

Man, Creation and the Fossil Record

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THE Theory of Evolution is a production of contra-traditional, western civilization. It is impossible that such an idea could have arisen in a civilization guarded by Tradition, in which essentials always take first place to accidentals. Evidence for the theory is derived from fossil remains, the accumulation of which is an extremely laborious process, involving considerable excavation of subterranean regions, bringing to light things which have, in the natural course of events, been buried. The difficulty of obtaining such information should be counted a blessing since it is not only concerned with what is purely accidental but also with "solidification" and death.

However, this does not mean that the fossils do not have their first principle in God, far from it. In fact the function of this paper is to present an interpretation of the fossil record within the framework of cycles and principles rather than from a viewpoint of accidentals and "progress" which characterize the profane mentality.

Before trying to interpret the characteristics of previous cycles it is necessary to understand the cycle in which we live and the relationships within it. Because of the analogy between microcosm and macrocosm, there is a direct relationship between the human psyche and the collectivity of all other beings on earth. Human consciousness is linked up with the individual spirit (*jivatma*), the mental faculties (reason, memory, imagination) and the interior continuities of the senses and organs of action. Consciousness (*ahankâra*) is the uniting principle of these three divisions of the psyche. Likewise among non-human beings the vertebrate form is the uniting principle of the three vertebrate types, birds, mammals and fish, which correspond to the three psychic domains mentioned above. Birds have a spiritual or elevated nature, mammals an expansive one, whereas fish are "trapped" within an aquatic domain which corresponds to sensory experience. The invertebrate animals and plants correspond to the lower part of the psyche, closely linked to the body. The invertebrates represent the emotive aspects while the plants, the physiology of which is inseparably linked with the sun as well as the atmosphere, represent the vital part of the psyche which maintains the life of the body.

Sufficient has been said to indicate the harmony which exists between the external and internal worlds. But it should be remembered that the principle of harmony also operates within each world; the principle in fact being identical to the Hindu concept of *Dharma*. This Cosmic Harmony is the principle which accounts for the co-ordination of all the beings in the cosmos and which maintains, on the terrestrial plane, "ecological" integration. One of the consequences of harmony is the process of "natural selection", so cherished by transformists. In fact natural selection is only one, accidental manifestation of the principle of harmony. Natural selection operates in two ways; firstly it maintains the norm of the species by eliminating deviations or mutations which result from the imperfections of formal, space-time existence; secondly it acts to co-ordinate the

relationship between the various species by bringing about genetical change of form. This is allowed by a certain degree of flexibility of the psychic and corporeal aspects of the being; however there are well defined limits beyond which harmonious flexibility is impossible and beyond which only deformation or mutation exists. The amount of harmonious adaptation which any one species is capable of undergoing will depend upon the nature of the primitive, created species, but undoubtedly in some cases the change is considerable. Thus the ass, the horse and the zebra probably comprise one species, all being derived from the primitive form which contained, within itself the possibilities manifested by the modern sub-species. The primitive form was a plastic creature whereas the modern forms are isolated and specialized, corresponding to certain restricted combinations of possibilities inherent in the primitive form. Thus we see that whereas adaptability enhances the harmony between species and environment it also means specialization and finally disharmony and elimination. This is in close relationship to the life of an individual which includes birth, growth and change, and finally death.

These cyclical events lead us to a consideration of the much greater cycles involving large numbers of beings and species which are illustrated by the so-called fossil record. Evolutionists have great difficulty in applying an evolutionary pattern to the invertebrate animals and the plants except for the adaptive sequences which we have described above.¹ They are mainly concerned with vertebrate animals and these will also be our chief concern.

The world appears to be a very solid and permanent place, but there is no reason to suppose that this has always been the case. The process of creation or formation may be regarded as a movement from "fluidity" to "solidity" or from "potentiality" to "actuality".² One can imagine that such a process is extremely plastic and has great potential for integration and harmony, each being "unrolling" and "solidifying" at precisely the appropriate moment. Even after formation each being is not fully solidified (as we mentioned above), but only becomes so after a period of genetical specialization. Thus creation may be seen to include two dimensions: one a "descent" from potentiality to actuality, the other a "horizontal" movement from primitive plasticity to specialization. Only the later movement takes place in time and space and consequently it is only this dimension which is represented in the fossil record.

The account of creation in the Book of Genesis provides a suitable guide for the interpretation of the fossil record.³ Genesis describes six cycles beginning with the creation of the Intellectual Light (*Buddhi*) and ending with the creation of man. The relation between the two does not have to be stressed. In the second cycle we see the separation of supra-formal and formal possibilities ("upper and lower waters"), and in the third cycle the first solidification of the formal possibilities in the creation of "earth", that is, the whole of mineral creation. This process signifies an actualization of certain possibilities of the lower psychic domain. The procession of plants, which terminates the third cycle and inaugurates the fourth, coincides with the creation of the luminaries⁴, which are, so to speak, signs of actualization of the upper psychic domain, in relation to the archetypes present in the supra-formal world.⁵ The relation between light and vegetation has been noted above and one should also remember the role of astrology in psychology as well as plants in medicine, and the traditional use of both with regard to the harmony of psyche and body.

