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# THE WORLD'S UNBORN SOUL

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE  
DELIVERED BEFORE THE  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD  
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BY

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## THE WORLD'S UNBORN SOUL

WERE I to express adequately my feelings at the honour this ancient University has done me by electing me to this newly founded Chair of Eastern Religions and Ethics, I should be tempted to become somewhat elaborate and perhaps tedious. Permit me therefore to express my gratitude to you with a plain 'Thank you'.

Six years ago I spent a few months in this University. I was, however, a stranger within its gates, in it but not of it. I therefore appreciate the honour of being received into this fellowship of men and women united in their loyalty to the supreme ideal of truth and in their resolution to practise it for the welfare of humanity. When I look at the names of my colleagues and think of the learning and scholarship they represent, I realize my own limitations and can only plead for all the indulgence which they can offer and I very much need.

### I

To attempt to understand one's age is an undertaking full of difficulties. No one who is in it can take a detached view of it. However, as rational beings, we cannot help asking what modern life in all its intense activity and rapid change signifies, what the sense of it all is, for, as Socrates tells us, the noblest of all investigations is the study of what man should be and what he should pursue.<sup>1</sup>

Human history is not a series of secular happenings; it is a meaningful process, a significant development. Those who look at it from the outside are carried away by the wars and battles, the economic disorders and the political upheavals, but below in the depths is to be found the truly majestic drama, the tension between the limited effort of man and the sovereign purpose of the universe. Man cannot rest in an unsolved discord. He must seek for harmony, strive for adjustment. His progress is marked by a series of integrations, by the formation of more and more comprehensive harmonies. When any particular integration is found inadequate to the new conditions, he breaks it down and advances to a larger whole. While civilization is always on the move, certain periods stand out clearly marked as periods of intense cultural change. The sixth century B.C., the transition

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, 487.

from antiquity to the Middle Ages and from the Middle Ages to Modern times in Europe, were such periods. None of these, however, is comparable to the present tension and anxiety which are world wide in character and extend to every aspect of human life. We seem to feel that the end of one period of civilization is slowly drawing into sight.

For the first time in the history of our planet its inhabitants have become one whole, each and every part of which is affected by the fortunes of every other. Science and technology, without aiming at this result, have achieved the unity. Economic and political phenomena are increasingly imposing on us the obligation to treat the world as a unit. Currencies are linked, commerce is international, political fortunes are interdependent. And yet the sense that mankind must become a community is still a casual whim, a vague aspiration, not generally accepted as a conscious ideal or an urgent practical necessity moving us to feel the dignity of a common citizenship and the call of a common duty. Attempts to bring about human unity through mechanical means, through political adjustments, have proved abortive. It is not by these devices, not at any rate by them alone, that the unity of the human race can be enduringly accomplished.

The destiny of the human race as of the individual depends on the direction of its life forces, the lights which guide it, and the laws that mould it. There is a region beyond the body and the intellect, one in which the human spirit finds its expression in aspiration, not in formulas, a region which Plato enters when he frames his myths. It is called the soul of a being, the determining principle of body and mind. In the souls of men to-day there are clashing tides of colour and race, nation and religion, which create mutual antagonisms, myths, and dreams that divide mankind into hostile groups. The average general mind is respectful of the *status quo* and disinclined to great adventures, in which the security and isolation of the past have to be given up. It is not quite convinced by the moral collapse of the present system reposing on a ring of national egoisms held in check by mutual fear and hesitation, by ineffective treaties and futile resolutions of international tribunals. 'Do you imagine', asks Plato in the *Republic*, 'that political constitutions spring from a tree or a rock and not from the dispositions of the citizens which turn the scale and draw all else in their direction? . . . The constitutions are as the men are and grow out of their char-

acters.'<sup>1</sup> A society can be remade only by changing men's hearts and minds. However much we may desire to make all things new, we cannot get away from our roots in the old. Let us go for some distance into the past and trace the ideas which rule the present.

## II

The moulding influences of modern civilization, the spirit of science and rationalism, secular humanism and the sovereign state can be traced to the period of classical antiquity.

1. The Greeks laid the foundations of natural science for the European world. To analyse and explore, to test and prove all things in the light of reason, was the ambition of the Greek mind. No part of life is excluded from criticism by the dictates of the State or the scruples of the Scriptures. The Greeks were the first to attempt to make life rational, to ask what is the right life for man and to apply the principles of reason and order to the chaos of primitive beliefs. Socrates warned us against the unexamined life and subjected the unanalysed slogans and catchwords of his time to careful scrutiny. He had firm faith that it is the nature of man to do right and walk straight. Human nature is fundamentally good and the spread of enlightenment will abolish all wrong. Vice is only a miss, an error. We can learn to become good. Virtue is teachable.

Plato tells us that the universal or the general idea determines the nature of a particular individual and has greater reality than the latter. The philosopher is one who seeks to escape from the realm of the transient and contemplates the world of real being freed from all confusion and error, which infect the objects of everyday experience. The world of ideas is the only realm of certainty in which man can dwell secure, freed from opinion and probability. The most obvious example of such truth is to be seen in the general propositions of mathematics.

2. Yet the Greek could never forget that his main concern was with man in his full concrete reality. His bodily passions should be given free play, his mental powers full scope. Every side of his nature should be developed so as to produce a harmony in which no part tyrannizes over the rest. Here is a definition of happiness attributed to Solon and approved by Herodotus. 'He is whole of limb, a stranger to disease, free from misfortune, happy in his children and comely to look upon. If in addition to all this he ends his life well, he is of a truth the man

<sup>1</sup> viii. 544. See Jowett's E.T.

of whom thou art in search, the man who may rightly be termed happy.'<sup>1</sup> The Greeks were not famous for their religious genius or moral fervour. We do not come across any hunger for the eternal or any passionate indignation against injustice. The main religion of the Greeks was the worship of the Olympian gods, who were conceived on the analogy of man. Dionysus, Aphrodite, Hermes, Artemis, each of them represents some quality of man. If we measure the nature of a religion by the sense of mystery it induces in its followers, the mythology of the Greeks is not religion of a high quality. The Sophists questioned the right of what religion taught to control man's conduct. It was at best a human convention.<sup>2</sup>

Religious beliefs, however, were useful for political purposes. Some god or other guards every city with special care. The religious festivals were open to the Greeks and closed to others. If Socrates was executed and Anaxagoras exiled for attacking traditional beliefs, it was because of their unpatriotic impiety. It was more political oppression than religious persecution. If the Sophists did not for long subvert the piety of the ancients, if Epicurus admitted the existence of the gods, even while he denied them any part in the government of the world, if the Stoics with the most pronounced rationalism still employed the old religious dynamic, it was because they knew the social value of religion.<sup>3</sup>

It is true that in Pythagoras and Plato, the Orphics and the Neoplatonists mystic tendencies were found, but these tendencies were by no means representative of the Greek spirit. Pindar and Pericles, Thucydides and Socrates, who represent the Greek genius at its best, with their visions of art and science, with their conceptions of civic life and aspiration, were essentially humanist thinkers.<sup>4</sup> The mystery religions believed in the

<sup>1</sup> 1-32 Rawlinson's E.T., vol. i, p. 16; see also Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 1360 b.

