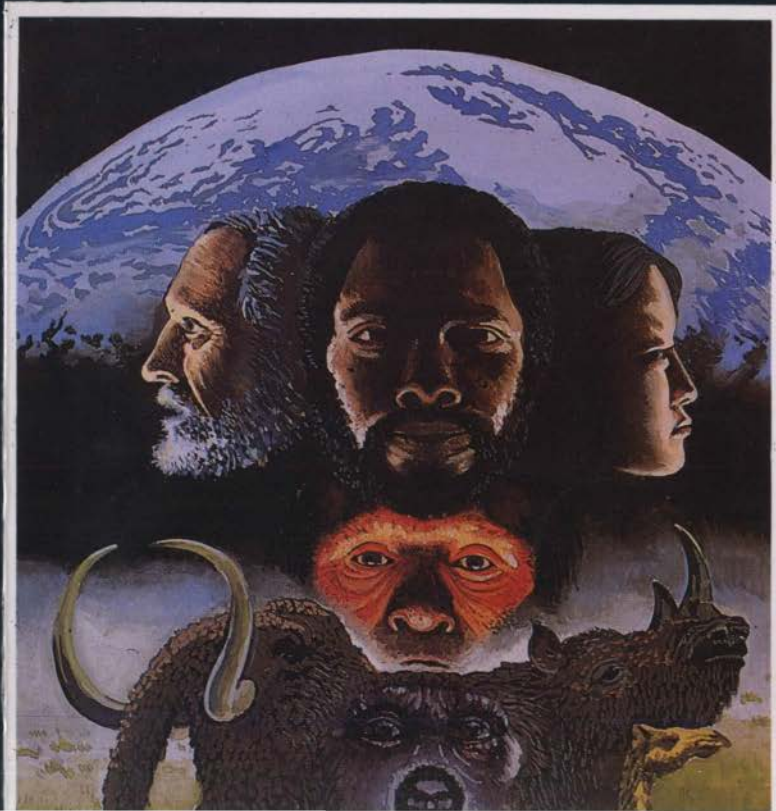
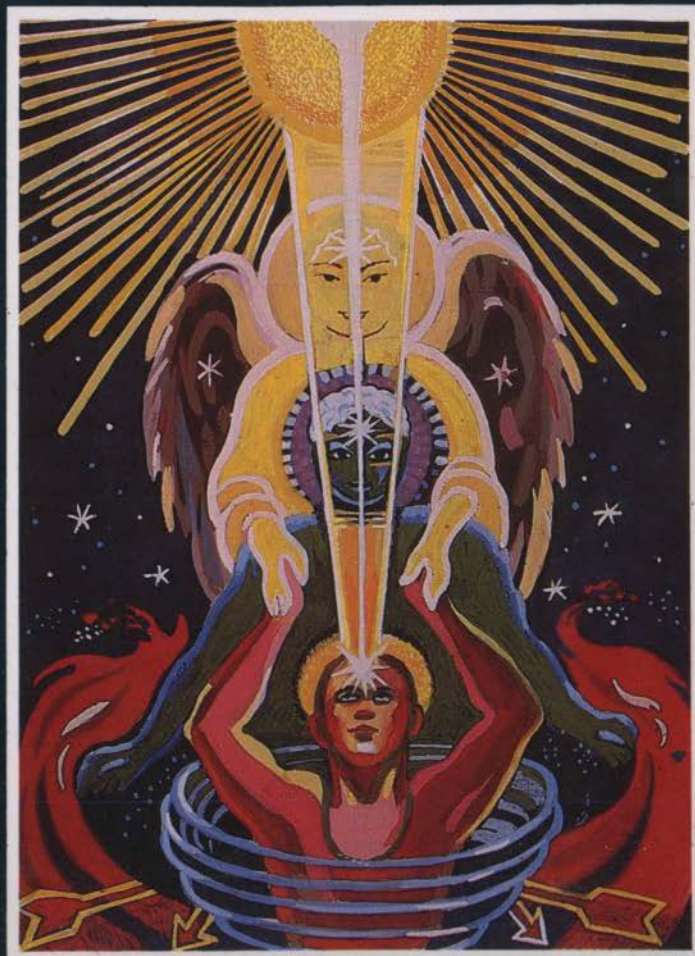


A Philosophy of Evolution for the Contemporary Man



A Philosophy of Evolution for the Contemporary Man

A Philosophy of Evolution for the Contemporary Man

Text by
Kireet Joshi

Design by
Niren Sengupta

Uday - Gopi



Indian Council of Philosophical Research

Acknowledgements

Some of the illustrations, photographs and pictures which appear in this book were used as a part of an exhibition sponsored by the Ministry of Education & Culture, Government of India, and organized by Indian Council of Philosophical Research in November 1983. Dr. T.K. Sarkar, who was at that time Director of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, was in charge of organizing this exhibition. We are indebted to the Ministry of Education for their help and wish to put on record our gratitude to them.

A number of designs and photographs which have been reproduced in this book have been selected from a collection of materials, the original sources of which are not known or could not be traced. We would, however, like to acknowledge with thanks these contributions. Some pictures have been taken from the stills of the film, *Man after Man* by David Montemurri. Among other artists who have helped us, we should like to mention Shri Niren Sengupta, Mr Rolf and Shri Rathin Sengupta.

We have received invaluable help from Shri Buddhadev Bhattacharya, and the design and layout of this book owes much to his initiative and labour. We are very grateful to him.

Professor D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Chairman, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, has given constant encouragement, and to him we owe a deep debt of gratitude.

©Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1986

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, or by any means, without written permission of the Publisher.

Published by Shri M.C. Jain for the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, Guru Nanak Foundation Building, Fourth Floor, New Mehrauli Road, New Delhi 110 067.

Phototypeset at The Typesetters, Rajendra Place, New Delhi 110 008.
Printed at Mehta Offset Works, New Delhi 110 028

To the contemporary man's
journey towards the next step
in evolution

Contents	Discontent of the Contemporary Man 9
	Evolutionary Crisis of Mankind 11
	Man is a Transitional Being 13
	Our Evolutionary Task 18
	What is the Secret of Nature's Movement? 21
	The Process of Evolution 27
	Marvel of the Mental Being 35
	A Deeper Question 49
	An Experiment in Evolution 55

Discontent of the Contemporary Man

The contemporary man, who has attempted to go beyond superficialities in order to think, live and act at deeper and higher levels, finds himself in a state of discontent. He has witnessed the triumphs of science and technology; he feels satiated but not satisfied. As for his internal world, he asks if it is his goal to suppress the limits to the expansion of his ego or to allow a free field to the unlimited desires of the force of his egocentric vital being; he seems to be wanting neither. A number of mental ideas and ideals are competing with each other for their full realization and fulfilment; for a time, he chooses one in preference to the other; but, in the long run, he seems to be looking for something else.

The contemporary man may resolve to explore. He may turn to the dialogues of Plato, learn and endure the Cartesian doubt, and marvel at the magnificence of Spinoza and Leibnitz. He may witness the conflict between Galileo and God, sharpen his intellect on the whetstone of materialism, pursue zealously the dispassionate inquiries of science, probe the 'fourth' dimension, examine evolution and mutation, and dream of a new physics, a new biology and a new psychology.

He may hear the categorical imperative, practise the austerities of morals, and knock at the doors of churches, temples and mosques. He may endeavour to set his feet on the paths of spiritual experience. He may imitate or live with Agni, Indra, Shiva, Krishna and Christ, sit at the feet of Agastya, Yajnavalkya, Aruni and Buddha, laugh with the sanyasin at the snaring net of Maya and meditate with Shankara on the reality of the Brahman, and yet yearn with Chaitanya for divine love and ecstasy.

He may do all this and yet find that he has no answer to his deeper quest and longing, which is still inarticulate and uncertain.

He may wish to engage in further study.

He may study history, politics, sociology and economics, and come to ask what defects in the past civilizations have led mankind to the confusion in which it has got engulfed, and how it can build a new glory that cannot fade.

Indeed, as he might review the sum of the past human endeavour, he would find that this past was fashioned overwhelmingly under the influence of the denial of the materialist on the one hand, and of the refusal of the ascetic on the other. Both had their full play in the course of man's history; both proved their utility, but both have finally shown their bankruptcy. It would become clear that no meaningful world can be built if the ultimate stuff to which everything returns is the unconscious, insensitive, neutral and indifferent Matter, or else, if Matter and the world built on it were an illusion, they would be rejected as nought by the sole existent Spirit.

It is true, he may find that a number of religions, spiritual philosophies and systems of Yoga have attempted to build some meaningful relationship between the material world and God, whether conceived in deistic, pantheistic, theistic or in some primitive or ultra-modern terms. But all of them stumble when they come to pronounce the real meaning of Matter, precisely when they come to answer questions as to whether it is *ultimately* acceptable to God. Even the most catholic teachings which preach universal love for men and creatures and plants and all creation, have declared that Matter is not a fit robe for the Spirit; that it is, after all, to be discarded. They have, therefore, asked their adherents to prepare themselves for the life after death, for the Day of Judgement, for some paradise, some supra-terrestrial abode of God or of gods, *vaikuntha*. Their concern for material life turns out ultimately to be a temporary compromise, at the most as a school for the 'fallen' soul to be chastened and trained, even under the threat of some eternal punishment, to enable it to return to its original source. None of them explains how the soul, originating from the divine source, or eternally a portion of the Divine, could 'fall' by some mistake or temptation or why, itself being, pure, any chastisement or training is needed at all. If the soul is pure and if it has accepted the material world, it must be with some luminous understanding and for some noble or meaningful purpose. It cannot be merely to become capable of returning as soon as possible to its original

home, which, in that case, it need not have left at all. There must then be some deeper relationship between the soul and the earth, between Spirit and Matter. But this has not been admitted. Matter is seen either as a tomb of the soul or as a temporary instrument to be utilized for a release in some supra-terrestrial or supra-cosmic existence or non-existence, *nirvana*. The result of these views on the earth cannot be substantially different from that of the exclusive refusal of the ascetic or of the denial of the materialist. It is then not surprising that even though they have played a great role in history and have even inspired some of the great cultures in which earthly life came to be developed to a high degree of excellence, most of these ultimately fell and collapsed, and even the rare ones, like the Indian culture, which did not meet that disastrous fate, have been suffering from serious maladies and are on the borderline of life and death, needing some radical cure.



Evolutionary Crisis of Mankind

At a deeper level, we may find that the discontent of the contemporary man is a manifestation of the crisis that mankind is undergoing today. That the present situation of mankind is critical is admitted widely. In gross terms, the threat of thermonuclear weapons to the very survival of mankind and to the ecological condition of the earth is directing leaders of the world, not only in the political field, but in practically every important field, to themes relevant to deeper levels of consciousness, even ethical and spiritual. It is clearly recognized that science alone cannot save the world or give to it the happiness and fulfilment that it is seeking. There are deeper questionings and explorations; attempts are being made to turn more and more decisively to the dimension of values.

The rationalistic age which began with the Renaissance has enabled man to fathom deep into the possibilities of reason as the governor of life. At the beginning of its journey in modern times, reason had the faith that it would be able, at its highest reaches of fulfilment, to deliver to man true, comprehensive and indubitable knowledge. It is now conclusively realized that reason can at best give only approximations and varying degrees of probability. The only certainty that reason can claim is regarding its concepts of the infinite and the absolute, which, too, can be set aside as conceptual fictions and have even been declared by the positivistic rationalists as meaningless and void of any significance. Reason erected the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, but it has come to realize that in actualizing the ideal of liberty it is required to suppress the claims of equality, and in actualizing the ideal of equality it is obliged to suppress the claims of liberty. As for the ideal of fraternity, it is acknowledged that it is more a matter of heart and spirit rather than that of reason. It is being realized that reason cannot give to man that knowledge and power which can fulfil the dream of a harmonious order of society; it is felt that something else is needed.

A stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. We are today in the midst of a multi-sided human experiment in which nations find themselves interdependent, and yet incapable of the required consciousness of co-operation and mutuality. Solutions are being attempted which still repose on the materialistic reason and a unified organization of the economic life. The methods which are being employed tend towards forced compression and imposed unanimity of mind and life and a mechanical organization of the communal existence. These are being countered by powerful movements that demand freedom, variety and decentralization.

Developments in communication and transport have led to the shrinking of the world, and a structure of the external life has been raised by man's ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges. Complex political, social, administrative, economic and cultural machinery have been built for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. It is clear that the system of civilization that the modern man has created is too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilize and manage; it has become a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites.

The issue seems to be that while, on the one hand, the seeking of the *basic fullness* of life is irreversible, there is, on the other hand, a necessity of the *free growth* of *something that exceeds* that basic fullness of life, which can come by opportunities for the increasing and completer pursuit of other and greater aims surpassing material existence, for the discovery of a higher truth and good and beauty, for the discovery of a greater and diviner spirit which would intervene and use life for a higher perfection of the being.

An exclusive pursuit of the basic fullness of life would mean, in the context of the egoistic consciousness and dividing mind, a vast pullulation of unaccorded ideas and impulses, a surge of enormous powers and desires, a chaotic mass of unassimilated and intermixed mental, vital and physical material of a larger existence which, in the absence of a creative harmonizing light of the spirit,

must welter in a universalized confusion and discord out of which it is impossible to build a greater harmonic life. On the contrary, given the potencies of the universal force provided by science, there would be increasing hungers and calls for life satisfaction of individuals, classes and nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling malady of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by immense and too formindable means, in the belief that this is man's way into something ideal.

