

**THE BOOK WAS  
DRENCHED**





# LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

( First Series )

*Sri Aurobindo's views on important life-problems  
compiled and arranged from his writings*

BY

KISHOR GANDHI



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## FOREWORD

*This series of LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS has been appearing in the fortnightly review MOTHER INDIA since its inception in February 1949. It was started at the instance of its Managing Editor, Mr. Keshavdev Poddar, who wanted to make it a special object of that review to make available to the general public Sri Aurobindo's views on the various important problems of life which arise in the minds of thoughtful persons everywhere. Sri Aurobindo is now universally recognised as a Master-Yogi and a supreme authority on all matters relating to spiritual knowledge and practice ; but, though this is not generally known, he is no less an authority in the various spheres of secular life because he has at his command a profound, extensive and intimate knowledge of all types of human experience and a deeply sympathetic understanding of all human situations. Since the spiritual discipline which he has himself practised and which he has enunciated for others does not aim at a withdrawal from human life but at a radical and total transformation of it, and since that transformation is not possible without a decisive conquest of life's basic difficulties, he had to make it his constant concern to come to as close a grip as possible with the endlessly complex and incalculably variable possibilities of human experience. The truth of*

*human life is not evident on its apparent surface and one who wants truly to understand and effectively to master it has to probe its hidden depths. For this reason Sri Aurobindo had always a double task laid upon him for the realisation of his life-work ; he had on the one hand to scale and conquer the utmost heights of the spirit and on the other hand to plunge into and master the inmost depths of life—without shunning any difficulty or recoiling from any danger—and to establish an effective link between these sundered poles of existence. The Greek dramatist's dictum 'nihil humani alienum' is more true of him than of any other person in the history of the human race.*

*Sri Aurobindo's views on questions of spiritual knowledge and practice, as set forth by him in a systematic and exhaustive manner in a number of books, have been available to the public for the last two decades. His views on the many issues of man's life and thought in the secular field have not been, however, set forth in this manner. An attempt is therefore made in this series to make known his views on these issues in as definite a manner as possible. The catechetic method has been adopted for this purpose as it seemed best suited to bring home in a direct and precise manner the unfailing light of Sri Aurobindo's profound wisdom on the various important life-problems that present themselves to an observing intelligence. The questions in each series have been so framed as to give a precise formulation to the several aspects of each of these problems and the answers to*

*them have been supplied by directly reproducing those passages from Sri Aurobindo's works which provide the right solution of these questions. It has not always been possible to deal exclusively with the secular questions and to leave out the spiritual topics altogether, for in reality there is no clear-cut line of demarcation between the two fields, especially in Sri Aurobindo's vision which unrelentingly strives for their harmonious realignment and true integration.*

*Endless gratitude is due to Sri Aurobindo for not only sanctioning the proposal to run this series but also for sparing his extremely valuable time to see and approve each instalment of it before publication.*

*Kishor Gandhi*

*April 24, 1950.*

## PREFATORY NOTE

*The answers to questions in all the series in this book are direct reproductions of appropriate passages taken from various books of Sri Aurobindo. The exact references to the books from which these passages are taken are shown in the appendix at the end of the book. Slight verbal modifications have been made at some places in the quoted passages in order to make them exactly suit the context of the questions they are intended to answer. Some of the passages in the answers in the earlier series have been revised by Sri Aurobindo to whom all the series were submitted for approval before publication in MOTHER INDIA. In two of the series some of the answers are taken from two unpublished letters of Sri Aurobindo to his disciples.*

K. G.

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## PREDICTIONS AND PROPHECIES

*age and then no more come true? In case of prophecies also some come true to the letter, others do not—they half fulfil or misfire entirely.*

A: Yes, that happens quite often, but it does not follow that the power of prediction is unreal or that the accurate predictions can be all explained by probability, chance or coincidence. The nature and number of those that cannot is too great. The variability of fulfilment may be explained either by an imperfect power in the prophet sometimes active, sometimes failing or by the fact that things are predictable in part only, they are determined in part only or else they are determined by different factors or lines of power, different series of potentials and actuals. So long as one is in touch with one line one predicts accurately, otherwise not—or if the lines of power change, one's prophecy also goes off the rails. All the same, one may say, there must be, if things are predictable at all, some power or plane through which or on which all is foreseeable; if there is a divine Omniscience and Omnipotence it must be so.

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*Q. 5: Is human will entirely helpless before Fate or destiny?*

A: The astrologers themselves say that there are two forces, *daiva* and *purushakara*, Fate and individual energy, and individual energy can modify and even frustrate Fate. Even what is determined by Fate has to be worked out, actually is worked out by a play of forces and in this play there is no absolute rigidity discoverable. Personal will or endeavour is one of those forces. Napoleon when asked why he believed in Fate yet was always planning and acting answered "Because it is fated that I should work and plan"; in other words, his planning and acting were part of Fate, contributed to the results Fate had in view.

*Q. 6: What is the explanation of Fate?*

A: The Indian explanation of Fate is Karma. We ourselves are our own Fate through our actions, but the Fate created by us binds us, for what we have sown we must reap in this life or another.

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*Q. 7: Whatever may have been our past actions, cannot our present will determine to some extent the course of future happenings?*

A: Certainly it can, because we are creating our Fate for the future even while undergoing old Fate from the past in the present. That gives a meaning to our will and action and does not, as European critics wrongly believe, constitute a rigid and sterilising fatalism.

*Q. 8: Are we completely bound to undergo the results of our past Karma? Cannot our present will modify or prevent the consequences of our past actions in the present?*

A: It is not impossible that our present will and action can annul or modify the past Karma; it is only certain strong effects called *utkat karma* that are non-modifiable. The achievement of spiritual consciousness, for example, can annul or give the power to annul past Karma; for then we enter into union with the cosmic or transcendent Divine Will which has the power to annul what it had

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created, break the narrow fixed lines of Karma and make possible a more plastic freedom and wideness. Neither Karma nor Astrology therefore points to a rigid and for ever immutable Fate.

## II

### SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

*Q. 1: It is said that the motive power behind all the actions and endeavours of men is the search for happiness. Is this true?*

A: That is an easily made psychological proposition which can exist only by ignoring facts. If you say that it is the Ananda behind the veil which makes one act as a moving power, not as a "motive", that may be so, but that is a metaphysical, not a psychological generalisation. When a Communist faces torture in a Nazi concentration camp, he is not doing it for the sake of Ananda or happiness, but for something else which makes him indifferent to Ananda or happiness or else compels him to face the loss of these things and even their very reverse, however painful it may be.

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*Q. 2: But evidently most people are after happiness and make it the aim of their life?*

A: To say that all human beings are always wanting happiness untainted with sorrow is far too sweeping a generalisation. What can safely be admitted is that it is one very strong strain in human nature. But there are many men who are not after happiness and do not believe it is the true aim of life. And mark that it is the human physical consciousness only that seeks after happiness. The human vital tends rather to reject a happiness untainted by sorrow and to find it a monotonous boring condition. Even if it accepts it, after a time it kicks over the traces and goes to some new painful or risky adventure. The higher vital is ready to sacrifice happiness in order to satisfy its passions, search for power, ambition, fame or any other motive. If you say it is because of the happiness power, fame, etc. give, that again is not universally true. Power can give anything else, but not happiness; it is something in its very nature arduous and full of difficulty to get, to keep or to use—speaking of course of power in the ordinary

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sense. A man may know he can never have fame in this life, but yet work in the hope of posthumous fame or on the chance of it. He may know that the satisfaction of his passion will bring him everything rather than happiness—suffering, torture, destruction—yet he will follow his impulse. So also the mind as well as the larger vital is not bound by the pursuit of happiness. It can seek Truth rather or the victory of a cause. To reduce all into a single hard construction seems to be very poor psychology. Neither Nature nor the vast Spirit in things is so limited and one-tracked as that.

*Q. 3: Some say that even the wicked, the criminals, etc. sin because they are trying to find the self's happiness in the sins they commit. Is this true?*

*A:* This is really a very summary and misleading criminal psychology. To say that a Paris crook or Apache steals, swindles, murders for the happiness of stealing, swindling, murdering, is a little startling. He does it for quite other reasons; he does it as his *métier* just as a doctor does his medical work.

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Can it always be said that the doctor does his work because of the happiness he finds in it?

*Q. 4: Why is it so difficult to overcome unhappiness and suffering?*

**A:** It is because something in the human vital clings to suffering and almost needs it as part of the drama of life. The external consciousness—the physical mind and consciousness of man—hates its own suffering and if left to itself dislikes also to see others suffer. But if we go deep enough we shall find that there is something in the vital which likes suffering and clings to it for the sake of the drama. It is something below the surface, but it is strong, almost universal in human nature and difficult to eradicate unless one recognises it and gets inwardly away from it. The mind and physical of man do not like suffering, for if they did, it would not be suffering any longer, but this thing in the vital wants it in order to give a spice to life. It is the reason, for example, why constant depressions can go on returning and returning even though the mind longs to get rid of them,

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because this in the vital responds, goes on repeating the same movement like a gramophone as soon as it is got going and insists on turning the whole round of the oft-repeated record. It does not really depend on the reasons which the vital gives for starting off the round; these are often of the most trivial character and wholly insufficient to justify it. It is only by a strong will to detach oneself, not to justify, to reject, not to welcome, that one can in the end get rid of this most troublesome and dangerous streak in human nature. In speaking therefore of the vital comedy, of the vital drama, we are speaking from a psychological knowledge which does not end with the surface of things but looks at these hidden movements. It is impossible to deal with things effectively and radically if we confine ourselves to their surface view only.

### III

#### POSSIBILITIES OF LOVE

*Q. 1: Anatole France says: "One can do no wrong when one really loves, but sensual passion is made up of hatred, egoism and wrath as much as love." But is not love itself as it exists between human beings mostly egoistic in character?*

A: Yes, the human feeling of love is always either based on or strongly mixed with ego,—that is why it cannot be pure. It is said in the Upanishad, "One does not love the wife for the sake of the wife, but for one's self's sake one loves the wife." There is usually a hope of return, of benefit or advantage of some kind, or of certain pleasures and gratifications, mental, vital or physical that the loved can give. Remove these things and the love very soon sinks, diminishes or turns into anger, reproach, indifference or even hatred. The vital element in human love is especially dominated by ego and desire. It is full of

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craving and demand; its continuance depends upon the satisfaction of its demands. If it does not get what it craves or even imagines that it is not being treated as it deserves—for it is full of imaginations, misunderstandings, jealousies, misinterpretations—it at once turns to sorrow, wounded feeling, anger, all kinds of disorder, finally cessation and departure. A love of this kind is only a source of suffering, trouble, disappointment, disillusion and disunion and in its very nature ephemeral and unreliable.

*Q. 2: Is human love always of this kind? Can it not take a purer and nobler form?*

**A:** Human love is usually a mixture of ignorance, attachment, passion and desire but it can take an unselfish, noble and pure form and expression if it is touched by the psychic. There is in the highest or deepest kind of love this psychic element which comes from the inmost heart and soul. It is a kind of inner union or self-giving or at least a seeking for that, a tie or an urge independent of other conditions or elements, existing for its own sake and not for any mental, vital or physical

pleasure, satisfaction, interest or habit. But usually the psychic element in human love, even when present, is not left pure; it is so much mixed, overloaded and hidden under the other elements that it gets little chance of fulfilling itself or achieving its own natural purity and fullness. What is called love is therefore sometimes one thing, sometimes another, most often a confused mixture.

*Q. 3: The psychic love may be purer than the vital love but does it not lack the flaming intensity and the warm glow of the vital love which so powerfully attract the human heart?*

A: It is a mistake to think that the vital alone has warmth and the psychic is something frigid without any flame in it. Psychic love can have a warmth and a flame as intense and more intense than the vital; only it is a pure fire, not dependent on the satisfaction of ego-desire or on the eating up of the fuel it embraces. It is a white flame, not a red one; but white heat is not inferior to the red variety in its ardour. It is true that the psychic love does not usually get its full play in human

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relations and human nature; it finds the fullness of its fire and ecstasy more easily when it is lifted towards the Divine. In the human relation the psychic love gets mixed up with other elements which seek at once to use it and overshadow it. It gets an outlet for its own full intensities only at rare moments. Otherwise it comes in only as an element, but even so it contributes all the higher things in a love fundamentally vital—all the finer sweetness, tenderness, fidelity, self-giving, self-sacrifice, reachings of soul to soul, idealising sublimations that lift up human love beyond itself, come from the psychic. If it could dominate and govern and transmute the other elements—mental, vital, physical—of human love, then love could be on the earth some reflection or preparation of the real thing, an integral union of the soul and its instruments in a dual life. But even some imperfect appearance of that is rare.

*Q. 4: In the vital love itself are there no elements akin to the psychic love? Is it all made up of ego and craving?*

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A: There are in the vital itself two kinds of love,—one full of joy and confidence and abandon, generous, unbargaining, ungrudging and very absolute in its dedication and this is akin to the psychic love. But there is another way of vital love which is the usual way of human nature which is made up of ego and desire and which is mostly a cause of trouble and suffering. It neither satisfies nor lasts.

*Q. 5: Why is human vital love so evanescent?*

A: It is because it is a passion which Nature has thrown in in order to serve a temporary purpose; it is good enough therefore for a temporary purpose and its normal tendency is to wane when it has sufficiently served Nature's purpose. In mankind, as man is a more complex being, she calls in the aid of imagination and idealism to help her push, gives a sense of ardour, of beauty and fire and glory, but all that wanes after a time. It cannot last because it is all a borrowed light and power, borrowed in the sense of being a reflection caught from something beyond and not native to the reflecting vital medium which imagination uses for

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the purpose. Moreover, nothing lasts in the mind and vital, all is a flux there. The one thing that endures is the soul, the spirit. Therefore love can last or satisfy only if it bases itself on the soul and spirit, if it has its roots there. But that means living no longer in the vital but in the soul and spirit.

*Q. 6: How can vital love get liberation from its usual insufficiencies and achieve the fulfilment of its secret urge?*

A: Like the mind and the physical, the vital is properly an instrument for the soul and spirit; when it works for itself it produces ignorant and imperfect results, but if it can be made into a conscious instrument of the psychic and the spirit, then it gets its own divine fulfilment; that is the idea contained in what is called transformation in Yoga.

*Q. 7: According to McTaggart, "Love is authentic and justifies itself completely whether its causes be great or trivial." How far is this true of the human relationships of love?*

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A: What McTaggart says is not often true in human practice; for there the destiny of love and its justification depend very much as a rule (though not always) on the nature of the cause or object. For if the object of love is trivial in the sense of its being an inadequate instrument for the dynamic realisation of the sense of oneness which Mc Taggart says is the essence of love, then love is likely to be balked of its fulfilment. Unless, of course, it is satisfied with existing, with spending itself in its own fundamental way on the loved without expecting any return for its self-expenditure, any mutual unification. Still, of love in its essence the statement may be true.

*Q. 8: What is the nature of love in its essence and origin?*

A: Love at its origin is a self-existent force, an absolute, a transcendent, which does not depend upon the objects—it depends only on itself or only on the Divine; for it is a self-existent power of the Divine. If it were not self-existent, it would hardly be independent of the nature or reaction of its objects. It is

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partly what is meant when we speak of transcendent Love—though this is only one aspect of its transcendence. That self-existent transcendent Love spreading itself over all, turning everywhere to contain, embrace, unite, help, upraise towards love and bliss and oneness, becomes cosmic divine Love; intensely fixing itself on one or other to find itself, to achieve a dynamic unification or to reach here towards the union of the soul with the Divine, it becomes the individual divine Love. But there are unhappily its diminutions in the human mind, human vital, human physical; there the divine essence of Love easily becomes mixed with counterfeits, dimmed, concealed or lost in the twisted movements born of division and ignorance.

## IV

### LOVE AND SEX

*Q. 1: Schopenhauer, the great German philosopher, considers love to be an illusion. According to him, when a youth and a girl fall in each other's arms in the ecstasy of love they imagine that they are seeking their own happiness, but it is really not so. They are only deluded by the impersonal will of the race into the belief that they are seeking a personal end in order that they may be induced to effect a far greater impersonal end—the creation of the race. Love is thus, to Schopenhauer, an unconscious sacrifice made by the lovers to Nature's ends. How far is this view true?*

**A:** It is perfectly true, not only of love as Schopenhauer means it, but of all human activities and movements of Nature. All movements are in the mass movements of Nature's cosmic forces, they are movements of universal Nature. The individual receives something of

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them, a wave or pressure of some cosmic force, and is driven by it; he thinks it is his own, generated in himself separately, but it is not so; it is part of a general movement which works just in the same way in others. Sex, for instance, is a movement of general Nature seeking for its play and it uses this or that one—a man vitally or physically “in love”, as it is called, with a woman is simply repeating and satisfying the world-movement of sex; if it had not been that woman, it would have been another; he is simply an instrument in Nature’s machinery, it is not an independent movement. So it is with anger and other Nature-motives. An executive cosmic force shapes us and dictates through our temperament and environment and mentality so shaped, through our individualised formulation of the cosmic energies, our actions and their results. Truly, we do not think, will or act but thought occurs in us, will occurs in us, impulse and act occur in us; our ego-sense gathers around itself, refers to itself all this flow of natural activities. It is Cosmic Force, it is Nature that forms the thought, imposes the will, imparts the impulse. Our body, mind and

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ego are a wave of that sea of force in action and do not govern it, but by it are governed and directed.

*Q. 2: What purpose does Cosmic Nature work out through the action of the universal sex-energy in the individual?*

**A:** The terrestrial sex-movement is a utilisation by Nature of the fundamental physical energy for purposes of procreation and the sex-energy is in its real nature a fundamental energy of life. In the economy of the material creation in the Ignorance the action of the animal sex-energy is thus a device for a particular purpose. It is a great power with two components in its physical basis, one meant for procreation and the process necessary for it, the other for feeding the general energies of the body, mind and vital,—also of the spiritual energies of the body. The sex-energy is thus the support in the body of all the spiritual, mental, vital and physical forces of the nature. Its misuse, therefore, turns to disorder and disintegration of the energies and powers of life.

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*Q. 3: Why has the sex-impulse so powerful a grip over human nature? Why is it difficult to get free of its hold even when its indulgence brings a reaction of disgust?*

A: It is because the sex-impulse is the greatest force on the vital plane. The thrill which accompanies it is a very gross distortion and degradation of the divine Ananda. The pleasure attached to it is the lure by which Nature makes the vital consent to this otherwise unpleasing process. There are quite a number of persons who experience a recoil of disgust after the sexual act and repulsion from the partner in it because of the disgust, but they return to it when the disgust has worn off for the sake of the lure.

*Q. 4: It is a common belief that sex-desire is stronger in men than in women. What is the truth in this belief?*

A: There is no universal rule. Women can be as sexual as men or more. But there are numbers of women who dislike sex and there are very few men. One Shukdev in a million

but many Dianas and Pallas Athenes. The virgin is really a feminine conception; men are repelled by the idea of eternal virginity. Many women would remain without any waking of the sexual instinct perhaps by any man. But there is another side to the picture. Women are perhaps less physically sexual than man on the whole,—but what about vital sexuality, the instinct of possessing and being possessed, etc.?

*Q. 5: What is the distinction between physical love and vital love?*

*A:* The two are not the same. It is possible for the vital to desire a woman for various vital reasons without love—in order to satisfy the instinct of domination or possession, in order to draw in the vital forces of a woman so as to feed one's own vital, for the exchange of vital forces, to satisfy vanity, the hunter's instinct of the chase, etc., etc. (This is from the man's view-point, but the woman also has her vital motives.) This is often called love, but it is only vital desire, a kind of lust. If, however, the emotions of the heart are

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awakened, then it becomes vital love—a mixed affair with any or all of these vital motives, strong, but still vital love.

But the physical love is different from this. It is the attraction of beauty, the physical sex-appeal or anything else of the kind awakening the emotions of the heart. If that does not happen, then the physical need is all and that is sheer lust, nothing more. But physical love without lust is possible.

*Q. 6: Love is really a function of the heart; so how can there be such a thing as mental love?*

*A:* Why not? The mind is the seat of thought and perception, the heart is the seat of love, the vital of desire—but how does that prevent the existence of mental love? As the mind can be invaded by the feelings of the emotional or the vital, so the heart too can be dominated by the mind and moved by mental forces. Thus there can be a mental love. It arises from the attempt to find one's ideal in another or from some strong mental passion of admiration and wonder or from

the mind's seeking for a comrade, a complement and fulfiller of one's nature, a *sahadharmi*, a guide and helper, a leader and master or from a hundred other mental motives. By itself that does not amount to love, though often it is so ardent as to be hardly distinguishable from it and may even push to sacrifice of life, entire self-giving, etc., etc. But when it awakes the emotions of the heart, then it may lead to a very powerful love which is yet mental in its roots and dominant character. Ordinarily, however, it is the mind and vital together which combine.

*Q. 7: Most of the modern psychologists hold the view that love between man and woman cannot exist without sexual desire and some even maintain that love is nothing but sex. Can there not be an ardent relation of love without sex at all coming in?*

**A:** It is an ignorant psychology that reduces everything to the sex-motive and the sex-impulse. Though the sex-desire does usually enter in the intimate love relationships between men and women, it cannot be said that it is invariably so. As said before, there

are a number of women who can love with the mind, the psychic, the vital (heart), but they shrink from a touch on the body and even when that goes, the physical act remains abhorrent to them. They may yield under pressure, but it does not reconcile them to the act which always seems to them animal and degrading. Love of a strong mental and vital character can exist along with a disinclination or positive dislike for the physical act and its accompaniments. No doubt, if the man presses, the woman is likely to yield, but it is *contre cœur*, as they say, against her feelings and her deepest instincts. Women know this, but men seem to find it hard to believe, but it is perfectly true.

