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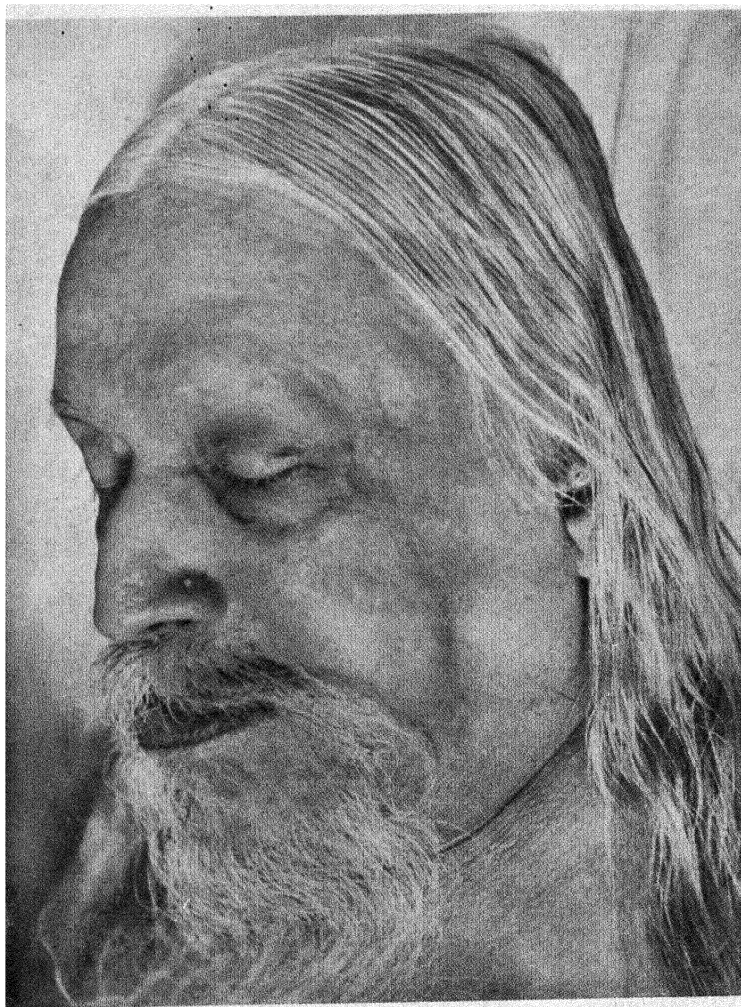


SRI AUROBINDO AND  
THE SOUL QUEST OF MAN



*Interpreted by Sri Aurobindo*  
THE MESSAGE OF THE GITA





● SRI AUROBINDO

*He laboured not for his own but for the world transformation*  
(photograph reproduced by permission of Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

SRI AUROBINDO  
AND THE SOUL QUEST  
OF MAN

*Three Steps to Spiritual Knowledge*

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A STUDY OF CHAPTERS I TO XII OF  
SRI AUROBINDO'S  
THE LIFE DIVINE

BY  
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## PREFACE

THE object of these essays, a re-focus of one portion of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, is not so much to present an interpretation in modified or alternative terms (if such were indeed necessary or even desirable), but an endeavour to give a closer view and more individual approach to the exposition as a whole. Since Sri Aurobindo wrote essentially from a cosmic standpoint, both widely and profusely, it requires some perseverance and persistence on our part if we are to extricate from it a clear and unclouded panorama of the principal peaks that successively emerge from its widely extensive range of thought-structure. But perhaps what is of more urgent concern is that one cannot easily discern a familiar landmark or point of contact within that broad expansive territory to which a passable span of approach can be readily laid. At the same time we have to remember that Sri Aurobindo saw and wrote primarily from a universal vision that traverses many paths of knowing, in which each is considered and determined according to its capacity to lead to the one ultimate Truth. One's chief difficulty from the very outset, therefore, is to determine the principal paths to follow, without becoming lost in an intricate maze of by-paths. This difficulty is increased if we take up these writings with a fixed and rigid attitude of mind, for we cannot then easily adjust ourselves to viewing things from so many different angles. Neither can we fully exercise our discrimination, so that we become lost in what seems to be an infinite diffuseness, but which is more precisely a wideness of vision that simultaneously traverses many planes of existence.

In order not to lose the individual values of Sri Aurobindo's work, I have dared to individualize what are in fact universal experiences. By this means it is hoped that at least a part of Sri Aurobindo's fundamental issues have been brought into a single focus, and that some avenue or bridge of contact has at the same time been constructed to reach those not-so-accessible ways. It

is hoped that this re-focusing of even a small section of Sri Aurobindo's total work may help to light up some corner of understanding and comprehension in the vastness of his thought.

\* \* \*

We should fail, however, to do full justice to a consideration of Sri Aurobindo's life-work if we did not take due note of the fact that he was essentially a man of God. This may sound somewhat paradoxical when we think of him only in his outer aspect as a great sage. For how can a high and lofty knowing possess at the same time the lowly and humble qualities of piety, simplicity and meekness which we usually associate with genuine men of God? The truth is of course that most great souls of simple piety found a direct approach to God in which knowledge was even a diverting influence to them, and which would have cut severely into their intimate relation with Him. Rarely enough has the vast field of spiritual knowledge been realized in its integral fullness as the veritable link charged with the power of raising man to the Divine Heights. But even more rarely has that vast field been consciously sought as the consecrated terrain for performing God's work in the world, while at the same time opening it up to the understanding of man. This indeed was Sri Aurobindo's unique achievement. But our acceptance of his utter surrender to the Divine is even more complicated by the fact that his God-given labour, unfortunately for our ordinary perception, was not of an outward and visible kind. If, therefore, we are to judge Sri Aurobindo's work aright we must see distinctly the two sides in which it appeared—that which was inner, and that which was the outer visible part. In this setting the inner work belonged wholly to the Divine, and hence this part is the more difficult to discern—and made even more so by those whose eyes are habitually fixed on outward phenomena. Also he never took upon himself any external demonstration to show the world proof of his Divine-directed work. Indeed such demonstrativeness would have detracted from his labour. All we can say, therefore, is that time alone will reveal the truth of his Divine work in the world.

But although the inner aspect of his work must as yet remain a closed book, what he did give to the world was a written record of that highest spiritual experience and God-knowledge. This was transcribed into the most comprehensible terms possible, in both an elevated poetry as well as a precise and unerring prose, so that those seeking the higher Light may be directly and progressively helped in their spiritual endeavour. By his long-sustained poise between the Divine Truth-plane and our ordinary mental comprehension, he was not only able to bring much of the Truth-knowledge into our current terms of knowing, but he inevitably became withdrawn and detached from the active world of men. Although the result of his work thus became more completely veiled from our outward-discerning judgment, we must not lose sight of the fact that in Sri Aurobindo's written works we have for these present times the widest and most comprehensive knowledge of the Divine Reality that the world has yet known. This was expressed in a clarity of thought that belongs neither to the obscure symbolical language nor the cryptic occult forms of the old esoteric schools. And whilst we still harbour any belief in the ultimate elevation of mankind, the place and value of that verbal gift to man must be increasingly recognized.

\* \* \*

The three steps referred to in the title are the three fundamental stages that are traversed in those first twelve chapters of *The Life Divine*. The first step (Chapters I–IV, and which are covered by the essay 'The Positive Approach to Spirituality') establishes the Divine Unity of all things, of which the bridging of Matter with Spirit is the natural basis. The second step (Chapters V–VIII, and which are dealt with in 'The Spiritual Basis of Personality'), reveals the inner unifying centre—the soul of man—as inevitably forming the individual basis and nucleus of a higher development. The third step (Chapters IX–XII, on which the last essay 'Time, Consciousness and the Spiritual Reality' is based) is the knowledge of the Divine Nature; how it is really hidden in the world and must eventually become the emergent factor of a spiritual

evolution. These three steps in fact correspond to the three fundamental truths which form the essence of the ancient Vedantic knowledge; namely, that the true Nature of the Divine Reality is not only above but here below, that the innermost soul of man is of the very stuff of that Divine Nature—and has the potentiality therefore to grow into That, and finally that the Divine Reality is the Supreme One—the All as well as the Absolute. Indeed there is nothing else but that omnipresent Reality. These are veritably universal truths, belonging to no particular race or creed, and are fundamental to all spiritual knowledge. Here we have to observe that of all the known scriptures of the world, it was the ancient Vedas and Upanishads of India that had preserved those fundamental truths most clearly and fully. Thus it was only logical and natural that they should have become the chosen basis of a new and wider revelation. But it must not be concluded thereby that *The Life Divine* aims to expound Vedanta (or Indian philosophy of a new and special school). It merely takes that old-established foundation as its convenient starting-point—as the most fertile ground for something new to grow upon—and thenceforth opens out for us ever new and greater realms of spiritual Truth. Let us not therefore be deterred by the immensity of the way nor by strange extraneous appearances, for having ventured on the first few steps we can then more assuredly open the gateway to a completer spiritual knowledge.

N. P.

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# SPIRITUALITY AND THE MODERN WORLD

## *A Preliminary General View*

### I

IT is but a stage in man's progressive development to believe that God manifests Himself through one particular religion or sect, and that this religion (whichever it might be) must be the true way. For wider realizations come to us which reveal that the set orthodox religions of the world are only partial approaches and partial attainments in the spiritual quest of man and his aspiration for God the Reality. Thus even the most organized sectarian religion at its highest represents but a partial revelation of the Supreme; and even the most highly developed religion while ever it holds the individual bound to its own limited doctrines and laws, cannot be the end of man's spiritual quest. It cannot through this narrow exclusiveness produce the secret goal of his innermost aspirations—that of union with the Divine, the Divine descent on earth, and ultimately the divinization of life itself. Sooner or later the spiritual flight beyond religion has to be made, as it has been done many times in the past. In all communities with a strongly developed religious sense it has in fact been the tendency to allow and even encourage this transcendence beyond the fixed law and dogma of creed, into the freer individual (and at the same time universal) atmosphere of the spiritual life. Such has been the way and endeavour, particularly in the East, for millenniums. It is not surprising, therefore, that the history of these communities shows a more or less continuous line of spiritual development and attainment, though mostly with a tenacious clinging to their own particular form of religious expression. Such spiritual attainments, however, through the truly enlightened ones, have often developed into new and quite independent influences, which have even spread

to and helped to uplift peoples in other regions of the world.

Religion being merely a branch of the spiritual tree must therefore eventually outgrow itself, and widen beyond its own petty narrowness. If the way of its transcendence has been lost or stemmed, then that religion inevitably falls into decay and loses its spiritual force. This has happened more notably in the present-day West, where religion has become utterly divorced from its originating spirit and source. Thus lacking the original spiritual light and force, religion in the modern world has become fossilized, and hence more of a hindrance to man's further progress and opening than an aid to his inner development. In this way the increasing rejection and rapid breakdown of all orthodox creeds and dogmas have taken place; and with it unfortunately a drastic diminution in man's faith and beliefs. But while modern man has thus turned his back on religion, he has at the same time taken a different course and development.

It is well, however, that the Spirit works in other ways and along other channels than through man-moulded religions—as it has been realized from time immemorial. The way of knowledge is also a powerful way towards God; and modern man through his advancement in scientific thought, and particularly through his persistent endeavours to unravel the inner secrets of Nature, may yet by these efforts find an opening to the Light. Thus we venture to suggest that modern thought and endeavour, in aiming towards a realization of truths beyond and behind man's present limited sensory awareness, may by that very limitation instigate a widening or change of consciousness in man himself. In all branches of modern thought, particularly through their top-most reaches and foremost exponents, there is the growing realization of an inherent limitation, and with it the consequent insistence to break beyond the bounds and frontiers of those conscious limits. Even though it may be by long and devious routes and many stumblings, as it now appears, such searching which at present seems to be but negatively directed, is really clearing the way for a more positive Truth to emerge. But a widening of consciousness would needs have to be the primary step for

apprehending that highest Truth and Light, which we call the spiritual.

In the conscious realization of this fuller endeavour and aim lies the salvation of modern man; and the rejection of religion therefore in this sense may not be a fundamental loss for him (though naturally it is a very dangerous period in this transitional stage when he may easily be drawn away from the Divine goal—as is the tendency to-day). But if he grasps the opportunity that has already been presented to him by the revelation of higher truths, and recognizes the reality of a wider plane of Consciousness as yet beyond—what has been called the illuminating Gnosis or World of Light of the ancients—he will realize more earnestly that this is the Godward path towards which he, the mental being, must look for guidance, and towards which indeed he must ultimately grow—or perish.

A deeper reading into the records of man's ancient spiritual quest for Truth, reveals more clearly that it was from this higher plane above mind (aptly called the Truth-plane), that those revelations—the illumined Word and 'voice of God'—had descended from time to time. For an earlier man, filled with an as yet undisturbed sense of a supra-Nature, these illuminations were his very guide and inspiration. The traditional lore and scriptures of the Eastern peoples had largely preserved—even though with some degree of parochial seclusiveness—illumined revelations, which had appeared as gifts from the gods to a less sophisticated man. It was chiefly because of the preservation of these ancient doctrines with their high ideals intact, that a persistent link between the spiritual reality and those traditional cultures could be maintained from the remotest past. The constant living touch of the Spirit, and a consequent impregnation of the cosmic outlook, had certainly saved such a culture, even in its most decadent and obscure periods, from succumbing to the fate of dispersion or extinction, as other ancient civilizations had done.

It was in such a way that India, throughout the ages, had been able to preserve and foster those universal principles of Truth, which had been revealed to her most ancient Seers. The massive collection of the Vedas, Upanishads and other ancient scriptures

bears witness to that assiduous preservation; but external factors had also assisted in protecting this cultural heritage. The Vedic seeds which the Aryan settlers had planted in the Indus valley found a naturally protective cradle for the growth and maturing of a high cosmic vision. In those early days—five or six millenniums ago—this settlement probably shared a common cultural unity with the Mesopotamian civilization of that time, as recent archaeological excavations appear to show. There is evidence also that both the Chaldean and the Vedic Seers of those early times shared a wide cosmological outlook in which man was not only seen to be in the Cosmos, but the Cosmos itself was realized to be in man also. There was then the more direct communion with the universe and the heavens—those veiled though ever-present worlds above which a later man has only been able to idealize into myth, folklore and astrological symbol.

But as we know, the westernmost branch of this old cultural unity disintegrated; for the Mesopotamian valley was too open to the winds of destruction, such as floods and invasions, to be able to survive these naturally destructive forces. The subsequent cultures of this region became cut off from and consequently lost the wider vision of their ancient Seers. (In fact the severance had become so complete that hieroglyphic scripts unearthed in more recent times have consistently failed to give up their esoteric secrets to a later and alien caste of thought.) It was doubtless as a protection—a natural condition of self-preservation—that the later cultures of this area enclosed themselves in a cloistered anthropomorphic shell, wherein the image of man was inevitably reflected upon all things. But it also produced a narrowing of their whole outlook. And unfortunately for Western man, these anthropomorphic fields became the chief cultural source from which he had derived the bulk of his intellectual principles and religious beliefs.

It was thus that Western culture, even from the earliest Greek times, had become almost entirely cut off from that ancient cosmic knowledge, which at the same time was held hidden in the farther East. In more recent times this separation has effected a radical and trenchant inconsistency in modern thought. On the

one hand we see that modern man, in attempting to gather together and integrate all the higher and long-lost attainments of the past for his next step forward, seems to have become conscious at last of an overlong separation from ancient origins, the Light of which he now seeks and certainly needs. Yet at the same time he displays a failure to accept that spiritual knowledge and higher Truth of the ancients, which indeed possesses the innate power of integration. This refusal is no doubt due to a present psychological attitude which prevents him from accepting an alien and remote-seeming culture as his guide and source of inspiration. Particularly do we see this aberration in those psychological efforts which attempt to interpret this ancient knowledge in terms of the archaic unconscious, thus belying its innate spiritual character. Such misleading explanations have not only succeeded in distorting the inner meaning of those scriptures, but they have also produced an inverted reflection of the higher Reality revealed. For it is not in the darkness of the unconscious that man can recapture the hidden truths, but indeed from the supernal heights of the Spirit. Thus it is not surprising that from these and other misrepresentations modern man has rejected this ancient knowledge as being not only a primitive and exotic source, but also irrelevant to his present needs. Yet without a higher motive, and particularly without a knowledge of the true direction of progress, man is stumbling blindly (as one sees to-day) at the mercy of the evolutionary forces. Certainly his clumsy and infantile handling of such cosmic and atomic power as science has so far yielded to him, is but one of many indications of this fundamental lack of vision and foresight.

For many centuries India had withheld this ancient spiritual knowledge from the outside world. This was but a withdrawal, a natural protective expediency against widespread pillage resulting from invasion and the exploitation of later times; but it was also a deprivation and loss for Western man. Significantly enough, however, we have in this modern turbulent age a new-releasing of this ancient Spirit, which has been largely expressed through India's recent awakening—what we might call the

Renaissance of India (as part of a larger Asian Renaissance). This has produced a reflowering of her ancient cultural heritage and a deliverance of that hidden light after long ages of seclusion, not primarily for India herself but for the world.

Through the modern Seers of this new birth the long-hidden spirituality had been successively unfolded. In the beginning, about a century ago, there was the tremendous effort of Sri Ramakrishna to penetrate the veil that had grown around the ancient Spirit, and to open the way for a new and living spiritual birth to appear in the world. Later it seemed necessary to extend, and even force the significance of India's spiritual accomplishments to the Western world. This was the chief endeavours of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and of Swami Vivekananda. This, however, was but a phase, and could not in itself be sufficient. For the revival of this ancient spirituality was not essentially a new religious movement with an evangelical message for the world, as it may have then seemed. Its final goal was more of a universal deliverance than a sectarian evocation; since it aimed eventually to bridge the wide gulf between the ancient eternal Truths and the foremost efforts of modern man. And even this in itself could only be the basis of an achievement that aimed ultimately at the spiritual transformation of all human life, with its consequent manifestation of the Divine Perfection in the world.

Such, then, is the magnitude of the spiritual Light that has emerged through India's awakening. Yet the climax to this world-stirring movement is notably Sri Aurobindo's achievement. For he has not only given us a complete revelation of the Spiritual Reality in its utter plenitude, but has laid the foundation for a new and greater development to grow on earth. But unless humanity now responds and takes up this task of transformation, how can men reap the fruits of this renascent spirituality?

## II

One might well ask that if a change of consciousness is really the leading tendency of modern thought and if spirituality is its

hidden goal, how can we reconcile this high aim and endeavour with the actual chaos and blindness of the present-day world? Religion, we have suggested, is powerless in its present enfeebled condition to guide man further; and it is significant too that modern science is becoming increasingly aware of its own inability to provide of itself a sure and powerful way out of this impasse. The science of the past certainly felt more sure of itself in this respect; and it even came to believe that it held the key and had the power to bring about the needed perfection in the whole of man's life and environment. It had indeed given man a sound knowledge of the material basis of life, of the biological processes and evolution, as well as an insight into the psychology of ethics and behaviour. But though this quest was important as the immediate basic need, its exclusive stress on outward phenomena merely led to a complete neglect of man's inner and spiritual life. And from that exclusive preoccupation arose the belief that by material means alone the next evolutionary step could be effected. The outcome of that endeavour, as we now see, shows how futile it really was towards achieving the radical change and transformation which this step demands. By having ignored the supreme importance of his inner being, and the Reality beyond the veil of surface appearances—which means the subliminal constituents and the soul-entity, as well as the Truth-plane above—modern man now finds himself oblivious to the Supreme Reality, his very Source and Sustainer. For it is precisely the inner which contains the subtle links that attach him inseparably to God and the Beyond—and the pre-eminent link is the soul-centre, the existence of which has been almost consistently suppressed by modern thought. It seems to bear no significance to the worldly outlook of modern man, that the great spiritual pathfinders of the world have all acclaimed the soul to be the very spark or seed-flame of the Divine. It is little wonder, then, that through this separation from the divine Light, a screen maintained by man himself, there has sprung all the obscurity and blindness which characterizes the modern age. Only by severing that veil of ignorance can the means of linking that deepest urge with the higher Light be achieved; and this implies

the soul's awakening to its own supreme stature. For it is only soul-power that can penetrate the darkness and reveal, for the individual at least, an integral Truth which at present is only partially and separatively being opened through man's highest endeavours of thought.

It is significant to note, however, that modern science, in an endeavour to reveal the hidden secrets in and behind Nature and the whole universal movement, has already turned inwards towards the subtle working of things. Thus behind the physical world of our ordinary awareness a more subtle realm has already been opened up—the intraphysical—which has an intricate atomic movement of its own that is not entirely mechanical or predictable. Its indeterminacy in fact seems to point to some inherent quality akin to a rudimentary will or even a dimmed compressed consciousness of its own (quite apart in its complexity from man's own consciousness). The atom is thus seen to be an immensely concentrated Dynamis, which only in the collectivity is compressed into an apparent staticity. The cosmic nature of the force liberated from the nuclear splitting of the atom is in itself a potent indication of the concealed Dynamis within it, and of a hidden force behind as well as within the whole universal movement. In the biological sciences also there has been discovered beneath the outer phenomena of life a world of organization, a complex interrelation of parts working as a harmonious whole; and at the centre as the basic element of the life-structure, the living cell. Although each cell is itself a complex individual unit, the collectivity of the organism functions in perfect co-ordination as though not only obeying one supreme Law and Consciousness, but that some immanent principle had inspired each cell with the exact knowledge for the carrying out of a preconceived Design. A similar inward tendency has also proceeded in the psychological field, which is all the more deliberate since man himself is pre-eminently the mental being. Thus below the surface of man's ordinary consciousness a vast subconscious depth has been unfolded. And below the subconscious, the Unconscious—the lowest levels of mind where the individual personality apparently merges into a

common racial consciousness that embraces the whole past of man.

Another tendency of modern science, apart from the inward turn but proceeding simultaneously with it, is the effort towards a synthesis. This manifests itself as a gathering together of all the strands of knowledge into one whole—as though preparing for some greater leap forward. In all branches of knowledge there is the similar endeavour to correlate the separate entities, such as the physical, the life-urge and mind stuff, into a larger co-ordinated unity—the unity of Reality itself. Whereas in the past each branch of science had attempted to maintain a strictly independent existence, in which the one strove against the others to prove itself the fundamental Reality and basis of all things, the new outlook would aim more towards an integration. Thus Matter, as it is now being explained by physical science, is not the whole but merely the surface of our existence, and so the material entity alone cannot give the real purpose and meaning of all the hidden complex movements that are being revealed in and beyond it. One is forced more and more to call in the other entities, either of life or mind, to explain many of the inconsistencies now being exposed therein. It is the same in modern psychology where the integration of man himself is sought as the pressing need of the times. But in this case it is the Spirit Principle which has to be invoked in order to shed the needed light on this otherwise obscure domain.

The results of all this endeavour of inward seeking and quest for synthesis are not commensurate, however, with the higher goal modern thought sets out to attain. In the first place the inner probings have taken a definite downward course, as is shown by the distorted application of modern knowledge with all its attendant decadence and blindness. And secondly there is not only a failure to reach a true synthesis, but there is even a greater sundering and disruption of thought into a babel of many tongues, where each investigator employs a private language and terminology of his own. The whole trend of this failure, as we have seen, is most blatantly exposed in the subjective investigations of psychology. By its excessive probings into

the dark subconscious, modern psychology has completely ignored the existence of any higher planes of mind, especially the luminous intuitive levels. And it is in fact the intuitive mind which reveals the more integral vision and wholeness for which man is now groping in the depths. But what is even more fundamental is his disregarding of the Spirit Principle itself—the entity above and beyond mind—and its direct representation in man as the very centre of his being.

The creative arts also display the self-same trends towards an inner expression, and being more of an individual effort they reveal their aberrations even more sharply. Both modern art and literature, with their deliberate self-conscious attempts to create a new vision, that of an interior seeing and expression, clearly indicate man's inner search into the Unknown. But it is evident that the resultant works, in spite of all their striving towards the higher ideal of Word or Image, present a very ugly and distorted picture. Thus, for example, the 'interior monologue' and surrealist experiments of recent years had, in their quest for an inner reality, become too greatly engulfed and obscured by their own subjectivity to rise to any higher flights of creative expression. Like contemporary psychology the modernists in taking the inward turn had also taken the downward plunge, losing thereby the universal values in an all too personal expression. It too had failed to realize that the subconscious depth is but a fragment—the lowest in fact—of the subliminal consciousness, and that even behind the subliminal, secreted within the very heart of it, is the true soul of man. In this way the whole trend of modern thought and endeavour has become plunged into a Night of darkness in which the higher Light and soul-reality are completely shut out. ,

### III

That the modern age is being urged towards the emergence of soul in the individual can be seen more clearly if we examine the whole movement of the Dynamic Spirit as it expresses itself

through the evolutionary process. For evolution traces in the outer movement of the world that which is essentially an unfolding of an inner content and reality. Let us therefore from the very outset state the spiritual point of view, that evolution is essentially the struggle of soul through matter, life and mind—and yet beyond mind—towards an ultimate self-emergence of its pure spiritual Nature. From this aspect we find that the first step in the creation of Matter was the descent of the Dynamic Spirit, and the transformation of Itself into an infinite number of atoms by a concentration process or condensation, as science has indeed suggested. In this way the atom became the fundamental and basic centre of the physical world—the soul of matter we might say. The creation of Matter as the very basis of our terrestrial life, represents therefore the uttermost transmutation, or rather materialization, of the Transcendent silence above into rock and stone below. Thus the first act of the material creation was the imprisoning, apparently for ever, of the Dynamic Consciousness within an immutable silence and fixity. But this could not be the end of the evolutionary process.