<sup>2</sup> Protagoras expresses clearly the easy view of the Sophists: 'I do not know whether God exists or does not exist, nor what is his nature; there are many obstacles to such knowledge, the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of man's life', *Fr.* 4.

<sup>3</sup> The essentially subordinate part played by religion in the Greek view can be illustrated by a reference to the doctrine of future life. Even Plato on occasions felt uncertain about life after death, whether it is immortality or dreamless sleep (*Republic* ii. 363, iii. 387). Aristotle is not clear on the subject, for he suggests that when a man is dead, neither good nor evil affects him any more (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1115. a. 25). The Stoics denied personal immortality though on occasions they affirmed the survival of the soul till the general conflagration. The Greeks played with the beliefs of future life, though they were little affected by them.

<sup>4</sup> 'Supposing Plato and Pindar to have a vein of Orphism and Pythagoras

deification of man, and the typical Greek had no use for it. Pindar writes: 'Two things alone there are that cherish life's bloom to its utmost sweetness amid the fair flowers of wealth—to have good success and to win therefor fair fame. Seek not to be a God; if the portion of these honours falls to thee, thou hast already all. The things of mortals best befit mortality.'<sup>1</sup> There are passages in Plato which ask us to mistrust our nature, to see in it an incurable taint and exhort us to live in the world of the unseen, but in them Plato is not voicing the Greek spirit.<sup>2</sup>

3. Devotion to the city-state filled the spiritual vacuum in the Greek consciousness. The city was the unit of Greek society and claimed the devotion of its citizens. No Greek city was willing to submit to the leadership of another.<sup>3</sup> The funeral oration of Pericles proclaims service of the state as the highest duty. Since each city had a consciousness of its own superiority, the Greeks failed to develop a larger loyalty towards a union of the whole Greek world. They could not organize and act together, and their lives were spent in violent conflicts of the mutually repellent autonomies. Greek civilization came to an end on account of its adherence to the false religion of patriotism.<sup>4</sup> While it gave Europe the habit of disinterested pursuit of knowledge,<sup>5</sup> it also left her a negative legacy of the untenability of holding up patriotism as the highest virtue. Rome, which succeeded Greece, was powerful for a time, but she lacked the spiritual unity which could bind her different provinces. Each

queer ideas on numbers, supposing Aeschylus to be touched with mysticism and Euripides with mysticism and morbidity, the student of the Greek genius has a right to disregard their peculiarities, if he feels that he has his hand on an essential quality in Hellenism and that they are inconsistent with it.' Livingstone, *The Greek Genius and its Meaning to us*, 2nd ed., 1915, p. 21; see also p. 22.

<sup>1</sup> *Isthm.* 4. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Laus*, 918. Rohde says in *Psyche* (1925), E.T., Chapter XIII, that the Platonic spirit is an alien phenomenon in Greece. Sir Richard Livingstone writes: 'Though in a thousand ways Plato is a Greek of the Greeks, in all that is most distinctive in his thought, he is a heretic.' *The Greek Genius and Its Meaning to us*, 2nd ed., 1915, p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> Grote writes: 'In respect to political sovereignty complete disunion was among their most cherished principles. The only source of supreme authority to which a Greek felt respect and attachment was to be sought within the walls of his own city.' *A History of Greece*, vol. iii, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> 'This state worship was the spiritual disease that Hellenism died of.' A. J. Toynbee, *Essays in Honor of Professor Gilbert Murray*, 1936, p. 308.

<sup>5</sup> 'Men differ from beasts and the race of the Hellenes from barbarians in that they are better educated for thought and for its expression in words.' *Isocrates*, xv. 293.

of them had its own religious forms and practices and despised those of its neighbours, and in the hour of her trial localism prevailed and Rome failed. By the time the old tradition broke down the new current of Christianity had set in.

### III

The vital urge to the development of medieval culture which attained high and beautiful expression in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was derived from the Judaic-Christian conception of life. Some Hellenists are inclined to suggest that this movement is an unhappy interruption of human progress. It is said that Europe would have been a very different place, more humane and peace loving, less given to national and racial feuds, cultural and religious strife, if the essential rationality and cosmopolitanism of the Stoics had been allowed to leaven the European world, if the persecutions of Marcus Aurelius had exterminated the Christian creed. Such speculations are futile, for history has taken a different course. Nature obviously had a different intention.

Rome's military conquests brought her into contact with other communities and her spiritual poverty exposed her to foreign religious influences. After a period of struggle, Christianity won. Even as Justinian's closure of the schools of Athens defined the end of the ancient world, the conversion of Constantine gave an official recognition to the victory of Christianity. While retaining the Jewish beliefs in a living God and passion for righteousness, it absorbed Greek thought and Roman traditions.

1. Its two chief contributions to European thought are an insistence on the insufficiency of the intellectual and the importance of the historical. Both Judaism and Christianity take their stand on revelation. While for the most spiritual of Greek thinkers, God was the 'Idea of the Good'. 'The First Mover', 'The Ruling Principle', ~~Reason or Logos~~, for the Jews and the Christians, God is a supreme person who reveals his will to his lawgivers and prophets. Christians believe in addition that God took the form of man and led a human life on earth. Again, while the greatest of Hellenic thinkers had no conception of history as a purposive process with a direction and a goal, but believed it to be a cyclic movement, the Jews had faith in an historical fulfilment. The Jewish consciousness lived in the intense expectation of some great decisive event which will

be the definitive solution of the historical problem. The Messianic idea, which is the determining factor in Jewish history, survived in Christianity. The Christian view represents a blend of the Greek and the Jewish conceptions of the historical. In the works of St. Augustine, who stood at the meeting-point of the two worlds, the Classical and the Christian, we find the struggle between the two conceptions. When he saw the great catastrophe happening before his eyes, the decay and death of the Roman Empire, the end of what seemed the most stable structure the world had seen, he pointed to the transcendent reality of God, the one changeless being above all the chances and changes of life. This is the central idea in his *Confessions*. The Jewish emphasis on the historical and the Christian doctrine of incarnation are difficult to reconcile with the absolute and non-historical character of the Godhead. The vigorous intellectual life of the Middle Ages was devoted to the explication of this problem and the finding of credible justifications for the other doctrines of the faith. In the theological writings of Thomas Aquinas we find an impressive attempt to build a system of Christian theology with the aid of the cold logic of the Aristotelians. In spite of these great attempts, however, the problem still remains unsolved.<sup>1</sup>

The very completeness of the edifice of thought raised by the Middle Ages left little room for undiscovered facts and paralysed thought.

2. When righteousness is practised, not for its own sake but because it is the will of God, it is practised with a fervour and a fanaticism that are sometimes ungodly. When the will of God is known, we feel driven to pass it on and think it intolerable that it should be disobeyed. 'The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?'<sup>2</sup> While such a belief gives definiteness, conviction, and urgency to the ethical message, which no

<sup>1</sup> A great Russian theologian, Nicholas Berdyaev, refers to this difficulty thus: 'According to the dogma of the Church and its prevailing philosophy, the possibility of a movement or of an historical process in the depths of divine life would appear to be incompatible with the Christian consciousness. There exists, indeed, a wide-spread Christian doctrine which denies that the principle of movement and of tragic destiny can affect the nature of the Divine Being. But I am deeply convinced that the Christian doctrine of the immobility and inertia of God and the Absolute, and of the effectiveness of the historical principle only in the creative and relative world that differs essentially from the Absolute is a purely exoteric and superficial doctrine. And it ignores what is most inward and mysterious, the esoteric truth implicit in the doctrine of the divinity.' *The Meaning of History*, E.T., 1936, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Amos iii. 8.

abstract logic could give, it at the same time shuts the door against all change and progress.