*Q. 8: The modern psychologists consider sex to be a natural human instinct, a necessity like food and sleep and an absence of this desire would be regarded by them as an abnormal condition. Is this true?*

**A:** Abnormal is a word which you can stick on anything that is not quite cheap or ordinary. In that way genius is abnormal, so

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is spirituality, so is the attempt to live by high ideals. The tendency to physical chastity in women is not abnormal, it is fairly common and includes a very high feminine type.

## V

### TRANSFORMATION OF SEX-ENERGY

*Q. 1: Balzac, the famous French novelist, was of the opinion that indulgence in sex greatly hampers the high type of mental activity. According to him, "The man of genius is frigid. When he tries to lead both lives, the intellectual life and the love life, the man of genius dies, as Raphael died and Lord Byron." So also Havelock Ellis, recognised as the world's greatest authority on sex, maintains that to increase artistic and mental capacity and force it is necessary to restrain sexual activity. "The brain and the sexual organs," he says, "are yet the great rivals in using up bodily energy, and there is an antagonism between extreme brain vigour and extreme sexual vigour, even though they may sometimes both appear at different periods in the same individual." We find this evidenced in the life of some great masters of art like Beethoven and Mozart, in whose life sexual indulgence played a much smaller part than in the life of an average man. This would seem to*

*imply that it is necessary to conserve sexual energy for the energisation and intensification of higher intellectual and aesthetic life. How far is this view justifiable?*

A: That is correct—the sex-energy can be controlled and diverted from the sex-purpose and used for aesthetic and artistic or other creation and productiveness or preserved for heightening of the intellectual or other energies. Entirely controlled it can be turned into a force of spiritual energy also. This was well known in ancient India and was described as the conversion of *retas* into *ojas* by Brahmacharya. *Retas*, the sex-fluid, consists of two elements, one meant for sex-purposes, the other as a basis of general energy, and if the sex-action is not indulged and the sex-fluid is prevented from being spent away, it turns into *ojas*. The whole theory of Brahmacharya is based upon that by the Yogis. The European scientists generally pooh-poohed the idea, but now they are beginning to discover the same fact for themselves.

*Q. 2: What is the process by which 'retas' is transformed into 'ojas'?*

## TRANSFORMATION OF SEX-ENERGY

A: The fundamental physical unit is the *retas*, in which the *tejas*, the heat and light and electricity in a man, is involved and hidden. All energy is thus latent in the *retas*. This energy may be either expended physically or conserved. All passion, lust, desire wastes the energy by pouring it, either in the gross form or a sublimated subtle form, out of the body. On the other hand, all self-control conserves the energies in the *retas*, and conservation always brings with it increase. But the needs of the physical body are limited and the excess of energy must create a surplus which has to turn itself to some use other than the physical. According to the ancient theory, *retas* is *jala* or water, full of light and heat and electricity, in one word, of *tejas*. The excess of the *retas* turns first into heat or *tapas* which stimulates the whole system, and it is for this reason that all forms of self-control and austerity are called *tapas* or *tapasya*, because they generate the heat or stimulus which is a source of powerful action and success; secondly, it turns to *tejas* proper, the light, the energy which is at the source of all knowledge; thirdly, it turns to *vidyut* or electricity, which is at the basis of all force-

ful action whether intellectual or physical. In the *vidyut* again is involved the *ojas*, or *prana-shakti*, the primal energy which proceeds from ether. The *retas*, refining from *jala* to *tapas*, *tejas* and *vidyut* and from *vidyut* to *ojas*, fills the system with physical strength, energy and brain-power and in its last form of *ojas* rises to the brain and informs it with that primal energy which is the most refined form of matter and nearest to spirit. It is *ojas* that creates a spiritual force or *virya*, by which a man attains to spiritual knowledge, spiritual love and faith, spiritual strength. It follows that the more we can by Brahmacharya increase the store of *tapas*, *tejas*, *vidyut* and *ojas*, the more we shall fill ourselves with utter energy for the works of the body, heart, mind and spirit.

*Q. 3: Many eminent psychologists, doctors and thinkers believe that complete sexual abstinence is dangerous and may lead to serious nervous trouble and even mental derangement. They maintain that the new form of energy produced from the sublimation of sexual energy may be harmful and may lead to perversities and morbidities. René Guyon, for*

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*example, points out: "When the libido is repressed, when its impetus is crushed back, it is forced to find an outlet by some other route. . . . But this compensation is not necessarily useful, superior and worthy of admiration. It can just as well be harmful and destructive." How far is this true?*

A: It is a fact that sex suppressed in outward action but indulged in other ways may lead to disorders of the system and brain troubles. That is the root of the medical theory which discourages sexual abstinence. But these things happen only when there is either secret indulgence of a perverse kind replacing the normal sexual activity or else an indulgence of it in a kind of subtle vital way by imagination or by an invisible vital interchange of an occult kind; harm never occurs when there is a true effort at mastery and abstinence. It is now held by many medical men in Europe that sexual abstinence, *if it is genuine*, is beneficial.

*Q. 4: The Freudian system of psycho-analysis has attributed a large number of physical and mental*

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*disorders to suppressed sexual desire. To what extent are the assertions of this system true?*

A: The psycho-analysis of Freud takes up a certain part, the darkest, the most perilous, the unhealthiest part of the nature, the lower vital subconscious layer, isolates some of its most morbid phenomena and attributes to it and them an action out of all proportion to its true role in the nature. Modern psychology is an infant science, at once rash, fumbling and crude. As in all infant sciences, the universal habit of the human mind—to take a partial or local truth, generalise it unduly and try to explain a whole field of Nature in its narrow terms—runs riot here. Moreover, the exaggeration of the importance of suppressed sexual complexes is a dangerous falsehood and it can have a nasty influence and tend to make the mind and vital more and not less fundamentally impure than before.

## VI

### THE ROLE OF RELIGION

*Q. 1: In modern times, especially in Europe, the place of religion in life has not only been very much minimised and restricted but often religion has been violently attacked as a force making for retardation, oppression, superstition and ignorance. This revolt against religion has sought to keep science, philosophy and art, politics and practical life and even ethics entirely immune to the influence of religion and in its extreme form has tried to destroy religion altogether. To what extent is this indictment against religion justified?*

**A:** This aggressive indictment against religion in modern times has much to justify it, not in its conclusion but in its premiss, —not that religion in itself must always be, but that historically and as a matter of fact the accredited religions and their hierarchs and exponents have too often been a force for

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retardation, have too often thrown their weight on the side of darkness, oppression and ignorance, and that it has needed a denial, a revolt of the oppressed human mind and heart to correct these errors and set religion right. Though we need not lay a too excessive stress on the superstitions, aberrations, violences, crimes even which Churches and cults and creeds have favoured, admitted, sanctioned, supported or exploited for their own benefit, we have to note the fact that such a thing was possible.

*Q. 2: What is the explanation of so much evil perpetrated in the name of religion?*

A: The root of this evil is not in true religion itself but in our ignorant human confusion of religion with a particular creed, sect, cult, religious society or Church. The human tendency to this error is extremely strong and the whole root of the historical insufficiency of religion as a guide and control of human society lies in this tendency. Churches and creeds have, for example, stood violently in the way of philosophy and science, burned

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a Giordano Bruno, imprisoned a Galileo, and so generally misconducted themselves in this matter that philosophy and science had in self-defence to turn upon religion and rend her to pieces in order to get a free field for their legitimate development; and this because men had chosen to think that religion was bound up with certain fixed intellectual conceptions about God and the world which could not stand scrutiny, and therefore scrutiny had to be put down by fire and sword; scientific and philosophical truth had to be denied in order that religious error might survive. We see too that a narrow religious spirit often oppresses and impoverishes the joy and beauty of life, either from an intolerant asceticism or, as the Puritans attempted it, because they could not see that religious austerity is not the whole of religion, though it may be an important side of it, is not the sole ethico-religious approach to God, since love, charity, gentleness, tolerance, kindness are also and even more divine, and they forgot or never knew that God is love and beauty as well as purity. In politics religion has often thrown itself on the side of power and

resisted the coming of larger political ideals, because it was itself, in the form of a Church, supported by power and because it confused religion with the Church, or because it stood for a false theocracy, forgetting that true theocracy is the kingdom of God in man and not the kingdom of a Pope, a priesthood or a sacerdotal class. So too it has often supported a rigid and outworn social system, because it thought its own life bound up with social forms with which it happened to have been associated during a long portion of its own history and erroneously concluded that even a necessary change there would be a violation of religion and a danger to its existence. As if so mighty and inward a power as the religious spirit in man could be destroyed by anything so small as the change of a social form or so outward as a social readjustment! This error in its many forms has been the great weakness of religion as practised in the past and the opportunity and justification for the revolt of the intelligence, the aesthetic sense, the social and political idealism, even the ethical spirit of the human being against what should have been its own highest tendency and law.

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*Q. 3: In ancient times religion was the most dominant thing in man's life and governed all his individual and social activities. The modern age, on the contrary, considers religion as the enemy of progress and has tried to banish it from life. How are these two divergent attitudes to be reconciled?*

A: Both the attitudes rest upon a certain strong justification and their quarrel is due to a misunderstanding. It is true in a sense that religion should be the dominant thing in life, its light and law, but religion as it should be and is in its inner nature, its fundamental law of being, a seeking after God, the cult of spirituality; on the other hand, it is true that religion when it identifies itself only with a creed, a cult, a Church, a system of ceremonial forms, may well become a retarding force, and there may therefore arise a necessity for the human spirit to reject its control over the varied activities of life.

*Q. 4: But by spirituality religion often means something remote from earthly life, different from it, hostile to it. The spirit then becomes something aloof which man can reach only by throwing away*

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*the life or by persistently discouraging, mortifying and killing it. If that be the true sense of religion, how can it have any positive message for human society in its effort or aspiration for progress or perfection in its own sphere? If religion discourages life and holds out no hope to it, how can it be its true law and guide?*

A: All such religious pessimistic notions of life which have weighed so heavily on man's mind both in the East and the West in the past are a denial of the fullness and power of the Spirit, an impatience with the ways of God in the world, an insufficient faith in the divine Wisdom and Will which created the world and for ever guide it. It admits a wrong notion about that supreme Wisdom and Power and therefore cannot itself be the supreme wisdom and power of the spirit to which the world can look for guidance and for the uplifting of its whole life towards the Divine.

In spirituality, then, understood in this true and complete sense, we must seek for the directing light and the harmonising law, and in religion only in proportion as it identifies itself with this spirituality. So long as it falls short of this, it is one human activity and

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power among others, though the most important and the most powerful, and cannot wholly guide the others. If it seeks always to fix them into the limits of a creed, an unchangeable law, a particular system, it must be prepared to see them revolting from its control; for although they may accept this impress for a time and greatly profit by it, in the end they must move by the law of their being towards a freer scope and activity. Spirituality respects the freedom of the human soul because it is itself fulfilled by freedom; and the deepest meaning of freedom is the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one's own nature, *dharma*. This liberty it will give to all the fundamental parts of our being. It will give that freedom to philosophy and science which ancient Indian religion gave,—freedom even to deny the spirit, if they will,—as a result of which philosophy and science never felt in ancient India any necessity of divorcing themselves from religion, but grew rather into it and under its light. It will give the same freedom to man's seeking for political and social perfection and to all his other powers and aspirations. Only it will be vigilant to

illuminate them so that they may grow into the light and law of the spirit, not by suppression and restriction, but by a searching, self-controlled expansion and a many-sided finding of their greatest, highest and deepest potentialities. For all these are potentialities of the spirit.

*Q. 5: Mahatma Gandhi, commenting on Dr. Ambedkar's advocacy of change of religion stated, "But religion is not like a house or a cloak which can be changed at will. It is more an integral part of one's self than of one's body. Religion is the tie that binds one to one's creator, and while the body perishes, as it has to, religion persists even after that." Is there not some exaggeration in this statement?*

**A:** If it is meant by the statement that the form of religion is something permanent and unchangeable, then that cannot be accepted. But if religion here means one's way of communion with the Divine, then it is true that that is something belonging to the inner being and cannot be changed like a house or a cloak for the sake of some personal, social or worldly convenience. If a change is to be made,

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it can only be for an inner spiritual reason, because of some development from within. No one can be bound to any form of religion or any particular creed or system, but if he changes the one he has accepted for another for external reasons, that means he has inwardly no religion at all and both his old and his new religion are only an empty formula. At bottom that is, I suppose, what the statement drives at. Preference for a different approach to the Truth or the desire of inner spiritual self-expression are not the motives of the recommendation of change to which objection is made here;—the object proposed is an enhancement of social status and consideration which is no more a spiritual motive than conversion for the sake of money or marriage. If a man has no religion in himself, he can change his credal profession for any motive; if he has, he cannot; he can only change it in response to an inner spiritual need. If a man has bhakti for the Divine in the form of Krishna, he can't very well say, "I will scrap Krishna for Christ, so that I may become socially respectable."

## VII

### RELIGION AND REASON

*Q. 1: The extremist type of modern mind has dismissed religion altogether by branding it as a mass of superstitious nonsense, but a more moderate type of that mind has taken a less intolerant attitude to it by not banishing it entirely but by creating what it calls a rational religion. Is this rational religion of any value?*

A: This more moderate attitude of the rational mind to religion is as shallow, presumptuous and erroneous as the thoroughgoing extremist attitude. Its attempts to explain religion have resulted in the compilation of an immense mass of amazingly ingenious perversions, such as certain pseudo-scientific attempts to form a comparative Science of Religion. It has built up in the approved modern style immense façades of theory with stray bricks of misunderstood facts for their material. Its mild condonations

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of religion have led to superficial phases of thought which have passed quickly away. Its efforts at the creation of a rational religion, perfectly well-intentioned, but helpless and unconvincing, have had no appreciable effect and have failed. A purely rational religion could only be a cold and bare Deism, and such attempts have always failed to achieve vitality and permanence; for they act contrary to the *dharma*, the natural law and the spirit of religion.

*Q. 2: Has religion then nothing to do with reason?*

A: The inmost essence of religion, apart from its outward machinery of creed, cult, ceremony and symbol, is the search for God and the finding of God, the Infinite, the Absolute, the One, the Divine who is all these things and yet no abstraction but a Being. Its work is a sincere living out of the true and intimate relations between man and God, relations of unity, relations of difference, relations of an illuminated knowledge, an ecstatic love and delight, an absolute surrender and service, a casting of every part of our existence

out of its normal status into an uprush of man towards the Divine and a descent of the Divine into man. All this has nothing to do with the realm of reason or its normal activities; its aim, its sphere, its process is suprarational. The knowledge of God is not to be gained by weighing the feeble arguments of reason for or against his existence: it is to be gained only by a self-transcending and absolute consecration, aspiration and experience.

*Q. 3: Is there no similarity between the mode of religious experience and the method of rational scientific experiment or rational philosophic thinking?*

A: No. Even in those parts of religious discipline which seem most to resemble scientific experiment, the method is a verification of things which exceed the reason and its timid scope. Even in those parts of religious knowledge which seem most to resemble intellectual operations, the illuminating faculties are not imagination, logic and rational judgment, but revelations, inspirations, intuitions, intuitive discernments that leap down to us from a

plane of suprarational light. The love of God is an infinite and absolute feeling which does not admit of any rational limitation and does not use a language of rational worship and adoration; the delight in God is that peace and bliss which passes all understanding. The surrender to God is the surrender of the whole being to a suprarational light, will, power and love, and his service takes no account of the compromises with life which the practical reason of man uses as the best part of its method in the ordinary conduct of mundane existence. Wherever religion really finds itself, its way is absolute and its fruits are ineffable.

*Q. 4: Has reason then no part to play in the sphere of religion?*

A: Reason has indeed a part to play in relation to this highest field of our religious being and experience, but that part is quite secondary. It cannot lay down the law for the religious life, it cannot determine in its own right the system of divine knowledge; it cannot school and lesson the divine love and delight;

it cannot set bounds to spiritual experience or lay its yoke upon the action of the spiritual man.

*Q. 5: What then is the true function of reason in relation to religion?*

**A:** Its sole part is to explain as best it can in its own language to the intellectual part of man the truths, the experiences, the laws of our suprarational and spiritual existence. That has been the work of spiritual philosophy in the East and of theology in the West, a work of great importance at moments like the present when the intellect of mankind after a long wandering is again turning towards the search for the Divine. Here there must inevitably enter a part of those operations proper to the intellect, logical reasoning, inferences from the data given by rational experience and knowledge of the apparent facts of existence, appeals even to the physical truths of science, all the apparatus of the intelligent mind in its ordinary workings. But this is the weakest part of spiritual philosophy. It convinces the rational mind only where the intellect is predisposed to belief, and even if it convinces,

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it cannot give the true knowledge. Reason is safest when it is content to take the profound truths and experiences of the spiritual being and the spiritual life, just as they are given to it, and throw them into such form, order and language as will make them the most intelligible to the reasoning mind. Even then it is not quite safe, for it is apt to harden the order into an intellectual system and to present the form as if it were the essence. And, at best, it has to use a language which is not the very tongue of the suprarational truth but its inadequate translation and, not being either the ordinary tongue of the rational intelligence, is open to non-understanding or misunderstanding by the ordinary reason of mankind. It is well known to the experience of the spiritual seeker that even the highest philosophising cannot give a true inner knowledge; all it can do is to address the intellect and, when it has done, to say, "I have tried to give you the truth in a form and system which will make it intelligible and possible to you; if you are intellectually convinced or attracted, you can now seek the real knowledge by other means which are beyond my province."

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*Q. 6: But the earlier forms of religion are not always of this pure and sublime type and contain much that is impure, ignorant and crude. Has not reason a better claim for interference in this type of religious life than in the high suprarational type of religious aspiration?*

A: As there is the suprarational life in which religious aspiration finds entirely what it seeks, so too there is also the infrarational life of the instincts, impulses, sensations, crude emotions, vital activities from which all human aspiration takes its beginning. These too feel the touch of the religious sense in man, share its needs and experience, desire its satisfactions. Religion includes this satisfaction also in its scope, and in what is usually called religion it seems even to be the greater part, sometimes to an external view almost the whole; for the supreme purity of spiritual experience does not appear or is glimpsed only through this mixed and turbid current. Much impurity, ignorance, superstition, many doubtful elements must form as the result of this contact and union of our highest tendencies with our lower ignorant nature. Here

it would seem that reason has its legitimate part; here surely it can intervene to enlighten, purify, rationalise the play of the instincts and impulses. It would seem that a religious reformation, a movement to substitute a "pure" and rational religion for one that is largely infrarational and impure, would be a distinct advance in the religious development of humanity. To a certain extent this may be, but, owing to the peculiar nature of the religious being, its entire urge towards the suprarational, not without serious qualifications, nor can the rational mind do anything here that is of a high positive value.

Religious forms and systems become effete and corrupt and have to be destroyed, or they lose much of their inner sense and become clouded in knowledge and injurious in practice, and in destroying what is effete or in negating aberrations reason has played an important part in religious history. But in its endeavour to get rid of the superstition and ignorance which have attached themselves to religious forms and symbols, intellectual reason unenlightened by spiritual knowledge tends to deny and, so far as it can, to destroy the

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truth and the experience which was contained in them. Reformations which give too much to reason and are too negative and protestant, usually create religions which lack in wealth of spirituality and fullness of religious emotion; they are not opulent in their contents; their form and too often their spirit is impoverished, bare and cold. If reason is to play any decisive part, it must be an intuitive rather than an intellectual reason, touched always by spiritual intensity and insight.

*Q. 7: Is there then a fundamental discord between the religious spirit and the reason?*

A: The relations of the spirit and the reason need not be, as they too often are in our practice, hostile or without any point of contact. Religion itself need not adopt for its principle the formula "I believe because it is impossible" or Pascal's "I believe because it is absurd." What is impossible or absurd to the unaided reason, becomes real and right to the reason lifted beyond itself by the power of the spirit and irradiated by its light. For then it is dominated by the intuitive mind

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which is our means of passage to a yet higher principle of knowledge. The widest spirituality does not exclude or discourage any essential human activity or faculty, but works rather to lift all of them up out of their imperfection and groping ignorance, transforms them by its touch and makes them the instruments of the light, power and joy of the divine being and the divine nature.

## VIII

### SUPERSTITIONS—POPULAR BELIEFS— OCCULTISM

*Q. 1: Most of the religious and other popular beliefs of the ancient times have been discarded as mere superstitions by the scientific-rationalistic mind of the modern man. Was there no truth in these beliefs?*

A: The word "superstition" has been habitually used as a convenient club to beat down any belief that does not agree with the ideas of the materialistic reason, that is to say, the physical mind dealing with the apparent law of physical process and seeing no further. It has also been used to dismiss ideas and beliefs not in agreement with one's own idea of what is the rational norm of supraphysical truths as well. For many ages man cherished beliefs that implied a force behind which acted on principles unknown to the physical mind and beyond the witness

of the outward reason and the senses. Science came in with a method of knowledge which extended the evidence of this outer field of consciousness and thought that by this method all existence would become explicable. It swept away at once without examination all the ancient beliefs as so many "superstitions"—true, half-true or false, all went into the dustbin in one impartial sweep, because they did not rely on the method of physical Science and lay outside its data or were or seemed incompatible with its standpoint. Even in the field of supraphysical experience only so much was admitted as could give a mentally rational explanation of itself according to a certain range of ideas—all the rest, everything that seemed to demand an occult, mystic or below-the-surface origin to explain it was put aside as so much superstition. Popular beliefs that were the fruit sometimes of imagination but sometimes also of a traditional empirical knowledge or of a right instinct shared naturally the same fate. That all this was a hasty and illegitimate operation, itself based on the "superstition" of the all-sufficiency of the new method which really applies only to a limited

field, is now becoming more and more evident. The word superstition is one which should be used either not at all or with great caution. It is evidently an anachronism to apply it to beliefs not accepted by the form of religion one happens oneself to follow or favour.

