

# HUMAN TRUTH

A Philosophy for a World in Crisis



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- (i) The Wrong Reality; The Essential Truth About Ourselves and Our World
- (ii) Slaves To The Machine; Beat the System That Controls Your Life.

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# HUMAN TRUTH

A Philosophy for a World in Crisis

John Bapty Oates

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A very special thanks goes to my wife  
Marguerite, for her loving care and  
support throughout these many years  
of writing, sustaining a precious and  
everlasting bond between us



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Bapty Oates began free and independent thinking at age 4 in 1929, essentially questioning why the human race, being capable of high intelligence, did not conduct itself or its affairs intelligently.

He has been conditioned to the minimum by reading and formal education; now concluding that this is no disadvantage—but is helpful to the discovery of our fundamental truth, or humantruth as he calls it.

He maintains a website; [www.humantruth.org](http://www.humantruth.org)

## ABOUT THE BOOK

This challenging book examines the state of the human mind and our world today, carrying essential thought further than ever before and making the profound discovery that what we regard as ‘our mind’ is in effect two minds; the conscious and the postconscious (‘unconscious’ describes a *state* of mind).

The brain mutation that made us human gave our existing conscious mind much increased capacity yet allowed it to remain motivated chiefly by instinct.

As a result the human race, despite high intelligence, has mainly applied itself to pursuing and developing the unintelligent competitive drives of instinct; responding to market forces - political and other pressures - continually causing man’s inhumanity to man.

But mutation provided a large surplus mental capacity that was sidelined and ignored by the conscious. This uncommitted, powerful reasoning capability formed itself into the postconscious mind; the source of conscience - with freedom and independence to follow its own unconstrained course.

The function of a free conglomeration of neurons, axons, dendrites, synapses etc., can only be the ultimate discovery of truth. No other function makes sense. Clearly then, the objective of our chief faculty, the postconscious, is truth, and such an intelligent species as ourselves needs to be guided by that truth (ie to be supraconscious), recognising it as the basis of complete agreement and cooperation, to be realised in a new world community.

Instead, guided by instinct, we have subjected ourselves to the Machine and its amoral Wrong Reality, with some good but also many immoral, crazy, painful and devastating consequences.

This book tells the story of our tragic march towards Machine-based societies and points the way to surely the only enduring solution; our collective advancement to supraconsciousness, and to a truly humane, or ‘humantrue’ society.

# HUMAN TRUTH

## A New Philosophy

### FOREWORD

**B**ooks are generally part of the norm. As a rule they are written by authors who occupy a certain place in the 'real' world. The writing is designed to interest or entertain the public. People have developed certain expectations of books; they like those which offer to help and strengthen the self, to make it more contented and successful in the world, to reconcile the existing self to its present reality. Publishers are aware of those expectations and usually publish only those books that promise to interest and entertain a wide enough public as to bring in a profit. That is the present 'way of the world'. This book envisages a very much better world, and a very different, humantrue way of life.

I think it is fair to say as a rule that books do not greatly change their readers. Most of us enjoy reading books that broadly harmonise with our own outlook, even though they may present a world different from ours in detail. We do study some books dealing with certain special subjects for the sake of the facts or insights they contain, which we in turn wish to learn. We read, with detached interest, views and opinions which go to one extreme on our left so-to-speak, and another extreme to our right; while we ourselves keep treading our old familiar middle path, little changed. In other words, we regard books as adjuncts of ourselves, or as objects that are subject to our whim, to be accepted or rejected, liked or disliked, noticed or unnoticed by us, at will.

We don't expect a book to be more closely representative of us than our own selves, showing that there is another, truer, potential self that we do not yet

recognise. We don't expect a book to penetrate further into ourselves than we wish; to question our cherished beliefs; to undermine our defences and to move us well away from our old familiar path. This book does, or aims to do, all these things.

I am approaching you not as you presently are but as you truly, potentially are, and hope that you will approach my efforts not determined to maintain your present self, but willing to seek and find your true self. I hope you will not let your present self turn you away from this book, but that you will allow the book to challenge your 'higher' mind; that you will listen to your own thoughts that then emerge.