The Jews first invented the myth that only one religion could be true. As they however conceived themselves to be the 'Chosen People',<sup>1</sup> they did not feel a mission to convert the whole world. The Jews gave to Christianity an ethical passion and a sense of superiority; the Greeks gave the vague aspirations and mysteries of the spirit a logical form, a dogmatic setting; the Romans with their practical bent and love of organization helped to institutionalize the religion. Their desire for world dominion transformed the simple faith of Jesus into a fiercely proselytizing creed. After the time of Constantine, authorities, clerical and secular, displayed systematic intolerance towards other forms of religious belief, taking shelter under the words 'He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth'.

Add to this the idea that the Kingdom is not of this world and Augustine's distinction of the Two Cities and the world becomes a ~~fleeting show, beauty a snare, and pleasure a temptation.~~ The highest virtue is abstinence and mortification. 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' Under the shadow of this great renunciation social impulses withered and intellectual curiosity slackened.

3. The doctrine of the state as a Divine creation was supported by Jesus, the apostles, and the Primitive Church. 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.' 'The powers that be are ordained of God.' It was one of the elementary duties of the Christians to pray for princes and other powers. The supremacy of the state obtained religious support.

The conquest of the Romans imposed unity on a large part of Europe and gave it a characteristic civilization with its laws and languages. Roman law still forms the basis of the codes of several European countries. Before the close of the fifth century the Roman Empire of the West had fallen before the arms of the northern invaders, and though a shadow of Rome's ancient power and name still survived at Constantinople, Europe had lost its former political unity. But the idea of cultural unity was sustained to some extent by the Holy Roman Empire. Though there were local and feudal anarchy and a good deal

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy xiv. 2.

of fighting in the Middle Ages, her greatest representatives, Charlemagne and Otto, Barbarossa and Hildebrand, Aquinas and Dante, believed in one Church and one Empire. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 smashed up the last remains of the Roman Empire in the East and ushered in a new era.

While Christianity gave to Europe a sure sense of the reality of the unseen, which holds the key to the destiny of man and the clue to right conduct, and thus redeemed even the intellectual and artistic pagans from an easy, self-centred, and self-complacent superficiality, it imposed on Europe religious bigotry, which stifled free intellectual inquiry and fostered narrowness and obscurantism. But people whose physical and mental powers are unexhausted cannot remain content with such an order. The elements of a freer life gradually asserted themselves. Though the Middle Ages had lived in the shadow of antiquity and were more concerned with its forms than the spirit, still through a gradual inward ripening of the mind, the easy and natural thought of the ancient Greeks, their exactitude of conception and experiment, attracted attention. The scholastic movement itself prepared the way for a rationalist revival. The greatest minds had a perception of the interrelations of the divine and the human. Dante tells us that divine providence has set before man two ends, blessedness of this life, which consists in the exercise of his natural powers, and blessedness of eternal life, which consists in the fruition of the sight of God. Religion and humanism are not opposites. Each needs the characteristic gifts and graces of the other. This recognition prepared the way for the belief in the perfectibility of man and society which was later raised to the rank of a dogma.

#### IV

The Renaissance is the great age of disintegration and re-birth; when for good or ill the organic unity of life of the Middle Ages, derived from its religious orientation, passed away, and the new world of Copernicus and Columbus, of Luther and Calvin, of Galileo and Descartes, of Machiavelli and Henry VIII came to birth. The history of the last four hundred years in Europe has been a simultaneous growth in political freedom, economic prosperity, intellectual advancement, and social reform, but it has also been a slow and sure decay of traditional

religion, morality, and social order. If in one sense it has been a progress, in another it has been a reaction, marked by a departure from the authentic foundations of life. A new civilization, based on the three Greek ideals of rationalist philosophy, humanist ethics, and nationalist politics, has been growing up.

1. The Renaissance gave back to Europe the free curiosity of the Greek mind, its eager search for first principles as well as the Roman's large practicality and sense for the ordering of life in harmony with social utility. These were pursued with a passion, a seriousness, an almost religious ardour, which Europe acquired during the long centuries of medieval religious discipline.

Under the influence of the new movement aiming at a complete rehabilitation of the human spirit, science started on its unfettered career. The sky changed with Copernicus and the habitable world with the explorers. The scientific and technological achievements cast the world into a closely knit unity and modern history slowly grew into the stature of world history.

Philosophical thought was moulded by the prestige of science. The reassertion of the mental habits of the Graeco-Roman world dates from Descartes, who rejects all that his intellect cannot include. He tries to put an end to the capricious multifariousness of opinion by the practice of the critical method. Truth is contained only in that which can be recognized clearly and distinctly. What is unclear and mysterious is not true. Truth lies where all men think alike, in judgements of universal validity. Mathematics is the great example of ideal truth. Spinoza, like Kant, aimed at a strictly scientific metaphysics and clothed his thoughts in the form of geometrical propositions. Metaphysics should be strict science and contain no arbitrariness. 'Truth', says Spinoza, 'would be eternally hidden from the human race, had not mathematics, which deals, not with ends, but with the nature and properties of figures, shown to man another norm of truth.'<sup>1</sup> So he treats of God, understanding and human passions, as though they were circles and triangles. Nature becomes an enormous silent machine which is indifferent to the values of man. Even if we call the former by the name of God, it does not come nearer the human being. 'For the reason and will which constitute God's essence must differ by the breadth of all heaven from our reason and will

<sup>1</sup> *Ethics*, pt. 1, Appendix.

have nothing in common with them, except the name; as little in fact, as the dog star has in common with the dog, the barking animal.' Leibniz breaks up the one world of Spinoza into an infinitely large number of parts which move according to eternally existing laws and have neither the right nor the power to alter by a hair's breadth, the order which is independent of them. Kant raises the question whether a science of metaphysics is possible with a logical structure like that of the well-established mathematical and natural sciences. These latter have acquired a scientific character on account of the universal rules, the synthetic *a priori* judgements, which they employ. Since these rules are applicable only within the limits of possible experience, metaphysics, which aims at the transcendent, is an impossibility. The passion for law, for rule, dominates Kant's philosophy. Rule expresses truth and justifies conduct. An action is right if we so act that the principle of it can be made a general rule. Hegel does not ask whether it is necessary for metaphysics to be a science, but strengthens the belief in the autonomy of reason. For him philosophy is the self-development of the spirit, its natural and necessary unfolding.