It is with the appearance of Life that we begin to discern the Dynamic Consciousness emerging and identifying itself with the outer form of the material mould; each life-form becoming a separative organism, and each organism itself the combination of individually constituted cells. Whereas matter revealed no apparent purpose in its existence, in the life process we begin to discern a purposive development—that the seed, for example, contains within it the exact basic form and character of the future organism. In the plant, however, there is as yet the utmost limitation imposed on the emerging dynamic force. It is in the animal, with its first rudimentary glimmer of mind, that we meet with the display of that freer movement which characterizes animal as distinct from plant-life. And this greater freedom of movement is in fact the keynote of the newly emerging entity, mind, of which man is its fullest and dominant expression. The evolution of man from the primitive to the cultural state is the growth from the instinctive to the self-conscious. Man then becomes aware of himself existing, and the reflective power of

mind turns him inward to regard and become aware of an inner self, which he first discerns as the 'I' or ego. As mind becomes more operative in man opening him to higher planes of thought, he gradually becomes cognizant of a deeper entity beyond the ego—a soul. It is this critical juncture in the evolutionary process that marks the stage from the cultural to the spiritual man. Where primitive man was characterized by instinct, and cultural man by a self-consciousness, the spiritual man is characterized by an emerging soul-consciousness. It is this emergence of the spiritual man that we recognize to be the central and dominating factor in and behind the present critical struggle of the world, and which constitutes in fact the very crisis of this modern age. In this struggle of an evolving soul to manifest itself and take the lead, man must either open to and become aware of this emerging entity or else be submerged in his resistance against the oncoming tide of the evolutionary force.

As an integral principle of this evolutionary movement, we can see that the atom of matter had given way to the living cell without itself becoming annihilated, and the cell in turn had become subordinated to the new mental centre ego, so in the same way we can discern that the ego must itself open to and surrender its domination and exclusive sense of individuality to the emerging consciousness of a higher being in man. It is this emerging soul—or psychic being—that is now struggling to become the nucleus of a new and higher Personality, of which the Seer or Liberated Man of the past—one who has completely transcended the mental confines of ego—is the forerunner and primal type. But the spiritual element is not only emergent, a thing still to come; it is in its own higher status a Reality above mind, eternally self-existent in the World of Light or the Truth-plane. And it is precisely because the spiritual factor is already there above, as it has been thus realized from the earliest dawn of man's conscious awakening, that the reign of mind and ego cannot be the end of the evolutionary movement. The descent of this higher Principle must inevitably be the consummation of man's struggle if he prepares himself and opens to this highest Truth.

It is a significant factor of this modern age that the knowledge which is so urgently needed for healing the existing abyss in modern thought, has already developed and has in fact emerged in all its fullness for the present-day world. This is the integral knowledge based on the old dynamic spirituality of India. But since it is in its very nature a composite soul-knowledge, it is only to be expected that the present consciousness of man must itself widen in order to recognize it in its fullness. Even as Greek thought lay dormant and locked away for centuries before the European Renaissance opened it up for the world, so this dynamic spirituality to-day awaits the soul-awakening of modern man. Eventually modern thought itself must turn and open to this higher and deeper knowledge. Yet it must be added that the acceptance of this spiritual knowledge does not at all imply a flight into some transcendent sphere beyond life and the world, nor does it mean a negation of life or otherworldliness.

Such in fact was the fundamental error into which the religious exclusiveness of medieval India fell (and medieval Europe also before the Renaissance). Through its very seclusion and hidden secrecy the whole of Indian culture for some centuries seemed to sink into that obscurity whose outward characteristic of life-negation put its stamp completely on the entire subsequent outlook of Indian life and thought. But the dynamic spirituality that had persisted as an undercurrent from the remote times of the Vedas could not be altogether subdued. From those ancient solitary heights through the whole period of India's spiritual development, the self-same line of dynamic spiritual endeavour had been operative, successively revealing itself through Upanishad, Gita and Tantra. It had in a sense been the descent from the Vedic height of pure intuitive illumination that could only be realized in its plenitude by the initiated few, through the wider intellectual and discriminative level of the Upanishads, until it spread out farther, embracing in its fold all those who turned to the Divine irrespective of class or creed. Thus the tales and epics of the Puranas (which embody the Gita as their most significant doctrine) spread this universal spirit not only over the whole of India, but even reaching Indonesia and Indo-China in her more

expansive age. Later the Tantras came, representing the development of a spiritual endeavour which sought to embrace all the diverse types and grades of humanity. But Tantra itself, by too steep a descent into the thick of life, unfortunately degenerated into those gross and exaggerated distortions which brought discredit to Indian spirituality. It was indeed during those medieval times of decline that the whole of the dynamic spiritual force seemed to be overwhelmed and vanquished by the negative recoil which had then gripped Indian thought. At least it seemed so, until the first shoots of the Renaissance appeared, and with it the ancient dynamism of the far-off Vedic Seers arose once more, culminating, as we have observed, in the work of Sri Aurobindo (a direct representative of this ancient line of dynamic Seers). By him the full content of this spiritual knowledge has been rescued, and comprehensively presented to the modern world.

#### IV

A change of Consciousness, with its enlargement of man's entire vision and outlook, is not only the dominant feature of his higher growth and development, but this principle is certainly becoming an apparent and accepted fact by a growing number of modern thinkers. Yet although the awareness is there in thought and idea, the visible signs of its appearance in actuality are far from manifest. In the first place, it is the individual effort and awakening that is the key motive, constituting the fundamental turn towards a higher development. For, as we have traced, it is the individual soul-centre which is the very seed-potential of a new mutation and transformation. And furthermore, it is that inner spirit-entity which must become, even from its first obscure stirring, the dominant and effective centre in the whole of man's progressive development. In this endeavour the ego or mind-centre must increasingly be subordinated to and guided by that innermost factor of his being—the soul. Secondly, it is the basic ignorance of modern man that he lacks the very awareness of soul, which is the real mainspring of his higher evolution and

spiritual growth. This is the primary ignorance of present-day man, from which all his other blindnesses and perversions spring. Firmly rooted in his egoistic nature, and dominated by the vacillating mind—with its unresolved conflicts of mental concepts and ideas, he will not readily relinquish that habitual standpoint and action-centre which constitutes his present outlook. But there is not only the powerful pull of mind to retain its mastery over man, there is also the fear in him—the fear of the primitive and unenlightened parts of his being—to relinquish an entity and condition he knows, for one which appears to be only a Void, a Vast and an Unknown.

To become conscious of the soul-being is then the primary need of man's higher development; but he must also become aware of the Supreme Reality of which his soul is but a seed, and from which the whole movement of Universal Nature is in fact but an outflowing or extension of Conscious Force. For while soul-awareness is the key factor which opens man's highest perception and endeavour to the wider reality of the Truth-plane, it is God-knowledge and God-consciousness which ultimately awakens that inner spark, and stirs his realization to the true nature of that inner being and to the hidden destiny of his material life. Man realizes then that the Divine is the secret Power which alone can raise him out of his ignorance and darkness into a luminous awareness, wherein he sees the Divine Nature not only in himself but in all things. He realizes that God alone is the Supreme and the All; and that God's very Nature is contained in each particle as well as in the wholeness of the universe. And though He embraces all and is contained in all, yet at the same time He is above and beyond the cosmic movement. This is the mystery of the Supreme, at least to our ordinary outlook on things. But to become fully conscious of the Divine and to recognize Him in all appearances and statuses, and in all conditions, is the one effective way of knowing and growing into that all-encompassing Consciousness. This indeed is the basic and fundamental requisite for man's higher advancement in all spheres of his activity. Without the living contact of that all-pervasive Presence, all one's higher striving and endeavour, such

as to control and harmonize the diverse forces both in oneself and in the world, are insignificant. For one merely becomes an isolated pool unconnected with the supreme Power and Will, which alone can lead man to his rightful goal.

The Supreme Reality—He whom we call God, or the Absolute, or more comprehensively the Divine—is not only aloof in the heavens above, or wrapped in the Silence of the Transcendence beyond, His Presence can be felt here in the universe, contained in every grain, atom and cell. Through the soul we most truly know Him; for it is He who is the multitudinous souls, as well as the supreme Soul of the universe. But because He is eternally above and beyond His Creation in that supreme transcendent Silence immutable and illimitable, we incline to believe, in experiencing that all-absorbing quietude, that the universal appearances of the Divine—His divisibility into the Many—is illusory, and contradictory to the One eternal Being in whom all are contained. This must necessarily be as long as we are content to comprehend the Reality of God in terms of our present limited and personal outlook. Rather we must vision God in terms of the universal and from the cosmic standpoint in order to realize and embrace the true multiple aspects of the Divine. It is only when we actually begin to experience something of the Vastness of the entire Reality that we become sharply aware of the limited power of mind. But this should not deter us from our rightful endeavour to enter into that experience.

In surveying the past we can readily realize that Western man's separation from the ancient cosmological knowledge was a crucial point in his earliest cultural beginnings, for it not only deprived him of the full integral awareness of the Divine, but had also left him with an exaggerated anthropomorphic idea of the ultimate Reality. Tracing the course of that knowledge as it had developed through his old religious beliefs, we see how that ancient cradle of Middle Eastern culture, even from the time of the Patriarch Abraham, had begun to develop its characteristically narrow and fanatical outlook. From the beginning there was an intense yearning for the Personal God, but Who became in their exclusive zeal the God of the chosen people. The One God

narrowed, in effect, into the God of Israel—tribal and sectarian. Later, however, during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. this intense aspiration for God, to descend as a personal reality into their midst, reached a new height. This was the time of the Prophets, of whom the central figure was undoubtedly Isaiah. It is interesting to note also that this self-same period of history was one of great significance in the whole cultural development of the then civilized world. It was a time when a number of cultures, after a phase of indrawn and separative development, had begun to blossom forth, each revealing a Light which was later to influence the entire subsequent thought-development and religious outlook of the world. It was the period of Lao-tse and Confucius in China, of Buddha in India, of Zoroaster in Persia, of Pythagoras in Greece, as well as of Isaiah in Israel. But amidst this effulgence of spiritual light we can see the beginnings of two extreme and divergent trends, which were later to divide the whole religious thought and outlook of the world into its Eastern and Western halves. One stream issuing from the Hebrew Prophets was subsequently destined to feed and nourish the whole religious development of the West; and the other emanating from Buddha was to provide the Far East with its basic religious ideals and outlook on life. On the one hand, centred around the inspired aspiration of those desert Prophets there was, as we have seen, the ardent straining for some descent of the Godhead, a yearning for His Revelation to the 'chosen people'—which really meant the people chosen of God and through whom he would surely reveal Himself. In those prophetic utterances it was always the Personal God, the One God Supreme, Who was exalted above all, and Whose Grace was exhorted. Thus Isaiah characteristically exclaims: 'With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early.' Like a trumpet-call from the hill-tops the note was thus sounded, and was to resound later throughout the whole religious life of the West. Salvation for those desert Prophets signified the coming of the Lord God (of Israel), and the pouring of the waters of His Spirit over the earth. Without His Spirit and Grace the earth is parched and dry, and corruption reigns every-

where. It is only the cleansing waters of God's Spirit that can purify the people, fertilize the earth, and sustain righteousness over all.

In India, on the other hand, there was being expounded quite a different spiritual message. After the intensive period of the Upanishads, the unitive and intuitive illumination of the original revelations began to break up, spreading into diverse streams and branches. One of the strongest of these branches, and one which occupied the central focus of Indian spirituality for a number of centuries, was the enlightened message of Buddha. His was the austere teaching of the solitary and individual endeavour. It was the heroic call for man himself to attempt the actual scaling of the bare bleak heights of the Spirit, in order to reach the unchanging Transcendence beyond. Self-discipline, self-purification and right action were the basic equipment needed for the accomplishment of this arduous effort. And how compelling was the goal of Nirvana which meant individual release from that interminable round of misery, suffering and bondage! It is little wonder that the calm, peace and contemplative stillness of this enlightened Way drew together its multitude of adherents. But it was fundamentally the teaching of individual salvation—showing man the way towards an utter extinction of his own egoistic personality, and his total absorption in the stillness of the Absolute. In thus obliterating the ego, however, the soul itself, as the dynamic centre of man's higher growth and expansion in the world, was cut off from its natural expression through the individual being. For this reason it was a contradiction of the whole purpose of the universal movement, and a negation of any meaning in man's earthly life. This world-negating outlook unfortunately came to form the basis and foundation of what grew into the characteristic way of life and mode of thought of the whole Eastern world.

Here then we have the beginning of those separative developments which ultimately divided the entire cultural world into two seemingly unbridgable halves—the Eastern way on the one hand, and the Western way on the other. It is abundantly clear, however, that beneath all this division and separation there yet

remained the One indivisible Reality, Whose design it appears to have been to split the world, at least temporarily, into its diverse streams of development, in order to show man separately and singly His many-sided aspects. Thus the Personal God of the Hebrews, and the Impersonal Absolute of the Buddha are not two unconnected and irreconcilable faces as they appear to be, but two real aspects of the self-same Reality. For the Divine, in His true integral wholeness, embraces both God the Person and God the Immutable Transcendent in One Supreme Reality.

Although Buddhism had spread its influence over a wider field outside India than any other Indian spiritual branch, there was preserved within India herself the latent deposit of an ancient dynamic spirituality. In the long history of India's cultural growth, the Buddhistic outlook and teaching was but a partial vision, one limb which had outgrown itself and which had to be cast off eventually, though its influence remained ingrained in the subsequent thought-development of India. But in spite of that dominant note of otherworldliness, there had persisted in the very heart of her culture the dynamic Word and Truth-seed of her ancient Seers. Perhaps more than any other scripture it was the Gita which brought out the essence of the ancient Spirit in a living form, and had thus preserved in the hearts of the people the true intimate reality of the Supreme. It gave a wide and all-embracing vision of the Divine which became the very core of Indian culture, uplifting it and bearing it through all its periods of decadence and outer decay. But in order to comprehend the hidden message of this ancient revelation we must examine its original teaching, particularly with the aid of a modern and competent interpretation (such as Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*). Through the Gita's comprehensive vision we are made to see a cosmic revelation in which all existence is a divine movement issuing from God and returning to God. In this movement, Nature is but a power of the Divine, that works out His Conscious Will inherent within her. Thus from the very outset there is no sharp duality between Spirit and Nature. The Spirit is the Supreme in His infinite extensive Consciousness, and the supreme Nature is the infinite Power of the Spirit. But within

the utter extensiveness of this cosmic movement, the supreme Nature has also formulated itself as the individual soul-centre, in order to provide a finite basis or growing-point for the manifold universal Becoming. In this way the individual soul, embedded in the world, came to form the basis of a multiple existence. But because the soul is the very stuff of the Divine Nature, it always seeks to return to that higher law of Being which is its own Self, and through which it can discover the Will, the Power, the dynamic Principle and the highest working of its own pristine Nature.

Such high aspiration of the soul, however, would seem to imply the eternal seeking for an otherworldly sphere, a transcendent flight that seeks to attain release from an interminable round of births and rebirths, which culminates eventually in a final liberation from this earth-life. This is largely the interpretation of the older commentaries on the Gita. But a more modern broad-visioned rendering of the problem, which rejects such a pessimistic conclusion that terminates in the extinction of life and the material universe, sees that the whole aim of the soul's birth in this earthly life is to bring those higher spiritual values down into the world in order to transform it. This is an issue which is not actually discussed in the Gita, since man who is the questioner and seeker of Divine guidance in this ancient drama, had not yet begun to dream of these earthly possibilities. But certainly the emergence and development of that ideal of world transformation would form a natural consequence to the Gita's fundamental teaching; for it stresses the significance of the dynamic soul, even though it does not dwell on the soul's future development. It is in fact this terrestrial outcome which is taken up and worked out in all its possibilities by Sri Aurobindo in 'The Life Divine.'

From the high cosmic standpoint of the Gita, which reveals the dual Natures that exist in both man and the universe, it is clear that the true Nature of the Divine, or spiritual Nature, is not what we see in the outer appearances of things. What we actually see as Nature is the lower order of a manifestation, inwardly aspiring towards a higher Nature which is as yet

unmanifest. But while wholly immersed in this lower Nature one finds that this latter largely falsifies one's values, and inverts the very truth of things, so that it is necessary to be able to transcend and become detached from it if we would see the wider cosmic truth. But here we come up against a radical difficulty, since our own nature is itself divided, and it is the lower Nature in us that forms the chief barrier against this detachment. With these opposite pulls we cannot easily identify ourselves wholly with the omniscient power and purity of the soul-nature, while at the same time freely accepting the lower Nature from which it seeks detachment. In the past this duality had produced the old unresolved conflict of the Flesh and the Spirit. But if we see the problem aright it need not be a conflict any more than is the apparent duality of the Divine Perfection above and the imperfection of His Creation here below. In both cases the fault lies primarily in our approach, which necessarily has to proceed through the dividing intellect of mind. For only when the true unitive centre of the being is established do we really become aware of the essential unity of the lower and higher Natures. This means ultimately a soul-emergence in which the soul itself comes to utilize the higher levels of mind as the direct means of bringing that higher Nature into an active relation with its lower counterpart. And thus is man himself made whole.

## V

In the age-long separation between East and West we cannot but observe the striking development of opposing ideals and diverse outlooks which that decisive division had produced. The general trend of Eastern life, dominated as it was by the ideal of the soul's final ascent to the Transcendent, became overshadowed by a widespread neglect of the material means of life and its multifarious possibilities. The aim of Western man, on the other hand, whose eye was directed more to earth than to heaven, sought rather the salvation of the world as his highest

endeavour in life. By taking these separate ways, however, each had in fact left out of account essential ingredients (which the other possessed) for accomplishing their respective ideals. Thus the basis of world salvation is individual soul-emergence, which in turn depends on the Transcendent realization; and likewise the ascent to the Heights would be an unfulfilled mission unless the very stuff of the Transcendence is brought down into the life of the world, and into the earth-nature itself. A direct consequence of this lack of rapprochement is the deep frustration of modern life, and the disharmony and unbalance of the present-day world. All this points more and more to the pressing need for integration—not only for the world but for man himself—in order that the radical division in the world's outlook may be healed. For world salvation means ultimately its healing, and healing means making whole. Only the unitive knowledge embracing both God and the universe can form the base and root of this ultimate Wholeness.

We should note, however, that the straining for integration and synthesis, which is expressed in many directions by modern thought, is not a wholly new development originating in this modern age. It was also a phenomenon of the past, though perhaps not so conscious a movement as it to-day displays. At certain critical periods in man's history we find that a powerful fusion of hitherto separate ways had to come about, in order to produce a new life and spirit for the advancement of man. Such have been the great reascent waves by which humanity has been uplifted. In the religious history of Western man, for example, there were two such notable periods. One was the century immediately preceding Christ's coming, when Buddhistic influences (through former missionaries from India) had formed a number of esoteric sects—mostly with mixed Zoroastrian and Hebrew backgrounds—which had become scattered between the Tigris and Nile valleys. Better known of these was the small community of Palestinian Essenes, who were amongst the first to recognize the divinity of Christ. And it was they who largely formed and cradled the nucleus of the new Faith. Later, in the Alexandria of the third and fourth centuries A.D. there occurred

a wider fusion of influences. It was then that Jewish and Indian mysticism flowed with Greek-inspired learning to give a solid basis to that newly-arisen Faith. And from this strong foundation of faith and reason the Church could be solidly established, and henceforth spread its message to all corners of the civilizable world.

Without underrating or lightly dismissing the powerful influence that the Christian development had exerted in moulding the whole advancement of Western man, we can nevertheless say that it has now proved itself to be insufficient to carry him or the world to its millennium. And not only Christianity but all religion as we know it to-day has now come to be a cramping factor in man's wider enlargement. In more recent times it was science which had largely fought against this growing suppression by religion of man's natural growth and expansiveness, and particularly against the latter's anthropomorphic presentation of Reality. Eventually science came to establish itself as a separate and independent body of knowledge, founded wholly on a reasoning which excluded faith. Thus science, although it had laid the foundations for a more expansive knowledge, has now found that it is itself limited in its power and scope to provide the wherewithal for a higher advancement. This is because in reaching for the true objective view—the absolute truth of the universe lying, as it thought, completely outside man's limited sphere—it had failed to realize the significant fact that the very instrumentation of its knowing (man's sensory awareness) is itself imperfect and unreliable. In reaching outside and beyond man, science had thus ignored the necessary development of the very centre from which it has to operate. Now the whole progress of science has naturally reached the stage when its own advancement—as well as that of man himself—depends on the long-neglected development of his inner sphere. It is clear that neither religion nor science can themselves lead man out of his present perplexities. Something more is needed that will give him a deeper realization and a broader vision to discern the goal and to perceive the direction towards which he must proceed. The pressing frustration of man's present condition, and his urge for

world unity (which means more than a global suzerainty embracing only the outer spheres of life), are all indicative that a new orientation and a yet larger and more all-embracing integration has to be made by him.

In reaching the limits of his present order of knowledge modern man has suddenly become conscious of having reached the edge of a precipice, which seems to be the utter end of things. But has man really reached the end-point of that complex organic growth which we call evolution, or is there a further possible stage here on earth which surpasses the limitations of his present imperfect human nature? This problem has indeed baffled the intellect of man. Yet we must concede that the very appearance of an apparent abyss in man's path is itself sufficient to draw out a clue for the resolution of this problem. For man is then compelled to strain yet further into the beyond and hence perceive a new and larger focus. It then becomes possible to discern the meaning of this dark abyss and its true relation to man. It not only marks the limit of his present order of knowledge, but it strikingly reveals that the ancient cleavage which has separated him for centuries from the larger cosmic knowledge has now appeared as the barrier to his further advancement. But in his present short-sightedness he cannot clearly discern the traversable way to his own salvation. Yet by becoming aware of the fact that the old cosmological knowledge has even in this modern world given rise to a wider range of spiritual realizations, he can begin to build a solid foundation for a new world order. And here we encounter the true and complete synthesis that man is seeking, such as it has been presented in 'The Life Divine.' For by bridging Matter and Spirit in an all-embracing cosmic unity, this new enlightenment has revealed for us the existence of a multiple diversity that finds its ultimate oneness in a vast and all-pervasive spiritual Reality. This revelation is indeed the basic root knowledge that indicates the way to the fulfilment of man's earthly existence. And one might add that on the acceptance or rejection of this integral way depends the whole future course and destiny of man.

## THE POSITIVE APPROACH TO SPIRITUALITY

**G**OD, Light, Freedom and Immortality are, and ever have been, the loftiest aims of man, as well as his innermost aspirations. Throughout the ages his urgent spirit has persistently soared towards these eternal peaks. Yet the present state of humanity only shows how far the modern world has swung from these higher aims and efforts. As though discouraged by the constant attempts of his forebears to reach those greater levels, present man has deliberately chosen to plunge into the depths of an obscurity and a chaos.

Or so it would seem; but behind this present trend of apparent degeneration there is in fact a greater purpose, which becomes more evident when we inquire more fully into the general movement of Nature herself. Here we can see in the wide sweep of Evolution that there has always been the same principle at work. The clash of opposites, as the challenge for an ultimate reconciliation, has throughout been the fundamental condition whereby a new status of being could arise. It was in this way that the mobility of life-forms had emerged from the static lifelessness of matter, and by the same means that a purposive wilful consciousness had issued from the blind instinctive urge of life. So it would now seem that the Light, which has thus been for man the living symbol of a higher stage beyond, should itself need the darkest Night of obscurity before its dawn can fully emerge into the world of humanity. For it appears, amid the clash and opposition of all the diverse forces which characterize the modern scene, that Nature is indeed straining to take the next major step forward to a new Dawn. Yet above all, we realize that this clash and final accord of opposites is in fact the supreme spur of Nature, through which she progressively achieves, and will achieve, her final evolutionary goal.

It is as well, however, in this increasing disorder of mankind, to examine the sources of these ancient aspirations, and to see if

we can where the Light really lies. For if in fact the Light is thus the next higher step for humanity, as well as being the immanent reality it is experienced to be, then it is primarily That which can offer the surest aid and means to lift man, the mental being, out of his ever-thickening darkness. In this endeavour we have fortunately, as a basis and a beginning, the already existing records and footprints of man's successive attempts to reach those heights, such as have been preserved in the most ancient writings of India. It is such remains which belong also to the world's most archaic scriptures, and which represent the early dawns of man's awakening to a higher Reality. For when we take a broader survey of human progress, we cannot with the same finality accept our present-day culture as having emerged exclusively from one or two regional zones only; nor can we claim that the development of humanity had progressed as uniformly as is generally supposed from the primitive to the civilized state. It is more likely that many dawns of enlightenment had appeared, even in the midst of a primitive past, and consequently the lines of cultural development which had proceeded therefrom should also be taken into account. This is especially so of the Eastern branches of human knowledge, which have hitherto been all too rigorously excluded from Western thought. Of these, it is particularly the ancient Sanskrit writings of India, with their original spirit faithfully preserved, which are undoubtedly the richest source. For they not only represent the earliest known efforts of man to scale the heights, but they are also the completest existing record of that conscious endeavour. It is significant, therefore, in the widening sweep of modern thought, that men are turning more and more to these ancient Indian writings, in their search for long-lost gleams of hidden truths.

