

# The Biospheric Symbiosis

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The total society of mankind can be understood only by reference to the great symbiosis<sup>1</sup> of which mankind is a part. This is the Symbiosis of the Biosphere, which is the transitional society between the Autonomic and Hypernomic Worlds.<sup>2</sup> We stand here before a structure that evidently comprises elements that are still lacking in our human experience. We know that the Biosphere, as a society of living organisms, has existed for many hundreds of millions of years and that it is likely to persist so long as the climatic conditions on the earth's surface continue to be controlled by the interchanges of energy between the atmosphere, the oceans and the outer layer of the crust. There is no apparent reason why this should not continue for another thousand million years.

The Biosphere includes all that is associated with life on the surface of our planet; and here is a situation of prodigious complexity for mankind alone. There are more than three thousand million human beings living at the present time; we cannot estimate the total number of human individuals that will live through past and future history. We exist on the earth with many thousands of billions of animals, vertebrate and invertebrate. The whole is interlaced with a network of connections that defies description.

Man is represented by one species and there have probably not been more than three or four species of hominidae in the million and a half years of man's existence on earth. Within the total Event that started with the appearance of life on the earth and which will end with its final cessation, humanity occupies, in duration and magnitude, a very small place. The significance of man as a dominant life form in the Biospheric Symbiosis consists in a task to be performed in the Evolution of life on the earth. 'CO With this in mind, we can set up a structure of societies beginning with Individual Man and ending with the Biosphere as a whole. It can be represented by the structure c of the three interlocking processes of the enneagram. In the Biospheric Symbiosis, three major processes coalesce into a Grand Cosmic Cycle:

1. The Transformation of Human Selves into Individuals.
2. The Evolution of Humanity.
3. The Spiritualization of the Biosphere.

These three distinct cycles spring from three independent sources. Each of these characterizes a radically distinct kind of society or element of the total symbiosis. The total character of the Biosphere must be a matter of conjecture, but is, no doubt, connected with the role of life as the reconciling element in the Universe.<sup>3</sup> Life on the earth presents us with a complexity of relevances too immense to be represented by a single structure. Because of this, we will deal only with the proper role of mankind in the Biospheric Symbiosis.<sup>4</sup> As we are dealing with three independent processes, we can make use of our ideas regarding the harmony of the enneagram. Each source or "do" leads into three stages before the need for "blending" arises. These three triplets can be deduced from the nature of the sources.

## FIRST TRIPLET

Initial stage.

Second stage.

Third stage.

The Human Person

The Family

The Clan or Nation SECOND TRIPLET

Initial stage.

**Second stage.**

**Third stage.**

**The Cultural Community or Civilization**

**The Total Human Situation limited in time, the Epoch**

**The Total Human Situation unlimited in time Humanity THIRD TRIPLET**

**Initial stage.**

**Second stage.**

**Third stage.**

**Man as a vehicle of Spiritualization**

**The particular form of life in which Spiritualization is concentrated. Evolving Stem**

**Form of Existence dominant in the Biosphere. Dominant Life-Form**

**These nine stages together form nine elements of which three are sources and six are steps. The enneagram has only nine points, but one of these appears twice, as the point of entrance and also the point of exit. This is due to the property of the enneagram of representing cosmic situations in the intransitive dimensions of Space and Eternity and the transitive dimensions of Time and Hyparxis.**

**The first sequence enters into, beyond the national societies, the international symbiosis, here called the Epoch.<sup>5</sup>**

**Epochs are associated with the conscious evolution of mankind, and therefore grow in importance with each successive stage. The Epochs outlive many generations of mankind -usually their duration is of the order of a hundred generations. Beyond the Epoch is the Humanity at one of the major stages of its evolution. For example, we are now in the stage when humanity is be-coming conscious of its own wholeness (One-World Awareness), but not yet of its role in the Biosphere. When the time comes, a transformed 'Humanity will begin the task of guiding the evolution of all life on the earth towards its great destiny. At a still later stage, a new Humanity quite unlike the human race as we know it today will set itself to coalesce the soul of the Biosphere.**

**These speculative prophecies of the very distant future are suggested by the structure of our diagram. At the point where Humanity assumes responsibility for its own evolution, it meets with a new problem: that of the Spiritualization of the Biosphere itself. It will then be seen that human existence has no separate significance and that a prodigious change of attitude towards all life on the earth will have to be accepted if further progress is to be made.**

**The Evolving Stems of the past have all prepared the way for the next step forward. Thus, mammals have prepared the way for the coming of man. Humanity will discover its role as an Evolving Stem of the Human Life-Form that will eventually complete the transformation of life.**