The English school of empiricism would get rid of all ideas which do not correspond to actual facts, of all propositions which cannot be tested by experience. Locke wished to rid philosophy of futile speculations into the inscrutable. In his hands even natural science becomes uncertain. 'In physical things', says he, 'scientific knowledge will still be out of our reach.' Sense is the only way of knowing, and it cannot give us certainty. Though his intellectual successor Berkeley imparted a theological impulse to his empiricism and admitted the reality of spirits, human and divine, Hume developed the logical implications of the empirical attitude when he left us with a world of impressions and ideas about whose origin and significance we know next to nothing. The successors of the rationalist and empirical schools to-day are dominated by the scientific methods. Some of the recent writings of realists remind us of Humian analysis and scepticism. A contemporary German thinker, Husserl, says that it is his desire 'to discover a radical beginning of a philosophy which, to repeat the Kantian phrase, will be able to present itself as science', 'to furnish philosophy with a scientific beginning'.<sup>1</sup> The infallibility of the Church

<sup>1</sup> *Ideas*, by E. Husserl, E.T. by W. R. Boyce Gibson, pp. 27 and 30 (1931). See also Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, 1936.

had yielded to the infallibility of scientific reason. As it in its turn seems to be failing us, we are in a tide of reaction against it. The different philosophical tendencies of voluntarism, pragmatism, and vitalism are indications of the transition from the predominantly rationalistic period of human development.

2. To conserve the ancient wisdom and practice the ancient virtue was the ambition of the humanist thinkers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They aimed at an escape from a life regulated by rigid ecclesiastical tradition into one of joyous freedom and unfettered spontaneity. Earthly life becomes the object of all striving and action. The critical spirit helps us to see the relativism of all moral codes. We refuse to be satisfied by mere statements about right and wrong, but ask for their reasons. We long for freedom from convention, mistaking it for real freedom. Conventions are said to be mere inhibitions and habits an orthodoxy. A cold dissection of the deepest things men have lived by ends in libertarian experiments in morals. Intellectual and artistic refinement places no check on brutal lusts and savage passions. The faith that the spread of reason will abolish all irrational outbursts has disappeared. There is more violence, oppression, and cruelty than there used to be. Man tries to rule his conduct by means external to himself, by technique and not self-control. Morality as an individual regeneration, an inner transformation, is not accepted.

Under the influence of the democratic conception of the right of all individuals as members of the society to the full life and development of which they are individually capable, the old landed economy of feudalism broke up, and the new money economy with the beginnings of economic individualism and the promise of modern industrialism developed. The release of the middle classes, which was effected by the abolition of privilege and feudalism, was succeeded by the claim of the working classes to a fair share in the wealth they produce. Liberal attempts to free the workers from their ignorance, isolation, and poverty by gradual humanitarian legislation and increased taxation, seemed to be very slow, and a new programme of abolishing capitalism, which is said to be the root cause of all political and social evils, by persuasion and constitutional methods if possible and by violence and revolution if necessary, became more popular. Everywhere a tendency towards state absolutism has been growing. The pressure of society on the individual is not less effective to-day than it was in the days of

barbarism. The view that social discipline is intended to assist the development of the innate goodness in man which he does not altogether abandon even when his nature is heated by passion, finds little support. Coercion becomes justified both within and without the state.

The influence of the Renaissance aided the breaking of the power of the Papacy, in the establishment of Protestantism, and the right of free inquiry. Luther put the Bible in place of the infallible Church and held it to be an unerring expression of God's relation to man. The Reformation insists on the right of the individual reason to determine the sense of the inspired scripture. Though in theory the interpretation of the Bible was left to the individual thinking, in practice the members of the different Churches were required to accept their varying interpretations of the contents of the Bible. Each Church thought itself to be the special depository of the only true exposition of the perfect will of God.

From the philosophical side, attacks were made on the traditional religion. If the world is an expression of law, if the universe is mechanical in character, God is necessary perhaps to set up the machinery which can work of itself. He is only the architect of the world. The theism of the Middle Ages lapses into deism. If the machine can work of itself it can also set itself up and start working.

While the philosophers of the Enlightenment and German Idealism attempt to reconcile Christian truth with the findings of reason, Schleiermacher sets out to prove that it is in conformity with the conditions of religious consciousness. Ritschl tries to establish that it is consistent with the cultural ethos. Thus Christian theology, which was once based on a sovereign act of God transcending all human powers of comprehension, gets steadily rationalized and is recommended on the ground that it can be reconciled with scientific truth and ethical values. The latter thus become more important than the revelation itself. The new spirit, which questioned the conventional forms of religion and the mediation of the priesthood between God and man, could not fail to go forward and question the scripture itself, and then all sense of the supernatural.

Humanism is the religion of the intellectuals to-day. Most of us who profess to be religious do so by habit, sentiment, or inertia. We accept our religion even as we do the Bank of England or the illusion of progress. We profess faith in God

but are not inclined to act on it. We know the shapes of thought but do not have the substance of conviction. When men have lost the old faith and have not yet found anything solid to put in its place, superstition grows. The long-starved powers of the soul reassert their claims and shift the foundations of our mind. The weak, the wounded, and the overstrained souls turn to psycho-analysis which deals with the problems of the soul, under the guise of rationality and with the prestige of science. It tells us that man is only rational in part. The authoritarian creeds, which take us back to pre-Renaissance days, appeal to those who find the life of pure reason so utterly disconcerting. Revivals overtake us and we yield to them in the faith that something is better than nothing. The age is distracted between new knowledge and old belief, between the cheap godless naturalism of the intellectuals and the crude revivals of the fundamentalists. As piety in any real sense has been effectively destroyed for large numbers, the national state absorbs all their energies and emotions, social, ethical, and religious.

3. The state which is the most powerful organization is least hampered by inner scruples or outer checks. Man in the community is at least half civilized, but the state is still primitive, essentially a huge beast of prey. We have no strong public opinion, or effective international law to restrain the predatory state. The fear of defeat or of a disastrous break-down is all that prevents an outburst.

Nations have become mysterious symbols to whose protection we rally as savages to fetishes. They claim to be enduring entities each sufficient to itself and independent of the rest. They are trained to believe that there would be no impoverishment of the world if other nations perished and they themselves left intact. Speaking of Athens, Pericles says: 'We of the present generation have made our City in all respects most self sufficient to meet the demands of peace or war.'<sup>1</sup> If the modern French, German, or American is sincerely convinced of his own immeasurable superiority to the 'lesser breeds without the law' and proclaims himself as the origin and consummation of world civilization, he is only the spiritual heir of the Greeks and the Jews. While Plato knew that patriotism was not enough, that it was something of a pious fraud, he yet commended it on grounds of social expediency.<sup>2</sup> For him barbarians were enemies by nature, and it was not improper to wage war on them even

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides ii, E. T. by Marchant.

<sup>2</sup> *Republic* 414 b.

to the point of enslaving or extirpating them.<sup>1</sup> The influence of the Jews, who were intensely conscious of being not as other men are, helped to strengthen the sacred egoism of the nation. Paul reaffirmed the dichotomy when he divided 'vessels of mercy afore prepared into glory' from 'vessels of wrath fitted to destruction' on the basis of religion and patriotism used it for its purposes. The Greek and the Barbarian, the Jew and the Gentile, damnation and grace, Nordic and non-Nordic have all a family likeness. Only the other day did we hear a great leader declare that 'Germany is our religion', the glory of the blood and soil of 'eternal Germany' is the sole purpose of existence justifying any sacrifice of individual liberty and thought. These resounding appeals for national hegemony and racial domination have a common origin and accent.