In the past, science had neither brought about the possibility of the intermingling of people on such a large scale as today, nor hand it put at the disposal of man such formidable powers as today. Besides, man had created societies based on fixed ideas or fixed customs, a fixed cultural system or an organic life-system, each with its own order. With these props and supports, man was able to arrive at some harmonized life by organized ideation and limitation. But in the contemporary context, where everything is being thrown into the melting pot of a more and more intermingling of life and a pouring in of ever new ideas and motives and facts and possibilities, the methods of the past would no more be available. It is true that reason and science could attempt to help, but they could only succeed in *standardizing and fixing* everything into an artificially arranged and mechanized unity of life, which would, in turn, continuously break down under the pressure of the demands and achievements of the *free* growth of man.

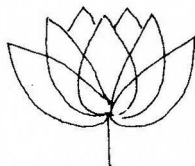
The situation, therefore, necessarily calls for a new and a greater consciousness to master the increasing potentialities of existence and harmonize them. A superior kind of whole being, whole knowledge and whole power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole life.

It has, therefore, been contended that the crisis through which mankind is passing is neither economic, nor social nor political, nor anything else, but evolutionary in character. Having developed all the available faculties and capacities in the normal range of the human type, having created the bewildering situation which is irreversible, and which none the less must be remedied, there is no other alternative for man but to tap the potentialities and capacities of a higher mental and

supramental range. This would mean an evolutionary step to transgress the limits of the human species leading eventually to an evolutionary mutation.

There is, indeed, the possibility that the human mind, eager to avoid, on the one hand, a mechanistic idea of life and society, and, on the other, the arduous evolutionary labour involved in the mutation of the human species, may seek refuge in a return to the religious idea and a society governed or sanctioned by religion. But organized religion, though it can provide a means of inner uplift for the individual and preserve in it or behind it a way for his opening to spiritual experience, has not changed human life and society. What is needed is not religion so conceived, but a total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the whole nature. The conclusion that has therefore been drawn is that it is only the full emergence of the light and power of the spirit and the consequent replacement or transformation and uplifting of our insufficient mental and vital nature by a spiritual and supramental consciousness, force and action that can effect the needed evolutionary miracle.

If it is said that this insistence on a radical change of nature seems to put off all the hope of humanity to a distant evolutionary future, the answer is that to hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition. At the same time, it is pointed out that what is demanded by this change is not something altogether distant, alien to our existence and radically impossible; for what has to be developed is there in our being and is not something outside it. It is, besides, a step for which the whole of evolution had been a preparation and which is brought closer at each crisis of human destiny. It has been further pointed out that what is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible and to find the way.



Man is a Transitional Being

Many questions arise.

It may be contended that the only statement of which we are certain is that there are events, but there is no warrant to admit that events have any internal or causal connections among themselves or any plan or design behind them. There is, in other words, no teleology. It is, therefore, argued that every event is a 'chance event', and that the quest of man to seek any meaning or purpose or any teleological or evolutionary goal may have some emotional significance but none in terms of objective truth. But if we examine this view, we find that it leaves us with some dissatisfying paradoxes. If everything were a chance, we may ask, how did the sense of meaning and design arise at all? It may, of course, be answered that that also was a matter of chance. But that precisely is the paradox, namely chance generating the sense of meaning and design. Again, if chance rules the world, then it is only a chance, and not a certainty, that the chance theory may be valid. In other words, the chance theory has no obligatory force. On the other hand, if there is a secret consciousness in or behind the apparently inconscient Energy in Matter, then the chance theory cannot hold its ground. In the same way, the materialistic position, too, cannot maintain its validity.

At the other extreme, it may be contended that if there is an ultimate Reality, which is infinite, perfect and absolute, then such a Reality cannot have any purpose in manifestation. It may, however, be conceded, as in the Indian theory of *Lila*, that the only purpose that the Absolute can have in manifestation would be the delight of manifestation itself. But it may be asked if the delight of manifestation or the delight of a game would not carry within itself an object to be accomplished in a part movement of the universal totality. Indeed, it may be conceded that a drama without denouement may be an artistic possibility, existing only for the pleasure of watching the characters and the pleasure in problems posed without a solution or with a forever suspended,

dubious balance of solution; the drama of the earth's evolution might conceivably be of that character, but an intended or inherently predetermined denouement is also and more convincingly possible. In that case, it may be said that Delight or *Ananda* is the secret principle of all being and support of all activity of being; but *Ananda* does not exclude a delight in the working out of a Truth inherent in being, immanent in the Force or Will of being, upheld in the hidden self-awareness of its consciousness-Force. There can then be no objection to the admission of a teleological factor, if the purpose is not a purpose in the human sense,—the sense of the need *to acquire* what one does not possess,—but in the sense of the intention *to manifest* fully all the possibilities inherent in the total movement.

It may be admitted that science affirms today an evolutionary terrestrial existence and that there are in recent trends of thinking bold and plausible speculations on evolution and the evolutionary future of man, particularly among philosophers. But it may be argued that the scientific theory of evolution can be challenged on the ground that it is insufficiently founded and that it is superfluous as an explanation of the process of terrestrial Nature. If the facts with which science deals are reliable, the generalizations it hazards are short-lived; it holds them for some decades or some centuries, then passes to another generalization, another theory of things. No firm metaphysical building, it may be concluded, can be erected upon these shifting quick-sands.

But the theory of spiritual evolution is not identical with the scientific theory of form-evolution and physical life-evolution. According to the theory of spiritual evolution, there are three stages in the process of becoming. An involution of the spirit in the inconscience is the beginning. An evolution in the ignorance with its play of possibilities of a partial developing knowledge is the middle. A consummation in a deployment of the spirit's self-knowledge and the self-power of its divine being and consciousness is the culmination. It is admitted that the two stages that have already occurred seem at first sight to deny the possibility of the later consummating stage of the cycle, but it is stressed that logically they imply its emergence. For, it is argued, if the inconscience has evolved consciousness, the partial consciousness

already reached must surely evolve into complete consciousness. It is contended that it is a supramentalized, perfected and divinized life for which the earth-nature is secretly seeking, and that a progressive manifestation of this kind can only have for its secret of significance the revelation of Being in a perfect Becoming.

Let us elucidate this view in fuller terms. An involution of the spiritual reality in the apparent inconscience of matter is the starting point of the evolution. Existence appears out of the Inconscient in a first evolutionary form as substance of Matter created by an inconscient energy. Consciousness, involved and non-apparent in Matter, first emerges in the disguise of vital vibrations, animate but subconscient; then in imperfect formulations of a conscient life, it strives towards self-finding through successive forms of that material substance, forms more and more adapted to its own complete expression. Consciousness in life, throwing off the primal insensibility of a material inanimation and nescience, labours to find itself more and more entirely in the Ignorance (a middle term between inconscience and plenary consciousness) which is its first inevitable formulation. But it achieves at first only a primary mental perception and a vital awareness of self and things, a life perception which in its first forms depends on an internal sensation responsive to the contacts of the other life and of Matter. Consciousness labours to manifest, as best it can through the inadequacy of sensation, its own inherent delight of being; but it can only formulate a partial pain and pleasure. But when we come to Man, we find that the energizing consciousness appears as Mind more clearly aware of itself and things. This is still a partial and limited, not an integral power of itself; but a first conceptive potentiality and promise of integral emergence is visible. That integral emergence is the goal of evolving Nature.

The appearance of Man in the evolutionary movement is, according to this view, highly significant. It is true that Man's first and primary business is to affirm himself in the universe. But his chief business is to evolve and finally to exceed himself. He has to enlarge his partial being into a complete being, his partial consciousness into an integral consciousness. He has to achieve mastery of his environment, but also world

union and world harmony. He has to realize his individuality, but also to enlarge into a cosmic self and a universal and process of a transformation, a chastening and correction of all that is obscure, erroneous and ignorant in his mentality, an ultimate arrival at a free and wide harmony and luminousness of knowledge and will and feeling and action and character. This can only be accomplished by his growing into a larger being and a larger consciousness: self-evolution from what he partially and temporarily is in his actual and apparent nature to what he completely is in his secret self and spirit. This hope is the justification of his work and struggle upon the earth amidst the phenomena of the cosmos.

It has been affirmed that, in fact, life, mind and supermind are present in the atom, are at work there, but invisible, occult and latent in a subconscious or apparently unconscious action of energy. The electron and the atom are in this view eternal somnambulists. In the plant the outer form consciousness is still in a state of sleep, always on the point of waking, but never waking. Animal being is mentally aware of existence, its own and others, it has even a practical intelligence, founded on memory, association, stimulating need, observation, a power of device. It is not all a half-conscious instinct; the animal prepares human intelligence. But when we come to man, we see the whole thing becoming conscious. Man not only turns his gaze downward and around him, but also upward towards what is about him and inward towards what is occult within him. To climb to higher altitudes, to get a greater scope, to transform his lower nature, this is always a natural impulse of man as soon as he has made his place for himself in the physical and vital world of the earth and has a little leisure to consider his further possibilities. He is capable, unlike other terrestrial creatures, of becoming aware of what is deeper than mind, of the soul within him, and of what is above the mind, of supermind, of spirit, capable of opening to it, admitting it, rising towards it, taking hold of it. It is in his human nature, in all human nature, to exceed itself by conscious evolution, to climb beyond what he is. And where is the limit of effectuation in the evolutionary being's self-becoming by self-exceeding?

A spiritual evolution, it is affirmed, an evolution of consciousness in Matter, in a constant developing self-

formulation till the form, even the physical body, can reveal the highest supramental knowledge and power and harmony is the key-note, the central significant motive of terrestrial existence.

The theory of spiritual evolution may accept the scientific account of physical evolution as a support or an element, but the support is not indispensable. What is common between the theory of spiritual evolution and scientific theory is the account of certain outward aspects of evolution, namely, that there is in the scale of terrestrial existence a development of forms, of bodies, a progressively complex and competent organization of Matter, of Life in Matter, of consciousness in living Matter; in this scale the better organized the form, the more it is capable of housing a better organized, a more complex and capable, a more developed or evolved Life and consciousness. In regard to these common aspects, there does not seem to be a basis for dispute, once the evolutionary hypothesis is put forward and the facts supporting it are marshalled. The dispute arises in regard to those aspects which are not indispensable for the theory of spiritual evolution, namely, the precise machinery by which the evolutionary process is effected or the exact genealogy or chronological succession of types of being, the development of one form of life out of a precedent less evolved form, natural selection, the struggle for life and the survival of acquired characteristics. These may or may not be accepted. What is of primary consequence is the fact of a successive creation with a developing plan in it. Another conclusion is that there is a graduated necessary succession in the evolution; first the evolution of Matter, next the evolution of Life in Matter, then the evolution of Mind in living Matter, and in this last stage an animal evolution followed by a human evolution. In particular, the essential point in the theory of spiritual evolution is the fact of the evolution of consciousness, a progression of spiritual manifestation in material existence.

But even if all this is accepted, it may still be doubted that Man would evolve so unimaginably as to develop into a superman or supramental species. It may be argued that Man is a type among many types so constructed, and like others, so he, too, has his own native law, limits, special kind of existence, within whose limits he can extend and develop, but which he

cannot transcend. To exceed himself, to grow into the superman, to put on the nature and capacities proper to the supermind, would be, it may be concluded, a contradiction of his self-law, impracticable and impossible.

In reply, it has been conceded that each type or pattern of consciousness and being in the body, once established, has to be faithful to the law of being of that type, to its design and rule of nature. But it has been pointed out that it may very well be that part of the law of the human type is its impulse towards self-exceeding, that the means for a conscious transition has been provided along with the spiritual powers of man, and that the possession of such a capacity may be a part of the plan on which the creative Energy has built him.

It has further been pointed out that there has been a tremendous human progress since man's appearance or even in his recent ascertainable history. It may, however, be argued that this process has not carried the human race beyond itself, into a self-exceeding. In reply, it has been contended that that was not to be expected until a critical stage was reached and that it is only now that stage is being reached. The action of evolutionary nature in a type of being and consciousness is first to develop the type to its utmost capacity by a subtilization and increasing complexity till it is ready for her bursting the shell, the ripened decisive emergence, reversal turning over of consciousness on itself.