When we regard these ancient scriptures of India—particularly the Vedas and the Upanishads—in their natural perspective, it is more apparent that they constitute no alien and irrelevant source of knowledge for modern man, but belong in fact to the very mainspring of his present endeavour. Thus it is no stray coincidence to find that modern science, while clashing with the

current Western—mainly Judaeo-Christian—beliefs concerning God and the world, has discovered principles that were surprisingly revealed to the penetrative insight of a more distant past. For when we examine the substance of those poetic utterances preserved in the Vedic hymns, with a more discerning eye than is usually given to them, we find that those ancient Aryans visioned cosmic realities which modern science is now progressively laying bare. Although the real meaning of these hymns is largely veiled from us by a pastoral imagery and symbol peculiar to their own times, we can see that the presence of an Immortal was clearly discerned in all that is mortal, and a secret Nature not normally visible to our ordinary awareness was perceived to exist both within and behind the material world. We must note, however, that in general the modern interpreters of these ancient hymns present quite a different explanation—perhaps because of the strange imagery that is used in them they missed the real key for unveiling their psychological subtleties. But having grasped the key to these hymns—which was the endeavour to know and seize the Truth in its naked reality<sup>1</sup>—their whole psychological meaning and import becomes startlingly clear. For the ancients not only knew of an inner nature, but discerned the presence of a higher world of Light and Immortality, which itself finds representation within the soul of man. Thus the whole effort and endeavour of the Vedic Seers was directed towards bringing about a union of the Higher with the lower in which man is immersed—or at least to find a path which would effect this.

While the current interpretations of the Vedas merely see in them an expression of pantheism, animism, or at the most an incantation of magical rites, we must note also that the modern psychological probings into the hidden meanings of their myth and symbol have only unearthed the racial memories or archetypes—deposits in the subconscious—of what are really higher realities. Both in fact entirely miss their real inner significance. For the vision of those ancients was indeed a pristine and direct beholding of Truth; not a primitive outlook, but rather a seeing which was as yet unobscured by all the complexity of thought-

<sup>1</sup> See especially Sri Aurobindo's *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* (Pondicherry, 1946).

constructions that characterized the later development of man. In a sense, however, these illuminations are more of an esoteric and individual attainment, the effectiveness of which, at least for their own time, could only be disseminated through a prescribed ritual of sacrificial practices. In spite of this, however, the inner truths of the Vedas have been kept alive in a remarkable way throughout the whole history of India's tradition and culture. For when the Vedas were falling into a mechanical ritual of priestly practices, there began to emerge that high conception of Truth and Reality which has been preserved in the older texts of the Upanishads. It was really centuries later, in the medieval period, that these lofty formulations of the Upanishads were submerged by the many diverse schools of philosophical thought which had then begun to spring up. By that time also the Vedic texts themselves had become absorbed as the basic scripture of that composite body of religious sects which we now know as Hinduism, and which came to obscure the true spirituality of India from the world. That medieval religio-philosophical pattern, which had straggled on even to the present day, was obviously too enclosed in itself to give the world the real spiritual truths it held. Only perhaps in this modern age, in reaching a more global outlook that seeks to embrace the whole of mankind, has the unique impetus and opening been given for these universal truths, now presented in a broader mould, to enter more widely into the life of the world.

Let us now consider the recent trends of science in the light of this ancient knowledge; for particularly in the case of the current investigations into the root of matter, we find that the real significance of these new discoveries is even more patently revealed. Thus in the large-scale experiments on nuclear fission, the forces which constitute the very centre of matter have been discovered to be not the ordinary physical cohesions known to classical science, but rather forces of a cosmic order, similar to those which uphold the whole material universe. The atom itself is thus found to contain the very keystone of the universe—a supra-cosmic Force. The tremendous power—at present thought of only in terms of its destructive capacity—which is liberated in

the atom-splitting event itself, gives no doubt as to the nature of this Force. It was indeed the actualization of this potency in all its stark reality, that had struck, and for a time at least stunned, the consciousness of mankind. But when we consider this phenomenon in its wider context, we see that it was these self-same fundamental forces, transcendent and yet inherent within all things, of which the ancient Seers knew, and accepted as the basis of the entire Reality. Above all they recognized that this power belonged to the very nature of the Supreme Reality itself, which they regarded as the one Source of all things. For to the ancients there was always the constant knowledge that behind the many powers and gods invoked to take part in their struggle against the forces of darkness, there is but one Supreme Godhead of which everything is a part or emanation. Even the gods themselves, though they appeared symbolically through diverse forms and names, were regarded as the delegates of the One Supreme. And similarly the outer world of matter was also seen to be the very manifestation of a divine Force and Energy on which the whole universe is based. Through this cosmic vision of a supreme Unity and a divine Origin, the ancients were able to perceive the Godhead not only encompassing all things, but also centrally contained within each as its true essence or soul. Modern man, however, with his excessive zeal for the surface reality, has not yet attained this redeeming knowledge and insight; and it is thus that he finds himself hazardously groping in the dark with a cosmic power in his hands.

In the Upanishads also, since they are the direct lineal descendants of the Vedas, it is not surprising to find similar cogent truths revealed, that are once again being unearthed by modern science. Thus experiment has shown that there is not only an organized movement compressed within the heart of matter—a replica of a potential universe—but that an inner fluidity is also present, which is more characteristic of the life-flux. One can now more readily say that an inner life is more possibly hidden and compressed within the apparently uncreative mass which we know outwardly as static matter. In the study of living organisms also, plant as well as animal, investigators have pointed to the

existence of a rudimentary consciousness already present. Thus plants have been shown to possess certain delicate and sensitive movements which strongly suggest a subtle nervous and circulatory mechanism within them, normally belonging to the more motile animal behaviour. And even amongst the lower forms of animal life we frequently find the display of a foreknowledge, a preparedness of what is to come, which surpasses any connection with a mechanical reflex or reaction to some outside stimulus. It is such innate 'knowing' and more purposive movements which hint at the presence of mind, though rudimentary, already inherent in all life. In this way we have the growing evidence of a progressively connected development which runs through the whole evolutionary process. It appears more natural, therefore—even as it was revealed by the Sages of Vedanta<sup>1</sup>—that Life should have emerged from Matter, and that Mind and a mental being should have evolved out of an amorphous Life, since the rudiments or embryos of the higher stages of Nature's unfoldment were already present in essence within the lower forms. And there is no reason to believe that the evolutionary movement has ceased with the advent of man. Rather it is more logical to adduce that the essence of a spiritual entity beyond mind is already there within him—the potential centre of a greater Being to which man can thus evolve.

It is now evident that because Vedanta had pushed boldly beyond sense-knowledge, it was able to know more directly the inner nature of things. The modern scientist, on the other hand, has in fact hampered his own progress by his excessive attachment to sense-data, so that he cannot explain nor see the wherefore of all the complex phenomena that are now coming to light. In a sense, however, by thus limiting itself to the very surface nature of man as the ultimate criterion of knowing, experimental science has brought about a greater practical applicability of its results into modern life. But at the same time it is clear that science, thus tied exclusively to the outer Nature, can only advance humanity blindly, rather than give the lead and light

<sup>1</sup> The term Vedanta is used in these essays only in reference to the original Upanishadic sources, and not to the systems of philosophy, derived from Vedanta, which developed much later.

the way forward. Its goal of perfecting humanity is thus dependent on the extent of humanity's own perfection and consciousness. Therefore, while utilizing science in the development of his outer material life, it is all the more essential for modern man to seize also another order of knowledge; and it is here that Vedanta can find its rightful place in modern life. For through its extensive and thorough delving into the inner realm and the Beyond, and especially in preserving the secret links therewith, Vedanta can now claim to be the chief living source and basis of man's quest for Perfection.

If, however, modern thought and life are to recover and thoroughly absorb this ancient knowledge, it is clear that it must be done through a living experience of it, rather than by a mere compilation or compendium of comparative knowledge. Attempts to thus combine artificially the ancient with the modern trends of thought, even though they may be earnest attempts to produce a synthesis, are not sufficiently rooted in man's actual experience to give the real inner conviction with which alone he can grasp the living thread and make it an intimate part of his whole life and being. And in the same way, attempts to sever this ancient knowledge from its present-day living background, and from the native soil on which it has been nurtured for centuries, must inevitably result in obscuring the vital link, essential for discovering the wider penetration into life that it has already made. For it is an integral penetration, responding to the world's need, that has been fulfilled; and thus is the presence of Vedanta in modern thought made so highly significant.

## II

If we can seize, with the same ancient tenacity, that earliest aspiration of man which yearns for the realization in this earthly life of a Perfection as yet beyond, then it would become more immanent to the modern mind that a divine Life on earth must be the destiny and ultimate aim of mankind, its evolutionary goal. But in order to accept this ideal as something more than a

flight of fantasy or an exotic yearning, we have to recognize first that the Beyond—which we call Spirit—is in fact a reality, as real at least as the material world is known to be in our present-day rational thought. And secondly, we must see that this spiritual reality not only belongs to an otherworldly domain, as it so appears, but that it also pervades and is in fact contained in this present worldly life. For Spirit, an Unknown though by no means an unknowable, only seems to be the unseen and the intangible merely because it is beyond man's present range of sensory awareness, and has therefore been rejected as unreal in an age bred and born out of a too-exclusive materialism.

For long ages, however, it has been a deep-rooted phenomenon of human thought, penetrating also into the life of the world, to become attached to one of two extremes, and to deny or exclude the other. Thus it came about that on the one hand, Matter was taken to be all-existent Reality, and on the other Spirit was presented as the All. In this way we find that in Western materialism, the inheritor of an almost exclusive line of naturalistic thought, Matter was not only taken to be the basis of reality but was also regarded as the sole existing entity. And conversely the idealistic tradition of the East had come to regard Spirit as the one self-existent Reality. For the materialist this exclusiveness led ultimately and logically enough to the rejection of God, or at the most to a suspension of judgment on His existence until He could be proved to exist. And for the pure idealist there resulted the natural recoil from the world and all its activities, which we now regard as the hall-mark of a medieval outlook and static way of life. It was this age-long fission in human life and thought which largely produced that vast gulf we see separating the ancient knowledge so alienly from the modern outlook. And this division in the world makes it all the more difficult for the present age to accept the larger Reality: that Matter and Spirit are but the two extremities of a Multiplicity, which itself is embraced by as well as contained in the Supreme All.

It is a good sign, however, that a strong current in modern thought is rapidly breaking away from the old materialism. Already physical science, the main stronghold of the materialist,

has rejected the absolute validity of sense-data, in showing that there is a deeper reality within Matter other than that ordinarily cognized by our sense faculties. The very basis of the materialist's faith has thus been irrevocably undermined, and science itself is now in the position of having to seek for other more reliable values to support its more recent discoveries. Moreover, it is certain that present-day science cannot possibly find a resting-place in the fog of indeterminacy into which it has latterly plunged. Here waves of probability and chance phenomena have displaced the former stable ground based on the classical system of natural law. Science in fact is compelled to push forward out of this uncertainty, as is already beginning to happen in its striving towards a wider and more supra-physical representation of the Cosmos. Sooner or later, however, its steps must be more constructively and consciously directed towards a comprehensive recognition of a composite Reality, which can adequately form a new basis of knowledge in place of the solid tangibility of Matter, though without losing the essential reality of the latter. In this endeavour, fortunately, it is not likely that the modern mind will repeat the error of the past by taking Matter to be an illusion, after materialism has so indelibly impressed its significance on the world.

It can now be seen that the age of pure materialism had really reached its natural end in that fundamental agnosticism which denied a reality to all that could not be grasped by sense-bound thought, labelling it an Unknowable. Thought had indeed hemmed itself in by that unnatural limitation. In a similar way we can see that asceticism had also reached its own end-point by rejecting the entire appearance of things as a pure illusion. Thus the scale of values in these two paths of thought had become completely reversed, showing also their utter polarity; for while the reality of the illusionist became the unknowable of the materialist, the sole reality of the latter had become the very matrix of all unreality for the former. Significantly enough, however, though diametrically opposed, each in its own separate field had arrived at a unity—either of Matter or of Spirit—to which all things could be reduced. And furthermore behind the

manifestation of the universe each had delegated an elusive Unknown which thus appeared to be a larger figure, or alternatively a shadow, of the known. The agnostic called this Unknown a shadowy non-existent, whereas the illusionist saw in it a vaster Reality beside which the universe paled to a mere nothingness.

That there is in fact a universal Unity amidst all this complex multiplicity, is a discovery steadily accumulating in evidence through various lines of scientific inquiry. Thus, one example out of many of a unity of plan or design extending throughout Cosmos, is to be seen in the more minute investigation into the structure of the living cell, particularly in the more complex nucleus of the blood cell. Here similar organized orbital movements have been observed to those revealed within the atom of matter; and both in fact reproduce on the microscopic and infra-microscopic scales something of the same planetary motion which appears to be innate in the macrocosm. It is significant that in having reached a limit in his own sphere of inquiry, the physical scientist is turning an eye more and more towards Life, as well as towards Mind, in the hope of finding beyond the now obvious bounds of the physical world some causal relationship that will throw light on the many inexplicable phenomena observed in the physical realm. But in this endeavour the more he probes into the intermediary phenomena of Life and Mind, the more is he becoming aware of a larger Reality looming beyond or perhaps behind this outer play of existence. It is becoming increasingly clear also that this larger Reality cannot be reduced merely to an unconscious Energy, or a Life-force or even a universal Mind, as has already been attempted. Such a simplified monism cannot explain the intricate and involved complexity of things, nor can it integrate the harmony of their interrelated working. Moreover, if we posit a blind mechanical force, or a grandiose extension of life or mind, as the base and stuff of all existence, then there is little meaning in man's present striving to control the forces of Nature, unless he can surpass these natural forces. Ultimately we are compelled to conceive of a greater Power than Mind, a more far-reaching purposive aim

through which man will be able to attain to that complete control which science now envisages. For a real mastery must finally imply a standing above these external elements of his present existence.

From this aspect of modern thought it seems more feasible to believe, as the ancients had in fact revealed, that there is a larger Unity which extends beyond the continuity of the already manifested gradations of evolution—Matter, Life and Mind. And we can more readily perceive that a vaster entity, a Supermind, could become the possible new basis of manifestation in this earth life. In this respect there is a considerable body of evidence throughout the history of mankind, which shows that a wider Reality is indeed continuous with man's present order of awareness. This is particularly so in the experiences of those who have themselves traversed the bounds of an individual consciousness, and entered or made momentary contact with the wider Cosmic Consciousness. These experiences have revealed two aspects. In the one they have appeared in the form of symbols indicating the cosmic largeness, its full and wide embrace. In the other they give a direct opening to the subliminal zones behind the surface veil of appearances, and thus present something of the inner realities of the Cosmos. We have ample evidence for this wider awareness, in the diverse depths and degrees befitting to this multiple consciousness, contained in the declared experiences of the Seers, the Prophets, the Mystics and the Saints of the world, as well as scattered throughout the works of the great creative minds. Since all these experiences reveal a wider and deeper faculty of knowing, it seems more probable, as certain modern thinkers have deduced, that the next mutation for man lies precisely in this heightened, though by no means highest, consciousness becoming the future normal possession and basis of man's being—just as his present self-consciousness had emerged from and superseded an animal instinct. Thus these higher states of consciousness would be the key as well as the fundamental steps of advancement, which can lead and open the way for modern man to attain to that greater Being which he really is potentially.

It is apparent that if we accept such a significant meaning for life on earth—and not merely regard the world as a mechanical round, or a brief transient phenomenon or chance occurrence—then the supreme purpose of man's very existence becomes increasingly clear. To reveal the larger Unity that resides in himself and in the world is the Purpose. And what is that larger Unity ultimately but the Divine? For we realize that it can be nothing less than the omniscient Divine Will that sustains the entire movement of the worlds, and which is indeed the real motive Power, though veiled, behind the all too egoistic will of man as equally behind the collective will of humanity. And if God really created man in His own image (not in man's idealized image of God's creation), this also—the Divine Power and Will—must be the hidden source of aspiration within him. For unless the God-nature is there within, the image must necessarily be an empty one. In addition to our own inner conviction, we have the widespread confirmation of spiritual realizations, that the Power of God is not only above, but that it had descended in Creation and entered into the very stuff of existence. Creation was, by this view, not merely a projection, but a descent or involution of the Divine Self-nature to become the world; and hence Evolution is the serial unfolding of this secret Power. It is these dynamic Truths which hold out for man the unlimited possibility of a Divine fulfilment on earth.

It is an unfortunate fact, however, that the more man is coerced towards an inner realization the more does he cling to the outer nature of things. Thus we find that his present endeavours are merely leading him farther away from the heart of Reality, instead of nearer towards it. For ultimately it is his own inner consciousness, the awareness extending from his innermost being, that must centralize all his knowledge and efforts. It is only through the secret recesses of his soul, containing as it does the compressed seed of the Divine, that he can first embrace and possess that larger Reality, which otherwise in its infinite vastness is wholly beyond his grasp. From within he can at last begin to know and become conscious of the real Unity that embraces Multiplicity; instead of at present standing outside this centre

and vaguely inferring a unity only as far as it can be pieced together out of an unseizable complexity. And knowing this Unity he can the more readily grow to that wholeness which he now begins to feel is man's true inherent status. For as the ancients had divined, it is only by knowing the supreme Reality within that one can really become That which is also beyond—and to know That means to enter into the heart of It. There is no other way.

### III

In the annals of human experience we find that there are records of a vaster more infinite Reality than that known—and extensively unknown—Cosmic existence. Such is the transcendent Beyond—the pure Spirit-in-itself—the knowledge of which is more familiar to Eastern spirituality than to the pattern and outlook of a naturalistic West. It was this larger realization of a lofty luminous Reality beyond the universe which at a certain stage of India's development had become the chief central aim of her endeavour, and which had inevitably culminated in producing the venerated figure of the Sannyasin—that is, one who has entirely renounced all worldly ties and attachments to become the lone pursuer of Spirit for its own sake. It was a perilous line of endeavour, however, for even though India had in this way amassed untold treasure of the Spirit, there was for centuries the widespread abandonment of all material progress, which had consequently put upon her that disconcerting cloak of outer decay and neglect. And even as in the materialism of the West where the agnostic had shut out all reality save the physical one, so here at the other extreme the Sannyasin aimed to cut off all entanglements with worldly life and its material base.

It is clear that such an immense leap into the Beyond could only be made at the expense of neglecting the material life, as well as of all those intermediary steps which make up the dynamic Cosmic Reality, and which also mark out for man the course of his future evolutionary progress. But supported by purely logical

thought, the justification for this extreme flight to the Spirit seemed equally as tenable as that for the utter plunge into Matter. It is now more understandable, therefore, how, during the long period of human development when the rational intellect had largely been the guiding factor of man, there should persist that large global bifurcation into the two separate lines of progress which culminated in agnosticism on the one hand and in illusionism on the other. And perhaps also this division had to take place, as we have previously hinted, in order to test out completely and to the full the inner truths of each path. In the present trend of knowledge, however, there are signs of a more all-embracing and integral movement, with its promise of a greater wholeness. Moreover modern thought, as opposed to that of the past, has a firmer sensorial link with Matter, and this factor makes it more securely grounded and rooted to earth for this fuller growth. It rests, however, with modern man himself to recognize fully and become conscious of this integral possibility; for as yet there is only a half-conscious fumbling, an infantile groping on the lower levels, with only here and there some vague foreboding of otherworld realities. It is apparent that humanity is almost unaware of or indifferent to the goal to which it is being drawn, and consequently there is all the blind resistance to this upward pull. †

Although modern thought has made some tentative beginnings in the direction of investigating that growing mass of evidence derived from subliminal phenomena and the associated experiences centred around extra-sensory perception, these infant sciences are still looked upon as abnormalities by the main body of scientific opinion, and consequently they are receiving but scant recognition in present-day research. In this connection we can see how the state of trance, for instance, which has come to be associated with these and other para-normal experiences, is so grossly misunderstood. Whereas the physical trance is regarded mainly as an abnormal or pathological condition, it is rather an intermediate and temporary phenomenon, induced by the sudden cessation of the physical senses and the consequent emergence of subtle ones to the surface consciousness. For when the outer

bodily senses are thus withdrawn, there intervenes a state of physical quietude which permits the inner faculties to extend and enlarge. Ultimately, however, as the Enlightened of all times have shown us, we can be fully alive in the physical activities—though with the mind perfectly stilled—and yet intensely aware of and even moving in and through otherworld realities. For we must note that these worlds beyond are not so remotely separate from the physical universe, but are intimately related with its present destiny and progress, and even exert an influence on the material plane which is as yet all too little known or correctly understood by modern thought.

Yet the occult worlds, though they thus enter significantly into human life and experience, are not the ends nor are they the dominant factor of existence, but rather they form an integral part of the extensive field of action of a Witness or Consciousness which stands beyond the entire activity that constitutes the Cosmos. For it has been revealed from earliest times that beyond all cosmic movement there is an ultimate Witness. (And does not this also correspond in the outer worlds to an inner experience of a passive observer which stands behind and aloof from the ordinary outward action-partaking part of the individual being?) It was the Witnesser of Cosmos, however, which the ancients realized could only be a Conscious Witness. For they realized that Consciousness was not merely confined to the limited outlook and possession of the individual being, but was far and above an all-pervading Principle which was supra-cosmic, as well as inherently cosmic—and through which the individual concentration had come to be formulated. From this standpoint it was revealed that the Conscious Witness is in fact the true centre and pivot of all cosmic action, and is thus the real source and origin, the very Creator and Matrix from which the whole cosmic movement has issued. Cosmos itself is therefore the external and active existence of that Witness. It was only in later centuries of Indian spiritual thought, through an exclusively idealistic tendency, that the detached Witness became the all-existent factor, and the Creation but a mirage or a transient illusion of It. Through a similar exclusiveness and one-sided

emphasis we find also how materialism had fallen into the other extreme conception—that the Activity or the Creation is the sole and ultimate Real. It is interesting to note, however, that the idea has appeared in some recent speculative thought (of a quasi-scientific nature), of an ultimate detached observer at the back of the individual self; and this innermost witness has significantly enough been shown to be linked with the larger verities of Immortality and Timelessness. From such approaches it may be possible for the greater Truth of the transcendent Witness, along with its real cosmic Creation, to be a more readily acceptable principle in modern thought.

In the idealistic pattern of Eastern thought, however, we can see how the conception of a sole-existent and completely extra-cosmic Witness had given rise to the belief that this earthly life is but an illusion which has to work itself out finally, through some repetitively mechanical or spiral-like way. And consequently the highest aim for this line of endeavour became the seeking for an ultimate refuge in the absolute Beyond, a final self-negating liberation from all fleshly bondage. The outlook of materialistic thought, which we really find to be complementary rather than entirely opposed to the idealistic tradition, had also come to regard the individual's life on earth as a transitory appearance on the world stage, though the emphasis in this case was on the outer present life rather than on some future state of existence. Therefore the highest practical aim of the materialist became principally the ethical one of rendering some selfless service to humanity and the world as perhaps the greatest useful endeavour in an otherwise meaningless or wholly self-centred life. From both these extremes of thought we find that their limited and pessimistic conclusions, particularly regarding the destiny of the individual's life, cannot readily be accepted by the modern mind as a satisfying and fundamental solution of existence; nor can they be considered to be a comprehensive affirmation of the All, since both conclusions lead to the ultimate elimination and negation of the dynamic centres of the divine Manifestation, which are the individual entities. It is clear, therefore, that a wider approach than that attempted by purely intellec-

tual endeavour is now needed if we are to attain to that comprehensive outlook which can combine the truths of both materialism and of idealism as the basis of a fuller affirmation. It has been shown, however, in endeavours of the past, that by detaching oneself and rising above logical thought, we are able to attain to a consciousness beyond that governed by the sense-mind and the ego. In this way we can enter intimately into the all-pervasive Cosmic Consciousness which is the real keystone to man's higher development. For in that larger awareness we begin to see that even the extreme lines of thought and development emerge from and are in fact branches of a common root and centre. Here we find the beginnings of a progression whereby man in his own being can instigate the needed integration.

