

## THE GREAT TEACHER

BY HENRI VANDERBYLL

CONTACT with nature originally developed man. Association with his fellow being teaches and develops him at present. The great teacher of the human mind and soul appeared when the first ancient family was established. Man's lessons became increasingly difficult as the family grew into the tribe, the nation, the empire and, finally, into the human race. It is often imagined that books, Bibles, and universities add to intelligence and to the soul. The human being, however, develops through contact with his surroundings, only. Life, the life which we at present know as the community life, eclipses the modern professor and preacher in this respect: it is able to make an individual realize a truth, whereas a fellow being is merely capable of acquainting him with a truth. There is a difference between realization and knowledge. The mind possesses a certain capacity for storing knowledge of facts—facts of nature, moral facts, ethical facts. But that knowledge is often like so much wind when experience pierces its tightly stretched rubberlike surface, and causes it to crumble into a hopeless heap of not-understanding. What mind, for example, does not know that "Thou shalt not kill"? What human being, on the other hand, fully realizes the truth on which the commandment is founded? Who, indeed, does not know that God is infinite, eternal and omnipresent? Who, on the other hand, realizes the much uttered fact?

Realization results from individual experience, only. Knowledge is merely capable of clothing in words and sentences that which the innermost being feels to be true as a result of experience. One reads the thoughts of a great thinker, and instantly knows them to be true. The thoughts cause certain chords in our soul to vibrate sympathetically, stir memories of facts experienced within one's own lifetime or experienced by one's ancestors, some ten thousand years ago. When mere experience becomes intelligent experience, when the inner being speaks through its interpreter, the mind, the

individual possesses a knowledge of fact and truth which is as unshakeable as is the foundation of the world. This does not mean, as some modern philosophers would have us believe, that *all* knowledge can be extracted from the inner being at will provided certain requirements in the natural of physical or psychic conditions are fulfilled. Man's inner being is the sum total of his individual experience, inherited and otherwise. And that total is inconsiderable as yet. What, if his soul has not vibrated harmoniously with an infinite immensity of universe? Shall he know the mysteries of the ultimate? Shall he rend the veil of matter, and face the body-consuming fire of the spirit? At the most, he can array in thoughts and garb in words that which he is as sum total of experience. He will grope for expression, and crave it, perhaps. And he will, undoubtedly, hear from the lips of some fellowman the music that stirs his soul into shouting: I know!

As to individual experience, it is furnished by the individual's immediate surroundings—surroundings that originally were natural, but that very gradually, at the hand of man, became not-natural, artificial. Once man had achieved his conquest of nature, he utilized her forces to his own advantage, but practically shut her out from his world of inner experience. She was no longer capable of further destroying his self-centeredness, of threatening him into intelligent activity, or of making him hear gods travel thunderingly across heavenly bridges. Man built himself a new world of experience, in which eventually human opponents and enemies supplanted the dangers of the primeval forest, and in which the hardships of the social life succeeded those of the life of nature. Nature's antagonism changed into the opposition of the social life.

In considering association with fellow beings the great teacher of man, we should distinguish between the latter's experience gathered within the society and that gained as a result of community having intercourse with community. Progressing mankind develops into organization within organization, and the more nearly mature it becomes the more numerous are its concentric organizations. Where, originally, the family led its solitary existence, and was instrumental in furnishing experience for its members, only, the nation furnished a certain amount of experience for all its members, the city a larger for a smaller number, and the family within the city the bulk for a few individuals. The less self-centered man became, the larger became his experience furnishing world, spreading from the family to the city, from the city to the nation and,

finally, from the nation to the community of nations. Organizations, like the family or the nation, are like individuals. They suffer, experience and learn as the individual does. But their experiences and lessons are distributed among their members in accordance with the latter's capacity for accepting them.

A study of the manner in which community associated with community in the past, and a study of the result of such association, will assist us in gaining a clear conception of the relationship between the individual and society. The first fact that strikes us in our study is that the opposition which man first encountered in nature is very much in evidence, though in a different form. On the surface of things that may seem to be an unfortunate fact. It should be considered, however, that the antagonistic spirit of the individual's external world is not produced by deliberate and evil intent, but owes its presence to "the nature of things." True, it is that, to all appearances at least, fellow beings whose paths of life cross ours within the community, deliberately and maliciously obstruct our progress, or destroy our hopes. And if we hold them absolutely responsible for their activities in the universe, there is no gainsaying the fact that organized human life shows signs of being a disheartening proposition. But our ideas about ultimate responsibility in the universe become extremely prejudiced when we consider the activities of our fellow men. It so happens that our brother rarely acts as we do, for which reason we are immediately prepared to criticize and to condemn utterly. Of course, there cannot be question of criticism and utter condemnation in the case of an ultimate responsibility which is also divine. The natural course, therefore, is to hold man absolutely responsible for his activities in immensity, a proceeding which is, invariably, disastrous to the progress of moral and ethic. We make a mistake, however, when we stop at the surface of life. We should penetrate further into its depths. Surfaces of life and parts of the universe, when considered by themselves, present in the majority of cases an evil aspect. The most provincially minded person discovers the largest amount of evil in the world. He fails to see the marvelous inter-relationship of the things that are and of the events that take place. He can only see the ugliness of an object or of a creature because his narrow mind is incapable of linking their presence with that of an infinite immensity of things and creatures.