It has been pointed out that in the evolutionary process, at each stage of higher ascent from a lower stage, the higher does not abandon the lower, but its first occupation is to take up and assimilate the lower by intenser cultivation, sharpening, subtilizing and sublimation. As man ascends from the animal, he looks downward from his plane of will and intelligence and enlarges, subtilizes and elevates his use of those elements which are central to the animal—sensation, sense-emotion, vital desire and pleasure. He does not abandon the animal reactions and enjoyments, but more lucidly, finely and sensitively mentalizes them. But as he develops further, he puts his lower being to a severer test, begins to demand from it on pain of rejection something like a transformation that is the mind's way of preparing for a spiritual life still beyond

it. As there are several lower and higher elements in man, the process of assimilation and sublimation becomes long and complex, and there appears to be not a straight line of progression, but development in a cycle. In reality, when the process is examined more closely, it turns out to be a process of spiral progression, in which a cycle of development ends at a higher point than the point which was earlier reached before entering into a period of a downward curve. Looked at from this point of view, it may be conceded that what man has until now principally done is to act within the circle of nature, on a spiral of nature-movement, sometimes descending, sometimes ascending. But what he has achieved—and this is important from the point of view a preparation for a future secure ascent—is that he has sharpened, subtilized and made an increasingly complex and plastic use of his capacities. In that sense, it can be said that however great the ancients, however supreme some of their achievements and creations, however impressive their powers of spirituality, of intellect or of character, there has been in later developments an increasing subtlety, complexity and manifold development of knowledge and possibility in man's achievements, in his politics, society, life, science, metaphysics, knowledge of all kinds, art and literature. Even in his spiritual endeavour, it has been urged, there has been this increasing subtlety, plasticity, sounding of depths and extension of seeking, even though the heights reached were less surprisingly lofty and less massive in power than those reached by the ancients. It is not surprising that there have been falls from a high type of culture, a sharp temporary descent into a certain obscurantism, cessations of the spiritual urge, plunges into a barbaric natural materialism. Considering the total spiral of progress, these may be viewed as temporary phenomena, at worst a downward curve, preparing for a higher curve. It is thus true that this progress has not carried the race beyond itself, into a self-exceeding or a transformation of the mental being; but this was not to be expected. All that has developed so far can be regarded, it has been concluded, as a process of developing the human type to its utmost capacity, and it is only now that we are ready to feel that it has ripened to a point of a decisive emergence or mutation. And the present crisis of mankind is an indicator of the coming movement of that mutation.

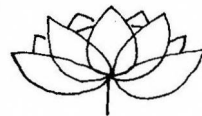
It has been observed that the appearance of human mind and body on the earth marks a crucial step, a decisive change in the course and process of evolution. Up to the advent of man, evolution had been effected, not by the self-aware aspiration, intention, will or seeking of the living being, but subconsciously or subliminally or by the automatic operation of Nature. But in man the necessary change has been made. In him, the self-aware participating individual will has emerged, and the being has become awake and aware of himself. Man has seen that there can be a higher status of consciousness than his own; the aspiration to exceed himself is delivered and articulate within him. He becomes conscious of a soul, he comes to discover the self and spirit. Until his emergence, evolution was subconscious; with him a conscious evolution becomes conceivable and practicable.

It has been further pointed out that if we observe closely the operations of Nature, we find that in the previous stages of the evolution, nature's first care and effort had to be directed towards a change in the physical organization. That change was a pre-requisite of a change of consciousness. But in man a reversal is possible, indeed inevitable. It is through his consciousness, through its transmutation, and no longer through a new bodily organism as a first instrumentation, that the evolution can be effected. It may even be surmised that in the inner reality of things, a change of consciousness was always the major fact, that evolution has always had a spiritual significance and the physical change was only instrumental. This relation was concealed by the first abnormal balance of the two factors, the body of the external inconscience outweighing and obscuring in importance the spiritual element, the conscious being. But once the balance has been righted, it is no longer the change of body that must precede the change of consciousness; the consciousness itself by its mutation will necessitate and operate whatever mutation is needed for the body.

It may, however, be still argued that if an evolutionary culmination in the production of the spiritual and supramental being is intended and man is to be its medium, it will only be a few especially evolved human beings who will form the new type and move towards the new life; that once done the rest of humanity will

sink back and remain quiescent in its normal status. In reply to this argument, it has been conceded that there is not the least probability or possibility of the whole human race rising en masse to the supramental level. What is suggested, it has been admitted, is nothing so revolutionary and astonishing, but only the capacity in the human mentality, when it has reached a certain level or a certain point of stress of the evolutionary impetus, to press towards a higher plane of consciousness and its embodiment in the being. It has further been explained that the being will necessarily undergo by this embodiment a change of the normal constitution of its nature, a change certainly of its mental and emotional and sensational constitution and also to a great extent of the body consciousness and the physical conditioning of our life and energies; but the change of consciousness will be the chief factor, the initial movement; the physical modification will be a subordinate factor, a consequence. As to whether humanity will sink back after the mutation of the human species, it has been suggested that the urge of man towards self-exceeding is not likely ever to die out totally in the race, and that the human mental status will always be there, not only as a degree in the scale, but also as an open step towards the spiritual and supramental status.

Man as he is, it has been affirmed, cannot be the last term of an evolution, if a spiritual unfolding on the earth is the hidden truth of the emergence of consciousness that has been taking place in Nature. He is, it is stressed, too imperfect an expression of the Spirit, Mind itself a too limited form and instrumentation. Man, the mental being, can only be a transitional being. If man is incapable of exceeding his mentality, it has been suggested, he must be surpassed, and Supermind and superman must manifest and take the lead of the creation. But if his mind is capable of opening to what exceeds it, then there is no reason why man himself should not arrive at Supermind and supermanhood or at least lend his mentality, life and body to an evolution of that greater term of the Spirit manifesting in Nature.



Our Evolutionary Task

In the light of the foregoing, man can be conceived as a laboratory of evolution in which Nature is experimenting to bring about his mutation. But man is a conscious being with a conscious will and instrumentation of deliberate action. The evolutionary force of Nature and man's will can therefore act and react upon each other, and the entire human drama can be seen as an enactment of this action and reaction. If the consciousness of man can be widened, intensified and heightened, it can learn the laws and processes of evolution and master the art of engineering the evolutionary movement, and it can, by voluntary co-operation with the evolutionary will, accelerate and effectuate the highest possible transmutation of himself. Man can, in other words, universalize himself, exceed himself, and fashion from his stuff and spirit a new being, a superman.

But there are several past and present concepts of the superman. Supermanhood in the ordinary idea consists of a surpassing of the normal human level, not in kind but in degree of the same kind, by an enlarged personality, a magnified and exaggerated ego, an increased power of mind, an increased power of vital force, a refined or tense and massive exaggeration of the forces of the human ignorance. There is also implied in it the idea of a forceful domination over humanity by the superman. This is the concept of supermanhood that we find in Nietzsche. The Nietzschean type of superman really signifies what is contained in the Indian concepts of the *Rakshasa* or *Asura*. The *Rakshasa* and the *Asura* symbolize a tense effort of humanity to surpass and transcend itself, but in the wrong direction. In India, a specific distinction is

made between the *Rakshasa* and the *Asura*. The *Rakshasa* is centred in the violence and turbulence of the exaggerated vital ego satisfying itself with the supreme tyrannical or anarchic strength of self-fulfilment; he is the giant, the ogre or devourer of the world. In the *Asura*, we find a mighty exhibition of an overpowering force, a self-possessed, self-held, even, it may be, an ascetically self-restrained mind-capacity and life power; he is strong, calm or cold or formidable in collected vehemence, subtle, dominating; he achieves even a sublimation at once of the mental and vital ego. If we examine the history of the world, we shall find that the earth has had enough of this kind of supermanhood in her past, and a larger emergence of that type would be a retrograde evolution. What is, however, conceived as the supermanhood that results from the decisive spiritual evolution is at once much more difficult and much more simple. What is conceived in the divine superman is a self-realized being, a building of the spiritual self, an intensity and urge of the soul and the deliverance and sovereignty of its light and power and beauty. It is not egoistic supermanhood seizing on a mental and vital domination over humanity, but the sovereignty of the Spirit over its own instruments, its possession of itself and its possession of life in the power of the Spirit. It will represent a new consciousness in which humanity itself shall find its own self-exceeding and self-fulfilment by the revelation of the divinity that is striving for birth within it. This is the concept of the superman that we find in Sri Aurobindo. As Sri Aurobindo explains, the divine superman combines and synthesizes the highest powers of love, power and wisdom. In him, the full heart of love is tranquillized by knowledge into a calm ecstasy and vibrates with strength; the strong hands of Power labour through him for the world in a radiant fullness of joy and light; his luminous brain of knowledge accepts and transforms the heart's obscure inspiration and lends itself to the workings of the high-seated will. All these powers are founded together, not in ego, but in a being that transcends ego, in a soul of sacrifice that lives in unity with all the world and accepts all things to transmute them in their divine stuff and forms.

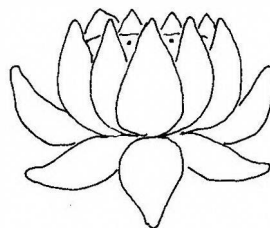
In the vision of Sri Aurobindo, the advent of the divine superman would mean a reversal of the present law of human consciousness and life. The divine superman

does not reject Matter and physical life, although he transforms it. One realizes that the soul has descended into the Inconscient and assumed the disguise of Matter for the adventure and the joy of creation and discovery. Life is seen as an adventure of the Spirit; it is not an error of the soul, but a deliberate enterprise that seeks a full transformation of material life on the earth. And when that transformation is achieved, the superman may not withdraw from life and Matter, but would continue to lead the evolution in Knowledge, a continuous self-unfolding of the infinite Spirit. It is envisaged that the evolution in Knowledge would be a more beautiful and glorious manifestation with more vistas ever unfolding themselves and more intensive in all ways than any evolution could be in the Ignorance. The supramental manifestation of life would be more full and fruitful; it would mean a greater and happier life for the entire earth.

It is, indeed, realized that the task involved in the transmutation of man into the divine supermanhood or into a supramental being is the most difficult task that can be conceived. It has been pointed out that this would mean getting nearer to our inner self and discovering the force of the soul that presides over the powers of our nature. There has to be constant stress on self-perfection that gives to the soul-force its largest scope. The soul-power of Knowledge must rise to the highest degree of which the individual nature can be the supporting basis. There must develop a free mind of light, and there must develop a bottomless steadiness and illimitable calm, upholding all the illumination, movement, and action as on some rock of ages, equal, unperturbed, unmoved. Similarly, the soul-power of Will and strength must rise to like largeness and altitude. One has to develop an absolute, calm fearlessness of the free spirit, an infinite dynamic courage which no peril, limitation of possibility or wall of opposing force can deter from pursuing the work, a high nobility of soul and will untouched by any littleness or baseness and moving with a certain greatness of step to spiritual victory through whatever temporary defeat or obstacle. There must be a spirit never depressed or cast down from faith and confidence. There should also come to fulfilment of a soul-power of mutuality, a free self-spending and spending of gift and possession in the work to be done, a great taking into oneself from all beings and a

free giving out of oneself to all, which can be described as a divine commerce. And, finally, there must come about the perfection of the soul-power of service, the universal love that lavishes itself without demand of return, the embrace that takes to itself the body of God in man and works for help and service, the abnegation that is ready to bear the yoke of the ideal and make life a free servitude to the truth, the right and the vast. This would also mean a complete extinction of egoism and the sense of the ego, a complete self-surrender of the whole being to the spiritual Reality of our being and to its work in the world. All these things are to be united, and in the process, they would all assist and enter into each other and become one.

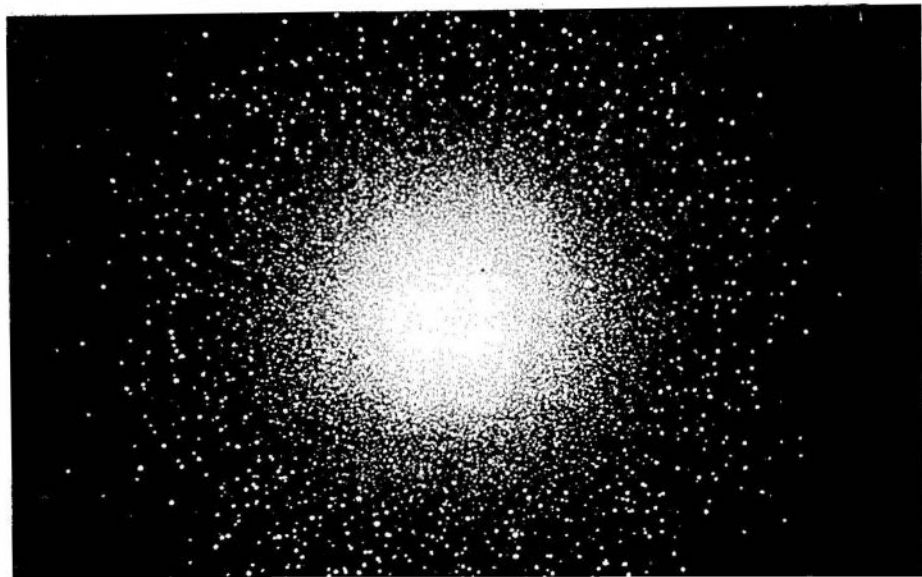
It is clear that the task is colossal. It is at once individual and collective; no individual by himself can accomplish this task. The great but little known experiments have shown that there has to be a minimum collectivity, representative of the whole humanity, which must support the individual revolutionary effort and evolutionary general progression. Not speculations but direct involvement in material transmutation would be needed. Indeed, a century or two or even more may be needed before the task can be accomplished; but to accomplish it even then, we are called upon to begin now.

