

COMMITTEE V
The Search for Global Ideology

DRAFT - 9/15/85
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THE INTEGRAL PHILOSOPHY OF SRI AUROBINDO

by

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The Fourteenth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences
Houston, Texas November 28-December 1, 1985

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PREFATORY NOTE

Sri Aurobindo is not very widely known in the Western world as a poet, a patriot and revolutionary leader, a mystic philosopher and a writer of rare genius. And only a few among even those who have heard his name have read his books. In this essay many passages, some of them quite long, have been quoted from his works to make its readers a little familiar with the substance of his thought and the style of his writing.

THE INTEGRAL PHILOSOPHY OF SRI AUROBINDO

What is the concept of global philosophy? What are its elements? Is there or can there be a global philosophy? If the answer is in the affirmative, is it or will it be a syncretic structure of thought which has taken or will take as its "ingredients" all that is best in the different systems of philosophy? Is Plato or Aristotle, Plotinus or Aquinas, Kant or Hegel a global philosopher? All these great thinkers have written on most of the important aspects of existence and human life. Does that make them authors of global philosophies? These questions came to my mind when I read the letter inviting me to present a paper at this ICUS on Sri Aurobindo's ideas on the possibilities of global philosophy.

I may point out at the very outset that Sri Aurobindo refused the title of philosopher. "And philosophy!", he has written in a letter, "Let me tell you in confidence that I never, never, never was a philosopher—although I have written philosophy which is another story altogether. I knew precious little about philosophy before I did the Yoga and came to Pondicherry - I was a poet and a politician, not a philosopher".¹ What does Sri Aurobindo mean by saying that he is not a philosopher though he has written philosophy? What is the distinction between writing philosophy and being a philosopher? In fact it may be asked - how did he manage to write philosophy? In 1914 M. Paul Richard and Madame Mirra Richard were in Pondicherry on a visit and they met Sri Aurobindo. Richard proposed that he would co-operate in a philosophical review², "and as my theory was", continues Sri Aurobindo, "that a yogi should be able to turn his hand at anything I could not very well refuse; and then he (Richard) had to go to the war and left me in the lurch with the sixty-four pages a month of philosophy all to write by my lonely self. Secondly, because I had only to write down in the terms of the intellect all that I had observed and come to know in practising yoga daily and the philosophy was there automatically. But that is not being a philosopher".³

The meaning of Sri Aurobindo's two statements that he was not a philosopher but that he had written philosophy will become clear if we see what philosophy is according to him. He defines philosophy as "the intellectual search

for the fundamental truth of things",⁴ and "only a formulation to ourselves in their essential significance the psychological and physical facts of existence and their relation to any ultimate reality that may exist".⁵ In his monograph Heraclitus⁶ he says that the ideas of the Greek thinker on which he laid stress were "general, philosophical, metaphysical", that they glanced at "those first truths of existence.....for which philosophy first seeks because they are the key to all other truths".⁷

It is clear from the above citations that according to Sri Aurobindo the business of philosophy is to seek the basic, the ultimate truths of existence and that the search is intellectual. We shall see later that he speaks of intuitive philosophy and spiritual philosophy. Nevertheless he does think that most philosophy since the time of the Vedas and the Upanishads in India and the Greek mystics in the Western world, has been primarily an intellectual adventure of the human mind, that it is speculative and deals in ideas which very often do not have any relation with concrete facts encountered in actual experience. He considers this a limitation of philosophy. For he writes, "Experience and formulation of experience I consider as the true aim of philosophy. The rest is merely intellectual work and may be interesting but nothing more".⁸ We have seen that his philosophy according to his own description of it is based upon yogic experience and knowledge. Since it is not founded on speculation and mere ideas, he refused to be described as a philosopher. But he did formulate his spiritual experiences in terms which are as intelligible as they can be. And in so doing he wrote philosophy.

Many, if not most philosophers arrive at their respective systems of thought or at least their philosophic ideas after studying the speculations of other thinkers. Their reflections are based on those of others and critical discussions of them. Sri Aurobindo read little philosophy, Western or Eastern. He has himself said that he was somewhat familiar with the writings of Aristotle, Plotinus, Kant, Hegel, Lock, who he said left him cold, Berkeley or Hume. The Republic and the Symposium of Plato he had to study as part of his Classics Tripos course when he was an undergraduate at the University of Cambridge, England. He read only extracts from Plato's other works. What little of Aristotle he read he found dry, "not like Plato's", as he said. Hegel he knew only through a book on

him which he went through after his return to India but it did not leave much impression on him. A book on Bergson was his introduction to the French thinker's philosophy of creative evolution.⁹

On the Indian side, it was a little better. He was acquainted with some Indian philosophical theories and speculations from the writings of Max Muller while he was in England. After his return to India he learned Sanskrit thoroughly and studied the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita and a few Puranas. It appears that he studied also one or two classics of the Yoga of Bhakti, loving adoration of God, Iswara Krishna's Sāmkhya-Kārikā and Patanjali's Yoga-sūtra. He translated the foundational work of illusionist Vedanta- Gaudapada's Māndūkyakārikā and also Shankara's commentary on some Upanishads and his Vivekacudāmani. The Vedas he found a great store-house of profound mystic knowledge and spiritual disciplines. The classics of the systems of Indian philosophy were a closed world to him though he gathered some knowledge of them from general accounts. His writings do not furnish any evidence that he was familiar with the Shaiva school of Tantric philosophy. He has mentioned one important doctrine of the Shakta Tantric philosophy and criticised it. It is reasonable to think that because Sri Aurobindo did not study philosophy, he said that he was not a philosopher.

Sri Aurobindo had not only a highly cultured mind but he was also sharply intuitive. To get at the heart of a doctrine, an idea or a situation, either social, political or cultural, was very easy and habitual for him. The lack of references to the ideas of other philosophers is explained by his want of direct acquaintance with their works. Yet one is amazed at his correct and penetrating insight into many philosophical positions clearly evident in his writings. But he would say that this is not being a philosopher in the accepted sense of the word.

Sri Aurobindo spoke a good deal about what appeared as the two main limitations of most, if not all, philosophies. First, they deal in ideas and abstractions and are not sufficiently, and in some cases, hardly, concerned with facts. Philosophy is too analytic and loves clean-cutting distinctions. The average man, he said, is enamoured of straight and plain thinking. But he is not alone in this. For "even the philosopher", he observes, "though he inclines to an intricate reasoning by the way is best delighted when he can get by it to some magnifi-

cently conclusive conclusion, some clean-cutting distinction between Brahman and not-Brahman, Reality and unreality or any of the host of mental oppositions on which so many "isms" have been founded".¹⁰ He felt quite strongly about this characteristic of philosophy - the love of trenchant statement by which the average mind is overpowered and inclined to the acceptance of these exclusive ideas and doctrines, "of the facile philosophy of ~~this~~ and not this, that and not that, a strong yes and no, a simple division, a pair of robust opposites, a clean-cut classification. Our reason acts by division, even our ordinary illogical thought is a stumbling and bungling summary analysis and arrangement of the experience which offers itself to us with unending complexity. But the clearest division is that which sets us most at ease, because it impresses on our still childlike intelligence a sense of conclusive and luminous simplicity".¹¹

Sri Aurobindo has remarked on the inherent tendency of philosophic reason to cut up a whole into parts each of which it treats as a whole to analyse further into smaller parts. This natural inclination of the analytic reason is owing to the fact that it cannot seize wholeness, fails to grasp it and finds parts more manageable for its purpose. It does try to arrive at unity but that attempt ends in the construction of an artificial summation which is not the real unity. We are reminded here of F.H. Bradley's analysis of the nature of the function of reason. Sri Aurobindo had not read Bradley when he was writing about the ways of intellectual reason. He did make some comments on Bradley and some other thinkers of like persuasion years later in answer to a disciple's questions. We will have occasion to refer to it later.

The philosophical systems are only feasible selective constructions of great reflective ideas. They are possibilities of reason rather than certainties. We have said before that Sri Aurobindo spoke of intuitive and spiritual philosophies. These have a much firmer grip on certainties. But, according to Sri Aurobindo, even these, though founded on spiritual experiences are "still selective constructions, a sort of great architectural approach to some gate into the unknowable Divine or ineffable Infinite".¹²

Sri Aurobindo saw the movement of knowledge in the following way. At the beginning the self-conscious, awakened human mind was intuitive and symbolic. It did not use the analytic reason to know the Truth or even the truths of things

of this world but knew directly by means of vision and intuitive apprehension. And it employed ordinary words indicative of physical objects and phenomena for psychological states, movements and experiences. Sri Aurobindo made a fairly detailed exposition of this theory with reference to the Vedas and the Upanishads though in the latter class of literature, the language is less antique and the mentality is at an initial stage of transition from the intuitive to the rational. The Upanishads are not intellectual philosophy in the usual sense of the word but records of many-sided and rich spiritual experiences. He remarked that scores of philosophies could be constructed out of these writings. This stage, however, was followed by the period of rational philosophy. There was still the explicit acceptance of the authority of the Vedas, for they were regarded as authoritative in respect of truths not belonging to the sensory and mental worlds. But free reign was given to the philosophic reason and the art of logical argument was developed to perfection. "Indian philosophy was intuitive in its beginnings, stimulative rather to the deeper vision of things, - nothing more exalted and profound, more revelatory of the depths and the heights, more powerful to open unending vistas has ever been conceived than the divine and inspired ^{12a} word, the mantra of the Veda and Vedanta (the Upanishads). When that philosophy became intellectual, precise, founded on the human reason, it also became rigidly logical, enamoured of fixity and system, desirous of a sort of geometry of thought", ¹³ says Sri Aurobindo.