## V

What then is the position to-day? Uncertainty, a fundamental agnosticism, a sense of uneasiness, that we are hastening confusedly to unknown ends. In his famous cartoon, *The Twentieth Century Looks at the Future*, Max Beerbohm depicts a tall, well-dressed, somewhat stooping figure looking out over a wide landscape at a large question mark which hangs over the distant horizon, like a malignant star. The future is incalculable. We do not know what we want. In previous periods men had a clear conception of the goal they were aiming at. It is either a life of reason or a triumph of religion or a return to old perfection. We are to-day aware of the void and the profaneness of our life, but not of a way of escape from it. Some advise us to retain our respect for reason and submit to fate. Others tell us that the task is too much for man and we are only to wait for a saviour who alone can set right the disorder in the heart of things. Some gaze back in spirit to the mellow vistas of the nineteenth century of industrial prosperity, colonial expansion, and liberal humanitarianism, honestly persuaded that the world was better off under the guidance of men of birth and breeding, and are prepared to fight a last battle for authority and order. A vision of the medieval order with church and theocracy, militarism, and despotism for its principles is sometimes held up before us. All these efforts are irrelevant to our times. They are like doses of morphia which give us temporary relief but cause permanent injury to the health. Neither a contented fatalism

<sup>1</sup> *Republic* v. 470 c-471 a.

nor religious expectancy nor reversion to the past can give meaning to a world which is in search of its soul. The slow dying of the old order need not fill us with despair as it is the law of all nature that life comes only by death. Every civilization is an experiment in life, an essay in creation, to be discarded when done with. With the infinite patience of one who has endless time and limitless resources at her absolute command, nature slowly, hesitatingly, often wastefully, goes on her triumphant way. She takes up an idea, works out its form till, at the moment of its perfect expression, it reveals some fundamental flaw, and then breaks it up again to begin anew a different pattern. Yet in some way the wisdom and spirit of all past forms enter into those which succeed them and inspire the gradual evolution of the purpose of history.

The present profound *malaise* is really a form of growing pains. The new world of which the old is in travail is still like an embryo. The components are all there; what is lacking is the integration, the completeness which is organic consciousness, the binding together of the different elements, making them breathe and come to life. We cannot live by instinct, habit, or emotion. We need a rational faith to sustain a new order of life and rescue us from our mental fog and spiritual anxiety.

The great periods of human history are marked by a widespread access of spiritual vitality derived from the fusion of national cultures with foreign influences. If we take Judaism we find that Abraham came from Mesopotamia and Joseph and Moses from Egypt. Later, Judaism shows the influence of Hellenism. Asia Minor and Egypt exercised considerable influence over the Greek development. The creative genius of the medieval world came from Palestine. The transition to the modern world was marked by the recovery of the Ancient. In times of trouble we draw the profoundest inspiration from sources outside us, from the newly recovered past or the achievement of men under different skies. So, perhaps, the civilizations of the East, their religions and ethics, may offer us some help in negotiating difficulties that we are up against. The only past known to the Europeans emerging from the Middle Ages was the Biblical, and the Graeco-Roman and their classics happen to be the subjects studied in the great universities founded in that period. Now that we have the whole world for our cultural base, the process of recovery and training in classics cannot cease with listening to the voices of Isaiah and Paul,

Socrates and Cicero. That would be an academic error, a failure of perspective. There are others also who have participated in the supreme adventure of the ages, the prophets of Egypt, the sages of China, and the seers of India, who are guide-posts disclosing to us the course of the trail. Of the living non-European civilizations, the chief are the Islamic, the Chinese, and the Hindu. The Islamic has the same historical background as Judaism and Christianity, which is well known in the West. The humanist civilization of China was considerably affected by the religious conceptions of India, especially the Buddhist. Religion, however, has been the master passion of the Hindu mind, a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path, the presupposition and basis of their civilization, the driving force of their culture, and the expression—in spite of its tragic failures, inconsistencies, divisions, and degradations—of their life in God. In the West, even in the most sympathetic quarters, Hindu thought is in general a subject for respectful but in every sense distant homage, not of living concern. The institution of this Chair by the far-sighted generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Spalding, and the unprecedented appointment of an Asiatic to an Oxford Chair are motivated, I take it, by a desire to lift Eastern thought from its sheltered remoteness and indicate its enduring value as a living force in shaping the soul of the modern man.

## VI

1. Hinduism adopts a rationalist attitude in the matter of religion. It tries to study the facts of human life in a scientific spirit, not only the obvious facts, the triumphs and defeats of men who sleep in spiritual unconsciousness, but the facts of life's depths. Religion is not so much a revelation to be attained by us in faith as an effort to unveil the deepest layers of man's being and get into enduring contact with them.

The religions of the world can be distinguished into those which emphasize the object and those which insist on experience. For the first class religion is an attitude of faith and conduct directed to a power without. For the second it is an experience to which the individual attaches supreme value. The Hindu and the Buddhist religions are of this class. For them religion is salvation. It is more a transforming experience than a notion of God. Real religion can exist without a definite conception of the deity but not without a distinction between the spiritual

and the profane, the sacred and the secular. Even in primitive religion with its characteristic phenomena of magic, we have religion, though not a belief in God. In theistic systems the essential thing is not the existence of the deity, but its power to transform man. Bodhi, or enlightenment, which Buddha attained and his followers aim at, is an experience. Perfect insight (*sambodhi*) is the end and aim of the Buddhist eightfold path. There are systems of Hindu thought like the Sāṅkhya and the Jaina which do not admit God but affirm the reality of the spiritual consciousness. There are theists like Rāmānuja for whom the spiritual consciousness, though not God himself, is the only way in which God can be known. All, however, are agreed in regarding salvation as the attainment of the true status of the individual.<sup>1</sup> Belief and conduct, rites and ceremonies, authorities and dogma, are assigned a place subordinate to the art of conscious self discovery and contact with the Divine. This distinctiveness of the Hindu religion was observed even by the ancients. Philostratus puts in the mouth of Apollonius of Tyana, these words: 'all wish to live in the nearness of God, but only the Hindus bring it to pass'.<sup>2</sup>

Brahman, which is the Sanskrit word for the absolute, is the principle of search as well as the object sought, the animating ideal and its fulfilment. The striving of the soul for the infinite is said to be Brahman. The impulse that compels us to raise the question of the true, the divine is itself divine. Brahman stands for the breath, 'the breath of the power of God' as it is said in the *Wisdom of Solomon*. It is man's sense of the divine as well as the divine, and the two meanings coalesce. The transcendent self stoops down as it were and touches the eyes of the empirical self, overwhelmed by the delusion of the world's work. When the individual puts away his being from all outward events, gathers himself together inwardly and strives with concentration, there breaks upon him an experience, secret, strange, and wondrous, which quickens within him, lays hold on him, and becomes his very being. Even if God be an idea and has no reality apart from one's ideation, that which

<sup>1</sup> *Ātmaprāptīlakṣaṇam mokṣam*.

<sup>2</sup> About spiritual experience, Sir Charles Eliot writes that 'it has been confirmed by the experience of men whose writings testify to their intellectual power and has commanded the respect of the masses. It must command our respect too, even if it is contrary to our temperament, for it is the persistent ideal of a great nation and cannot be explained away as hallucination or charlatanism.' *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. i (1921), p. lxii.

frames the idea of God and strives to realize it is itself divine.<sup>1</sup> Our longing for perfection, our sense of lack, our striving to attain consciousness of infinity, our urge to the ideal, are the sources of divine revelation. They are to be found in some measure in all things. The very fact that we seek God, clearly proves that life cannot be without Him. God is life. Recognition of this fact is spiritual consciousness.