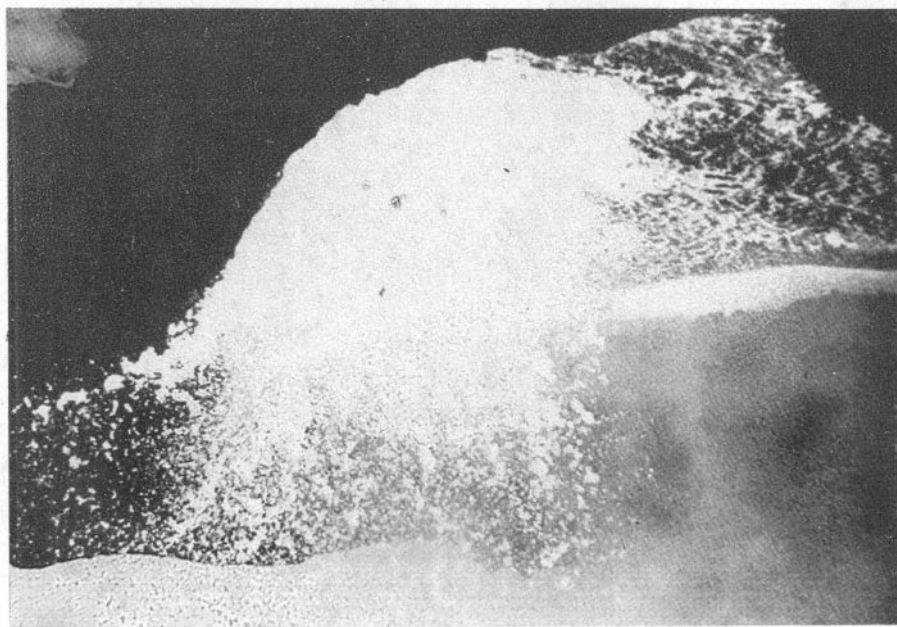
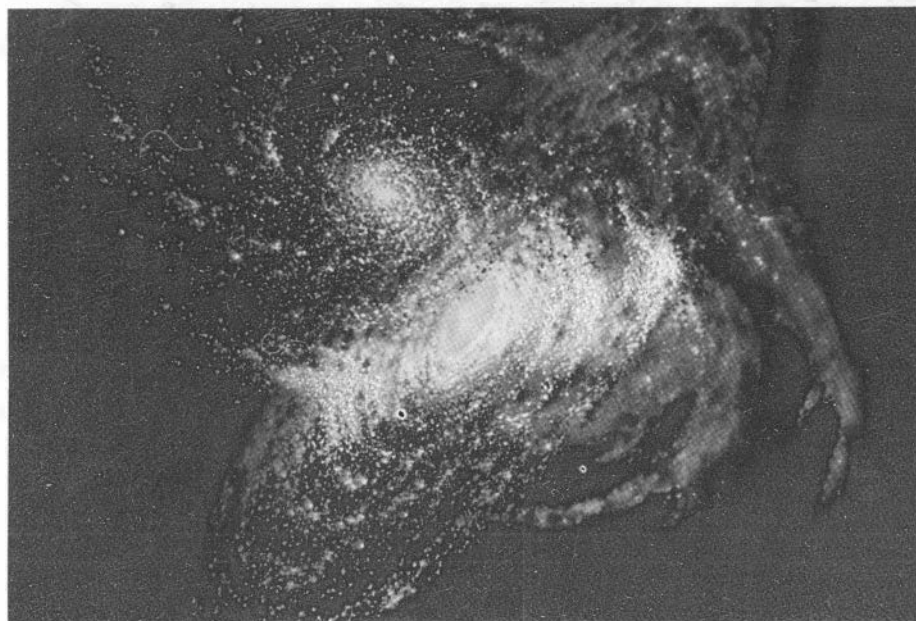


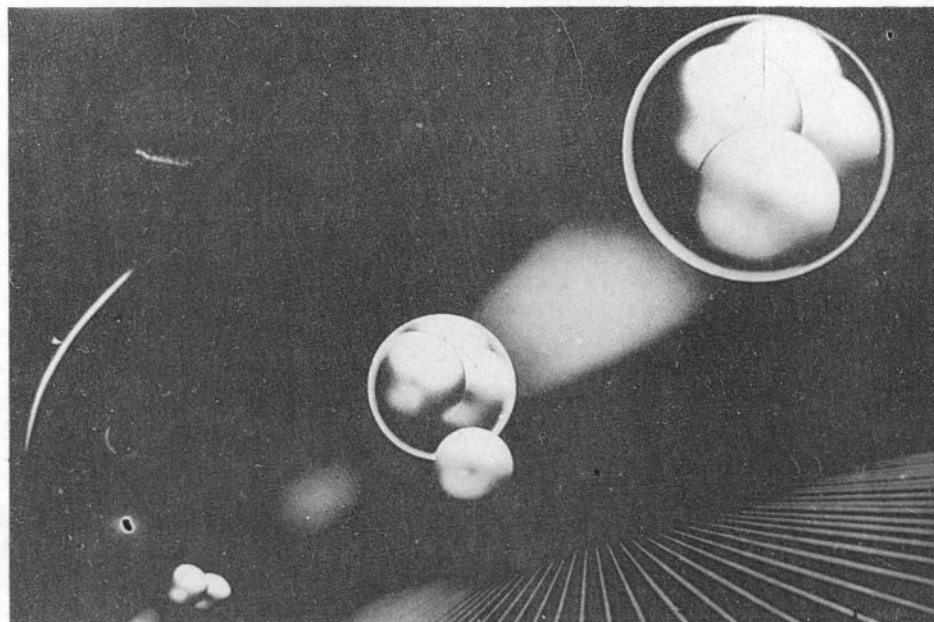
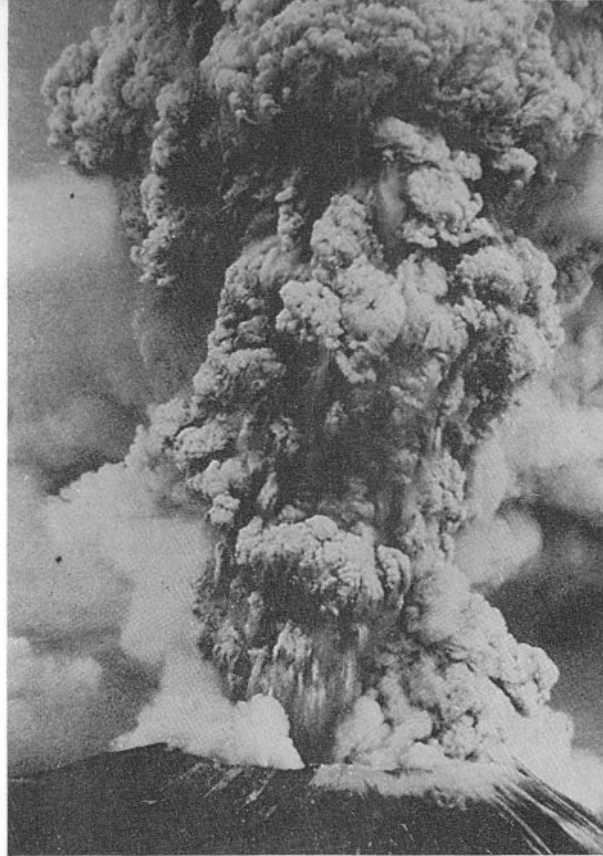
What is the Secret of Nature's Movement ?

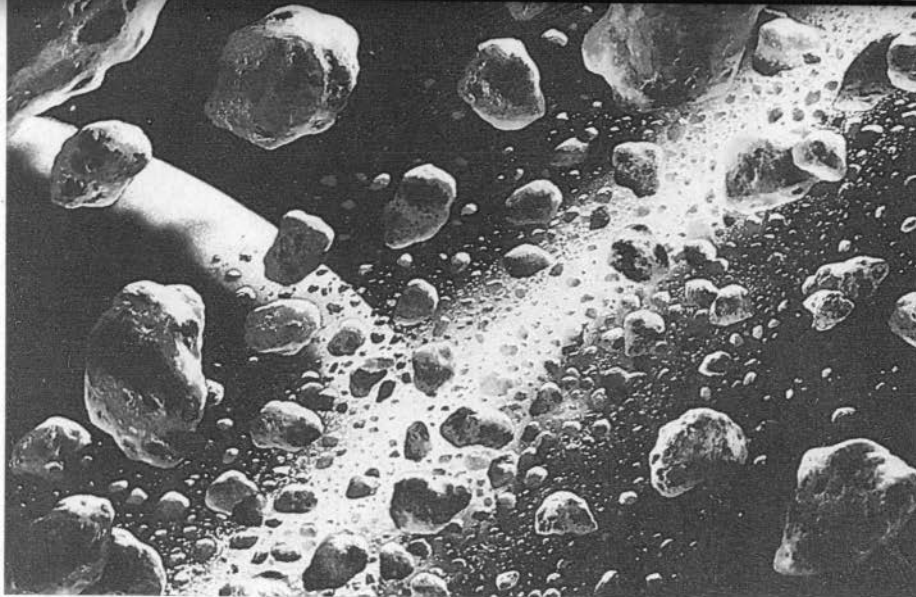
In the earliest stages of the movement of Nature, we are met by the dumb secrecy of her inconscience. There is no revelation of any significance or purpose in her works, no hint of anything other than her immediate preoccupation, which also seems to be for ever her only business. Matter alone appears to be the sole, dumb and stark cosmic reality.

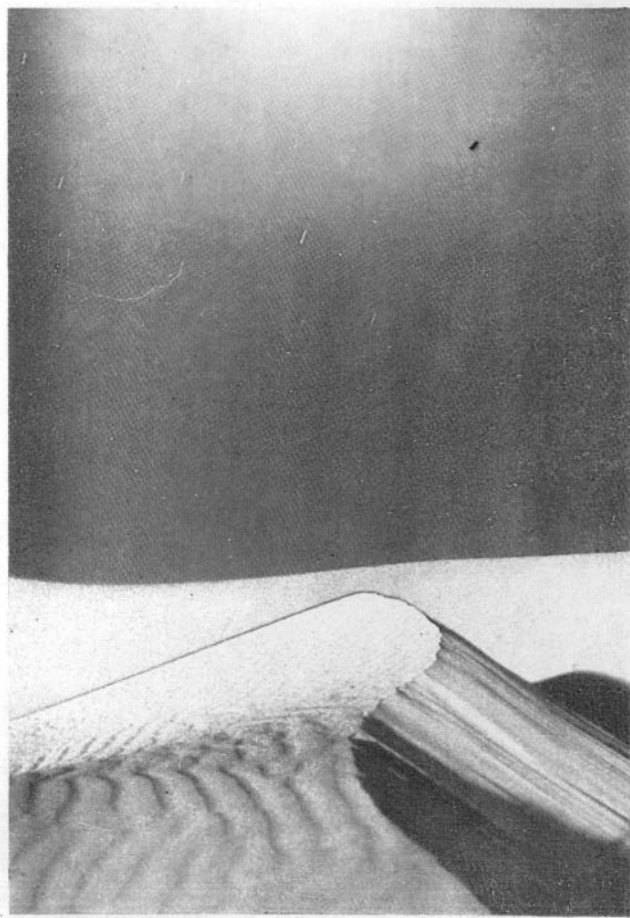
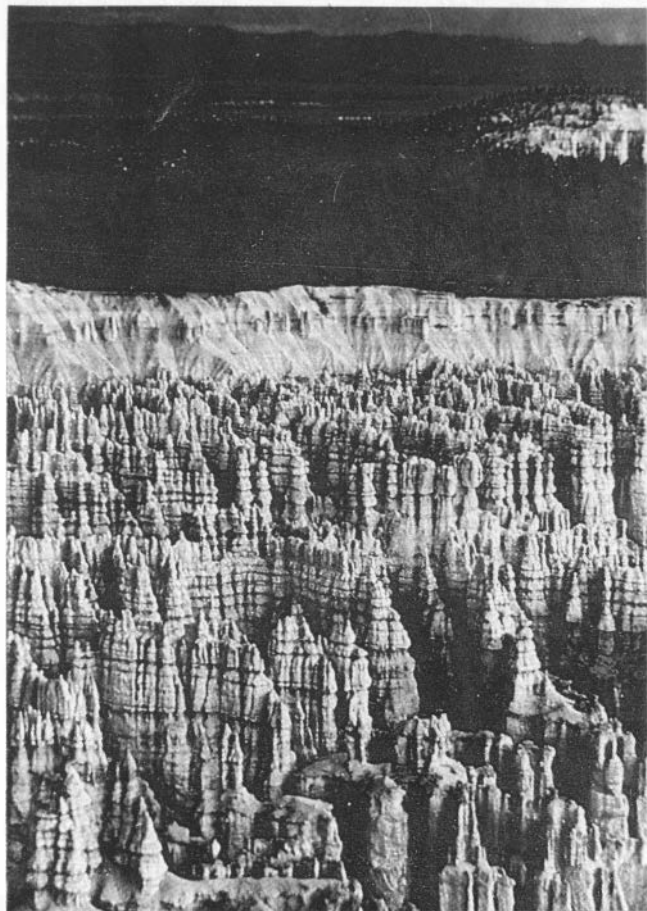
If we were present there, conscious but uninstructed, we would only have seen appearing out of a vast abyss of an apparent non-existence an Energy busy with the creation of Matter, a material world and material objects, organizing the infinity of the inconscient into the scheme of a boundless universe or a system of countless universes that stretched around us into space without any certain end or limit, a tireless creation of nebulae and star clusters and suns and planets, existing only for itself, without any sense in it, empty of cause or purpose. It might have seemed to us a stupendous machinery without a use, a mighty, meaningless movement.