Cosmic Consciousness, however, if it is to become a living reality in the world and not merely a theoretical speculation, must be seized, entered into and lived in in the same way that the ancient Seers must have immersed themselves and lived in it; though for the modern world it must become a more permanent and normal possession of man, the very basis of his further enlargement. But in order to achieve this wider vision we must in a progressive way be able to break through the limitation of the ego-centre, and identify ourselves more and more completely with the secret innermost Self which is hidden in all things. It is, however, the ego in man—that dividing and separative centre of his being—which is the chief stumbling-block in the way of his further advancement. For the ego has grown to be the central dominant factor of man's nature, and to which it is deeply rooted, so that it now requires somewhat of an internal revolution to displace its sovereignty, a complete orientation and change of attitude—similar though in an external direction to the decisive change which took place in man's outlook on the world when he began to realize that the earth is not the real centre of the solar and planetary systems. The first step is a broadening and deepening of knowledge, particularly from the direct utterances or the recorded experiences of those who have already plumbed the potentialities of the cosmic consciousness. From these we learn that there are two states or phases through

which we can enter into this wider consciousness. Either we become aware of the one Being of which Matter, Life and Mind are the multiple emanations—and even beyond Mind the higher entity of Supermind—which together form the subliminal layers or worlds of existence of the larger cosmic Reality, or, plunging directly into these worlds, we become unified with the Multiplicity in all its inner details, and in this way can enter even into the lives and minds of other beings than our own. But the separate awareness of these two aspects of Cosmos—its wholeness and multiple detail—is but our first approach to that wider Consciousness. Later we begin to realize that they are not really separate experiences, as it appears at first, but the two sides—the largeness of the One and the detail of the Many—through which the whole Cosmic Reality reveals itself to us. In that wider awareness we begin to see that all cosmic Being is essentially an embodiment of Consciousness, and that this pure Consciousness is itself a Being, or more properly an all-extensive Existence. In other words, Consciousness itself is the underlying reality of Cosmos. Hence through all its formations and statuses Consciousness is never separated from Being, nor can Being be entirely excluded from Consciousness. Otherwise the reality of the world divorced from Consciousness would naturally fall into that narrow conception of a mere mechanical and aimless existence; and the reality of the Transcendence devoid of its inherent Being would give Creation the appearance of an unreality or an illusion. It is only when we widen our seeing beyond the present habitual outlook that we begin to realize in a more integral way the infinite and intimate inter-relationship of an all-conscious, all-existent Reality which is at once cosmic and extra-cosmic.

Beyond the Cosmos, therefore, we look to the vastness of a world-transcending Consciousness, whose infinite Perfection the ancients had already discerned and unveiled. There, they had revealed, lies the pure Spirit itself, the divine Ground of all existence; and the universe is but a branching tree-like dependency of that supernal Vast. But just as one can enter into and live in the Cosmic Consciousness, so it was found possible also to enter into a oneness with that Transcendent Consciousness

and become thereby completely detached and aloof from the universal activity and movement. It was indeed in that high and lofty vision above the worlds that the ancient Seers were able to penetrate the secrets of the larger Reality, and to realize Its relation with the Cosmos and with man. Only in a later age, while attempting to grasp the immensity of the Transcendence, before the horizon of humanity had widened sufficiently to embrace the wholeness of it, did man's mind become overwhelmed and transfixed by a first impress and contact with the pure infinite Calm of that apparently inactive Spirit. For in that transfixed state mind could seize nothing but the face of the Transcendence—the Calm, the Stillness and the utter Silence of that luminous translucent Sea. While it was even thus the highest grasp of the human intellect—as opposed to a higher intuitive seeing—it was also a hypnotic charm which held the mind of man spell-bound for centuries; and it thus became the final goal, the supreme All of a host of religious seekers who had come within the orbit of its dazzling light. Chiefly fostered and spread by Buddhistic teaching this powerful realization of a pure Transcendence had widely gripped the Eastern world, and during a long medieval era of spiritual endeavour it had become the main principle dominating Indian life and thought. It was largely due to the initial reaction of a more dynamic turn of mind in face of that static transfixed poise that Western man had been unable to see beyond the unprogressive fixedness which came to characterize Indian spiritual thought to the world. And the truth of the Transcendence has hence been widely rejected by the modern age, as being both the cause of illusion and a distraction from the realities of the world. Yet actual experience reveals that the Transcendence holds in itself the supreme Truth of the Absolute which is man's eternal quest. In this respect we might note that the current experiences of a momentary inner though abiding sense of Timelessness, which are beginning to appear in some recent writings, not only indicate the reality of this transcendent consciousness to the modern mind, but also give a clue to the direction in which the true comprehensive Reality can be found.

Yet to see the Divine even in His detached unstained Purity is

itself a limitation, unless at the same time we see Him also in the world. For the very act of Creation was the bringing down, in successive and progressive steps, of that pure infinite Consciousness into a finite material mould—eternal Spirit to become inert Matter. And the Creator, Who is even now forming and shaping the world, forcing down a greater entity than Mind into this all too resistant earthly field, not only embraces and sustains the universe, but has also entered through His very Nature into the stuff of Creation, down to the minutest particle of it. It is thus that we can say that Nature is really a disguised Godhead, and that man, the highest element in the terrestrial emergence, is in truth potential God. It is these bold and lofty truths, revealed by the Enlightened of the world, that the modern seeking mind has yet to recognize and to bring to fulfilment.

#### IV

Although we have seen that Spirit is essentially the significant reality secreted in Matter, and that Matter is the basic mould in which Spirit can eventually become manifest in the world, we have yet to discern the precise oneness of these extreme entities which persistently appear to be eternal dualities. For it is only on an entirely reconciling unity that a true integral harmony can ultimately rest. In the first place, certain experiences indicate that the duality itself is fundamentally a relative one belonging to our ordinary awareness of things, and therefore the limitation would seem to arise originally from an inherent dividing action in man himself—for mind alone and unilluminated by a greater Consciousness is largely an agent of separation rather than one of integration. It is for this latter reason that the integral truth and knowledge which modern man is seeking outwardly must eventually find its real basis in a wider and inward awareness. Such awareness, as we have already suggested, is implicit in the attainment of cosmic consciousness, where all extremes are experienced not as eternal antagonists but as essentially the converse and complementary facets of a single Reality. It is an

integrative seeing, that springs from an all-embracing knowing and is achieved through an intimate identity, wherein the subject and the object—the knower and the known—have become one (focused from the unifying centre of the being). This means the attainment of both an intuitive feeling into the diversity of cosmos even to its innermost depths and centre, and at the same time an integral grasp of the wholeness of it. It is by this comprehensive insight that we become aware of Spirit, not only as the hidden essence or soul of Matter, but also as the invisibly silk-like thread which runs through all the multifarious forms of the universe, and which really makes of Cosmos an effective unity. But above all we can begin to realize the transcendent truth of Spirit, or soul-stuff, as being the true Self of that Conscious Being, whose Nature has entered into and become the material universe with its successive gradations of Life, Mind and an ever-pressing Beyond. Matter is thus integrally and eternally joined to Spirit in the Existence of the One, who is the All and the Supreme. Through this realization we are able to see that the terrestrial evolution is no blind instinctive movement, but has emerged throughout as a purposive and consciously guided one, having for its highest aim a divinized life on earth. And furthermore that man the self-conscious being has become the central pivot and potential growing-point of this world-transforming movement.

Having reached the unifying truth of Cosmos, wherein the One eternally manifests through the Many, we can more readily realize that the vast infinite Stillness of the Beyond does not negate the activity of the Cosmos, for the Silence is not in fact the whole of the Transcendence. Rather is it the Ground of the Supreme Reality, of which the Stillness of the Transcendence and the Dynamis of Cosmos are two complementary aspects or poles—negative and positive—which constitute its essential Oneness. In other words, Cosmos is the manifest Dynamism of that Supreme, while the Transcendence is the passive support and the infinite source of its eternal creativity, the fount even of all that inexhaustible energy. But ultimately man himself comes to realize that the Supreme Reality and the true inner self of his

being are one; that the soul is the very seed of the Divine, and the All-Supreme is in fact the Self. Thus it comes about that the Cosmic largeness and the Transcendent Calm can be realized inwardly through his own central being, not merely as a projection of the total Reality, but as the integral essence of It.

Just as the infinite Calm is the divine Ground or support of the Cosmic activity, so for man's perfection in the world the conscious attainment within himself of that unshakable Stillness is the real basis of an integral development. For it is only by immediate contact and hold upon that vast infinite quietude, that the firm stability and foundation can be laid for the individual to embrace the largeness of the Cosmic Reality without being swept away by the infinite multiplicity of it. In this way a greater Perfection will be attained which can be a more permanent and normal possession of man's being. To have revealed this world-transcending Calm in its purity was the outstanding example of Buddha, who after this attainment performed all his enlightened and noble works in the world, becoming thereby the silent sentinel and active embodiment to all men of those transcendent Heights. We see that it was rather through his own luminous example than by any verbal teaching that the Buddha had demonstrated the truth of a worldly action issuing from an inner impersonal calm. It was only the surface appearance of that utter peacefulness which had led men to conclude that the withdrawal from activity is itself the ultimate and absolute summit of attainment. By the same signs, therefore, the condition of non-Being which the pure Spirit as the antithesis of cosmic Being thus appears to present, was taken to be the Buddhistic goal of human endeavour. But venturing beyond that Silence, which itself stills the very thought and speech in us, we come to the direct Truth that this apparent finality of Nothingness represents but the inability of our finite thought to translate through words that which is beyond all mental concepts. The very postulation in fact of a non-Being (since non-Being is but a term representing our own limitation of expression) implies that Something really does exist beyond conceptual thought, and that there only appears to be a blank or a zero because the infinity of the Beyond

thus escapes the grasp of the translating mind. A larger comprehension indeed reveals that, whereas Being is the body of cosmic existence—the medium of activity of the Supreme—the term non-Being represents the Supreme's eternal freedom from all cosmic manifestation and movement. Through this we see that the one status does not deny, but rather completes the reality of the other. And we realize at last that the face of the Transcendence is really the gateway to that further and more integral divine attainment which it is humanity's work to bring to earthly fruition.

While it is widely assumed that a comprehensive knowledge of the universe can be obtained merely through the scrutiny of external signs and indications, at the same time it is admitted by modern science that such means will only give relative viewpoints of the world, and thus the Absolute would be made wholly unattainable. But there are other ways of knowing which are not being seriously considered in modern thought. Thus man's knowledge in its origin really issues from the progressive opening and widening of the individual self, by which he can ultimately attain to a realization of the true Self of the universe. This discovery, as the ancients had directly discerned, is the very key which opens up the infinite vistas of a higher Knowledge; and is in fact the basis and mainspring of all man's further knowing. By this inner unfolding we become aware in a direct and living way, not only of the wider cosmic existence, but also of a state in which all relative phenomena disappear in a self-extinction or Nirvana, wherein the limited self is lost in the Self of the Infinite. It was this experience, however, of total immersion in the Impersonal beyond all egoistic attachment, which in becoming the sole aim and endeavour had powerfully drawn the aspiring soul from its hold on worldly life. And therefore we must now regard this solitary pursuit as an escape of the soul from its own true destiny on earth, rather than as a state of fulfilment. For even while maintaining this high impersonal detachment, it is necessary at the same time to retain the full conscious grasp on the activity and rhythm of the world movement. Thus even in the transcendent consciousness the individual need not lose the dynamic and positive truth of Existence—that

of a divine Becoming in and through the activity of the worlds. And that which the Divine has thus embraced, can man with all conscience reject?

As in the Cosmic Consciousness, so in the Transcendent we come to see that whereas Matter and the physical universe constitute the basis of the Manifestation, pure Spirit which at first appears to obliterate all material reality is in fact the detached origin of cosmic action, from which the action itself is guided and sustained. From this standpoint we see that the ultimate Beyond is no blank negation or infinite zero, but is indeed a supreme Wisdom and Intelligence, the Lord of all the universal activity, whose very Spirit has entered into and permeates the multiplicity of Creation even to the minutest particle—centre of it—whether of atom, cell or soul. And even one's own petty action can be seen to be ultimately the sanction or tolerance of a Supreme Will, and not merely the direct result of any personal or collective effort. The Supreme (or Brahman of the ancients) is the eternal guiding Power, the ever-present and all-pervading Reality.

All things are, in their secret essence, the Self-nature of that One Supreme. It is only when the habitually dividing action of mind disappears that we realize that the apparent division of real and unreal, and the incompatibility of Matter and Spirit, are but illusions of a partial seeing of that which is really a comprehensive Truth and all-embracing Harmony. Even the forces of darkness—evil, pain, suffering and ignorance which are inevitably interwoven in our worldly life—are not really antagonists of the Supreme, but amidst the clash of life they are the as yet unconquered antagonists of man in his path towards the Divine. One Lord, one Self there is amid all the diversity of the worlds; one Supreme Who is above, around and within—and the Many are but His multiple representations and infinite becomings. It is with this conception of an omniscient and all-embracing Divine Reality that we can begin to formulate an integral and positive structure of the universe—one that will reveal not only man's relation with the Cosmos but his intimate connection also with that vaster Beyond.

Of the highest and deepest experience of the Supreme Reality, we can say from ancient testimony that it has consistently been revealed, by those who have passed beyond the limits of the ordinary mental outlook, to be ever an eternal triple compound of Being, Consciousness, and Bliss. And whether in the concentrated essence of the individual, or in the infinite extension of the Cosmos, or in the unseizable vastness of the Transcendence, always there is that ever-present Being or Existence, that infinite Wisdom and Power, and that inexpressible Love or Beatitude, inextricably combined in the pure Divine Nature of the Supreme. Only when we can rise above and become truly detached from the divided consciousness of ego do we realize that the Transcendence and the Cosmos, the apparent non-Being and the universal Being, the Silence and the Activity, the One and the Many are really the multiple facets of that Supreme All, Who is eternally and throughout the One omnipresent Reality; and Whose Divine Nature has entered into the world to become its ultimate manifest reality.

# THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF PERSONALITY

## I

ONE of the earliest, as well as one of the most widespread of man's conceptions of God—as the One Being—had visioned Him to be the all-seeing, all-knowing and all-pervasive Father Who is the sole Creator and Sustainer of the worlds. It was this image which came to form the central doctrine of the main monotheistic religions of the world. But although this conception became the centre of such world-sweeping religious influences, deeper experiences of God appear, which cannot be confined within this fixed and apparently conclusive idea of the Supreme. Moreover in these religious systems we find that there is the tendency to regard God as an exclusively extra-cosmic Being who exists apart and aloof from His Creation. But if God is all-pervasive, as He is deeply felt to be, then He is certainly a living Presence in the world, as well as being aloof in His abode or Heaven beyond. And we can indeed feel the intimate Presence of that soul-stirring Reality far more closely from within than through any externalized conception of Him.

It is from such experiences that the inner seeking for a more direct way of knowing God, and for a more intimate union with Him, had arisen. The quest and the yearning of the mystics and religious seekers of all times, through their intensive endeavour to know and to feel that very Presence from which man was traditionally separated, have beaten a path for us to follow. They had revealed that beyond the awareness of the Cosmos one can experience directly that divine Ground and Nature which is the very Purity of God's Being; and, furthermore, that this greater Reality can be known more surely and more powerfully through the innermost part of one's own being. This revelation resulted

in the growing awareness that a deeper and larger Reality exists which could not be fathomed by any mental ideation or verbal interpretation. It is only through one's own effort and experience that one can know and achieve that Divine Reality. To realize the One Supreme, therefore, became the central goal and all-absorbing passion which stirred the whole efforts of those spiritual venturers.

In the past there had been broadly two main lines of endeavour in this mystical quest for union with the Divine. On the one hand was the conscious attempt to ascend to and experience those higher planes of existence where the pure Divine Nature reigns in all its aloofness from the Creation and the Activity. This was the path which had been pursued mainly by the Eastern mystics; and which had culminated in that experience of an infinite Transcendent Calm and Silence, which is the Ground of the Divine Reality, though not its integral Heights. The experience of that infinite Stillness, however, became so absorbing that the ever-creative Dynamism of the Divine, which is the well-spring of our earthly life, was lost. And thus the world came to be regarded merely as a grand Illusion or Maya. On the other hand there was the attempt, mainly by the Western mystics, to bring down into the world by an intense aspiration and subsequent act of Grace, the very Bliss and ecstasy of that Divine Reality. This pursuit had resulted largely in an intensity of Love and ecstatic union with God, and the realization of His living Presence in the world. But as with the Eastern mystics this path also had led to a one-sided endeavour. The Divine Love flooding and overpowering the individual in its intensity finally became a transient and evanescent possession which could not be sustained without the more stable and secure basis of an integral God-knowledge. Thus the efforts to ascend to the Heights, unmindful of man's connections with the depths, and the attempts to realize God in the very lowest levels of Life and Matter without regard for the Heights, both resulted in but a partial knowledge. Moreover, these divided efforts had produced mainly individual achievements, which being scattered and disparate, could not consolidate and embrace the vastness of the Divine

Reality, especially in relation to the need of earth and humanity. For such is the all-inclusive wideness of that One Reality that its entire and integral fullness cannot be realized, except by the progressive opening from within the soul, as well as through an ever-widening consciousness of That which is above. Both the Divine Knowledge which comes from that ascent to the Heights, and the Divine Love which descends in response to an intense yearning and aspiration, together form the interwoven strands of man's endeavour to realize the wholeness of the Divine Reality.

As man progressively enters into that all-embracing God-consciousness so he becomes aware of a far more comprehensive and intimate Knowledge, which surpasses his former fixed and circumscribed conception centred on an extra-cosmic Deity, or even beyond that wide and infinite supracosmic vision of the Transcendence which had appeared to be the finality and goal of all God-knowledge. Beyond the man-imaged personal aspect of God, and beyond even the cosmic-imaged impersonal vision of the Supreme, stands the pure Divine Nature in itself. It is only this comprehensive experience of the Divine which can give the true integral knowledge that present-day man is vaguely seeking. For while an extra-cosmic conception of Deity had in separating God from the world led to a materialistic view of life, an all-absorbing endeavour to immerse one's whole being in that pure Transcendent Self beyond had resulted in the utter neglect of this earthly life. Modern man, however, apparently unattracted by a partial approach to knowledge, is beginning to be convinced that an integral Reality is the ultimate Truth of things.

It is only in a wider experience of God that we discover the true Nature of the Supreme. This, as the ancients had disclosed, is the real key both to our self-knowledge and to our knowledge of the universe. For that wider God-knowledge belongs essentially to experiences which surpass all our limited mental formulations, springing rather from those more profound depths of man which are at present latent and obscured in him. Here lies the secret soul-entity, which being the very seed and substance of the Divine contains not only the means of knowing and realizing the Divine Reality, but also the latent power of grow-

ing into that Fullness and Perfection. To the awakening soul everything is seen to be God; and each particle seen to contain the very essence of the Divine Nature as its secret centre. One comes to realize that the Divine is truly an omnipresent Reality, which even in the multitudinous diversity of the Cosmic Creation, as equally as in the aloofness of the Transcendence, is ever a supreme Unity. It was indeed through that fundamental revelation of Oneness—that the essential Self in all things and the Transcendent Self beyond are One—which gave the ancient Vedantic Seers the vision that a Divine growth and movement is the central Truth of the cosmic Reality. The Supreme was realized to be an infinite and all-extensive Omnipresence, a Multiplicity emerging from an unmanifest Transcendence. God was seen to be above and below, the seed and sustainer, and the beginning and end of all existence. It is indeed through those greater revelations, preserved as they have been in the ancient scriptures of Veda and Upanishad, that modern man can best form a firmer foundation for his future knowledge, and at the same time gain a truer perspective of man and the universe.

It was by this lofty vision that the Vedantic Seers came to realize the ultimate Nature of the Supreme—as the indivisible compound of Being, Consciousness and Bliss, which they denoted by the composite term Sachchidananda. But even by that central formula they realized that the supreme Wholeness is infinitely beyond all that can be seized even through the widest reaches of mind. To describe the Infinite in a language of finite terms, the ancients were obliged to express in negatives the all-extensiveness of the One Supreme ('not this . . . not that'). By passing beyond the limited mental outlook, however, to that Consciousness which transcends Cosmos, the ancient Seers had discovered a rapid and direct means of realizing the three-fold Nature of the Supreme. But although the transcendent Consciousness thus revealed the secret Nature of Divinity, they came to realize also that within the Cosmic Creativity the same triple Nature was a central and integral constituent of its minutest parts, as well as of its entirety. Thus the individual soul concealing the Divine Nature seed-like within it, can be a conscious

effort progressively grow into That. For this is the seed of transformation that has been scattered and sown throughout the whole Cosmic Creation, and from which man now emerges as the highest promise of a Divine unfolding. Creation, therefore, has been essentially the step-by-step descent of that Divine Nature, with the consequent dispersion of Its seed-like Essence to become the central points of an emergent Evolution.

Here in this wider vision of Reality, we see how the ancient Truths shed their revealing light upon the lines that Science is now tentatively probing. But modern thought has not yet admitted that the unitive and comprehensive knowledge of the Supreme, or the soul-filled consciousness of that all-pervading Presence which has hitherto been the prerogative of mystical experience, is in fact the fundamental basis of his further knowing. Finite thought is humbled and stilled by that infinite realization, or else it flees fear-stricken from the seeming possibility of being submerged by that infinite expansiveness. In face of that Vastness, all one can say is that apart from the Supreme nothing can exist, and that That is the sole-existent Unity which embraces all the diversities and multiplicities, and at the same time is beyond these, the infinite Matrix and the inexpressible Unmanifest. But for the individual enmeshed in the Ignorance of the world, the Supreme is above all an Omnipresent and inner-living Reality. By seizing that inner Presence, and entering into the infinite Vastness, and becoming possessed by the Spirit of that Omnipresent Reality, we can progressively widen our consciousness. Thus alone can one become fully aware of the goal, and of the path which man must tread if he is to fulfil his Divine destiny in this terrestrial life.

The chief difficulty, however, from the very outset lies in our present instrumentation of knowing, which given its own freedom of action soon proves to be an utterly false and unreliable guide. But though we are at present necessarily circumscribed by this restricted outlook, this does not mean that we cannot widen our perception and knowledge beyond mind. Something deep and insistent within man constantly stirs up a discontentment with the contradictions of his present picture of Reality, which

with its divided and vacillating uncertainty is patently a fragmentary representation built up of partial aspects of a Whole that is as yet unseizable. It was in fact due to that vacillating and separative action of mind in which the integral Unity could not be wholly grasped or defined, that there had arisen so many diverse and conflicting concepts representing what was purported to be the ultimate Truth. Modern thought, however, far from satisfied with the explanations of a lifeless materialism as the sole index of Truth, and equally incredulous of some other-worldly interpretation of existence, is now seeking a more comprehensive integration of Reality.

It was in fact when the modern mind had become dissatisfied with materialism that it took up Life, in the form of vitalism, as being possibly the one fundamental Reality; for the massive evidence of the newly-discovered evolutionary process had certainly forced a new entity other than Matter to be accepted as a reality also. But the seeming blindness of that evolutionary development soon discouraged any claim of Life to be the one self-purposive and all-knowing Reality. It was apparent that some transcendent Power above Life must necessarily be the guiding Force and Consciousness behind the whole movement. This led to the investigation of Mind, with its greater powers of penetration and its higher ranges of thought-flight, as being a more possible claimant to the role of the one universal and dominant entity underlying Reality. But in spite of the freer and less rigid nature of Mind there was still a Beyond which the mind itself could not fathom or encompass. It thus became evident that the entities Matter, Life and Mind, each a reality intimately interrelated in a complex Multiplicity, are in fact parts of a greater Whole and Unity. It is at this juncture, however, that we encounter the difficulty of present-day thought to break the circle of its own conscious limitations. For not only has modern man rejected or ignored the very Reality of God—considered to be a primitive belief inherited from his forebears—but he has shut out the ancient claim of the soul to be the central Reality of the individual person. Yet the very fact of shutting out the soul has only made it appear all the more insignificant and unde-

veloped, since the condition for its growth and expansion has not been fulfilled or fostered. It is, however, by ignoring these basic realities that modern thought has barred the way to an acceptance of the ancient spiritual knowledge with its more recent extensive development. And thus is present-day knowledge seriously preventing its own liberation from the circle of limitations and net of uncertainties in which it is entrammelled.

It is only when we begin to realize the true meaning and purpose of God's entry into the material substance and life-movement that the whole evolutionary process assumes a new and larger significance. Thus we see that the Divine Nature in its Descent had formed at definite stages those subtle worlds or planes which constitute the background and subliminal pattern of the whole Cosmic Reality. And from these subliminal planes the Manifestation had emerged, and is yet emerging. First of all there was the inner Creation or involution of those typal worlds, and then came the manifest reality of which Matter, Life and Mind have thus far emerged in the Earth's evolution. Spiritual experiences into the as yet occult spheres of Cosmos have further revealed that a Supramental plane exists which is not only the unmanifested entity of man's higher evolution, but is in fact the very keystone and link to a Divine transformation. It is clear that from the very beginning the secret goal was to manifest the Divine Nature in all its integrality within the living substance of a material world. And therefore the central aim of man, as the highest emergent of this progressive unfoldment, must be the conscious development in and from himself of that Divine Perfection which will ultimately make the fulfilment of God's Purpose a visible and manifest actuality.