Should we merely cut a single scene from the film of history, that of nature threatening and bullying infant man, for instance, the

impression that ugliness marked the beginnings of human development will take hold of us. But when we view the scene in connection with others that follow, when we see man, as a result, transmuted from brute into intelligent being, the ugliness referred to completely vanishes. And the business of man associating with man, of nation having intercourse with nation, loses its sordid nature when we penetrate beyond human activity into its deeper meaning. We should, first of all, realize that strife and struggle in the universe result from differences among its members. It is these differences which make antagonism between individuals a necessary evil. There is question of one self traveling in this direction, of another self in an opposite one. When their paths cross, as will happen in the social life, interest opposes interest, and a clash is inevitable. As the result of the two forces that propel the individual, the first his individual momentum, and the second the external world that compels him, the direction which he eventually follows lies somewhere between the individually desired one and the direction of the external force. The compulsion emanating from the external world invariably results in suffering of some sort. The suffering constitutes experience, and is caused not only by external conditions and circumstances, but also by the individual's reluctance to ignore the voice of his self. Community life is instrumental in arousing self-centered man into a greater degree of universe-consciousness. We should be careful, therefore, lest we consider ourselves, the individual, to be much pitied, and the external world of humans that oppose our aims to be much condemned. Neither pity nor condemnation are in order. The fact of the matter is that our more or less immature condition invites certain opposition, allows our soul to be wounded, as a result of which we experience and mature. There is no difference, so far as method is concerned, between a natural external world developing man into a thinker. The only difference must be found in the means employed, which in the first instance is nature and in the latter, man.

It should be realized, in the second place, that differences among its members are absolutely essential to the existence and the progress of a universe. We cannot conceive of a homogeneous existence, of a whole consisting of parts that are absolutely alike. Nor can we imagine a humanity whose individuals are alike in every respect. It is because A differs from B that both are enabled to experience and develop. We learn our life's lessons chiefly from our enemies and adversaries, and seldom from our best friends—from those that

understand us because they are very much like we are. The bitter experiences of nations, too, experiences which they gathered through the instrumentality of sister nations, were forces that progressively propelled their citizens or their descendants. The intercourse of nations, as history well shows, has seldom been of an amiable nature. The bulk of historical data refer to battles, conquests, and destruction. History is a series of clashes between Me and not-Me, of triumphant victories and crushing defeats, of new national glories blazing over the sepulchres of departed ones. But a system underlies these apparently senseless attempts at human destruction. The system is evolution's own, and bears a remarkable resemblance to the one employed by her in the depths of space for the purpose of building solar systems. The history of the stellar universe, too, is a series of destructive clashes followed by blazes of new-found glory. Cataclysm and birth are inseparably associated in the starry depths of space. Throughout nature we find life rear itself upon the throne of death, today emerge from yesterday's shriveling womb. The thing born contains within itself the thing that died, in a higher form, perhaps. In the crashing sound of doom the joyful shout of a new and bigger life is heard.

The melancholy, age-long funeral procession of leading civilizations marches to the music of life. The march is a progressive one. Prominent among the millions of trails made by human beings on the sands of the past, trails that lead hither and thither and nowhere, is a shining highway that directly links an obscure yesterday with the present. It is the highway of civilization, built by the leaders among nations. Whenever national catastrophe cried unto high heaven, and glory spent its last flicker of light, a successor appeared to build the next section of the highway. Human evolution trod alternately on the roseate glory of nations and on the clouds of their darkest despair. The leading civilizations of the past came and went, they rose and fell, they boasted of their strength and they were silent in death.

One fact concerning the leading nations of yesterday immediately strikes us: they were materially powerful. Vastness of territory, wealth, and efficient instruments of attack and defense, were prerequisite to leadership. They enabled the nation in question to make its voice heard in all corners of the world. For, at bottom, there was no question of accumulation of wealth, of acquisition of formidable armies and navies, but rather of the distribution of thought and intelligence. From the powerful nation, superior intel-

ligence, if only a one-sided superior intelligence, radiated and was assimilated by sister nations to the extent that the latter were capable of assimilating it. Thus we find many a scar of civilization to represent a wound inflicted by powerful brutality, a wound which was healed by the balsam of newly-acquired intelligence. Like new stars in the more or less dark firmament of humanity, Sumeria and Akkadia, China and India, Babylonia and Assyria, Egypt and Palestine, Greece and Rome, one by one flickered up, and one by one were extinguished. Their respective existences were enveloped in the smoke of war, and stained by the blood of conquest. Yet was the gift which thy tendered human progress sufficiently valuable to prevent their death from being absolute. Their physical strength, their material glory and power, met with complete annihilation. But something that was the nation, in an intellectual sense, continued to exist. That something was the best which evolution was capable of arousing in the brain of man at that particular time.