*Q. 2: But surely it can't be denied that there are a number of beliefs which are only blind superstitions?*

A: We cannot go so far as to deny that there is such a thing as superstition—a fixed belief without any ground in something that is quite unsound and does not hang together. The human mind readily claps on such belief to things which can be or are in themselves true, and this is a mixture which very badly confuses the search for knowledge. But precisely because of this mixture, because somewhere behind the superstition or not far off from it there is very usually some real truth, one ought to be cautious in using the word or sweeping away with it as a convenient broom the true, the partly true and the unfounded together and claiming that the bare ground left is the only truth of the matter.

*Q. 3: Belief in magical and occult practices was common to all humanity before the advent of modern Science. What is the real nature and function of occultism?*

**A:** Occultism is in its essence man's effort to arrive at a knowledge of secret truths and potentialities of Nature which will lift him out of slavery to his physical limits of being, an attempt in particular to possess and organise the mysterious, occult, outwardly still undeveloped direct power of Mind upon Life and of both Mind and Life over Matter. There is at the same time an endeavour to establish communication with worlds and entities belonging to the supraphysical heights, depths and intermediate levels of cosmic Being and to utilise this communion for the mastery of a higher Truth and for a help to man in his will to make himself sovereign over Nature's powers and forces. This human aspiration takes its stand on the belief, intuition or intimation that we are not mere creatures of the mud, but souls, minds, wills that can know all the mysteries of this and every world and become not only Nature's pupils but her adepts

and masters. The occultist sought to know the secret of physical things also and in this effort he furthered astronomy, created chemistry, gave an impulse to other sciences, for he utilised geometry also and the science of numbers; but still more he sought to know the secrets of supernature. In this sense occultism might be described as the science of the supernatural; but it is in fact only the discovery of the supra-physical, the surpassing of the material limit,—the heart of occultism is not the impossible chimera which hopes to go beyond or outside all force of Nature and make pure phantasy and arbitrary miracle omnipotently effective. What seems to us supernatural is in fact either a spontaneous irruption of the phenomena of other-Nature into physical Nature or, in the work of the occultist, a possession of the knowledge and power of the higher orders or grades of cosmic Being and Energy and the direction of their forces and processes towards the production of effects in the physical world by seizing on possibilities of interconnection and means for a material effectuality. There are powers of the mind and the life-force which have not been included in Nature's present

systematisation of mind and life in Matter, but are potential and can be brought to bear upon material things and happenings or even brought in and added to the present systematisation so as to enlarge the control of mind over our own life and body or to act on the minds, lives, bodies of others or on the movements of cosmic Forces. The modern admission of hypnotism is an example of such a discovery and systematised application,—though still narrow and limited, limited by its method and formula,—of occult powers which otherwise touch us only by a casual or a hidden action whose process is unknown to us or imperfectly caught by a few; for we are all the time undergoing a battery of suggestions, thought suggestions, impulse suggestions, will suggestions, emotional and sensational suggestions, thought waves, life waves that come on us or into us from others or from the universal Energy, but act and produce their effects without our knowledge. A systematised endeavour to know these movements and their law and possibilities, to master and use the power on Nature-force behind them or to protect ourselves from them would fall within

one province of occultism: but it would only be a small part even of that province; for wide and multiple are the possible fields, uses, processes of this vast range of little explored Knowledge.

*Q. 4: What was the essential difference between occultism as practised in the West and in the East?*

A: Occultism in the West indulged too freely in the romance of the supernatural or made the mistake of concentrating its major effort on the discovery of formulas and effective modes for using supernormal powers. It deviated into magic white and black or into a romantic or thaumaturgic paraphernalia of occult mysticism and the exaggeration of what was after all a limited and scanty knowledge. These tendencies and this insecurity of mental foundation made it difficult to defend and easy to discredit, a target facile and vulnerable. In Egypt and the East this line of knowledge arrived at a greater and more comprehensive endeavour: this ampler maturity can be seen still intact in the remarkable system of the Tantras; it was not only a

many-sided science of the supernormal but supplied the basis of all the occult elements of religion and even developed a great and powerful system of spiritual discipline and self-realisation.

*Q. 5: In the popular mind occultism is usually associated with magic and magical formulas like the mantras. The rationalist mind considers these as fraudulent tricks intended to deceive credulous people. Is there no effective truth in these formulas?*

A: This is only one side of occultism but it is not altogether a superstition as is vainly imagined by those who have not looked deeply or at all at this covert side of secret Nature-Force or experimented with its possibilities. Formulas and their application, a mechanisation of latent forces, can be astonishingly effective in the occult use of mind-power and life-power just as it is in physical Science, but this is only a subordinate method and a limited direction.

*Q. 6: What should be the highest and most important aim of the occult or magical practice?*

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A: Its most important aim must be the discovery of the hidden truths and powers of the mind-force and the life-power and the greater forces of the concealed spirit. The highest occultism is that which discovers the secret movements and dynamic supernormal possibilities of mind and life and spirit and uses them in their native force or by an applied process for the greater effectivity of our mental, vital and spiritual being.

## IX

### COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE DEAD— SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENA

*Q. 1: A section of scientists in Europe who could not deny the occurrence of supernatural phenomena have tried in recent times to investigate them by scientific experimentation and collected a mass of evidence in this field, especially in the psychical research societies organised for the purpose. Communications with the dead through spiritual seances has been a subject of special interest in these societies. Is there any truth in the claim made by them that it is possible to have communications with dead persons through a "psychic" medium?*

A: There is after death a period in which one passes through the other worlds and it is quite possible for the dead or rather the departed—for they are not dead—who are still in regions near the earth to have communication with the living; sometimes it

happens automatically, sometimes by an effort at communication on one side of the curtain or the other. There is no impossibility of such communication by the means used by the spiritists.

*Q. 2: But are not a large number of communications received by mediums in the seances quite false?*

A: Usually genuine communications or contacts of that kind or brought about by that means can only be with those who are yet in a world which is a sort of idealised replica of the earth-consciousness and in which the same personality, ideas, memories persist that the person had here. But all that pretends to be such communications with departed souls is not genuine, especially when it is done through a paid professional medium.

*Q. 3: Why do these mediums receive false communications?*

A: It is because there is an enormous amount of mixture of a very undesirable

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kind, for apart from the great mass of unconscious suggestions from the sitters or the contributions of the medium's subliminal consciousness, one gets into contact with a world of beings which is of a very deceptive or self-deceptive illusory nature. Many of these come and claim to be the departed souls of relatives, acquaintances, well known men, famous personalities, etc. There are also beings who pick up the discarded feelings and memories of the dead and masquerade with them. There are a great number of beings who come to such seances only to play with the consciousness of men or exercise their powers through this contact with the earth and who dope the mediums and sitters with their falsehoods, tricks and illusions. (This refers, of course, to the mediums who are not themselves tricksters.) What comes through the medium may be thus a mixture of the medium's subconscious (using subconscious in the ordinary, not in the Yogic sense) and that of the sitters; there may be an intervention from something like conscious vital sheaths left by the departed or perhaps occupied or used by some spirit or some vital

being. The departed himself in his vital sheath or in something else assumed for the occasion may intervene; the communication in either case is from his vital part. Or some elemental spirit of the lowest vital-physical world near earth may interfere. Where there is such a mixture, a horrible confusion can for the most part be the result—a hotch-potch of all sorts of things coming in through the medium of an atmosphere of “astral” grey light and shadow.

*Q. 4: Sometimes these mediums claim to contact the departed souls of the great men of the past like Christ, Buddha, Shakespeare, Napoleon, etc., and to receive communications from them. Are these communications genuine?*

**A:** All such pretended communications with the famous dead of long-past times are in their very nature deceptive and most of those with the recent ones also—that is evident from the character of these communications.

*Q. 5: Is the possibility of genuine communication with dead persons then very rare?*

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A: Through conscientious mediums one may get sound results, but even these are very ignorant of the nature of the forces they are handling and have no discrimination which can guard them against trickery from the other side of the veil.

*Q. 6: Does this mean that there is little hope of getting true knowledge of the after-life through the spiritualistic seances?*

A: Very little genuine knowledge of the nature of the after-life can be gathered from these seances; a true knowledge is more often gained by the experience of individuals who make serious contact or are able in one way or another to cross the border.

*Q. 7: Is it quite safe to take part in these seances and psychical societies?*

A: Such seances can put one in *rapport* with a very low world of vital beings and forces, themselves obscure, incoherent or tricky and it is dangerous to associate with such a world or to undergo any influence.

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A contact with such a level of beings can be harmful and spiritually dangerous. Many mediums become nervously or morally unbalanced.

*Q. 8: It is said that it is the "ghost" of the dead person who comes to these seances. The term "ghost" is also often used in other connections, e.g. in the case of haunted houses. Belief in ghosts, in fact, was universal till the advent of modern science. Is there any truth in this belief?*

A: The word "ghost" as used in popular parlance covers an enormous number of distinct phenomena which have no necessary connection with each other. To name a few only:

(1) An actual contact with the soul of a human being in its subtle body and transcribed to our mind by the appearance of an image or the hearing of a voice.

(2) A mental formation stamped by the thoughts and feelings of a departed human being on the atmosphere of a place or locality, wandering about there or repeating itself, till that formation either exhausts itself or is dissolved by one means or another. This is

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the explanation of such phenomena as the haunted house in which the scenes attending or surrounding or preceding a murder are repeated over and over again and many other similar phenomena.

(3) A being of the lower vital planes who has assumed the discarded vital sheath of a departed human being or a fragment of his vital personality and appears and acts in the form and perhaps with the surface thoughts and memories of that person.

(4) A being of the lower vital plane who by the medium of a living human being or by some other means or agency is able to materialise itself sufficiently so as to appear and act in a visible form or speak with an audible voice or, without so appearing, to move about material things, e. g. furniture or to materialise objects or to shift them from place to place. This accounts for what are called *poltergeists*, phenomena of stone-throwing, tree-inhabiting *bhutas*, and other well-known phenomena.

(5) Apparitions which are the formations of one's own mind and take to the senses an objective appearance.

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(6) Temporary possession of people by vital beings who sometimes pretend to be departed relatives, etc.

(7) Thought-images of themselves projected, often by people at the moment of death, which appear at that time or a few hours afterwards to their friends or relatives.

*Q. 9: Is there any truth in what is called the "automatic writings" recorded by the "spiritualists"?*

A: Automatic writings like communications with the dead are a mixed affair. Part comes from the subconscious mind of the medium and part from that of the sitters. But it is not true that all can be accounted for by a dramatising imagination and memory. Sometimes there are things none present could know or remember; sometimes even, though that is rare, glimpses of the future.

*Q. 10: What is the explanation of such phenomena as dematerialisation, rematerialisation, levitation, etc. known to many Yogis in India and Tibetan Lamas? Are they merely tricks or magic as is usually supposed?*

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A: There are different planes of substance, gross, subtle and more subtle going back to what is called causal (Karana) substance. What is more gross can be reduced to the subtle state and the subtle brought into the gross state; that accounts for dematerialisation and rematerialisation. These are occult processes and are vulgarly regarded as magic. Ordinarily the magician knows nothing of the why and wherefore of what he is doing, he has simply learned the formula or process or else controls elemental beings of the subtler states (planes or worlds) who do the things for him. The Tibetans indulge widely in occult processes; the books of Madame David Neel who has lived in Tibet give an idea of their expertness in these things. But also the Tibetan Lamas know something of the laws of occult (mental and vital) energy and how it can be made to act on physical things. That is something which goes beyond mere magic. The direct power of mind-force or life-force upon Matter can be extended to an almost illimitable degree. It must be remembered that Energy is fundamentally one in all the planes, only taking more and

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more dense forms, so there is nothing *a priori* impossible in mind-energy or life-energy acting directly on material energy and substance; if they do they can make a material object do things or rather can do things with a material object which would be to that object in its ordinary poise or "law" unhabitual and therefore apparently impossible.

## X

### THE PROBLEM OF GOOD AND EVIL (1)

*Q. 1: One of the most persistent problems of mankind throughout the ages has been the problem of good and evil or the ethical problem. It has been viewed in different ways at different times. Some ancient religions tried to fix an absolute code of conduct based upon supreme laws of good and evil revealed by God through a prophet and having authority at all times and at all places. The Ten Commandments of the ancient Hebrews are an example of this tendency. Is there any truth in the divine origin of these codes and do they possess the eternal validity ascribed to them? What is the difference between the nature of the true divine law and these inflexible codes?*

**A:** These codes are for the most part no more than idealistic glorifications of the moral principles sanctified by religious emotion with the label of a superhuman origin. Some, like the extreme Christian ethic, are rejected by

human nature because they insist unworkably on an impracticable absolute rule. Others prove in the end to be evolutionary compromises and become obsolete in the march of Time. The true divine law, unlike these mental counterfeits, cannot be a system of rigid ethical determinations that press into their cast-iron moulds all our life-movements. The Law divine is truth of life and truth of the spirit and must take up with a free living plasticity and inspire with the direct touch of its eternal light each step of our action and all the complexities of our life-issues. It must act not as a rule and formula but as an enveloping and penetrating conscious presence that determines all our thoughts, activities, feelings, impulses of will by its infallible power and knowledge.

*Q. 2: Some other older religions erected complex Shastras like the codes of Manu and Confucius and proclaimed them as the expression of everlasting verities, Sanatan Dharma. Is the claim of these Shastras to be the expression of supreme and eternal truths of conduct valid? Do they serve the highest ethical aspiration of our nature?*

A: The *Shastra* is a combination in some kind of uniting amalgam of three principles—the social rule, the moral law and certain principles of our highest nature. The first two principles are evolutionary and valid for a time, mental constructions, human readings of the will of the Eternal; the third, attached and subdued to certain social and moral formulas, had to share the fortunes of its forms. Either the *Shastra* grows obsolete and has to be progressively changed or finally cast away or else it stands as a rigid barrier to the self-development of the individual and the race. The *Shastra* erects a collective and external standard; it ignores the inner nature of the individual, the indeterminable elements of a secret spiritual force within him. But the nature of the individual will not be ignored; its demand is inexorable. The unrestrained indulgence of his outer impulses leads to anarchy and dissolution, but the suppression and coercion of his soul's freedom by a fixed and mechanical rule spells stagnation or an inner death. Not this coercion or determination from outside, but the free discovery of his highest spirit and the truth of an eternal

movement is the supreme thing that he has to effectuate.

*Q. 3: The ethical idealist looks for the sure criterion of his conduct not in any superhuman or divine agency but in his own moral reason. Kant, for example, maintains that the moral law is inherent in human reason itself; it is a priori, before experience, innate in the very nature of the human mind, a categorical imperative, an unfailing determinant of right and wrong. Has human reason this inherent and categorical moral sense?*

A: The rational ethical idealist has tried to reduce the ethical life like all the rest to a matter of reason, to determine its nature, its law, its practical action by some principle of reason, by some law of reason. He has never really succeeded and he never can really succeed; his appearances of success are mere pretences of the intellect building elegant and empty constructions with words and ideas, mere conventions of logic and vamped-up synthesis, in sum, pretentious failures which break down at the first strenuous touch of reality. Our moral ideals are themselves for the most part

ill-evolved, ignorant and arbitrary, mental constructions rather than transcriptions of the eternal truths of the spirit. Authoritative and dogmatic, they assert certain absolute standards in theory, but in practice every existing system of ethics proves either in application unworkable or is in fact a constant coming short of the absolute standard to which the ideal pretends. Moreover, these absolute standards themselves become conflicting principles in their present application by an imperfect humanity. Justice often demands what love abhors. Right reason dispassionately considering the facts of nature and human relations in search of a satisfying norm or rule is unable to admit without modification either any reign of absolute justice or any reign of absolute love. And in fact man's absolute justice easily turns out to be in practice a sovereign injustice; for his mind, one-sided and rigid in its constructions, puts forward a one-sided partial and rigorous scheme or figure and claims for it totality and absoluteness and an application that ignores the subtler truth of things and the plasticity of life. All our standards turned into action either waver

on a flux of compromises or err by this partiality and unelastic structure.

*Q. 4: But is it not a fact that, in spite of its basic limitation, the ethical idealist's cult of absolute moral standards and categorical imperatives of an ideal moral law has been a great force for the moral improvement and growth of humanity?*

A: There is, no doubt, something here that helps us to rise beyond limitation by the physical and vital man in us, an insistence that overpasses the individual and collective needs and desires of a humanity still bound to the living mud of Matter in which it took its roots, an aspiration that helps to develop the mental and moral being in us: this new sublimating element has been therefore an acquisition of great importance; its workings have marked a considerable step forward in the difficult evolution of terrestrial Nature. And behind the inadequacy of these ethical conceptions something too is concealed that does attach to a supreme Truth; there is here the glimmer of a light and power that are part of a yet unreached divine Nature. But the

mental idea of these things is not that light and the moral formulation of them is not that power. These are only representative constructions of the mind that cannot embody the divine spirit which they vainly endeavour to imprison in their categorical formulas. Our inner nature is the progressive expression of the eternal Spirit and too complex a power to be tied by a single dominant mental or moral principle. Beyond the mental and moral being in us is a greater divine being that is spiritual and supramental. Only the supramental consciousness can reveal to the differing and conflicting forces of our nature their spiritual truth and harmonise their divergencies.

*Q. 5: Recent thinkers have treated the ethical problem more as a practical question of social relationship rather than that of ideal or divine absolute laws. Thus the utilitarian school of the nineteenth century of which Mill was one of the chief representatives laid down the dictum of "the greatest good of the greatest number" as the sole criterion of all ethical conduct. Can this principle of utility be considered the true standard of ethical goodness and evil?*

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A: Utility is a fundamental principle of existence and all fundamental principles of existence are in the end one; therefore it is true that the highest good is also the highest utility. It is true also that not any balance of the greatest good of the greatest number, but simply the good of others and most widely the good of all is one ideal aim of outgoing ethical practice; it is that which the ethical man would like to effect, if he could only find the way and be always sure what is the real good of all. But this does not help to regulate our ethical practice, nor does it supply us with its inner principle whether of being or of action, but only produces one of the many considerations by which we can feel our way along the road which is so difficult to travel. Good, not utility, must be the principle and standard of good; otherwise we fall into the hands of that dangerous pretender expediency, whose whole method is alien to the ethical. Moreover, the standard of utility, the judgment of utility, its spirit, its form, its application must vary with the individual nature, the habit of mind, the outlook on the world. Here there can be no

reliable general law to which all can subscribe, no set of large governing principles such as it is sought to supply to our conduct by a true ethics. Nor can ethics at all or ever be a matter of calculation. There is only one safe rule for the ethical man, to stick to his principle of good, his instinct for good, his vision of good, his intuition of good and to govern by that his conduct. He may err, but he will be on his right road in spite of all stumblings, because he will be faithful to the law of his nature. The saying of the Gita is always true: better is the law of one's own nature though ill-performed, dangerous is an alien law however speciously superior it may seem to our reason. But the law of nature of the ethical being is the pursuit of good; it can never be the pursuit of utility.

## XI

### THE PROBLEM OF GOOD AND EVIL (2)

*Q. 1: The hedonistic theory of ethics judges virtue from the standard of pleasure or satisfaction which it considers to be the goal of all human activity and man's supreme good. How far can this be admitted as the true aim of our ethical endeavour?*

**A:** Neither the pursuit of pleasure high or base nor self-satisfaction of any kind, however subtle or even spiritual, can be the law of nature of the ethical being. It is true that the highest good is both in its nature and inner effect the highest bliss. Ananda, delight of being, is the spring of all existence and that to which it tends and for which it seeks openly or covertly in all its activities. It is true too that in virtue growing, in good accomplished there is great pleasure and that the seeking for it may well be always there as a subconscious motive to the pursuit of virtue. But

for practical purposes this is a side aspect of the matter; it does not constitute pleasure into a test or standard of virtue. On the contrary, virtue comes to the natural man by a struggle with his pleasure-seeking nature and is often a deliberate embracing of pain, an edification of strength by suffering. We do not embrace that pain and struggle for the pleasure of the pain and the pleasure of the struggle; for that higher strenuous delight, though it is felt by the secret spirit in us, is not usually or not at first conscious in the conscient normal part of our being which is the field of the struggle. The action of the ethical man is not motivated by even an inner pleasure, but by a call of his being, the necessity of an ideal, the figure of an absolute standard, a law of the Divine.

*Q. 2: But the history of the human race shows that the origin of man's morality and the determining cause of its evolution is not his inner necessity for an ideal but the social need of adjusting his personal claims and desires to those of the others in his society. Is not this social need the true origin of morality?*

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A: It is true that this social need is the obscure matrix of morality and of man's ethical impulse and that, in the outward history, the evolution of man in society may seem to be the determining cause of his ethical evolution. For ethics only begins by the demand upon him of something other than his personal preference, vital pleasure or material self-interest; and this demand seems at first to work on him through the necessity of his relations with others, by the exigencies of his social existence: but that this is not the core of the matter is shown by the fact that the ethical demand does not always square with the social demand, nor the ethical standard always coincide with the social standard. On the contrary, the ethical man is often called upon to reject and do battle with the social demand, to break, to move away from, to reverse the social standard. His relations with others and his relations with himself are both of them the occasions of his ethical growth; but that which determines his ethical being is his relations with God, the urge of the Divine upon him whether concealed in his nature or conscious in his higher self or inner

genius. He obeys an inner ideal, not an outer standard; he answers to a divine law in his being, not to a social claim or a collective necessity. The ethical imperative comes not from around but from within him and above him.