To say that God exists means that spiritual experience is attainable. The possibility of the experience constitutes the most conclusive proof of the reality of God. God is 'given', and is the factual content of the spiritual experience. All other proofs are descriptions of God, matters of definition, and language. The fact of God does not depend on mere human authority or evidence from alleged miraculous events. The authority of scripture, the traditions of the Church, or the casuistries of schoolmen who proclaim but do not prove, may not carry conviction to many of us who are the children of science and reason, but we must submit to the fact of spiritual experience, which is primary and positive. We may dispute theologies, but cannot deny facts. The fire of life in its visible burning compels assent, though not the fumbling speculations of smokers sitting around the fire.

While realization is the fact, the theory of reality is an inference. There is difference between contact with reality and opinion about it, between the mystery of godliness and belief in God. A man may know much about theology but yet be lacking in the spirit of religion. The Hindu thinkers warn us against rationalistic self-sufficiency. The learned run far more risks than the unlearned.<sup>2</sup> There are two ways in which we deceive ourselves, the easy way of the unlearned who believe that the world we see is all, and the laborious way of the learned who establish the truth of naturalism and are deceived by the definite. Both of them succeed in shutting us away from the reality of our being.

The process of self-discovery is not the result of intellectual analysis but of the attainment of a human integrity reached by a complete mastery over nature. The old faith in mere reason that we will act properly if we think rightly is not true. Mere

<sup>1</sup> The Apostle has given the classical expression to this paradox: 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' Phil. ii. 12-13.

<sup>2</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, iv. 4. 10; *Īśa Upaniṣad*, ix.

knowledge is of the nature of a decoration, an exhibit with no roots. It does not free the mind. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Nārada confesses that all his scriptural learning has not taught him the true nature of the self, and in the same Upaniṣad, Śvetaketu, in spite of his study of the scriptures for the prescribed period, is said to be merely conceited and not well instructed.<sup>1</sup> Spiritual attainment is not the perfection of the intellectual man but an energy pouring into it from beyond it, vivifying it. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says: 'As the self-existent pierced the openings of the senses outward, one looks outward, not within himself. A certain thoughtful person, seeking immortality, turned the eye inward and saw the self.'<sup>2</sup> It is seeing with the spiritual eye of the pure in heart, who have overcome the passions of greed and envy, hatred and suspicion, that is here insisted on. This is the fulfilment of man's life, where every aspect of his being is raised to its highest point, where all the senses gather, the whole mind leaps forward and realizes in one quivering instant such things as cannot be easily expressed. Though it is beyond the word of tongue or concept of mind, the longing and love of the soul, its desire and anxiety, its seeking and thinking are filled with the highest spirit. This state of being or awareness to which man could attain, is the meaning of human life. It is religion, and not mere argument about it, that is the ultimate authority for one's ideas of God and life. God is not an intellectual idea or a moral principle, but the deepest consciousness from whom ideas and rules derive. He is not a logical construction but the perceived reality present in each of us and giving to each of us the reality we possess. We are saved not by creeds but by gnosis, *jñāna*, or spiritual wisdom. This is the result of the remaking of man. Logical knowledge is comparable to a finger which points to the object and disappears when the object is seen. True knowledge is awareness, a perception of the identity with the supreme, a clear-sighted intuition, a dawning of insight into that which logic infers and scriptures teach. An austere life turns knowledge into wisdom, a pundit into a prophet.<sup>3</sup>

This is not, however, to attribute strength to sentiment, or

<sup>1</sup> vi. 1. 3.

<sup>2</sup> iv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, iv. 4. 21. Ruysbroeck says: 'If we desire to taste God in our own selves we must pass beyond reason. . . . We must remain despoiled and free of all images. . . . We go on to a state of ignorance and darkness to suffer the higher information of the Eternal word, the image of the Father.' *The Ring*, Ch. IX.

derive illumination from ignorance. The truth of the experience does not arise from the mystery of its origin or the delight it causes in us. It is due to the fact that it satisfies our wants, including the intellectual, and thus gives peace of mind to the individual and contributes to the social harmony of the community. He who enters into an awareness of the real is the complete man whose mind is serene and whole being at rest. It is essential for us to seize and sift our intuitions, for the dangers of mistaking paradoxes for discoveries, metaphors for proofs, and words for truth are quite serious. If we are suspicious of the claims of intelligence we will land in a self-satisfied obscurantism. Any experience which does not fit in with tested knowledge must be rejected as hocus-pocus. To be spiritual is not to reject reason but to go beyond it. It is to think so hard that thinking becomes knowing or viewing, what we might call creative thinking. Philosophy and religion are two aspects of a single movement.

2. This view is humanistic in a deeper sense. It looks upon religion as a natural development of a really human life. Man, no doubt, is the measure of all things; only his nature contains or reflects every level of reality from matter to God. He is a many levelled being. He may identify himself with his animal nature, the physical and the physiological, or with the self-conscious reason. The sub-rational vital aims, however indispensable and valuable in their own place, cannot without disaster take control of a being who after all is not and cannot be a mere animal. In the thought and life of the modern man, self-conscious intellect, with its clear analysis and limited aims, takes the highest place, and suicidal scepticism is the result, for while it accepts the evidence of the senses and the results of judgement and inference, it rejects as spurious and subjective the deeper intuitions which discursive reason must take for granted. Faith in conceptual reason is the logical counterpart of the egoism which makes the selfish ego the deadliest foe of the soul. True humanism tells us that there is something more in man than is apparent in his ordinary consciousness, something which frames ideals and thoughts, a finer spiritual presence, which makes him dissatisfied with mere earthly pursuits. The one doctrine that has the longest intellectual ancestry is the belief that the ordinary condition of man is not his ultimate being, that he has in him a deeper self, call it breath or ghost, soul or spirit. In each being dwells a light which no power can

extinguish, an immortal spirit, benign and tolerant, the silent witness in his heart. The greatest thinkers of the world unite in asking us to know the self. Mencius declares: 'Who knows his own nature knows heaven.' St. Augustine writes: 'I, Lord, went wandering like a strayed sheep, seeking thee with anxious reasoning without, whilst thou wast within me. . . . I went round the streets and squares of the city of this world seeking thee, and I found thee not, because in vain I sought without for him who was within myself.' We make a detour round the universe to get back to the self. The oldest wisdom in the world tells us that we can consciously unite with the divine while in this body, for this is man really born. If he misses his destiny, nature is not in a hurry; she will catch him some day and compel him to fulfil her secret purpose. Truth, beauty, peace, power, and wisdom are all attributes of the divine self which awaits our finding.†