In respect of the Western world, Sri Aurobindo finds the same movement in ancient Greece. The Mystics, the Mysteries came first and were followed by ratiocinative, intellectual philosophy. He says, "To ignore the influence of the mystic thought and its methods of self-expression on the intellectual thinking of the Greeks from Pythagoras to Plato is to falsify the historical procession of the human mind. It was enveloped at first in the symbolic, intuitive, esoteric style and discipline of the Mystics....." ¹⁴ It may be pointed out incidentally that Sri Aurobindo admired Greek thought very much. "The philosophy and thought of the Greeks is perhaps the most intellectually stimulating, the most fruitful clarities the world has yet had". ¹⁵ He also said that the ancient Greek mind 'had a flexibly inquiring logic'. Its leading characteristics were 'acuteness and a wide open eye of the intellect,'....."and by this power in it," says he, "it deter-

mined the whole character and field of subsequent European thinking."¹⁶

It may be thought that Sri Aurobindo, being a yogi and a mystic, would deplore this movement of the human mind from the intuitive to the intellectual. On the contrary, he actually welcomes it. Though he is very positive in thinking that the intellectual reason cannot attain knowledge of the essential truth of things, he nevertheless considers that this movement of the human mind is all to the good and will contribute to the evolution of humanity. What exactly he means by this, how a fall from the heights can be a factor in human progress we will see later. At the moment let us only say this that Sri Aurobindo looks forward not only to the development in man of new faculties of knowledge but also to the purification and further enhancement of the powers and capacities of knowledge, action and enjoyment man possesses now but of which he is not the master.

Secondly, philosophy being intellectual, ratiocinative and dialectical exploration of abstract ideas is far removed from life. In the Western world specially it has not been a power for life. After saying that the ideas of Heraclitus he emphasised were general, philosophical and metaphysical, he goes on to ask, "But what is their practical effect on human life and aspiration? For that is in the end the real value of philosophy for man, to give him light on the nature of his being, the principles of his psychology, his relations with the world and with God, the fixed lines of the great possibilities of his destiny".¹⁷ Most European philosophy suffers from this weakness that "it lives too much in the clouds";¹⁸ the exclusive seeking of metaphysical truth for its own sake is its be-all and end-all and "therefore it has been a little barren because much too indirect in its bearing on life".¹⁹ But it was not so always. Much of Greek philosophy sought to be practical guides to life both individual and corporate. "The Greek thinkers Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, the Stoics and the Epicureans had also the practical aim and dynamic Force".²⁰ But unlike in India, it acted only on the cultured few. Sri Aurobindo offers an explanation why the influence of Greek philosophy did not touch the ordinary man. He says that Greek philosophy lost "its affiliation to the Mystics and separated itself from popular religion. Consequently it became powerless to enlighten the masses. For"....as ordinarily Philosophy alone can give light to Religion and save it from crudeness, ignorance and superstition

so Religion alone can give, except for a few, spiritual passion and effective power to Philosophy and save it from becoming unsubstantial, abstract and sterile.^{20c} Sri Aurobindo regrets this as a misfortune for both, "when the divine sisters part company". He is quite clear on this that philosophy, though essentially a search for truth, should not only have a message for life but the power to direct it. In its heyday science culminating in victorious materialism did away with the need for philosophy. That happened because philosophy had become too much a thing of abstract and barren ideas ceasing to be what it should be--a "discovery of the real reality of things by which human existence can learn its laws and the principle of its perfection".²¹

Indian philosophy always regarded the guidance of life as one of its principal, if not the principal, aim. Knowledge of the truth of the ultimate Reality is the means of attaining spiritual liberation - freedom from the wrong apprehension of one's true essential being as that which it is not. The knowledge is intuitive, experiential and not intellectual and speculative. Nevertheless it is knowledge. What is to be noted in this connection is that the ultimate knowledge was reflected in all areas of life and in all activities, individual and collective, of the Indian people. "Indian philosophy," says Sri Aurobindo, "has always understood its double function, it has sought the truth not only as intellectual pleasure or the natural dharma (law of nature and function according to nature)^{21a} of reason, but in order to know how man may live by truth or strive after it, hence its intimate influence on the religion, the social ideas, the daily life of the people, its immense dynamic power on the mind and actions of Indian humanity".²² Sri Aurobindo has elaborated this point on a number of occasions and has written at length on how the dynamic vision of the One and its self-manifestation in the world and human life has shaped Indian civilisation and culture, and he considered this as one of the chief characteristic merits of Indian philosophy. Sri Aurobindo was quite alive to the danger of seeking truth for its pragmatic value. He was perfectly aware that such seeking would not attain the desired goal because it would be influenced by the vital aim. Our search for truth must be for its own sake but at the same time it is not the final end. "Truth must be sought" for its own sake", writes Sri Aurobindo, "and not start with any preconceived practical aim and prepossession which would distort our disinterested view of things; but

once found, its bearing on life becomes of capital importance and is the solid justification of the labour spent in our research".²³ And at this point he cites the example of Indian philosophy which successfully searched for truth without any preconceptions and yet applied the knowledge of truth with an astonishing thoroughness.

Sri Aurobindo is definitely of the view that science and philosophy should be completely free to work in their respective fields. Religion should not determine the terms of reference of either of these two activities of the rational mind. But, he asserts, science and rational philosophy in their turn have no right to dictate to religion and intuitive and experiential spiritual philosophy. But before we come to that, let us note that Sri Aurobindo points out another serious defect of reason. It is at this point of the evolution of man his sovereign faculty because it is self-conscious and can stand back and observe and study facts relatively dispassionately. Nevertheless it cannot be entirely dispassionate and objective. There is no dearth of men who are "subjects to the tyranny of their interests, prejudices or passions."²⁴ But the man of reason, even of "enlightened" reason is "subjected to the tyranny of ideas. Indeed he turns these ideas into interest, obscures them with [^]prejudices and passions and [^]is unable to think freely about them, unable to distinguish their limits or the relation [^]to them of other, [^]different and opposite ideas and the equal right of these also [^]to existence".²⁵ History furnishes ample evidence of Sri Aurobindo's observation, "Thus, as we constantly see, individuals, masses of men, whole generations are carried away by certain ethical, religious, aesthetic, political ideas or a set of ideas, espouse them with passion, pursue them as [^]interests, seek to [^]make them a system and lasting rule of life, [^]are swept [^]in the drive of their [^]action and do not really use the free and disinterested reason for the right knowledge of existence and for its right and sane government".²⁶ Did not Hegel consider the Prussian State as the supreme manifestation of the Absolute Idea, and Heidegger welcome Nazism with all the force of his powerful philosophic intellect? [^]and [^]his [^]aw

What is needed for the knowledge of truth is not a keen and powerful intellect but the purified intelligence. Our conscious mentality is an extremely complex thing and unbeknown to us all, kinds of subjective and objective factors.

influence it despite our best efforts to be intellectually objective and dispassionate. A purified intelligence can enter into the heart of truth because it has no prejudice and passion standing in its path of search for it.

We have said before that Sri Aurobindo considers the philosophical systems as selective constructions of reflective ideas. He justifies the variety of philosophical and religious approaches and statements because "it was necessary that man should find God variously that he might come to know Him entirely".²⁷ All knowledge and activities of the human mind can be divided into two categories. There is a higher, supreme supra-intellectual knowledge. Its aim is the discovery of the One and Infinite both in its transcendent and universal aspects, as it is in itself and as it is behind all appearances of Nature. In both aspects its method is intuition, contemplation, insight and direct contact with the Truth and with the truths of phenomena. The other category is the lower science which is concerned with an outward knowledge of the phenomena, the disguises of the unitive spiritual Reality which appears to us in and through the more exterior forms of the world-manifestation around us.

Sri Aurobindo's preference is clearly for a synthesis of the two kinds of knowledge mentioned above. But to attain the desired synthesis, we need to recognise that "it is when knowledge reaches its highest aspects that it is possible to arrive at the greatest unity. The highest and widest seeing is the wisest, for then all knowledge is unified in its one comprehensive meaning."²⁸ The seeking for the principles of existence should aim at the direct apprehension of the supreme Principle, the Category of categories. There is a single Truth to which all religions are different approaches, a single Reality and all philosophies are divergent view-points looking at different sides of it, there is a supreme Science in which all sciences meet. "...for that which all our mind-knowledge and super-sensuous vision is seeking is found most integrally in the unity of God, men and Nature and all that is in Nature".²⁹

The integration of all knowledge is the ideal of Sri Aurobindo. But we have seen that he very strongly believes that truth once found must direct life to find its fulfilment. We have seen too that he is also of the view that Yoga is the way to integral knowledge. However, the yogic knowledge itself is not philo-

sophy which is formulation of experience. The question is what kind or kinds of experience should be the material on the foundation of which the philosopher will build his mansion of thought? Sri Aurobindo makes a strong case for accepting spiritual experiences as material of an integral philosophy. He says Yoga is scientific in that it also is based upon observation, experiment, analysis and synthesis of what is observed. It has the same relation with the forces of the psychological states, forces, functions and their mutual relations as the natural sciences have with the physical forces like steam or electricity. Yoga also is a natural science, but the nature here is the inner, subjective nature of man. Yoga is depth and height psychology. Sri Aurobindo defines psychology as the science of consciousness and not of mind. Consciousness is a much greater reality than the mind which is only one of its self-formulations. "Consciousness," says Sri Aurobindo, "is not, to my experience, a phenomenon dependent on the reactions of personality to the forces of Nature and amounting to no more than a seeing or interpretation of these reactions. If that were so, then when the personality becomes silent and immobile and gives no reactions, as there would be no seeing or interpretative action, there would therefore be no consciousness. That contradicts some of the fundamental experiences of Yoga, e.g., a silent and immobile consciousness infinitely spread out, not dependent on the personality but impersonal and universal, not seeing and interpreting contacts but motionlessly self-aware, not dependent on the reactions, but persistent in itself even when no reactions take place. The subjective personality itself is only a formation of consciousness which is a power inherent, not in the activity of the temporary manifested personality, but in the being, the Self or Purusha".³⁰ Sri Aurobindo says it is a power inherent in existence, in the Self. This is true from the psychological point of view. Metaphysically speaking, the Self is Consciousness; it is, to use the Sanskrit term, cit (chit), which is svayam-prakāśa, self-luminous. Consciousness is also dynamic, it is a power not only of awareness but also creative self-manifestation; it is cit-śakti (chit-shakti), conscious Force. It can put out of itself thoughts, feelings, wills, reactions all of which are its manifestation but none of which is that. They are forms of consciousness which is their essence. This is another way of saying, that the Self, God, the supreme Person is the inmost essential Reality of all existences, of all that has become.