*Q. 3: What are the progressive stages of the growth of man's moral nature?*

A: Our ethical impulses and activities begin like all the rest in the infrarational and take their rise from the subconscious. They arise as an instinct of right, an instinct of obedience to an ununderstood law, an instinct of self-giving in labour, an instinct of sacrifice and self-sacrifice, an instinct of love, of self-subordination and of solidarity with others. Man obeys the law at first without any inquiry into the why and the wherefore; he does not seek for it a sanction in the reason. His first thought is that it is a law created by higher powers than himself and his race and he says with the ancient poet that he knows not whence these laws sprang, but only that they are and endure and cannot with impunity

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be violated. What the instincts and impulses seek after, the reason labours to make us understand, so that the will may come to use the ethical impulses intelligently and turn the instincts into ethical ideas. It corrects man's crude and often erring misprisions of the ethical instinct, separates and purifies his confused associations, shows as best it can the relations of his often clashing moral ideals, tries to arbitrate and compromise between their conflicting claims, arranges a system and many-sided rule of ethical action. And all this is well, a necessary stage of our advance; but in the end these ethical ideas and this intelligent ethical will which it has tried to train to its control, escape from its hold and soar up beyond its province. Always, even when enduring its rein and curb, they have that inborn tendency.

*Q. 4: Why does the developing ethical impulse in man finally refuse to follow the dictates of his reason?*

**A:** The ethical being of man like the rest is a growth and a seeking towards the abso-

lute, the Divine, which can only be attained securely in the suprarational. It seeks after an absolute purity, an absolute right, an absolute truth, an absolute strength, an absolute love and self-giving, and it is most satisfied when it can get them in absolute measure, without limit, curb or compromise, divinely, infinitely, in a sort of godhead and transfiguration of the ethical being. The reason is chiefly concerned with what it best understands, the apparent process, the machinery, the outward act, its result and effect, its circumstance, occasion and motive; by these it judges the morality of the action and the morality of the doer. But the developed ethical being knows instinctively that it is an inner something which it seeks and the outward act is only a means of bringing out and manifesting within ourselves by its psychological effects that inner absolute and eternal entity.

*Q. 5: By what standard does the developed ethical man measure the value of his actions?*

*A: To the developed ethical being the value of our actions is not so much in their*

apparent nature and outward result as in their help towards the growth of the Divine within us. It is difficult, even impossible, to justify upon outward grounds the absolute justice, absolute right, absolute purity, love or selflessness of an action or course of action; for action is always relative, it is mixed and uncertain in its results, perplexed in its occasions. But it is possible to relate the inner being to the eternal and absolute good, to make our sense and will full of it so as to act out of its impulsion or its intuitions and inspirations. That is what the ethical being labours towards and the higher ethical man increasingly attains to in his inner efforts.

*Q. 6: What is the true essence of ethics and how is it realised?*

A: Ethics is not in its essence a calculation of good and evil in the action or a laboured effort to be blameless according to the standards of the world,—those are only crude appearances,—it is an attempt to grow into the divine nature. Its parts of purity are an aspiration towards the inalienable purity of

God's being; its parts of truth and right are a seeking after conscious unity with the law of the divine knowledge and will; its parts of sympathy and charity are a movement towards the infinity and universality of the divine love; its parts of strength and manhood are an edification of the divine strength and power. That is the heart of its meaning. Its high fulfilment comes when the being of the man undergoes this transfiguration; then it is not his actions that standardise his nature but his nature that gives value to his actions; then he is no longer laboriously virtuous, artificially moral, but naturally divine. Actively, too, he is fulfilled and consummated when he is not led or moved either by the infrarational impulses or the rational intelligence and will, but inspired and piloted by the divine knowledge and will made conscious in his nature. And that can only be done, first by communication of the truth of these things through the intuitive mind as it purifies itself progressively from the invasion of egoism, self-interest, desire, passion and all kinds of self-will, finally through the suprarational light and power, no longer

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communicated but present and in possession of his being. Such was the supreme aim of the ancient sages who had the wisdom which rational man and rational society have rejected because it was too high a truth for the comprehension of the reason and for the powers of the normal limited human will too bold and immense, too infinite an effort.

## XII

### THE PROBLEM OF GOOD AND EVIL (3)

*Q. 1: The moralist enjoins the practice of virtue by laying down the dictum that good must create good and evil must create evil in accordance with the law that like creates like. "Do unto others as you would be done by," he says, because then they will indeed so do to you. The strict pacifist, for example, would never admit the use of violence or a resort to war in any circumstances whatsoever on the ground that violence leads always to further violence. Does any such strict rule of moral return prevail in actual life?*

**A:** The rule is true to a certain extent in tendency and works sometimes well enough and the prudential intelligence of man takes some account of it in action but it is not true all the way and all the time. It is evident enough that hatred, violence, injustice are likely to create an answering hatred, violence and injustice and that I can only

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indulge these propensities with impunity if I am sufficiently powerful to defy resistance or so long as I am at once strong and prudent enough to provide against their natural reactions. It is true also that by doing good and kindness I create a certain goodwill in others, and can rely under ordinary or favourable circumstances not so much on gratitude and return in kind as on their support and favour. But this good and this evil are both of them movements of the ego, and on the mixed egoism of human nature there can be no safe or positive reliance. An egoistic selfish strength, if it knows what to do and where to stop, even a certain measure of violence and injustice, if it is strong and skilful, cunning, fraud, many kinds of evil, do actually pay in man's dealing with man hardly less than in the animal's with the animal, and on the other hand the doer of good who counts on a return or reward finds himself as often as not disappointed of his bargained recompense.

*Q. 2: Why is this so?*

*A:* It is because the weakness of human

nature worships the power that tramples on it, does homage to successful strength, can return to every kind of strong or skilful imposition belief, acceptance, obedience: it can crouch and fawn and admire even amidst movements of hatred and terror; it has singular loyalties and unreasoning instincts. And its disloyalties too are as unreasoning or light and fickle: it takes just dealing and beneficence as its right and forgets or cares not to repay. And there is worse; for justice, mercy, beneficence, kindness are often enough rewarded by their opposites and ill-will an answer to goodwill is a brutally common experience. If something in the world and in man returns good for good and evil for evil, it as often returns evil for good and, with or without a conscious moral intention, good for evil. And even an unegoistic virtue or a divine good and love entering the world awakens hostile reactions. Attila and Jenghiz on the throne to the end, Christ on the cross and Socrates drinking his potion of hemlock are no very clear evidence for any optimistic notion of a law of moral return in the world of human nature.

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*Q. 3: If not in human nature, does this law operate in the action of the larger world measures?*

A: There is little more sign of its sure existence in the world measures. Actually in the cosmic dispensation evil comes out of good and good out of evil and there seems to be no exact correspondence between the moral and the vital measures. All that we can say is that good done tends to increase the sum and total power of good in the world and the greater this grows, the greater is likely to be the sum of human happiness, and that evil done tends to increase the sum and total power of evil in the world and the greater this grows, the greater is likely to be the sum of human suffering and, eventually, man or nation doing evil has in some way to pay for it, but not often in any intelligibly graded or apportioned measure and not always in clearly translating terms of vital good fortune and ill fortune.

*Q. 4: Does this rule of moral return correspond to the true principle and the whole law of ethics?*

### THE PROBLEM OF GOOD AND EVIL (3)

A: It cannot, because good and evil are moral and not vital values and have a clear right only to a moral and not a vital return, because reward and punishment put forward as the conditions of good doing and evil doing do not constitute and cannot create a really moral order, the principle itself, whatever temporary end it serves, being fundamentally immoral from the higher point of view of a true and pure ethics, and because there are other forces that count and have their right,—knowledge, power and many others. The correspondence of moral and vital good is a demand of the human ego and like many others of its demands answers to certain tendencies in the world mind, but is not its whole law or highest purpose. A moral order there can be, but it is in ourselves and for its own sake that we have to create it and, only when we have so created it and found its right relation to other powers of life, can we hope to make it count at its full value in the right ordering of man's vital existence.

*Q. 5: Is there not a retaliatory action in Nature, a sort of a boomerang movement of energy by which*

*the results of a man's actions rebound upon him, sometimes in exact figure and measure? The ancients recognised this action of Nature and called it the law of talion which seemed to them a sufficient evidence of a moral order in the universe. Does any such law of exact and unfailing retributive rebound exist in Nature?*

A: The careful thinker will pause long before he hastens to subscribe to any such conclusion, for there is much that militates against it and this kind of definite reaction is rather exceptional than an ordinary rule of human life. If it were a regular feature, men would soon learn the code of the draconic impersonal legislator and know what to avoid and the list of life's prohibitions and vetoes. But there is no such clear penal legislation of Nature.

The mathematical precision of physical Nature's action and reaction cannot indeed be expected from mental and vital Nature. For not only does everything become infinitely more subtle, complex and variable as we rise in the scale, so that in our life-action there is an extraordinary intertwining of forces and

mixture of many values, but, even, the psychological and moral value of the same action differs in different cases, according to the circumstance, the conditions, the motive and mind of the doer.

*Q. 6: But in the dealings of man with man and of man with the universe and God, would not this law work out a strict ethical justice?*

A: The law of the talion is no just or ethical rule when applied by man to men and, applied by a superhuman dispenser of justice or impersonal law with a rude rule of thumb to the delicate and intricate tangle of man's life action and life motives, it would be no better. And it is evident too that the slow, long and subtle purposes of the universal Power working in the human race would be defeated rather than served by any universality of this too precise and summary procedure. Accordingly we find that its working is occasional and intermittent rather than regular, variable and to our minds capricious rather than automatic and plainly intelligible.

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*Q. 7: But how is it then that in a number of cases a definite and unmistakable recoil of a man's actions comes upon him sooner or later?*

A: At times in the individual's life the rebound of this kind of Karma is decisively, often terribly clear and penal justice is done, although it may come to him in an unexpected fashion, long delayed and from strange quarters; but however satisfactory to our dramatic sense, this is not the common method of retributive Nature. Her ways are more tortuous, subtle, unobtrusive and indecipherable. Sometimes a nation pays for its crimes or offences though not with that kind of precision but still enough for the sign manual of the law to be there, but individually it is the innocent who suffer.

*Q. 8: Is there no truth then in man's idea of this law of talion? Does it not serve any moral purpose in the will and the workings of the universe?*

A: It is evident that we cannot make much of a force that works out in so strange a fashion, however occasionally striking and

dramatic its pointing at cause and consequence. It is too uncertain in its infliction of penalty to serve the end which the human mind expects from a system of penal justice, too inscrutably variable in its incidence to act as an indicator to that element in the human temperament which waits upon expediency and regulates its steps by a prudential eye to consequence. Men and nations continue to act always in the same fashion regardless of this occasional breaking out of the lightnings of a retaliatory doom, these occasional precisions of Karmic justice amidst the uncertainties of the complex measures of the universe. It works really not on the mind and will of man—except to some degree in a subtle and imperfect fashion on the subconscious mind—but outside him, as a partial check and regulator helping to maintain the balance of the returns of energy and the life purposes of the world-spirit. The action of Nature's penalties, seldom agreeing with any pure law of the talion, is intended to prevent the success of the vital egoism of man and serves as an interim compression and compulsion until he can discover and succeed in

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spite of his vital self in obeying a higher law of his being and a purer dynamism of motive in his directing mind and governing spirit. It serves therefore a certain moral purpose in the will in the universe, but is not itself, even in combination with others, sufficient to be the law of a moral order.

### XIII

#### THE LAW OF KARMA

*Q. 1: Belief in the law of Karma, in one form or other, has existed both in the East and the West since ancient times. Is this belief based on any sound practical or philosophical truth?*

A: There is an unanswerable truth in the theory of Karma,—not necessarily in the form the ancients gave to it, but in the idea at its centre,—which at once strikes the mind and commands the assent of the understanding. There is a solidity at once of philosophic and of practical truth supporting the idea, a bed-rock of the deepest universal undeniable verities against which the human mind must always come up in its fathomings of the fathomless; in this way indeed does the world deal with us, there is a law here which does so make itself felt and against which all our egoistic ignorance and self-will and violence

dashes up in the end, as the old Greek poet said of the haughty insolence and prosperous pride of man, against the very foundation of the throne of Zeus, the marble feet of Themis, the adamantine bust of Ananke. There is the secret of an eternal factor, the base of the unchanging action of the just and truthful gods, *devānām dhruvāni vratāni*, in the self-sufficient and impartial law of Karma.

*Q. 2: What is the fundamental meaning of Karma?*

*A:* Fundamentally, the meaning of Karma is that all existence is the working of a universal Energy, a process and an action and a building of things by that action,—an unbuilding too, but as a step to farther building,—that all is a continuous chain in which every one link is bound indissolubly to the past infinity of numberless links, and the whole governed by fixed relations, by a fixed association of cause and effect, present action the result of past action as future action will be the result of present action, all cause a working of energy and all effect

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too a working of energy. The moral significance is that all our existence is a putting out of an energy which is in us and by which we are made and as is the nature of the energy which is put forth as cause, so shall be that of the energy which returns as effect, that this is the universal law and nothing in the world can, being of and in our world, escape from its governing incidence. That is the philosophical reality of the theory of Karma, and that too is the way of seeing which has been developed by physical Science.

*Q. 3: It is held by many that this law of Karma wholly determines and governs the evolution of the life and the soul in the universe. Is this true?*

A: The law or chain of Karma is only an outward machinery and cannot be elevated to a greater position as the sole and absolute determinant of the life-workings of the cosmos, unless the cosmos is itself entirely mechanical in its character. But all is not Law and Process, there is also Being and Consciousness; there is not only a machinery but a Spirit in things, not only Nature and law of cosmos

but a cosmic Spirit, not only a process of mind and life and body but a soul in the natural creature. If it were not so, there could be no rebirth of a soul and no field for a law of Karma. But if the fundamental truth of our being is spiritual and not mechanical, it must be our self, our soul that fundamentally determines its own evolution, and the law of Karma can only be one of the processes it uses for that purpose: our Spirit, our Self must be greater than its Karma. There is Law, but there is also spiritual freedom: Law and Process are one side of our existence and their reign is over our outer mind, life and body, for these are mostly subject to the mechanism of Nature. But even here their mechanical power is absolute only over body and matter; for Law becomes more complex and less rigid, Process more plastic and less mechanical when there comes in the phenomenon of life, and yet more is this so when mind intervenes with its subtlety; an inner freedom already begins to intervene and, the more we go within, the soul's power of choice is increasingly felt: for Prakriti is the field of law and process, but the soul, the

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Purusha, is the giver of the sanction, *anumantā*, and even if ordinarily it chooses to remain a witness and concede an automatic sanction, it can be, if it wills, the master of its nature, Ishwara.

*Q. 4: The modern scientific mind while admitting the mechanical law of the action of the energies, reduces all to a determination by the physical energies of the universe. Is this not an arbitrary oversimplification of the complex workings of the many strands of the universal Nature? Is not the action of our inner mental and moral nature largely independent of the rule of our bodily processes?*

A: Being is no doubt one, and Law too may be one; but it is perilous to fix from the beginning on one type of phenomena with a predetermined will to deduce from that all other phenomenon however different in its significance and nature. In that way we are bound to distort truth into the mould of our own prepossession. Intermediately at least we have rather to recognise the old harmonious truth of Veda—which also came by this way in its end, its Vedanta, to the conception of

the unity of Being,—that there are different planes of cosmic existence and therefore too of our own existence and in each of them the same powers, energies or laws must act in a different type and in another sense and light of their effectuality. First, then, we see that if Karma be a universal truth or the universal truth of being, it must be equally true of the inly-born mental and moral worlds of our action as in our outward relations with the physical universe. It is the mental energy that we put forth which determines the mental effect,—but subject to all the impact of past, present and future surrounding circumstance, because we are not isolated powers in the world but rather our energy a subordinate strain and thread of the universal energy. The moral energy of our action determines similarly the nature and effect of the moral consequence, but subject too—though to this element the rigid moralist does not give sufficient consideration,—to the same incidence of past, present and future surrounding circumstance. That this is true of the output of physical energy needs no saying nor any demonstration. We must recognise these different types

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and variously formulated motions of the one universal Force, and it will not do to say from the beginning that the measure and quality of my inner being is some result of the output of a physical energy translated into mental and moral energies,—for instance, that my doing a good or a bad action or yielding to good or to bad affections and motives is at the mercy of my liver, or contained in the physical germ of my birth, or is the effect of my chemical elements or determined essentially and ultimately by the disposition of the constituent electrons of my brain and nervous system. Whatever drafts my mental and moral being may make on the corporeal for its supporting physical energy and however it may be affected by its borrowings, yet it is very evident that it uses them for other and larger purposes, has a supraphysical method, evolves much greater motives and significances. The moral energy is in itself a distinct power, has its own plane of karma, moves me even, and that characteristically, to override my vital and physical nature. Forms of one universal Force at bottom—or at top—these may be, but in practice they are different energies and have to be so

dealt with—until we can find what that universal Force may be in its highest purest texture and initial power and whether that discovery can give us in the perplexities of our nature a unifying direction.

*Q. 5: The ethical mind has tried to read in the complex workings of the Karmic Law the strict working of the rule of moral justice. Is this also not an error of over-simplification by arbitrary selection of a limited principle as the sole regulator of the manifold action of the universal Nature?*

A: The universe is not solely an ethical proposition, a problem of the antinomy of the good and the evil; the Spirit of the universe can in no way be imagined as a rigid moralist concerned only with making all things obey the law of moral good, or a stream of tendency towards righteousness attempting, hitherto, with only a very poor success, to prevail and rule, or a stern Justicer rewarding and punishing creatures in a world that he has made or has suffered to be full of wickedness and suffering and evil. The universal Will has evidently many other and more supple modes than that,

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an infinity of interests, many other elements of its being to manifest, many lines to follow, many laws and purposes to pursue. The law of the world is not this alone that our good brings good to us and our evil brings evil, nor is its sufficient key the ethical-hedonistic rule that our moral good brings to us happiness and success and our moral evil brings to us sorrow and misfortune. There is a rule of right in the world, but it is the right of the truth of Nature and of the truth of the spirit, and that is a vast and various rule and takes many forms that have to be understood and accepted before we can reach either its highest or its integral principle.

*Q. 6: Some extreme moralists maintain that even catastrophes and upheavals in the physical nature like earthquakes are a result of the sins of men. Is there any truth in this?*

A: Why should earthquakes occur by some wrong movement of man? When man was not there, did not earthquakes occur? If he were blotted out by poison gas or otherwise, would they cease? Earthquakes are a pertur-

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bation in Nature due to some pressure of forces; frequency of earthquakes may coincide with a violence of upheavals in human life but the upheavals of earth and human life are both results of a general clash or pressure of forces; one is not the cause of the other.

## XIV

### KARMA AND FREE WILL

*Q. 1: If the law of Karma governs everything there can be no possibility of freedom. Are we completely bound by the rule of Karma? Is the human idea of freedom only an illusion?*

A: The world of Matter seems to know nothing about freedom; everything there appears as if written in sybillic laws upon tablets of stone, laws which have a process, but no initial reason, serve a harmony of purposes or at least produce a cosmos of fixed results, but do not appear to be shaped with an eye to them by any discoverable Intelligence. We can think of no presence of soul in natural things, because we can see in them no conscious action of mind, and a conscious active mental intelligence is to our notions the very basis and standing-ground, if not the whole stuff of soul-existence. If Matter is all, then

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we may very easily conclude that all is a Karma of material energy which is governed by some inherent incomprehensible mechanically legislating Necessity. But then we see that Life seems to be made of a different stuff; here various possibility develops, here creation becomes eager, pressing, flexible, protean; here we are conscious of a searching and a selection, many potentialities and a choice of actualities, of a subconscious idea which is feeling around for its vital self-expression and guiding an instinctive action,—often, though in certain limits, with an unerring intuitive guidance of life to its immediate objective or to some yet distant purpose,—of a subconscious will too in the fibre of all this vast seeking and mutable impulsion. This too indeed works within limits, under fetters, in a given range of processes. But when we get to mind, Nature becomes there much more widely conscious of possibility and of choice; mind is aware of potentialities and of determinations in idea which are other than those of the immediate actuality or of the fixedly necessary consequence of the sum of past and present actualities; it is aware of numberless “may-be”s

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and "might-have-been"s, and these last are not entirely dead rejected things, but can return through the power of the Idea and effect future determinations and can fulfil themselves at last in the inner reality of their idea though, it may well be, in other forms and circumstances.

*Q. 2: But is not man's conscious choice and will itself an instrument of the universal Nature, and is not his freedom an arbitrary illusion of his mentality which lives in each moment of the present and separates it by ignorance, by an abstraction of the mind from its determining past, so that he seems at every critical moment to exercise a free virgin choice, while all the time his choice is dominated by his own previous formations which he ignores?*

A: That is the first idea of Karma. Certainly, our present will must come in as one though not by any means the sole element of the act and formation, but in this view it is not a free ever-new will, but constantly an instrument shaped and used by something greater than ourselves. Only if there is a soul or self which is not a creation, but a

master of Nature, not a formation of the stream of universal energy, but itself the former and creator of its own Karma, are we justified in our claim of an actual freedom or at least in our aspiration to a real liberty. There is the whole heart of the debate, the nodus and escape of this perplexed issue.

*Q. 3: Is there no relation between man's subjection to the blind force of Karmic Necessity and his irrepressible impulse of freedom, between his earthly human nature at whirl in the machinery of mind, life and body and the master-Soul, the free Godhead, the real Man behind?*

**A:** The soul of man is a power of the self-existence which manifests the universe and not the creature and slave of a mechanical Nature; and it is only the natural instruments of his being, it is mind, life and body and their functions and members which are helpless apparatus and gear of the machinery. These things are subject to the action of Karma, but man in himself, the real man within is not its subject, *na karma lipyate nare*; rather is Karma his instrument and its developments the mate-

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rial he uses, and he is using it always from life to life for the shaping of a limited and individual, which may be one day a divine and cosmic personality. For the eternal spirit enjoys an absolute freedom, and this freedom appears to us no doubt in a certain status, origin or background of all being as an unconditioned infinite of existence, but also it is in relation to the universe the freedom of an existence which displays an infinite of possibilities and has a power of shaping at will out of its own potentiality the harmonies of the cosmos. Man, too, may well be capable of a release, *moksha*, into the unconditioned Infinite by cessation of all action and mind and personality; but that is not the whole of the spirit's absolute freedom; it is rather a dependent liberty, since it endures only by this cessation. But the freedom of the Spirit is not so dependent; that remains unimpaired in all this action of Karma and is not diminished or abrogated by the pouring of its energies into the whirl of the universe.