Should you choose to ignore these words, that choice will be made by your conscious self, but it is likely that your 'higher' mind, i.e. your postconscious, will take them in despite that self. The function of the postconscious is truth. Its true conclusions are available to consciousness, but not its deepest reasoning that goes to form those true conclusions. Since it is the same, or potentially the same mind in everybody, any well-developed postconscious that reveals its truth shall be revealing the actual or potential truth within any other postconscious. That is what this book is trying to do. It goes against convention, but present convention is false. Above all else we need human-truth.

J.B.O.

**HISTORY** - writing of the first edition of this book was completed in 1990 against the background concerns of that time. World events have moved on, of course, and this new 2008 edition reflects some of the changes. Nuclear power was abandoned and Capitalist/Communist confrontation has largely disappeared, mainly due to public protest. Awareness of the global warming threat has dramatically increased, as has scientific understanding of the origins of this planet and of the formation of life.

On the other hand wars have continued, despite public protest, and the old confrontation has been replaced by that between Democracy and Islam. To combat the threats of climate change it is proposed to reintroduce nuclear power.

In these and many other respects this short passage of time makes no big difference, for the characteristics of our existing wrong reality and this book's purpose to expose them, and change them, remain the same.

J.B.O. 2009

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## PREFACE

The objective of this book is to help in bringing about a benign, peaceful, happy - i.e. humantrue - society. This will be a worldwide society whose basic values and practices are in accord with the fundamental understanding, thinking and feeling of every individual. These values and practices will be constantly and universally upheld because they have been fully and willingly agreed. This society will ensure that the minds of its children are fully opened so that they share in this common, and true, understanding, thinking and feeling from the beginning.

In a humantrue society there will be a great sense of trust in all mankind and a feeling of total security. There will be no locking of doors to protect property. Children shall go out to play without fear. We will have the comforting knowledge that everyone in the world shares the same basic concerns. We shall be free of anxiety, because the reason for our living will be the well-being of each other.

A great feature of humantrue society will be co-operation. We shall conduct our affairs according to true reason. We shall be enabled to understand and follow our moral code, which requires that we co-operate rather than compete, and to show the utmost kindness and compassion to each other. By way of reason, co-operation ensures that the species survives with the minimum of pain, hurt and damage, either to itself or to its environment.

We shall give and share. This is the intelligent thing to do and the one way of ensuring that all people are equally provided for. A humantrue society will be unable to do otherwise, because this is a true principle, and our intelligence makes us perfectly capable of carrying the principle out.

A humantrue society will be united. Based upon intelligent agreement, we and our framework of life shall treat everybody as equal, with no artificial differences. This makes sense, because our chief faculty is our mind; the

function of the intellectual mind is truth, and essential truth is one and the same for everyone. Responsibility for a humantrue society can be entrusted to no other than each and every individual. This is the only way of ensuring that society is humantrue. By dividing 'power' amongst all individuals it loses its separate influence and reduces to nothing, whereas the strength of responsibility increases with wide sharing. Life in a humantrue society will be simple. It will be entirely understandable to every responsible individual member. There will be nothing of more consequence than the gentle, loving, constructive everyday concerns of the individual. There will be general concern to put the minimum strain upon Earth. The practical processes of living will engage our minds only as far as is required to carry them out thoroughly; otherwise our intellects will flower in every possible abstract way; through music for example.

That is how life on Earth should, and could, be. It is not how human life currently is. We are, or seem to be far from achieving such a society. This is not because it is an impossible dream, but because we have not yet made the effort to break the bonds of conditioning and to realise our intellectual potential.

Without doubt we are a race of superior intelligence, yet it does not strike us that the basic practices of our society are far from intelligent. Consider some of these practices and our consequent behaviour (fully explored in Part IV.) Our subjection to a competitive money economy for example, which employs most of us (but unemploys many of us) in its interests rather than being employed by us in the human interest. Under this demonstrably false economy, or management, many people waste enormous effort and time in simply handling, calculating and multiplying money and measuring everything in terms of money. As another example of unintelligent practice, take the fact that we continually progress, materially, technologically and politically. We accept material progress as an inevitable fact of life, hardly stopping to consider the opposite view - that it is undesirable, unjustified, and that we accept it merely out of habit. Finally, look at our practice of submitting to the institutions of a system dedicated to ruthless pursuit of the instinctive competitive drives (finance, commerce, industry), but also to other institutions of the same system (law, police; the military) which curb some of the inevitable inhumanities of that pursuit, and are supposed to protect us when it goes recklessly out of control.