The truest artist in creation is the great Potter who fashions men from human clay. Achievements in the way of man-fashioning are the best but for a little while. New ideals must be realized, and new races spring up, as if by magic, from nowhere. They become materially powerful, take their place in the front ranks of the marching columns of humanity, while their predecessors fall back to the rear, and sometimes perish by the wayside. But the latter's noblest qualities and their highest intelligence are inherited by their successors. As far as their leadership, their thoughts and morals in general, are concerned, they have become antiquated, and are no longer responding to the highest demands of a progressing human race.

Although the history of nations is a melancholy story in one way, it is a sublime one in another. All death is melancholy when considered a mere cessation of existence. The realization, however, that only the hollow shell which contained the principle of life is the rightful share of the grave, causes us to view death in the light of a sublime necessity. Life's principle, indeed, does not become oblivion's prey, but continues in the keeping of universal life, which utilizes for higher and higher purposes. We, individuals, may dispel the gloomy doubts concerning the inevitable tomorrow with the holy conviction that we have given our children that which we are. We may, furthermore, rest assured that our children shall be more than we are at present. They are climbing the heights of human progress, starting where we are ready to leave off, being equipped

with an inherited experience and knowledge which we and our ancestors had to acquire. They develop in a world of thoughts and objects that are new for us, but that soon will be old and commonplace for them. In our children, and in our children's children, we, the individual, shall continue to exist—not in a physical but in a soul-sense.

These conceptions of death and continuity fit into the seemingly melancholy scheme of rising and falling civilizations. As far as intelligence and moral quality are concerned, individuals and nations are immortalized in their descendants and their successors in this manner: succeeding generations contain preceding ones. The highest present intelligence contains that of Lao-Tze, that of Hammurabi, that of Moses, that of Socrates. But it surpasses any individual intelligence of the past. Only a twentieth-century soul may possess the new understanding, experiencing things that never before were experienced, living in surroundings that exist for the first time in the history of man. Immortality itself, therefore, leads the funeral procession of perishing civilizations. But it is the immortality of thought and soul, both of which continue to exist within a larger existence. Men never thought in vain, nor acted without purpose, as their lives constituted stepping stones that led their descendants to higher realms of human development. It is therefore that we are sometimes struck by the fact that "there is nothing new under the sun." The fact is only an apparent one, however. Inventions made thousands of years ago that are still useful to humanity, have been improved upon by an intelligence higher than that of the original inventors. Many true thoughts that were uttered centuries ago have developed into new thoughts for the reason that the truth which they expressed has become a part of a larger and more universal truth. Six hundred years before the birth of Christ, a Chinese sage observed: "The good I meet with goodness; the bad I also meet with goodness: that is virtue's goodness." Several centuries later, a higher intelligence taught: "Ye have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil." Today, a still broader intelligence explains, with the aid of a more thorough knowledge of the nature of the universe, why it is not man's place to condemn his brother's soul, or to punish him for possessing the nature which is his.

We have endeavored to furnish the reader with a mere glimpse of what lies beneath the aggressive and selfish spirit of nations that share the shelter of the globe. Their aggressive and selfish spirit is

all that we can perceive when we stop at appearances, and when we think of man as actor, creator and destroyer. But the Me of man is not a detached entity in this universe, nor does it act independently on the stage of life. Unbreakable bonds link it with the past, the present and the future. "Yesterday this day's madness did prepare." The past propels the human soul, the present moulds it, and the future calls it. The thoughts that we think today owe their existence to a chain of thoughts that directly links our mind with the beginnings of intelligence. The nature of our present activities is founded, ultimately, on that of the activities of the first man. Our soul is an age-long history of experiences, our mind a record of the things a million men have thought.

The purpose, if there be any, of strife among nations is human development. And if we cannot see purpose behind the fussy and mad behavior of mankind, we must at least observe that its ultimate result is not destruction but creation. Were it possible for us to realize that nations and individuals are not themselves actors, but instruments of action, we should be able to witness creation arise from the ashes of destruction. The creation in question does not, as already observed, refer to things material, but most emphatically to the mind and the soul of man. It is a bloody French revolution, horrible when contemplated by itself, that not only destroyed the corrupted soul of France, but also gave birth to a new and bigger France. The apparent contradiction of life and death in the words, "Le roi est mort, vive le roi!" with which the French people greeted the successor to the throne, is encountered throughout the universe. Death means life, destruction implies creation, loss involves gain. The truth of this statement comes home to us as we reflect upon our individual existence as a member of the community. In our private life the light of regeneration succeeds the darkness of a spiritual hell, we gain in soul and in intelligence as a compensation for our individually conceived losses, and every day we die and are reborn in a moral and in an intellectual sense. It is experience that both destroys and creates—experience which can be ours only as a result of our contact with the external world. The external world in the present case is society.

Most men elbow their way through the crowds on the highway of life, intent upon accomplishing their purpose and upon reaching their aim, taking it for granted that their individual aims and purposes are all that matter in the universe. The jostling crowd, the creatures that obstruct their progress, the souls that beg them to



reconsider and to travel in a different direction, are obstacles that must be eliminated, are enemies that must be vanquished. Little do these men dream that the jostling, hither and thither moving crowd is an organized whole, a living, spiritual machine that distributes experience and its resulting instruction to its members in accordance with their needs. That the crowd jostles, that fellow beings obstruct their progress, is due, in their opinion, to wickedness, perverseness, and what not. Their analysis of the matter ceases with the individual that antagonizes or opposes. The question, Why does the individual oppose? is seldom asked. A conscientious answer to that question should reveal his opponent as a being that acts in a particular manner because he is what he is. And that his aims, purposes and activities oppose their own is due to the fact that his being differs from theirs.