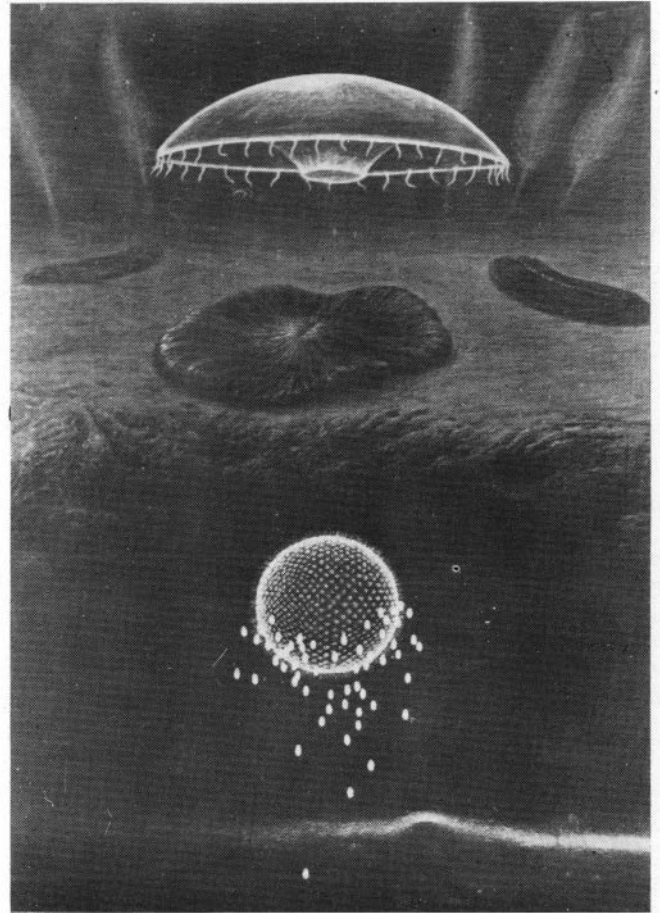


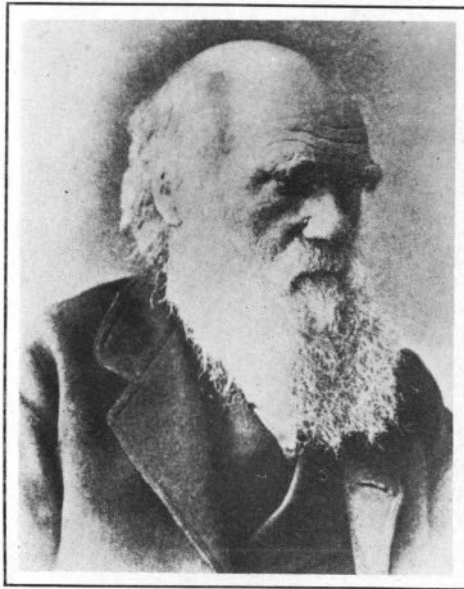
We would have seen no evidence of a soul and no limit of Mind or Life in this immeasurable and interminable display of Matter.

But after some aeons, we might have detected at least in one small corner of the universe an outbreak of teeming life, the phenomenon of living Matter, a Life in things that had emerged and become visible.

But still we would have understood nothing, Nature would still veil her secret. We would have seen a Nature concerned only with establishing this outburst of Life, this new creation, but Life living for itself with no significance in it.

We could not have imagined that a thinking mind would appear in this minute island of life, that a consciousness could awake in the Inconscient, a new, greater and subtler vibration come to the surface and betray more clearly the existence of the submerged Spirit.





Charles Darwin
(1809-1882)

The Process of Evolution

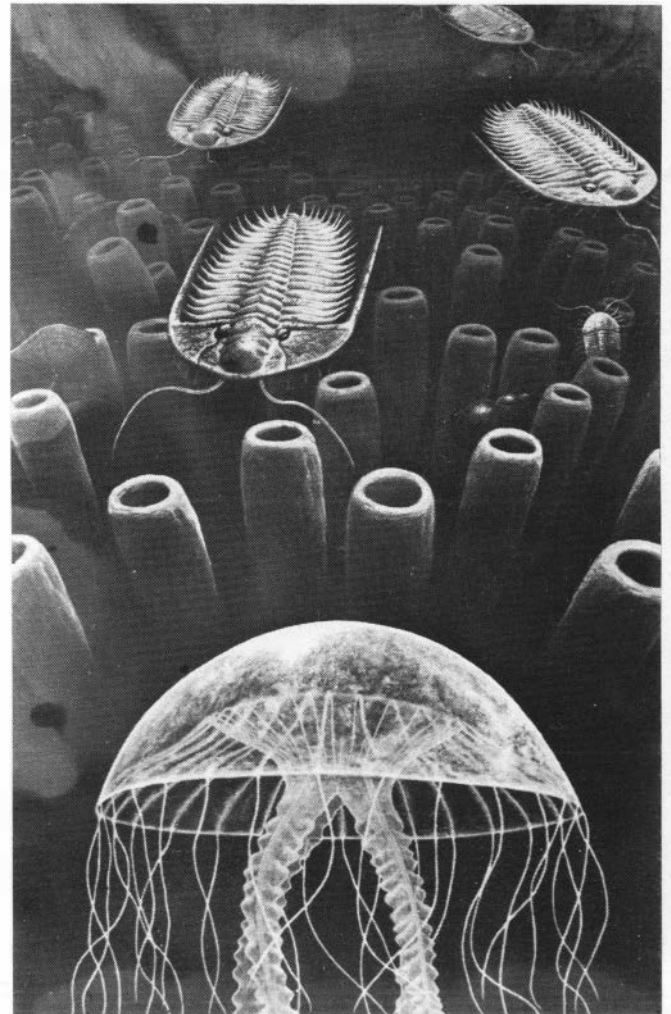
The process of evolution was detected in ancient times. Both in India and in Greece, there were important ideas of evolution. In modern times, the theory of evolution is mainly the work of Linnaeus (1707-78), Buffon (1707-88), Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), Lamarck (1744-1829), Charles Darwin (1809-82) and his followers.

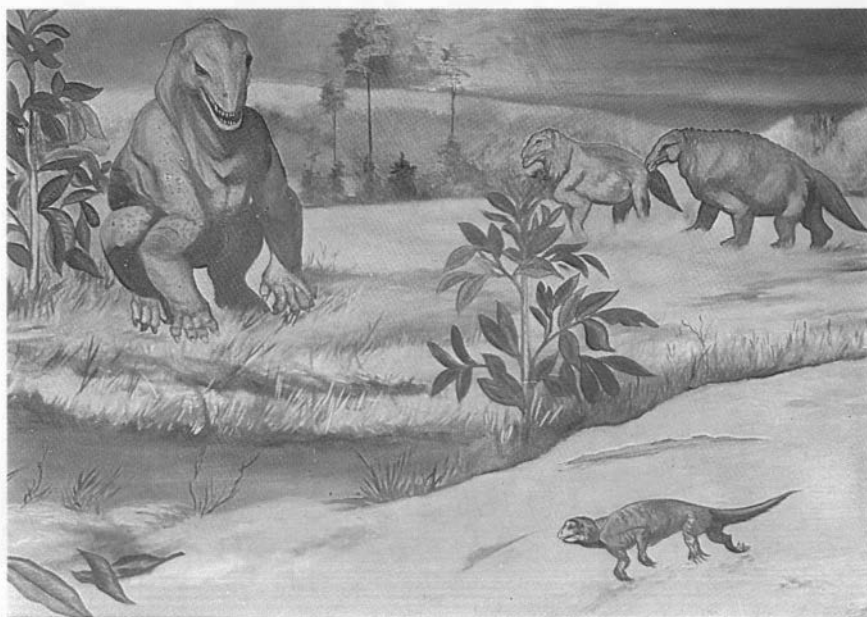
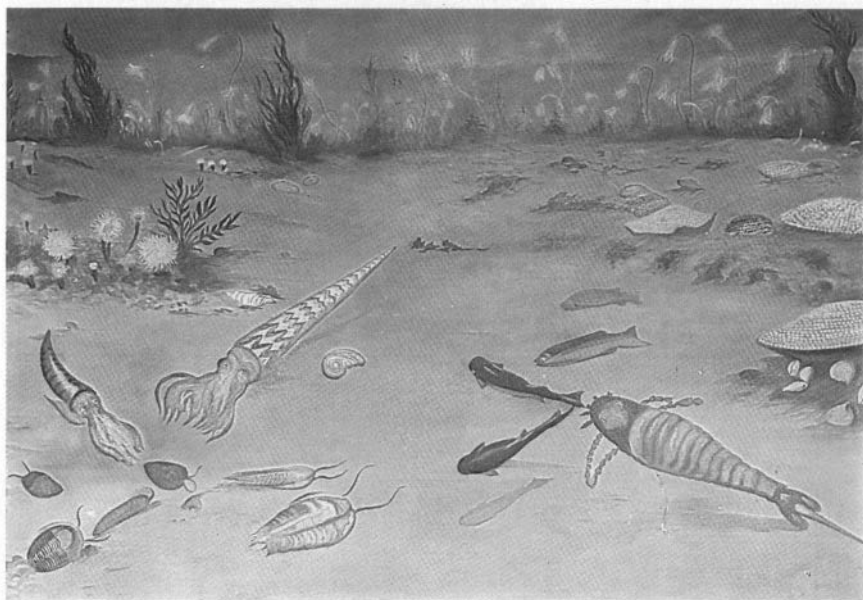
On the Origin of Species written by Charles Darwin (1859) gave details and demonstrations of his scientific theory of evolution, according to which, life on the earth evolved by a *gradual* and yet *continuous* process from the earliest forms of living organs to the latest product, man. Natural selection, variation and heredity are said to be the factors through the operation of which new species arise out of existing ones. When new characters are produced by the variability of organisms, natural selection decides their survival or death. If the characters do not adapt to their environment, they are eliminated in the competition. If, on the other hand, they equip themselves better for the struggle, they tend to survive. The offsprings of the successful tend to resemble the parents in exhibiting the favoured variation to a greater degree than the parents, and a new type becomes established by a continuous piling up of small useful accretions through many generations.

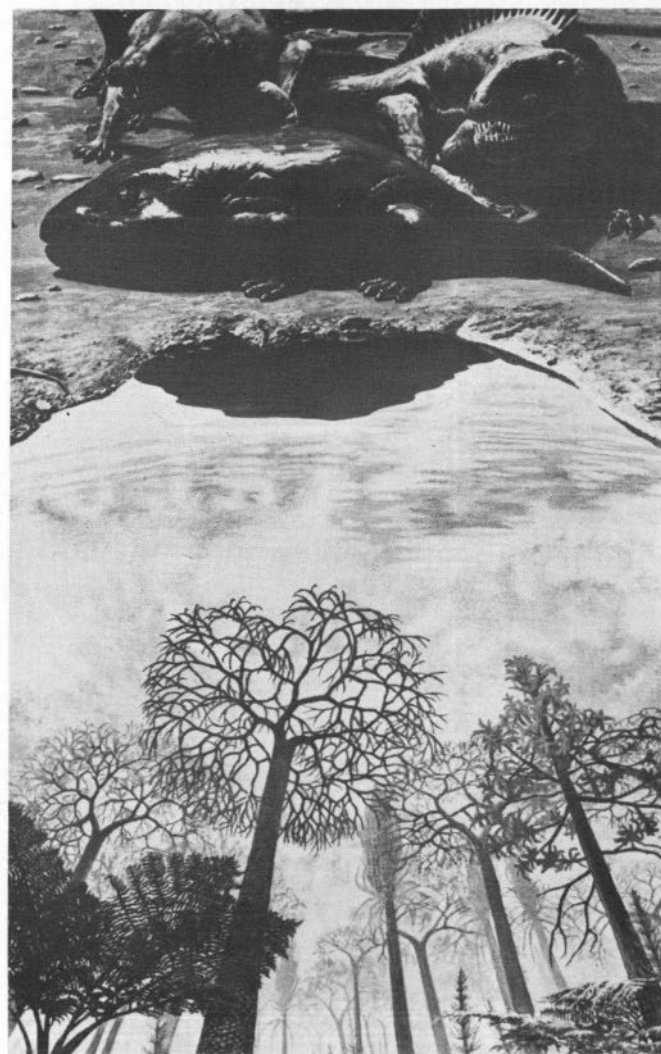
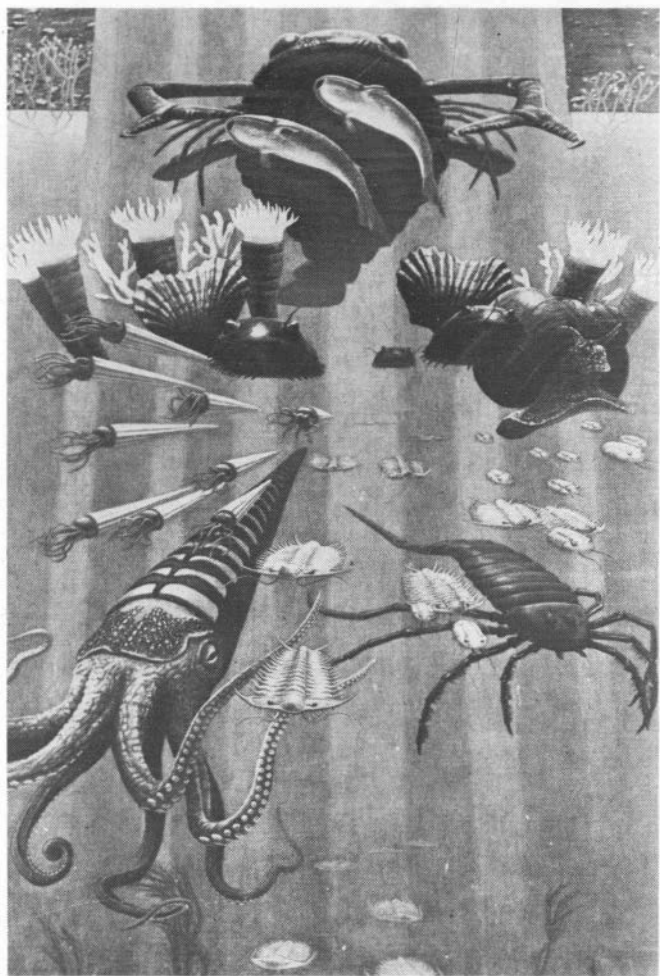
The two original components of Darwin's theory were (i) that evolution is gradual, and (ii) that the nature of the change is dictated by natural, not divine, selection. Both of these are closely interlinked, and both are at the heart of controversy today, as they were in Darwin's time.