**In describing the Symbiosis of the Biosphere we will be obliged to look forward into the future. The reason for this is that Man is a relatively recent arrival in the Biosphere and has not yet developed the properties that will eventually distinguish him existentially from the animals. We write existentially, because in his essential nature man has been totally different from the animals since he first appeared on the earth.**

**The symbiosis we are studying in this section is perceptible in time and space. We cannot observe directly the eternal pattern upon which it is constructed; but we can deduce it on systematic principles. The hyparchic significance<sup>6</sup> escapes us altogether-in other words, we have no means of answering the question whether the Biospheric Symbiosis corresponds to the Destiny of the Biosphere. If we could know the answer to this question we would know a great deal about the destiny and future of mankind.**

**At the present time, our interest must necessarily be directed mainly to the societies that are exemplified in our experience.**

### **The Family**

**The family can be taken as the entire field of personal contacts of man and woman. The tendency to weaken family ties that has developed recently is generally agreed to be retrograde. The family society was formerly taken as including three generations. The clan or sept, owning land in common and claiming descent from a common ancestor, gives us a possible upper limit to the authentic bond of family. The extent of a family society can be recognized by the existence of a personal link between its members. A man may never have met or heard of some other member; but he can "place" him by his parentage, dwelling-place or occupation. Thus we can recognize sub-groups of members within a complete family society. They are all kith and kin, but they do not all perform the same function. In the ideal patriarchal society, there are sub-groups working in harmony on the different levels of the selfhood. Some are occupied with material needs, others with satisfactions and others again with teaching and transformation.**

**Thus, the family is the natural environment in which the existential man develops. Its main influence is upon the four Selves that receive their content mainly from the family. The Personality draws from all sources. It is very probable that a family society shares in a common Fate.**

**The family also has an essential significance inasmuch as it is to provide the conditions for acquiring disposition and discrimination. This task belongs to its inner life. The family has a symbiotic relevance for the Biosphere as the natural unit of existential humanity. It is with the family that transformations of the human life-form begin.**

**In all human societies, the family is the prime social force within larger social complexities. The symbiosis of the family leads us directly on to the next stage: the nations.**

### **National Societies**

**The family is a centrally directed unity. The members share a common heritage that holds them together. The heritage includes consanguinity, common experiences, possessions held in common, a common language, beliefs and traditions. The pull of these forces is not exhausted when they cease to produce a personal linkage. We can recognize, beyond the limits of the family, societies with a more complex structure, but which are still unified by ties of the same kind. These societies are nations or peoples. Such societies have existed on the earth from before recorded history. They are usually held together by geographic boundaries as well as a common heritage; but the latter is the true bond of nationhood. This is verified by observing the ability of nations to preserve their unity in migrating into a new geographical environment. The common heritage usually includes a common language and a marked endogamic tendency.**

**Although the unity of a nation is mainly existential it always extends over several levels of existence and includes common attitudes towards Value. There can be, for example, national art, national morality and national obligations recognized and shared by the various groups within a national society.**

**Nations must, of course, be distinguished from states, which are instruments for the exercise of authority and do not belong to the natural societies of the biosphere. State governments are seldom coextensive with national societies, although they often claim to base their authority upon the "rights of nations." Modern states often embrace many nations and nations are divided among states. The "state" as an institution is constantly changing in form. It should, ideally, have the structure of a four-term system, for its function is to sustain harmonious cooperation between the four psychostatic sub-groups of the total human society. Political economy, or state-craft, is a part of the general harmony of human societies and it will continue to change as mankind evolves towards structures that will supersede the modern state as it has taken the place of older institutions. This leads us to the role of civilizations.**

## **Civilizations**

**Civilizations differ from families, clans and nations by their origin and by their function. They are not held together by the centripetal influences of a common origin or economic and vegetative pressures. They usually extend over regions that are geographically dissimilar. Often they embrace many nations living under quite different climatic and economic conditions. Moreover, they arise, develop, flourish, degenerate and are replaced in a manner quite different from families and nations.**

**Civilizations are also different from the symbioses belonging to the third and fourth stages that embrace the whole human race over a period of time. Civilizations do not belong to the "stages" of human evolution, but are rather channels through which Value influences enter. They are invisibly associated with the Soul-Stuff Pool,<sup>7</sup> the state of which they reflect in the visible life of mankind. On this view, civilizations have their origins, neither in the personal needs of man or woman nor in the spiritual pattern of Destiny of the Biosphere, but in the evolutionary urge of mankind as a whole. They are the strivings of the still immature Soul of Man and they mark a stage in its transformation from the formless Soul-Stuff Pool to the future Cosmic Man.**

