

- A famous biologist and writer, the first head of the UNESCO, gives his idea on man as the sole agent of his own destiny.

MAN'S DESTINY

Man's destiny is to be the sole agent for the future evolution of this planet. He is the highest dominant type to be produced by over two and a half billion years of the slow biological improvement effected by the blind opportunistic workings of natural selection; if he does not destroy himself, he has at least an equal stretch of evolutionary time before him to exercise his agency.

During the later part of biological evolution, mind — our word for the mental activities and properties of organisms — emerged with greater clarity and intensity, and came to play a more important role in the individual lives of animals. Eventually it broke through to become the foundation and the main source of further evolution, though the essential character of evolution now become cultural instead of genetic or biologi-

cal. It was to this breakthrough, brought about by the automatic mechanism of natural selection and not by any conscious effort on his own part, that man owes his dominant evolutionary position.

It is only through possessing a mind that he has become the dominant portion of this planet and the agent responsible for its future evolution; and it will be only by the right use of that mind that he will be able to exercise that responsibility properly. He could all too readily be a failure in the job; he will succeed only if he faces it consciously and if he uses all his mental resources — knowledge and reason, imagination and sensitivity, capacities for wonder and love, for comprehension and compassion, for spiritual aspiration and moral effort.

And he must face it without outside help. In the

evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer either need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created: it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul, as well as brain and body.

So did religion. Religions are organs of psychosocial man concerned with human destiny and with experiences of sacredness and transcendence. In their evolution, some (but by no means all) have given birth to the concept of gods as supernatural beings endowed with mental and spiritual properties and capable of intervening in the affairs of nature, including man. These theistic religions are early organizations of human thought in its interaction with the puzzling, complex world with which it has to contend — the outer world of nature and the inner world of man's own nature. In this, they resemble other early organizations of human thought confronted with nature, like the doctrine of the Four Elements, earth, air, fire and water, or

the Eastern concept of rebirth and reincarnation. Like these, they are destined to disappear in competition with other, truer, and more embracing thought-organizations which are handling the same range of raw or processed experience.

Evolutionary man can no longer take refuge from his loneliness by creeping for shelter into the arms of a divinised father-figure whom he has himself created, nor escape from the responsibility of making decisions by sheltering under the umbrella of Divine Authority, nor absolve himself from the hard task of meeting his present problems and planning his future by relying on the will of an omniscient but unfortunately inscrutable Providence. On the other hand, his loneliness is only apparent. He is not alone as a type. Thanks to the astronomers, he now knows that he is one among many organisms that bear witness to the trend towards sentience, mind and richness of being, operating so widely but so sparsely in the cosmos.

More immediately important, thanks to Darwin, he now knows that he is not an isolated phenomenon, cut off from the rest of nature by his uniqueness. Not only is he made of the same matter and operated by the same energy as all the rest of the cosmos, but for all his distinctiveness he is linked by genetic continuity with all the other living inhabitants of his planet. Animals, plants, and micro-organisms, they are all his cousins or remoter kin, all parts of one single branching and evolving flow of metabolizing protoplasm. . .

It is hard to break through the firm framework of an accepted belief-system and build new and complex successors, but it is necessary. It is necessary to organize our *ad hoc* ideas and scattered values into a unitive pattern, transcending conflicts and divisions in its unitary web. Only by such a reconciliation of opposites and disparates can our belief-system release us from inner conflicts: only so can we gain that peaceful assurance which will help unlock our

energies for development in strenuous practical action.

Our new pattern of thinking will be evolution-centred. It will give us assurance by reminding us of our long evolutionary rise; how this was also, strangely and wonderfully, the rise of mind; and how that rise culminated in the eruption of mind as the dominant factor in evolution and led to our own spectacular but precarious evolutionary success.

Our new organization of thought — belief-system, framework of values, ideology, call it what you will — must grow and be developed in the light of our new evolutionary vision. So, in the first place, it must of course itself be evolutionary: that is to say, it must help us to think in terms of an overriding process of change, development, and possible improvement, to have our eyes on the future rather than on the past, to find support in the growing, spreading, upreaching body of our knowledge, instead of in the rigid frame of fixed dogma or ancient authority. Equally, of course, the evolutionary

outlook must be scientific, not in the sense that it rejects or neglects other human activities, but in believing in the value of the scientific method for eliciting knowledge from ignorance and truth from error, and in basing itself on the firm ground of scientifically established knowledge. Unlike most theologies, it accepts the inevitability and indeed the desirability of change, and advances by welcoming new discovery even when it conflicts with old ways of thinking.

The only way in which the present split between religion and science could be mended would be through the acceptance by science of the fact and value of religion as an organ of evolving man, and the acceptance by religion that religions must evolve if they are not to become extinct, or at best turn into outdated living fossils struggling to survive in a new and alien environment.