*Q. 4: Some spiritual thinkers maintain that man cannot enjoy this double freedom because as*

*man he is an individual being and therefore a thing of Nature and entirely subject to Karma; to be free he must get away from individuality and Nature and Karma, and then man no longer exists, there is only the unconditioned Infinite.*

A: But this is to assume that there is no power of spiritual individuality, but only a power of individuation in Nature, only the formation of a nodus of mental, vital and physical Karma with which the one self for a long time mistakenly identifies its being by the delusion of ego. But if on the other hand there is any such thing as an individual power of spirit, it must in whatever degree share in the force and freedom of the self-existent Divinity; for it is being of his being.

*Q. 5: Why is man bound by Karma and conditioned and determined by its law though he is free in spirit? Why does he not have complete freedom?*

A: It is because there is separation between his outward nature and his inmost spiritual self and he does not live in that outwardness

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with his whole being, but with a shape, turn and formation of himself which he calls his ego or his personality. The cosmic spirit in Matter seems itself to be so bound, for the same reason, because it has started an outward action, a law and disposition of material energy which must be allowed to unroll its consequences; itself holds back behind and conceals its shaping touch, but still its supporting assent and impulse are there and these come out more into the open as Nature rises in the scales of life and mind. Nevertheless, even in mind and even in its phenomenon of a conscious will Karma is the first law and there cannot be there a complete freedom; there is no such thing as a mental will which is absolutely free. And this is because mind is part of the action of the outward Ignorance, an action which seeks for knowledge but does not possess its full light and power, which can conceive of self and spirit and infinity and reflect them, but not altogether live in them, which can quiver with infinite possibility, but can only deal in a limited half-effective fashion with limited possibilities. An Ignorance cannot be permitted to have, even if

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in its nature it could have, free mastery. It would never do for an ignorant mind and will to be given a wide and real freedom; for it would upset the right order of the energy which the Spirit has set at work and produce a most unholy confusion. It must be forced to obey or, if it resists, to bear the reaction of the Law; its partial freedom of a clouded and stumbling knowledge must be constantly overruled both in action and result by the law of universal Nature and the will of the seeing universal Spirit who governs the dispositions and consequences of Karma. And that is in patent fact the character of our mental being and action.

## XV

### KARMA AND REBIRTH

*Q. 1: The idea of Karma in ancient times was closely associated with a belief in rebirth. Is this association based on any inevitable necessity?*

A: This close association between Karma and rebirth is not a mere accident, but a perfectly intelligible and indeed inevitable union of two related truths which are needed for each other's completeness and can with difficulty exist in separation. These two things are the soul side and the nature side of one and the same cosmic sequence. Rebirth is meaningless without Karma, and Karma has no fount of inevitable origin and no rational and no moral justification if it is not an instrumentality for the sequences of the soul's continuous experience.

*Q. 2: Why is Karma necessary for rebirth?*

A: If we believe that the soul is repeatedly reborn in the body, we must believe also that there is some link between the lives that preceded and the lives that follow and that the past of the soul has an effect on its future; and that is the spiritual essence of the law of Karma. To deny it would be to establish a reign of the most chaotic incoherence, such as we find only in the leaps and turns of the mind in dream or in the thoughts of madness, and hardly even there. And if this existence were, as the cosmic pessimist imagines, a dream or an illusion or, worse, as Schopenhauer would have it, a delirium and insanity of the soul, we might accept some such law of inconsequent consequence. But, taken even at its worst, this world of life differs from dream, illusion and madness by its plan of fine, complex and subtle sequences, the hanging together and utility even of its discords, the general and particular harmony of its relations, which, if they are not the harmony we would have, not our longed-for ideal harmony, has still at every point the stamp of a Wisdom and an Idea at work; it is not the act of a Mind in tatters or a machine in dis-

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location. The continuous existence of the soul in rebirth must signify an evolution if not of the self, for that is said to be immutable, yet of its more outward active soul or self of experience. This evolution is not possible if there is not a connected sequence from life to life, a result of action and experience, an evolutionary consequence to the soul, a law of Karma.

*Q. 3: What is the necessity of rebirth to Karma?*

A: If we give to Karma its integral and not a truncated meaning, we must admit rebirth for the sufficient field of its action.

*Q. 4: What is the integral meaning of Karma, and why is rebirth necessary as a field of its working?*

A: Karma is not quite the same thing as a material or substantial law of cause and effect, the antecedent and its mechanical consequence. That would perfectly admit of a Karma which could be carried on in time and the results come with certainty in their proper place, their just degree by a working out of the balance of forces, but need not in any

way touch the human originator who might have passed away from the scene by the time the result of his acts got into manifestation. A mechanical Nature could well visit the sins of the fathers not on them, but on their fourth or their four-hundredth generation, as indeed this physical Nature does, and no objection of injustice or any other mental or moral objection could rise, for the only justice or reason of a mechanism is that it shall work according to the law of its structure and the fixed eventuality of its force in action. We cannot demand from it a mind or a moral equity or any kind of supraphysical responsibility. The universal energy grinds out unconsciously its effects and individuals are only fortuitous or subordinate means of its workings; the soul itself, if there is a soul, makes only a part of the mechanism of Nature, exists not for itself, but as a utility for her business. But Karma is more than a mechanical law of antecedent and consequence. Karma is action, there is a thing done and a doer and an active consequence; these three are the three joints, the three locks, the three *sandhis* of the connexus of Karma. And it is a complex mental, moral

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and physical working; for the law of it is not less true of the mental and moral than of the physical consequence of the act to the doer. The will and the idea are the driving force of the action, and the momentum does not come from some commotion in my chemical atoms or some working of ion and electron or some weird biological effervescence. Therefore the act and consequence must have some relation to the will and the idea and there must be a mental and moral consequence to the soul which has the will and idea. That, if we admit the individual as a real being, signifies a continuity of act and consequence to him and therefore rebirth for a field of this working. It is evident that in one life we do not and cannot labour out and exhaust all the values and powers of that life, but only carry on a past thread, weave out something in the present, prepare infinitely more for the future.

*Q. 5: Is not the existence of the individual soul implied in the idea of rebirth? Would the consequence of rebirth follow from the very nature of Karma if there were only an All-Soul of the universe?*

A. It would not, because then it would be that which is carrying on in myriads of forms its past, working out some present result, spinning yarn of Karma for a future web of the consequence. It is the All-Soul which would be the originator, would uphold the force of the act, would receive and exhaust or again take up for farther uses the returning force of the consequence. Nothing essential would depend on its doing all these things through the same individual mask of its being. For the individual would only be a prolonged moment of the All-Soul, and what it originated in this moment of its being which I call myself, might very well produce its result on some other moment of the same being which from the point of view of my ego would be somebody quite different from and unconnected with myself. There would be no injustice, no unreason in such an apparently vicarious reaping of the fruit or suffering of the consequence; for what has a mask, though it be a living and suffering mask, to do with these things? And, in fact, in the nature of life in the material universe a working out of the result of the action of one in the lives of many others,

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an effect of the individual's action on the group or the whole is everywhere the law. What I sow in this hour is reaped by my posterity for several generations and we can then call it the Karma of the family. What the men of today as community or people resolve upon and execute, comes back with a blessing or a sword upon the future of their race when they themselves have passed away and are no longer there to rejoice or to suffer; and that we can speak of as the Karma of the nation. Mankind as a whole too has a Karma; what it wrought in its past will shape its future destiny; individuals seem only to be temporary units of human thought, will, nature who act according to the compulsion of the soul in humanity and disappear; but the Karma of the race which they have helped to form continues through the centuries, the millenniums, the cycles.

But we can see, when we look into ourselves, that this relation of the individual to the whole has a different significance; it does not mean that I have no existence except as a more or less protracted moment in the cosmic becoming of the All-Soul: that too is only

a superficial appearance and much subtler and greater is the truth of my being.

*Q. 6: What then is the real truth of the individual soul and what is its proper relation to the All-Soul or the cosmic spirit?*

A: The original and eternal Reality, the Alpha and Omega, the Godhead is neither separate in the individual nor is he only and solely a Pantheos, a cosmic spirit. He is at once the eternal individual and the eternal All-Soul of this and many universes, and at the same time he is much more than these things. This universe might end, but he would still be; and I too, though the universe might end, could still exist in him; and all these eternal souls would still exist in him. But as his being is for ever, so the succession of his creations too is for ever; if one creation were to come to an end, it would be only that another might begin and the new would carry on with a fresh commencement and initiation the possibility that had not been worked out in the old, for there can be no end to the self-manifestation of the Infinite. *Nasti anto*

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*vistcrasya me.* The universe finds itself in me, even as I find myself in the universe, because we are this face and that face of the one eternal Reality, and individual being is as much needed as universal being to work out this manifestation. The individual vision of things is as true as the universal vision, both are ways of the self-seeing of the Eternal. I may now see myself as a creature contained in the universe; but when I come to self-knowledge, I see too the universe to be a thing contained in myself, subtly by implication in my individuality, amply in the great universalised self I then become. These are data of an ancient experience, things known and voiced of old, though they may seem shadowy and transcendental to the positive modern mind which has long pored so minutely on outward things that it has become dazed and blind to any greater light and is only slowly recovering the power to see through its folds; but they are for all that always valid and can be experienced today by any one of us who chooses to turn to the deepest way of the inner experience. Modern thought and science, if we look at the new knowledge given

us in its whole, do not contradict them, but only trace for us the outward effect and workings of these realities; for always we find in the end that truth of self is not contradicted, but reproduced and made effectual here by law of Energy and law of Matter.

*Q. 7: Though the truth of the individual soul has to be admitted in considering rebirth, is it not necessary to guard against the ancient tendency of over-emphasizing its importance?*

A: The old idea of rebirth erred by an excessive individualism. Too self-concentrated, it treated one's rebirth and karma as too much one's own single affair, a sharply separate movement in the whole, leaned too much on one's own concern with one's self and, even while it admitted universal relations and a unity with the whole, yet taught the human being to see in life principally a condition and means of his own spiritual benefit and separate salvation. That came from the view of the universe as a movement which proceeds out of something beyond, something

from which each being enters into life and returns out of it to its source, and the absorbing idea of that return as the one thing that at all matters. Our being in the world, so treated, came in the end to be regarded as an episode and in sum and essence an unhappy and discreditable episode in the changeless eternity of the Spirit. But this was too summary a view of the will and the ways of the Spirit in existence. Certain it is that while we are here our rebirth or Karma even while it runs on its own lines, is intimately one with the same lines in the universal existence. But my self-knowledge and self-finding too do not abolish my oneness with other life and other beings. An intimate universality is part of the glory of spiritual perfection. This idea of universality, of oneness not only with God or the eternal Self in me, but with all humanity and other beings, is growing to be the most prominent strain in our minds and it has to be taken more largely into account in any future idea or computation of the significance of rebirth and Karma. It was admitted in old times; the Buddhist law of compassion was a recognition

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of its importance; but it has to be given a still more pervading power in the general significance.

## XVI

### KARMA AND JUSTICE

*Q. 1: It is a common belief that according to the law of Karma a man's actions in one life determine the nature, circumstances and happenings of his next life. If the sum of past actions was good, the life in the next birth is successful, prosperous and happy; if bad, the next life is unsuccessful, unhappy, full of suffering and misfortune. Is there any truth in this belief?*

**A:** These are very summary popular notions and offer no foothold to the philosophic reason and no answer to a search for the true significance of life. A vast world-system which serves only as a school of sin and virtue and consists of a system of rewards and whippings, does not make any appeal to our intelligence. The soul or spirit within us, if it is divine, immortal or celestial, cannot be sent here solely to be put to school for this

kind of crude and primitive moral education; if it enters into the Ignorance, it must be because there is some larger principle or possibility of its being that has to be worked out through the Ignorance. If, on the other hand, it is a being from the Infinite plunged for some cosmic purpose into the obscurity of Matter and growing to self-knowledge within it, its life here and the significance of that life must be something more than that of an infant coddled and whipped into virtuous ways; it must be a growth out of an assumed ignorance towards its own full spiritual stature with a final passage into an immortal consciousness, knowledge, strength, beauty, divine purity and power, and for such a spiritual growth this law of Karma is all too puerile. Even if the soul is something created, an infant being that has to learn from Nature and grow into immortality, it must be by a larger law of growth and not by some divine code of primitive and barbaric justice. This idea of Karma is a construction of the smaller part of the human vital mind concerned with its petty rules of life and its desires and joys and sorrows and erecting their puny standards into the law

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and aim of the cosmos. These notions cannot be acceptable to the thinking mind; they have too evidently the stamp of a construction fashioned by our human ignorance.

*Q. 2: Is the soul then not governed by this Karmic law which is supposed to reward it for its virtues in past lives and inflict suffering for its sins? Are not the results of a man's actions in his past lives visited on him in his present life?*

**A:** It is not conceivable that the spirit within is an automaton in the hands of Karma, a slave in this life of its past actions; the truth must be less rigid and more plastic. If a certain amount of results of past Karma is formulated in the present life, it must be with the consent of the psychic being which presides over the new formation of its earth-experience and assents not merely to an outward compulsory process, but to a secret Will and Guidance. That secret Will is not mechanical, but spiritual; the guidance comes from an Intelligence which may use mechanical processes but is not their subject. Self-expression and experience are what the soul

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seeks by its birth into the body; whatever is necessary for the self-expression and experience of this life, whether it intervenes as an automatic outcome of past lives or as a free selection of results and a continuity or as a new development, whatever is a means of creation of the future, that will be formulated: for the principle is not the working out of a mechanism of Law, but the development of the nature through cosmic experience so that eventually it may grow out of the Ignorance. There must therefore be two elements, Karma as an instrument, but also the secret Consciousness and Will within working through the mind, life and body as the user. Fate, whether purely mechanical or created by ourselves, a chain of our own manufacture, is only one factor of existence; Being and its consciousness and its will are a still more important factor. In Indian astrology which considers all life circumstances to be Karma, mostly predetermined or indicated in the graph of the stars, there is still provision made for the energy and force of the being which can change or cancel part or much of what is so written or even all but the most imperative and power-

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ful bindings of Karma. This is a reasonable account of the balance: but there is also to be added to the computation the fact that destiny is not simple but complex; the destiny which binds our physical being, binds it so long or in so far as a greater law does not intervene. Action belongs to the physical part of us, it is the physical outcome of our being; but behind our surface is a freer life power, a freer mind power which has another energy and can create another destiny and bring it in to modify the primary plan, and when the soul and self emerge, when we become consciously spiritual beings, that change can cancel or wholly remodel the graph of our physical fate. Karma, then,—or at least any mechanical law of Karma,—cannot be accepted as the sole determinant of circumstances and the whole machinery of rebirth and of our future evolution.

*Q. 3: What is the explanation of the sudden strokes of luck or fortune which are quite frequent phenomena in life? The popular belief is that they are rewards for the forgotten good actions of the past life. Similarly, apparently inexplicable*

*strokes of bad fortune are taken to be the results of sins committed in the past life. Is there some truth in this belief?*

A: There is indeed in our life a very large element of what we call luck or fortune, which baulks our effort or result or gives the prize without effort or to an inferior energy: the secret cause of these caprices of Destiny—or causes, for the roots of Fortune may be manifold,—must be no doubt partly sought for in our hidden past; but it is difficult to accept the simple solution that good luck is a return for a forgotten virtuous action in a past life and bad luck a return for a sin or crime. If we see the righteous man suffering here, it is difficult to believe that this paragon of virtue was in the last life a scoundrel and is paying, even after his exemplary conversion by a new birth, for sins he then committed; nor, if the wicked triumphs, can we easily suppose that he was in his last life a saint who has suddenly taken a wrong turn but continues to receive a cash return for his previous virtue. A total change of this kind between life and life is possible though not likely to

be frequent, but to saddle the new opposite personality with the rewards or punishments of the old looks like a purposeless and purely mechanical procedure. This and many other difficulties arise, and the too simple logic of the correlation is not so strong as it claims to be; the idea of retribution of Karma as a compensation for the injustice of life and Nature is a feeble basis for the theory, for it puts forward a shallow and superficial human feeling and standard as the sense of the cosmic Law and is based on an unsound reasoning; there must be some other and stronger foundation for the law of Karma.

*Q. 4: Is there no truth then in this theory of Karma which looks for vital-hedonistic returns for ethical actions and imposes that as the sole meaning of the universal Law of Karma?*

A: A partial truth of fact, not of fundamental or general principle, may be admitted for this doctrine; for although the lines of the action of energy are distinct and independent, they can act together and upon each other, though not by any rigidly fixed law of

correspondence. It is possible that in the total method of the returns of Nature there intervenes a strand of connection or rather of interaction between vital-physical good and ill and ethical good and ill, a limited correspondence and meeting-point between divergent dualities not amounting to an inseparable coherence. Our own varying energies, desires, movements are mixed together in their working and can bring about a mixed result: our vital part does demand substantial and external rewards for virtue, for knowledge, for every intellectual, aesthetic, moral or physical effort; it believes firmly in punishment for sin and even for ignorance. This may well either create or else reply to a corresponding cosmic action; for Nature takes us as we are and to some extent suits her movements to our need or our demands on her. If we accept the action of invisible Forces upon us, there may be also invisible Forces in Life-Nature that belong to the same plane of Consciousness-Force as this part of our being, Forces that move according to the same plan or the same power-motive as our lower vital nature. It can be often observed that when a self-assertive

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vital egoism goes on trampling on its way without restraint or scruple all that opposes its will or desire, it raises a mass of reactions against itself, reactions of hatred, antagonism, unease in men which may have their result now or hereafter, and still more formidable adverse reactions in universal Nature. It is as if the patience of Nature, her willingness to be used were exhausted; the very forces that the ego of the strong vital man seized and bent to its purpose rebel and turn against him; those he had trampled on rise up and receive power for his downfall: the insolent vital force of Man strikes against the throne of Necessity and is dashed to pieces or the lame foot of Punishment reaches at last the successful offender. This reaction to his energies may come upon him in another life and not at once, it may be a burden of consequence he takes up in his return to the field of these Forces; it may happen on a small as well as a large scale, to the small vital being and his small errors as well as in these larger instances. For the principle will be the same; the mental being in us seeking for success by a misuse of force which Nature admits but reacts in the end

against it, receives the adverse return in the guise of defeat and suffering and failure. But the promotion of this minor line of causes and results to the status of an invariable absolute Law or the whole cosmic rule of action of a supreme Being is not valid; they belong to a middle region between the inmost or supreme Truth of things and the impartiality of material Nature.

*Q. 5: What is then the essential meaning and purpose of the complex working of the law of Karma? What is its fundamental significance for our spiritual evolution on earth?*

A: The reactions of Nature are not in essence meant as reward or punishment; that is not their fundamental value, which is rather an inherent value of natural relations and, in so far as it affects the spiritual evolution, a value of the lessons of experience in the soul's cosmic training. If we touch fire, it burns, but there is no principle of punishment in this relation of cause and effect, it is a lesson of relation and a lesson of experience; so in all Nature's dealings with us there is a relation

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of things and there is a corresponding lesson of experience. The action of the cosmic Energy is complex and the same Forces may act in different ways according to circumstances, to the need of the being, to the intention of the Cosmic Power in its action; our life is affected not only by its own energies but by the energies of others and by universal Forces, and all this vast interplay cannot be determined in its results solely by the one factor of an all-governing moral law and its exclusive attention to the merits and demerits, the sins and virtues of individual human beings. Nor can good fortune and evil fortune, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery and suffering be taken as if they existed merely as incentives and deterrents to the natural being in its choice of good and evil. It is for experience, for growth of the individual being that the soul enters into rebirth; joy and grief, pain and suffering, fortune and misfortune are parts of that experience, means of that growth: even the soul may of itself accept or choose poverty, misfortune and suffering as helpful to its growth, stimulants of a rapid development, and reject riches and prosperity and

success as dangerous and conducive to a relaxation of its spiritual effort. Happiness and success bringing happiness are, no doubt, a legitimate demand of humanity; it is an attempt of life and Matter to catch a pale reflection or a gross image of felicity: but a superficial happiness and material success, however desirable to our vital nature, are not the main object of our existence; if that had been the intention, life would have been otherwise arranged in the cosmic ordinance of things. All the secret of the circumstances of rebirth centres around the one capital need of the soul, the need of growth, the need of experience; that governs the line of its evolution and all the rest is accessory. Cosmic existence is not a vast administrative system of universal justice with a cosmic Law of recompense and retribution as its machinery or a divine Legislator and Judge at its centre. It is seen by us first as a great automatic movement of energy of Nature, and in it emerges a self-developing movement of consciousness, a movement therefore of Spirit working out its own being in the motion of energy of Nature. In this motion takes place the cycle

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of rebirth, and in that cycle the soul, the psychic being, prepares for itself—or the Divine Wisdom or the cosmic Consciousness-Force prepares for it and through its action, —whatever is needed for the next step in its evolution, the next formation of personality, the coming nexus of necessary experiences constantly provided and organised out of the continuous flux of past, present and future energies for each new birth, for each new step of the spirit backward or forward or else still in a circle, but always a step in the growth of the being towards its destined self-unfolding in Nature.