It is impossible to acquire a clear conception of the manner in which the community influences and develops the individual unless we accept differentiation as the basis of our thought. Nor can we without such a basis, account for the widely differing notions about the mystery of existence to which men have clung in the past, and to which they are clinging at present. If we merely think of men as human beings, beings that are fundamentally alike, the thoughts and actions of theirs that do not meet with our approval seem to proceed from their unwillingness to do and to think the right thing. The danger looms of our being prepared to condemn them to eternal hell-fire, and of condemning to Hades our own condemning soul. But a study of history should convince us of the absurdity of holding men absolutely responsible for the nature of their thoughts. The deeper we penetrate into the past, the more willing we are to concede that man could not very well help entertaining his extraordinary notions about things in general. Approaching the present, however, we become less generous, if not altogether harsh, in our criticism of thought and morale. It appears that our feelings remain unhurt when we contemplate human immaturity and stupidity from the distance of ages. We are incapable, however, of tolerating them in our present surroundings. This incomprehensible attitude of ours may be due to an excessive love of self which unconsciously desires that our own particular thoughts and ideas shall pervade the human world. But it also results, to a large extent, from our blindness to the fact that comparative immaturity and stupidity are part and parcel of our community. The past, as concerns moral and intelligence, is with us. Almost the complete his-

tory of human development is represented by the beings that today constitute the human race.

All men are different, and the difference in question originates in the inner being and in the intelligence. The degree of maturity of the inner man, and the degree of intelligence which is reflected by the inner being, are determined by the number and the variety of experiences that are both inherited from the past and acquired in this present life. When the external world—ultimately speaking, the universe—succeeds in drawing man's attention to its presence, there is question of individual experience. By what particular method the external world gains admission into the inner being, we have already explained in our chapter on Individual Development. There remains to be added that no man hears the voice of immensity unless his soul be equipped to hear it. The individual experiences in a way that conforms with his nature. Similar external conditions affect two different individuals in a different manner. What constitutes a calamity for one person may leave another unaffected. One man's cause of discouragement is another's source of inspiration. In a sense, the individual chooses only such experiences as are able to affect his being. But in all instances experience adds to man's universe-consciousness, while it destroys a little of his self-centeredness. Eventually, it must lead to complete universe-consciousness, to an awareness of All That Is, and to the utter elimination of the self.

The fact that present humanity consists of individuals each of which differs slightly from the other is one which we are slow to accept. This state of more or less complete differentiation is of a comparatively recent date. When human history began, men dwelt on fairly even levels of development which were represented by the various races that inhabited the earth. But the races developed into sub-races, the latter into nations, and within the nations classes of individuals proceeded to differentiate. The process of differentiation does not merely take place in the human world, but in almost every department of nature. Thinkers have observed that the developing universe proceeds from the homogeneous towards the heterogeneous, from one-ness towards many-ness. The solar system in its infancy is a gaseous mass, in its maturer stages an organized whole consisting of a central sun, of planets, satellites, meteors and comets. Whether we study the youthful stages of a solar system, or those of a humanity, or those of a continent, in each instance we meet with simplicity or oneness of the whole. All origin and immaturity

in the universe approach homogeneity, all destiny and maturity are visible in a complete differentiation of the whole.

Now, our incorrigible habit of judging the human world capable of thinking and acting in conformity with a certain fixed standard of thought and action results, in the first place, from our ignoring the fact that men are not, and never were, alike; and, in the second place, from our misconception of the manner in which the human race evolves. We incline to the notion that the individuals composing humanity progress uniformly like the points of a widening circle. We have marked the past with milestones that represent important stages in man's career of development. A flash of superior development here, an outburst of art there, a great invention elsewhere, prompt us to observe that a certain people, or that humanity, had achieved certain successes in the way of intelligence, art, or invention. Thus we remark that the Hebrews were monotheists, which they were—with a ninety-five per cent exception. The Greeks were philosophers and artists, with the exception of the large majority that consisted of superstitious barbarians. Today, nations endeavor to prove their claim to intellectual superiority by citing the names of certain of their sons, most of whom lived centuries ago, that won a place in the hall of fame. The German people are proud of having produced Goethe, Beethoven and Bach. The English nation measures its cultural heights with the Shakespearean yardstick. Not unfrequently, the American nation, sans Shakespeare and sans Goethe, sans Beethoven and sans Bach, in the estimation of moss-covered Europe, is a farflung community of money-making and dollar-hoarding individuals. Apart from the possibility that a Whitman and an Emerson look a little too deeply into the future to be adequately appreciated by the average citizen of the world, the fact remains that the above method of estimating a nation's intellectual or artistic worth by its production of a few illustrious men, is to the highest degree erroneous, if not absurd. If the German nation is dwelling on a lofty cultural eminence because Beethoven composed his *Moonlight Sonata*, and Goethe his *Faust*, then it may with equal justice be claimed that the Jews of twenty centuries ago were possessed of the Christ-spirit because Jesus dwelt in their midst. But Jesus, the Christ, pinnacle-like, loomed high above the swamp-level of average humanity, most of his thoughts and conceptions hidden from view by the ethereal mist of the too-sublime. In a comparative sense, the same may be observed about the intellectual and artistic genii of Europe. They,

too, represented the few that expressed ideals unattainable for the masses unto this day. We are but hinting at the truth when we observe that the first rumble of the Big Berthas forever destroyed the sublime strains of "Liebesträume" that once supposedly represented a nation's soul.