Some of the extremely traumatic recent events in our history are at last beginning to bring home to us our own shortcomings. War is a feature of amoral, competitive, divided, authoritative society; a phenomenon resulting from small differences escalating to huge conflicts because society lacks benign self-control. Within the last seventy-five years many, many millions of

humans have died in two world wars and countless smaller ones, in the course of which human behaviour has descended to unbelievably callous, merciless and bloodthirsty levels. During the same period millions more have died of cruel oppression; also from starvation, neglect, and disease because society has failed to look after them.

These enormous figures are easy to quote dispassionately, but just imagine the suffering and heartbreak surrounding each death.

Occurring in a period of only sixty years, and still going on, is brutality of a more disturbing kind behind closed doors; by ruthless torture often ending in execution. One way of persuading oneself of the need for fundamental radical change is to remember that human individuals just like ourselves gassed the Jews in Hitler's concentration camps, enslaved and slaughtered peasants and politicians alike in Stalin's regime of terror, degraded, terrorised, maimed Cambodian civilians on the orders of Pol Pot, and then, in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, were murdering, raping and displacing whole peoples because of cultural and religious differences.

The fact is that mankind is unpredictable, dangerous and uncontrollable, and shall remain so unless and until we become what this book shows we ought by nature to be - supraconscious. The whole purpose of this book is to make clear the full significance of this word, and to show without doubt that it is our true nature to be supraconscious.

It is when ruthless leaders come to believe they cannot control or neutralise people in any other way that they order, and we perform, unspeakable atrocities. These horrors result from the accepted amoral norms being taken to extremes. In certain circumstances all humans are capable of this terrible behaviour. For all the complexities of our applied intelligence, our intellect is yet unfulfilled. Though we believe ourselves to be, or try to be gentle, compassionate and peaceable, too many of us, too often, show the characteristics of sophisticated predators.

Our present false habits and standards, chained to existing society's amoral rules and instinctive practices (competitive money orientation, political dishonesty, self-interest, racial and other forms of discrimination) contain the potential for exploding into these extremes of horrendously violent and inhuman behaviour. That is the false picture we have always had before us. This book sets out along the road to the altogether happier, humantrue outlook already briefly described. The book reveals humanity's true potential for supraconscious awareness. If we fulfil that potential we shall bring about a world where anything other than gentle, compassionate and peaceable behaviour shall be impossible.

A humantrue world would be right and good for us, but it is a prospect so remote from present reality as to need great initial mental effort to envisage.

There is no doubt that we are capable of that vision however, and once we see it and determine to make it our reality, we shall achieve a humantrue world relatively easily. The question is, are we willing to make the initial effort?

---

You, I, and all human individuals throughout the world have brains of enormous capacity. There may be about one hundred thousand million neurons in the human cerebral cortex. Of these, about ten thousand million comprise the covering cortex, the neocortex, separated into six layers with a huge potential number of correlating dendrites, axons, and synapses. Some other animals, such as whales and dolphins, have actually or comparatively larger brains but not this same layered neocortex. It is this that gives us our infinitely superior, and in my view, optimum reasoning power.

Were we truly represented by our faculty of higher intelligence, unique on Earth, we would surely now be living in peace and contentment. But our instinctive impulses are much more representative of us than this faculty of knowing and reasoning, or intellect.

It is the animal character of humanity, using its brain as calculator, which has aided and abetted our astonishingly rapid, yet essentially retrogressive development, from individual rivalry to world war, for example, and from local pecking orders to the wealth and poverty of nations.

Yet we each have the ability to be morally aware of right and wrong, good and bad principles, and our reasoning capacity gives us the responsibility for applying those principles in our world.