## XVII

### KARMA AND MORALITY

*Q. 1: Since the vital-hedonistic interpretation of the law of Karma whether applied to the present life or extended to future births is only a reflection of the lower ethical mind of humanity, there should be a higher line of the law of the Karma corresponding to our higher ethical aspirations. What is the essential difference between this lower and the higher ethical aspiration?*

**A:** The higher ethical mind no longer follows good for a reward now on earth or in another existence, but for the sake of good, and no longer shuns evil for fear of punishment on earth later on in this life or else in another life or in hell, but because to follow evil is a degradation and affliction of its being and a fall from its innate and imperative endeavour. This is to it a necessity of its moral nature, a truly categorical imperative, a call

that in the total more complex nature of man may be dulled or suppressed or excluded by the claim of its other parts and their needs, but to the ethical mind is binding and absolute. The virtue that demands a reward for acting well and needs a penalty to keep it walking in the straight way is no real portion, no true law of the ethical being, but rather a mixed creation, a rule of his practical reason that seeks always after utility and holds that to be right which is helpful and expedient, a rule that looks first not at the growth of the soul but at the mechanical securing of a regulated outward conduct and to secure it bribes and terrifies the vital being into acquiescence and a reluctant subordination of its own instincts and natural ventures. The virtue so created is an expediency, a social decency, a prudent limitation of egoism, a commercial substitute for the true thing; or, at best, it is a habit of the mind and not a truth of the soul, and in the mind a fabrication, mixed and of inferior stuff, a conventional virtue, insecure, destructible by the wear and tear of life, easily confused with other expediencies or purchasable or conquerable by them,—it is not a

high and clear upbuilding, an enduring and inwardly living self-creation of the soul.

*Q. 2: Is conventional morality a part of the higher ethical trend of humanity or a result of its lower and limited expression? Does it not help the progress of humanity by exercising a stabilizing influence over the unruly elements in our nature?*

A: Whatever its practical utility or service as a step of the transition, the mental habit of confusion and vitalistic compromise it fosters and the more questionable confusions and compromises that habit favours, have made conventional morality one of the chief of the forces that hold back human life from progressing to a true ethical order. If humanity has made any lasting and true advance, it has been not through the virtue created by reward and punishment or any of the conventional sanctions powerful on the little vital ego, but by an insistence from the higher mind on the lower, an insistence on right for its own sake, on imperative moral values, on an absolute law and truth of ethical being and ethical conduct that must

be obeyed whatever the recalcitrances of the lower mind, whatever the pains of the vital problem, whatever the external result, the inferior issue.

*Q. 3: But is not this higher ethical tendency which discards all other standards and exclusively follows virtue for its own sake itself an exaggerated and extremist tendency making for rigidity and narrowness and often retarding and even opposing the progressive movement of life and soul?*

A: This kind of high absoluteness in the ethical demand is appalling to the flesh and the ego, for it admits of no comfortable indulgence and compromise, no abating reserves or conditions, no profitable compact between the egoistic life and virtue. It is offensive too to the practical reason, for it ignores the complexity of the world and of human nature and seems to savour of an extremism and exclusive exaggeration as dangerous to life as it is exalted in ideal purpose. *Fiat justitia ruat coelum*, let justice and right be done though the heavens fall, is a rule of conduct that only the ideal mind can accept with

equanimity or the ideal life tolerate in practice. And even to the larger ideal mind this absoluteness becomes untrustworthy if it is an obedience not to the higher law of the soul, but to an outward moral law, a code of conduct. For then in place of a lifting enthusiasm we have the rigidity of the Pharisee, a puritan fierceness or narrowness or the life-killing tyranny of a single insufficient side of the nature. This is not yet that higher mental movement, but a straining towards it, an attempt to rise above the transitional law and the vitalistic compromise. And it brings with it an artificiality, a tension, a coercion, often a repellent austerity which, disregarding as it does sanity and large wisdom and the simple naturalness of the true ethical mind and the flexibilities of life, tyrannising over but not transforming it, is not the higher perfection of our nature.

*Q. 4: What is then the real value of this absolutist ethical tendency of our higher mind in the progressive perfection of our soul and nature? How can this tendency achieve its true fulfilment?*

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A: There is here the feeling out after a great return to the output of moral energy, an attempt well worth making, if the aim can indeed so be accomplished, to build up by the insistence on a rigid obedience to a law of moral action that which is yet non-existent or imperfectly existent in us but which alone can make the law of our conduct a thing true and living,—an ethical being with an inalienably ethical nature. No rule imposed on him from outside, whether in the name of a supposed mechanical or impersonal law or of God or prophet, can be, as such, true or right or binding on man: it becomes that only when it answers to some demand or aids some evolution of his inner being. And when that inner being is revealed, evolved, at each moment naturally active, simply and spontaneously imperative, then we get the true, the inner and intuitive Law in its light of self-knowledge, its beauty of self-fulfilment, its intimate life significance. An act of justice, truth, love, compassion, purity, sacrifice becomes then the faultless expression, the natural outflowering of our soul of justice, our soul of truth, our soul of love and compassion, our soul of

purity or sacrifice. And before the greatness of its imperative mandate to the outer nature the vital being and the practical reason and surface seeking intelligence must and do bow down as before something greater than themselves, something that belongs directly to the divine and the infinite.

*Q. 5: What is the nature and significance of the working of the law of Karma corresponding to this higher ethical trend of human nature?*

A: It is here that we get the clue to the higher law of Karma, of the output and returns of energy, and see it immediately and directly to be, what all law of Karma, really and ultimately, if at first covertly, is for man, a law of his spiritual evolution. The true return to the act of virtue, to the ethically right output of his energy—his reward, if you will, and the sole recompense on which he has a right to insist,—is its return upon him in a growth of the moral strength within him, an upbuilding of his ethical being, a flowering of the soul of right, justice, love, compassion, purity, truth, strength, courage, self-giving

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that he seeks to be. The true return to the act of evil, to the ethically wrong output of energy—his punishment, if you will, and the sole penalty he has any need or right to fear,—is its return upon him in a retardation of the growth, a demolition of the upbuilding, an obscuration, tarnishing, impoverishing of the soul, of the pure, strong and luminous being that he is striving to be. An inner happiness he may gain by his act, the calm, peace, satisfaction of the soul fulfilled in right, or an inner calamity, the suffering, disturbance, unease and malady of its descent or failure, but he can demand from God or moral Law no other. The ethical soul—not the counterfeit but the real—accepts the pains and sufferings and difficulties and fierce intimidations of life, not as a punishment for its sins, but as an opportunity and trial, an opportunity for its growth, a trial of its built or native strength, and good fortune and all outer success not as a coveted reward of virtue, but as an opportunity also and an even greater more difficult trial. What to this high seeker of Right can mean the vital law of Karma or what can its gods do to him that

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he can fear or long for? The ethical-vitalistic explanation of the world and its meaning and measures has for such a soul, for man at this height of his evolution no significance. He has travelled beyond the jurisdiction of the Powers of the middle air, the head of his spirit's endeavour is lifted above the dull grey-white belt that is their empire.

## XVIII

### THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

*Q. 1: As in the seeking for moral good, so in the seeking for knowledge, the modern mind has laid predominant stress on its practical or utilitarian value. Can this be taken as its right motive and aim?*

A: Mind in its first action pursues knowledge with a certain curiosity, but turns it mainly to practical experience, to a help that enables it to fulfil better and to increase more assuredly the first uses and purposes of life. Afterwards it evolves a freer use of the intelligence, but there is still a dominant turn towards the vital purpose. But the higher mind of humanity is no more content with a utilitarian use of knowledge as its last word in the seeking of the intelligence than with a vitalistic and utilitarian turn and demand of the ethical being. As in the ethical, so in the intellectual being of man there emerges a necessity of knowledge

which is no longer its utility for life, its need of knowing rightly in order to act rightly, to deal successfully and intelligently with the world around it, but a necessity of the soul, an imperative demand of the inner being.

*Q. 2: What should be the true aim of the pursuit of knowledge?*

A: The pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge is the true, the intrinsic *dharma* of the intellect and not for the sake primarily or even necessarily at all for the securing or the enlargement of the means of life and success in action. The vital kinetic man tends indeed to regard this passion of the intellect as a respectable but still rather unpractical and often trivial curiosity: as he values ethics for its social effects or for its rewards in life, so he values knowledge for its external helpfulness; science is great in his eyes because of its inventions, its increase of comforts and means and appliances: his standard in all things is vital efficiency. But in fact Nature sees and stirs from the first to a larger and more inward Will and is moved with a greater purpose, and

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all seeking for knowledge springs from a necessity of the mind, a necessity of its nature, and that means a necessity of the soul that is here in nature. Its need to know is one with its need to grow, and from the eager curiosity of the child upward to the serious stress of mind of the thinker, scholar, scientist, philosopher, the fundamental purpose of Nature, the constant in it, is the same. All the time that she seems busy only with the maintenance of her works, with life, with the outward, her secret underlying purpose is other,—it is the evolution of that which is hidden within her: for if her first dynamic word is life, her greater revealing word is consciousness and the evolution of life and action only the means of the evolution of the consciousness involved in life, the imprisoned soul, the Jiva. Action is a means, but knowledge is the sign and the growth of the conscious soul is the purpose. Man's use of the intelligence for the pursuit of knowledge is therefore that which distinguishes him most from other beings and gives him his high peculiar place in the scale of existence. His passion for knowledge, first world-knowledge, but afterwards self-knowledge and that in which

both meet and find their common secret, God-knowledge, is the central drift of his ideal mind and a greater imperative of his being than that of action, though later in laying its complete hold on him, greater in the wideness of its reach and greater too in its effectiveness upon action, in the returns of the world energy to his power of the truth within him.

*Q. 3: At what stage in man's evolution does this true aim become the ruling motive of his mind and the lower aim of utility fall away?*

A: It is when his mind is preparing to disengage itself, its pure self of will and intelligence, the radiant head of its endeavour from subjection to the vital motive that this imperative of nature, this intrinsic need that creates in the mind of man the urge towards knowledge, becomes something much greater, becomes instead more and more plainly the ideal absolute imperative of the soul emerging from the husks and sheaths of ignorance and pushing towards the truth, towards the light as the condition of its fulfilment and the very call of the Divine upon its being. The lure

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of an external utility ceases to be at all needed as an incentive towards knowledge, just as the lure of a vital reward offered now or hereafter ceases on the same high level of our ascent to be needed as an incentive to virtue, and to attach importance to it under whatever specious colour is even felt to be a degradation of the disinterestedness, a fall from the high purity of the soul motive. Already even in the more outward forms of intellectual seeking something of this absoluteness begins to be felt and to reign. The scientist pursues his discoveries in order that he may know the law and truth of the process of the universe and their practical results are only a secondary motive of the enquiring mind and no motive at all to the higher scientific intelligence. The philosopher is driven from within to search for the ultimate truth of things for the one sake of Truth only and all else but to see the very face of Truth becomes to him, to his absorbing mind and soul of knowledge, secondary or of no importance; nothing can be allowed to interfere with that one imperative. And there is the tendency to the same kind of exclusiveness in the interest and the process of this absolute.

The thinker is concerned to seek out and enforce the truth on himself and the world regardless of any effect it may have in disturbing the established bases of life, religion, ethics, society, regardless of any other consideration whatsoever: he must express the word of the Truth whatever its dynamic results on life. And this absolute becomes most absolute, this imperative most imperative when the inner action surpasses the strong coldness of intellectual search and becomes a fiery striving for truth experience, a luminous inner truth living, a birth into a new truth consciousness. The enamoured of light, the sage, the Yogin of knowledge, the seer, the Rishi live for knowledge, and in knowledge, because it is the absolute of light and truth that they seek after and its claim on them is single and absolute.

*Q. 4: But though the real seeker of truth does not care for any material reward there must be some return for the output of his mental energy in the economy of Nature. What is his benefit or gain from the pure pursuit of truth?*

**A:** This also is a line of the world energy,

—for the world Shakti is a Shakti of consciousness and knowledge and not only a Power of force and action,—and the output of the energy of knowledge brings its results as surely as the energy of the will seeking after success in action or after right ethical conduct. But the result that it brings on this higher plane of the seeking in mind is simply and purely the upward growth of the soul in light and truth; that and whatever happiness it brings is the one supreme reward demanded by the soul of knowledge and the darkening of the light within, the pain of the fall from truth, the pain of the imperfection of not living only by its law and wholly in the light is its one penalty of suffering. The outward rewards and the sufferings of life are small things to the higher soul of knowledge in man: even his high mind of knowledge will often face all that the world can do to afflict it, just as it is ready to make all manner of sacrifices in the pursuit and the affirmation of the truth it knows and lives for. Bruno burning in the Roman fire, the martyrs of all religions suffering and welcoming as witnesses to the light within them torture and

persecution, Buddha leaving all to discover the dark cause of universal suffering in this world of the impermanence and the way of escape into the supreme Permanence, the ascetic casting away as an illusion life in the world and its activities, enjoyments, attractions with the one will to enter into the absolute truth and the supreme consciousness are witnesses to this imperative of knowledge, its extreme examples and exponents.

*Q. 5: Is it not a fact that the pursuit of practical knowledge brings better returns in life than the pursuit of moral right?*

A: As a power for the returns of life the world energy seems to attach a more direct importance and give more tangible results to knowledge, to the right practical workings of the intelligence than it yields to moral right. In this material world it is at least doubtful how far moral good is repaid by vital good and moral evil punished by a recoil, but it is certain that we do pay very usually for our errors, for stupidity, for ignorance of the right way of action, for any ignoring or misapplica-

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tion of the laws that govern our psychical, vital and physical being; it is certain that knowledge is a power for life efficiency and success. Intelligence pays its way in the material world, guards itself against vital and physical suffering, secures its vital rewards more surely than moral right and ethical purpose.

*Q. 6: Through all these various motives for the pursuit of truth does not Nature work out some intention which is fulfilled in her highest working? What is that intention?*

A: The intention of Nature, the spiritual justification of her ways appears at last in the final turn of her energies leading the conscious soul along the lines of truth and knowledge. At first she is physical Nature building her firm field according to a base of settled truth and law but determined by a subconscious knowledge she does not yet share with her creatures. Next she is Life growing slowly self-conscious, seeking out knowledge that she may move seeingly in them along her ways and increase at once the complexity and the efficacy of

her movements, but developing slowly too the consciousness that knowledge must be pursued for a higher and purer end, for truth, for the satisfaction, as the life expression and as the spiritual self-finding of the soul of knowledge. But, last, it is that soul itself growing in the truth and light, growing into the absolute truth of itself which is its perfection, that becomes the law and high end of her energies. And at each stage she gives returns according to the development of the aim and consciousness of the being. At first there is the return of skill and effectual intelligence—and her own need explains sufficiently why she gives the rewards of life not, as the ethical mind in us would have it, to the just, not chiefly to moral good, but to the skilful and to the strong, to will and force and intelligence,—and then, more and more clearly disengaged, the return of enlightenment and the satisfaction of the mind and the soul in the conscious use and wise direction of its powers and capacities and, last of all, the one supreme return, the increase of the soul in light, the satisfaction of its perfection in knowledge, its birth into the

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highest consciousness and the pure fulfilment of its own innate imperative. It is that growth, a divine birth or spiritual self-exceeding, its supreme reward, which for the eastern mind has been always the highest gain,—the growth out of human ignorance into divine self-knowledge.

## XIX

### SUBJECTIVISM AND OBJECTIVISM (1)

*Q. 1: The modern mind which is largely a product of the materialistic and utilitarian intellectualism of the nineteenth century has been dominated by its objective view of life. What is the essential meaning of objectivism and what are its practical consequences when it is taken to be the governing law of individual and social existence?*

**A:** Objectivism proceeds by the analytical reason and takes an external mechanical view of the whole of existence. It looks at the world as a thing, an object, a process to be studied by an observing reason which places itself abstractly outside the elements and the sum of what it has to consider and observes it thus from outside as one would an intricate mechanism. The laws of this process are considered as so many mechanical rules or

settled forces acting upon the individual or the group which, when they have been observed and distinguished by the reason, have by one's will or by some will to be applied; they have to be imposed on the individual, that is to say, by his own abstract reason and will or by that of other individuals or of the group, and they have to be imposed on the group either by its own collective reason and will embodied in some machinery of control which the mind considers as something apart from the life of the group or by the reason and will of some other group external to it or of which it is in some way a part. So the State is viewed in modern political thought as an entity in itself, as if it were something apart from the community and its individuals, something which has the right to impose itself on them and control them in the fulfilment of some idea of right, good or interest, which is inflicted on them by a restraining and fashioning power rather than developed in them and by them as a thing towards which their self and nature are impelled to grow. Life is to be managed, harmonised, perfected by an adjustment, a manipulation,

a machinery through which it is passed and by which it is shaped. A law outside oneself, —outside even when it is discovered or determined by the individual reason and accepted or enforced by the individual will, —this is the governing idea of objectivism; a mechanical process of management, ordering, perfection, this is its conception of practice.

*Q. 2: What is the central difference between subjectivism and objectivism in their viewpoints and their dynamic consequences in life?*

A: Subjectivism proceeds from within and regards everything from the point of view of a containing and developing self-consciousness. The law here is within ourselves; life a self-creating, a growth and development of that which we are potentially and hold within ourselves; the process is an increasing self-recognition, self-realisation and resultant self-shaping. Reason and will are only effective movements of the self, reason a process in self-recognition, will a force for self-affirmation and self-shaping. Moreover, reason and intellectual will are only a part of the

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means by which we recognise and realise ourselves. Subjectivism tends to take a large and complex view of our nature and being and to recognise many powers of knowledge, many forces of effectuation. Even, we see it in its first movement away from the external and objective method discount and belittle the importance of the work of the reason and assert the supremacy of the life-impulse or the essential Will-to-be in opposition to the claims of the intellect or else affirm some deeper power of knowledge, called nowadays the intuition, which sees things in the whole, in their truth, in their profundities and harmonies, while intellectual reason breaks up, falsifies, affirms superficial appearances and harmonises only by a mechanical adjustment. But substantially we can see that what is meant by this intuition is the self-consciousness feeling, perceiving, grasping in its substance and aspects rather than analysing in its mechanism its own truth and nature and powers. The whole impulse of subjectivism is to get at the self, to live in the self, to see by the self, to live out the truth of the self internally and

externally but always from an internal initiation and centre.

*Q. 3: Is it not likely that subjectivism in its search for the true self may stop short of the complete discovery and may attach itself to some of its incomplete or subsidiary aspects? What is the final aim at which the progressive endeavour of subjective seeking is intended to arrive?*

A: The subjective search for the self may, like the objective, lean preponderantly to identification with the conscious physical life,—the body being the frame and determinant here of the mental and vital movements and capacities,—or it may identify itself with the vital being and its emotions, desires, impulses, seekings for power and growth and egoistic fulfilment, or it may rise to a conception of man as a mental and moral being and exalt his inner growth, power and perfection, individual and collective, to be the true aim of existence. A sort of subjective materialism, pragmatic and outward-going, is a possible standpoint; but in this the subjective tendency cannot long linger, for its

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natural impulse is to go always inward and it only begins to feel itself and have satisfaction of itself when it gets to the full conscious life within and feels all its power, joy and forceful potentiality. Man at this stage regards himself as a profound, vital Will-to-be which uses body as its instrument and to which the powers of mind are servants and ministers. This is the cast of that vitalism which in various striking forms has played recently so great a part and still exercises a considerable influence on human thought. Beyond it we get to a subjective idealism now beginning to emerge and become prominent, which seeks the fulfilment of man in the satisfaction of his inmost religious, aesthetic, ethical, intuitive, intellectual, sympathetic and higher or deeper emotional nature and, regarding this as the fullness of our being and the whole object of our being, tries to subject to it the physical and vital existence, which come to be considered rather as a possible symbol and instrument of the subjective life flowing out into forms than as having any value in themselves. A certain tendency to mysticism, occultism and the search for a self independent

of the life and the body accompanies this new movement—new to modern life after the reign of individualism and objective intellectualism—and emphasizes its real character and trend.

But here also it is possible for subjectivism to go beyond and to discover the true Self as something greater even than mind. Mind, life and body then become merely an instrumentation for the increasing expression of this Self in the world,—instruments not equal in their hierarchy, but equal in their necessity to the whole, so that their complete perfection and harmony and unity as elements of our self-expression become essential to the true aim of our living. And yet that aim would not be to perfect life, body and mind in themselves, but to develop them so as to make a fit basis for the revelation in our inner and outer life of the Self, the secret Godhead who is one in all of us. The ideal of human existence, personal and social, would be its progressive transformation into a conscious outflowing of the joy, power, love, light, beauty of the transcendent and universal Spirit.

## XX

### SUBJECTIVISM AND OBJECTIVISM (2)

*Q. 1: What were the principal effects of the vital subjectivism to which the modern mind arrived in its recoil from the intellectual objectivism of the nineteenth century and which very strongly influenced not only its philosophy, art and religion but also its political and social life?*

A: After the material formula which governed the greater part of the nineteenth century had burdened man with the heaviest servitude to the machinery of the outer material life that he has ever yet been called upon to bear, the first attempt to break through, to get to the living reality in things and away from the mechanical idea of life and living and society, landed us in that surface vitalism which had already begun to govern thought before the two formulas inextricably locked together lit up and flung themselves

on the lurid pyre of the world-war. The vital élan brought us no deliverance, but only used the machinery already created with a more feverish insistence, a vehement attempt to live more rapidly, more intensely, an inordinate will to act and to succeed, to enlarge the mere force of living, to pile up a gigantic efficiency of life.

*Q. 2: But could this adverse result not have been averted if the vital subjectivism had taken a profound and complete form instead of remaining shallow and incomplete?*

**A:** It could not have been otherwise even if this vitalism had been less superficial and external, more truly subjective. To live, to act, to grow, to increase the vital force, to understand, utilise and fulfil the intuitive impulse of life are not things evil in themselves: rather they are excellent things, if rightly followed and rightly used, that is to say, if they are directed to something beyond the mere vitalistic impulse and are governed by that within which is higher than Life. The Life-power is an instrument, not an aim; it

is in the upward scale the first great subjective supraphysical instrument of the Spirit and the base of all action and endeavour. But a Life-power that sees nothing beyond itself, nothing to be served except its own organised demands and impulses, will be very soon like the force of steam driving an engine without the driver or an engine in which the locomotive force has made the driver its servant and not its controller. It can only add the uncontrollable impetus of a high-crested or broad-based Titanism, or it may be even a nether flaming demonism, to the Nature forces of the material world with the intellect as its servant, an impetus of measureless unresting creation, appropriation, expansion which will end in something violent, huge and "colossal", foredoomed in its very nature to excess and ruin, because light is not in it nor the soul's truth nor the sanction of the gods and their calm eternal will and knowledge.

