

Lesson 9

UNITY OF LIFE

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From *The Process of Self-Transformation*

The transcendent consciousness brings out another insight into the nature of things — the unity of life. This is the ultimate foundation of universal brotherhood.

Let us explore this more deeply.

Look at a single leaf of a tree. Its life appears to be separate from the other leaves. The apparent proof of such separateness is that if we cut that leaf, it will die, but the other leaves will not die or be injured.

Yet look again. What gives life to the leaf? It comes from the nourishing sap that passes through the twig, the same twig that supplies the same life to the other leaves. In other words, the leaf doesn't have a separate life. There is only one life that animates not only the leaves but also the twigs, branches, trunk and roots of the entire tree, which are but the outer garments of that life. The garment withers and dies during autumn and winter, and a new garment springs up in spring and summer. The garment changes, but the life doesn't. It's the same one life. The leaves look separate, but they're really but one life.

Look at our fingers. They're also separate. You wound the small finger and you feel the pain, but the other fingers aren't bleeding. They remain healthy and unaffected. And yet these fingers don't have separate lives. They are part of the one life that runs through the entire body of the human being. The separateness is superficial. If we look deeper into the nature of the fingers, we'll see that they are not really separate.

We see other human beings as separate from us. If you feel pain, I don't feel it. If you die, I don't die. Indeed, it seems true that we're separate. But that's because we're identifying ourselves with the outer garment that we call the body or personality. If we look deeper into our human nature, a different realization may dawn upon us. Among those who realize this inner unity of life are the mystics, whose consciousness of the higher self or higher triangle has awakened. In them, there is a natural emergence not only of compassion, but a realization of the unity of life.

Is it any wonder that Francis of Assisi wouldn't even step on ants when he walked? That he considered the sun and the moon as his brother and sister?

John Donne had a mystical insight when he wrote the immortal words:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

CORROBORATION

This concept of unity in organisms and in nature is now gaining wider acceptance in scientific circles. In biology, the theory of morphic fields and morphic resonance is one example;

the Gaia theory of the earth as one organism is another; Carl Jung's collective unconscious in psychology is another example. Arthur Koestler propounded the concept of holons, a view that has been adopted by transpersonal psychologists such as Ken Wilber. A holon is a whole unit or organism that is also a part of a larger whole. Everything is a holon, that is, it's composed of smaller parts, although it is itself a part of a larger whole. A holon is equivalent to a morphic unit of Rupert Sheldrake. The whole series of holons forms a hierarchy of holons, or a holarchy.

COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

One of the major contributions of Jung is his theory of the existence of the collective unconscious, a level of consciousness shared in common by all of humanity. Its manifestations are in the form of myths and archetypes.

He said, "The collective unconscious . . . is not individual but common to all men, and perhaps even to all animals, and is the true basis of the individual psyche."

MORPHIC RESONANCE

Sheldrake propounded the theory of morphic resonance in 1981 with the publication of his book *A New Science of Life*. Everything, that is, every *morphic unit*, whether atoms or crystals, organs, animals, social systems or the entire cosmos itself, has its own *morphic field*. These fields determine the form and behavior of the unit or organism, because the fields have *memories*, and the forms and behavior follow these memories. These fields can be behavioral, social, cultural or mental. They constitute the underlying unity of organisms as well as the interrelationship between different organisms, which may be part of a larger morphic unit.

Similar morphic units affect each other through a process that Sheldrake called "*morphic reso-*

nance." For example, ten rats in England may learn to solve a new maze in ten hours. This learning is said to have an effect on other rats that may be thousands of miles away, such that rats in the United States may solve the same maze in a shorter period. Experiments have been conducted that appear to validate this hypothesis.

Although Sheldrake is careful not to say that this implies a common consciousness, he does say that it is something similar to the concept of collective unconscious of Jung. In a television interview with Dr. Jeffrey Mishlove, Sheldrake was quite explicit about this:

MISHLOVE: When you talk about these fields containing a memory, they almost begin to sound like the mind itself, in some funny way.

SHELDRAKE: Well, if they're like the mind, they're much more like the unconscious mind than the conscious mind, because we have to remember that in our own minds, a large part of the mind, as Freud and Jung and others have told us, is unconscious. And what Jung and his followers have emphasized is that we all not only have our own personal unconscious, but we tune in to or access the collective unconscious, which is a collective memory of the species. What I'm saying is very like that idea, but it's not confined to human beings, it's right through nature.

The sharing of consciousness of animals of a particular species is equivalent to the concept of a group soul in theosophy. By extending this concept to human beings, it means that there is a larger shared field or consciousness among human beings. As Sheldrake said, "In the human realm this is similar to Jung's theory of the collective unconscious."

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Questions for Review:

1. What is the rational basis for universal brotherhood and the unity of life?
2. In what way does psychology corroborate the commonality of human consciousness?
3. What is morphic resonance and how does it support the idea of the unity of life?