Nations possess average degrees of development that lie somewhere between the lowest and the highest degree found among their citizens. Between these two extremes are found innumerable shades of difference that are often hardly discernible, but that assert themselves in the individual's activities, morals or thoughts. The main difference between the modern and the ancient community is this: in the former the scale of individual development is finely graded, in the latter—a certain average development belongs to the masses and a conspicuously superior development is owned by a few individuals. Evolution, in the course of time, filled these wide gaps between immaturity and comparative maturity with countless intermediate stages of development. Moses, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Galileo, and Newton are solitary figures in history, their intelligence soaring high above the average. And as we read about these men, we unconsciously raise the level of intelligence of their contemporaries, of the masses, to their own. But that task was reserved for evolution. Superior intelligence in history made a preliminary survey of the road which all individuals eventually must travel. In the course of time, we find the travelers that originally proceeded in groups and masses scattered along the road surveyed. We have in mind the solitary and utterly lonely figure of Jesus who surveyed the soul's pathway far beyond the vision and the comprehension of his contemporaries, far beyond our present understanding, perhaps. But the first section of the road is beginning to be filled with travelers that see the light in accordance with the progress that they have made. The great men of the past represent ideals, ideals of intelligence and morals, which for centuries continue to draw the groping children of humanity into higher regions of human development.

Humanity, then, does not progress uniformly. Like the main current of a wide stream, the core of humanity travels ahead of the rest, lighting the way with its superior development. The core contains what many are pleased to name the supermen, men that differ from other human beings in degree of universe-consciousness and intelligence, only. And along the banks of the stream of life the lingering eddies splash their human drops that evaporate into

oblivion. The drops represent immaturity which henceforth belongs to the past, and which has ceased to be of useful purpose in the great scheme of human life. Progressing humanity, therefore, continually replaces the temporary lowest and the temporary highest degree of development by two new extremes that raise the average development of the whole.

Now, the thing that develops the individual is compulsory association with fellow beings. In ancient times it was the compulsory intercourse with nature. When men began to organize into families, tribes and nations, when they chose to jointly face the struggle of life, the experiences involved in that mode of living supplanted those that were formerly furnished by the individual's nature-surroundings. The forest with its danger of beast and reptile made way for the city with its human opponents and enemies. The battle with nature's forces became the struggle for existence in the modern sense. All the hardships of the former nature-life changed into those of the social life, and continued to sharpen the individual's wit and to arouse him from his self-centeredness.

Life is a school in which all individuals are compelled to learn their lessons. For some foolish reason we object to the compulsory nature of our instruction. For another, unaccountable reason, we are blind to the fact that there are several grades in which individuals are instructed in accordance with their natural capacity for learning. If we could conceive of society as of a great teacher, and if we could perceive the many different lessons which many different individuals are required to master, the drudgery and the callousness of life should completely disappear. Instead, we should behold a divinely conceived instrument that very gradually raises man from eternal darkness into eternal light. As to the compulsory nature of individual instruction, our inability to see the true relationship between the member of the community and the whole prevents us from perceiving the necessity of such compulsion. And, yet, the relationship in question is a very simple one. In order to become aware of its simplicity, we have but to realize that the individual is a constituent part of the whole, and that his voice loses itself in the chorus of voices of the community. The whole has impersonal interests and aims, and is impersonally active. It does not progress in a direction that expresses A's desire, nor in one that reflects B's ambition, but in a direction that lies between those indicated by A and B. In other words, A deflects B from his original course, and vice versa.

Although our fellow beings thus apparently oppose our aims, and sometimes intentionally and maliciously obstruct our progress, they are merely instrumental in doing so. The actual seat of opposition must be found in the community, itself. And when we realize, in last analysis, that the individual is part of the community, we should finally locate it both in the individual and in society. Society is the modern external world which gradually supplanted the ancient natural one. Evolution uses it as an instrument, even as she formerly employed nature, for the purpose of developing man. Whereas the natural external world, however, merely taught man the alphabet of intelligence, social surroundings instruct him in the art of weaving intricate compositions on the mystery of existence.