What is our true self? While our bodily organization undergoes changes, while our thoughts gather like clouds in the sky and disperse again, the self is never lost. It is present in all, yet distinct from all. Its nature is not affected by ordinary happenings. It is the source of the sense of identity through numerous transformations. It remains itself though it *sees* all things. It is the one thing that remains constant and unchanged in the incessant and multiform activity of the universe, in the slow changes of the organism, in the flux of sensations, in the dissipation of ideas, the fading of memories. Our personality which we generally take for our self is conscious only by fits and starts. There are large gaps in it, without consciousness. The seer always exists. Even if death comes, the seer cannot die. 'When the sun and the moon have both set, the fire has gone out, and speech has stopped, Yājñavalkya, what serves as the light for a man? The self serves as his light (*ātmaivāsya jyotir bhavati*). It is through the light of the self that he sits, goes out, works, and returns.† Nothing on the object side can touch the subject. Feelings and thoughts are on the same plane as objects and events in so far as they are observable. Things can be different from what they are without the self being different from itself. This persisting self which is universal seer to all things seen, this essential awareness which nothing has the power to suppress, which knows nothing of having been born as it knows nothing of dying, which is the basis of all knowledge, of dreams and ecstasies,

† *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, iv. 3. 6. †

is, says Śaṅkara, not capable of proof, nor does it need any, for it is self-proven (*svasiddha*). Though itself inconceivable, it is the ground of every possibility of conceiving, of every act of knowledge. Even he who denies it presupposes it in so far as he thinks. It is not an organ or a faculty but that which vivifies and disposes every organ and every faculty, the vast background of our being in which all organs, intellect, and will lie. Body, mind, and the world are almost arbitrary restrictions imposed on this consciousness. This universal self is in our ordinary life obscured by psychological impurities and fluctuations and becomes confused with the empirical self. The latter, which is a system of energies, psychological and logical, lays claim to perfect independence and individuality, little knowing that it can conserve itself only by perpetual change. We take our personality to be our most intimate and deepest possession, our sovereign good. But it belongs to the object side, itself shaped by relative happenings, mutable and accidental, as compared with the self. We can think about it, calculate its interests, sacrifice them on occasions. It is a sort of psychological being that answers to our name, is reflected in the looking-glass (*nāmarūpa*), a number in statistical tables. It is subject to pleasure and pain, expands when praised, contracts when criticized, admires itself, and is lost in the masquerade.<sup>1</sup> The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* makes a distinction between the two birds which dwell in the same tree, one eating the sweet fruit and the other looking on without eating.<sup>2</sup> The former is the empirical self and the latter the transcendental self.

The phenomenal character of the empirical self and the world answering to it is denoted by the word *māyā*, which signifies the fragility of the universe. *Māyā* does not mean that the empirical world with the selves in it is an illusion, for the whole effort of the cosmos is directed to and sustained by the one supreme self, which though distinct from everything is implicated in everything. The criticism that Hindu thought is pantheistic makes out that the supreme being, which is complete and impenetrable, is yet filled with things which live, breathe, and move each according to its nature. Nothing can be born, exist, or die in any degree, nothing can have time, place, form, or meaning except on this universal background.

*Māyā* is a term employed also to indicate the tendency to identify ourselves with our apparent selves and become exiled

<sup>1</sup> *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, viii. 3. 12. 21755 <sup>2</sup> ii. 1. 2.

from our spiritual consciousness with its maximum of clarity and certainty. This tendency is the expression of the working of self-conscious reason. Intellectual activities are a derivation, a selection, and so long as they are cut off from the truth which is their secret source, a deformation of true knowledge (*avidyā*) which has its natural result in selfishness. The aim of all human living is self-definition. It is to isolate the substantial permanence which each finite life possesses deep down, from the strife of empirical happenings. We can exceed the limits within which human consciousness normally functions. Man can abstract from his body and flesh, from his feelings and desires, even from thoughts which rise like waves on the surface of his mind, and reach a pure awareness, the naked condition of his pure selfhood. By steady discipline he can be led back to the pure being, the subject that reflects, and reach that state of immediacy and unity in which all chaos disappears. When we break through the ring of smoke round the self, unwrap the sheaths which cover it, we achieve here and now in the flesh the destiny of our being. The 'I', the *ātman*, the universal self, infinitely simple, is a trinity of transcendent reality (*sat*), awareness (*cit*), and freedom (*ānanda*). Such is the way in which we formulate in intellectual terms the truth of our own being to which our ordinary consciousness is now alien. We recommend to others this truth by conceiving of it as pure impersonality or cosmic personality manifesting the universe. The negative method which requires us to give up the creaturely, to divest ourselves of all qualities, push slowly out beyond all distinctions, reveals the inexpressible sanctity of the experience. This exaltation, this motionless concentration, this holy calm and deep serenity which is like the state of a deep sea at rest, reflecting heaven on its surface, or in the image of the *Bhagavadgītā*, 'still as a flame in a windless place', bathed as it were in an incomprehensible brightness (*tejas*) is hard to describe. An austere reticence or a negative account is all that is open to us. When, however, we lapse back from this state into our ordinary consciousness, we represent the self as another with its transcendent majesty. We quake and shiver, bleed and moan with a longing gaze at it. We dare not even lift up our eyes. We are filled with a desire to escape from the world of discord and struggle. In this mood we represent the supreme as the sovereign personality encompassing this whole world, working through the cosmos and ourselves for the realization of the universal

kingdom. If the personal concept is more prominent, the individual seeks his development in a humble, trustful submission to God. We may adopt the mode of *bhakti* or devotion, or the method of *jñāna* or contemplation by which the self, set free from all that is not self, regains its pure dignity. The attainment of spiritual status when refracted in the logical universe appears as a revelation of grace.

Śaṅkara clearly brings out the distinction between the absolute self, the divine person, and the human individual: 'Therefore the unconditioned self, being beyond speech and mind, undifferentiated, and one is designated as "not this, not this"; when it has the limiting adjuncts of the body and organs which are characterized by imperfect knowledge, desire, and work, it is called the empirical individual self; and when the self has the limitation of the creative power manifesting through eternal and unlimited knowledge, it is called the inner ruler and divine person. The same self, as by its nature transcendent, absolute, and pure, is called the immutable and supreme self.'<sup>1</sup>

When we seek to grasp the reality impersonal in itself, personal from the cosmic end, by conceptual methods, we must note that logically precise formulas are at best provisional and incomplete. The definiteness and transparency of the symbols do not mean that the thing signified has been grasped completely. Those who have no contact with reality, no insight into truth, accept the relative symbol for the absolute truth. In their self-confident jugglery with symbols and definitions they forget the thing itself. Only the background of reality can transform the empty sounds of words into significant expressions of truth.' The distinction of impersonal and personal, *nirguṇa* and *saḡuṇa* is found in all mysticism, Eastern or Western. If Śaṅkara distinguishes Brahman from Íśvara, Eckhart contrasts the Godhead (*Deitas*) with God (*Deus*). While God is the personal triune God of Church doctrine, which 'becomes and dis-becomes', the pure Godhead stands high above God, and is the ground of the possibility of God, who is absorbed in the Godhead, which is beyond being and goodness.