*Q. 3: Beyond the vital subjectivism there is the possibility of a mental and psychic subjectivism. What would this greater subjectivism be able to*

*achieve if it succeeds in exerting a powerful influence on the life of the individual and society?*

A: This greater idea would realise that the elevation of the human existence will come not through material efficiency alone or the complex play of his vital and dynamic powers mastering through the aid of the intellect the energies of physical Nature for the satisfaction of the life-instincts, which can only be an intensification of his present mode of existence, but through the greatness of his mental and psychic being and a discovery, bringing forward an organisation of his vast subliminal nature and its forces. It would see in life an opportunity for the joy and power of knowledge, for the joy and power of beauty, for the joy and power of the human will mastering not only physical Nature, but vital and mental Nature. It might discover her secret yet undreamed of mind-powers and life-powers and use them for a freer liberation of man from the limitations of his shackled bodily life. It might arrive at new psychic relations, a more sovereign power of the idea to realise itself in the act, inner means of over-

coming obstacles of distance and division which would cast into insignificance even the last miraculous achievements of material Science. A development of this kind is far enough away from the dreams of the mass of men, but there are certain pale hints and presages of such a possibility and ideas which lead to it are already held by a great number who are perhaps in this respect the yet unrecognised vanguard of humanity. It is not impossible that behind the confused morning voices of the hour a light of this kind, still below the horizon, may be waiting to ascend with its splendours.

Such a turn of human thought, effort, ideas of life, if it took hold of the communal mind, would evidently lead to a profound revolution throughout the whole range of human existence. It would give it from the first a new tone and atmosphere, a loftier spirit, wider horizons, a greater aim. It might easily develop a science which would bring the powers of the physical world into a real and not only a contingent and mechanical subjection and open perhaps the doors of other worlds. It might develop an achievement of Art and

Beauty which would make the greatness of the past a comparatively little thing and would save the world from the astonishingly callous reign of utilitarian ugliness that even now afflicts it. It would open up a closer and freer interchange between human minds and, it may well be hoped, a kindlier interchange between human hearts and lives. Nor need its achievements stop here, but might proceed to greater things of which these would be only the beginnings.

*Q. 4: Would this mental and psychic subjectivism be free from the dangers that are found in the vital subjectivism?*

A: This mental and psychic subjectivism would have its dangers, greater dangers even than those that attend a vitalistic subjectivism, because its powers of action also would be greater, but it would have what vitalistic subjectivism has not and cannot easily have, the chance of a detecting discernment, strong safeguards and a powerful liberating light. But still a subjective age of mankind must be an adventure full of perils and uncertainties

as are all great adventures of the race. It may wander long before it finds itself or may not find itself at all and swing back to a new repetition of the cycle.

*Q. 5: But is there also not this danger that the effort of mental and psychic subjectivism may succeed only with individuals but fail with the mass of humanity which even till the present day remains so firmly entrenched in its physical mentality? Is it conceivable that the average physical man can be rapidly uplifted to the mental and psychical heights and to the farther elevations of the Spirit?*

A: This was one principal reason of the failure of past attempts to spiritualise mankind, that they endeavoured to spiritualise at once the material man by a sort of rapid miracle, and though that can be done, the miracle is not likely to be of an enduring character if it overleaps the stages of his ascent and leaves the intervening levels untrodden and therefore unmastered. The endeavour may succeed with individuals,—Indian thought would say with those who have made themselves ready in a past existence,—but it

must fail with the mass. When it passes beyond the few, the forceful miracle of the spirit flags; unable to transform by inner force, the new religion tries to save by machinery, is entangled in the mechanical turning of its own instruments, loses the spirit and perishes quickly or decays slowly. That is the fate which overtakes all attempts of the vitalistic, the intellectual and mental, the spiritual endeavour to deal with material man through his physical mind chiefly or alone; the endeavour is overpowered by the machinery it creates and becomes the slave and victim of the machine. That is the revenge which our material Nature, herself mechanical, takes upon all such violent endeavours; she waits to master them by their concessions to her own law. If mankind is to be spiritualised, it must first in the mass cease to be the material or the vital man and become the psychic and the true mental being. It may be questioned whether such a mass progress or conversion is possible; but if it is not, then the spiritualisation of mankind as a whole is a chimera.

## XXI

### SUBJECTIVISM AND OBJECTIVISM (3)

*Q. 1: What was the chief reason which turned the materialistic objectivism of the last century to subjectivism?*

A: In Europe this materialistic objectivism has proceeded by the discovery of the laws of the physical universe and the economic and sociological conditions of human life as determined by the physical being of man, his environment, his evolutionary history, his physical and vital, his individual and collective need. But after a time it must become apparent that the knowledge of the physical world is not the whole of knowledge; it must appear that man is a mental as well as a physical and vital being and even much more essentially mental than physical or vital. Even though his psychology is strongly affected and limited by his physical being and environment, it is

not at its roots determined by them, but constantly reacts, subtly determines their action, effects even their new-shaping by the force of his psychological demand on life. His economic state and social institutions are themselves governed by his psychological demand on the possibilities, circumstances, tendencies created by the relation between the mind and soul of humanity and its life and body. Therefore to find the truth of things and the law of his being in relation to that truth he must go deeper and fathom the subjective secret of himself and things as well as their objective forms and surroundings.

*Q. 2: But could he not find this truth and this law by the power of his critical analytic intellect without having recourse to his deeper powers?*

A: Not for very long. For in his study of himself and the world he cannot but come face to face with the soul in himself and the soul in the world and find it to be an entity so profound, so complex, so full of hidden secrets and powers that his intellectual reason betrays itself as an insufficient light and a

fumbling seeker: it is successfully analytical only of superficialities and of what lies just behind the superficialities. The need of a deeper knowledge must then turn him to the discovery of new powers and means within himself. He finds that he can only know himself entirely by becoming actively self-conscious and not merely self-critical, by more and more living in his soul and acting out of it rather than floundering on surfaces, by putting himself into conscious harmony with that which lies behind his superficial mentality and psychology and by enlightening his reason and making dynamic his action through this deeper light and power to which he thus opens. In this process the rationalistic ideal begins to subject itself to the ideal of intuitional knowledge and a deeper self-awareness; the utilitarian standard gives way to the aspiration towards self-consciousness and self-realisation; the rule of living according to the manifest laws of physical Nature is replaced by the effort towards living according to the veiled Law and Will and Power active in the life of the world and in the inner and outer life of humanity.

## LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

*Q. 3: What changes did this new subjective Intuitionism produce in the cultural activities of the modern age?*

A: The art, music and literature of the world, always a sure index of the vital tendencies of the age, have undergone a profound revolution in the direction of an ever-deepening subjectivism. The great objective art and literature of the past no longer commands the mind of the new age. The first tendency was, as in thought so in literature, an increasing psychological vitalism which sought to represent penetratingly the most subtle psychological impulses and tendencies of man as they started to the surface in his emotional, aesthetic and vitalistic cravings and activities. Composed with great skill and subtlety but without any real insight into the law of man's being, these creations seldom got behind the reverse side of our surface emotions, sensations and actions which they minutely analysed in their details but without any wide or profound light of knowledge; they were perhaps more immediately interesting but ordinarily inferior as art to the old literature which at least seized

firmly and with a large and powerful mastery on its province. Often they described the malady of Life rather than its health and power, or the riot and revolt of its cravings, vehement and therefore impotent and unsatisfied, rather than its dynamis of self-expression and self-possession. But to this movement which reached its highest creative power in Russia, there succeeded a turn towards a more truly psychological art, music and literature, mental, intuitional, psychic rather than vitalistic, departing in fact from a superficial vitalism as much as its predecessors departed from the objective mind of the past. This new movement largely aimed like the new philosophic Intuitionalism at a real rending of the veil, the seizure by the human mind of that which does not overtly express itself, the touch and penetration into the hidden soul of things. Much of it was still infirm, unsubstantial in its grasp on what it pursued, rudimentary in its forms, but it initiated a decisive departure of the human mind from its old moorings and pointed the direction in which it is being piloted on a momentous voyage of discovery, the discovery

of a new world within which must eventually bring about the creation of a new world without in life and society. Art and literature seem definitely to have taken a turn towards a subjective search into what may be called the hidden inside of things and away from the rational and objective canon or nature.

*Q. 4: In the field of education, as in the fields of art and literature, the subjective movement has brought about a definitive change in the ideals of the previous generation. What is the main consequence of this change?*

**A:** Formerly, education was merely a mechanical forcing of the child's nature into arbitrary grooves of training and knowledge in which his individual subjectivity was the last thing considered, and his family upbringing was a constant repression and compulsory shaping of his habits, his thoughts, his character into the mould fixed for them by the conventional ideas or individual interests and ideals of the teachers and parents. The discovery that education must be a bringing out of the child's own intellectual and moral capacities

to their highest possible value and must be based on the psychology of the child-nature was a step forward towards a more healthy because a more subjective system.

*Q. 5: In what respect did this new discovery fall short of the complete truth about child-education? By what way could it arrive at this complete truth?*

A: It fell short because it still regarded the child as an object to be handled and moulded by the teacher, to be educated. But at least there was a glimmering of the realisation that each human being is a self-developing soul and that the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. It is not yet realised what this soul is or that the true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the

foreground as 'the leader of the march set in our front,' will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of its potentialities of which our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception. These new educational methods are on the straight way to this truer dealing. The closer touch attempted with the psychical entity behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on its possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being. That was the knowledge which the ancients sought to express through religious and social symbolism, and subjectivism is a road of return to the lost knowledge. First deepening man's inner experience, restoring perhaps on an unpre-

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cedented scale insight and self-knowledge to the race, it must end by revolutionising his social and collective self-expression.

## XXII

### SUBJECTIVISM AND OBJECTIVISM (4)

*Q. 1: Modern psychology which is still either completely under the influence of the objectivist view of life or only superficially subjective in some of its branches considers all subjectivism, whose very principle is to turn within, as unhealthy introversion leading to morbidity and abnormality. The external reality is to its view the only safe province for human thought and action and so its advice is to be as extrovert and objective as possible. Is this not an evident exaggeration?*

**A:** The materialistic thinker, erecting an opposition between the extrovert and the introvert, holds up the extrovert attitude for acceptance as the only safety: to go inward is to enter into darkness or emptiness or to lose the balance of the consciousness and become morbid; it is from outside that such inner life as one can construct is created, and

its health is assured only by a strict reliance on its wholesome and nourishing outer sources, —the balance of the personal mind and life can only be secured by a firm support on external reality, for the material world is the sole fundamental reality. This may be true for the physical man, the born extrovert, who feels himself to be a creature of outward Nature; made by her and dependent on her, he would lose himself if he went inward: for him there is no inner being, no inner living. But the introvert of this distinction also has not the inner life; he is not a seer of the true inner self and of inner things, but the small mental man who looks superficially inside himself and sees there not his spiritual self but his life-ego, his mind-ego and becomes unhealthily preoccupied with the movements of this little pitiful dwarf creature. The idea or experience of an inner darkness when looking inwards is the first reaction of a mentality which has lived always on the surface and has no realised inner existence; it has only a constructed internal experience which depends on the outside world for the materials of its being. But to those into whose

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composition there has entered the power of a more inner living, the movement of going within and living within brings not a darkness or dull emptiness but an enlargement, a rush of new experience, a greater vision, a larger capacity, an extended life infinitely more real and various than the first pettiness of the life constructed for itself by our normal physical humanity, a joy of being which is larger and richer than any delight in existence that the outer vital man or the surface mental man can gain by their dynamic vital force and activity or subtlety and expansion of the mental existence. A silence, an entry into a wide or even immense or infinite emptiness is part of the inner spiritual experience; of this silence and void the physical mind has a certain fear, the small superficially active thinking or vital mind a shrinking from it or dislike,—for it confuses the silence with mental and vital incapacity and the void with cessation or non-existence: but this silence is the silence of the spirit which is the condition of a greater knowledge, power and bliss, and this emptiness is the emptying of the cup of our natural being, a liberation of

it from its turbid contents so that it may be filled with the wine of God; it is the passage not into non-existence but to a greater existence. Even when the being turns towards cessation, it is a cessation not in non-existence but into some vast ineffable of spiritual being or the plunge into the incommunicable super-conscience of the Absolute.

*Q. 2: Bertrand Russell in his book "The Conquest of Happiness" says: "We are all prone to the malady of the introvert, who, with the manifold spectacle of the world spread out before him, turns away and gazes upon the emptiness within." Is this not a completely misleading statement?*

*A:* The word 'introvert' has come into existence only recently and sounds like a companion of 'pervert'. Literally, it means one who is turned inwards. The Upanishad speaks of the doors of the senses that are turned outwards absorbing man in external things ('for their own sakes', I suppose?) and of the rare man among a million who turns his vision inwards and sees the self. Is that man an introvert? And is Russell's

ideal man 'interested in externals for their own sakes'—a Ramaswami the chef or Joseph the chauffeur, for instance—*homo externalis Russellius*, an extrovert? Or is an introvert one who has an inner life stronger than his external one,—the poet, the musician, the artist? Was Beethoven in his deafness bringing out music from within him an introvert? Or does it mean one who measures external things by an inner standard and is interested in them not 'for their own sakes' but for their value to the soul's self-development, its psychic, religious, ethical or other self-expression? Are Tolstoy and Gandhi examples of introverts? Or in another field—Goethe? Or does it mean one who cares for external things only as they touch his own mind or else concern his own ego? But that would include 999,999 men out of every million.

What are external things? Russell is a mathematician. Are mathematical formulae external things even though they exist here only in the World-mind and the mind of Man? If not, is Russell, as mathematician, an introvert? Again, Yajnavalkya says that one loves the wife not for the sake of the wife,

but for the self's sake, and so with other objects of interest or desire—whether the self be the inner self or the ego. In yoga it is the valuing of external things in the terms of the desire of the ego that is discouraged—their only value is their value in the manifestation of the Divine. Who desires external things 'for their own sake' and not for some value to the conscious being? Even Cheloo, the day-labourer, is not interested in a two-anna piece for its own sake but for some vital satisfaction it can bring him; even with the hoarding miser it is the same—it is his vital being's passion for possession that he satisfies and that is something not external but internal, part of his inner makeup, the unseen personality that moves inside behind the veil of the body.

*Q. 3: Why is it so difficult for the materialist thinker to concede substantial reality to the subjective and supraphysical orders of existence?*

*A:* The objective and the physical order or reality is convincing to the physical or externalising mind because it is directly obvious to the senses, while of the subjective and the

supraphysical that mind has no means of knowledge except from fragmentary signs and data and inferences which are at every step liable to error. Our subjective movements and inner experiences are a domain of happenings as real as any outward physical happenings; but if the individual mind can know something of its own phenomena by direct experience, it is ignorant of what happens in the consciousness of others except by analogy with its own or such signs, data, inferences as its outward observation can give it. I am therefore inwardly real to myself, but the invisible life of others has only an indirect reality to me except in so far as it impinges on my own mind, life and senses. This is the limitation of the physical mind of man, and it creates in him a habit of believing entirely only in the physical and of doubting or challenging all that does not come into accord with his own experience or his own scope of understanding or square with his own standard or sum of established knowledge.

*Q. 4: In recent times this attitude of the common physical mind has been raised into a valid standard*

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*of knowledge. It has been held that all truth must be referred to the judgment of the personal mind of every man or else it must be verifiable by a common experience in order to be valid. Is not this standard quite inadequate and even false?*

A: Obviously this is a false standard of reality and of knowledge, since this means the sovereignty of the normal or average mind and its limited capacity and experience, the exclusion of what is supernormal or beyond the average intelligence. In its extreme, this claim of the individual to be the judge of everything is an egoistic illusion, a superstition of the physical mind, in the mass a gross and vulgar error. The truth behind it is that each man has to think for himself, know for himself according to his capacity, but his judgment can be valid only on condition that he is ready to learn and open always to a larger knowledge. It is reasoned that to depart from the physical standard and the principle of personal or universal verification will lead to gross delusions and the admission of unverified truth and subjective phantasy into the realm of knowledge. But error and delusion and the intro-

duction of personality and one's own subjectivity into the pursuit of knowledge are always present, and the physical or objective standards and methods do not exclude them. The probability of error is no reason for refusing to attempt discovery, and subjective discovery must be pursued by a subjective method of enquiry, observation and verification; research into the supraphysical must evolve, accept and test an appropriate means and methods other than those by which one examines the constituents of physical objects and the processes of Energy in material Nature.

To refuse to enquire upon any general ground preconceived and *a priori* is an obscurantism as prejudicial to the extension of knowledge as the religious obscurantism which opposed in Europe the extension of scientific discovery. The greatest inner discoveries, the experience of self-being, the cosmic consciousness, the inner calm of the liberated spirit, the direct effect of mind upon mind, the knowledge of things by consciousness in direct contact with other consciousness or with its objects, most spiritual experiences of any value, cannot be brought before the tribunal

of the common mentality which has no experience of these things and takes its own absence or incapacity of experience as a proof of their invalidity or their non-existence. Physical truths or formulas, generalisations, discoveries founded upon physical observation can be so referred, but even there a training of capacity is needed before one can truly understand and judge; it is not every untrained mind that can follow the mathematics of relativity or other difficult scientific truths or judge of the validity either of their result or their process. All reality, all experience must indeed, to be held as true, be capable of verification by a same or similar experience; so, in fact, all men can have a spiritual experience and can follow it out and verify it in themselves, but only when they have acquired the capacity or can follow the inner methods by which that experience and verification are made possible. It is necessary to dwell on these obvious and elementary truths because the opposite ideas have been sovereign in a recent period of human mentality,—they are now only receding,—and have stood in the way of the development of a vast domain of possible knowledge. It is of

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supreme importance for the human spirit to be free to sound the depths of inner or subliminal reality, of spiritual and of what is still super-conscious reality, and not to immure itself in the physical mind and its narrow domain of objective external solidities; for in that way alone can there come liberation from the Ignorance in which our mentality dwells and a release into a complete consciousness, a true and integral self-realisation and self-knowledge.

## XXIII

### SUBJECTIVISM AND OBJECTIVISM (5)

*Q. 1: As the objectivist view of the materialistic thinker denies substantial reality to our subjective existence, so the subjectivist view of a certain school of Idealistic thought refuses to concede independent reality to all objective existence. According to this school, all that exists is a subjective creation of mind, a structure of consciousness, and the idea of an objective reality independent of consciousness an illusion, since we can have no evidence of any such independent self-existence of things. How far is this view tenable?*

**A:** It is clear that a Mind of the nature of our surface intelligence can be only a secondary power of existence. For it bears the stamp of incapacity and ignorance as a sign that it is derivative and not the original creatrix; we see that it does not know or understand the objects it perceives, it has no automatic control

of them; it has to acquire a laboriously built knowledge and controlling power. This initial incapacity could not be there if these objects were the Mind's own structures, creations of its self-Power.

*Q. 2: But if we suppose a universal Mind of the same character as our mind, could not that well be the creator of the universe?*

A: The nature of Mind as we know it is an Ignorance seeking for knowledge; it is a knower of fractions and worker of divisions striving to arrive at a sum, to piece together a whole, —it is not possessed of the essence of things or their totality: a universal Mind of the same character might know the sum of its divisions by force of its universality but it would still lack the essential knowledge, and without the essential knowledge there could be no true integral knowledge.

An infinite Mind constituted in the terms of mentality as we know it might possibly construct an accidental cosmos of conflicting possibilities and it might shape it into something shifting, something always transient,

something ever uncertain in its drift, neither real nor unreal, possessed of no definite end or aim but only an endless succession of momentary aims leading—since there is no superior directing power of knowledge—eventually nowhither. Nihilism or Illusionism or some kindred philosophy is the only logical conclusion of such a pure noumenalism, the cosmos so constructed would be a presentation or reflection of something not itself, but always and to the end a false presentation, a distorted reflection; all cosmic existence would be a Mind struggling to work out fully its imaginations, but not succeeding, because they have no imperative basis of self-truth; overpowered and carried forward by the stream of its own past energies, it would be borne onward indeterminately for ever without issue unless or until it can either slay itself or fall into an eternal stillness. That traced to its roots is Nihilism and Illusionism and it is the only wisdom if we suppose that our human mentality or anything at all like it represents the highest cosmic force and the original conception at work in the universe.

*Q. 3: Would this be true even of an infinite Mind free from the limitations of our mind? Could not such a Mind, infinite, omniscient and omnipotent, be the original creator of the universe?*

A: But such a Mind would be something quite different from the definition of mind as we know it, it would be something beyond mentality; it would be the supramental Truth. An infinite, omniscient, omnipotent Mind would not be mind at all, but supramental knowledge. Mind, as we know it, is not the original constructor of the universe: it is an intermediary power valid for certain actualities of being; an agent, an intermediary, it actualises possibilities and has its share in the creation, but the real creatrix is a Consciousness, an Energy inherent in the transcendent and cosmic Spirit.

*Q. 4: We have then to admit that the subjectivist view of reality by itself does not represent the complete truth and the objectivist view has also an element of truth in it?*

A: It is true that there is no such thing as an objective reality independent of con-

sciousness; but at the same time there is a truth in objectivity and it is this, that the reality of things resides in something that is within them and is independent of the interpretation our mind gives to them and of the structures it builds upon its observation. These structures constitute the mind's subjective image or figure of the universe, but the universe and its objects are not a mere image or figure. They are in essence creations of consciousness, but of a consciousness that is one with being, whose substance is the substance of Being and whose creations too are of that substance, therefore real. In this view the world cannot be a purely subjective creation of Consciousness; the subjective and the objective truth of things are both real, they are two sides of the same Reality.