Sri Aurobindo looks upon the universe as an evolution from Consciousness and the field of the evolution of consciousness. There is double evolution, that of the universe from God and that of God in universal Nature. It has been stated by Sri Aurobindo that there are two points of involution - one is the Supermind and the other is the Inconscient. The universe evolves out of the Supermind in which it is involved. This evolution is properly called involution. Consciousness descends into the universe till it reaches the nethermost point of the process - the Inconscient. Admittedly, descent is an image and is meant to convey the idea that consciousness becomes less than obviously what it essentially is. There is in God, in the conscious Self the inherent power of veiling himself; the capacity to self-limit is an inherent power of consciousness. That there are all kinds of limitation in the world cannot be denied, limitation of knowledge, capacity, enjoyment. What is their origin? Are they the children of some diabolic Power or Being perpetually challenging God, or did man bring them into existence by his pride and the defiance of His will, or are they mere illusions mysteriously apparent but never really real? Sri Aurobindo's answer is that these limitations are the results of the process of self-manifestation of the Divine, of his willing assumption of self-limitation. That is a paradox but nevertheless true - the self-manifestation of God is a self-concealing on the part of the One Infinite so that a multitude of finites could be born. God is a multiple Unity, the multiplicity being potentially existent in His being and actually brought into open manifestation by His conscious Force.

Pure Consciousness, sheer uncreative self-awareness, turns itself into a conscious Knower and creative self-knowledge. This act of God cannot be regarded as a limitation because there is in it no ignorance of His Being and Nature. Sri Aurobindo calls this self-Knowledge, for want of a better term he says, the Supermind which he defines as "the Divine's knowledge of Himself and his own native power of acting". It is also described by him as God's self-awareness and world-awareness. The combination of the two awarenesses, of self and the world, is very significant, for in Sri Aurobindo's vision the Self has become the world. The Supermind is God's omniscience and omnipotence. It is also the consciousness by which God assumes three aspects - Transcendental, Universal and Individual. There

is a status of God beyond that of the Self of the universe and the true spiritual self of the individual. The rational mind cannot grasp this One-in-three and three-in-One which is an illogical idea to it, nor is it left to faith to fathom its mystery as best as it can. For Sri Aurobindo this three-fold status of the supreme Unknowable Absolute self-revealing itself in three aspects is known by the supramental Knowledge. This is the integral knowledge and the philosophy that formulates the integration of God, Man and Nature is the integral philosophy.

The supermind is not merely the Knowledge of God that God has of himself and his conscious Will. It is also the Divine Being as the seed and the material of the world-tree, its trunk, branches, twigs, leaves and flowers. At the heart of everything that has been, is and will be is the supreme spiritual Reality as and by means of the supermind. Sri Aurobindo also describes the supramental gnosis as the Divine Maya. The word Maya is derived from the root mā, to measure, and the supermind is Maya because it measures the Immeasurable, limits the Illimitable and materialises Spirit. But it is Divine Maya because it has the knowledge proceeding from the Knower of the right process of measuring and does not act out of ignorance. The Knowledge includes that of the Law of the Self's self-manifestation, for however much appearances contradict it, the creation is not, chaos [^] but a cosmos. [^]

We have said above that God has a self-projected individual aspect. Sri Aurobindo describes this aspect both as the Divine as the individual and the individual Divine. Each individual self knows its identity with the Reality which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and its unity-in-distinction and distinction-in-unity with that and regards all other individual selves the same way. This community of free individual spirits is the primary multiplicity. They are the dynamos through whom the Force of ^CConsciousness flows for the manifestation of God as the universe. What part does the individual spiritual self play in creation which in this philosophy is not bringing out something out of nothing but the manifestation of the unmanifest like sesame oil out of sesame? The individual self, jīvatmā, in Sri Aurobindo's terminology, makes itself an object of its own knowledge holding itself as an object in its own consciousness. There is no division. The individual knows that it is looking upon itself and that the looker on,

the looking and the looked on are all the same reality. This distinction-in-unity in the knowledge of the individual spirit develops into greater prominence of itself as the object and progressively hardens into division. When this happens, then there is a descent from Knowledge into Ignorance. The self-limitation or delimitation of God now has become actual limitation. The sense of unity is overcome by the sense of separate multiplicity. The Supermind becomes Mind or develops Mind out of itself by limitation. Mind is the instrument of cosmic Ignorance, of the mental Maya of which division in consciousness is the sheet-anchor. The individual spirit projects out of itself the mental being, or the soul in mind. Thus there is a limitation of being, knowledge and power, for as one's consciousness, so is one's force and energy. While the supramental Will is omnipotent, the mental will is a lame and limping and fallible. It does not know what it should do nor can it fully achieve what it imperfectly knows or thinks it has to do.

The self-identity of the individual being becomes centred not in the soul but in the ego. It considers itself separate from its Ground of existence, from the cosmos around it and also all other individuals. This separative ego is what we erroneously regard as our true self and follow its interests regardless of the legitimate interests of others. It is true that we are forced to acknowledge their interests and make compromises. But discord and conflict are the badge of our relations with our fellows.

The transition from the integral supramental to the divisive mental consciousness would be too abrupt and logically inconceivable unless there were another level of consciousness which could serve as a link between the two. Sri Aurobindo says that there is indeed such a link. He calls it the Overmind, and describes it as global consciousness. It is aware of the One Truth but it distinguishes it into different aspects. And despite its knowledge of the central Truth, it emphasises one aspect rather than another. Sri Aurobindo says that God does not need to manifest the universe in his Being and that he can be realised as free from his own act of self-revelation. Now this freedom may seem to stress the idea that God is static, passive and uncreative. In the supermind the silence and activity of God are the same Truth. The overmind, however, emphasises either the static or the dynamic aspect. So also with the self-expressions of the Divine Being as it

Impersonal or Personal, Transcendent, Universal or Individual - the overmental view prefers one to the others. It holds the Truth in its consciousness but makes different formulations possible. Thus it represents the beginning of Ignorance. Knowing, it makes unknowing a potential fact which becomes actualised in the Mind which is consciousness based on division and is thus ignorant of the unitary Truth. With regard to the universe the overmind has a global sweep and is ^{as} such described by Sri Aurobindo as cosmic consciousness. If one attains the overmental consciousness, he will know the universe as a system, a whole, a cosmos and not as an unstable patch-work of conflicting parts. He will also know directly the forces and events in the universe.

Sri Aurobindo distinguishes between two levels of cosmic consciousness of which the overmental is the lower. The Existence-Consciousness-Conscious Force-Delight Reality takes three stances from another point of view. As the Self or Atman it passively supports by its Presence the cosmic manifestation. It is static and silent and does not do so much as sanction the creative process. That is the function of God as Purusha, Soul or Person who always enjoys the creation though he does not actively control it. It is in his third aspect, that of God, that the Divine actively directs, controls and carries out the function of self-manifestation as the universe. Of these the second aspect, the Purusha or Soul is the true, primary Cosmic Consciousness. It is aware of and sanctions the becoming of the universe. Its consciousness is spread throughout the cosmos and a person can raise himself to the secondary cosmic consciousness even without realising the Purusha or Person, the Divine as Soul. Sri Aurobindo considers this achievement undesirable and risky because to know a great deal about the cosmos, even directly, without realising the source and sustaining Reality and Force of it can be spiritually disastrous. It can swell the ego into, if we may say so, to global proportions. Sri Aurobindo would rather that spiritual seekers should realise God in essence, beyond the universe, however partially, before knowing his ^{not} universe and thus lose the [^] Noumena in the phenomena. For God does not live by the world, the world lives by him.

Consciousness in mind has veiled its self-nature and becomes self-conscious reason. It is at its best only the capacity to search for knowledge. Though it may not be in possession of knowledge, it is the instrument for seeking it. The mind

can reflect, have a reflexive action on itself and thus know its nature, capacities and functions. There is however a descent of consciousness to lower levels of its self-manifestation. First, below mind there is the plane of Life. Here consciousness is un-self-conscious instinct. It is geared to the fulfilling of vital needs. It is the consciousness of insects, birds, beasts and higher animals. These creatures know directly where to find water, shelter, from which quarter danger may come and how to reproduce the species. Instinct is intuitive in that it gives direct 'knowledge' about things that are necessary for the sub-human creatures to live. Sri Aurobindo would agree with Bergson that instinct is intuition in ignorance. The characteristic activity of Life is expansion, aggrandisement, possession and enjoyment. The ego as known on the level of the Mind is not developed on the vital level. The idea may be expressed by saying that there is enjoyment but no sense of a clearly defined 'I' enjoying. There is aggrandisement but not a self that consciously aggrandises itself. There is a herd-instinct as against other groups of the same species but it cannot be said that there is an individual ego-sense in them. It is important to understand this because the separative ego-sense also has a decisive role to play in the evolution of consciousness in the universe.

The last but one rung in the ladder of descent and involution of consciousness is Matter. Consciousness in matter is completely hidden and seems non-existent. Division here is on the verge of becoming disintegration. Below Matter is the Inconscient, the "unconscious waters" of the Rigveda, 'waters' being the symbol of the amorphous stuff which is the immediate origin of this world and all that is in it. We use the phrase 'immediate origin' to distinguish the Inconscient from the Supermind which is the primary origin of the universe. The Inconscient is from the point of the evolution of the universe its origin. But it is itself a derivative principle and comes into being as a result of the descent of the supermind, the divine gnosis, into the state of apparently complete nescience.

The great theme of Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy is the evolution of consciousness in the universe. It does deal with the evolution of more complex living organisms from less complex creatures. That evolution is only a stage in the much wider and complex process, namely, the evolution of consciousness. The

supramental Consciousness and Knowledge involved in the Inconscient is what Sri Aurobindo is primarily interested in in his world-view. The process is ultimately guided by the supermind though it is not obvious. It is not so because it is functioning under the conditions dictated by the different emergents like Matter, Life and Mind. The medium in which the divine gnosis acts has its own law which the supermind respects even while changing them. Matter, simply stated, is consciousness ~~ness~~ which has made itself sensibly ~~apprehensible~~. In reference to the supermind it was said that it is at the same time knower, knowledge and known. Consciousness turns itself into different kinds of subjects, instruments of knowledge and objects. The senses are one of these kinds of instruments and their object is Matter which is consciousness that has taken physically concrete form. It may be said that Matter is nothing but the quality of perceivedness (by the senses) of consciousness.