**Civilizations are characterized by specific value-structures including popular tastes, social moralities and human and religious values. A Civilization may endure for a thousand years and embrace a substantial proportion of mankind. It may also be relatively restricted in scope and duration. In all cases, civilizations have a dyadic character. Outwardly, they are social and political, arousing in their members expansive ambition and the urge to impose their value-structure upon outlying societies. Inwardly, they are human and religious, seeking for the realization of the Essential Revelation associated with their arising. Arnold Toynbee, whose Study of History is our principal source for the picture of civilizations, shows how they have been associated both with great Empires and with Universal Churches.**

**Civilizations are comparatively recent arrivals upon the scene of human history. Toynbee distinguishes 'forty odd that have flourished in the past five thousand years. It does not follow that the role they have performed was unfilled before. There have always been Sources from which value-structures have entered human experience. Before there were civilizations, Schools were already in Being, but their operations were confined to a minority who stood apart from the rest of mankind. The role of Civilizations has been to spread value-structures widely among all the people of the world. This role is now almost complete, and Civilizations as we know them will give place to new kinds of societies for the transmission of values. This cannot take place until the higher values begin to enter the Soul of Man through the Soul-Stuff Pool. We may be encouraged to hope that progress is being made in the purification of the SSP, by the observation that ruthless cruelty in human dealings is no longer accepted as it was two thousand years ago. There is also a widespread recognition of the responsibility that the strong bear for the weak. These are indications that the animal nature in the Human Soul is less dominant than it was in the past. Unfortunately, there is no indication that five thousand years of Civilizations, that have embraced nine tenths of the human race, have succeeded in diminishing the deeper evils of egoistic thirst for existence and for domination over others. Many millennia will have to pass before the flow of influences coming from the Second Source will be very different from what it is at present.**

## **Epochs**

**The third great stage in the transition from man to Biosphere comes with the world society of the Epoch, which is in itself a symbiosis. This means that it is more than a society of all mankind existing over a period of time. It is placed in an environment of evolutionary and involutory transformation, which includes all the forms of life in the Biosphere. This is not all, for the Epoch has an invisible, or essential, environment that is the whole Destiny of Mankind. The symbiosis is total so far as mankind is concerned, excluding at most, vestigial traces of earlier periods that have fallen out of the evolutionary stream. Since there can be only one such totality at any one time and since their duration is measured in thousands of years, we can**

have very little historical material for their study. Nevertheless, it seems certain that the Value-Structures of different Civilizations, though conflicting in particulars, have a recognizable common element that marks the stage reached in the general Evolution of the human race. Within the Epoch, civilizations, cultures, states and super-states, world religions and so on, are distinct terms within the total structure. Only in the recent past, has enough historical material become available to permit a synoptic view of the Epochal Symbiosis. Because of its place in the total symbiosis, we shall expect each succeeding Epoch to make a specific and recognizable contribution to human progress. We shall call this the Master Idea of the Epoch. Its structure is bound to have a degree of concreteness that corresponds to the number of elements that it must combine.

### Humanity

The Human Essence class comprises all beings past, present or future who, living on the earth, have the potentiality for conscious transformation. Within this Totality, different species of man have arisen in the past and will no doubt do so in the future. Any such major cycle of human transformation determines a totality that we shall call an Humanity. The duration of such an element in the Biosphere may be a hundred thousand years - at this stage we have no criterion for deciding. It may be that the successive cycles correspond to the development of the Selves in a single human totality.<sup>8</sup> The guiding principle here is the belief that mankind has a unique destiny to fulfill and that all subordinate societies are involved in this destiny whether they are aware of it or not.

### Spiritualization

Here we have the notion of the "Realization of Essence in Existence and the Spiritualization of Existence through Essence." By including it in our scheme of societies of the Biosphere, we imply that there is a Spiritualization for "communities" of Individuals. This suggests a connection with the -Individualized Souls of the Psychoteleios Group (who have achieved liberation and are free from the delusions of earthly life). We shall tentatively associate this source within the Biospheric Totality with the "Communion of Saints" and the perfect individuals who have-accepted responsibility for guiding the spiritualizing process on the earth: the "Prophetic Circle." This may include also the Demiurgic Essences to form a society of Individual Wills who combine - beyond the limitations of time and place - to perform this task.<sup>9</sup>

### Evolving Stem

The human totalities that will appear on the earth cannot by themselves accomplish the whole task of transforming the Biosphere into a Conscious Creative Being. For this great aim, many different roles must be combined. We understand by the Evolving Stem the society which over a major period of time is the growing point in which the significance of life on the earth is concentrated.