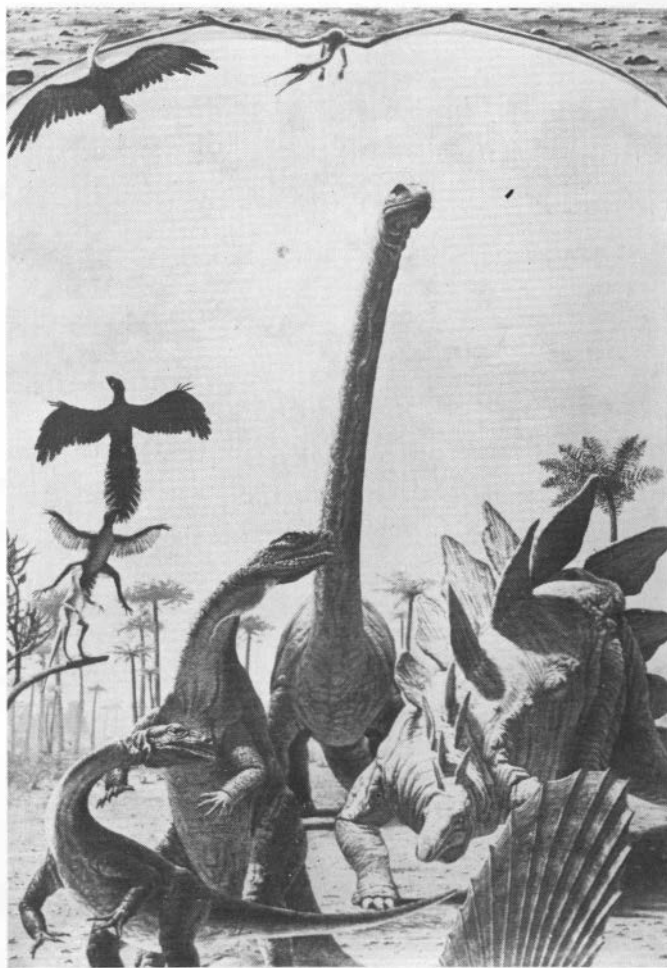
Many naturalists accepted Darwin's gradualism because it accorded well with what they saw in living species. But critics could not accept that all the world's marvellous species and their extraordinary structures, such as those of the eye, could have arisen only by chance. Some biologists accepted that minor changes might be the result of natural selection, but held that beyond extremes within a range of variation, a new species could not arise by natural selection alone. The only way in which the boundaries of species might be breached, they contended, would be through a sudden jump.

Paleontologists who dug up and classified the remains of extinct species raised another major objection to gradualism. They argued that if Darwin were right, they should be able to find a series of specimens that could be laid out in a gradual continuum from one major type of animal to another. If, for example, reptiles evolved into mammals, there should be fossils representing every gradation between these two groups. Instead, the paleontologists found more gaps than continua. Darwin conceded this, but he thought that further researches would reveal the intermediate links. As it turned out, only a few links have been found, and this issue is a part of today's controversy.





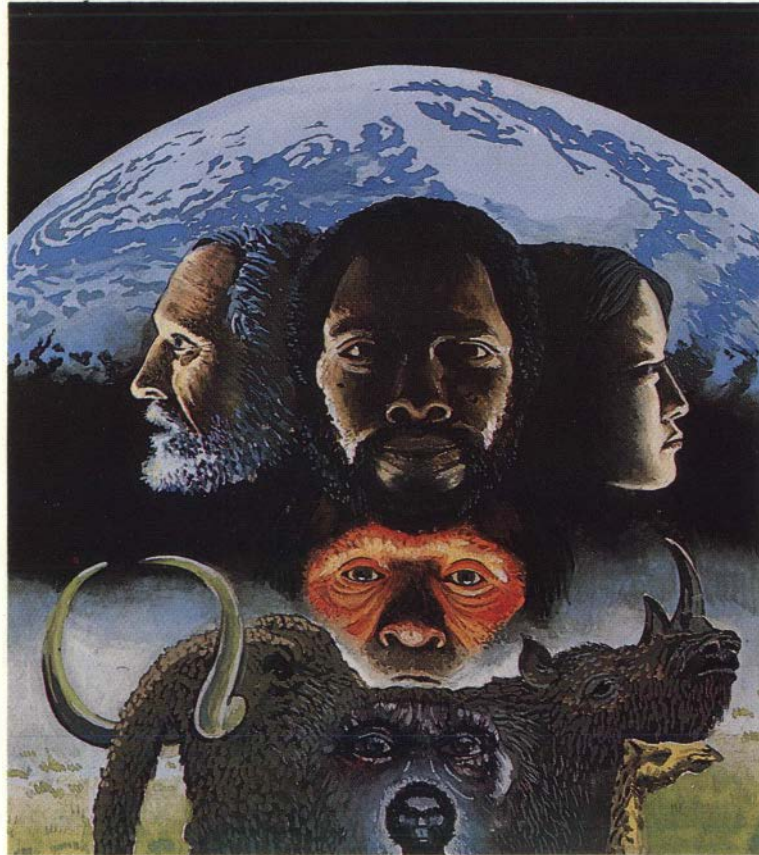




There are biologists today who maintain that the evolutionary process jumps from one species to another. Their theory is called 'saltationism' (from Latin *saltare* to leap.)

The early geneticists maintained that plants and animals sometimes produce offsprings with unusual abnormalities or variations that could be considered well outside the normal range of variation. These odd offsprings were called sports. Hugo de Vries, an early Dutch geneticist, also observed that the sports undergo some kind of permanent, large-scale alteration of the hereditary units. He called the change a mutation. On the other hand, gradual changes or variations were called by him fluctuations.

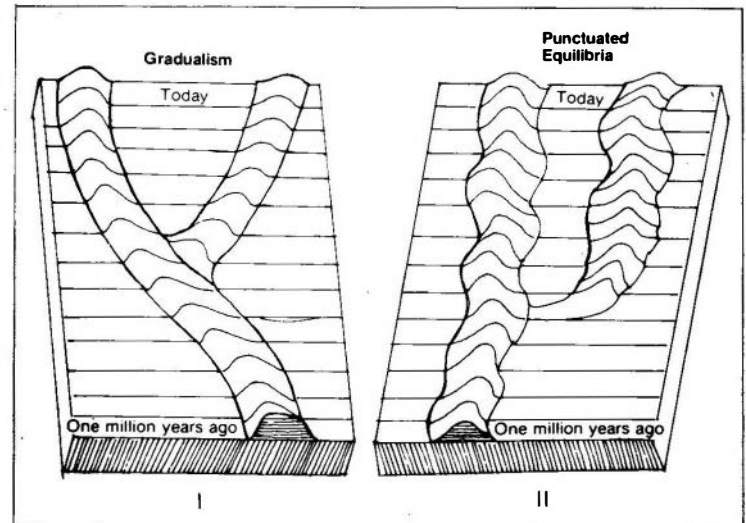
In the early twentieth century, evolutionists were divided into two camps. There were geneticists, who saw only evidence for sudden discontinuous change or mutation. They supported the saltationist view. On the other hand, there were naturalists who supported Darwinian gradualism. By the 1930s, however, the rift between these two camps came to be healed by a new evolutionary theory that Julian Huxley named the 'modern synthesis'. As part of the new theory, Dobzhansky emphasized the need for what he called isolating mechanisms. He recognized that a new species could not emerge from an old one in the wild, if its early members continue to breed with the parent stock. The novel features would either be swamped by the parent stock, or they would be spread throughout the existing species, causing the entire species to evolve slightly. If part of the species population is to split from the parent stock, it must be isolated from the larger population of stock. A river, mountain range, or some other geographic feature must prevent the small variant group from breeding with its original stock. Eventually, the isolated population would become so different that biological differences would prevent inbreeding.



In 1972, Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge asserted that evolutionists had become too rigid in insisting on gradualism. They put forth a new theory that reduced gradualism to a rare event and named the dominant phenomenon 'punctuated equilibria'.

According to them, species are, for most of their existence, in evolutionary equilibrium or stasis. They change very little, if at all. But once in a while the stasis is punctuated by a sudden 'speciation event', somehow, a small population of the parent species begins evolving rapidly and, within a relatively few generations, becomes a distinct species.

However, there are evolutionists who continue to stick to the gradualist view, and at the moment, there is no clear resolution in sight. The present debates point to the possibility of the emergence of a new scientific theory which might give a better understanding of the intrinsic 'how' of the evolutionary process.



Contrasting theories of evolution's tempo: I is Darwin's *gradualist* view. II is the *punctuated equilibria* view. Ridges represent species, continuing over time from bottom to top. Movement to the left or right indicates modification of the species

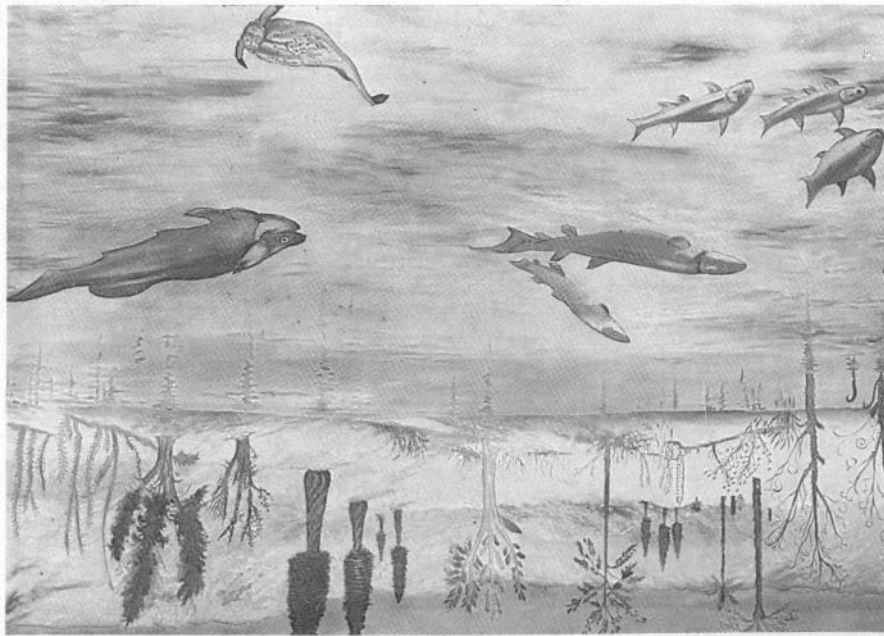
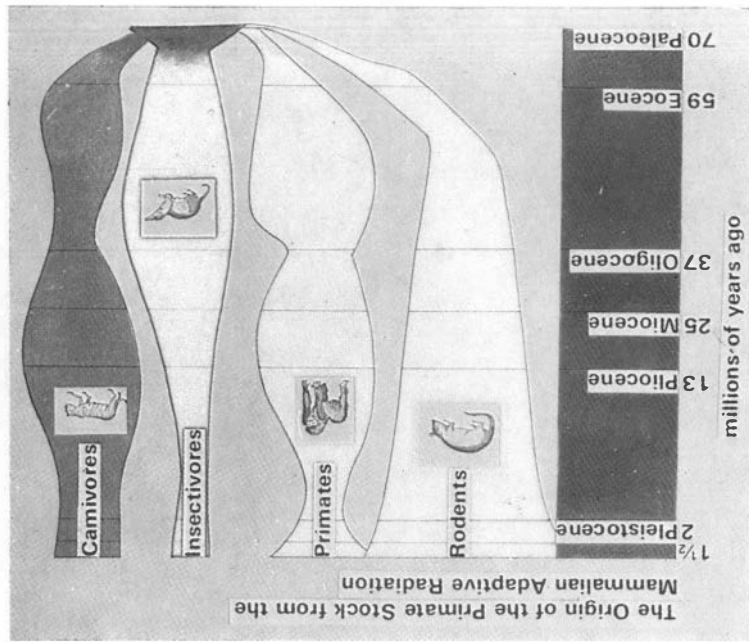
Marvel of the Mental Being