It is important to remember this concept of Matter in order to understand Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution. The descent and involution of consciousness into and in Matter is the prelude to the ascent and evolution of consciousness into its own essential reality. **This is** not an entirely new concept. The doctrines of the Shaiva and Shakta Tantriks in India, and of Plotinus are in essence the same and expound a similar concept of the supreme Reality. The originality of Sri Aurobindo lies in the idea that consciousness is not only returning to its native status beyond the universe, but it is also in the process helping the evolution of the different categories through which it descended into the world and in which it became involved. It is not [^]evolving out of them but also in them. To employ Sri Aurobindo's terminology, consciousness is emerging out of Matter, Life and Mind to its own spiritual Essence. It is also developing new levels of its own complex and hierarchical self-arrangement in the universe which will actualise potentialities of the different principles of the universal manifestation--Matter, Life, Mind--as a consequence of which they will be transformed into the moulds manifesting God and not remain, as they are now, masks hiding his nature.

Sri Aurobindo says that the evolution of consciousness is the result of the process of its ascent and descent. This descent is not the primary one which brought about the universe. Consciousness involved in Matter aspires to liberate itself from the shackles of its material vesture and manifest itself compara-

tively freely. This aspiration calls down a response from the next higher level of consciousness, namely Life, and the two together are instrumental in releasing existing but unmanifest vitality in Matter. The manifestation of Life in Matter is, in Sri Aurobindo's view, one step in the evolution of consciousness in the world. Surely all Life and living creatures, not excepting the tiniest insect, is sensitive and respond to stimulus. The response of course is a sign of the presence of consciousness, however inchoate and incapable, the power of which makes it possible. The same double process of ascent and descent brings about the manifestation of latent Mind in living Matter or embodied living creatures. Man appears on the earth scene and civilization and culture take their halting steps in the mission towards their labour of refining Mind as a fit vehicle of the further evolution of consciousness in the world.

Man the mental being, the soul in mind, has achieved marvellous things. The most significant activity, from the spiritual point of view of Sri Aurobindo, is man's search for his true self and the fundamental reality of all that is. This seeking gives birth to philosophies, religions, mystic disciplines and yogic practices. They are all Nature's means of opening the mental consciousness to dimensions of being which are man's true environment and of dimensions of knowledge which are the keys to the discovery of different levels of existence. But there is no gainsaying the fact that these new discoveries are partial and therefore, for the most part, inconsistent with each other. The different systems of knowledge of the Truth, even when they are intuitive and experiential, are yet only reflections of insights into some aspect or aspects of the Reality. Man's spirituality is mental spirituality.

Sri Aurobindo divides reality into two hemispheres -- the upper and the lower. The first comprises Existence-Consciousness-Conscious Force-Delight and the Supermind and the lower Mind, Life and Matter. In the upper or higher hemisphere there is no Ignorance. The Reality is there self-luminously manifest and the knowledge of Oneness is fully uncovered. The lower hemisphere is a world of Ignorance. There the sense of the One essential Reality of all things is veiled. Nevertheless there is a correspondence between the principles of the two hemispheres. Existence becomes Matter, Consciousness Life and the Supermind Mind. There is also in this

world a principle which descends from the Delight of Existence. Sri Aurobindo calls it the psyche or the soul. In its essence it is a spiritual category and is a general principle which in itself is not formed or individualised. In the process of the evolution of consciousness, the psyche or the soul evolves as what Sri Aurobindo describes as the psychic being or psychic personality. The psychic grows into maturity through many lives and also helps the evolution of the mental, vital and physical being of man. It may be said to be the meeting point of God and Nature in man. This is why it is a most important principle in Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of spiritual evolution. For, as has been said above, while it itself evolves it also helps the evolution of mind, life and body and since its source is the Bliss of Existence, it is naturally full of joy and cheer and turned to God and it can prepare mind, life and body for realising the same values. Of course the psychic being, though pure, is not from the beginning free from the natural influences on it of mind, life and matter. It becomes perfect by what is normally, very slow evolution. When it evolves up to the mental level, it becomes the soul in mind or the mental being. Then begins man's search for his essential self, the ultimate Reality and an ideal life.

Sri Aurobindo asserts that the evolution of consciousness has not reached its term with the emergence of Mind in the world. The mental consciousness is imperfect, ignorant of the truth of the universe and incapable of controlling or directing life in it. It cannot therefore be regarded as the creator of the world. It has achieved great things in thought, the creation and appreciation of beauty, in unravelling the mysteries of Nature and mastering some of her forces. Nevertheless it has not been able to solve the problems of individual life, far less that of collective existence, because it does not know its essential truth. But according to Sri Aurobindo Nature intends to solve the problem of life. "All problems of existence are, essentially, problems of harmony".³² Nature is labouring to bring about the meeting and reconciliation between apparently opposite principles. Life has evolved out of Matter and we have the physical organism of man which is a marvel. It is true that perfect harmony has not been achieved here, for Life has to leave the body when the physical organism cannot meet its demands or sustain its activities. Unconscious and still inert Matter and sensitive and dynamic Life have

been brought together as one sign of the evolution of consciousness. Self-conscious reason and instinctive consciousness inhabiting a physical body also seem to be contradictory principles. Yet Nature has evolved out of instinctive sensitivity mental reason of which man is the vehicle. Here also the reconciliation of apparently opposed principles is not complete. Instinct has not been thoroughly rationalised and man carries in himself the animal in many ways. He despite being endowed with reflective reason hardly knows himself and his complex nature. This lack of self-knowledge prevents him from ordering his life in an ideal way. Indeed there is no consensus as to what is the ideal life. For Sri Aurobindo the ideal life must be a perfect image of the Divine. And God is Being, Consciousness, Knowledge, Force, Bliss, universal Self, the essential Reality of all existence. He recognises the fact that however limited mind may be, it is only rational human beings who can even think of what the ideal life may be and make some effort, however feeble, to realise it. The fact that man does strive after an ideal existence shows that there is in the mind another kind of consciousness hidden and involved which prompts it "to reach for the sky". It indicates too that man also harbours deep in his heart a principle, the psychic being, which is in tune with an ideal life of which it has some direct experience. Crudity and refinement, cruelty and kindness, pettiness and generosity and many other pairs of opposite attributes characterise the same person. Not only that, man seeks to reconcile this conflict within himself. He has erected systems of morals which he hopes will restrain his animal passions and anti-social impulses. He feels the call of a superhuman Reality and religions are born. He probes deep within himself, discovers unplumbed depths and scales unknown heights in his inner subjective being and mystical practices and yogic disciplines are discovered. All this shows that mind is an intermediate level of consciousness and man is a transitional being. A U

Sri Aurobindo points out that though mind has achieved marvels, it is also at the same time a woefully inadequate instrument for solving the problems of life. This is because mind is in its very nature a divisive consciousness and harmony to it is an ideal incapable of realisation. It erects "moral" systems e.g. Nazism, which seek to change the very idea and nature of true ethical values. Religions of peace and brotherhood are organised into militant Churches, defence of one's freedom becomes a weapon for subjugating others, devotion to an ideal

degenerates into fanaticism. There is needed a new consciousness which holds the key to the harmony which man seeks. Sri Aurobindo points to the Supermind as that consciousness and says it is preparing to evolve out of the mental consciousness. On an individual level if man can shift his self-identity from his mental ego to the psychic being within him, then he can find a principle of relative harmony within himself which can to a great extent resolve the conflict between different parts of his being, between mind, life and body. The psychic being is individual but not ego-based. It is an evolutionary individual formation of the psyche or the soul which is a projection into this world of the Bliss aspect of God. It is therefore by nature joyful and free from the desires of the ego and the conflict of interests that are brought about by them. If an individual can live in the light and by the power of the psychic being in himself, he will see the legitimate interests of others and help them realise their good in harmony with his evolution. But the psychic being is individual and to realise it as one's essential self is not enough. For there is the Self at once universal and essentially the same in all. There is no shadow of division in it. It is by realising this essential Self that the ego can be transcended.

But a formidable difficulty faces man here. Even in his spiritual search man remains a mental being. The ordinary human, dominated by the ego and full of desires for transitory values, almost incurably restless and incapable of one-pointed concentration, cannot realise the Truth. But there are disciplines by which the mind can become free of desires, learn intense concentration, detach itself from the ego and its dualities -- pain and pleasure, success and failure, friend and foe etc. -- make itself calm and capable of reflecting the Light of the Spirit in it and thus know the Self, God, the Absolute. However, mental realisations are extremely varied and even contradictory. Even a cursory study of the different great religions will bear this out. Apart from the basic moral principles which are common, in the properly religious dimension, that is to say, in so far as there is an attempt to contact the Truth directly and experientially realise ultimate Reality, the religions have divergent ideas of the nature of that Reality and the manner in which man realises it. Accordingly, the concepts of summum bonum are also extremely varied, even contradictory. In a long passage in The Life Divine, his main metaphysical work, Sri Aurobindo has referred to this divergence of religious

and philosophies. Some have seen 'the material world as the body of the Divine' or 'Life as a great pulsation of the breath of Divine Existence'. All things have been regarded by some 'as the thoughts of the cosmic Mind', others realise that 'there is a spirit greater than these things, their subtler and yet more wonderful source and creator'. There are philosophies which 'find God only in the inconscient' or 'as the one Conscious in inconscient things or as an ineffable superconscious Existence'. It has been the standpoint of some that in order to reach That 'we must leave behind our terrestrial being and annul the mind, life and body'; that of others is this that we must, 'overcoming division, see that He is all these at once and accept fearlessly the consequences of that vision'. God is worshipped 'with universality as the cosmic Being' or He is limited, as by the Positivist, 'in humanity only'. The vision of the timeless and spaceless has led some 'to reject God in Nature and cosmos'. Some adore Him in various strange or beautiful or magnified forms of the human ego or for His perfect possession of the qualities to which man aspires, His Divinity revealed to them as a supreme Power, Love, Beauty, Truth, Righteousness, Wisdom'. Devotees are there who 'perceive Him as the Lord of Nature, Father and Creator' or as 'Nature herself and the universal Mother'. Still others 'pursue Him as the Lover and attracter of souls or serve him as the hidden Master of all works'. God is seen 'as One or a manifold Deity', 'the one divine Man or one Divine in all men' or more largely, as "the One whose presence enables us to become unified in consciousness or in works or in life with all beings, unified with all things in Time and Space, unified with Nature and her influences and even her inanimate forces"³³. After describing so many different approaches to the myriad-faceted Reality, Sri Aurobindo expresses his own view -- "the truth behind must ever be the same because all is the one Divine Infinite whom all are seeking."³⁴ In fact, he welcomes the variety of approaches, visions and realisations. "Because everything is that One there must be this endless variety in the human approach to its possession, it was necessary that man should find God thus variously in order that he might come to know Him entirely"³⁵. Nonetheless he says also that he must arrive at the greatest unity of knowledge because that will give it its most comprehensive meaning.