## II

While the Supreme Reality, as we discover, had expressed itself through many successive though co-existent forms of Consciousness—from the widest freedom and extensiveness of pure Spirit to the uttermost compression and limitation of inert

Matter—even so man in his progressively evolutionary ascent cannot attain to that integral Perfection if he fails to observe the interwoven nature of these stages, and renounces what has already been given to him as the basis and root of that development. Not only must he perfect his mental life and its accomplishments, but he must also take up the very physical base which is the foundation of his earth-life. All too frequently it has been the tendency of the past to neglect or reject this material ground, in pursuing the spiritual life. We are reminded, however, of the ancient Greek ideal of establishing a healthy and vigorous outlook of mind only on a strong basis of bodily perfection, thus preserving the ever-present balance and inter-relationship between Mind and Matter in a more integrated life. But for an even fuller and completer existence, the subtle links between body and Spirit have to be established in our outward activities. And here life itself is our chief aid and central factor of endeavour (not shunned from spirituality as it formerly was); for it is the vital force of life which supplies the impetus for those self-directed efforts. And also is not Life centred on that triple formation of Consciousness—the individual, the cosmic and the supra-cosmic—which marks it out to be a fundamental and permanent foundation on which that constructive effort can be accomplished? This triple relation can be particularly seen in the biological process itself, where the single cell has emerged as the fundamental unit of life, of which the regular rhythms and pulse-beat issue from a cosmic dynamism; and the purposive flow which instigates the whole movement proceeds from a transcendent Force or Will. Here we observe that the individualized centre is not only at the origin of life, but is throughout the permanent and integral factor of a progressive enlargement. And just as we need not give up bodily life in order to attain the highest spiritual achievements, so we need not lose that essential individual centre in entering a wider Consciousness.

To the ancient Seers the quest for Knowledge aimed only at an actualization of Truth through individual effort and development, so that eventually one may become a centre of enlightened action. They had realized that the universe is but the body and

manifest Presence of an infinite and all-extensive Supreme; and that the individual is the central instrument for the detailed execution of that Cosmic Design. The attainment of a higher Knowledge was therefore the fundamental step by which the individual could become conscious of the Cosmic Action—of which the Transcendent Silence was the acknowledged basis. It was only in later endeavours that the tendency arose to equate that attainment of the Transcendent Consciousness with the ultimate submersion or obliteration of individuality. For if Cosmos is ultimately an illusion, as it was supposed, then the individual being as part of that cosmic framework and activity would likewise have no final reality or permanency. In fact, for both the naturalistic tradition of the West, as well as for the ascetic idealism of the East, the individual existence was ultimately taken to be a transitory or temporary phenomenon of earthly life. Soul was either deprived of its divine nature and potentiality or else regarded as a mere drop of the Transcendent Self, to merge and finally lose its own identity in that infinite Sea of Silence. But if the true destiny of man's existence is to manifest the Divine Reality here in this earthly life—and no other goal can be envisaged—then the individual is indeed the living point through which the Divine can act and ultimately bring about the emergence of Perfection in the world.

It is only through the full recognition of this divine destiny of the individual soul on earth that the persistent conflict and division in human thought and endeavour can eventually be resolved and harmonized. For the very basis of this knowledge rests on our embracing the full integral conception of the Supreme Reality—its static and dynamic formations, its personal and impersonal aspects, and its inner and outer relations. In this process there are three aspects to observe. Firstly, in seizing the Oneness of the Transcendent Reality we must at the same time be able to grasp and retain our hold on the Reality of the Multiplicity itself, in which the earth-life is the centre of an emergent Evolution. Secondly, it is the individual centre—the divine spark secreted within man—that is the real link with God, and His true instrument in the action and progression of the world. In man's

present condition, however, this centre is largely, if not wholly, obscured by an all-dominant ego. It is only by an inner aspiration and spiritual endeavour that one can overcome the claims of ego to be the sole dominant centre of the being, and so open the way for the true soul to emerge and become the guiding factor of one's life. Thirdly, we must see that in the dynamic Action of the Supreme the multiple unity of Cosmos is emerging through three broad stages: the subconscious, the conscient and the superconscient. In the progressive manifestation of Cosmos through the evolutionary movement, the beginning was a unified cohesion of subconscious elements, which being unaware of their own existence formed the fixed and neutral ground for some higher emergence to appear. From these static inconscient levels we have the first dynamic but as yet half-conscient stirring of Life, impelled by a Force outside the whole of its collective movement. Only later do we have the more conscious glimmer, which gives the promise of a yet higher emergence. The true conscient stage only begins to appear with the development through man of the individual ego, which henceforth became the surface unifying centre binding together a distinct personality. It also became the chief directing agent behind all man's external activities. But the ego is a limited instrument, and is not by any means the final stage of man's evolutionary development. Rather is it a transitory step in the progressive manifestation of the One Reality; for the ego at the most can only make a unity out of surface appearances, and cannot include in that all which operates behind the veil. Moreover the ego is firmly entrenched in the belief of its own separate existence, and cannot perceive that the individual is one with others also. It is this exclusive and limited outlook of a dividing ego-faculty which constitutes our present imperfect personality. Only when the ego-barrier, by a progressive self-realization, begins to be broken down, and with it the narrow personal consciousness it had firmly built around itself, can our lower nature begin to open to and be uplifted by that which is at present superconscious to us. Through that higher consciousness we become aware of the true cosmic unity behind the veil of external appearances;

and within its enfolding embrace we experience that Transcendent Calm and Silence which surpasses all 'mental comprehension.

By this progressive development we can see that man's eventual God-directed action in the world can only be effected through the liberation and full emergence of the individual soul as the predominant centre of one's activities. This liberation in its fullness means the seeking not only for union with the Transcendent One, which brings merely individual liberation, but also for union with the Cosmic Many; for it is particularly this self-extension of the being to unite with the Multiplicity which can bring about a spiritual resurgence in the world. Even a single soul thus attaining that integral liberation can stimulate a similar outburst in other souls. It was no doubt this utter self-giving of the liberated being which held back Buddha from finally entering Nirvana (remaining only on the threshold), until all humanity had been delivered from the bondage of ego. This was his great self-sacrifice; and it does not at all imply that man cannot and should not attain to the Highest while living in the world, as many have believed. On the contrary, it is in fact necessary to enter into the unilluminated activity of the world in order to transform it. Only thus can the Enlightened ultimately bring the Light and Power of the Divine permanently into human life.

### III

We say that a divine Emergence or Becoming is the underlying motive of the evolutionary process. But what does this mean? In the first place, we have seen that the universe has not only emanated from the One Supreme, but that the very substance of Creation holds the Divine Nature as its inner Being and Essence. A successive Descent of that higher Nature to form the hidden subliminal recesses of Cosmos, was but the prelude and secret preparation for the progressive ascent of the lower Nature, through a multiplicity of individualized points. Secondly, the pattern of this cosmic scheme cannot have sprung from any

grandiose illusion or an accidental combination of forces, such as it has been widely presumed, but is the progressively conscious revelation of the Divine Nature, which is the inner Truth of things. This outward emergence of that which is secreted within is in fact the fundamental principle running through the whole development of the universe. We can say, therefore, that the real purpose of man's existence is yet to manifest in the life of the world that Divine Nature which is both immanent and transcendent.

The ancient Seers had already discerned that the inner Truth threaded through all things was the inseparable compound of an infinite Bliss and Self-conscious Existence. By transcending the Cosmic Reality they had been able to vision the Divine Nature in its utter purity and perfection as the intimate fusion of Being, Consciousness and Bliss (or Sachchidananda). This basic formula, as experience proves it to be, is the highest conception that human consciousness can project in finite terms, of that which is an infinite as well as an intimate and omnipresent Reality. It was the ancient Greeks who in a later age put forth, mainly from a cosmic vision of Reality, the ever-present verities of Goodness, Truth and Beauty as the highest ideals of man. But these ideals, as we now see them, are not representative of the fullest Truths, nor do they embody the ultimate aim of human life. They are, in fact, the translation in universal terms of a wider transcendent realization. A further triune derivative of the Supreme was that given by the religious conception of God, which seemed to offer a more intimate and personal relationship than the apparently remote and impersonal conception of the Transcendence. Such was the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In this relation the Father represents the Origin and Source—the supreme Being from whom all things are derived. The Holy Ghost or all-pervading Spirit is the Consciousness, the very breath of the Divine which permeates all things and out of which the substance of the worlds has come. And the Son, the crowning glory of the Trinity, is symbolical of the Grace which descends into the world, and becomes through God's infinite Love the concentrated seed for growth into the divinized Per-

sonality. But this Trinity, even though it brings that infinite Presence of the Divine closer to our human level of understanding, does not represent its whole Reality. It reveals a profound Truth in personal terms, but does not give the supreme Transcendent vision, the supra-human Truth, which the Vedantic Seers had formulated as Sachchidananda. Nor does it help to raise man to those greater Heights of God-consciousness. Rather has it tended to humble the human personality, and to obscure the divinity inherent in man. The Vedantic Seers had had the courage to reach beyond the narrow human level of perception, sensing that this limited sphere of outlook was not the final state of man. By thus surpassing the human orbit of consciousness they were able to declare decisively: 'He (the Supreme Being and Divine Nature) I (the indwelling Spirit) am.' Yet it was no grandiose declaration, but the steady and fearless seeing of a higher Truth and Law to which man could, and should, ultimately attain. ,

We can now see more clearly the trend and direction of the universal pattern. In the Descent of the Supreme Reality there are successive levels which, though ordinarily occult to us, may enter into our awareness through our gradual widening into the Cosmic Consciousness. The outer Manifestation, on the other hand, has taken the form of a progressive Ascent, which appears in the world as an emergent Evolution. Each level of the descent has in this way become a stage in man's ascension. Characteristic of this evolutionary emergence is an increasing though progressively ordered complexity. First there was the struggle of Life out of Matter, which is viewed by modern science as two quite opposing processes, as the increasing organization of a creative evolution on the one hand, and the increasing disorganization of a wholly inanimate world on the other. Later comes the first glimmer of mind, appearing primarily as an inward concentration on its own activity. The animal instinct, for the most part unaware of its own action, becomes a fumbling self-consciousness. At first it is uncertain of its powers and potentialities, but later it attempts to reach towards some measure of self-mastery. It is at this stage that self-consciousness, turning from a mere outward contem-

plation on things, begins to realize that there is a greater Self beyond the narrow egoistic personality. It is thus that one becomes aware of the inner subliminal self, and behind it the Universal Self and the vast Cosmic Reality. We begin to recognize that there is in fact a greater entity than Mind—the wider reality of Supermind—which is the next level in man's ascent, and to which Mind itself can thus progressively open. Yet the attainment of self-mastery and of a wider Consciousness are but steps in one's preparation for the ultimate Descent of that higher Reality. For it is a universal law that at each stage of the ascent some higher and as yet hidden principle of the unmanifest and the subliminal has to be brought out to reinforce and establish that which is but an immature emergence. It is thus that man can be gradually and fully transformed into an integrated Gnostic Being, in whom the universe and the individual are unified by a higher Law and Nature, which is the Divine Purity and Perfection.

Now we begin to recognize that the world-shattering force locked within the atomic nucleus, which science is busy investigating, is none other than a compressed seed of the divine Conscious Force—a Power of the Divine Nature itself. But Matter is wholly inconscient of that potential Power and Energy which is thus held within it. It is only when Life and later Mind begin to emerge that we see something of that inexhaustible Energy being brought into play. But for Life the predominant expression is yet that of an Ignorance—a many-branching movement that is as yet unaware of its own purpose and existence. We are inclined to see a superficial innocence in that pure spontaneous play of life, but delving below the surface movements we discern that it is motivated by the blindness of a radical unknowing, which is the real emergent nature of Life. Similarly, in the development of Mind we find that the central motive power has come to revolve round an aberration of its pristine origin. In this case Desire became the central factor, displaying an insatiable yearning to grasp and possess all that appears to be tantalizingly outside itself. The greater the unattainability the more intensely is the desire heightened; but for the most part it is intent on only

satisfying its own self-seeking and egoistic demands, heedless of the true goal and innermost aspirations of man. Thus has Mind chiefly come to operate under the direction and instigation of its central ego-faculty—a narrow and jealously guarded power in man, which by the mind's increasing development has become the main stumbling-block in the way of his higher advancement.

It is only beyond the entities of Life and Mind that we can begin to contact in its original freedom and self-mastery that absolute Force which is compressed within Matter, and the inexhaustible Energy which Life widely dissipates and squanders, and that Power of awareness which Mind has distorted for its own self-centred aggrandisement. Consequently it is only when some Power of that Beyond can operate here below in its own right that the released atomic forces could be fully controlled and properly harnessed. And in the same way the distortions of Life's unknowing would be transformed into a true Knowledge, and the unruly fire of egoistic desire changed into the pure flame of aspiration. But the seed of that higher (or Supramental) Power is already secreted in man as the potential dominant principle of his elevation into the Gnostic Being, and its subliminal Force is even now pressing down to germinate that seed and bring it out fully and openly into the life of the world. We realize thus that the Descent is a necessary and essential condition for Ascent; it is the fulfilment, in fact, of an aspiration and conscious endeavour here below. Furthermore, the dynamic centre of the individual being, which is as yet immature, contains many possibilities and potentialities, and therefore requires the living presence of its own native Power and Matrix from above, acting in its pristine Purity and Freedom here below, in order to give the example and the necessary protection to assure its right growth and development. This implies the need of the descent of the primal type. In this way there had been, in the past the creation of an Adam—or should we rather say a succession of Adams, since it is inconceivable that one solitary primal being appeared?—as the God-given completed Human who formed the model and pattern by which Man could be raised progressively from the animal stage.

It is clear that for the fulfilment of this gradual unfoldment of

the universe, the individual centres are the essential instruments of action. For it is the individual who expresses externally through life that all-pervading Consciousness which would otherwise be diffused throughout the entire expanse of Cosmos. It is because of this infinite cosmic diffusion that the finite concentration is necessary to produce an effective centre of manifestation and action. Without the individual the universe would remain but an infinite expanse, a static Creation devoid of a growing-point. But just as the universe needs the dynamic centres of growth, so the individual needs the broad expansiveness of the universe as the field and ground of his development. Man comes to realize that he is not only an integral part of Cosmos, but that it is solely through his constant interaction and entire participation in that movement that he is able to carry out God's Will in the world. And furthermore, if the universe is his foundation and field of action, then confined strictly within the limits of Life and Mind, as he is at present, he is impelled to strive beyond these limitations if he is to universalize himself and so manifest the divine All. This self-widening into the impersonal is indeed achieved through the realization of his essential personality—the true inner Person. Only by that greater Self can man rise above the blind dynamic urge, which we ordinarily call Nature. Of all earthly Creation it is man alone who can erect, through an increasingly conscious endeavour, a regulated order and harmony, a purposeful aim out of what is but a blind and coerced activity. This indeed is man's real work in the world, and for which God has chosen him as His direct instrument.

#### IV

We can readily perceive that it is through the higher reaches of mind, and from intuitive flashes beyond mind, that man first gleams something of the higher levels to which he must climb. But within him there is already a greater principle than mind, though yet latent and seed-like. This is his soul-potential and true personality in embryo—the seed of the Divine Nature which

has but sought the animal body as the foundation of a Divine Life on earth. Thus even man's mental life of abstract thought, aesthetic endeavour and conscious aspiration is but the intermediary stage of a yet higher progression; for it is only through the awakened soul that he can really seize in their fullness the higher Truths of his existence. Awakened then to a profounder self-knowledge man begins to conceive some formula, and some formulation of the ideal that he has eventually to bring forth. At first his aim vacillates between two possibilities. Is the Beyond with its Power, Light and Bliss—and which seems so remotely unattainable in this earthly life—the one Truth and goal of Existence? Or is the shadowy darkness here below his true habitat and sole Reality? For here in the world it is only the direct opposites of those higher ideals which constantly confront him. Not Immortality but death is the seeming end of things; not Truth but error and falsehood are the ever-recurring factors of his life; not Love and Beatitude but sorrow, pain and evil are the constant companions of his way. Amidst this conflict and turmoil how can man perceive God, except as a Being infinitely remote? For only the dark shadows of those deeper aspirations flit across his path to become the harsh realities of his earthly life. Thus weighed down with the labour and constant demands of life, he all too readily feels the urge to cut himself off finally and have done with the ignorance of the world. And he becomes appeased by the thought that this life is but a transitory stage-play, or perhaps some gigantic Cosmic dream of a Universal Mind. Even as the transcendent face of the Divine Nature in its pure unseizable vastness appears at first to negate the reality of the world, so the worldly body of the ineffable Supreme comes to belie the very existence of an idealized conception of Perfection beyond. Or, alternatively, if we accept God and the Beyond, we forthwith tend to reject the world as fundamentally unreal or transitory. But as we have already discarded the apparent illusion induced by the Transcendent vision of the world, so we must push aside this alternative evasion of our difficulties as an escape from the problem and a shunning of our real work in the world. For these opposite conceptions of the ultimate ideal are

the very conditions of our life's working, and our vacillating attitude results from a false view of what the individual function really is for this endeavour. A broader view reveals that the present nature of man and the world—the pain, suffering and evil—are but the conditions of man's progress. They are not by any means his inevitable earthly fate or destiny, the consequences of a fall, but they constitute the primary conditions of the work he has yet to fulfil.

It is out of these errors and aberrations of the world, and even by their aid, that the true relation of things has to be found. The prevalence of evil and ignorance is in fact the very spur that goads man on to realize some degree of Truth and Bliss not yet attained. The imperfections of the world are also a check which retard a too hasty or impatient advance. By being drawn back continually into the maelstrom of life, one is compelled to face the very need of perfecting all the imperfections. And in this process one needs the protection which only an increasing God-consciousness can give, in order to save him from being completely engulfed. Thus only when the narrow self-centredness of man's present outlook has been broadened into some measure of God-consciousness does he gain the real protection to guard him against complete submersion in that surging stream of life. By that God-consciousness also he will be able to receive the sure guidance enabling him to establish the ground for an ultimate transformation of suffering into Beatitude, error into Truth, evil into Good, and all this imperfect Nature into the Perfection of the Divine Reality. But how, it may now be asked, can those hard realities of the world possibly be converted into that which is so remote and infinitely beyond all earthly existence? Surely those high ideals belong to some other sphere some other-worldly abode than this terrestrial globe. Yet even in face of these assailing doubts, deeper experiences in the quietude of the soul, assure and convince us that the essence of those remote Truths is ever an omnipresent, the most intimate possession of our being as well as the innermost centre of things around. And consequently the Perfection and the imperfection are not essentially contraries, but are manifestations of the One Reality. Although

it is out of the lower that the Higher must emerge, ultimately it is by the Higher that the lower is effectually raised. Such is the supreme principle which traverses and directs the whole of the evolutionary ascent; and through it the individual efforts of man will be actualized.

It is clear to see that our failure to discern the secret Divine Essence in things, only seeing the opposite of their inherent divinity, arises from some fundamental fault and aberration in our own make-up, which is naturally an inseparable part of the universal Nature; and this distorts our own perception of things. We do not recognize the Divine Nature because it is clouded and obscured by an Ignorance, a distorting Maya, which we normally cannot penetrate. But accepting this fundamental Ignorance of the world as the real—though removable—bar to our right perception of Truth, we can begin to view it systematically in its correct perspective. It is not by hastily brushing it aside, but first by self-purification and thus making of oneself a more rarefied medium through which the higher Light can act that one gains the necessary clearer perception. Furthermore it is only by accepting the Ignorance that we can eventually transform it into a means of expressing the Divine outwardly and visibly in the world, bringing out the latent potentialities of the hidden Divine Nature in things. To do this we must boldly probe beneath the surface and outer appearances, and be unafraid to plunge into the unfathomable depths of Consciousness. At first we may perceive but flickering and intermittent flashes of Truth, which can only be represented symbolically—of which we find traces in some of the higher expressions of art, poetry and religious feeling. But it is through spiritual insight that one's perception becomes more strongly founded in a wider Consciousness, and one begins to see more integrally and more comprehensively, in relation to life as a whole, something of that supreme Plan of which the individual is the significant instrument of endeavour. It is then that the all-pervasive God-consciousness can begin to open up and bring its revealing Light into the darker recesses of our as yet half-illuminated mind.

Since the phenomenal world as we see it is really the appearance of the Divine Nature, which it has chosen to assume in order to manifest its Purity and Perfection through that which masks its Truth most completely, we realize that our seeing only the surface obscurity results from a limitation in our own outlook, and particularly in our present instrumentation of knowing based as it is on the senses and the sense-mind. It is for this reason that whereas the true Nature of things is a unity and a wholeness, we normally see only a partial picture of Reality—a divided and disparate world. We encounter the surface conflict and clash of opposites, and fail to recognize their inter-related working and hidden connections.

Perceiving the outward relation between man and the world we see that his present instruments of knowing have arisen from and developed out of the animal nature—a world of instincts and pure sensory awareness. Looking inwards, however, into the subliminal nature, one sees there something which does not belong to the animal world, and which even surpasses and transcends all human attributes—something of the spiritual or divine Nature itself. It is these two aspects—the inner and the outer—which separately appear to give a double nature to man—half-animal, half-divine. Man's nature thus seems to be a permanent immiscibility of gross lower elements and a more subtle higher substance; and it is the latter which is largely overlaid and obscured by the outward grosser parts. In his highest endeavour, therefore, man strives to purify himself of this lower nature, and even to purge and rid himself of it—though this latter operation inevitably results in divorcing him from the whole activity and current of life. With this seemingly two-fold nature, however, man has assumed the appearance of the completely divided being which is symbolized in the Biblical story of the "fall" of man. Adam, being the Primal Man, still possessed and held the higher Nature at first as a consistent whole—since he was as yet the pure stuff of God—and in an integral harmony with the lower creation. It is only when he has actually

partaken of the fruit of discord and division that he falls completely into the snare of the lower nature. His higher Self is then separated from him, as though by a veil, and he becomes wholly enmeshed in the sorrow, death and evil of the world. Henceforth that Perfection which had once been his as a conscious possession, becomes but an ideal, an ever-recurring dream which intermittently stirs him, amidst the distractions of a worldly life, to recover once more those pristine Heights. This endeavour, however, is not merely a matter of casting off again the lower Nature which he has thus accepted. For man has embraced that which has emerged from the lower levels of creation, precisely to discover the higher Nature and be himself the medium of its manifestation. This he can only do by transformation; that is, by transmuting the separated layers of his present Nature into a consistent compound, a wholeness of being in which the division of higher and lower, gross and subtle, fleshly and spiritual have become completely unified. This means the development of his soul-nature—the true unifying centre of his being—as the dominant and guiding principle of his life. Only through that spiritual entity can he completely recover the true unified consciousness that can bring the transforming Power and Light of the Divine Nature into the world. But the recovery and proper development of the soul-nature requires a full knowledge and consciousness, in order to pursue the right course of action (especially in its early immature stages). In other words, he needs the light of a higher knowledge to find his way out of the darkness of ignorance into the luminous realm of Truth. And reciprocally, it is only his soul that can retain fully and correctly utilize that higher Light and Truth which is the very substance and matrix of its being. It is that higher knowledge, therefore, in unifying and reconciling man's scattered fragments of knowing, and in revealing opposites as integral parts of one Whole, that is the first step. Only by that can man begin to transform the division of his present outlook into the true integral unity and harmony of the Divine.

By thus identifying himself with the harmony of the totality, through a progressive knowledge, man comes to realize that the

condition of his present consciousness, though of practical importance for his actual day-to-day dealings in life, does not reach the ultimate possibilities of his total awareness. Yet he clings passionately to all the imperfections and limitations as though these constituted the sole reality; though at the same time we can see that he is reluctant to lessen his grasp on it until he is convinced that something higher can actually be cast into the mould of his present earth life. But unfortunately by this tight-gripped retention on the lower Nature, he has come to believe that this latter represents his permanent lot and destiny, at least in this worldly life. So that only by death can he sever himself from it and be liberated into some spiritual sphere beyond, where his pure soul-nature rid of the animal grossness can enjoy the bliss and felicity, the expansiveness and the untrammelled beatitude native to its own expression. This liberation, however, does not fulfil the purpose of his material birth. For this life is no transient, phenomenal or chance existence with some permanent state of bliss and freedom beyond. It is here and now that man must bring out and establish the divine Nature in all its variegated plenitude.

