

Self-Construction in the Developing World

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Written: 10 Sep 1996

One of the most common prejudices of the XX century was the opinion that one might change oneself without changing the world around. Personal perfection was opposed to the economical and social diseases, and people were incited to detach their spiritual life from the flow of “external” events. All means were considered good for such a purpose: from calm meditation to ecstasy, from “sublime” thoughts to psychedelics, from rejecting any responsibility to overwork. Many oriental teachings and practices became most popular just because they promised the quietness and isolation of the out-of-the-world existence.

However, there ain’t no such thing as a free lunch. The price to pay for individual “self-perfection” in an imperfect environment was the loss of subjectivity itself, the reduction of a person to the level of an animal. All the human desires and social interests were to be suppressed, and one was to be quite satisfied with the “basic” (animal) needs: food and drink, shelter, sex. The “superior wisdom” and “higher knowledge” obtained in this way actually proved to be aimless and senseless, never going beyond trivial banalities, the more conceited the less their preachers could comprehend human behavior proper.

This philosophy of abstract individualism was accompanied by scientific reductionism, proclaiming the identity of human and animal behavior, so that a person became a prisoner of the organism, nothing more than mere *physiological* process, albeit very complex and flexible, like the development of neural networks. One of the strongest trends in the XX century psychotherapy was concerned with equipping a person with a collection of psychological techniques insuring almost complete self-control and self-regulation. Well, this did work sometimes—with those who became fixed on it. Still, their achievements could not significantly affect the mental health of the others, like the record-beating aspirations of sportsmen wasted the physical health of the humanity, rather than improved it.

Paradoxically enough, all the religions added to the same end, though some of them apparently tried to distinguish human “soul” from the animal one, and introduce a kind of human responsibility. Still, the subduing of the person to a “superior” force (god, spirit, abstract idea, ritual, final goal, karma etc.), which constitutes an essential part of religious consciousness, could only mean that the individual remained deprived of the active role in the reorganization of the world, and the only field one could cultivate was one’s “own” personality, and the only way to cultivate it was to suppress everything that called for more productive behavior.

Philosophy of Unism considers personal development an indispensable level of the development of the World in general. This level differs from both the level of existence and the level of life—and the keyword here is *activity*. In the course of it, **the Subject** comprehends the World as **the Object**, and reproduces it as **the Product**. The both sides are necessary for subjectivity, and the wider is the scope of activity the more Subject it assumes. Therefore, any kind of self-restriction hinders the development of subjectivity—and thus the development of the world. In other words, another side of subjectivity is *universality*. Briefly, the Subject may be defined as an Object that links any object in the world to any other object in a universal way.

However, no finite formation can provide enough universality. Consequently, any finite form may just *represent* some level of subjectivity—and never “contain” or “possess” it. In particular, a person is a kind of “individualized” subjectivity, but one’s personality is always “outside” the body, which is not essential for the personality and may be completely disposed of sometimes; thus an eminent person may continue to live as a Subject after the physical death, and there may exist personalities that had never possessed a physical body, like literature characters or group pseudonyms (Kozma Prutkov, Nicolas Bourbaki).

There are different levels of subjectivity which may be represented by an individual, a group, a social layer, a country, or even the humanity in general. Surely, there are many more levels about which we know nothing yet. All that hierarchy is developing as a part of the world, reflecting its hierarchical structures. Individual development may only be a small fragment of the picture—still, even a smaller mirror may reflect the whole sun! *Any* subjectivity is infinite by its nature, and a person becomes equal to the Universe as soon as the person's subjectivity is concerned, and any action may represent activity as such.

Now, it becomes clear that one may become a Subject just *acting* like Subject, rather than *pretending* to be something. Therefore, personal development comes from *activity* rather than self-patching. If you strive for personal perfection, you have to decide how to improve the world first, and to aim at something outside you to get to yourself.

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