I hope it has been made sufficiently clear that it is not possible to

attain this all-comprehensive and unifying knowledge by intellectual speculation. Mind cannot know the Reality, it can only construct a figure, a representation of it. It can feel that there is a consciousness beyond it, even receive some Light from that higher consciousness and have a glimpse of a self-existent Truth. Sri Aurobindo has referred to "Bradley and others, who have arrived through intellectual thinking at the idea of an 'Other beyond Thought' or have even, like Bradley, tried to express their conclusions about it in terms that recall some of the expressions in the Arya".³⁶ In this connection Sri Aurobindo says that the idea is as old as the Vedas and was repeated in other forms in Buddhism, Christian Gnosticism, Sufism. He points out that originally it was discovered by the mystics following an inner spiritual discipline. But somewhere between the seventh and fifth centuries, philosophers both in the West and in the East began to intellectualise knowledge. In the West, intellectual reason was accepted as the only or the highest organ of the discovery of Truth, "it began to fade". However, it has, says Sri Aurobindo, "tried constantly to return; the Neo-Platonists brought it back, and now, it appears, the Neo-Hegelians and others (e.g. the Russian Ouspensky and one or two German thinkers, I believe) seem to be reaching after it".³⁷

In the East, the supra-intellectual Truth survived. The reason is that though philosophical reason was cultivated to its utmost capability, it was not accepted as the sole or even the highest means of attaining knowledge of the Truth, the Reality. Spiritual intuition and illumination and experience had the first rank among the instruments of the knowledge of Reality. Intellectual conclusions that contradicted the authority of direct insight and experience were considered to be invalid. It is significant that each system of philosophy has equipped itself with a practical discipline to reach a higher state of consciousness. A philosopher begins with thought and reason but aims at going beyond them to reach a consciousness beyond mind. "Each philosophical founder (as also those who continued his work or school) has been a metaphysical thinker doubled with a yogi. Those who were only philosophic intellectuals were respected for their learning but never took rank as truth-discoverers. And the philosophies that lacked a sufficiently powerful means of spiritual experience died out and became things of the past because they were not dynamic for spiritual discovery and realisation".³⁸

In a chapter entitled "The Methods of Vedantic Knowledge" in his The Life Divine, Sri Aurobindo describes the different means of knowing that man has and can have. His primary aim is not to list and analyse the categories of the philosophical reason à la Kant or trace the dialectical method like Hegel, nor does he elaborate the steps of deductive and inductive inference etc. Instead he shows the different instruments of knowledge that consciousness has devised in man -- the senses, mixed and dependent reason, pure and sovereign reason and intuition. This is a psychological description of the methods of knowledge -- psychological rather than merely rational because it surveys the different planes and capacities of consciousness of which psychology is the science. It is no wonder that Sri Aurobindo emphatically holds that "It is only if there is a greater consciousness beyond Mind and that consciousness is accessible to us that we can know and enter into the ultimate Reality"³⁹. He is more specific as regards the particular level of consciousness which he says is especially relevant to his philosophy and yoga. "It is not by 'thinking out' the entire reality but by a change of consciousness that one can pass from ignorance to the Knowledge--the Knowledge by which we become what we know. To pass from the external to a direct and intimate inner consciousness; to widen consciousness out of the limits of the ego and the body; to heighten it by an inner will and aspiration and opening to the Light till it passes in its ascent beyond Mind; to bring down a descent of the supramental Divine through self-giving and surrender with a consequent transformation of mind, life and body -- this is the integral way to the Truth. It is this that we call the Truth here and aim at in our yoga."⁴⁰

It is necessary to explain here Sri Aurobindo's experience-concept of the Mind and mental consciousness. It may be said that consciousness which does not know the Reality integrally is mind. From this point of view, Overmind which has a global consciousness is also Mind. All spiritual philosophies assert in one voice that mind cannot know the spiritual Reality. This is true if we mean by mind the ordinary human mind, even pure reason which seeks knowledge for the sake of knowledge. But one Upanishad while saying that mind returns from That along with speech, asserts that by mind indeed the Self has to be known. There is no contradiction here for the mind as it ordinarily is in the average human being

namely, dependent on the senses, restlessly driven by vital impulses, desires and passions, is incapable of the direct apprehension of the Truth. But spiritual psychology holds that by certain yogic disciplines the mind can be purified of desires and passions and quieted and made transparent so that it can reflect the Spirit and thus know the Self and God by reflection.

For Sri Aurobindo, there are greater possibilities of the Mind taking the term in the wider sense explained above. Beyond the ordinary human mind there is a level of mental consciousness which he calls the Higher Mind. Here the mind does not have to seek knowledge of things or principles but it comes through in the form of concepts and ideas. Higher still is the Illumined Mind where concepts and ideas are rendered redundant and the mental consciousness is full of illumination. The Intuitive Mind is a still higher level where direct vision of the Truth is attained. Overmind is the topmost level of the mental consciousness. It is "not Mind as we know it", writes Sri Aurobindo, "but an Overmind that covers as with wide wings of some creative Oversoul this whole lower hemisphere of Knowledge-Ignorance, links it with that greater Truth-Consciousness (the Supermind)⁴¹ while yet at the same time with its brilliant golden Lid veils the face of the greater Truth from our sight, intervening with the flood of its possibilities as at once an obstacle and a passage in our seeking of the spiritual law of our existence, its highest aim, its secret Reality.....this is the Power that at once connects and divides the supreme Knowledge and cosmic Ignorance." 42.

The overmind knows the essential Truth and embraces the totality. Yet "it takes each Aspect or Power and gives to it an independent action in which it acquires a full importance and is able to work out, we might say, its own world of action", says Sri Aurobindo. It is Knowledge because it knows the Truth, it is Ignorance since it makes possible separate distinction between the different aspects of the Truth of the Divine Being. Impersonal and Personal, Static and Dynamic, Transcendent and Universal or Individual, these are diverse sides of the Truth to the overmind, each of which can be emphasised over the other and thus lead to Ignorance. The overmind knows the truth of the different religions and philosophies, divergent economic and political and social systems and yet makes it possible for them to flourish separately. Gradually they become exclusive,

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discordant and even hostile. It is because the Overmind makes the fragmentation of the Truth possible that it cannot give us the law of the ideal life nor establish it on this earth. It should be noted that Sri Aurobindo says that on the planes beginning with the Higher Mind upto the Overmind knowledge of the Truth is attainable. They are the spiritual planes of the mental consciousness and they are described also as the mental planes of the Spirit. But the knowledge is neither perfect nor is its power supreme. Intuition for example, is direct knowledge of the Truth and the truths of things. It shines as a flash and has neither the integrality of the supermind nor the totality of the overmind. And it also becomes mixed with the mind and the lower levels of consciousness and becomes vitiated by them. It has been said above that the Overmind knows the essential Truth of things and embraces the totality. It is also not limited by the self-determinations of the Truth which it uses. "But", writes Sri Aurobindo, "although it knows their oneness, can realise in spiritual cognition, yet its dynamic movement, even while relying on that for its security, is not directly determined by it. Overmind Energy proceeds through an illimitable capacity of separation and combination of the powers and aspects of the integral and indivisible all-comprehending unity." ⁴⁴

For example, Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti respectively in Sanskrit, are in the supramental harmony two aspects of a single truth-being and dynamis of the Reality; there is no disequilibrium between the two, one does not predominate over the other. On the other hand, "In overmind," says Sri Aurobindo, "we have the origin of the cleavage, the trenchant distinction made by the philosophy of the Sankhyas in which they appear as two independent entities, Prakriti able to dominate Purusha and cloud its freedom and power, reducing it to a witness and recipient of her forms and actions, Purusha able to return to its separate existence and abide in a free self-sovereignty by rejection of her (Prakriti's) overclouding material principle". ⁴⁵ The overmind brings about the same cleavage between the other aspects and powers of the Divine Reality. It sees the truth of the One and the Many, Divine Personality and Divine Impersonality etc. but does ⁴⁶ see integrally that ^{and} they are the same Reality, for "each is still an aspect and power of the One Reality", says Sri Aurobindo, "but each is empowered to act as an independent entity in the whole, arrive at the fullness of its possibilities of its separate expression and develop the dynamic consequence of that separateness". ⁴⁶ And yet an impli-

cit underlying unity is the basis of this separateness; this is the reason why all possibilities of combination and relation between the different aspects and powers, all interchange and mutualities of their energies are freely organised and their actualisation, always possible.

Thus the overmind, despite being the global consciousness, and embracing the universal totality, is not the principle and power of integral Knowledge-Will. Consciousness as the soul in man must rise beyond the overmind to be able to realise God, Man and Nature and all that is in Nature as the integral Reality capable of infinite self-variations without ceasing to be integral. Only then the various parts and planes of the universal being of which man is an epitome can be perfectly harmonised and the principle of the divine life discovered and its power utilised for the establishment of the ideal individual and collective existence and living.