Even in spite of man's present reliance on physical science he has not yet gained through it a consistent picture of the universe. For while purporting to disclose the pure objective reality—at least of the material field—science has so far only succeeded in exposing a net of uncertainties. Nor does present-day art, although it has striven for a higher and more subtle range of vision, arrive any nearer towards an integral representation. These, and other avenues of endeavour, all add up to convince us that behind these divergent efforts there must be a convergent avenue by which the whole multiple Reality can be known. For beyond the distracting pattern of man's present striving, intermittent flashes come which reveal a deeper and wider channel for reaching that Reality. It is such revelatory experiences that lead to the realization of a higher knowledge, which henceforth must form the essential basis and progressive stages of man's greater advancement. To attempt to enlarge the consciousness without first establishing this knowledge as our primary means

of attainment is both a hazardous and fruitless procedure. For without this firm foundation one would be inevitably precipitated into the unknown and uncharted waters of the occult and the spiritual with neither guide nor direction-finder. In reaching for a wider consciousness it is thus important to retain one's hold on the practical values of one's present order of awareness, even with all its faults and aberrations, until that higher range is established. It is after all our chief existing link with life and the world, and if we prematurely sever this living channel in our zealous pursuit of some wider cosmic or transcendent consciousness, we cannot then adequately relate our new vision to the realities of things around. All too frequently in the past it had been the tendency to act on the belief that a plunge into the spiritual life and the pursuit of God-consciousness meant a severance and release from this lower order of ignorance, and with it a disconnection from the sensory faculties which thus keep us attached to the lower Nature. But it is in fact the practical application of that wider Consciousness to the present life and existence of the world which is the ultimate aim of spiritual knowledge; and for this to be accomplished we must necessarily utilize these limited instruments of knowing, at least until more perfected faculties have sufficiently developed to control and guide man's advancement. With the acquisition of a higher knowledge, and especially the development of the discriminative faculty, the mind and senses are gradually purified, and their discernment clarified. This clarification of mind is an important stage in our first approach to spiritual knowledge. We can then discriminate more clearly and precisely between Truth and untruth, and what for man is Divine and what is non-divine; for there are many illusions, suggestions and false lights which come to draw us constantly from our rightful course.

It is noteworthy to observe that one of the principal admissions that modern science has had to make is the fact that the senses are unreliable, or at the best merely relative. But this does not mean that both the scientific picture of the world and that presented by our sensory faculties cannot be each a partial aspect, bearing a practical import of the totality. In the development of

science it is clear that the sense-mind had first collected and co-ordinated its sensory data, and that the analytical mind piecing together the information thus received from observation and experiment, has produced a more or less fundamental structural detail of the physical world and its working. This, however, is far from being a complete knowledge, as science now admits; and even by this admission it is beginning to probe into new fields of experience. But unfortunately man himself is as yet reluctant to admit in the same way the limitation of his own faculties of knowing. And it is in fact this latter limitation which is really hampering the wider advancement of science.

When we consider the fundamental importance of science we see that it lies essentially in the utilization knowledge—that is, its endeavour to bring its findings into a practical relation with life. It is thus primarily a means—though at present a restricted one—towards man's higher advancement and greater achievement. In this respect we can compare the scientific approach with the artistic vision and creative effort. For whereas the latter strives to reach some image or idealization of Truth, the former aims to externalize its discoveries and bring them into a materialized form. Thus art endeavours to raise man into the realm of the higher ideals, chiefly of Truth and Beauty, and to elevate his sensibilities and aesthetic appreciation. Science, on the other hand, attempts to convert its discoveries into realizable values which can be readily handled by man. Science, therefore, is not so much concerned with the advancement of man himself as with the conversion of Truth into utilizable terms. Under the aegis of science man is thus expected to broaden his horizon only through the rich store of practical knowledge which it brings to him. But, it may be asked, how can science itself advance if man, the very instrument of its searching, remains fixed and static? It is because of this one-sided result that the present fixation has arisen in modern thought; and this will be inevitable whilst science merely strains to enlarge its instruments of discernment without at the same time elevating the consciousness which eventually has to utilize those instruments. But there is not only the deadlock in the experimental and observational field, there is

also the present split in the theoretical sphere of scientific knowledge itself. For by means of reason and deduction science has advanced so far beyond man's sensory limits that its present-day findings appear to oppose the latter, and thus reason has true cause to regard the senses as erroneous and faulty. The dilemma of modern science, therefore, is to translate its new findings into a more convincing experience of them—not only to make them comprehensible, but also to determine whether they really do come within the field of actuality or are merely hypothetical speculations, or are perhaps a mixture of both. This, of course, can only be resolved by the development in man himself of a wider sensibility and a broader range of perception.

It is in such a way that all the diverse and disconnected strands of experience which make up man's present state of knowledge, can come to be seen in their true perspective, both in relation to the wider cosmic Whole, and to the yet greater infinite Vastness beyond Cosmos. Since it is clear that present-day science cannot advance very far without endangering the whole terrestrial field, it is even more imperative for man to establish in himself the firm basis of a wide unitive knowledge, which will give him the clearer insight to discern the goal and direction his endeavours must now take. And this in fact means spiritual knowledge and spiritual awareness which, proceeding from the very centre of his being, aims first to enlarge the consciousness, so that the whole and not a partial truth can be realized and encompassed. It is for this reason—its inner centredness—that spiritual knowledge is the real root of man's knowing and the basic factor of his integral development. Unlike science and art—both of which evade the primary need of first changing man himself by enlarging inwardly his present faculties of awareness—spirituality proceeds from the innermost centre of man, extending from there to embrace the whole of his being, and yet beyond until it encompasses the entire Reality. In this way man himself comes to contain and grasp the Wholeness as a living possession of his being. It is on this integral foundation that the whole of man's knowledge—his science and art as well as his religion and philosophy—can find their own true bearings, and each in its own

way assist in the unification and integration of man's life—instead of as at present aiding its disruption.

## VI

We have observed that the present consciousness of man is characterized by division and separation, but it is yet to be seen how the ego had become the chief centre and instrument of this dividing action. Because the ego had evolved into the all-dominant centre of man's being, it is naturally stubbornly reluctant to admit that for his future advancement it is essential that it accepts a subordinate function. It is this difficulty which comes sharply into focus particularly at this critical juncture of man's development, when the soul-seed of his being is struggling to emerge as the true unifying and naturally co-ordinating centre. Furthermore, we can see that the ego labours under the delusion that without its dominant guidance and control no concerted action can take place, and that the personality would therefore disintegrate and cease to exist as a distinct entity in the world. In other words, the ego rests on its claim to be the all-important 'I' and the real self of man. It is only by our opening to a higher knowledge—a knowledge transcending the grasp of the ego—that we realize the true self to be the soul-entity. And it is this potentially greater centre—as yet enclosed seed-like in man—to which the ego itself must turn, and ultimately serve. In this way a progressive widening of the mind, and a grasping of the truths that are above and beyond the ego's domain, lead to the realization that the final destiny of this lower action-centre is not to remain permanently as the all-powerful principle of the being, having imposed itself as the chief director and indispensable factor around which man's world must necessarily revolve. One becomes conscious of a greater potentiality within, which is in fact closer to the supreme Source and Origin of things—the true centre of man's existence. It is not the ego, therefore, that is the real delegate and direct instrument of man's higher advancement, but the inner soul. For it is the soul which convinces him by

direct contact that the centre of the world is not the spurious 'I but that Supreme Origin, which though infinitely beyond man and the world, is yet at the same time not only inseparably attached to the world, but also to that innermost centre of his being.,

It is in this egoistic stage of man's development, however, that all his reasoning and intellectual powers have been built up; and largely by means of Reason man has been able to erect his present store of knowledge. But valuable as Reason is, we can see that this knowledge is fundamentally dominated by the ego-centre, which has utilized the power of Reason for its own protection and aggrandisement. Reason has thus come to be the support and justification for the narrow viewpoint of the ego, so that everything which imperils the superiority of the latter is rejected as illogical or untenable. It is in this way that the ideal of a divine life on earth, with its consequent transformation of human nature, and the supplanting of the ego itself by a new centre of superiority, is vigorously repulsed by Reason as being an impossible attainment—at least in this terrestrial life. Human nature, it argues, cannot be changed so completely and radically. Hence the conception of an ideal state of Perfection is merely assigned to some sphere or heaven beyond this earthly life.

Let it be noted that pure Reason, as a power in itself apart from the ego-function, has the lofty aim of pursuing Knowledge and Truth by means of eliminating error. An absolute and ever-existent Truth is the ideal towards which Reason more naturally strives. But without the harmonized inter-relationship of the whole being, Reason has come to institute its own law of operation as the sovereign principle of man's knowing. It has thus produced a one-sided effort, through which those other ideals of Beauty, Faith and Goodness—which largely support man's art, religion and morality—have been systematically rejected, and considered as only secondary to his progressive thought, or even irrelevant to the pure Truth itself. Moreover, these latter ideals, belonging as they do to man's emotive nature, are more of spontaneous feeling and expression beyond the grasp of the precise and logical step-by-step procedure of Reason. Firmly fixed in the view that Truth can only be reached by mental

thought, it is suspicious of the validity of other than thought-inspired expression. By its clear-cut logical method it sets out to elucidate whatever aspect of Truth comes within its scope of direct analyses. The overstepping into the realm of the mysterious, or a plunge into the waters of the noumenal are always anathema to the reasoning faculty, unless there is already some comprehensive bridge to reach these unknown regions. It is clear, therefore, that Reason is not by any means all-embracing in its method of approach, but is in fact selective; for many aspects of Reality are rejected by it merely because they lie outside its sphere of argument by the narrow proof-by-exclusion process. Its natural method is that of 'either-or'—which does not seek to discover the common ground of compatibility whereby opposites and differences may possibly be unified. We can see, however, that all this narrow exclusion and rigid elimination is due largely to the utilization of Reason by the all-dominant ego-centre, so that any attempt by the former to probe into the deeper causes or fundamental root of things is rigorously suppressed. But Reason has a higher role and function. As the instrument of the more comprehensive faculty of soul, Reason can open up a clear and decisive avenue through which our present mental apprehension could reach and grasp the greater Truths as yet beyond.

Within the multiplicity of the whole cosmic movement we have seen that the individual ego has emerged, via the terrestrial evolution, as a centralized instrument of action. But it is equally clear that it is yet the centre of an inferior co-ordination—integrating that which is below itself in the lower Nature. It has thus established a partial unity, which is but a stage towards the full integral unity of the individual being. It is this partialization which has kept man tied to the ignorance of the lower Nature, and exclusively attached to the limited sensory faculties. In this way the ego has been able to maintain its predominance as the centre of a divided consciousness, effectively shutting out the Truth and Light of a higher Nature beyond; for its very existence as the dominant factor in man has depended on preserving this division. By this separation also the ego has been able to

attain a complete control over all the activities and motives of man—and has thus falsely become the prime mover, the doer and the supreme 'I' of his being. Only beyond this narrow mental centre, therefore, can man begin to participate in the consciousness of the totality, and even beyond this in the consciousness of That which transcends the totality, on which this latter itself depends.

Although the ancient Vedanta had clearly indicated that the cosmic source of the ego's distorting action could be traced to its being rooted in the lower Nature, it was later derivative schools of thought which deformed this original truth. In these philosophies, which unfortunately overshadowed the original Upanishadic teaching, the ego came to be regarded not only as the root of the duality of the world—and therefore its outlook a false representation of the pristine Truth—but also as the very cause and creator of this illusory universal Nature. In other words, it was the ego which held man attached to an illusion—the cosmos—which was itself an imperfection and deformation of the pure Transcendent Reality. Logically, therefore, the highest achievement for man would be to cut himself off finally from the chains of ego, and thus attain eternal liberation in the untrammelled Beyond. It was this idea which became current, turning a positive truth into a world-negating ideal. By thus eliminating the ego, it is clear that at the same time we cut off our own existence from the cosmic movement. The ego, in spite of its attachment to the ignorance, is but the temporary centre of man's being—a narrow, exclusive and ultra self-conscious unity of the individual, and is a step towards that wider universal unity culminating in the all-embracing realization of the Divine. It is by this larger progression, therefore, that the ego becomes a subordinate integer of a yet greater Wholeness—which unifies the lower nature of man in order to serve a higher Will and Law. When the Divine becomes the centre of our seeing, we find the true co-ordination and harmony of all that was hitherto disparate and conflicting. By this extra-egoistic relation we become aware of the true identity between the innermost self and the Conscious Being of the Divine Nature. And since that Conscious Being

had, through a serial descent, become the infinite entities constituting material forms, and thence had emerged through life and the lower levels of mind into some half figure of Consciousness, we are forced to concede that the further steps beyond mind have yet to be made. The very limitation of mind and the constructions imposed by its ego-centre indicate clearly enough that these are but partial formations of an all-embracing Consciousness. The complete emergence can only come through the fully perfected and integrated Being of the Divine Nature, the seed of which implanted in man as his innermost soul, is now struggling towards some measure of that greater manifestation.

Thus it can be realized that the ego, though at first the primary integument of a unity, has not embraced the full integral complement of man's greater Wholeness. It is in fact the offspring and effective action-centre of Mind, and having taken possession of man, had become the basis and organized centre of his present divided being. By appropriating only the lower Nature the ego had built around itself a natural field, in which it could readily become the dominant centre of the being. Thus man, restricted and apparently bound to a lower order of consciousness, had come to regard the immediate appearance as the true reality, and himself a separate and distinct entity from what seemed to be a vague unknown Beyond. The condition is therefore reached where man's attention is solely centred on the outer reality. He becomes oblivious of a higher Reality, so that even when this latter intrudes itself through the veil of separation, he sees it only as an unreality and an illusion. The key freeing him from this all too fixed and rigid grip of the ego lies in his self-opening to the universal or cosmic truths, and beyond these to the Divine Reality itself. Thus can the individual centralize his seeing outside and beyond the ego—awakening the true unifying dynamis of his own being. And in this way the dualities of his present outlook can be composed into the true wholeness of an integral vision. Only through that complete unification can the Divine Transformation and Perfection be established in this earthly life.

## VII

It has been seen that the Divine Nature—that which the ancients termed Sachchidananda—in working<sup>e</sup> secretly and inwardly through the appearance of the world, is really striving to manifest Itself ultimately in the very nature and substance of that which seems to oppose and contradict its own essential Perfection. And furthermore, that within this movement the ego had become an intermediary stage towards the final emergence of the fully perfected Gnostic Being, who is the only effective instrument of this ultimate world transformation. But it is clear that the primary need of this higher emergence is a spiritual knowledge through which a wider Consciousness can eventually be attained. Let us therefore examine more closely the steps which constitute the natural basis of this higher attainment.

In the past, by an advancing power of Reason, man had been able to deduce facts beyond the range of his inherited sense-bound awareness. Here we find that Reason acting independently of sensory experience had sought to discover the objective and absolute truths of the world—that is, a reality which exists outside and apart from the nature of man. By this endeavour metaphysical thought had been able to proceed beyond the point where experimental science could not yet go. But even the acquisition of metaphysical knowledge, although it satisfies the quest of Reason, is essentially an abstract knowledge removed from the reality of the world around, and does not embrace the integral Truth. A complete knowledge must eventually bring down the highest truths. And in addition it is necessary that these ideals be converted into facts, and that the facts themselves be translated into acts, if they are to become real and utilizable values. But since these highest ideals merge into spheres beyond our present sensory perception, we must conclude that it is first necessary to extend our own psychological outlook and develop more plastic faculties, in order to bring such supra-physical concepts within the realm of actual experience.

It is by the faculty of Reason that man has been able to raise himself effectively above the merely instinctive level of the

animal world. Whereas below man the senses are the chief channels or means of communication between the great Life urge and the animal's activity, in man the senses have become co-ordinated and controlled by the development of a sense-mind, which translates sensory impressions into mental concepts. While animal awareness is merged into and motivated by the large underlying life-consciousness of which the individual organism is a part, in man, separated from this direct and common reservoir of knowing, there has developed a self-contained consciousness organized by the sense-mind. It is this separation from the broad primary mother-consciousness that has produced in man an indirect or secondary means of knowing, centred on the dividing self-conscious nature of the ego. Only when man can rise above the narrow confines of his self-centred ego does he become aware of larger spheres of Consciousness—cosmic as well as supra-cosmic—which open him to a more direct realization of the totality. Below him man sees the broad instinctive stream of the life-force, by which the activity of the organism is seemingly guided and controlled, and above him there is the vast sea of a universal consciousness in which the individual can himself partake of wider and more comprehensive vistas of knowing—if he is willing to forsake his narrow ego-view of the world. The separative organization of mind is thus an intermediary phase of development between the instinctive urge of life and an enlightened cosmic consciousness. Compared with the separative nature of man's present outlook, these two modes of Consciousness, above and below, are a direct means of action or knowing, in which there is no division between the acting being and the act, or as in the higher consciousness between the knower and the known. It is what we can aptly call a knowledge by identity, and is in fact the fundamental process and substratum of all knowing. In the super-consciousness, however, the action springs directly from the individual's own awareness as an intuition, whereas in the animal sub-consciousness the action is instigated by an instinctive urge of which it is not at all conscious.

Although sense-mind ordinarily utilizes the senses as its chief channel of communication to become aware of and make contact

with the outer world, it can also act independently of the senses and know directly something of the inner as well as the outer nature of things. Such phenomena as telepathy and clairvoyance (which are largely discarded by that part of us which fears an expansion of our present faculties of awareness), indicate clearly the inherent plastic nature of mind. These phenomena, in fact, cannot be explained unless we see that it is because the physical senses are quieted or subdued—as in sleep or trance or hypnosis—that the inner and more subtle faculties of the mind are able to emerge, which can extend beyond the material field of activity. Yet although sleep and trance are usually our first gateways to other spheres of awareness, it is in the waking consciousness that these more subtle avenues of knowing have to be cultivated, in order to become normal functions coincident with our ordinary outlook. But while clairvoyance and telepathy are themselves primary indications of the occult working of the sense-mind, these phenomena merely lead us into the subliminal zones of man and the universe, but cannot seize the higher supracosmic truths beyond. Here it is Reason, acting independently of all sensory data, that can first lead us, through its incessant search for the Absolute, to realize those wider transcendent spheres. In this respect it is important to note also that mere belief in the magical and the miraculous is not synonymous with belief in the existence of the true supernature. Whereas the former is not open to the scrutiny of Reason, it is only when the reasoning power begins to probe and investigate occult knowledge, ruthlessly sweeping away all superstitions, illusions and false beliefs, that the latter can clearly be defined. The way is then cleared for the intuitive mind to bring the true illumination, which lights up the occult zones in their natural relations with both our surface consciousness and the supracosmic truths. For while seeing into and through the occult, intuition also stands above and detached from it, and grasps the entirety in a larger perspective. By this we see that Reason's principal function is to act as the mediator between the subconscious level of the instinctive life-urge and the superconscious sphere of intuitive illumination, which is the domain of the higher mind.

In becoming the self-conscious individual with a developed power of Reason, man had certainly surpassed the blind instinctive animal level of awareness, but in so doing he had forfeited a direct way of knowing for a fragmentary and indirect one. It is therefore towards a more self-aware identification with the larger Consciousness that man's efforts must now be directed. And this means the development of the intuitive faculty on which all higher knowledge is necessarily based. For it is intuition which brings one into a direct and unified relation with that which we ordinarily regard as 'otherness.' In the past there had mostly been intermittent flashes of intuition, and only rarely was there the steady sustained insight which marks the established working of the intuitive faculty—such as it appeared in the lives of the saints, prophets and men of God. It is particularly in the world's scriptural revelations, therefore, that we can expect to find the richest source of an intuitive vision. Thus, for example, it was through intuitive channels that the ancient Vedantic Seers sought to reveal the secret connection between man and the universe, and between man and that Transcendent Existent on which both the universe and man depend. These relations they summed up briefly in three succinct formulae. Firstly, in the expression 'I am He' they indicated the individual's realization of his essential oneness with that Transcendent Beyond. Secondly, by the utterance 'Thou art That,' they revealed that each and every individual is essentially constituted of that transcendent Self—that the pure Divine Nature is the central essence of all things. Thirdly, by the disclosure that 'All this is Brahman,' they unfolded the all-embracing Truth that the Whole as well as the constituent parts are the very existence of that sole-existent Reality. So that not only is each and every individual entity inseparably connected with the Supreme, but also each is joined to the other by that all-pervading spiritual Presence in an intimate relation and oneness of being. Thus is the individual, in his activity in the world, integrally connected with the collectivity; and without the mutual interchange between them neither the collectivity nor the individual can progress and expand into a truly universalized existence.

It is interesting to see the part that Intuition has actually played in the history of human thought, particularly in moulding the basic pattern and exposing the chief direction that true progress must take. At crucial moments, whether in the leadership of a nation, in scientific discovery or in art and poetry, it is always the flash of inspiration that is the nucleus of a new vision, a new orientation or a new impetus in human progress. It is only later that the intellect comes in to build up its own citadel of thought around that intuitive light-seed. We can see this process more clearly in the growth of the older civilizations, notably in India where spiritual thought and endeavour, which depend largely on the intuitive faculty, had always been the principal pursuit. The dawn of these ancient cultures was invariably marked by the appearance of a direct intuitive revelation—either of an occult or of a spiritual nature—which became the nucleus of its future beliefs and activity. This was the age of the Gods and the Heroes, the myths and the grand epics of man. The dawn of Indian culture, the age of the Vedas, was of this category, with its rich store of symbol and inspired vision of Truth. It was a revelation necessarily comprehended only by the few of those early times, and thus the Seers were obliged to express their realizations through known symbolical images natural to the life of their time. The translation of that Vedic symbol into a more precise expression, which at the same time retained the original intuitive truths, marked the beginning of the Vedantic period, with the appearance of the earliest Upanishads. This was the age of instruction rather than of symbolical ritual, when actual experience of the sought Truth was transmitted directly from Master to disciple. It was natural, however, that as this knowledge spread outwards it should become more diffused, and that the certitude of its spiritual truths should become blurred by speculative deliberation. The transmission of direct experience gradually gave way to hair-splitting argument, and argument to diverse schools of belief. This was the period of metaphysical thought, when attempts were made to formulate the ancient revelations into short epigrammatical summaries or long drawn-out and divergent interpretations. Thus arose the

many schools of Indian philosophy each claiming to give the correct interpretation of Vedanta, but each in fact presenting merely a partial and fragmented aspect of that integral Truth. They served, however, as steps or gateways by which something of those wider universal truths could be comprehended by the many rather than by the few. It is as well to note here that in considering the ancient knowledge we must distinguish between what was seen and what was brought into effect. There is a huge hiatus between the high flight of Thought and the actualization in Life of the Truths discerned by the ancient Seers—and which the new spirituality aims to realize in the world. In the past the colossal task of collating and recording those highest Truths absorbed all the energy of endeavour, and thus impeded the penetration of those Truths into Life itself. And of course the world and man were not yet ready for that momentous step.

But yet we have to differentiate between religion and spirituality. In pursuing the development of India's spiritual thought we see that it was during the medieval years of sectarian development that the unity of the higher truths was lost in the divided channels of a many-branching system. It was a time when the composite religion we know to-day as Hinduism began to form its characteristic pattern of separative sectarian growths. This tendency is unfortunately common to all the religious faiths of the world, and can be seen in the development of Western religion also. Thus for example it is now clear that we cannot regard Hinduism as an equivalent term of reference for the ancient scriptures of Veda and Vedanta, even though this composite religion is founded on those revelations. Similarly we cannot regard present-day Christianity as being synonymous with the living example of Christ's life, whose teaching it claims to propound (though Christ's actual words are mostly lost to us, and only an indirect record of the real spiritual teachings unfortunately remains). Let us note in this respect that unlike the old Upanishadic recordings, the Bible itself is largely an historical record—a testimony of revelation rather than a direct revelation in itself. For it contains mainly an indirect recording of those utterances and acts which issue from an intimate communing with God. Only

here and there do we find the more direct records of revelation, and even in these cases it has been subsequently made to fit into the general pattern of a book which aimed more to convince and give the foundation of a belief to the people, rather than to preserve the direct enlightened Word. This inadequacy of the present-day religions of the world only points to the pressing need of a new and wider presentation of the highest spiritual Truths; and such, we venture to suggest, is now being revealed in the new spirituality of India.

It is by taking a wider view of the respective developments of religion and philosophy (though their actual relationship has always been a combined and interdependent one), that we can see how each has contributed in its own way towards the cultural uplift of man. Broadly speaking, we find that whereas philosophy has served mainly as an ascending stage in the progression of humanity, religion has tended to form the descending complement of a cyclic movement. Thus philosophy has attempted to open up the mind to the highest truths, values and principles, while religion originating directly from a ray of God-given Light has tended to spread its revelations outwards until it has permeated all levels of life. Successive descents of the Divine Grace have been the seeds from which the world's religions have sprung. By that Grace man has been progressively enlightened and raised to the realization of an infinite Reality beyond all mundane conception, instigating in him the greater endeavour to realize those ideals. But religious movements, which sooner or later have become bereft of their spiritual origins, can be said to have delivered their message, and fulfilled their purpose in the world, once their uplifting power has gone. Yet men have continued to cling to an empty shell of dogma and organized ritual, in spite of the fact that the inner spirit has already fled into more dynamic forms of aspiration. But although the broad outward developments of religion and philosophy tend to form each a separative cyclic movement, we find that there is also an alternating rhythm within each tending towards their integration. Thus in philosophy the ascent of the individual towards those inspired ideals of religion turns more naturally to an invigorating

descent through the collectivity. And conversely the descent of spiritual Light through the broad mass of humanity, inspires the individual ascent to regain those Heights, and actualize a yet greater realization of the Divine Reality in the world. In this way philosophy at its best has utilized the highest realizations of religious expression as its own goal and summits of attainment, while religion as a yet living force has made use of the intellectual permeation of these spiritual truths for giving the masses a rational basis of dogma in accordance with its own particular way and aspect of the Divine. As an intellectual force, therefore, philosophy's chief role has been the attempt to awaken the individual to a comprehension of the highest ideals of human conception, and as an emotional factor religion has tended to light up a collective aspiration towards its own particular revelation of the Divine. In this way religion and philosophy have conjoined in the quest for and realization of higher truths.