Next, the evolutionary outlook must be global. Man is strong and successful in so far as he operates in inter-thinking groups, which are

able to pool their knowledge and beliefs. To have any success in fulfilling his destiny as the controller or agent of future evolution on earth, he must become one single inter-thinking group, with one general framework of ideas: otherwise his mental energies will be dissipated in ideological conflict. . . .

But our thinking must also be concerned with the individual. The well-developed, well-patterned individual human being is, in a strictly scientific sense, the highest phenomenon of which we have any knowledge; and the variety of individual personalities is the world's highest richness.

In the light of the evolutionary vision the individual need not feel just a meaningless cog in the social machine, nor merely the helpless prey and sport of vast impersonal forces. He can do something to develop his own personality, to discover his own talents and possibilities, to interact personally and fruitfully with other individuals, to discover something of his own significance

Population is people in the mass; and it is in regard to population that the most drastic reversal or reorientation of our thinking has become necessary. The unprecedented population-explosion of the last half-century has strikingly exemplified the Marxist principle of the passage of quantity into quality. . .

Population-increase is already destroying or eroding many of the world's resources, both those for material subsistence and those — equally essential but often neglected — for human enjoyment and fulfillment. Early in man's history the injunction to increase and multiply was right. Today it is wrong, and to obey it will be disastrous.

The Western world has to achieve the difficult task of reversing the direction of its thought about population. It has to begin thinking that our aim should be not increase but decrease — certainly and quickly decrease in the rate of population-growth; and in the long run equally, certainly, decrease in the absolute number of peo-

ple in the world, including our own countries.

We must make the same reversal of ideas about our economic system. At the moment our Western economic system (which is steadily invading new region) is based on expanding production for profit; and production for profit is based on expanding consumption. As one American writer has put it, our economy depends on persuading more people to believe that they want to consume more products. This is leading to gross over-exploitation of resources that ought to be conserved, to excessive advertising, to the dissipation of talent and energy into unproductive channels, and to a diversion of the economy as a whole away from its true functions.

But, like the population-explosion, this consumption-explosion cannot continue much longer: it is an inherently self-defeating process. Sooner rather than later we shall be forced to get away from a system based on artificially increasing the number of human wants, and set about constructing one aim-

ed at the qualitative satisfaction of real human needs, spiritual and mental as well as material and physiological. This means abandoning the pernicious habit of evaluating every human project solely in terms of its utility — by which the evaluators mean solely its material utility, and especially its utility in making a profit for somebody . . .

Quantity of material production is, of course, necessary as the basis for the satisfaction of elementary human needs — but only up to a certain degree. More than a certain number of calories or cocktails or TV sets or washing machines per person is not merely unnecessary but bad. Quantity of material production can be only a means to a further end, not an end in itself.

The important ends of man's life include the creation and enjoyment of beauty, both natural and man-made; increased comprehension and a more assured sense of significance; the preservation of all sources of pure wonder and delight, like fine scenery, wild ani-

mals in freedom, or unspoiled nature; the attainment of inner peace and harmony; the feeling of active participation in embracing and enduring projects, including the cosmic project of evolution. It is through such things that individuals attain greater fulfillment. As for nations and societies, they are remembered not for their wealth or comforts or technologies, but for their great buildings and works of art, their achievements in science or law or political philosophy, their success in liberating human life from the shackles of fear and ignorance.

Finally, the evolutionary vision is enabling us to discern, however incompletely, the lineaments of the new religion that we can be sure will arise to serve the needs of the coming era. . .

The emergent religion of the near future could be a good thing. It will believe in knowledge. It will be able to take advantage of the vast amount of new knowledge produced by the knowledge-explosion of the last few centuries in constructing

what we may call its theology — the framework of facts and ideas which provide it with intellectual support; it should be able, with our increased knowledge of mind, to define man's sense of right and wrong more clearly so as to provide a better moral support, and to focus the feeling of sacredness on fitter objects. Instead of worshipping supernatural rulers, it will sanctify the higher manifestations of human nature, in art and love, in intellectual comprehension and aspiring adoration, and will emphasize the fuller realization of life's possibilities as a sacred trust.

Thus the evolutionary vision, first opened up for us by Charles Darwin a century back, illuminates our human existence in a simple but almost overwhelming way. It exemplifies the truth that truth is great and will prevail and the greater truth that truth will set us free.

Evolutionary truth frees us from subservient fear of the unknown and supernatural, and exhorts us to face this new freedom with courage tempered with wisdom, and hope tempered with knowledge. It shows us our destiny and our duty. — *By Julian Huxley, abstract from The Humanist Frame.*

NEW HUSBAND

The dying man gasped pitifully, "Grant me one last request, Martha," he pleaded.

"Of course, Stanley," she said softly.

"Six month after I die I want you to marry Abner Jones," he said.

"Abner Jones! she said in a shocked tone. "But I thought you hated that man."

"Exactly, he said with his final breath.