Evolution's game, as we have stated before, is played by two interested parties, viz, by the thing or the creature that evolves, and by the instrument of evolution. It cannot truthfully be stated that society shapes the individual and that it maps out his career in life. The individual, being what he is, has a voice in the matter. His particular nature determines whether or not certain external conditions shall constitute experience for him. It, furthermore, determines how and to what extent society shall influence it. The compulsory nature of the individual's instruction does not, therefore, originate in his surroundings, only, but also in his inner being. The self, alone, does not constitute fate. Nor should fate be sought in the external world, only. But the self and the world of not-self which acts upon the self, together shape individual destiny. This last statement is not altogether to the liking of many people. Man is naturally averse to compulsion of any kind. It is freedom that he demands, freedom of action, freedom of thought, freedom to wander about in his labyrinthal universe. Especially of late, as a reaction perhaps against a more or less mechanistic conception of the universe, the philosophy of freedom is being pushed into the foreground. One of the popular arguments in favor of free will is, that without it life would lose its moral nature and purpose. But this associating free will with moral, and compulsion with not-moral or immorality, does not destroy the facts of nature. We suspect that also in this instance the wish is father of the thought, and that the conception of life is made to agree with a preconceived idea. In our deepest heart we possibly realize that there is no such thing as freedom. We are free, yes, in the sense that we are not slaves, that we are not subject to the domineering power of the tyrant. But who can conscientiously link a scheming infinite with tyranny, and

who can associate our child-like notions about moral with the activities of immensity?

Like children, we see freedom in action, in movement. We neglect to inquire about the forces that cause a thing to act or to move in a certain manner. If free will determines our activities in the universe, what then causes us to be active in one manner, and not in another? Why do we act nobly or ignobly? Because we are good or wicked, wise or ignorant, humble or perverse? Then here is limitation, fate, compulsion! And if the answer is, circumstances, or surroundings, or environment, then limitation, fate and compulsion lie there, in the external world of not-self. From whatsoever angle we view the matter, we cannot escape the conclusion that we are not independent actors on the stage of life. A mysterious something propels us which is both within and without, a something which intangibly pervades immensity, and which constitutes the sum total of all that is.

Individuality and compulsion are inseparably associated. It is in vain that we search the universe for absolute freedom. The planet of the solar system, the electron of the atomic system, are held in check, and their movements are guided, by forces residing in the external world. That the forces in question are capable of guiding and of holding in check, also results from the nature of the planet and from that of the electron. The entire universe of stars, meteors, comets and nebulae is a huge interplay of checking, guiding and directing forces—we may add, fortunately enough. The bird of proverbial freedom is a prisoner of nature, dependent on her bounty and subject to her moods. The atom darts along a path which is prescribed by external influences and by its own inherent qualities. And the external world causes the human individual to experience, to act and to think in conformity with the nature of his being. In passing, it may be observed that those people, in particular, who sincerely cling to the belief in an omniscient, all-ruling deity, are the first to sponsor the contradictory conception of individual free will. They do not realize, of course, that the conception in question denies the omnipotence and the all-rule of the supreme. Nor do they fully grasp the meaning of the following words: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And the statement, "The hairs on thy head are numbered," is reduced to little more than interesting reading matter by the notion of free will. These conflicting notions arise from an inability to link things,

beings and events with the rest of all that is, as a result of which the separately contemplated object reflects the shadow of evil.

The fact that the members composing society differ in constitution, physically, mentally and spiritually, makes possible the compulsion which the community exerts upon the individual. If society consisted of men that were absolutely alike, all thoughts, actions, activities and aims would be identical. Peace would reign supreme—the peace of death. There could be no question of individual experience. For experience is possible only then when the self comes in touch with a world the nature of which differs from that of the self. Each individual reflects the nature of his inner self in his activities, his thoughts, and his actions. What a man does and thinks expresses what he is. It is said, “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.” But the reverse of that statement is more nearly true. As a man is, so does he think, act, and express himself in general. It is the different activities, thoughts and actions of individuals who live in close association that involve opposition, antagonism and struggle. These, in turn, constitute experience which develop the inner being and the intelligence. Ultimately speaking, therefore, we are unjust in our condemnation of humanity because it does not progress in an altogether peaceable manner. The individual does not consciously oppose his fellow. He opposes him because he is what he is, and because his fellow is different from what he is. All individual existence is a struggle, a strife, a war. The heterogeneous nature of the universe is responsible for the fact.

The great spiritual machine: the community! Society, man's teacher par excellence! We are in the habit of placing ourselves outside of it, as if we did not belong to it, as if we were not part and parcel of it. We hurl our criticism at it, worry about its present and future condition, agitate in favor of reforming it, rebel against its relentlessness. Wasted energy, all this! The thing is perfect. But it is a thing nature-made, not man-made. Man is the instrument, nature is the creator. Criticism of society and its members is an easy enough matter when we hold the individual responsible for what he is. Here is the picture that we criticize: A number of human beings placed upon this planet; they enter into an association; and they make a muddle of organized life. But the same force that called human beings from the deep of the world, and that placed them upon this earth, also bade them organize and build their society. And it is for that reason that society remains



deaf to the shouts and the lamentations, to the condemnations and the criticism of man. She continues to proceed in a natural manner, to blossom out in accordance with all the laws of natural growth. And not until we shall realize that man is instrumental instead of original, we must continue to run madly hither and thither, to pull our hair in frantic despair, and to complain to high heaven concerning the rottenness of our social structure.