The cycles are developments of the possibilities contained synthetically in the Intellectual Light. The harmony of each cycle is due to the integrity of the Intellect and, so far as the formal world is concerned, to the Law which regulates each cycle, giving each its particular characteristics.

The fifth and sixth cycles are of particular interest so far as this paper is concerned since they correspond to the formation of the greater part of the fossil record. The fifth cycle is begun by the creation of the fish and ended by the creation of the birds, while the sixth cycle is begun by the creation of land beasts (i.e. mammals) and terminated by the creation of man. The term creation does not imply that the being in question was not "present" before its creation but rather that during the course of the cycles certain beings "clothed" themselves according to their characteristic possibilities and "emerged" into the formal domain.

The duration of the fifth cycle corresponds to the vast geological period between the middle of the Old Palaeozoic and the end of the Mesozoic. The first fossils to be found are fish, then during the New Palaeozoic and Mesozoic there are amphibians and reptiles. Finally at the end of the Mesozoic fossil birds appear. Here we see a linear and successive emergence of possibilities between two poles, the lower corresponding to the Paleozoic fish and the upper to the cretaceous birds. We would expect to find a continuous series of possibilities between these two extremes; thus in addition to amphibians and reptiles we find fish/amphibians, amphibian/reptiles and reptile/birds. However, because of phyletic considerations (which are determined by cosmic laws) we would expect to find few intermediary creatures since each merely acts as an "isthmus" between adjacent domains, to fulfill certain metaphysical requirements, such as the "equispatial" development of individuals. The creative movement of the fifth cycle involves a passage from aquatic, through terrestrial forms to birds which rise above the earth's surface. The medial creation of the cycle is represented by the amphibian/reptile *Seymouria*. A study of the fossils which are found above *Seymouria* is of interest in illustrating the complexity of the creative process, when several secondary cycles may be operating lateral to and in conjunction with the main cycle. During the Permian, Triassic and lower Jurassic periods, in addition to the Cotylosaur/ Thecodont reptiles which are "central" in relation to a line from fish to birds, we see the creation of lateral reptilian creatures including tortoises and the so-called mammal-like reptiles. The latter beings are of considerable interest since they are creations of a secondary cycle which includes the non-eutherian mammals (e.g. monotremes and marsupials) which still exist today. This secondary cycle forms a link between the major fifth and sixth cycles and may be regarded as a lateral extension of both cycles maintaining a continuous link of possibilities between them.⁶

The sixth cycle is of particular interest because it includes the formation of mammals and man. Man occupies a central position in the creation since "made in the image of God" he is the only being which has direct and free access to the supra-formal world. It is significant that subsequent to the creation of man the Creator is said to "rest", that is to say that he "retreats" to his original Centre of "actionless activity", which constitutes the inner reality of which man is the exterior aspect.

Man is not only the image of God, he is also a eutherian mammal, and these two parts of his nature are inseparably linked. Within the *Eutheria* two divisions may be seen:

those which bear a close physical resemblance to man, namely the *Primates* and those which are diverse in structure and unlike man. The latter group includes all the non-primate *Eutheria*. It is true to say that not only is man supreme, but also primate structure is supreme. The former truth is seen in the separateness of man from the other mammals, while the latter truth is seen by the "dominance" of the primate characteristics over the earliest eutherian mammals. In fact the first eutherians of the Cretaceous were intermediate between primates and insectivores, the insectivores being the most "peripheral" of the mammalian beings. The events of the sixth cycle have two characteristics: a) the successive approximation from "diffuseness" (earliest eutherians) to "centrality" (man); b) the creation of beings "intermediate" between the "periphery" (insectivores) and the "centre" (man). The "intermediate" beings which include the rodents, carnivores, horse and cow types etc., need not concern us but the primates are of considerable interest because of their formal resemblance to man. In relation to the insectivores, tree shrews and monkeys the apes are more central, but in relation to man the apes are extremely decentralized. The fossil record indicates the presence of numbers of beings which in structure were intermediate between apes and man. There is some evidence to suggest that these creatures were also psychically intermediate between apes and men; however with regard to spiritual possibility they were certainly not men and consequently had a zombie-like character. They form part of the sixth cycle macrocosm whereas man is the seventh cycle microcosm.

The first fossilized human skeletons are found in the Reindeer Age or Upper Paleolithic (Upper Pleistocene). These men appear to have been responsible for the beautiful cave paintings found in western Europe. It is clear that they represent a developed culture with a Tradition dependent upon nature for its symbolism, in some respects similar to the North American Indians. The Upper Paleolithic men can in no way be said to be primordial. The first formalization of man probably occurred in the Miocene period, during which the Himalayas and Tibetan plateau were formed.⁷ This region is symbolic-ally related to the *axis mundi*⁸, and consequently to man.