There are two factors, however, which break into what would otherwise be an interminable cyclic movement around a fixed point—as mental constructions and beliefs are of themselves wont to turn. One is the descent of Grace, through which God has successively given—in accordance with man's readiness—something of His own Divine Nature to the world; and the other is the individual ascent attaining and bringing down into the world some actual realization of the Transcendent Beyond. Thus has a fixed cycle been converted into an ascending spiral, which is in fact the basic pattern and hallmark of all spiritual endeavour and achievement. Religion in its proper role has thus been the channel for a renewal or rebirth—a Descent from the Supreme—while philosophy has been the chief instrument for stirring the individual quest to regain those absolute truths which have been sporadically revealed to man. In this way the divine Light has built up a growing spiritual knowledge in the world. And it is this knowledge which constitutes the most potent factor and direct opening through which modern thought can free itself from the tangle in which it is at present enmeshed.

Although, as we have seen, there is a higher function for Reason, in man's present ego-restricted stage it has become the

all-dominant and fundamental criterion of his knowledge, and by this fiat has irreverently swept aside the central truth-factor of revelation, together with the beliefs (false and otherwise) which had grown around it. Faith, belief and intuition have all had to give way to a purely rational system of thought. But sooner or later man must discover that what he has ignored—namely Intuition or the direct seeing of a higher Consciousness—is the very principle by which the wholeness of things, at present seemingly in conflict, can be reconciled, and their true Unity seized. By this opening to a higher Reality we can begin to discern what the true relation really is between man and the multiple complex movement of the world; and above all the secret connection between the vast cosmic existence and that supreme and absolute Unity beyond. Hence we realize that the central pivot of this extensive interwoven relation resides in the innermost self of man's being, which is the very essence of that pure infinite Nature as yet beyond. It is through this secret though ever-present relation that the true spiritual personality of man, at present latent and embryonic, can be progressively raised to its own natural stature in the being. And for this accomplishment the light of that new and comprehensive spiritual knowledge, which has now fully emerged from its ancient foundations, is our most valuable, if not indispensable, aid towards the ultimate attainment of man's terrestrial goal.

# TIME, CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE SPIRITUAL REALITY

## I

**I**N a previous survey of present-day science we had noted that one of its principal features has been its decisive inward turn. An exclusive preoccupation with surface appearances had gradually given way to the attempt to unveil the inner and more subtle detailed working within and behind matter, life and mind. And with this development there has naturally ensued a more radical probing into the fundamental principles that underlie the whole visible reality of the outer world. But although all scientific investigation must necessarily revolve around man's own awareness of the world—bounded as it is at present by his sensory perception—science has persistently sought beyond the nature of man himself in order to discover the absolute truths which exist apart and independently as realities-in-themselves. And this was no doubt urged on by the quest for univereal truths, as opposed to the old anthropomorphized knowledge it sought to supersede. In this way various constants of Nature had been propounded by science, most of which have later been discovered to be not so much absolute values as measures or things between themselves, and which are ultimately not entirely disconnected with man. In fact man's 'interference,' as it has been called, into Nature's scheme has proved to be not so easy to eliminate. Nevertheless in seeking for the wholly impersonal or dehumanized truth, science was bent on excluding all connection with the self of the observer, which consequently came to be regarded as a strictly personal field and hence opposed to the pure absolute Reality. But as we have seen, this process had unfortunately cut off the very life-line between science—which in its fullest practical endeavour aims to link the outer and inner and become thereby a complete knowledge—and the soul of

man, which is the central factor of this comprehensive knowing. Little by little modern science, even at the expense of abandoning the Absolute itself, has been increasingly forced to include something of the nature of the investigator himself, who inevitably forms an integral part of the universal field of inquiry.

It was chiefly the Relativity Theory which first introduced self-consciousness into what had hitherto been a bounded domain of fixed natural laws; thus upsetting the old rigid classical order of absolute values that pertained to the physical world. Henceforth the individualized picture of the universe became the predominant one, wherein the observer had come into the field of observation as an integral and in fact central part of it. Physical science had to admit the reality of mind (at least that of the observer), and having admitted mind into its scheme it also had to submit to the interference which mind introduced into this hitherto completely enclosed and self-contained sphere of physical matter. Following on the heels of the Relativity Theory came wave mechanics, presenting its more fluid picture of the universe. This line of development emerged chiefly from the study of the collective movement of matter. But at the same time another line of development which concentrated on the inner detailed structure of matter was being investigated. It was this latter which led to what is now familiarly known as the particle-picture of the universe. Here the Quantum Theory revolutionized the old rigid and mechanistic conception of the molecular world of matter, as radically as the Relativity Theory had upset the balance of the absolute laws pertaining to the molar groupings of the physical world. Faced with these two alternative pictures of the universe, it was the main task of the new investigators to try and integrate into one pattern the separate fields of phenomena thus presented. But this has not proved so easy to accomplish. In the case of the particle picture, although there is the attempt to get closer to the inner detail and individual nature of the indivisible particle, this knowledge in itself cannot bring about a complete presentation of the totality, until the exact relation between the individual structure and the collective movement can be clearly discerned. For while

we have gained a more detailed perception of the inner complexity, the combined integrality of the collective process and of its relation to the minuter movement involved in it, is at the same time lost. Likewise in reducing all phenomena to waves the particle picture has become partly, if not wholly, obliterated so that the final integration showing the inter-relationship between the particle and the wave cannot as yet be effected.

Although modern science is thus temporarily divided along these two lines of inquiry, it is now possible that the actual disclosure of a cosmic or supra-cosmic force locked within the atomic nucleus may prove to be the real link between the wave mechanism of the collectivity and the individual particle structure of matter. For when we examine wave motion more closely we see that it is fundamentally a surface movement, which is but our representation of an underlying energy that supports and is the substratum of all movement. It is this basic Energy in being continually transmitted from particle to particle by the regular oscillations of these latter which really produces the phenomenon of wave motion. We then have a multi-varied stream of energy-centres each with its own particular waves of oscillation; and it is this sea of Energy, continually being thrown into diverse forms, which constitutes the whole of the Cosmic Reality. Since waves of energy thus form the elemental substratum of all phenomena, manifestation is but the transformation of bundles of energy into diverse centres of oscillation, producing all that we perceive to be static matter, colour, sound and other more rarefied phenomena beyond sensation. And furthermore it is this self-same infinite extension of cosmic Energy which has at the same time become compressed to form the very core of the particle itself—its concentrated essence or atomic soul. This compressed cosmic energy has been clearly displayed in the recent exploitation of atomic power. This supra-cosmic Force inherent within the nucleus of all atoms can only mean that a transcendent Power—call it God's—is secreted within each particle of matter. Thus it comes about that only when the unifying nucleus of the particle-centre is forcefully broken can the infinitely compressed force within it be released to become

the all-extensive Force which is its origin. Thus we can say more decisively that the observed motion of the wave, representing a deeper reality, and the behaviour of the particle originate from a single source, a transcendent Energy or Force<sup>6</sup>; and that they are both of the very stuff of that cosmic Energy. It remains to be seen anon whether this Energy is an inert extensiveness or is itself the Power of Consciousness. In the meantime it is enough to observe that it is but our limited perception which has thus separated wave motion (representing the mass or collective movement) from particle behaviour (which expresses the individual centres of matter), so that the observation of the one has temporarily shut out the existence of the other; and consequently the integral reality of this new presentation of science has become blurred and indecisive.

This narrow and defective outlook, however, is not a permanent or indelible fixture in man. It is, as we have already traced, the result of an imperfection, an incomplete growth which can and must eventually be surpassed and eradicated by the acquisition of a higher knowledge and consciousness. This deep-rooted aberration is then seen in its true light as originating from the false pose of the ego, which merely gives the individual an illusion of being separated from the outer world. By that false division man is obliged to observe the world only through a restricted aperture of vision, which gives him the partial and fragmented picture of the world that characterizes his present outlook. We can see, therefore, that the only radical solution for widening and perfecting man's present knowledge and consciousness lies primarily in relinquishing that fixed egocentric standpoint, and of establishing instead the true Self or soul-entirety of his being as the dominant centre of all his seeing and action. This new centralization, however, is naturally opposed by the ego which sees in that change of focus the potential eliminator of its own predominant position; and here lies the root of the deadlock in man's present advancement. For only when the ego comes to surrender its firmly held power to that potentially greater Self—which it would only do by an increasing knowledge leading to a realization of its true function—can man

attain a correct insight and perspective on the world. One then comes to see more clearly that he is not merely a function of a seemingly all-powerful universal Nature, but that this latter is itself subordinate to a greater Power—a supreme Nature. And not only so, but that the universal Nature also contains the higher or Divine Nature as the central essence of each indivisible particle. Thus the living contact between the individual entity and the higher Nature is constantly maintained. And it is precisely because of that subtle link that the soul-seed of man's being is able to grow beyond and ultimately surpass his present ego-bound limitations.

Science has already indicated, if not openly at least implicitly, that its own investigations cannot proceed very far without including or taking into account the very existence of man's own nature, both as part of the field of study as well as the instrument of knowing, since obviously all his observational data must necessarily proceed from or through that medium. The Theory of Relativity, having placed the observer within the field of observation, was obliged henceforth to recognize the essentially relative nature of its particular viewpoints and measures. In this way absolute or natural law has had to give way to relative and even indeterminate values and proportions, with a consequent shift of emphasis in the whole scientific outlook. As a direct result of this the subjective element of time naturally came to the fore, since time is an experience based on our conscious awareness of relative values. In its objective bearings time is specifically a measure which spans out or sectionalizes the cosmic movement, in order to assist the limited range of mind to observe the change in an eternally mutable Cosmos. This sectionalizing process, however, issues from the individual's own limits of consciousness, of which the successive 'nows' mark the points of actuality through which reality is directly experienced. Thus the 'now-aperture' or static moment of time is the fundamental unit, as far as the individual is concerned, of his perception. Time therefore, from the individual point of view, has a reality only in so far as it is a finite measure of some portion of the cosmic rhythm—or is a comparative

derivation of this measurement. Time naturally varies according to the degree of consciousness possessed by the observer, who at the same time is immersed and necessarily carried along in that unceasing cosmic flow. From this shifting viewpoint all measures and values are necessarily relative while they are based on observations from one particular standpoint or field of reference within the whole vastness of Cosmos.

But suppose that instead of this fixity and restriction of outlook—resulting as it does from a narrow and rigid aperture of consciousness—man possessed the capacity of detaching an essential part of himself from the cosmic flow, he would then be in a position to experience more freely all the infinitely varied expressions of Cosmos. No longer time-bound he would be able to know directly, by standing above or entering into the heart of things, their true nature-in-themselves; and he would be more cognizant of the goal and direction of the whole infinite cosmic movement. Although such supra-cosmic detachment would seem to run counter to man's narrow earth-bound consciousness yet it is also apparent that no really absolute truth can be gained whilst one is wholly fixed and immersed within the cosmic flow itself. And we must concede that it is the truth of the Absolute which is in fact the constant goal towards which man in his highest endeavours is ever straining to realize. In the case of the mystics and spiritual pathfinders, who have particularly sought this approach to knowledge, they have clearly illustrated in their own life's work the truth that this utter detachment from the cosmic movement is not only possible as part of man's completer earth-life, but is the essential step towards attaining a conscious growth and fuller development. Their experiences clearly show that man's apparently separated consciousness—that which he looks upon as his own private world-view—is not only continuous and connected with the vast reservoir of Cosmos, but that the individual can himself open out and extend into that wider universal consciousness. This is achieved through the innermost centre of his being, by a widening which at the same time does not relinquish that essential centre of individuality. It is the stage in evolutionary Nature when soul-development seeks

to emerge and take the lead; for with it a new order or cycle of progression become possible on earth.

But there is another factor to consider in this widening of our narrow 'now-view' into the expansiveness of Cosmos. By increasingly identifying oneself with the universal movement it becomes more necessary to stabilize the whole basis of one's being; since it is but natural that without this stability one easily loses one's bearings in relinquishing the familiar anchorage of the personal outlook. And it is clear that the true stability can only come through a complete detachment from the cosmic movement, which at the same time has not lost the inner hold on it. This means firstly the establishment within of that quiescent state of timeless detachment which is opened to us by the transcendent Consciousness. For it is only on the utter quietude of that infinite Calm that one can penetrate into the diversity of 'otherness' without being submerged or carried away by all its intersecting currents. In that inner Silence mystical experience has indeed revealed the true foundation of man's spiritual growth, the whole basis of his enlargement into the wider universal Consciousness. Yet it is only when we realize that this detached or transcendent Consciousness and the wide universalized Consciousness are not two separate states of awareness that we begin to see both in their interconnected relation as being focused in and emanating from the unified centre of the soul. For it is the soul which not only possesses the intuitive faculty of directly contacting these diverse spheres of Consciousness, but possesses also the hidden seed-potential for expanding the whole outlook into a comprehensive Consciousness in which both modes of Consciousness are the natural expression. Thus it is uniquely the soul that can bring the otherwise inaccessible knowledge of the Heights into an individualized awareness. Here lies the truly effective power by which the present earth-life can be ultimately raised into that perfected state of existence which is the real goal of all man's higher striving. ,

## II

That there is the possibility and even urgent necessity for exceeding man's present mental horizon beyond mere intellectual acquisitiveness is a principle now acceptable to modern thought. Such acceptance has been largely due to the influence of that metaphysical current which centred itself around the idea of a creative and emergent Evolution. The close study of the evolutionary movement certainly lent support to the view that beyond the intellect some direct power of intuition could be, for man, the next possible stage of evolutionary development, though the true nature of this new faculty was not clearly definable. Its view of evolution was that of a continual emergence or becoming, the ultimate purpose of which was likewise obscure. But nevertheless that ever-pressing Becoming seemed to be the fundamental and sole reality underlying all cosmic existence. An eternally flowing duration being thus the basic reality, space as opposed to this objectivized time came to be regarded as a subjective concept. While this reversal of our ordinary viewpoint laid bare a neglected aspect of the cosmic movement (that duration is in fact an objective reality), this explanation alone does not leave room for an objective spatial reality. For duration in itself represents but the reality of cosmic change only in so far as the introspective faculty of mind perceives the universal flux; while space on the other hand represents the reality of cosmic form as perceived by our outward-turned or externalized consciousness. Duration, as we experience it, results from an exclusive feeling-into things, whereas spatial forms are built up for us out of the fragmented outer perception of the discerning intellect. Time and space thus separated by mind into subjective or objective experiences alternatively, merely represents our failure to grasp the integral truth. In both cases the underlying truth of wholeness or the essential continuity of space and time which relativity has significantly indicated, is lost to our partializing and restricted awareness. It is only when subjectivity and objectivity become unified (as in the true intuitivized seeing) that we come to realize the true unity of space and time as a single continuity.

Although form, ordinarily appears as a static conception, what we really see is one instant or momentary perception of an eternally changing universe, in which each successive instant appears to be the fixed and permanent reality. This staticity also produces in us an apparent sense of detachment from this ceaseless flow—a sense of being apart and separate from it—due to the separative nature of our mentalized outlook. When we experience pure duration, on the other hand, we are really shutting out the perception of form and letting ourselves be led by an exclusive feeling-into or identification with the pure movement of cosmos. But this is not the true identity, the integral vision, which at one and the same time grasps both the essence and the wholeness. Only through the acquisition of the intuitive insight can we fuse both the elements of detachment and feeling-into-things in one spontaneous and comprehensive seeing. And this demands the opening up of that innermost centre of our being, of which intuition is its normal function and expression.

Yet a further difficulty arises when we interpret the world solely in terms of Cosmic Becoming, and that is we ignore the possibility of a transcendent Absolute or fundamental Ground of existence beyond Cosmos. But where, we may ask, is that Becoming derived and whither is it bound? This question can only be satisfactorily answered if we accept a Unity as the ultimate principle underlying all things. And not only a oneness of Cosmos, but a transcending and all-embracing Oneness beyond. For if all existence were but the sum of its relative parts—devoid of an Absolute—then each value in itself would represent a potentially independent and self-existent unit, and we should arrive at an infinite multiplicity in which no finality or unifying centre could ever be reached. Furthermore the very existence of a world of relativities must indicate the tacit or accepted presence of an Absolute. For it is the Absolute to which all relativities are ultimately related, and on which their very relatedness depends. Otherwise we must live in a world of completely isolated units with no possible points of contact between them. Hence we say that universal Becoming represents the infinite multiplicity of an

ultimate Oneness. And it is this Oneness that has been termed Being, to distinguish it from the Becoming. But it must be added that Being is not thereby the antithesis of Becoming, but rather the complementary pole or origin, by which even the Becoming exists. Being, in fact, is what the ancients discerned to be the pure Existent, that is, the pristine original Being of the Divine Nature which though aloof is yet intimately connected with the cosmic Becoming in its own diverse ways.

Although these dual concepts of transcendent Being and cosmic Becoming represent for us a larger dynamic notion of the Supreme Reality, yet this two-fold presentation does not yet reveal the essential Oneness or all-pervading Unity which is the integral Nature of the All. In the first place the Absolute is not wholly aloof and detached from the Relative, but is in fact contained in it in order to become an infinite multiplicity of centres or growing-points from which a Self-manifestation can emerge. Just as in the physical realm we have seen that an all-pervading Energy or Force constitutes both the fundamental matrix of the universe as well as the central essence of its indivisible particles, so throughout Life, Mind and beyond Mind the same basic pattern persists, in which a centre—cell, ego or soul—constitutes the nucleus of a progressive manifestation. Here we discover the secret link between Being and Becoming, which is really those essential centres or growing-points. Thus we can see how Being is ever contained in the Becoming and is progressively emerging out of it.

In this dynamic and all-extensive relation we begin to discern the true three-fold Nature of the ever-present Reality as it expresses itself through the creative process and evolutionary dynamis of the world, and—as it is even beyond Creation. Firstly there is the Absolute aspect as the detached origin and source from which all things have emerged and on which they eternally depend. Secondly there is the all-extensive aspect as the Power or Consciousness which constitutes the all-pervasive Nature of the Cosmos. And thirdly there is the essence or soul through which the triple Nature of the Absolute can yet emerge and become manifest in the world. Beyond the duality, therefore,

of our highest reach of intellectual thought we begin to discern that spiritual vision which from ancient times has revealed the triple Nature of the Divine. It is a direct and undivided seeing which transcends, the narrow egocentric standpoint of our ordinary outlook. All is then seen to be, in its essence as well as in its manifold activity, the self-Nature of the Supreme, the emanation in fact of that pure Existent which though eternally beyond has yet become the multiple manifest centres of a conscious-growing universe.<sup>1</sup> Our interpretation of the world as well as our centre of outlook, is thence shifted from an exclusive egocentric vision to a broad God-centred realization. The true Nature of the Divine is no longer obscured and clouded by a disproportionate expansion and projection of our petty human nature, anthropomorphizing all things, but is seen in its all-pervasive Vastness to be ever the eternal Omnipresence. By this constant God-consciousness, which reveals an intimate and essential oneness of being, man comes to realize that his own restricted and imperfect nature can only be widened and transformed through the Divine seed which is his true Self. It is from this soul-centre that one can begin to discover the true relation between the individual, the multiplicity, and the Divine Reality which is the All. It is a realization that is not only the centre of a wide universal Consciousness, but is the very basis for man's growth into the Divine Perfection, which is the true goal of his present earth-life.

### III

Confronting modern science, as we have so far observed, is the problem of how to discover the true inherent nature of things apart from the interference and intrusion of man's own nature. But clearly it is impossible to achieve an absolutely dehumanized conception of the world unless man the knower is prepared to widen his horizon and transcend his present limita-

<sup>1</sup> Note that the modern cult of Existentialism deliberately ignores the reality of this pure Existent, and hence it misses that unifying and integrating Oneness which is the very Origin of all existence, depicting therefore a mere Godless world.

tions. We have suggested, however, that since man possesses this transcendent potentiality, though at present latent and embryonic, he can through the soul-faculty of pure intuition develop a wider and freer consciousness, which not only penetrates directly into and seizes the truth of things, but can also stand back and see detachedly the whole Truth in a wider perspective. Although this faculty springs directly from the spiritual centre of man's being—his inner soul—it is first through the higher reaches of mind that he more readily encounters it, chiefly through the clarified and illumined parts of mind beyond the fragmenting intellect. It is the intuitivized mind in fact, which reflects and holds something of soul-power as its own innate expression, and is thus the naturally initial avenue whereby intuition is first seized by us. But of course the decisive leap beyond mind has yet to be made, and by which the soul-nature of the being can be permanently established as the central factor of knowing. Mind is essentially an instrument of division, and though it is necessarily an important link in bringing out the latent faculties of soul, and for bridging these with man's present defective nature, we must remember that the leap beyond mind has sooner or later to be made, if we are to establish the native spiritual qualities in their unmixed purity. ♫

Let us now see how the ancient world compromised in dealing with this problem of bridging the nature of man with an objective view of the universe. In the old-world Greek and Indian systems, for example, we find the psychological interpretation of the universe predominating—which is not to say that it was purely subjective. According to their view there were five basic elements, each of which corresponded to one of the developed sense-faculties in man. Thus the most rarefied element was the all-pervading aether which filled the whole of Space, and was responsible for conveying the subtle vibrations of sound, stimulating in us the sense of hearing. Next in the scale was air which was primarily the medium for our awareness of touch. Thirdly came the element of fire, the source of light, which naturally called forth in us the sensation of sight. Fourthly there was the liquid state, as typified by water, and from which taste was the

natural consequence. And lastly the fully cohesive form of earth, stimulating in us our fifth sense of smell. The Indian systems of philosophy went farther, in elaborating these fundamental relations in two directions. Firstly in the direction of a wider cosmological knowledge, and secondly towards a deeper psychological insight. Here in this two-fold investigation lay the basis of that duality which dominated not only Eastern philosophy, but also became the fundamental principle embedded in the Western dualistic systems. It produced that trenchant division of Reality into Nature on the one hand, and Spirit on the other. Nature was the inert mechanical movement, the outer play and grossness of things, while Spirit remained eternally the pure detached Consciousness, the Source and Origin of all movement. The Sankhya system of India particularly typified this two-fold relation. The main difficulty here was to bridge the psycho-cosmological gap, and explain the conversion of the elemental vibrations of cosmos into individual conscious sensations. This was done, however, by indicating the presence of two cosmic principles—one an all-pervasive Force and the other a dividing principle or Ego-formation. By the interaction of these two forces the original quiescent sea of Consciousness was fragmented into myriads of separate and individual consciousnesses each reflecting the nature of the vast mother-consciousness from which they were derived. Because it was only a reflected consciousness the individual could only realize the true Reality by completely transcending the universal Nature and becoming identified with the pure Spirit. By this process the individual entity is ultimately lost or submerged; and consequently the whole movement of existence becomes a mechanical whirl, purposeless and without end or goal, save that of escape from its aimless round into the Stillness of Spirit beyond.

To the modern mind, however, the pressing needs of the world are too great to accept this dualistic philosophy of escapism as lightly as it was done in the past. And also the scientific investigations of recent times, particularly into the biological process of evolution, have helped to intensify the reality and significance of Creation. In fact a purpose is introduced into the cosmic

scheme, where hitherto there was no natural outcome other than dissolution. Furthermore, the evolutionary movement as a whole has been more clearly discerned to be an unfoldment in which an increasing complexity and organization of life-forms is the principal motif. It appears to be the building-up process carried on by life, which would therefore counteract or rather balance' the 'running-down' or increasing disorganization of energy apparent in the physical universe. Life is the rejuvenating force, whereas Matter is a disintegrating factor. But what is the aim of this increasing organization of Life? As we proceed from the lower to the higher forms it seems to be the gradual emergence or unfoldment of greater degrees of Consciousness which is the real cumulative result of that age-long progression. But it is only in recent years that the actual possession of consciousness by the plant and animal world has become a demonstrable fact. Hitherto consciousness was only thought of in terms of it being a human attribute, the personal and separative possession of the individual mental being. Modern psychology has to some extent helped to broaden men's views on Consciousness, especially in its study of dreams and the functioning of the lower levels of mind, where mind naturally meets and forms a common ground with the life urge. Both the deeper layers of the individual consciousness as well as the hinterland belonging to mind have been shown to merge eventually into a common or collective consciousness. And at a yet deeper level the individual appears to be connected with a consciousness that embraces the whole of man's evolutionary past. Similarly, in the hinterland of mind, where dreams have played such a predominant role, individual minds merge into a common zone where there is no apparent division or separation between them. Clearly their separateness, as concentrated centres of mental energy, is but a convenient device for the purpose of a decisive development and one-pointed action. This is also paralleled on the biological level of the life movement where the individuals having been built up as a specialized concentrated unit out of an uncountable number of generations, it dispersed again into the general stream of the life-flow, thus ceding his own contribution once more to the

common reservoir from which he had originally emerged. This emergence of a concentrated entity out of an undifferentiated mass, into which it is again absorbed, appears in fact to be the basic pattern and movement of Consciousness itself through all phases of manifestation. For Consciousness, inherent as a fundamental possession of the very nature of Cosmos as well as of the individual being, is the creative urge or Force within and behind all things. It is Consciousness in fact which gives Cosmic Energy a purpose, so that the action of the latter is not merely a blind and mechanical one. Although modern science has to some extent come to accept forms of consciousness apart from the personalized consciousness of man, it has not yet decided whether all consciousness as we know it is a form of mental consciousness, or whether each gradation in the evolutionary scale has its own particular and separate consciousness, or on the other hand whether these particular forms of consciousness are not really so many derivatives of a common matrix or mother-consciousness.

