



The Conscious Individual

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Abstract

This article traces the evolutionary development of human consciousness and its increasingly complex and sophisticated organization as human personality from the instinctive behavior of the animal and the subconscious conformity characteristic of early forms of human civilization through progressive stages of transition from physical to social to mental levels of awareness and from the undifferentiated social consciousness of the member of the tribe to the emergence of independent thinking, creativity and uniqueness, which characterize the Conscious Individual. The individual and the collective evolve in tandem. The collective imparts its acquired capacities to its members. The emerging individual acts as a catalyst to spur further development of the collective. Each stage of the journey is the same in essence and structure at progressively higher levels of consciousness and organization. The higher the level achieved by the collective in terms of quality and complexity, the greater the knowledge and organization demanded of the individual. The article ends by cataloging crucial points at which modern society is mired in outmoded conceptions, superstitious beliefs, pre-modern values and archaic institutions that obstruct humanity's further evolution from problems and limitations to ever-expanding opportunities. The conscious individual is the key to that process.

The conscious individual is the most complex phenomenon yet discovered in the universe. The individual is the vanguard of human evolution. Society has the capacity to create conscious individuals as a finite expression of its infinitely vast and varied social potential. At an earlier stage society fosters development of members who conform to its values, rules and norms and submit subconsciously to domination by the collective.

Mind is the highest instrument of the individual, yet it remains largely ignorant and unconscious both of the world outside and its own true inner being. Human beings becoming mentally conscious is the process of civilization. It is mental awakening. The individual becoming conscious of the existence of eternal, infinite Spirit is spiritual awakening.

Primitive man, though endowed with an intelligence as great as our own, was largely unconscious of the world in Space beyond his immediate community or of existence in Time beyond the recent past and immediate present. Growing awareness in Space and Time is growth of consciousness and spiritual awakening. Animals are guided and protected by unerring subconscious instincts. Humanity has largely lost this subconscious knowledge as civilization advanced, replacing subconscious instinct with conscious knowledge of hunting,

agriculture, language and education. The flawless knowledge of subconscious instinct can be regained at a higher level as mental insight by a transformation of subconscious into conscious processes.

Our growing knowledge of Geography and History is a sign that human beings are becoming increasingly aware in Space and Time. The development of literature, especially poetry, is indicative of our increasing awareness of subtle psychological realities beyond the reach of the senses.

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Humanity progresses in the measure it becomes conscious and organizes that consciousness. The individual grows by becoming conscious of relationships with other people and society. Life presents crises that compel us to discover new knowledge, create new institutions and acquire new behaviors. Natural calamities are the outer symptoms of such crises. Death is their physical inward expression. Mental confusion is the stimulus for growing comprehension. Resolving crises enhances our understanding of Life, the world in which we live, society and ourselves. Confusion is mental. Crises are physical and social. Improved understanding enhances our effectivity. Increasing mastery of nature is an expression of growing consciousness. This is the external social progress. A corresponding inner progress drives our individual evolution psychologically and spiritually.

Language was born when man became mentally creative. Education is the process of society consciously passing on to future collective generations the knowledge of the collective acquired through its past experience, making conscious the collective individual. Culture makes people conscious of the value of other people. Existence, history, civilization, culture, law and custom are successive stages in the evolution of society. Humanity, long fascinated by the moon from afar, now walks upon it.

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The conception of the World University Consortium represents humanity’s growing global awareness of the power of knowledge. Education began as language and speech. Language represents mental conception expressed verbally. Language and education make possible the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next, which is essential for humanity to learn from past experiences and avoid the necessity of continuous repetition. Education has the power to abridge the historical experience of time by the application of Mind in the field of organisation. In early times that knowledge was just sufficient to help people survive physically and nomadically. The awareness of social identity and the conscious striving for social progress within groups came later as the innate urge of gregariousness

led human beings to associate with one another for territorial defense and sedentary social life.

Thus, humanity has advanced through progressive stages of a long evolutionary journey individually and collectively. Each stage of this journey is essentially the same in essence and structure at progressively higher levels of consciousness and organization. The higher the level in terms of quality and complexity, the greater the knowledge and organization demanded. With respect to food, this has meant a gradual shift in emphasis from mere quantity to quality and improvement in taste. The evolution from simple sounds to complex harmonies of music is a parallel qualitative movement. Advances in each dimension parallel those in other dimensions. Each aspect advances horizontally to cover wider areas

and new fields of expression and vertically to form higher levels of organization. Thus, local level food production has evolved into national and global food systems. Monoculture crop production and limited diets have been replaced by multi-national cuisine. Folk music of local origin has evolved into myriad varieties and unlimited choice generated globally and accessible around the world. This social process is analogous to a tree's progressive growth as roots, trunk, foliage, flowers and fruit. The same process repeats everywhere with infinite variations in expression.

No resource or opportunity is ever fully availed of. A large portion of the public is largely unaware of the services offered by governments. People are unaware of the enormous benefits conferred and creative opportunities offered by society and by life. No human being utilizes all his or her knowledge, skills and capacities. No society fully engages all its members. The law of utilization demands that supply be many times larger than the demand. The human brain and its potential remain mostly unused.