Most of the proposed schemes for the improvement of the conditions of society are built on a shaky foundation. Their foundation is sought in the expressions of society rather than in its constitution. We consider the conditions of labor, or those of capital, but we seldom consider the inner condition of the laborer or of the capitalist. If the face of society is wrinkled and haggard looking, a dash of paint may temporarily improve appearances. The unhealthy condition remains, however, and only a fool is deceived by an artificial appearance of health. It is not in society's diseased countenance but rather in its constitution that we should find the cause of its ailments. By society's constitution we should mean something final and ultimate. When we say that laborers, doctors, lawyers, preachers and kings compose society, we refer to expressions, and not to fundamentals. The manner in which a man is active in the community roughly expresses what he is. At bottom, society is an organization of human inner beings that express themselves in accordance with their respective degrees of development.

An important question is this: How well, or how badly, does a scale of development fit into society? Each member of the community is active in behalf of the whole of which he is a part. No matter how deeply interested he may be in his personal affairs, his activities are nevertheless instrumental in determining the condition of the whole. But he not only contributes his share towards making the whole what it is, he is also compelled to respond to certain demands that emanate from it. The family, the smallest community in existence, establishes certain boundaries within which the member may move. Certain restrictions are placed upon the latter, and certain things are required from him. The interest of the family is his own, and he cannot, logically, object to the restrictions and the demands in question. The individual's voice is never heard singly, nor is his individuality considered separately. There exists a voice of the community in which the member's voice can be but partly heard.

That the member is unable to fully assert his individuality is due to the fact that society is a heterogeneous whole. We are in the habit of endowing men with the same inherent capacities and possibilities. We imagine that all men suffer, enjoy, experience and evolve in the same manner. But human beings are fundamentally not alike. Differences that appear on the surface should be linked with differences that touch the inner being. We should not expect a single religion to suffice for an entire humanity. Not all people are capable of living according to a single code of morals. Not all men are potentially able or intellectual. Let us remember that our observations of man concern reflections. His actions and his activities reveal the nature of his Me. They constitute the odor of his self, and belong to it as perfume belongs to the flower. They are the natural and the necessary expressions of that which he is. That which he is causes him to act in a certain manner, reveals certain capacities and abilities, makes him become laborer or president, criminal or saint. What, really, is an individual? He is a product of evolution—a fine, a bad, or a mediocre product, according to our viewpoint. The degree of development which he represents, which was determined before birth, clears him of the responsibility for the nature of his being and for its necessary expressions. That a man is not responsible for the qualities of his soul and of his gray matter, simple as the fact may be, seems to be an indigestible one for many people. "Why does he fail to do this or that?" they ask. Or, "Why does he not educate himself?" Foolish questions, these! And equally foolish are the answers found to them. Why does not the fish fly? Why does not the rose grow below the surface of the soil? A man does what he does, because he is what he is.

These simple facts make our efforts to cure the ills of society appear vain. Society heals herself: from within. External applications merely make her look unnatural, ridiculous. We should learn to leave nature alone, to let evolution continue in peace. A great deal of unnecessary noise would then cease to disturb the eternal quiet of an infinite universe. Our foolish notion of dispensing with nature, and of having a fling at man-fashioning ourselves, brings little or no results. We preach and exhort, lecture from platform and soapbarrel, found Leagues of Nations and call disarmament conferences, inaugurate a movement here and found a society there. But, in the most annoying of manners, humanity continues its lazy progress, insensible to the fussy activities of well-meaning

souls who would make it cover a distance of a thousand years in the flash of a moment.

The ills of society continue to annoy us as long as we consider merely our own interests, and as long as we fail to associate our private difficulties with a universal scheme of progress. There probably is not an individual living who has not, at times, denounced the barrier which society occasionally erects, apparently to block his progress. Consideration of the self and the barrier, only, turns the compulsion experienced into a hard and bitter one. Yet is it comparatively easy to accustom ourselves to the idea of compulsion when we consider that its nature is impersonal? It is not, indeed, our fellow man who forces us into our particular station in life. Nor is there question of one class of men driving another, let us say, to labor. Society, at its present stage of development, demands the performance of labor. And certain of its members, to the exclusion of others, are peculiarly fit to supply the demand. This response to an impersonal demand lifts any activity in society above the level of inferiority on which we may be tempted to place it. Considered from the community's standpoint, there cannot be question of either superiority or inferiority. Each member contributes his share towards making society what it is, and the nature of his contribution is determined by the nature of his being. Eliminate the streetsweeper, and the community loses something of its near-perfection. The same thing would result in case the manufacturer were eliminated.

These reflections lead us to the consideration of liberty and equality. Man's conception of liberty and equality are sometimes dangerously utopian. Whenever he tries their practical application, he shakes the very foundations of society. There follow blood and thunder, lawlessness and disorganization. A leader generally arises and, with him, iron rule. When the heat of passion has cooled and the thunder of revolution has subsided, there is an unuttered realization that the healthy community is founded on something of which the violent reformer of society had not thought. The violent reformer's intellectual analysis of the social structure ignores society as a whole and considers merely individual problems. He commits the blunder which the average man is inclined to commit in the mental process of society building. He employs a single kind of building material, say, bricks, laboring under the delusion that he can very well dispense with steel, plaster, cement, lumber, in short, with such materials as are necessary for the completion of the solid

structure. His society turns out to be a tottering group of individuals of a certain kind who vainly and madly hunt for something, they know not what, that will solidly cement them together. The rest of the original community is inactive, and bereft of the opportunity to be useful in behalf of the whole. Then follow the guilotine and the machine gun.