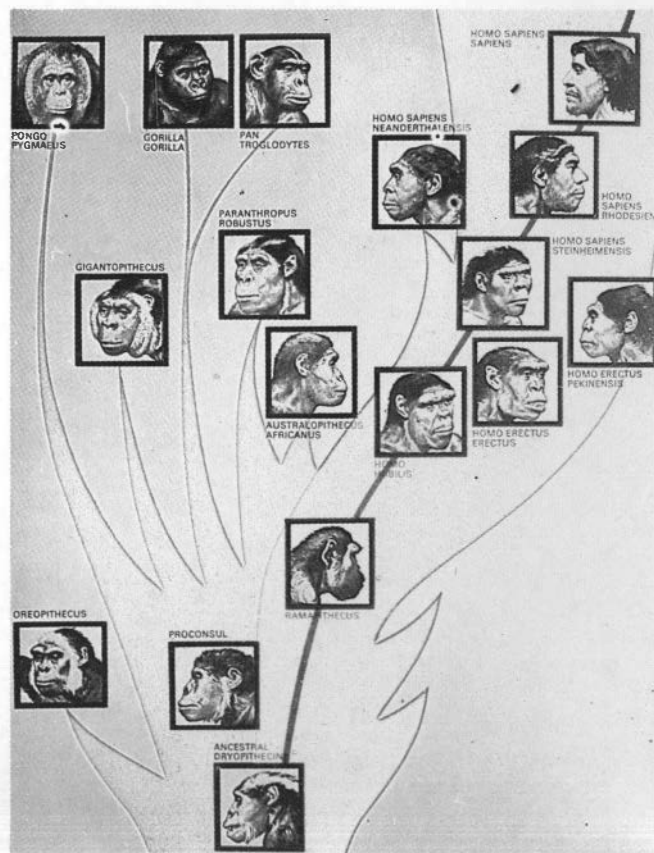
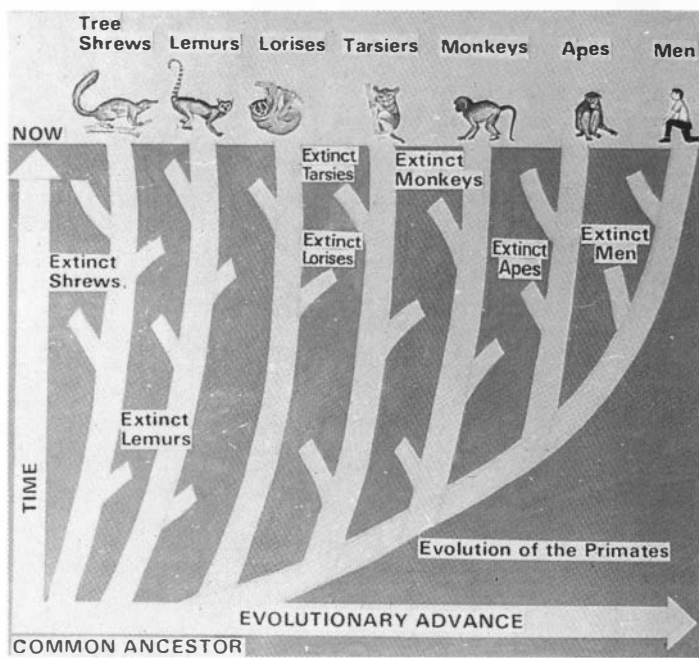
If we were to go back to the stage when life had just emerged on the earth, it could not have seemed possible to us that in this little life, a mental being would emerge and create all manner of utensils, erect cities, houses, temples, theatres, laboratories, factories, chisel from it statues and carve cave-cathedrals, invent architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry and a hundred arts and crafts, discover the mathematics and physics of the universe, and live for the sake of knowledge, develop into the thinker, the philosopher and scientist and become even the hunter after the invisible, the mystic and the spiritual seeker.

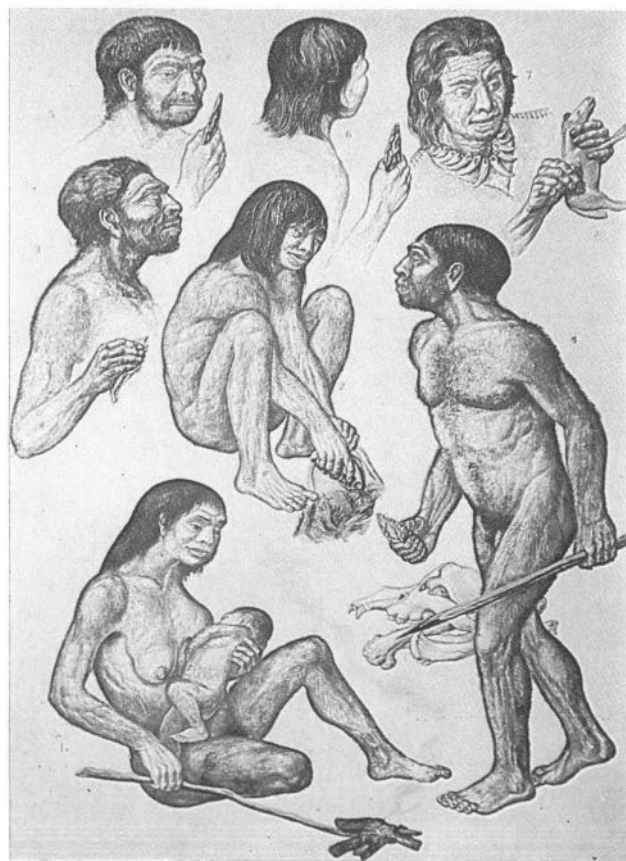
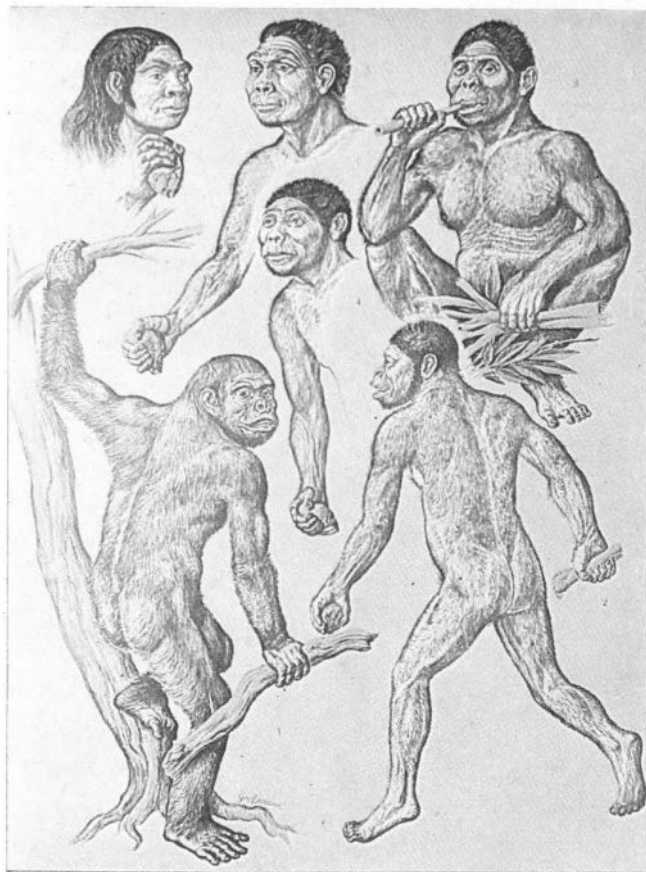
But if after several ages or cycles we had looked again and seen this miracle in full process, even then perhaps, we would still not have understood, it would still seem impossible to us that the hidden spirit could wholly emerge, complete in its consciousness, and dwell upon the earth as the self-known and world-knower, Nature's ruler and possessor.

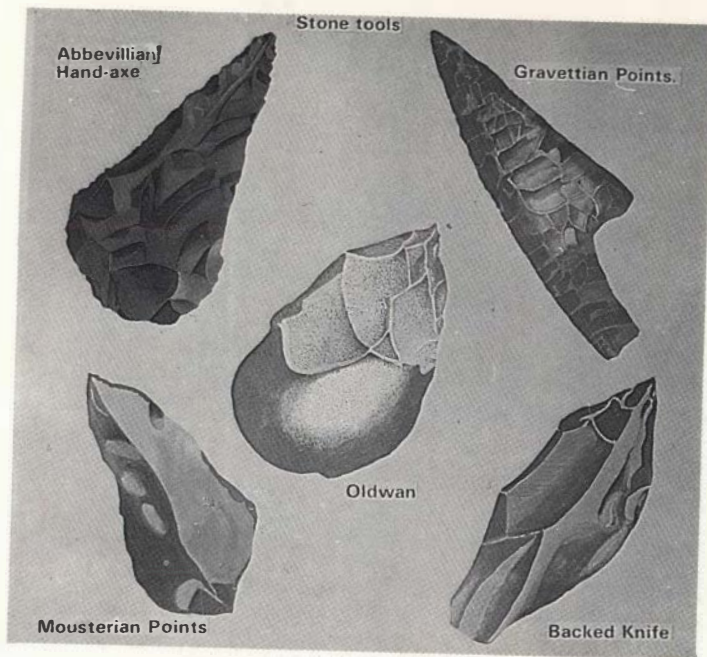
We would have said: 'Impossible! all that has happened is nothing much, a little bubbling of sensitive grey stuff of brain, a queer freak in a bit of inanimate Matter moving about on a small dot in the universe'.

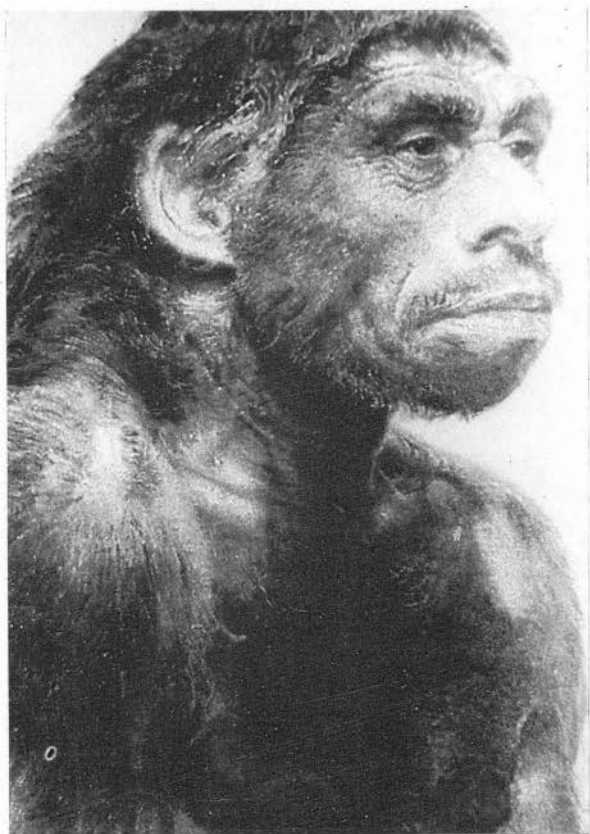
But if we were more deliberate, we might have probably concluded that man, the mental being, is sublimated by the endeavour of the Energy to evolve out of him as the spiritual man, the fully conscious being, man exceeding his first material self and discoverer of his true self and highest nature.