It is with our active assistance, and despite our mental capacity, that our world functions on wrong and bad principles. Society is a permanent battleground, with competitive aims and interests locked in continual combat. The inner intelligence of the mind looks on like a horrified, protesting spectator, wondering why life cannot be altogether benign and pleasant. It is the nature of high intelligence to answer all questions and solve all problems - to make life in its own image, so to speak. This thoughtful process must result in continual improvement of society towards perfection - unless it is prevented. Since existing human society is progressing otherwise, it is clear that in our case the process has been prevented.

## THE AUTOMATON

We do try to improve our society, with some success, but this is a fringe activity, not that to which our energies are mainly applied. Humanity is not making intelligent progress towards answering and solving its questions and problems, is not building a growing body of agreed truth that shall be our infallible guide. This is the process that is being prevented, for the reason that we are not guided by our intelligence. We are driven, body and mind, by an automaton.

The automaton is a self-acting influence, the mainspring of our society. It embodies the principle of competitive conflict, an instinctive driving force. This is the principle on which our world society is founded, its chief motivation; the first and foremost influence over our development so far, and the basic cause of our problems. The stressful state of human society is not primarily due to the present conflicting characteristics of its individuals, but is inherent in the automaton that developed those characteristics, which has imposed this conflict on us, yet with our help.

The bulk of history has been made by the application of our minds and bodies to the automatic drives. We have pursued a growing complexity of competitive aims and material interests, and these have become the norm. The whole interconnected system of practices and institutions that dictate, represent, and control our activities needs a name - let it be called the MACHINE.

## HUMANS IN HARNESS

We are harnessed to the automaton, whose influence permeates every inch of the fabric of our lives. And we serve the Machine whose institutions, representing every conceivable aim and interest of those automatic drives, have taken over the exploitation and control of our resources and activities. The Machine includes institutions that we suppose to be working in the interests of our own protection and well-being. But whilst serving even these institutions we remain harnessed to the automaton, in whose interests we are acting contrary to our well-being.

Even though we become aware of our true interests and opposed to the Machine, it is extremely difficult to throw off our harness and escape from servitude. The Machine provides most of the necessities of life, to obtain which we have to serve it, or conform to its practices. The Machine has weaved most of the fabric of society, and provides the framework of our community. It also controls the means of widespread communication, by

which we are not so much humanly united as wired-in to a network that connects our automatic selves together.

Were we to become wholly and fully true to ourselves we would have to be isolated individuals, but such personal independence is hardly practicable because of humanity's overwhelming dependence on the Machine. As things stand, if we are to provide for ourselves, join in community, and attach some meaning to our lives, we are obliged largely to conform to the norm. We do not find it easy to express our true inner thoughts to others, or even to ourselves, because those thoughts are abnormal in the eyes of automatic reality.

In this book that you are now reading - an attempt to express wholly true reasoning - every word and every construction of meaning has to fight against enormous pressure from the Machine to crush it down into conformity. If this writing is to have any hope of breaking the iron grip of that normal conformity, it must make automatic reason wither and die from exposure to truth. If that makes it so unfamiliar, abnormal or intense as to be hard to read, so be it. Maybe the conclusion to be drawn is that writing which is easy to read may not convey truth, and true breakthrough requires much hard work on the part of both reader and writer.

## **BRAIN FIXATION**

We are born into this world with some instinctive inherited intelligence, but no ready-made complete processes of true reason. The human baby is expert at recognising its mother, for example, but not at judging whether she is right or wrong. Several years must elapse before every component of our faculty of intellect reaches full potential, and we become fully capable of reasoning for ourselves. In the interim we are exposed to direct experience of the world as it appears to be, or to indirect experience by way of TV programmes, comics and books. We are also exposed to the influence of parents, peers and teachers. Before our minds are fully fledged and potentially able to work out the truth of it all, we have been subject to about fifteen years of brain-fixation. Despite the crazily unreasonable picture which human life presents, if anybody reaches this stage with determination to discover truth, almost nobody sustains it.

We are also born with temperament, a series of emotional capacities each varying between strong and weak, mostly evolved as the accompaniment to instinct for coping with life in the natural world. In the process of growing up we have to learn how to adjust these emotions and adapt them, first to the Machine, then to the human community.