Perhaps we might find the solution to this emergence of Consciousness contained in the relation between the apparently inconscient mechanical Force that characterizes inert Matter and the type of consciousness that has made its appearance in Life. For if we ask why Matter and Life, when presumed to be derived from the same Consciousness, are so different, even opposed to each other in their fundamental nature, we forget that Life has been obviously created to perform an altogether different function from Matter. In fact we lose the transcendent truth in the manifest reality if we cannot see diversity springing from Oneness. The Force compressed in Matter is a Consciousness just as the life-urge is the expression of the same Consciousness. And since Life has indeed entered into Matter and is its chosen medium of expression, we are justified in considering that for the close co-ordination which takes place between them the consciousness of Matter and that of Life are closely related, if not basically one. But if in the vital functions of the human body, for example, the action of the organs and cells are entirely independent of the atoms of which they are composed, and if again these functions are totally separate from the mental consciousness, then through

what medium is the close co-ordination and subtle responses of one with another to take place unless there is 'a common consciousness through which they all can and do act in unison? And yet there is another difficulty, for if the physical consciousness apparently follows its own law and operation of working, distinct from the life-movement, then how did the freely moving plastic consciousness of Life enter into Matter? The whole logic of Creation convinces us that the Consciousness which forms the matrix and substratum of all things is also contained in essence within them. Thus it was not merely a simple entering of a new form of consciousness, but a purposive penetration in order to bring out the latent capacity contained seed-like in the individual essence. In other words, the seed of Life (which is one form of Consciousness) was, and is, already contained within Matter (which is another form of Consciousness), so that the result of Creation is ever the gradual emergence or manifestation of that which is already contained within.

This naturally brings in the question of the future of man. And in this respect modern man has at least come to realize that his own mental outlook is not by any means complete or perfected. Even he has come to presume that there is the possibility of a greater Consciousness above mind, which can bring him a far wider range of vision beyond the present human limits of perception. But it is to the actualization of this change of consciousness that man's knowledge and efforts must be primarily directed. Even regarding the universe apart from the standpoint of science, we realize that there must be an intelligence or consciousness inherent in Nature, maintaining a harmony amidst all the diversity of its disparate and conflicting forces. We see that it is only man's intrusion into this natural order that has created disharmony where there was hitherto a state of stability and balance. Yet was that erstwhile stability of Nature the final end of evolution? Obviously the advent of Mind brought something with it which stood up against and challenged the predominant reign of Nature herself. But in his opposition man was so bent on creating a more humanized world in which the wild unruly forces of Nature would be ordered and controlled, that

he ignored the possibility of a higher Will and Consciousness than his own. It is clear by now that humanity has succeeded in creating only a disharmony and unbalance from which it cannot easily extricate itself, and that Nature is merely kicking back against the plunder and misuse of her natural possessions. Unless man accepts a higher Principle, a greater Will than his own egoistic perversity, how can he hope to restore an order and harmony in the world? Man is obliged not only to observe the subtle relations and established order of Nature (if he is not to destroy the very roots on which his terrestrial life is based), but also to discover the reality and working of a higher Law towards which his mental development must eventually lead. It is in this transitional stage, however, between the lower order and the higher (or supernature), that mind has fallen into the error of regarding its own acquired power as the be-all and end-all of human life, and in believing that merely a greater mental development will itself accomplish the ideal and goal of terrestrial harmony. But at last man is compelled to see the true limitations and frontiers of mind; though he has not yet raised himself to the vision of soul-consciousness as the truth of a higher development beyond the reaches of mind.

In studying the processes of Nature's dynamic development in its wider cosmic bearings, we have come to see that human consciousness is but a form of Nature's vast sea of Consciousness—the mother-consciousness in fact out of which the individual has arisen. But since Evolution is intrinsically the emergence of greater and higher forms of consciousness, wider levels beyond the mental are the natural outcome, the progressive steps of man's terrestrial development. This brings in the question of an ultimate consciousness, and here we realize that there is in fact an innermost centre of man's being which contains the indestructible seed of that ultimate, which at the same time is the all-consciousness. This is the true indivisible and indissoluble part of his being. Unlike his mental and vital parts which are, as we have seen intradiffusible, the evolving soul or psychic being is the true individual entity of man, his spiritual personality. In order that a change of consciousness can come about, from the

present self-conscious stage of man's development, he must not only open up his constricted outlook to that wider consciousness which is at once the all-pervasive matrix and the multiple consciousness of 'otherness,' but also to that greater Consciousness beyond Cosmos, which is transcendent, pristine and quiescent. This latter is indeed the true origin of Consciousness, being an integral constituent of the Divine Nature in its self-existent Purity and absolute Perfection, and serenely detached from all cosmic activity. Yet that self-same Nature, detached and other-worldly though it seems, is also contained in the world as the central soul-seed of the individual being. Thus it is only when our normal outlook is at last centralized on this latent seed-potential of the all-consciousness, and focused from one essential point of seeing, that we begin to obtain an integral and comprehensive realization of calm amidst activity, of Oneness amidst diversity, and of expansiveness amidst constriction. It is the beginning of our openness to a God-consciousness that must eventually become the central pivot of our whole outlook and the motive force of all our endeavour.

#### IV

When we contemplate Creation, apart from the Divine Purity and Perfection beyond, we cannot but be perplexed by the seeming purposelessness and incongruity of that Descent of the Divine Nature into the inconscience and ignorance of the world. Yet we realize that this riddle, like other seemingly irreconcilable dilemmas, is only insoluble if we are content to remain limited by the narrow personal ego-view of the world. We have to step outside the petty self of our ordinary seeing, in order to discern the world and Creation from the standpoint of the Divine. A spiritual experience reveals to us that the Divine Nature in its fullness is not only Conscious Being but also Delight of existence. And these divine qualities, which constitute the essence or soul of things, thereby give us the clue to the riddle of the universe.

In evolution we have seen that it is a Conscious Force, and not merely a blind mechanical compulsion, that underlies the creative process of the world. But we must also observe that while evolution expresses an increasing emergence of Consciousness, there is at the same time an increasing release of freedom. At the lowest levels this freedom is expressed by what has been discerned as the indeterminate factor within the particle of Matter. In the freer creativity of Life there is a freedom of movement which infinitely surpasses the comparative constriction of the inanimate world. And in man we reach the infinitely wider freedom of choice that is the exclusive prerogative of the human will. This ascending freedom of action seems to be more fundamentally the unfolding of an inherent joy of existence—that utter freedom of expression of which the Delight of the Divine Nature is its native source and origin. This indeed is the fount and dynamis, the very spring-source of that eternal Becoming which reveals itself progressively through Evolution. Thus, since Delight is the true root and sap of an unfolding freedom, we can say with more conviction that the ultimate aim of the evolutionary ascent is to liberate its utter freedom and delight of being, and so fully express the Divine Nature in all its perfection. This would be the crowning glory of an emergence that had laboured, albeit circuitously and ambulatory, out of the deepest obscurity of the inconscient. It would be the culmination of a movement by which the inherent Divine Nature would remain not merely a static and otherworldly Beyond, but would become manifest in matter, life and mind, revealing itself here and now in a divinized life. This ultimate emergence of that perfect freedom, joy and delight through the evolutionary movement, would seem to be the only conceivable reason why the Divine Nature had at all taken on itself that utter self-obscuration in the depths of an Inconscience. In a sense we can see it as a masked play, a game of hide-and-seek, in which the most precious gem or central Truth has been carefully concealed and hidden. And when the individual reaches the stage when he becomes a conscious seeker in this game, how ardently he is obliged to search in order to find the secret of that

hidden gem. And furthermore, when we consider the nature of man, endowed with a self-centred will of his own, as the instrument of this divinized manifestation, it is even more apparent that without the challenge of distortion and obscurity, no endeavour towards a higher perfection would be attempted. Only by the presence of imperfection—though it seems a long and tedious obstruction—will man's efforts be stirred towards bringing out the true perfection in the world, and thus furthering the divine manifestation.

It is often asked, especially in moments of anguish, how there can be a just God when there is so much suffering and injustice in the world. But this is rather the cry of those who, overwhelmed by the prevalence of pain and suffering, dismiss the Reality of God as an effete myth or dream. To them the very appearance of so much suffering ingrained in the world denies that spiritual affirmation of the Presence of God's infinite Self-delight pervading all things. But it is clear that the whole question of pain, suffering and injustice has to be judged apart from our own emotional reactions if we are to see it aright. Pain in Nature is essentially a functional or pin-prick device that points out or exposes some weakness, fault or interference in the individual's constitution. It first appears in Life as the natural recoil of the organism, a sensitivity against intrusion or attack by that which is other than or outside itself. It is natural, therefore, that with the increase of self-consciousness, as in man, so his sensitivity to pain has become more acute and intensified; in other words, pain has become a 'problem' for man. But it is obvious that the increasing awareness of pain has itself heightened and exaggerated the whole question. For by over-expanding its intensity we come to believe that pain is fundamentally and ineradicably inherent in the very nature of things. This is because we have not yet grown out of our self-conscious awareness, and taken on something of the universal or cosmic consciousness, through which we begin to see things in a broader perspective, unhampered by the interference of the lower Nature in us. But when we leave behind our own self-centred experience of pain's intensity, we see the wide and permanent extensiveness of delight

or joy of existence, into which the phenomenon of pain is but an intrusion. We are compelled to conclude that pain is a transitory occurrence, a device or spur by which Nature ensures a certain and progressive development.

It is not by meekly accepting suffering, however, as the inevitable hall-mark and badge of our earthly existence, that we can surpass this transitional stage, but rather by heroically and calmly facing pain, and seeing in it our own constitutional weaknesses and imperfections. Pain can only be overcome in the individual through an inner calm and growing strength, and above all by an increasing knowledge that aspires for the true Divine guidance. A secondary though more stubborn difficulty may arise when we regard suffering as the punishment for the evil in the world. The moralist in us is all too ready to look upon suffering as a welcome and indispensable whip or scourge whereby human nature must ever be goaded on to Perfection. But if Perfection, as we have traced, must grow from within, then mere outer castigation can only subdue the evil but cannot eradicate it. The problem of evil can only be solved when we see in it an intentional and purposive creation, a powerful instrument that stirs the very consciousness of man to realize the good that is overshadowed by the presence of evil. Only when we are confronted with Evil do we become deeply conscious of the existence of the Goodness and Perfection which Evil thus obscures. Such is the way of Mind's inverse cognition. It is clear that just as pain had emerged with Life in response to a higher urge and destiny, so Evil has emerged with the growing self-consciousness of Mind. It is the prime factor in curbing a headstrong self-will and ego-centredness, and therefore in awakening a higher consciousness and a higher ideal in humanity. Hence, it is particularly at this self-conscious stage of development that we have the emergence of the moral or ethical man. But by accepting Evil as an indelible feature in the nature of the world we admit a permanent duality in the ultimate structure of Reality (unless of course we glibly by-pass the issue by relegating the world and the evil in it to an ultimate unreality). Evil, though it appears to oppose and negate God's infinite Goodness, is yet to

be seen as a necessary creation of God, in order to serve His ultimate Purpose of bringing out the divine Perfection hidden in that which is as yet sunken in imperfection and ignorance. Evil is an adversity or hostile force placed before man to test his integrity, his ultimate intention and the direction and goal he means to take. For the one true way of overcoming Evil is to be beyond the influence of Evil, and this means overthrowing the domination of ego around which Evil has come to centre itself. It is clear that while ever man remains in the divided mental stage he will be constantly open to and under the sway of these adverse powers, and that only beyond this phase can he wholly become a direct instrument of the Divine.

Realizing the all-extensiveness of the Divine Reality, we begin to see that it is God Himself who has really taken on the pain and the suffering of the world. It is He who has even assumed the guise of Evil to test man's self-will against the Divine Will. For all and everything is indeed the Supreme One. It is only while we are enmeshed in the multiplicity, immersed in and of the very nature of its imperfection, that we see the Perfection as something remote and otherworldly—and oneself as the all-important factor of operation. We do not readily realize that the seed of Perfection is already within us, awaiting our conscious endeavour to ripen and bring it forth as the true nature and sovereign inhabitant of our being. This is because man is balanced somewhat unsteadily between a universal Nature to which he is linked by the animal part of his being, and the Divine to whom he is inseparably joined through the soul-centre within him. And it is the lower and outer part which is the more naturally apparent and hence more impelling to him. It is thus that man's efforts have been chiefly centred on the middle course of attempting to humanize his relation between Nature here and God apparently beyond. This endeavour, however, has had the direct result of fixing the humanness and of keeping him rooted in this intermediary stage of development. This humanness is particularly seen in the recoil of the human mind and emotions in face of the apparently brutal and seemingly inhuman methods of Nature's working. Being too ready to project into a non-human world

his own fears where such emotional reactions are non-existent, he fails to see that the animal world accepts pain and slaughter as an inevitable part of the conditions of survival. Strength pitted against strength, or sagacity against sagacity is the brute law that constantly brings out and sharpens the latent capacities of creatures involved in the struggle of life. It has been termed the 'survival of the fittest,' but it is not only this; it is the testing-ground for Nature's true line of development. Yet because this destructive law is more evident to us—having a more direct and forceful effect on our sensibilities—we neglect to observe that there is another equally prevalent law, that of mutual aid or advantage. And yet one might say that this latter law is the more prevalent pattern of behaviour and even normal inter-relationship in Nature's wide domain.

From a comparative study of behaviour we can see that the human pattern of conduct as taught by ethics is a transitional stage in man's development, and the knowledge or science of ethics is but a preparatory step to the spiritual life; just as philosophy and metaphysics are preparatory to spiritual knowledge. In fact ethical knowledge may be regarded as complementary to philosophy, in so far as the latter in the field of thought aims to clarify the mental perception, while the former in the field of action sets out to purify one's acts and sensibilities and relate them to a higher Law. It is really mysticism, however, which marks the more definite turn towards the spiritual way of life. For the very aim of mysticism is not merely to attain knowledge, nor to follow a set pattern of conduct, but to attain union with the Divine. There are, however, many stages or degrees of mysticism, and even these do not constitute the full spiritual life. In fact the aim of mysticism—union with the Divine—is the very commencement of spiritual endeavour, with its unreserved dedication to the Divine Will. For union with the Divine brings us into contact with the Divine Will, and without this awareness we cannot correctly act in accordance with His Way and Purpose.

It is clear that the emergence of the Moral Conscience or the Ethical Man on the one hand, and of the man of Reason or pure rationalist on the other, are but stages culminating in the evolu-

tion of the Spiritual Man. (And the appearance of the Spiritual Man is itself but a stage in the evolution of the Gnostic Being—the truly divinized Personality.) The danger comes in when man, in reaching the stage when he rejects his old worn-out ethical codes, throws off also the Moral Force which constitutes the original link with the Divine Will. Along with morality he rejects God also, and in modern times this has inevitably left the way open for the forces of evil to come and take possession of the individual or the society. Without a higher Law to replace, as it should, the old abandoned codes of behaviour, degeneration naturally sets in. It is such complete abandonment that marks the decadent periods of cultures and societies, when civilizations have crumbled and fallen into decay.

Although ethics rightly directed is a means—even a powerful lever—whereby the individual and the collectivity can struggle out of the conflicts of life's diverting currents towards a higher harmony and universality, misdirected ethics often falls into greater errors than admittedly egoistic action is guilty of. Too often we find that ethics has merely become a cloak for ignorance and falsehood, so that what is called ego-less action is not necessarily good or rightly directed. Action which has been severed from all personal motive and interest, must necessarily be motivated by some other force or purposive will; and unless it is the true divine Will that has found an opening, such action all too readily comes under the sway of adverse forces, and other perversities and distortions, of which there are many instances. Clearly it is not a high-minded effort that is the criterion of ego-less action, but one that is directed pure and unmixed from the inner motive force of the soul. It is that alone which has the direct link with the Divine Will, and which gives the true opening to a Divine-motivated action. Only by this centralization of our being can we bring a higher Will and Law to operate through all our acts and works. And by this intimate connection and relation with the Divine we begin to live in that experience which sees beyond the dualities of pleasure and pain, suffering and ephemeral joy, to the Divine Nature and pure delight of being inherent in all things. And so we are uplifted by the vision that

even the imperfection of the world has within it that Divine Perfection which is the promise of the full expression of the Divine manifestation in life.

## V

In considering the position of the present-day scientist, we can see that the chief difficulty he is faced with is the problem of having to piece together a unified system out of the disjointed picture with which modern physics has so far presented him. He is somewhat in the position of the man who is left with a legacy of a half-built house, but without the architect's plan to enable him to complete it. Modern science, however, in concerning itself solely with building a fresh model of the universe from the no doubt solid and immovable foundations of Matter, has not taken into account the true end which scientific knowledge must take if it is to aid rightly the general advancement of man. The modern scientist, therefore, has not only to work out his future course, but also to discover the ultimate aim of man on which his own direction depends. It is true that some attempts have already been made to find a directional sign independent of the human standpoint, within the whole universal movement, which would give him a clue to the ultimate goal of things. But these we find are conflicting directions which have confused rather than clarified the issue. Thus the dynamic presentation of the evolutionary process has revealed an ever-increasing complexity of structure and function throughout the life-flow together with an increasing consciousness. The logical consequence of this is that if man maintains his present dominant position as the growing-point of this evolving movement, there are all the possibilities of his surpassing his present limited faculties and becoming a Being endowed with a larger Consciousness, of which the spiritual man is the natural forerunner. The physical scientist, on the other hand, exploring within the limited field of matter, merely finds that an ever-increasing disintegration of energy is the fundamental directional movement of the universe. From

this standpoint the running down of the universe (viewed as an energy-system) is the inevitable consequence, and presumably the higher integration of the life-movement would never be accomplished, since the very stuff and ground on which it is building would sooner or later crumble away. Since all must apparently end in dissolution there is no hope of man attaining, in the physical world at least, a permanent higher state of Being. These pessimistic conclusions regarding the transitoriness of matter and life have led many scientists to jump from matter as the sole reality of the world to mind as the all-reality and permanent spiritual factor of Existence, taking matter therefore to be a subjective experience. It is obvious, however, that both the continual disintegration of matter and the integration-process of the life-movement are, like the phenomena of growth and decay, merely partial and complementary movements within a larger whole. For although Matter in its own sphere appears to be tending towards a greater disorganization, where it meets and enters Life it is taken up into a more progressive and creative organization. And likewise where Mind enters into the movement of life a more purposive and wilful endeavour has been introduced into that otherwise indecisive creative complex. The sprawling and, as it seems, indiscriminate branching out of life is abruptly brought to the concentrated focal point of a willed endeavour in man.

But when we come to consider Mind more closely we find that although it appears to exhibit an infinite movement, giving the impression of an unlimited freedom, its motion is really that of eternal recurrence, a cyclic movement around a fixed point. Even where the comparative freedom of self-will intervenes into this mechanical movement of mind and instigates changing activity, the origin of this motive force is still that central point around which mind fixedly revolves. Here again we find that mind fails to give us a directional sign, unless we are content to regard its cyclic movement, the closed circle, as the complete symbol of freedom. It is only when we catch a glimmer of the Light beyond mind that we recognize not only a wider freedom of expansiveness, but also the true goal and way of man's striving.

Here indeed is the larger Consciousness towards which Life is circuitously groping. And here also is the pristine Truth revealing that the apparent disintegration-process of matter is but a surface and partial, phenomenon of a far deeper exchange-system of Cosmic Energy; and similarly that the incessant circling of mind can indeed be opened out at its highest levels into that which is the Truth-consciousness itself.

We now begin to see that Evolution is not merely a life-movement, a biological phenomenon, but that this latter is the surface appearance of a far vaster play—the inter-related rhythms of the Divine Nature itself. When we see the essential dynamic nature of things as a hidden joy or delight of existence, we realize that Delight is in fact the *raison d'être* of all Existence, and that without the fundamental spring of Delight no evolutionary dynamis could ensue. Thus evolution is even more than a purposive movement; it is the free and perpetual creative act of the Divine for the sheer joy of Self-creation. From this viewpoint evolution is a mutable rhythm of creative consciousness which in its essence, origin and purpose is a play of infinite delight. It is only when this integral vision of existence is fragmented into its separate segments by our analytical frame of thought that the original triune unity of this Divine Play is obliterated and submerged. By this segmentation cosmic form, likewise perceived through a narrow aperture of vision, appears only as a static entity, so that in this guise it readily takes on the appearance of a mask or a Maya, an illusion of Reality. The outer body of things detached from their origin thus seems to be but a temporary garment cloaking the inner delight which is the permanent Reality. The universe itself from this angle appears to be an eternal recurrence, a purposeless cycling through space. But this illusion of eternity is, of course, due to the fact that mind has become centred on that fixed point—the ego—and by this limiting and constricting centre distorts man's whole outlook and prevents his attainment of a wider consciousness. Eventually we find that it is only our contact with the divine delight, inherently possessed by and emanating from the soul-consciousness, that can truly express the absolute freedom of the liberated spirit.

By the awakening of our dynamic soul-centre or psychic being we can experience the pure Divine Nature and its unmixed delight of being, a positive Truth and Light instead of the vacillating uncertainty that springs from the divided nature of mind. By stirring those hidden depths and awakening that all-embracing Consciousness we enter into that living Presence, which alone can give us the joyous sense of existence founded on a profound and unshakable Calm. Identifying ourselves with that dynamic centre, and through it finding and surrendering ourselves to the Supreme whose seed of Grace we are in our essential being, we break ourselves completely from the petty egoistic life. At the same time our eyes are opened to the true values of things and their proper relation. For from that positive unifying centre all dualities embrace each other in the intimate oneness of Spirit, so that even in the darkest moments of adversity we realize the Divine Presence sustaining us and carrying us onward. We must be wary, however, of letting this intimate experience of Oneness blind us to the constant necessity of maintaining our proper outer action and function in the world. For the realization of the Divine Presence must give us not only an unshaken faith, but also the knowledge, discrimination and insight to perceive the necessary outer action required of us. Therefore we say that spiritual knowledge, culminating in a soul-knowledge and God-consciousness, must be the basis of man's future action if he is to accomplish God's Will in the world.

We can now realize something of the fullness of the spiritual Reality within the cosmic movement. In its utter extensiveness it appears to us as the sea of Light, above mind, from which man from time immemorial has received his inspirations and direct revelations of Truth. In its concentrated form it is the as yet immature seed of Light secreted at the very centre of man's being. As long as it is obscured and veiled or suppressed by the highly developed powers of mind, we only become aware of that inner presence when some direct flash or inner voice breaks through the impenetrableness of the being. But it is only when the spiritual Light from above can find an open and responsive soul here below that a more permanent and fixed contact can

be established between the obscurity of the lower Nature and the Divine Nature seeking to manifest here on earth. It is this accomplishment that will bring the full dynamic Light of the Divine, or Supermind, into the earth-life and nature. And by this Power the emerging soul-personality can henceforth grow into the Gnostic Being, establishing a new, divine order in the world in place of the old natural and human orders. Such is the great future open to man—a future that is both a challenge (to the present reign of ego) and a sacrifice (of all that has been built around the purely human relation and outlook on the world). Will man cling obstinately to his narrowness and reject the challenge and the sacrifice, or will he reveal his true inherent greatness by consciously accepting them? Whatever the choice man makes he must clearly understand that by obstructing the advent of the divine order he but imperils his own survival. For the real question that remains is whether man's own will can prevail against God's.

There are two essential considerations to observe at this juncture (although the precise nature of the spiritual transformation and its process yet remain to be considered). One is the establishment of the soul-personality in the individual—apart from and in spite of the mental power and its complex ramifications in life. The other is that the soul being must become firmly rooted in the earth-nature itself. In other words, the physical consciousness, at present dominated and weighed down by the active vital and prevailing mental energies, must be awakened to a susceptibility that will respond directly to the power of the Spirit. And at the same time the soul itself must enter into (not cringe from) the physical consciousness, thus preparing the latter to become the true basis of the soul's further growth and development. It may be that even the life-energy and mind-power in their present organized state, may need to be highly modified, and their pretentious claims and obstinacy curtailed, in the struggle to establish the soul's link firmly with earth. At least the struggle must ensue until the seeds of the spiritual evolution are fertilely sown on earth. So that more than anything else, it is for this soul-preparedness and openness that we must first aspire. 7



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