It is in the supramental consciousness that the integral Knowledge can be attained, for the supermind is integral knowledge. What to the mind are opposites and to the overmind complementary but separate aspects and powers of the Truth are to the supermind various sides of the same Reality realised simultaneously in the one and the same experience. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "The integrality of the Supermind keeps always the essential truth of things, the total truth and the truth of its individual self-determinations clearly knit together; it maintains in them an inseparable unity and between them a close interpenetration and a free and full consciousness of each other...."⁴⁷ And this Knowledge is identical with Will and its power is infallible, for in the supermind ideation (not mental but supramental) and power of effectuation are not divided and discordant but one harmonious movement of the supreme Conscious Force. The evolution of the supermind in the world is the especial concern of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. For that manifestation is the means of the establishment of the divine life here on earth. We will explain shortly what exactly the divine life connotes.

Now let us see what the scope of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is and why it deserves to be described as integral. It will best be described in his own words. "Spirit being the fundamental truth of existence, life can be only its manifestation: Spirit must be not only the origin of life but its basis, its pervading reality and its highest and total result. But the forms of life as they appear to us

are at once its disguises and its instruments of self-manifestation. Man has to grow in knowledge till they cease to be disguises and to grow in spiritual power and quality till they become in him its perfect instruments. To grow into the fullness of the divine is the true law of life and to shape his earthly existence into its image is the meaning of his evolution. This is the fundamental tenet of the philosophy of the Arya⁴⁸. Here we find the ideal of the emerging harmony between Spirit and Life briefly but clearly stated. We also see that Life is not now what it should be, at the same time it is meant to be divinised. The forms of life are disguises that veil the Spirit but also instruments of its self-manifestation. The instruments have to be transformed so that they can do what they are intended to, namely, reveal the Spirit in Life perfectly.

Sri Aurobindo felt that this truth had first to be worked out from the metaphysical point of view; for "in philosophy metaphysical truth is the nucleus of the rest, it is the statement of the last and most general truths on which all the others depend or in which they are gathered up. Therefore we gave the first place to the Life Divine⁴⁹". Here he starts with the fundamental ideas of Vedanta regarding the self and mind and life, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and the world, knowledge and ignorance, rebirth and the Spirit. But his Vedanta is very different from what it is generally considered to be, namely, a denial of life. He did not follow the line of the great Shankara which ended in creating a trenchant opposition between the Self and the world. He refused to bisect existence into the Self and the not-self, God and the world. Instead "we have attempted on the contrary", he continues, "from its data a more comprehensive Advaita (Monism). We have shown that mind and life and matter are derivations from the Self through a spiritual mind or supermind which is the real support of cosmic existence and by developing mind into that man can arrive at the real truth of the Spirit in the world and the real truth and highest law of life. The Self is Sachchidananda (Sat-chit-Ananda, Being-Consciousness-Bliss) and there is no incurable antinomy between that and the world: only we see the world through the eyes of the Ignorance and we have to see it through the eyes of the Knowledge. Our ignorance is only knowledge developing out of its involution in the apparent nescience of Matter and on its way to return to its conscious integrality. To accomplish that return and manifest the spiritual life in human existence is the opportunity

given by the succession of rebirth. We accept the truth of evolution, not so much in the physical form given to it by the West as in its philosophical truth, the involution of life and mind and spirit here in matter and their progressive manifestation. At the summit of this evolution is the spiritual life, the life divine".⁵⁰ We have given this rather long quotation because this passage gives the gist of Sri Aurobindo's integral spiritual idealism.

It has been seen before that Sri Aurobindo strongly holds the view that philosophy should not be merely a theoretical adventure but must give guidance to life. It is true that, as he puts it, the truth of life depends on the truth of being. But he also says that "Truth of philosophy is of a merely theoretical value unless it can be lived".⁵¹ How can the truth worked out theoretically by him in The Life Divine be put to practice and lived? The Synthesis of Yoga is the companion volume of the metaphysical work. In that work Sri Aurobindo "tried.....to arrive at a synthetical view of the principles and methods of the various lines of spiritual self-discipline, and the way in which they can lead to an integral divine, in ⁵² the human existence". It has been said before that Sri Aurobindo was of the view that God is the Self of the universe, that he is immanent in the world. The individual lives in smaller 'universes' around him -- his society, his nation and humanity. Does society feature in Sri Aurobindo's thought? After telling his reader of the Arya what he was trying to do in his work The Synthesis of Yoga, he went on to remark that the Yoga could lead "to an individual self-development", but he felt that "it was necessary to show too how our ideal can work out in the social life of mankind. In The Psychology of Social Development (later published as The Human Cycle) we have indicated how these truths affect the evolution of human society.⁵³ But the metaphysical vision extended beyond the human society. And "In the Ideal of Human Unity we have taken the present trend of mankind towards a closer unification and tried to appreciate its tendencies and show what is wanting to them in order that real human unity may be achieved".⁵⁴

It can be easily seen how vast the scope of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is. It could not be otherwise because he saw in the heart of all things one integral Reality and in all movements of Nature the action of its Conscious Force. While nothing is to be accepted as they are now, nothing is to be rejected because however contrary their appearance, they are derived from the same Reality and are

potentially capable of spiritual transfiguration.

Sri Aurobindo has not only thought deeply and creatively about the future of social evolution and the primary and secondary means of achieving human unity, he has also turned his close and insightful attention to art and poetry, education and even physical culture as important elements of the total evolution of man into superman. This has been possible because he sees behind all activities both of Nature and of man the same Force, which is conscious fundamentally but appears partly conscious, sub-conscious and even unconscious on certain levels of its action. Art, poetry etc. are not yoga by themselves but they can be made the means of opening man's consciousness to higher planes of consciousness and thus turn him to spiritual self-discovery. The integral Knowledge of the spiritual Reality, the supramental apprehension of the universal Lord, reveals to the man who has such knowledge the relation between all that is in Nature including all that is human, to their Source, their limitations and their possibilities. This is why, as said above, nothing is to be accepted as it is now at the present stage of evolution and yet not anything is to be rejected from the scheme and process of the self-manifestation of Consciousness in the world. The physical, the vital and the mental being of man, all have a part to play in man's integral evolution because the world is the chosen venue of God's perfect self-revelation. "To know, and possess and be the divine being", writes Sri Aurobindo, "in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilight or obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build peace and self-existent bliss where there is only a transitory satisfaction besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish an infinite freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities, to discover and realise the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation,-- this is offered to us as the manifestation of God in Matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution". 55

This eloquent passage is taken from the first chapter entitled 'The Human Aspiration', of The Life Divine. The first paragraph of the chapter states Sri Aurobindo's idea of the deepest and perpetual aspiration of man. "The earliest preoccupation of man", writes he, "in his awakened thoughts, and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation,--for it survives the longest periods of

scepticism and returns after every banishment,--is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration; today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last,--God, Light, Freedom, Immortality." 56

It would appear from a reading of the two citations together, of which the former constitutes the second paragraph of the chapter mentioned above, that Sri Aurobindo has given a radically original turn to the primeval longing of man. For he speaks of the plenary supramental wisdom replacing our twilight physical mentality while all mystical knowledge has been till now spiritual-mental and therefore not integrally comprehensive, of not only finding freedom from the bondage to the world but of establishing an infinite freedom here in this world and last but not the least, of not only realising the essential immortality of the spiritual self but of discovering and realising it in a body subjected to death and constant mutation, in other words, realising physical immortality by transforming the very substance of the body, its organs and their functions.

It has been clear by now that Sri Aurobindo has focussed his philosophical attention on an all-round development of consciousness in the world. Of this development Nature has been the guardian and guiding power in a subconscious way till the emergence of man. Evolution has the opportunity of becoming conscious in man who is endowed with self-reflective reason. The evolution that man can bring about has two directions. First, he can ascend to higher and greater ranges of consciousness, to wit, to the Higher, Illumined and the Intuitive Mind and the Overmind. But Sri Aurobindo thinks that man can do better, that he can ascend to the Supermind. Secondly, it is open to him to effect the descent of the Supermind into his whole being the result of which will be the release of consciousness inherently present in them but not manifest in them in a manner in which it can be recognised. Evolution is a joint process of ascent and descent of consciousness, of aspiration from below and response from above. The beginning of evolution is nothing but the actualisation of the will of suppressed or involved consciousness in Matter to make

itself openly manifest, that is, evolved. That aspiration draws down from consciousness in the Life plane a pressure which evolves vitality already existent but unmanifest in material substance. The process of the emergence of Mind from vitalised matter is the same. Man, mānuṣa, manuṣya in Sanskrit--derived from the root man meaning to think, reflect, cogitate--is so called because he is the child of Mind and thus the mental being. Now Nature with the co-operation of self-conscious man is in the process of manifesting the supermind out of mental man to transform him into the superman--superman not of sheer will and power but of Wisdom, Force and Love, a veritable god wearing the earthly robe of matter.

It is important to remember that Sri Aurobindo's approach is psychological which is in the last analysis spiritual for understanding his theory of social evolution. He does not ignore the economic and political forces but considers that they are external expressions of inner psychological forces. In any society there are people whose whole life is an attempt at satisfying physical needs and vital urges and determined by instincts and impulses. Their actions are moulded by clash of desires and temporary and pragmatic compromises which mitigate the ferocity of the conflict of interests to the mutual advantage of the dominant members of the community. Sometimes the pragmatic arrangement may be provided by moral awakening or religious sanction or both. The people nevertheless are dominated by their physical needs and their satisfaction and psychologically speaking, they are according to Sri Aurobindo, barbarians. There are others, perhaps not very many, who try to live their lives according to reason and some idealism. They are not devoid of physical needs and vital desires nor are they averse to fulfilling them. But the life of the mind is more important to them. They reflect on the comparative desirability of different values and the way to realise them. Sri Aurobindo calls them civilised. It is possible, indeed history furnishes ample evidence that it is so, that a civilised society is not economically and politically as well organised as a barbarian society. Nevertheless, it is more evolved as a community. Among the civilised members of a society, there will be a few who pursue truth, beauty and goodness for their own sake and cherish them as values the realisation of which give more satisfaction than the fulfilment of sheer physical needs and vital urges. A cultured society may lack some of the amenities of a civilised community but is more refined and noble. And then there are those whose primary

aim is to discover the spiritual soul in themselves. The needs of the body and the satisfaction of vital desires or the pursuit of science, philosophy, art etc. are less important to them than the preparation for and development of the spiritual life. To know and live in and from the spirit is their supreme quest. They are the sages, the saints, the mystics and yogis who are the salt of the earth. People of all the three types are found in all societies. Whether a society is barbaric or civilised and cultured or spiritual depends on the dominant ideal that motivates the individuals constituting it.

