



Lesson 1: Evolution of Desires

The history of the universe is often divided into discrete eras, such as the period when the universe was forming and life as we define it was absent. Existence was limited to chemical interactions that took the form of solid, liquid or gas depending upon the temperature and pressure of the materials involved. Later, a new era emerged when the first vegetation appeared. In between these two eras was a tumultuous time leading to what was essentially a new level of existence: a leap from the world of rocks and chemicals to a world of plants.

Another discrete era began when the first animals appeared, followed by the dinosaurs that roamed the earth, and finally reaching the vast array of species on the planet today. Just a few tens of thousands of years ago, prehistoric man emerged from the animal level, but developed the animal characteristics to new and unique degrees that set the human species apart from the rest of the animal kingdom. This ushered in a new era where the predominant feature is man's interaction with and impact on his physical and social environment.

The transitions between each of these eras, from Still to Vegetative to Animate and Speaking, were times of temperature extremes, cataclysms of various sorts and the rapid extinction of species as new life forms emerged. It is almost as if every time a new level of existence appeared, a massive change was required in order to give birth to the new era.

If instead of looking at these events as discrete incidents, we begin to view them as a logical continuum of events, a question appears. What is causing each new level of existence to come into being?

When viewed from the perspective of the development of *desire* as opposed to sheer randomness and chaos, we can find an order to what we define as "history." In the four above mentioned eras (Still, Vegetative, Animate and Speaking), it is easy to identify a specific collection of desires for each and every level. For instance, on the level of Still, we primarily see one single desire being fulfilled – the desire to remain inert, motionless. Anything that does not satisfy that desire is met with resistance, and requires energy to overcome.

If we explore the Vegetative level, we see an expansion in both the number and intensity of desires. While the desire of the rock is to stay the way it is, a plant has an inherent desire to grow. While the Still level has a singular desire, plants have many desires, including desires to receive sunlight for photosynthesis, minerals to provide the nutrients required for growth, the desire for water, a desire to reproduce, and a desire for warmth. These may not be conscious in the same way we think of "desires" in humans, but they are the motivating factors that make a plant do what a plant does.

A quick look at the Animate level shows us that all the desires from the Still and Vegetative levels remain in some fashion (desires for rest, growth and nutrition), but we also begin to see an entirely new set of desires that are unknown



to objects on the Vegetative or Still levels: desires to be mobile, to have a certain level of independence, and in some cases, to have a social structure of some sort.

Finally, in the Speaking level, we find all of the above desires along with desires for more precise means of communications, a need for more complex interpersonal relationships (social needs), desires for possession of goods and property, a need for a sense of self worth, and desires for knowledge and beauty. These desires have led us to develop our ability for abstract reasoning and communications, explore science and technology, and implement elaborate social structures designed to suit varied circumstances.

Along with the change in desires, there is another distinct characteristic that separates these individual levels of existence such as plants and animal. In order to be able to tell whether a desire has been fulfilled or remains empty, each level of existence must have “senses” that are tuned to detect the reception of that particular desire. Thus, each and every level has a specific number of desires, pleasures and the corresponding senses that precisely correspond to the strength of the desire of that particular level. This means that where an oak tree has senses that enable it to receive pleasure from heat, water, sun and growing, a dog can receive pleasure from running around the yard, eating whatever

appeals to it, from seeing different things and hearing different sounds, and relating to its external environment in a much more personal manner.

If we now look at this time continuum of history not as discrete moments of change, but rather as a continuous development of desire, with specific periods of transformation where new desires and senses emerge, a pattern begins to take shape. This pattern can also be seen within each level, so there is a still, vegetative, animate and speaking degree within the Still level, and also within the Vegetative level, within the Animate level and within the Speaking level. It is not that the rock contains a plant or an animal inside of it, or that the rock will turn into a plant. What we are referring to here is that the *level of desire* that initially produced rocks evolves, until what is produced is on the level of plants rather than rocks. Nothing is lost, however, and the level of desire corresponding to rocks is still present and a new level of desire is added on top of it.

Still	Still
	Vegetative
	Animate
	Speaking
Vegetative	Still
	Vegetative
	Animate
	Speaking
Animate	Still
	Vegetative
	Animate
	Speaking
Speaking	Still
	Vegetative
	Animate
	Speaking



But this brings up another question. If the Still level contains degrees of still, vegetative, animate and speaking, then why aren't we able to observe these sub-desires in a rock? This can be most easily understood through an analogy with human reproduction. When the egg is first fertilized, it is called a "zygote." The single cell zygote contains everything that is required for the development of the future human being, but it is all in potential. The necessary material is present from the moment of fertilization, but it will only be activated when the growing embryo has reached the right stage of development for that particular function.

In the same way, the Still level contains desires of the vegetative, animate and speaking levels, but only in potential. Until the desires that are present in the Still level develop to the right stage, though, these degrees will remain present but inactive. Once the overall desire grows to the right intensity, the desires contained within the next degree will begin to be activated. Just as the baby is born once it is fully developed, the complete development of the desires results in the "birth" of the next level.

The implications of this structure are profound. This means that just as the human embryo contains the entire blueprint to create a person and will never create a dog or a rosebush instead, the entirety of all of creation is contained in the initial blueprint of the Still level. The sequence of activation is also already set. Just as the heart, lungs, brain, arms, and legs of babies always develop in exactly the same sequence, the Still, Vegetative, Animate and Speaking degrees will always appear in this order within each level. In other words, we can use this pattern to understand where we came from and where we are heading.

In upcoming articles, we will take a look at where we exist within this pattern on both a societal and a personal level. We will begin to understand the challenges that confront us in life from a new perspective, and gain insight into how we can approach these challenges. Most importantly, with this new perspective, we can begin to glimpse the levels we have yet to attain, and can find ways to bring those new desires closer to fulfillment.