution caused the petals to open, as a result of which the dawning light of a universe penetrated into the human soul. We observed that the growth of the soul was accompanied by a greater freedom of movement, both as regards the body and as regards the mind. The physical world with which man was directly in touch, or was capable of being in touch, expanded in the course of time, and the world in which he thought that he lived became larger and more intricate. For

the present let us consider the growing world of immediate contact.

Nature, we observed, was man's first teacher. Her methods of instruction were more or less crude and barbaric. But it should not be forgotten that her task consisted in chipping away the coarser features of an unripe soul. Even at present, we find that life teaches the soul according to methods that fit a particular case. One man suffers physically, another financially, another spirtually. As ancient man possessed neither finance nor a spiritual nature, but a strong, hair-covered body, chiefly, nature made her appeal via his body and his stomach. We saw that her threats urged him to reason, that reason subsequently adopted the cave as a home, invented stone weapons and primitive clothes. Man became a tool-using animal. His use of tools more than anything else, eventually became instrumental in bringing about his greater freedom of movement upon this earth. At first, it was nature's threats that drove him from his cave, and made him wander over the face of the earth. Migrations of tribes and races were started by the severe cold of glacial periods, by floods, droughts, and topographical changes of the country. Travel and new surroundings involved new experiences and eventually resulted in new thoughts, new tools, new arts, new civilizations. Today, nature still remembers her ancient method of broadening the minds of men, when dissatisfied citizens emigrate to foreign lands in the expectation of "doing better."

On the whole, however, nature is no longer the cruel but kind teacher of former times. When man began to answer her with his intelligence and with his tools, her voice began to sound considerably less harsh, and man snapped his fingers at her threats. The tools slowly and gradually built a bulwark of protection against which nature vainly spent her wrath. After protection of the physical body had become an established fact, she almost completely ceased to be the chief instructor of mankind. Instead, she became slave to human intelligence. A new influence, a more or less unnatural one, began to further stimulate intelligence. That influence emanated from the particular sort of life, inaugurated by man, himself community life. But, this new teacher of mankind we shall discuss in a later chapter.

The tools that man invented, and the objects that he created, were, as stated before, at first intended to protect the physical man from the angry moods of nature and from the dangers that

lurked in his surroundings. Eventually, however, they became instrumental in facilitating his movements upon the earth. The unconscious desire to discover the universe, in the past urged him on to explore his terrestrial home, and tempts him today to travel to the moon and to the planet Mars. Transportation facilities were first discovered in nature, in the horse, the camel, the elephant, and the ass. Then followed combinations of natural products of intelligence, such as a horse tied to a cart. And, finally, as in our present age, the horse is eliminated, and intelligence causes the cart to move itself. The less man's inventions savor of nature, the more efficient are his tools, and the more sublime are the objects that they fashion. That sounds startling to many who instinctively dislike the artificial world of man, and vainly long for the beauties of a nature undefiled by human ingenuity. The natural, however, is the original, an original which is also unintelligent. Man, the brute, nursed at nature's breast. Man, the thinker, is a member of civilized society. Man, the brute, found his tools among the rocks of the wild. Man, the scientist, fashions them from keenest imagination. The nature man tread where his physical strength permitted him to proceed. Modern man considers, to a certain extent, at least, the rights and the aims of his fellow man. We see the human being, with his tools and with his created objects, rise from the rocks and the wilds of nature, and establish himself on a higher level in a world whose foundation is becoming more and more intellectual and less and less physical. His early inventions, therefore, suggest the physical, the self. Necessity, as the proverbial saying has it, is the mother of invention. No thing was invented for the mere sake of inventing, or in behalf of suffering humanity. The self and its needs, its desires, its cravings, was the great inventor and manufacturer. The evolution of the tool, however, kept pace with that of the inner man. So did that of the objects which the tools fashioned. As man lost some of his self-centeredness, his tools became more intricate and efficient, and his creations more wonderful. It is a fact, no sufficiently realized, that the ability to be aware of not-self enables the inventor to concentrate on his subject, to thoroughly study all its details, aspects and possibilities, and to achieve success in spite of obstacles and hardships. The great inventors of the human race had little concern for self, and sacrificed its wants and desires for the sake of reaching their object.