The truth is that liberty for many people is identical with the total absence of compulsory and restricting influences. But such a condition, as we have endeavored to explain before, is impossible. Restriction and compulsion originate both with the individual, himself, and with the external world. They are inseparably associated with the universal fact of differentiation. In society, differentiation looms up as inequality, an inequality which, indeed, has nothing to do with social position or with worldly possessions, but with the condition of development of the inner being. Men are born free and equal in a very limited sense. In reality they are born servants to the great spirit of the universe, and they are instrumental in furthering its schemes. To that fact, there can be no moral objection. There can be no moral objection to the father curbing his individuality for the sake of the family of which he is an integral part. There can be no moral objection to the citizen's suppression of self for the sake of the state of which he is a constitutive member. And, finally, there is no moral objection to the individual's obeying the laws of a supreme power in which he "lives, moves and has his being."

As concerns inequality, the following picture perhaps illustrates it. Two tiny creatures lie crying in their respective cradles, the one a potential genius, the other a potential dull-head. Entering into life from behind the veil of birth, they carry with them their respective inheritance of the ages. And even if they should henceforth travel hand in hand, meeting with the same external conditions, the life of the one must of necessity be totally different from that of the other. The same universe leaves two entirely different impressions in two dissimilar souls. It arouses inspiration in the one, leaving the other unmoved. A single external world of circumstance and surroundings creates two different inner worlds of experience and thought. Fate, for each of the two individuals, is not without, nor is it within, but it is both without and within. The meeting of the fatal self and the fatal external world shapes immediate individual destiny.

Society, at any given moment, is what it should be. It is perfect in view of the nature of the material of which it is composed. True, one can conceive of a society that more closely approaches the ideal. But such an ideal condition cannot be established as a sort of superstructure on top of the existing one. The superstructure must gradually emerge from the inner existing building. A million different things, learn a million different lessons, and grow a thousand times more universe-conscious than they are at present. And it is these very things which society eventually accomplishes. No single individual, not even a Son of Man, can accomplish them. Sermons and lectures, books and universities, do no more than express what the individual already knows as a result of inner experience. It is experience which community life furnishes the individual. We may add that its method of distribution is founded on a basis of absolute justice. Our experiences are necessary for the immediate further development of the self. Judiciously, the self chooses from life's storehouse of experience the things that it needs. No man of a preponderantly physical nature ever suffers the tortures of a spiritual hell. Experience touches the individual where he is capable of feeling. Human development proceeds along the lines of individual sacrifice. And our willingness to sacrifice expresses the fact that we are losing in self-centeredness and gaining in universe-consciousness. Our surroundings, therefore, cannot educate and instruct us, unless they occasionally covet that which we have or desire. We find, as a consequence, that all members of society struggle and experience in accordance with the nature of their being. It is true that we are not always able to perceive suffering and struggle. But that is due to the fact that we lack imagination. It is a difficult matter for us to place ourselves in thought in the position of our neighbor. Our own position is overwhelmingly more important. Often, of course, it is absolutely impossible for us to see the struggles and the sufferings of our fellow man. His references to them cause us to smile. We reflect that he is foolish to "let such things bother him." Our lack of appreciation results from our living in an entirely different world, on account of our possessing an entirely different soul.

Modern life is the great teacher of man. Society is to the modern individual what nature was to ancient man. It constitutes the individual's external world, his storehouse of experience. Man experiences in accordance with the nature of his being. The individuals and the conditions that are instrumental in opposing or

thwarting his aims, oppose for no other reason than the one that he is the particular human being that he is. It is *his* aims that are opposed and thwarted, and his aims are stamped with the mark of his particular soul. Society threatens, renders difficult, or takes away. That is what nature used to do in the case of primeval man. The result, as we have seen, was that primeval man lit the darkness of his intelligence with a spark of reason. To think means to awaken from the nature-dream of self-centeredness in which all individual being originally is wrapped. To think and reason about a threatening external world constitutes the first step on the road that leads towards the discovery of an infinite universe. The ancient method, nature's method, of awakening man is still in force in modern society. The social life is but a thin veil that very inadequately hides scheming nature. Man is a product of nature, and his physical, social, moral and intellectual creations are her indirect products. Society, with its problems for the individual, continues to throw sparks of light into the semidarkness of half-matured intelligence. It continues to awaken the individual from his natural dream of self-centeredness, and to impress the act upon his mind that an immense world of not-self exists. The world of not-self holds mysteries which it is his divine task to unravel. The secret of being and the secret of God must be discovered by him in the world of not-self which, in turn, cannot exist for him unless he breaks the shell of self-centeredness within which he was born. He is assisted in breaking through the shell by his surroundings, by life, by the external world, by the very world of not-self which he is to discover. The prosaic business of living, though he is seldom aware of the fact, is the thing that urges him to discover the universe, and, subsequently perhaps, the spirit that moves it.