### Dominant Life-Form of the Biosphere

We have hitherto taken the Biosphere to be an existential totality occupying an indeterminate position between life and existence beyond life. We now have to broaden our view to take into account the essential significance of the great society of living things that inhabits the surface of our planet. We have surmised that humanity is in course of developing a Great Human Soul; we may make the further step and suggest that the Biosphere is also in course of Evolution towards Unity.

At the present time, man is almost without any sense of responsibility towards the Biosphere. He lives at the expense of the life around him. He forces unnatural processes upon the soil, upon vegetation and upon the animals. He destroys the germinal essence in insects, micro-organisms and other forms of life. All this is done without any consideration for the Biosphere from which he was produced and into which he must return. Like a wanton child, he takes and does not restore and his picture of the future is drawn in terms of human "Mastery over Nature." At the same time, man longs for a destiny beyond nature. He is gaining experience - often very painfully - but he understands very little of life and nothing of the

reason why there is life upon this planet earth. Very few members of our present day civilizations are even interested in these problems. Not only to the ordinary, average man, but to philosophers, statesmen and religious leaders, the problem before us is taken as beginning and ending with man. All that we have written in this chapter will be taken either as foolish speculation or as wholly irrelevant to the real problems of our time. Such dismissal of the Biosphere and its Symbiosis is wholly mistaken, for the problems of life and death that confront mankind today can be resolved only if help comes from the that is working for the Transformation of the Biosphere.

The comparison of the ideal structure of human society with the present situation on the earth makes it evident that there is no effectual Psychokinetic Group.<sup>10</sup> This is the principal reason why mankind is living out of harmony with the needs of the Community of Life on the Earth. The Specialists who have acquired some degree of understanding of the situation have no authority and are compelled to act as the instruments of the psychostatic leaders. When the situation is studied dispassionately, it would seem that the progressive deterioration of man's relations with the Biosphere is inevitable. It has even been half-seriously suggested that man will ultimately be able to dispense with all other forms of life, producing not only all materials but all nutrients required for his existence by the exercise of his own power to control the material energies. Even today, voices are raised in warning against such folly - not on moral grounds, but because of the evidences that the destruction of life on the earth is outstripping man's ability to find substitutes. Deforestation, the loss of fertility of arable lands, the depopulation of the oceans, the adulteration of food-stuffs, and the loss of nutritive values, increasing population pressure in the human race itself, are all cited as danger signals that mankind refuses to heed. Indeed, man is playing a role of "anti-symbiotic." <sup>11</sup>

If our analysis of the social structure corresponds to the reality, these danger signals are warnings of a deeper peril: that of the emergence of human societies so highly organized as to dominate the world and yet wholly and willfully ignorant of the true significance of man's existence.

1. When it is necessary to take into account the relevances of a Society within a family of Societies in process of interaction and development, we shall speak of a symbiosis ... symbiosis is a society that cannot be understood except by reference to the mutual reliance of its member groups and also by reference to the world process in which it occurs." The Dramatic Universe, Vol. III, Coombe Springs Press, page 231.

2. Autonomic means "under its own laws" and refers to living existence. Hypernomic means "above the laws."

3. The three worlds of materiality (Hyponomic), vitality (Autonomic), and deity (Hypernomic), form a triad in which Life transmits the Reconciling Impulse.

4. The history of life on the earth, including the arising of mind, involves a whole new set of relevancies.

5. The theory of Epochs was introduced in the author's Crisis in Human Affairs, Hodder & Stoughton, 1948.

6. This is a measure of its contribution to Reality.

7. The Soul-Stuff Pool is the reservoir of experiential energy from which the raw soul-material of human beings is drawn and to which it returns. The countless generations of mankind gradually transform the soul-stuff.

8. The reader will recognize a similarity in these ideas to those of Tantric Buddhism and other traditions of the Middle East and China. The author has not found any verification of the precise cycles such as the period of 432,000 years which seems to have originated with the Chaldean cosmologists. The theory of "societies" here introduced was developed independently of these traditions; but the resemblance is not without significance.

9. This society is acting on the level of "Providential History." Demiurgic essences are the class

of beings who exist on a higher level than man and are responsible for maintaining planetary harmony. As Gurdjieff in his *Beelzebub's Tales* suggests, their work is not necessarily favorable to the liberation of individuals from the cosmic mechanism

10. The group undergoing personal transformation and moving from personality to individuality -or becoming real. This group is between the psychostatic who lives a purely external life, and the psychoteleios, who has attained self-realization.

11. There is an American fantasy which installs the Devil in a Manhattan skyscraper and shows how he (the devil) teaches man how to destroy the Biosphere

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