Man's conception of what is necessary and desirable changes as he changes, and as the conditions of which he is the immediate author alter. The cave of Neolithic days became the reed and the mud hut of early Sumerian times, the tent of ancient Nomadic tribes, the villa of Pompei, the romantic castle of mediaeval times, the modern sanitary and efficient bungalow. The original animal skin evolved into a more and more intricate system of covering the body, until it finally culminated in the modern stiff collar and the evening dress. The roughly chipped tool of flint which primitive man wielded in glacier covered Europe was the foundation of our modern skyscraper. propels our palatial steamer, and gives speed and wing to our flying machine. Nor can it be denied that man's material paraphernalia, at any time, are vaguely indicative of a certain existing degree of intelligence. We do not think, however, that their improvement, or their possible perfection, are the chief aims of human evolution. Particular living conditions belong to a particular degree of human development as a nice cover belongs to a good book, or as a cheap one fits a trashy novel. Clothes do not make the inner man, nor does a palatial home tell us anything definite about the quality of gray matter within the owner's skull. The truth is, that tools and created objects, although indispensable, play subordinate parts in the scheme of human progress. They are, as we have stated, to a large extent instrumental in assisting man to discover the universe. They enable him to travel about, as a result of which new experiences add to his soul. History, from 5000 B. C. to the present, furnishes a clear example of the steady growth of man's world of experience. At first, there merely was intercourse with wandering tribes. At a later period, the human world of experience was concentrated on the shores of the Mediterranean. Then it included Europe, North Africa, Minor Asia, and a part of India. The day came when imagination spurred courageous men on to discover new worlds across the oceans. World empires were founded by the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Spaniards, and the British. Necessity clamored for new tools to adequately meet these new conditions. The railroad, the steamship, telegraph, telephone, wireless, and, last, but not least, the flying machine, responded to the call. Man's present world of experience or, rather, the world in which he is capable of experiencing, constitutes the entire earth. Quite a different world from the one of two or three thousand years ago!

And, yet, the desire in man to discover the universe is still present, more so than ever, perhaps. Being able to travel around the world in comparatively few days, to read at a glance what happened some hours ago in Moscow, London, and Sydney, does not satisfy him. He is actually considering the problem of traveling to the moon, and the one of communicating with Mars. It is difficult, at this time, to venture an opinion concerning the possibility of human extraterrestrial journeys. Considering, however, man's ultimate origin in the depths of the sea, his extremely narrow world of experience in the beginning, the subsequent life on land, the successful explorations over the entire face of the earth, the establishment of railroads and steamship lines that encircle the globe, recent journeys through the air, who can tell but the moon and Mars are waiting to be explored by a universally-minded human being of the future? The earth is indeed but a pinpoint in the immensity of existence.

The changes which man has wrought upon the earth, as we observed at the beginning of this chapter, are miraculous. He has dotted its face with cities, he has spun an intricate web of roads and railroads across its surface, he has lit its countenance with a billion electric lights, he has harnessed the power of waterfalls, diverted rivers from their natural courses, bridged abysses that separated continents, sunk shafts into the bowels of his planet, and viewed his earthly home from the dizzy heights of the sky. These feats were performed within the boundaries of the world with which he was in immediate, physical contact. But he performed other miracles, miracles that are not physical and concrete. They were performed in a world imagined, a world which in magnitude far surpassed the limited world in which his body was capable of moving. Every now and then, further exploration of the external world appeared to be a physical impossibility. His mind then proceeded to do what his body was incapable of doing. His imagination, a product of his increased ability to be aware of not-self, broke through the barriers of physical limitation, and made trips into immensity. What it saw on those trips was added to the Thoughts of Man, thoughts that were constantly revised as the trips became more extensive, and as the mind's powers of observation and reasoning became more accurate. Of course, the first human imaginings were almost identical with fancies. A conception of the true nature of immensity, if it be at all possible to acquire it, must be founded on a mental bird's

eye view of the whole. One cannot know a skyscraper by its basement, only, nor the universe by a little patch of earth. That is one important fact we modern enthusiasts are pleased to overlook.

These intellectual journeys into the universe resulted in thoughts which may be classified, in accordance with their nature, as follows: Mythology, Religion, Science, Philosophy. Of these, we hold mythology to be close akin to fancy, and philosophy to approach a fact-supported imagination. Religion, in our opinion, represents the transition between mythology and philosophy, whereas science links man's growing world of experience and the universe in which he thinks that he lives. It is in science that man's thought of self is hardly distinguishable from his thought of not-self. True, many inventions were made for the purpose of protecting, pleasing, or coddling self. But an equal number, the majority of which belong to recent history, are the result of personal sacrifice, the impersonal desire to know, and the unselfish purpose of ameliorating the struggle of human life. It is indeed difficult to draw a dividing line between the material and the intellectual paraphernalia that at present accompany man through eternity. As stated before, the origin of man lies in nature, in the physical, and his immediate destiny is an intellectual life, so that the physical and the intellectual blend in many of his expressions.

Besides material and intellectual accomplishments, man must be credited with accomplishments in the way of morals and ethics. The latter are dependent upon, and result from, his intellectual conquests. What he saw on his journeys through immensity, for one thing, was reflected in his behavior towards his fellow man, and in his activities in general.