In his The Human Cycle Sri Aurobindo adopted the terms used by the German historian Lamprecht in expounding his own theory of social evolution. Society passes through stages which are described as symbolic, typical and conventional, individual and lastly subjective. The mentality of the symbolic age regarded everything in the world as a figure and a representation of a reality subtle, occult and divine. Human institutions were not exceptions to this. For example, the early Indian society was regarded as the earthly embodiment in human conditions of the cosmic Soul. That society was divided into four orders, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra,--misinterpreted as castes or classes--which were representations respectively of the four aspects of the cosmic Divine Being, namely, Wisdom, Power, Mutuality and Service. What determined the division was one's psychological type, temperament and function natural to one's inner psychological bent. As time passed, the division remained but the clear perception of its symbolic truth became obscure. The orders became rigid types and birth became the determining factor. Sri Aurobindo calls this the typical stage. Here the truth receded into the background but something of the merit of the types remained. Later that also was lost and the types degenerated into mere conventions. The conventional age was followed by the revolt of the individual. This revolt was a long time coming in the East and in India and is better illustrated by events at the end of medieval Europe. Biblical authority was questioned along with the authority of the Church by individual thinkers, scientists and philosophers when research and experiment showed up the mythical character of the Genesis story of creation. The age of the individual was ushered in. Science became the standard of all truth and Reason the worshipped goddess.

The individual revolt and the consequent free adventure of knowledge did

wonders. A lot of superstitions and prejudices were cleared away and the way to the establishment of a sane society was opened. But the success of rational thinking and scientific enquiry in many fields misled not only ordinary people but leaders of thought also into believing that reason could provide the panacea of all evils. They failed to see the limitations of reason which can deal only with the quantitative and the measurable but is almost completely out of its depths when faced with the qualitative aspects of things. Values are entirely beyond the scope of science. Sri Aurobindo has pointed out that a most curious and disastrous thing resulted from the deification of reason. Rational scientific enquiry discovered universal laws in Nature of which the individual was only an example. When the primacy of the universal in relation to the individual was applied to the area of social and political life, it ended up in suppressing the very freedom of the individual which made the rational adventure possible. This unfortunate misapplication of the relation of the universal law and the individual event which is its exemplar to social living has made the individual human being a "member of a pack, a hive, a mass". The cause of this reduction of the individual to a cog in the State machinery is the consequence of economic socialism. The State control of free thought and expression and in principle, indeed in a great many cases, in actual fact, of all the aspects of life of the citizens, will according to Sri Aurobindo bring about philosophical anarchism because the spirit of the individual will not accept this regimentation of his life and being for all time.

The solution however does not lie merely in another individual revolt against the authority of the Totalitarian State and the succeeding of it by another age of reason. It lies rather, in the coming of the subjective age. The word subjective here does not mean the imaginary or fanciful but the inner aspect of man's being. But the future cycle of social evolution will not be determined by the vital or the mental aspects of man's nature. The true subjective element in him is the Soul, the divine aspect of his being.

Sri Aurobindo is not saying that if people are increasingly religious, then the desirable and ideal cycle of social evolution will be inaugurated. Religion is not always spiritual. It is mostly concerned with creed and cult, ceremony and festivals etc. More often than not it has bound the human spirit rather than liberated it. Evidence is not lacking that it has opposed tooth and nail adventures of

scientific research and philosophic thought, and it very often has also starved the aesthetic impulse in man. Sri Aurobindo grants that religion at its best turns man to his inmost subjective aspect and opens the door for the spiritualisation of his life. But he reminds us that religion has succeeded in doing this in the case of the individual only. Even then it looked for man's spiritual fulfilment beyond the earth and regarded this world as only a venue for the preparation for a paradisaal existence. Society as a whole never "seized on the discovery of the soul as a means for the discovery of the law of its own being or on a knowledge of the soul's true nature and need and its fulfilment as the right way of terrestrial perfection."⁵⁷ Religion was mostly used by society to give sanction to its customs, conventions and institutions. Whatever may have been the truth in the case of the individual, the socialisation of religion did not make society spiritual.

For that to happen, the soul of society must come forward and assume the leadership of its collective life. For there is a group soul as well as the individual soul. One great result of the awakening of the social soul will be the liberation of the individual from communal pressures to conform in thought and way of life. "The true and full spiritual aim in society", says Sri Aurobindo, "will regard man not as a mind, a life and a body, but as a soul incarnated for a divine fulfilment upon earth, not only in heavens beyond, which after all it need not have left if it had no divine business here in the world of physical, vital and mental nature"⁵⁸. Life, mind and body will not be regarded as ends in themselves nor as things to be cast off so that the spirit can fly away from imprisonment in them into its own unsullied kingdom above. The natural members of the soul will be accepted as instruments for a divine purpose, the nature and significance of which has not yet been grasped. Their high potentialities will be revealed, for the purpose is to spiritualise them so that they can become luminous means of the manifestation of spirit by growing more and more conscious and perfect.

A spiritual society will recognise its members' [^] of a free atmosphere for [^] their growth, to find themselves and their potentialities. Errors will be committed and mistakes made in the use of freedom but it will be recognised that experience is gained through errors, also that each member has a divine principle in

him or her which they will find out as they evolve and discover its law in their individual and collective life. There will be no dictation to science and philosophy to conform to religious dogmas or even assuredly certain spiritual truth. And as with science and philosophy, so with art. The aesthetic being in man can not only be touched by divine afflatus but can rise on its own curve to spiritual possibilities. "The highest aim of the aesthetic being", writes Sri Aurobindo, "is to find the Divine through beauty; the highest Art is that which by an inspired use of significant and interpretative form unseals the doors of the spirit."⁵ Sri Aurobindo does not accept the idea that "Art must be religious or not at all" or that "it must be subservient to either utility or scientific truth or philosophic ideas, Art may make use of these things as elements, but it has its own swadharma, essential law, and it will rise to the widest spirituality by following out its own natural lines with no other yoke than the intimate law of its own being".⁶⁰

The principle of freedom will be extended to the lower nature of man though compulsion may seem to be the right method of dealing with it. This is not to say that they will be left to themselves without any attempt to change them. The spiritual aim will not take resort to repression from without but will instead look for a free self-rule and development from within. If we seek the soul and let it guide by its inherent consciousness and knowledge the lower nature, the latter will accept that guidance. This is possible because the lower nature is also a formation of consciousness and can become open to the soul's light and power.

Fullness of life and man's being is the goal of the spiritual aim in society. A higher knowledge, intuition and ultimately the supermind working through the individual and social soul will usher in the spiritual society and the human cycle will have reached its acme of perfection.

Sri Aurobindo cast his creative and mystic glance on the largest society, to wit, humanity, to find out what its possibilities were from the point of view of the evolving spirit in the world. Here his main thesis is that Nature is preparing humanity for an eventual unity. Through trials and experiments conditions for this emerging unity are being prepared. Sri Aurobindo from his wide and deep

knowledge of history has given many examples of past attempts at unifying people and countries, analysed the causes of their failures and also what they achieved. He recognises the fact that many of these movements were not conscious attempts at achieving unity but the motives were national glory, possession of markets, imperial expansion and so on. Nevertheless some of them served to advance the cause of unity. He has laid down the requirements for the achievement of human unity. The main requirement is again psychological and subjective.

Sri Aurobindo is perfectly aware of the formidable obstacles in the path of human unity. Nonetheless, the sense of the need of unity of mankind has been steadily becoming stronger. In his The Ideal Of Human Unity, he discusses in separate chapters the economic, military and administrative issues of the problem of setting up a World Government. His treatment of the problems involved shows expert knowledge, optimistic realism and sane judgement. Sri Aurobindo was as great an advocate of a rich and harmonious diversity in unity as a severe critic of dead uniformity. He does not accept at all the idea of a single World State. He is justifiably apprehensive that it will lead to regimentation and efforts to destroy the characteristic qualities and features of different national cultures and ways of life and seek to replace them by a colourless uniformity over the whole world. His preference is for a loose federation of free national states and governments. The problem of stronger and weaker nations, and the binding authority of the World Government may raise its ugly head. The importance of the psychological aspect is seen here very clearly. Unity must be a conscious choice and freely and deliberately cherished and pursued. The freedom of none can be sacrificed and only a genuine respect for the liberty of all nations to choose their respective ways of life without however threatening to deny others the same freedom can assure this. The different nations and humanity as a whole must feel the vital need of unity, must feel that it cannot exist without it. A spiritual religion of humanity is needed; humanity must become an object of worship, so to speak. There must be a living, dynamic and conscious acceptance of the idea that all sections of humanity are branches of one international family.⁶¹ It has been said before that Sri Aurobindo is a great believer in freedom of the individual, of society and of nations. Equality and fraternity are equally great

ideas and ideals. But if there is too much liberty there is likely to be licentiousness on the one hand and persecution of others on the other. Too much equality may end up in doing away with unique and special qualities of individual nations and in the process destroy the richness of life. Fraternity cannot be realised in the absence of a living sense of brotherhood. It is true that the psychological sense of unity will need an outward machinery for it to be realised. But it is also true that a burning sense of the need of unity will help create the machinery.