Normally our realistic characters are formed in three ways. 1: By our fixed mental conditioning and circumstances in existing reality. 2: By our reasoned and emotional reactions to the concepts and facts of our reality - whether we accept or reject, like or dislike them. 3: By the balance or imbalance resulting from 1 and 2 - whether we react destructively against reality; whether we passively accept and make the best we can of the here and now; or whether we act constructively to gain for ourselves an advantageous position in the Machine.

What constitutes our willing brain fixation is either that we have allowed our minds to be so conditioned that we cannot perceive any but these three ways, or, that seeing another possible way, we deny it. Whether our character is formed by the first, second or third way, or by a combination of all three, practically all of us accept the underlying facts of existing reality. Many people protest against the inhuman effects, but almost nobody questions the fundamental principles of the Machine.

For example, we think law and order depends on strong government and do not consider an alternative view - that government may well cause lawlessness by relieving people of responsibility for their society. We consider that the competitive money economy reflects the facets of human nature, and do not normally think to the contrary - that apparent human nature has largely been formed by the characteristics of the money economy.

## **HUMANITY V. THE MACHINE**

The Machine is our motivation, and the framework of our society. It depends on us to keep it accelerating along, which we do because we believe there is no alternative. But this is our public activity. Privately we observe different standards. So although our public activity supports the amoral and immoral affairs of the Machine, we are unwilling publicly to admit this because it contravenes our private morality. Yet at the same time we believe it naïve to expect that our private morality could possibly govern our public activities, so we pretend that we want to be moral but are continually frustrated by events which we also pretend are beyond our control. We pay lip service to humane standards whilst at the same time methodically betraying them. For example, humans talk endlessly about peace, but forever make war. We increase efforts to fight escalating crime, but steadily move ever further away from understanding and removing its causes. The divorce rate increases as our general failure to co-operate, tolerate and agree seeps more deeply into our personal lives. Were we making true progress, war, crime, policing and divorce would be steadily declining.

We keep these double standards by dividing ourselves into two; a public, hard outer shell of self, and a private, soft inner awareness. We are able to sustain our outer shells by the fact that the hard reality to which they belong constantly confirms the belief that we have no alternative. Also, our outer shells employ the denial factor, refusing to respond to the still, small voice of conscience. And so we demand Machine satisfactions to make up for the loss of true fulfilment. We defend our automatic selves, and these satisfactions, on the grounds that they are the most that we can expect or hope for. It is the hard outlook of our outer shells that we mostly act upon. When it comes to a choice between morals and lawful gain of money for instance, the great majority choose money. From this viewpoint the virtual eclipse of our true awareness can be justified, because the soft inner shell can be seen as a weakness, having to take a back seat in the tough, real world. Under the surface, our lives are really a struggle between our humanity and the Machine, and the Machine always comes out on top. We are hardly aware of this fact because, on the surface, we are all working for the Machine, on its side in the struggle. To move out of this wrong reality and into the right one, we need to wake up to the fact that our true humanity is fighting a losing battle. Whoever we are, we need to realise that each and every one of us belongs on the human side. The Machine is the common enemy on the other side. It can be defeated if we become united.

The subjects touched upon so far shall be returned to later, more fully and from different angles. This is the beginning of an exploration, and I hope you will reserve critical judgement until it is completed.





# HUMANTRUTH

A New Philosophy



## Part I EVOLUTION OF THINKING BEINGS



## Chapter 1

### FORMATION OF LIFE

In tackling the subject of evolution, and the formation of life, my object is not to impart knowledge but to draw conclusions from knowledge that most of us already possess or can easily discover, conclusions which are not normally drawn. I want to show that humanity's present nature and state is not inevitable and was not preordained by evolution; that our evolution was a means of producing intellect in human form, and that intellect is itself a means the achievement of whose ends requires a human nature and state very different from that which presently exists here on Earth.

It appears to be generally accepted, and has been made clear to me by Peter Russell (*The Awakening Earth*, publisher Routledge & Keegan Paul), that a Big Bang originated this universe, about fifteen billion years ago. Approximately one-hundredth of a second after this event nothing existed but pure energy at a temperature of 100,000,000,000degC. At that precise time there were none of the elementary particles of matter - electrons, protons, etc.- because nothing of that sort can exist at such high temperatures. The terms here used to describe time, heat and the character of matter are those invented by humanity as relevant to our particular experience of the subsequent universe.