We confront a paradox of needs and opportunities. Humanity possesses a huge surplus of productive and technological capacities that remain underutilized, yet we confront perpetual problems of scarcity. The world is beset with problems that appear insoluble largely because we are unconscious of the social capacity that already exists and the social potential waiting to be developed. Like the child in the story, someone should have the courage to state that our insoluble problems are like the emperor's new clothes. A sense of helplessness and hopelessness prevents us from seeing the incredible power society has created for human accomplishment in all fields and for modifying our ideas, attitudes and actions to more fully avail of it. The New Paradigm can be fuller and richer than anything now imaginable, if only we do not cling to outmoded concepts, vested interests and dead conventions.

We condemn other cultures for preventing the development of their women and children, forgetting that women acquired the right to vote in America only in 1922 and in Switzerland only in 1971. We condemn the corruption in developing countries forgetting that most of the prosperity and wealth of Western nations was acquired before laws were introduced to

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legalize and sustain the status quo. Forms of discrimination and corruption have changed. In the name of democracy we have ‘legalized’ plutocracy. We blame the terrorists and fundamentalists of the world for disturbing our peace and security while clinging with equal fervor to our own archaic forms of fundamentalism that ‘terrorize’ the billions who are excluded. In the name of free markets, we have created a new aristocracy of the speculators. In the name of technological progress, we disenfranchise millions of workers, rob tens of millions of youth of their future and witness soaring levels of inequality. In the name of democracy, we perpetuate a system of global governance over which veto power is exercised by five nations which happened to be the victors in a war fought before 95 percent of the world’s population was even born. In the name of security we cling to our nuclear arsenals that can only destroy and never secure anything, proliferate the dissemination of small arms around the world, and insist on expanding a cooperative security system that exponentially enhances the perceived threat to nations that are excluded, rather than building one that is truly inclusive and cooperative. Why have we not solved all these problems and eradicated these inequities? Why do we hesitate and submit? Why did Western nations repeat the folly of earlier generations by consciously dismantling the regulatory protection that ensured seven decades of financial stability? Are we really incapable of understanding the source of our problems and fashioning effective solutions? Or are we too secure and satisfied as respectable members of society to willingly rock the boat?

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We are the species that have emerged from the forest, settled the globe, traveled to edge of the solar system and peered into distant corners of the universe. Who is in charge of human evolution? We have invented money and now let it possess us. We have created markets and now in the name of neo-liberalism let them rule us. We have fashioned an endless succession of technological wonders and now let them replace us. We have developed rule of law and democratic governance to promote freedom and equality and now passively succumb to new forms of tyranny. We reject countless superstitions of earlier generations in favor of new knowledge, yet continue to uphold the right of citizens to own weapons capable of firing 900 rounds a minute over a distance of 1000 yards based on a law established at a time when a flintlock musket could fire a single shot per minute over a distance of less than 100 meters. Is this really what human rights stand for? So long as governments refuse to ban gun-carrying and passively condone the frequent death of innocents, they have no right to criticize terrorists or fundamentalists.

If the US Supreme Court insists on the right of corporations to dominate US elections or the World Court refuses to enforce the provisions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

abolishing all nuclear weapons, or the five permanent members of the UN Security Council refuse to renounce their undemocratic powers, then it is time for the world public opinion to rise up in protest and demand wiser counsel and more truly democratic institutions of governance. The need of the hour is for the ‘supreme court’ of world public opinion to overrule perverse decisions of governments. Law is a codification of public conscience and when it ceases to reflect the evolution of that consciousness, it must be modified, supplanted or rejected, regardless of the sanctimonious pleadings of vested interests and archaic institutions.

“Thought should rise boldly in the world to offer leadership.”

Though slavery was abolished by constitutional amendment in 1865, it persisted for a century until Rosa Parks sparked the onset of the American Civil Rights Movement. Her action qualifies her as a conscious individual. The world has seen many more conscious individuals such as Churchill, who defended liberty in WWII; Franklin D. Roosevelt, who humanized capitalism with the New Deal; and Gorbachev, who worked from inside to demolish the authoritarian fortress. When Club of Rome came out with the slogan “Limits to Growth”, the world responded enthusiastically. Now perhaps the same world should respond joyously with the call for “Limitless growth of human well-being”. The Gordian knot that helps keep problems alive needs to be cut right now for the emergence of the conscious Individual.

Though unconsciousness continues to rule, it does so by default and cannot claim the right to rule. That right belongs only to consciousness. Society as well as the individual has to become conscious and continue to grow in consciousness. Gorbachev became conscious and the Soviet Union dissolved. It is true that there is no leadership in the world today, but there can be leadership in Thought. The world is facing an evolutionary crisis. It cannot be solved by appeasing the culprits. The French Revolutionaries did not negotiate with the French aristocrats to plead that they renounce their autocratic power. Charles I was not consulted before he was removed from power. Thought should rise boldly in the world to offer leadership. If not a distinguished individual, then at least a group of like-minded international organisations now see some light at the end of the tunnel. This is a process of the world consciously emerging from the folly of its own ignorance and fundamentalism. The individual must become conscious in order for the society to follow. For the conscious individual, there is no problem in the world too difficult to solve. Rather the conscious individual will discover opportunities all around.

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