The integral nature of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is evident from the fact that he gives due place and value to all knowledge, experience, economic and political institutions, cultural movements, religions and philosophies and spiritual disciplines. None of them does he consider as final and absolute, none of them as entirely valueless. For example, he is a great believer in and an advocate of individual freedom, yet he says that communism can be a corrective of excessive individualism, on the other hand he does not endorse the deification of the State at the cost of the individual. Money is an important element in his scheme of life but he rejects the motive of production for personal profit. At the same time he believes that capitalism has a place in that without surplus capital industry, business, trade and commerce will languish. If Democracy can assure the right of all citizens to develop along the lines which their inner nature determines, he is all for it. Yet a cultured aristocracy, not of birth or wealth but of refined and purified intelligence and most of all, of spiritual vision and power should be the natural leaders of a commune of soul-consciousness towards which he believes society is evolving. Morality is indispensable for the growth of man, for the refinement of his personality and for civilised conduct. Yet morality is not the limit of man's evolution. Spirituality is his high aim and spirituality transcends morality. It is the direct knowledge of the Self which is essentially free from the tensions and dualities of the moral life. In a chapter entitled "The Evolution of the Spiritual Man" in The Life Divine, Sri Aurobindo has said that four things have helped that evolution. They are religion, occultism, philosophy and spirituality. A word about occultism should be said here. Sri Aurobindo does not mean by it black magic and dabbling in so called miracles. Occultism is knowledge of the secret states, forces and functions of the mind, life and body

and their inter-relations. This is necessary, if the spiritual aim is not only to realise the Reality but also to transform human nature so that it can manifest the Divine. Religion and philosophy must be spiritualised for them to be able to play their respective roles in the future evolution of man into superman. But spirituality itself must be more comprehensive, harmonious and integral. Basing itself on the Transcendent Absolute, embracing the universal Divine and accepting the individual Self as the Centre of the nîsus of evolution in this world, it will harmonise in one knowledge God, Man and Nature and all that is contained in Nature. Till now all spiritual experiences have been on one or the other of the planes of mental consciousness touched and suffused by spiritual knowledge, peace, power or joy. It is indisputable that spiritual experiences are extremely varied and spiritual people are of very different types. Sri Aurobindo after pointing out that spirituality is a small kernel when it disengages itself in the consciousness from physicality, vitality and mentality and puts on its own distinctive character. But the kernel grows and man begins to live in the spiritual consciousness. Its first formations are evident in the spiritualisation of our natural activities. There is a permeating influence or even a guidance. There may be a spiritual turn of the thoughts or the emotions or the will or of all three sides of our nature. A spiritualised ethical formation in character is a possible consequence. Some have an awareness of an inner light, guidance or communion or a greater Control than our mind and will to which something in us obey; all this may happen, yet all is not moulded into that experience. These intuitions and illuminations grow in insistence and canalise themselves, there is a strong inner formation of the being and a claim to govern the whole life and nature, Then begins the spiritual formation of the being, we see the emergence of "the saint, the devotee, spiritual sage, the seer, the prophet, the servant of God, the soldier of the spirit. They take their stand on one part of the natural being lifted up by a spiritual light, power or ecstasy". Sri Aurobindo delineates with great knowledge and authority the difference in the spirituality of the types of spiritual people mentioned above in a passage which though a bit long is worth quoting in toto. "The sage and seer live in the spiritual mind, their thought or their vision is governed and moulded by an inner or a greater divine light of knowledge; the devotee lives in the spiritual aspiration of the heart, its self-offering and its

seeking; the saint is moved by the awakened psychic being in the inner heart grown powerful to govern the emotional and vital being; the others stand in the vital kinetic nature driven by a higher spiritual energy and turned by it towards an inspired action, a God-given work or mission, the service of some divine Power, idea or ideal. The last or highest emergence is the liberated man who has realised the Self and Spirit within him, entered into the cosmic consciousness, passed into union with the Eternal and, so far as he still accepts life and action, acts by the light and energy of the Power within him working through his human instruments of Nature. The largest formulation of this spiritual change and achievement is a total liberation of soul, mind, heart and action, a casting of them all into the sense of the cosmic Self and the Divine Reality.⁶³ The spiritual evolution of the individual has then found its way and thrown up its range of Himalayan eminences and its peaks of highest nature. Beyond this height and largeness there opens only the supramental ascent or the incommunicable Transcendence."⁶⁴

It is easy to see that Sri Aurobindo considers these spiritual achievements partial. At the same time he asserts that they need not always be incomplete and one-sided. All of these spiritual experiences can be harmonised and fused into one master and all-comprehensive realisation if man ascends to the supramental consciousness and attains [^]integral knowledge inherent in it. And if he can bring down its Will one with the Knowledge, he can transform his nature. His mind will become capable of reflecting all knowledge, his life will enjoy the Divine Bliss in all its movements and the body will establish the peace and joy in its very cells in such a way that their natural decay, disintegration and death will be overcome. To sum up, spirituality has to become supramentalised so that it can transform Life into the Life Divine.

The divine life will be the perfect expression of the Truth-Consciousness of the integral Knowledge of God achieving his purpose by its own infallible Will through the self-existent Love and Bliss which will determine the network of relations, the life of the supramental spiritual beings whose soul, mind and [^]life and body will be free from Ignorance and act out of a creative dynamic sense of the unity of all that is.

APPENDIX

The problem of evil is a great question mark on any Monistic philosophy which accepts the reality of the world and holds that it is a manifestation of God. It is even a more acute issue in the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. He starts with the idea of the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Brahman of the Vedanta and holds that the world is the self-manifestation of that Reality. Not only that, he further maintains that the manifestation is for delight, that its source is Bliss and its goal too is Bliss. Sri Aurobindo has to answer the question--why the manifestation of God at all when he is self-sufficient and perfect? Similar theories maintain that the world is an emanation of the One, the supreme Reality, as, for example, what Plotinus holds, or that it is the nature of God to manifest, as the Shaiva Tantric schools say. The other Tantric school, the Shakta, elevates Shakti, the supreme Conscious Force above God. Sri Aurobindo agrees with none of these doctrines. The Divine according to him is absolutely free and is not compelled by anything to manifest. The world is not an emanation from God as the rays are emanated from the sun nor is it the nature of God to manifest, and of course God according to Sri Aurobindo, is not subservient to Shakti. Why then manifestation at all? His simple answer is -- for delight.

This answer is very hard to accept in view of the universal presence of error, evil, pain and suffering in the world. Sri Aurobindo not being an illusionist, does not reject these phenomena as unreal. At the same time he does not accept them as permanent features of universal existence.

It has been said before that Sri Aurobindo says that one of the inherent powers of consciousness is to limit itself. The statement may be recalled that Ignorance is a development from Knowledge by limitation from the point of view of the descent of consciousness. And here lies the key to Sri Aurobindo's answer to the problem of error, evil, pain and suffering. Ignorance is the parent of these phenomena. They are the consequences of the division of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo holds that the problem of evil etc. become impossible to solve on the basis of the idea of an extra-cosmic God by which he means God who is beyond the universe and not immanent in it. It is utterly unintelligible why such a God would inflict such dire punishments on his creatures for no fault of their own. Sri Aurobindo's idea of God is that He is supra-cosmic, transcendent of the uni-

verse in that he is not identical with it--our philosopher is not a pantheist-- but at the same time he is immanent in it. Who is suffering in the last analysis, Sri Aurobindo asks. His answer is that since the Divine is immanent in the universe and thus the one Knower in all beings, any experience in the world must ultimately be his. So the question why God inflicts punishment on his creatures does not arise.

As far as moral evil is concerned, Sri Aurobindo points out that it is a peculiarly human phenomenon. Neither in physical Nature nor in the sub-human creation is there any such thing as evil. And it is absent in the world of gods, if there be such beings. Evil is an evolutionary phenomenon and thus it is not a permanent feature of the evolving world. It will be eliminated when there is further evolution of consciousness, when man will live in and from the spirit.

Physical pain and suffering are also the result of the limitation of consciousness giving rise to the division in being. Because one regards the world and one's fellows as not essentially oneself, one thinks that the streams of force one encounters come from the not-self, from 'an other'. And the division of consciousness makes man incapable of meeting the force as one's own. Besides, the growth of consciousness enables one to withstand and absorb any force into oneself and it eventually ceases to be painful. Pain, pleasure and indifference are really limited refractions of the Bliss of existence. It appears as one of the three in accordance with our state of consciousness. With the evolution of consciousness in a certain way, pain, pleasure and indifference are all transformed into Bliss. It is not uncommon that an injured soldier fights on in spite of intense physical suffering or a mother carries on the usual duties when a grown-up son has died. In these instances the soldier or the mother has changed the inner consciousness in a way which makes them capable of enduring the physical pain or emotional suffering. Thus pain and suffering can be neutralised and, according to Sri Aurobindo, they can be turned to joy provided consciousness can be radically changed and its attendant power enhanced. In the community of spiritual supermen, pain and suffering and evil will have no place because the mental consciousness will be transcended and life will be one conscious and joyous movement of the essential unitary reality of God, the true common Self of all.

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- 51,52,53. SABCL 17. 402
54. ibid.
55. SABCL 18. 1-2
56. 18. 1
57. 15. 211
58. 15. 212-13
59,60. 15. 215
61. 15. 554-55: "A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future....there is a secret Spirit,a divine Reality,in which we are all one....A spiritual oneness would create psychological oneness not dependent upon intellectual or outward uniformity and compel a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification....this would be the basis of a higher type of human existence."
62. SABCL 19. 882
63. Here Sri Aurobindo gives the following foot-note: "This is the essence of the spiritual ideal and realisation held before us by the Gita."
64. SABCL. 19. 882
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4. 16. 314
5. 13. 241-42
6. 16. 335-71
7. 16. 362
- 8.Mother India, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Vol.XXXVIII No.8 p489.
- 9.Archives and Research, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Vol.7 No.2 pp 163-65.
- 10,11.SABCL 16. 265
12. 16. 105
- 12a. The word Upanishads within brackets is the present writer's addition to explain the word Vedanta.
13. SABCL 16. 335
14. 16. 339
15. 16. 335
16. ibid.
17. 16. 362
- 18,19,20 ibid.
- 20a. 16. 363
21. 15. 71
- 21a. The words within brackets are added by the present writer to explain dharma
- 22,23.SABCL 16. 362
24. 15. 99
- 25,26 ibid.
- 27,28.SABCL 19. 700
29. 19. 701
30. 22. 233-34
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32. SABCL 18. 2
- 33,34,35 19. 700
36. 22. 158
- 37,38. 22. 159
39. 22. 158
40. 22. 160-61
41. The two words within brackets are added by the present writer.
42. SABCL 18. 278
- 43,44,45 18. 279
46. 18. 279-80
47. 18. 279
48. 17. 400-01
- 49,50. 17. 401