The foregoing information is part of current scientific theory. It is acceptable not only because it is the result of advanced scientific thinking based on long research but also because it is reasonable. In the search for the true meaning and purpose of life, without the benefit of modern scientific research, humanity has resorted to the imagination and supported its chosen beliefs with contrived reason. While these beliefs could not be proven, neither could

they be disproved. Now that we have well-founded theories about the creation and evolution of life, a major obstacle has been cleared from the way of reason towards truth.

It is necessary to comment on the meaning of truth. This word is hard to define because we presently use it to mean many different things. Those meanings that I ascribe to it are given in Part III, Chapter 13, and Part V, Chapter 32. In the meantime I suggest that you keep an open mind as to the significance of this word.

Humanity's search for truth has been concentrated very much more on the discovery of scientific fact than on reasoning with the knowledge we already have. Consequently we are on the verge of total scientific understanding, yet wallowing in increasing social chaos because we do not understand ourselves or our reality. The relevance of our ability to describe the creation of this universe to within one-hundredth of a second of the Big Bang (even though we do not know what occurred before that precise time), and its subsequent history, is that it should eradicate all previous fanciful explanations of the creation of ourselves and our world, and bring us, so to speak, down to earth. But this is not the case. We still prefer searching for answers to finding them. Automated man worships science. Scientists have travelled far along the road of knowledge but appear to have missed the way of true reason, and seem to be raising up other fantasies to pose as human truth.

The significance of our relationship with the universe, and the meaning and purpose of life, is fully explored in Chapters 36 and 37. Right now I think it useful to point out that however mysterious things seem when partially hidden from our understanding, when fully exposed they are revealed as matter-of-fact. It is reasonable to deduce that any thing, once it is fully explained, shall take its logical place in the train of causes and effects of all things. This applies to abstracts as well as to actual things. No material thing except pure energy could survive the Big Bang, but abstracts could survive it, parts of the truth in which, as I believe and shall suggest later, all ultimate meaning is to be found. To fulfil truth is the purpose underlying all the matter-of-fact processes of the universe. Our present concern - evolution - we can reasonably presume to be the result of another abstract, which not only survived the Big Bang but caused it to occur rather than allow energy to cancel itself out. This is the influence, to express energy in all conceivable ways, which has resulted in the existing universe. It has ultimately produced human life, not as an end in itself but as a means to an end. And humanity does not need to make yet more new discoveries to learn the essential truth. That truth is not mysterious and unknowable. All that we need to know is already knowable. We have but to open our minds to optimum reason.

To continue with generally accepted scientific theory, three minutes after the Big Bang the temperature of the rapidly expanding universe was 900,000,000degC, and neutrons and protons began combining to form stable atomic nuclei. About 700,000 years later the temperature had dropped to about 4000degC, and electrons and nuclei were combining to form simple, stable atoms, mostly hydrogen and helium. Below 4000degC gravitation draws atoms together, and the more they group together the more gravitational pull they exert. This process, continuing for some thousands of millions of years, eventually produced huge clouds of hydrogen and helium gas, whose internal condensation formed stars. During this time the universe had become very cold overall, but collapsing stars generated such heat that some of them exploded. Within these supernovae new and heavier elements of matter were formed and spread throughout the universe. Eventually much of this matter condensed into new stars, some of which exploded in turn. In this way all the stars, suns and planets were formed, including Earth and everything on Earth, and including our sun, a mass of hydrogen burning at 4000degC, and giving off the necessary energy to sustain our life.

It was once thought that the creation of life was a supernatural event; then that the conditions in which it could occur were very rare. Now it appears that the vital components are easily made and put together, given the right physical and chemical conditions, and that all kinds of suitable conditions are, or were, to be found. Our planet Earth came into being about 4500 million years ago, and the seas that soon formed did provide such suitable conditions for molecules to combine into macromolecules which in turn, about 1000 million years later, combined into simple cells.