## XXIV

### MATERIALISM (1)

*Q. 1: Materialism, from which the objectivist theory of reality and knowledge was derived and which has now lost much of the ground it held in the last century, has been credited with the creation of a large number of great evils and its decline and passing away has been proclaimed, especially by the idealists and the religionists, as a fortunate deliverance for the human spirit. Is this accusation wholly valid? Has materialism been a force only for the retardation of knowledge and deviation from the true path of progress?*

**A:** All that materialism is accused of may have and much of it has its truth. But most things that the human mind thus alternately trumpets and bans are a double skein. They come to us with opposite faces, their good side and their bad, a dark aspect of error and a bright of truth; and it is as we look upon one

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or the other visage that we swing to our extremes of opinion or else oscillate between them.

*Q. 2: We have then to admit that the materialism of the previous age, in spite of its basic limitations, did contribute to the positive advancement of human knowledge and civilizational progress?*

A: This age of which materialism was the portentous offspring and in which it had figured first as petulant rebel and aggressive thinker, then as a grave and strenuous preceptor of mankind, has been by no means a period of mere error, calamity and degeneration, but rather a most powerful creative epoch of humanity. Examine impartially its results. Not only has it immensely widened and filled in the knowledge of the race and accustomed it to a great patience of research, scrupulosity, accuracy,—if it has done that only in one large sphere of inquiry, it has still prepared for the extension of the same curiosity, intellectual rectitude, power for knowledge to other and higher fields,—not only has it with an unexampled force and

richness of invention brought and put into our hands, for much evil, but also for much good, discoveries, instruments, practical powers, conquests, conveniences which, however we may declare their insufficiency for our highest interests, yet few of us would care to relinquish, but it has also, paradoxical as that might at first seem, strengthened man's idealism. On the whole, it has given him a kindlier hope and humanised his nature. Tolerance is greater, liberty has increased, charity is more a matter of course, peace, if not yet practicable, is growing at least imaginable. Latterly the thought of the eighteenth century which promulgated secularism has been much scouted and belittled, that of the nineteenth which developed it, riddled with adverse criticism and overpassed. Still they worshipped no mean godheads. Reason, science, progress, freedom, humanity were their ideals, and which of these idols, if idols they are, would we like or ought we, if we are wise, to cast down into the mire or leave as poor unworshipped relics on the wayside? If there are other and yet greater godheads or if the visible forms adored were only clay

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or stone images or the rites void of the inmost knowledge, yet has their cult been for us a preliminary initiation and the long material sacrifice prepared us for a greater religion.

*Q. 3: Science and reason which were the two principal powers by which the entire structure of materialistic thought was built are also now discredited along with materialism especially as they fostered scepticism, agnosticism and atheism. But have we not to concede that they too had their utility, even a sort of a necessity in the progressive development of human knowledge?*

A: Reason is not the supreme light, but yet is it always a necessary light-bringer and until it has been given its rights and allowed to judge and purify our first infrarational instincts, impulses, rash fervours, crude beliefs, and blind prejudgments, we are not altogether ready for the full unveiling of a greater inner luminary. Science is a right knowledge, in the end only of processes, but still the knowledge of processes too is part of a total wisdom and essential to a wide and a clear approach

towards deeper Truth behind. If it has laboured mainly in the physical field, if it has limited itself and bordered or overshadowed its light with a certain cloud of wilful ignorance, still one had to begin this method somewhere and the physical field is the first, the nearest, the easiest for the kind and manner of inquiry undertaken. Ignorance of one side of Truth or the choice of a partial ignorance or ignoring for better concentration on another side is often a necessity of our imperfect mental nature. It is unfortunate if ignorance becomes dogmatic and denies what it has refused to examine, but still no permanent harm need have been done if this willed self-limitation is compelled to disappear when the occasion of its utility is exhausted. Now that we have founded rigorously our knowledge of the physical, we can go forward with a much firmer step to a more open, secure and luminous repossession of mental and psychic knowledge. Even spiritual truths are likely to gain from it, not a loftier or more penetrating,—that is with difficulty possible,—but an ampler light and a fuller self-expression.

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*Q. 4: Critics of materialism attach no substantial value to the help it rendered to human progress and advancement of freedom and humanitarianism because all this progress and advancement was confined to man's outer life while true progress, freedom and charity, in their view, could only be found in man's inner being. Is this criticism entirely justified?*

A: Progress is the very heart of the significance of human life, for it means our evolution into greater and richer being; and the materialistic ages by insisting on it, by forcing us to recognise it as our aim and our necessity, by making impossible hereafter the attempt to subsist in the dullness of the gross beatitude of a stationary self-content, have done a priceless service to the earth-life and cleared the ways of heaven. Outward progress was the greater part of its aim and the inward is the more essential? But the inward too is not complete if the outward is left out of account. Even if the insistence of our progress falls for a time too exclusively on growth in one field, still all movement forward is helpful and must end by giving a greater force and a larger meaning to our need of

growth in deeper and higher provinces of our being. Freedom is a godhead whose greatness only the narrowly limited mind, the State-worshipper or the crank of reaction can now deny. No doubt, again, the essential is an inner freedom; but if without the inner realisation, the outer attempt at liberty may prove at last a vain thing, yet to pursue an inner liberty and perpetuate an outer slavery or to rejoice in an isolated release and leave mankind to its chains was also an anomaly that had to be exploded, a confined and too self-centred ideal. Humanity is not the highest godhead; God is more than humanity; but in humanity too we have to find and to serve him. The cult of humanity means an increasing kindness, tolerance, charity, helpfulness, solidarity, universality, unity, fullness of individual and collective growth, and towards these things we are advancing much more rapidly than was possible in any previous age, if still with sadly stumbling footsteps and some fierce relapses. The cult of our other human selves within the cult of the Divine comes closer to us as our large ideal. To have brought even one of these things a step nearer,

to have helped to settle them with whatever imperfect expression and formula in our minds, to have accelerated our movement towards them are strong achievements, noble services.

*Q. 5: But it is contended that these great movements were not the results of materialism because the urge towards them had been long active in the mind of the race and the seeds from which they naturally grew had been sown a long time back. The principle of humanitarianism, for example, was first made prominent by Christianity and Buddhism which preached insistently compassion and love. Materialism therefore cannot be credited with originating these high ideals which existed in previous religious cultures though it gave them a fuller development. Is this view quite true?*

A: This is the truth, but not the whole truth. The old religious cultures were often admirable in the ensemble and always in some of their parts, but if they had not been defective, they could neither have been so easily breached, nor would there have been the need of a secularist age to bring out the results the religions had sown.

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*Q. 6: What were the defects in these old religious cultures which prevented the full realisation of the social ideals of progress, freedom and liberalism?*

A: Their faults were those of a certain narrowness and exclusive vision. Concentrated, intense in their ideal and intensive in their effect, their expansive influence on the human mind was small. They isolated too much their action in the individual, limited too narrowly the working of their ideals in the social order, tolerated for instance, and even utilised for the ends of Church and creed, an immense amount of cruelty and barbarism which were contrary to the spirit and truth from which they had started. What they discouraged in the soul of the individual, they yet maintained in the action and the frame of society, seemed hardly to conceive of a human order delivered from these blots. The depth and fervour of their aspiration had for its shadow a want of intellectual clarity, an obscurity which confused their working and balked the expansion of their spiritual elements. They nourished too a core of asceticism and hardly cared to

believe in the definite amelioration of the earth life, despised by them as a downfall or a dolorous descent or imperfection of the human spirit, or whatever earthly hope they admitted, saw itself postponed to the millennial end of things. A belief in the vanity of human life or of existence itself suited better the preoccupation with an aim beyond earth. Perfection, ethical growth, liberation became individual ideals and figured too much as an isolated preparation of the soul for the beyond. The social effect of the religious temperament, however potentially considerable, was cramped by excessive other-worldliness and distrust in the intellect accentuated to obscurantism.

*Q. 7: But did not materialism which prevailed in the secularist centuries that followed these old religious cultures go very much to the opposite extreme?*

A: The secularist centuries weighed the balance down very much in the opposite direction. They turned the mind of the race wholly earthwards and manwards, but by insisting on intellectual clarity, reason, justice, freedom, tolerance, humanity, by putting these forward

and putting the progress of the race and its perfectibility as an immediate rule for the earthly life to be constantly pressed towards and not shunting off the social ideal to doomsday to be miraculously effected by some last divine intervention and judgment, they cleared the way for a collective advance. For they made these nobler possibilities of mankind more imperative to the practical intelligence. If they lost sight of heaven or missed the spiritual sense of the ideals they took over from earlier ages, yet by this rational and practical insistence on them they drove them home to the thinking mind. Even their too mechanical turn developed from a legitimate desire to find some means for making the effective working of these ideals a condition of the very structure of society. Materialism was only the extreme intellectual result of this earthward and human turn of the race mind.

*Q. 8: What was the intention of the Time-spirit in turning the mind of the race so exclusively to materialistic pursuits and to the intensive exploration and mastery of physical Nature?*

A: It was an intellectual machinery used by the Time-spirit to secure for a good space the firm fixing of that exclusive turn of thought and endeavour, a strong rivet of opinion to hold the mind of man to it for as long as it might be needed. Man does need to develop firmly in all his earthly parts, to fortify and perfect his body, his life, his outward-going mind, to take full possession of the earth his dwelling-place, to know and utilise physical Nature, enrich his environment and satisfy by the aid of a generalised intelligence his evolving mental, vital and physical being. That is not all his need, but it is a great and initial part of it and of human perfection. Its full meaning appears afterwards; for only in the beginning and in the appearance an impulse of his life, in the end and really it will be seen to have been a need of his soul, a preparing of fit instruments and the creating of a fit environment for a diviner life. He has been set here to serve God's ways upon earth and fulfil the Godhead in man and he must not despise earth or reject the basis given for the first powers and potentialities of the Godhead. When his thought and aim have

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persisted too far in that direction, he need not complain if he is swung back for a time towards the other extreme, to a negative or a positive, a covert or an open materialism. It is Nature's violent way of setting right her own excesses in him.

## XXV

### MATERIALISM (2)

*Q. 1: Why did materialism become so powerful a force in the last century? Was its influence derived from some basic universal truth to which it gave a distinctive formulation?*

A : The intellectual force of materialism comes from its response to a universal truth of existence. Our dominant opinions have always two forces behind them, a need of our nature and a truth of universal existence from which the need arises. We have the material and vital need because life in Matter is our actual basis, the earthward turn of our minds because earth is and was intended to be the foundation here for the workings of the Spirit. When indeed we scan with a scrupulous intelligence the face that universal existence presents to us or study where we are one with it or what in it all seems most universal and permanent, the first answer we get is not spiri-

tual but material. The seers of the Upanishads saw this with their penetrating vision and when they gave this expression of our first apparently complete, eventually insufficient view of Being, "Matter is the Brahman, from Matter all things are born, by Matter they exist, to Matter they return," they fixed the formula of universal truth of which all materialistic thought and physical science are a recognition, an investigation, a filling in of its significant details, elucidations, justifying phenomena and revelatory processes, the large universal comment of Nature upon a single text.

*Q. 2: But since the truth of Matter is only the first fact of our normal experience and not the complete or final truth, why was it taken to be the sole truth of existence to the exclusion of all other higher universal truths?*

A: Matter surely is here our basis, the one thing that is and persists, while life, mind, soul and all else appear in it as a secondary phenomenon, seem somehow to arise out of it, subsist by feeding upon it,—therefore the word used in the Upanishads for Matter is

*annam*, food,—and collapse from our view where it disappears. Apparently the existence of Matter is necessary to them, their existence does not appear to be one whit necessary to Matter. The Being does present himself at first with this face, inexorably, as if claiming to be that and nothing else, insisting that his material base and its need shall first be satisfied and, until that is done, grimly persistent with little or with no regard for our idealistic susceptibilities and caring nothing if he breaks through the delicate net of our moral, our aesthetic and our other finer perceptions. They have the hope of their reign, but meanwhile this is the first visage of universal existence and we have not to hide our face from it any more than could Arjuna from the terrible figure of the Divine on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, or attempt to escape and evade it as Shiva, when there rose around him the many stupendous forms of the original Energy, fled from the vision of it to this and that quarter, forgetful of his own godhead. We must look existence in the face in whatever aspect it confronts us and be strong to find within as well as behind it the Divine.

*Q. 3: But why should science which impartially seeks for the complete truth of phenomena rule out from its inquiry all the evidence of the greater and independent truths of our biological, psychological and spiritual existence or explain them away as merely secondary powers dependent on the primary and the fundamental reality of Matter?*

A: Physical science must necessarily to its own first view be materialistic, because so long as it deals with the physical, it has for its own truth's sake to be physical both in its standpoint and method; it must interpret the material universe first in the language of the material Brahman, because these are its primary and its general terms and all others come second, subsequently, are a special syllabary. To follow a self-indulgent course from the beginning would lead at once towards fancies and falsities. Initially, science is justified in resenting any call on it to indulge in another kind of imagination and intuition. Anything that draws it out of the circle of the phenomena of objects, as they are represented to the senses and their instrumental prolongations, and away from the dealings

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of the reason with them by a rigorous testing of experience and experimentation, must distract it from its task and is inadmissible. It cannot allow the bringing in of the human view of things; it has to interpret man in the terms of the cosmos, not the cosmos in the terms of man. The too facile conclusion of the idealist that since things only exist as known to consciousness, they can exist only by consciousness and must be creations of the mind, has no meaning for it; it first has to inquire what consciousness is, whether it is not a result rather than a cause of Matter, coming into being, as it seems to do, only in the frame of a material insciant universe and apparently able to exist only on the condition that that has been previously established. Starting from Matter, science has to be at least hypothetically materialistic.

*Q. 4: But though this may be an initial necessity for science for firmly establishing the truth of Matter, must it not, after that necessity is over, break through the narrow shackles of the materialistic theory and widen out its inquiry into the greater realms of Life, Mind and Spirit?*

A: When the action of the material principle, the first to organise itself, has been to some extent well understood, then can this science go on to consider what claim to be quite other terms of our being, life and mind. But first it is forced to ask itself whether both mind and life are not, as they seem to be, special consequences of the material evolution, themselves powers and movements of Matter. After and if this explanation has failed to cover and to elucidate the facts, it can be more freely investigated whether they are not quite other principles of being. Many philosophical questions arise, as, whether they have entered into Matter and whence or were always in it, and if so, whether they are for ever less and subordinate in action or are in their essential power greater, whether contained in it only or really containing it, whether subsequent and dependent on its previous appearance or only that in their apparent organisation here but in real being and power anterior to it and Matter itself dependent on the essential pre-existence of life and mind. A greater question comes, whether mind itself is the last term or there is something

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beyond, whether soul is only an apparent result and phenomenon of the interaction of mind, life and body or we have here an independent term of our being and of all being, greater, anterior, ultimate, all Matter containing and contained in a secret spiritual consciousness, spirit the first, last and eternal, the Alpha and the Omega, the OM. For experiential philosophy either Matter, Mind, Life or Spirit may be the Being, but none of these higher principles can be made securely the basis of our thought against all intellectual questioning until the materialistic hypothesis has first been given a chance and tested. That may in the end turn out to have been the use of the materialistic investigation of the universe and its inquiry the greatest possible service to the finality of the spiritual explanation of the universe.

*Q. 5: What are the gates of escape by which materialistic knowledge can get away from its self-imprisoning limitations?*

A: Physical science has before its eye two eternal factors of existence, Matter and Energy,

and no others at all are needed in the account of its operations. Mind dealing with the facts and relations of Matter and Energy as they are arranged to the senses in experience and continuative experiment and are analysed by the reason, would be a sufficient definition of physical science. Its first regard is on Matter as the one principle of being and energy only a phenomenon of Matter; but in the end one questions whether it is not the other way round, all things the action of Energy and matter only the field, body and instrument of its workings. The first view is quantitative and purely mechanical, the second lets in a qualitative and a more spiritual element. We do not at once leap out of the materialistic circle, but we see an opening in it which may widen into an outlet when, stirred by this suggestion, we look at life and mind not merely as phenomenon in Matter, but as energies, and see that they are other energies than the material with peculiar qualities, powers and workings. If indeed all action of life and mind could be reduced, as it was once hoped, to none but material quantitative and mechanical, to mathematical, physio-

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logical and chemical terms, the opening would cease to be an outlet; it would be choked. That attempt has failed and there is no sign of its ever being successful. Only a limited range of the phenomena of life and mind could be satisfied by a purely bio-physical, psycho-physical or bio-psychical explanation, and even if more could be dealt with by these data, still they would only have been accounted for on one side of their mystery, the lower end. Life and Mind, like the Vedic Agni, have their two extremities hidden in a secrecy, and we should by this way only have hold of the tail-end, the head would still be mystic and secret. To know more we must have studied not only the actual or possible action of body and Matter on mind and life, but explored all the possible action of mind too on body and life; and that opens undreamed vistas. And there is always the vast field of the action of mind in itself and on itself, which needs for its elucidation another, a mental, a psychic science.

Having examined and explained Matter by physical methods and in the language of the material Brahman,—it is not really

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explained, but let that pass,—having failed to carry that way of knowledge into other fields beyond a narrow limit, we must then consent to scrutinise life and mind by methods appropriate to them and explain their facts in the language of the vital and mental Brahman. We may discover then where and how these tongues of the one existence render the same truth and throw light on each other's phrases, and discover too perhaps another, high, brilliant and revealing speech which may shine out as its definitive all-explaining word. That can only be if we pursue these other sciences too in the same spirit as the physical, with a scrutiny not only of their obvious actual phenomena, but of all the countless untested potentialities of mental and psychic energy and with a free unlimited experimentation. We shall find out that their ranges of the unknown are immense. We shall perceive that until the possibilities of mind and spirit are better explored and their truths better known, we cannot yet pronounce the last all-ensphering formula of universal existence. Very early in this process the materialistic circle will be seen opening up on all its sides until

it rapidly breaks up and disappears. Adhering still to the essential rigorous method of science, though not to its purely physical instrumentation, scrutinising, experimenting, holding nothing for established which cannot be scrupulously and universally verified, we shall still arrive at supraphysical certitudes. There are other means, there are greater approaches, but this line of access too can lead to the one universal truth.

*Q. 6: What will remain as the lasting contribution of the materialistic thought when the progressive mind of humanity has passed beyond it into higher truths of existence?*

A: Three things will remain from the labour of the secularist centuries; truth of the physical world and its importance, the scientific method of knowledge,—which is to induce Nature and Being to reveal their own way of being and proceeding, not hastening to put upon them our own impositions of idea and imagination, *adhyāropa*,—and last though very far from least, the truth and importance of the earth life and the human

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endeavour, its evolutionary meaning. They will remain, but turn to another sense and disclose great issues. Surer of our hope and our labour, we shall see them all transformed into light of a vaster and more intimate world-knowledge and self-knowledge.

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## APPENDIX

References to Sri Aurobindo's books from which the answers in each series are taken are shown below:

	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Reference</i>
I	1 to 8	.... Letters (2nd Series), pp. 557-563.
II	1 to 3	.... From an unpublished letter.
	4	.... Letters (2nd Series), pp. 380-381.
III	1 to 8	.... Letters (1st Series), pp. 255-273.
IV	1	.... Letters (2nd Series), pp. 412-413. and Synthesis of Yoga, Part I, p. 205.
	2 and 3	.... Letters (2nd Series), pp. 413-414.
	4	.... From an unpublished letter.
	5 to 8	.... Letters (2nd Series), pp. 422-425.
V	1	.... Letters (2nd Series), pp. 413-414.
	2	.... Brain of India, pp. 18-20.
	3	.... Bases of Yoga, pp. 89-90.
	4	.... Bases of Yoga, p. 112.
VI	1 to 4	.... The Human Cycle, Ch. 17.
	5	.... Letters (2nd Series), pp. 588-589.
VII	1 to 7	.... The Human Cycle, Ch. 13.
VIII	1 and 2	.... Letters (1st Series), pp. 381-385.
	3 to 6	.... The Life Divine, Vol. II, pp. 885- 890.
IX	1 to 9	.... Letters (2nd Series), Sec. 15.
	10	.... Letters (1st Series), pp. 394-395.
X	1 to 4	.... Synthesis of Yoga, Part I, pp. 185- 191.

	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Reference</i>
	5	.... The Human Cycle, pp. 183-184.
XI	1 to 6	.... The Human Cycle, pp. 184-189.
XII	1 to 8	.... Arya, Vol. VII, pp. 275-281.
XIII	1 and 2	.... Arya, Vol. VI, pp. 56-58.
	3	.... The Life Divine, Vol. II, pp. 784-785.
	4	.... Arya, Vol. VI, pp. 58-60.
	5	.... Arya, Vol. VII, pp. 61-62.
	6	.... Letters (2nd Series), p. 598.
XIV	1 to 5	.... Arya, Vol. VI, pp. 118-126.
XV	1 to 7	.... Arya, Vol. VI, pp. 247-256.
XVI	1 to 5	.... The Life Divine, Vol. II, pp. 780-797.
XVII	1 to 5	.... Arya, Vol. VII, pp. 284-288.
XVIII	1 to 6	.... Arya, Vol. VII, pp. 344-348.
XIX	1 to 3	.... The Human Cycle, pp. 67-73.
XX	1 to 5	.... The Human Cycle, pp. 310-315.
XXI	1 to 5	.... The Human Cycle, pp. 31-38.
XXII	1	.... The Life Divine, Vol. II, pp. 1120-1122.
	2	.... Letters (3rd Series), pp. 345-346.
	3 and 4	.... The Life Divine, Vol. II, pp. 541-545.
XXIII	1 to 4	.... The Life Divine, Vol. I, pp. 179-181 and Vol. II, pp. 535-536.
XXIV	1 to 8	.... Arya, Vol. V, pp. 180-186.
XXV	1 to 6	.... Arya, Vol. V, pp. 186-192.

(Note: References to *The Life Divine*, Vols. I and II are to its First Edition.)