So far we have only considered the creative aspects of the cycles but in addition to these "positive" effects there are also "negative" or destructive effects. We shall consider two cases of destruction both of which indicate "anticipation" of future events. The greatest example of destruction is that which terminated the fifth cycle when all the archosaurian reptiles disappeared, never to be seen again. This catastrophic event coincided with the creation of the first birds and mammals. Earlier in the fifth cycle, when the first reptiles were being created, an aquatic destructive phase took place when almost all the Paleozoic marine vertebrates were eliminated. The seas were re-populated with the modern type of teleostean fish later in the fifth cycle, just before the creation of the birds. The creation of the teleostean fish was the first sign of the approaching sixth cycle which would bring about the elimination of the reptiles and their replacement by mammals. Such events indicate the complex and overlapping nature of the cycles and illustrate the fluidity of the creation process.

The seventh cycle begins with the creation of man, who is the microcosm corresponding to the macrocosm of the sixth cycle. There is no further creation after man. The sixth cycle as we have said is characterized by birds, mammals and teleostean fish, and so we return to the psychological considerations presented at the beginning of this

paper.

The invertebrate animals and the plants constitute the lowest part of the macrocosm and consequently "conform" to the higher changes which are taking place, in the same way as vertebrate creations "con-form" to astrological movements. The passive nature of the lower part of the macrocosm is best seen in the fossil record of the plants. Thus the *Pteridophyta* belong to the fifth cycle and the *Angiospermae* to the sixth. It is worth noting that the interval between the emergence of the "lower" pteridophytes and the "upper" pteridophytes corresponds to the time of existence of *Seymouria*, the amphibian/reptile which occupied the medial isthmus of the fifth cycle.

At the beginning of this paper it was said that there is an analogy between the unifying nature of human consciousness and the phyletic unity of the vertebrate form. Man is thus not only the central and principal mammal, but he is also the principle of the vertebrate body and psyche. This is clearly seen in embryology and has given rise to the erroneous Theory of Recapitulation. It is a well known fact that the young stages of different vertebrates resemble one another more than they resemble the adult stages, and more than the adult stages resemble one another. When the embryology of man is compared with that of other vertebrates it is seen that the early stages are very similar. In later development, however, the non-human vertebrates "deviate" and become specialized in particular respects. For example the visceral pouches which occur in the pharyngeal region of all vertebrate embryos are arrested in development in fish to give rise to the gills, whereas in man their development continues until eventually they are converted into glandular organs and parts of the ear. The amount of change in form with regard to the original embryonic structure is least in man and most in non-human vertebrates. Using the analogy of a tree we can say that whereas the embryology of man proceeds along the central axis or trunk, that of other vertebrates deviates in various places giving rise to side branches, each of which may be regarded as a particularized specialization of the trunk. Therefore the form of man is the vertebrate "norm" and the other vertebrate forms are aspects of the "norm". This is another way of saying that Man is an expression of the Intellect and animals are particularizations of the Intellect.

This paper is in no way intended to be "dogmatic", but rather is written in the spirit of traditional science, in which the study of nature is not pursued for its own sake but for the purpose of allowing the student to discover himself. It is also intended to show that traditional texts are not at all naïve but are exact and true. This is because of their spiritual origin which is also the origin of the whole creation.

¹ This is because of the extremely horizontal nature of these peripheral beings. It is extremely difficult to define the limits of the species in the invertebrates and almost impossible in the plants where even the concept of individuality breaks down. The change which the fossil record shows for peripheral beings must be regarded as passive due to their proximity to the substantial pole of existence. The vertebrates on the other hand play a far more essential role to which the peripheral beings "respond". This is particularly clear in the fossil record of the plants which are the most passive of the peripheral, living beings, and to which we shall refer later.

² Compare the article "Cosmology and modern science" by Titus Burckhardt in *Tomorrow*, volume 12, number 4, (Autumn, 1964).

³ The symbolism of Genesis is complex and synthetic. The commands are not given in time, no more than each *cycle* is actually one day. The fossil record is merely a temporal, sequential reflection of the commands which are in themselves supra-temporal.

⁴ The heavenly bodies are traditionally regarded as "supports" for the faculties of the universal soul which is the cause of all change in the sub-lunar world.

⁵ The slow rotation of the heavenly sphere is the first sign of the descent of harmonizing, spiritual influences into the lower world.

⁶ The "lateral" nature of the non-eutherian mammals is also seen in their geographical position.

⁷ There is every reason to suppose that primordial man was not at all solidified and this accounts for the absence of fossils.

⁸ Mount Kailas and the four rivers which radiate from it (Indus, Brahmaputra, Ganges and Sutlej) correspond to the Paradise of Genesis.