It is not the aim of this book to retail the evolution of life in detail so much as to explore its significance in relation to the development of intelligence. Significant factors are that there seems to be a strong universal intention to create life; that there appears, at least on Earth, to be a planetary determination to progress and protect life; and that the progress of life inevitably brings about the advance of intelligence. To me, this suggests a purpose; not the purpose of a supreme power (which would hardly need to be so dependent on physics, or expected to have to wait so long for results), but the purpose of a weak force that can be achieved only with the help of intelligence. This question also is pursued further in Part V, Chapter 36, and Part VI, Chapter 37.

The biosphere's determination to progress and protect life is suggested by James Lovelock in his book *GAIA* (Oxford University Press), and is also dealt with by Russell. To begin with our atmosphere was probably methane, and the early simple cells were bacteria and algae. These cells lived by photosynthesis, producing oxygen as a by-product. Oxygen was poisonous to

these bacteria and algae, then the only representatives of life on Earth's crust, but for a long time it was absorbed by the oxidising of minerals such as iron, thus keeping these organisms safe. Eventually, when all the available minerals were oxidised, life was threatened with extinction, not only from poisoning by the rising amount of oxygen in the atmosphere, but also from destruction by ultra-violet light, which had previously been vital to the creation of life. However, the extra oxygen rose to the upper atmosphere where it was converted into an ozone layer that shielded Earth from much of the ultra-violet light. By the time oxygen had accumulated in the lower atmosphere, some bacteria had developed which could tolerate it. Certain of these bacteria continued to use photosynthesis and became plants. Others developed the ability to use oxygen, giving them such effective flexibility that they went on to become animals.

Such events could be said to be a matter of chance, but Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis suggests that the biosphere of Earth is a self-regulating entity with the capacity to keep the planet healthy by controlling the chemical and physical environment. Also that the physical and chemical condition of the surface of the Earth, of the atmosphere, and of the oceans has been and continues to be made fit for life by the presence of life itself. This might be regarded as a fantastic notion, but surely it is no more remarkable than the development of human intellect.

The Gaia hypothesis is reinforced by ensuing events, explained in detail by James Lovelock, partly summarised very neatly by Peter Russell, and further summarised as follows. Throughout the history of life on Earth, the surface temperature of the planet has kept to an average between 15 and 35degC, despite drastic atmospheric changes and a 30% increase in heat from the sun. The level of salt in the oceans has remained consistently below 4%; if it had risen above 6%, even for a few minutes, life in the oceans would have ended. Ever since an oxygen atmosphere was established, the oxygen content has remained at a level of 21%; a few per cent less and many life-forms would be unable to survive (perhaps we would be unable to think, for example); a few per cent more and everything combustible would eventually burn. The presence of ammonia in the atmosphere is precisely regulated so as to keep a level of acidity in rain and soil that is optimum for life. The process of methylation recycles iodine, which is vital to the production of hormones that regulate the metabolic rate, and removes toxic substances such as mercury and arsenic from the local environment by converting them into gaseous forms. The ozone layer, already mentioned, shields us from annihilation by ultra-violet radiation.

The early development of life on planet Earth proceeded in this way: given a generally hospitable environment under the care and protection of Gaia,

simple cells united with others to become sexually reproductive, further uniting to become viable organs, then complex organisms of internally co-operative multifunctional cells. As these organisms became more complex, so did the nervous systems required to facilitate their internal functions and external activities, also the central brain required to co-ordinate them. The forms these organisms took and the habits and characteristics they acquired were partly determined by their environment, and partly by the fact that they were in competition for the food supply.

Considering the elemental building blocks of life, when chemicals came together to form macromolecules, and chains and groups of these, Russell says 'what requires to be explained is why this occurred'. It seems to me that we also have to ask the questions - why did the simple cells not remain as they were, merely content to adjust their numbers to the food supply? Why does life progress? Why do life-forms compete; is it because a compulsion to progress brings them into competition, or because the presence of competition compels them to progress? Why is there evolution of any kind, and for what reason do individual life-forms maintain and reproduce themselves? Why does Gaia sustain the biosphere with such care? I give my answers to these questions in Parts V and VI.

We humans are presently fascinated by facts. They attract us because they simply have to be accepted, whereas whole reason is a struggle because it requires more than facts. The physics and chemistry of the universe, and life, is interesting but does not yield the answers to those questions just raised. Those answers shall be found at the very end of the most significant evolutionary development, the subject of the next chapter - the advance of intelligence.