The two familiar criticisms that for Hindu thought the world is an illusion (*māyā*), that it is divine (pantheism) cancel

<sup>1</sup> Tasmān nirupādhikasyā'tmano nirupākhyatvān nirviśeṣatvād ekatvācca neti neti ti vyapadeśo 'bhavati. avidyākāmakarmaviśiṣṭakāryakaraṇopādhir ātmā saṁsārī jīva ucya-te. nityaniratisāya jñānaśaktyupādhir ātmā' ntary-āmÍśvara ucya-te. sa eva nirupādhīḥ kevalaḥ śuddhaḥ svenasvabhāvenākṣaram para ucya-te. Śaṅkara on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, iii. 8. 12.

each other and point out that the Hindu is aware of both the upward and the downward movements. The way to the knowledge of the divine has two sides, the negative and the positive. The negative takes us to the spiritual consciousness, the silent witness which dissolves all form and thought, what Plotinus, the Neoplatonic Christian mystic called Dionysus the Areopagite, Eckhart, Ruysbroeck aim at, the 'Divine Darkness', 'the nameless, formless nothing'. But there is the way of affirmation by which the God-conscious man affirms that the great silent sea of infinity, in whose mysterious embrace the individual loses his name and form, is also the over-mastering, all-embracing life. Here is the refrain of the *Chândogya Upaniṣad*:<sup>1</sup> 'This whole world has that being for itself. That is reality. That is the self. That art thou, O Śvetaketu.' The self is the core of being, the inner thread by being strung on which the world with all its variety exists. It is the real of the real, *satyasya satyam*. The manifold universe is not an illusion; it is being, though of a lower order, subject to change, waxing and waning, growing and shrinking. Compare again 'He who dwells in the Earth, who is other than the Earth, whom the Earth does not know, whose body the Earth is, who controls the Earth from within, he is yourself, the inner controller, the immortal'. This is said to be true of all things in the world, subjective and objective, which are the manifestations of the 'unseen seer'.<sup>2</sup> Even Śaṅkara admits that 'This whole multiplicity of creatures existing under name and form in so far as it has the supreme Being itself for its essence is true; if regarded as self-dependent is untrue'.<sup>3</sup> Everything everywhere is based on reality.<sup>4</sup> For the Hindu thinkers, the objective world exists. It is not an illusion. It is real not in being ultimate, but in being a form, an expression of the ultimate. To regard the world as ultimately real is delusion (*moha*).

While the criticism regarding the illusory nature of the world suggests the impersonal restful character of the supreme, that of pantheism, brings out its ceaseless self-expression or active creativity. It is not true to contend that the experience of the pure realm of being, timeless and perfect, breeds in us contempt for the more familiar world of existence, which is unhappily

<sup>1</sup> vi. 10 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, iii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Sarvam ca nāmarūpādivikārajātam sadātmanā eva satyam, svatas tu anṛtam. Śaṅkara on *Chândogya Upaniṣad*, vi. 3. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Sadāspadam sarvam sarvatra. Śaṅkara on *Bhagavadgītā*, xiii. 14.

full of imperfection. Reality and existence are not to be set against each other as metaphysical contraries. Nothing on earth is utterly perfect or utterly without perfection. Those who have the vision of perfection strive continually to increase the perfection and diminish the imperfection. Life is forever striving for its fuller creative manifestation. For one who has the vision of the supreme, life, personality, and history become important. The life of God is the fulness of our life.

When man apprehends the supreme being, returns to the concrete, and controls his life in the light of its truth, he is a complete man. He reaches an almost inconceivable universality. All his powers which have been hitherto bound up with narrow pursuits are liberated for larger ends. The doctrine of *māyā* tells us that we fall away from our authentic being if we are lost in the world of empirical objects and earthly desires, turning our back on reality which gives them value. They are so alluring that they provoke ardent desires, but they cannot satisfy the inner being, and in the world outside they break forth into frantic disorder. This does not mean that we have to neglect worldly welfare or despise body and mind. The body is a necessity for the soul. A system which believes in rebirth cannot despise bodily life, for every soul has need of it. Personal life is not to be repressed in order to gain the end of religion. It is to be recreated and purified in the light of the higher truth. He in whom the spark of spirit glows, grows into a new man, the man of God, the transfigured person. The divine penetrates his self, wells up and flows through him, absorbing him and enriching him within it. God is not for him another self, he is the real self closer than his own ego. 'I live, yet not I, but it is Christ who liveth in me.' In the order of nature, he keeps up his separate individuality; in the order of spirit, the divine has taken hold of him, remoulding his personality. The pride of a self-conscious individual yields to the humility of a God-centred one. He works in the world with the faith that life in its pure quality is always noble and beautiful and only its frustration evil.

3. The fundamental truths of a spiritual religion are that our real self is the supreme being, which it is our business to discover and consciously become, and this being is one in all. The soul that has found itself is no longer conscious of itself in its isolation. It is conscious rather of the universal life of which all individuals, races, and nations are specific articulations. A

single impulsion runs beneath all the adventures and aspirations of man. It is the soul's experience of the essential unity with the whole of being that is brought out in the words, 'Thou in me and I in thee.' Fellowship is life, lack of fellowship death. The secret solidarity of the human race we cannot escape from. It cannot be abolished by the passing insanities of the world. Those who are anxious to live in peace with their own species and all life will not find it possible to gloat over the massacres of large numbers of men simply because they do not belong to their race or country. Working for a wider, all-embracing vision they cut across the artificial ways of living, which seduce us from the natural springs of life. Our normal attitudes to other races and nations are no more than artificial masks, habits of thought and feeling, sedulously cultivated by long practice in dissimulation. The social nature of man is distorted into queer shapes by the poison poured into his blood which turns him into a hunting animal. Racialism and nationalism which require us to exercise our baser passions, to bully and cheat, to kill and loot, all with a feeling that we are profoundly virtuous and doing God's work, are abhorrent to the spiritually awakened. For them all races and nations lie beneath the same arch of heaven. They proclaim a new social relationship and serve a new society with civil liberties for all individuals, and political freedom for all nations great and small.

## VII

The collapse of a civilization built on the audacities of speculative doubt, moral impressionism, and the fierce and confused enthusiasms of races and nations need not dishearten us, for it has in it elements of an antisocial and antimoral character, which deserve to perish. It is directed to the good, not of mankind as a whole, but of a powerful privileged few among individuals as well as nations. Whatever is valuable in it will enter into the new world which is struggling to be born. In spite of all appearances to the contrary, we discern in the present unrest the gradual dawning of a great light, a converging life endeavour, a growing realization that there is a secret spirit in which we are all one, and of which humanity is the highest vehicle on earth, and an increasing desire to live out this knowledge and establish a kingdom of spirit on earth. Science has produced the necessary means for easy transport of men and communication of thought. Intellectually the world

is bound together in a web of common ideas and reciprocal knowledge. Even the obstacles of religious dogma are not so formidable as they were in the past. The progress of thought and criticism is helping the different religions to sound the note of the eternal, the universal, the one truth of spirit which life obeys, seeks for, and delights in at all times and in all places. We are able to see a little more clearly that the truth of a religion is not what is singular and private to it, is not the mere letter of the law which its priests are apt to insist on, and its faithful to fight for, but that part of it which it is capable of sharing with all others. Humanity's ultimate realization of itself and of the world can be attained only by an ever-increasing liberation of the values that are universal and human. Mankind is still in the making. Human life as we have it is only the raw material for human life as it might be. There is a hitherto undreamt-of fullness, freedom, and happiness within reach of our species, if only we can pull ourselves together and go forward with a high purpose and fine resolve. What we require is not professions and programmes but the power of spirit in the hearts of men, a power which will help us to discipline our passions of greed and selfishness and organize the world which is at one with us in desire.

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