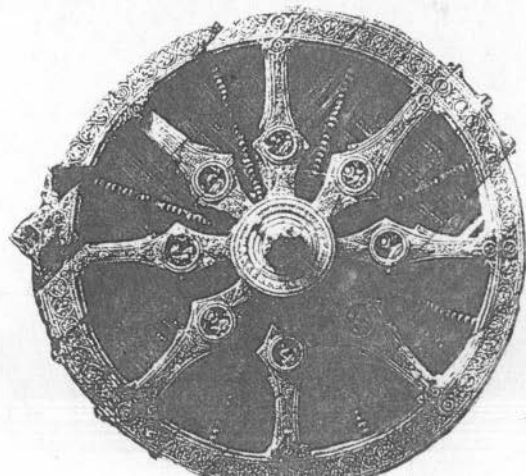


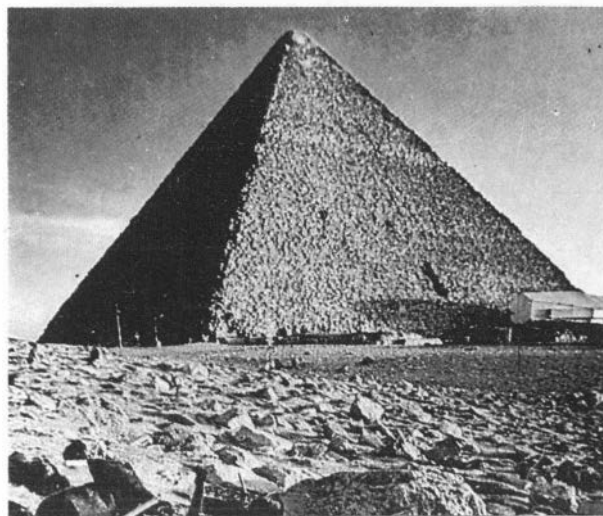


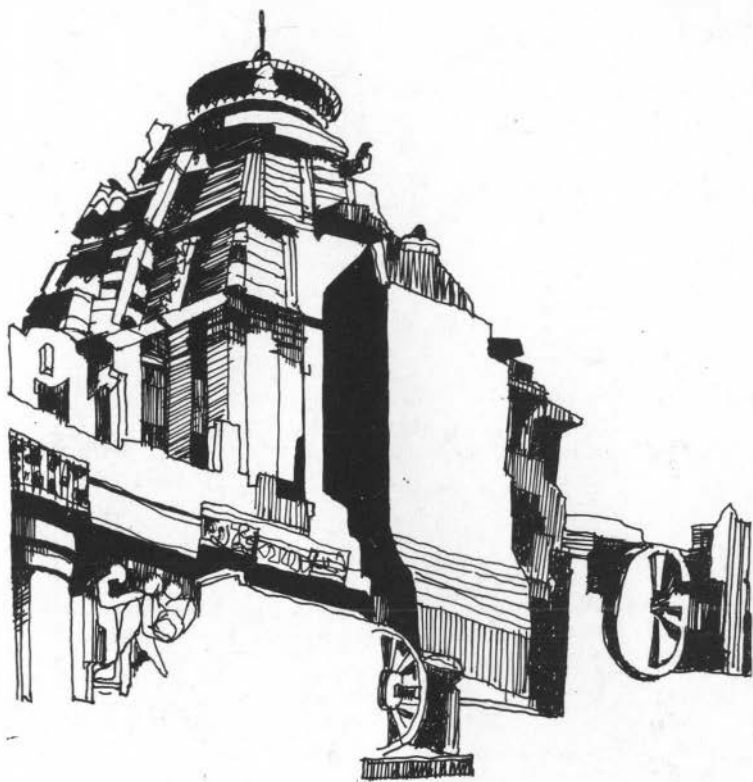


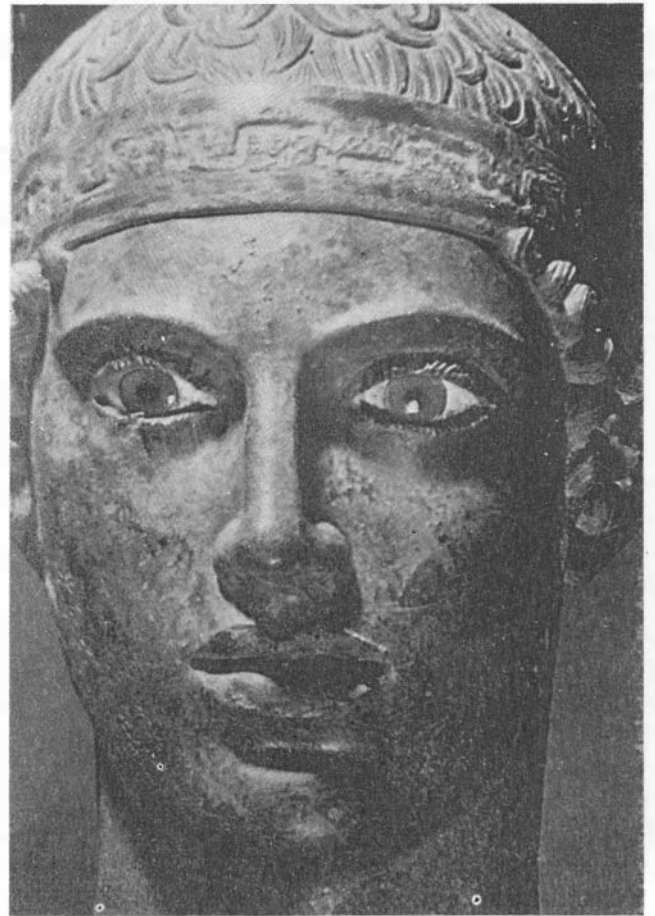


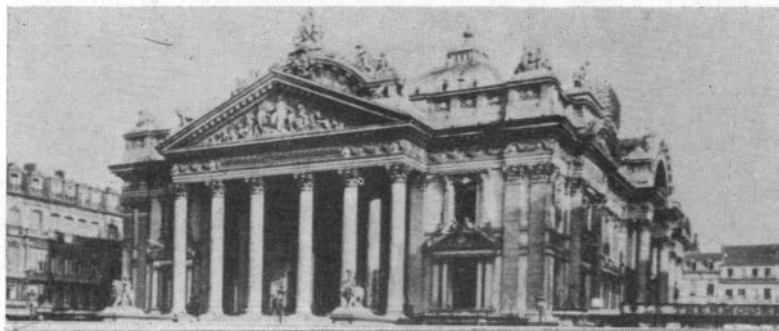
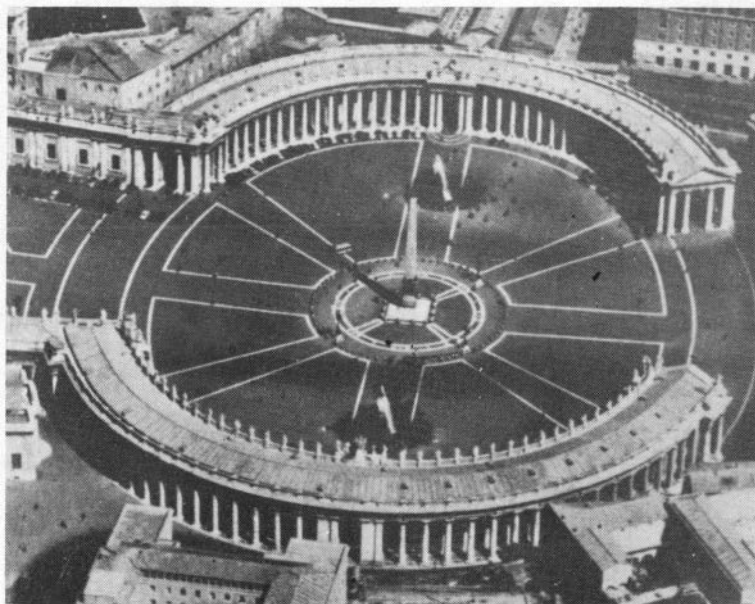


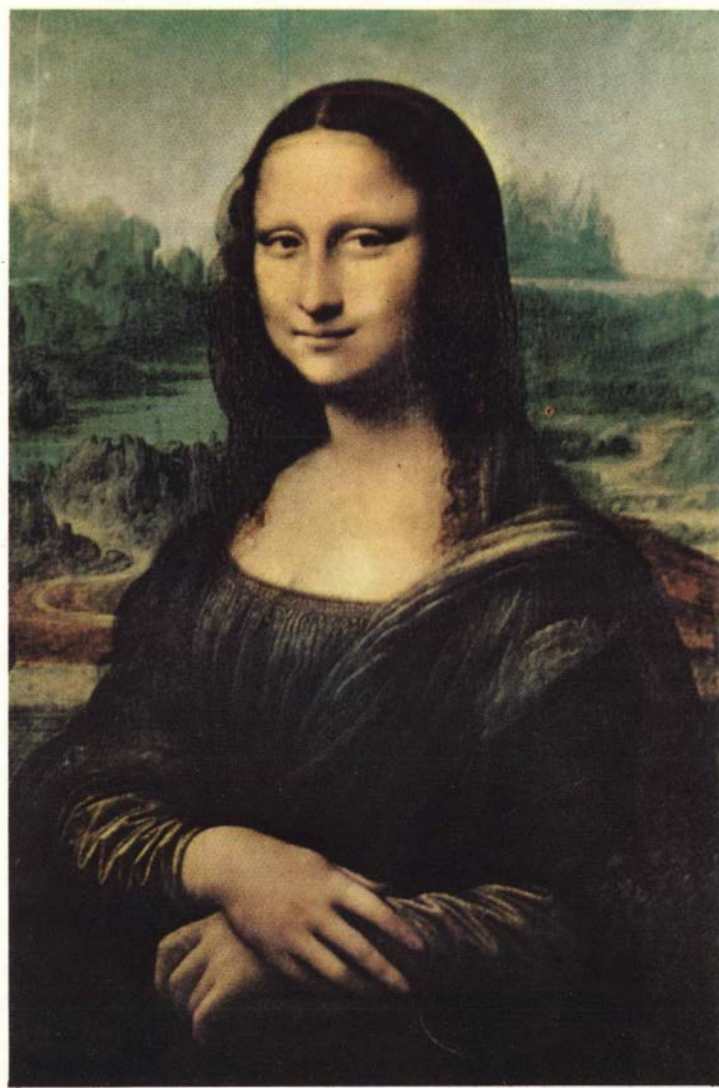






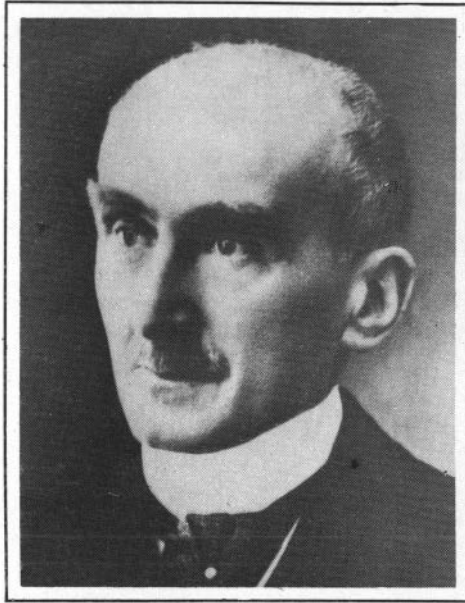












Henri Bergson
(1859-1941)



That the eye with all its inimitable contrivances ... could have been formed by natural selection seems absurd in the highest possible degree.

A Deeper Question

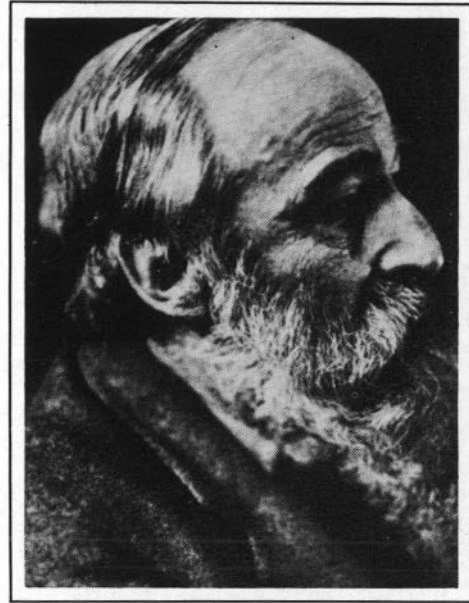
There is still a deeper question. Why do variations occur? Whether they are small or great, gradual or abrupt, we cannot trace them to the influence of the environment. For types without variations seem to be just as well adapted as those with them. Darwin's view of chance variations is virtually a confession of his inability to explain the source of variations.

Modifications and variations do not come singly but in complexes, involving many minor and consequential modifications and variations. Each single small variation is not independently selected. In other words, the organisms seem to 'vary' as a whole.

Bergson pointed out that the molluscs in the order of evolution proceed by steady steps to develop an eye, which resembles very much the eye developed by the independent line of vertebrates. How does it happen, he asked, that similar effects appear in different lines of evolution brought about by different means? How could the same small variations occur in two independent lines of evolution if they were purely accidental? According to Bergson, the two series must have been governed by a common vital impulse to this useful end. There is something more in evolution than merely mechanical urge. He is inclined to attribute a 'rudiment of choice' to the species which, travelling by different paths, reach the same goal. Given a new situation, the 'urge' (*élan vital*), common to all members, leads them to meet it by a new method. According to Bergson, it is the inner urge, or life force, or an upward drive, that incites the whole species in a definite direction. The striving of the organism is the creative effort to which evolution is due.

The biological theory of evolution assumes that life always came from life. Herbert Spencer questioned this assumption and attempted to give a philosophical account of the rise of the living from the non-living, the mental from the non-mental. According to him, the differences between these are due to the degree of the complexity of the organization. But still the question why life should evolve out of Matter or in Matter is not explained. Why should life occur at all? The theory of the survival of the fittest does not carry us far. Life has little survival value as compared with matter from which it is supposed to have sprung. A rock survives for hundreds of millions of years, while even the oldest tree is only a few thousand years old. If survival was the aim of nature, life would never have appeared.

Other significant philosophical theories have also come to be formulated. According to Samuel Alexander, the whole process of the universe is a historic growth from space-time. The original matrix is space-time. Time is the mind of space. In course of time, space-time breaks up into finites of ever-increasing complexity. At certain points in the history of things, finites assume new empirical qualities which are distinctive levels of experience—primary qualities, matter; and secondary qualities, life and mind. As explained in his book, *Space, Time and Deity*, the cosmic process has now reached the human level, and man is looking forward to the next higher quality of deity. According to him, men of religious genius are preparing mankind for this next stage of development. The divine quality or deity is a stage in time beyond the human. The whole world is now engaged in the production of deity. As time is the very substance of reality, no being can exhaust the future. Even God is a creature of time.



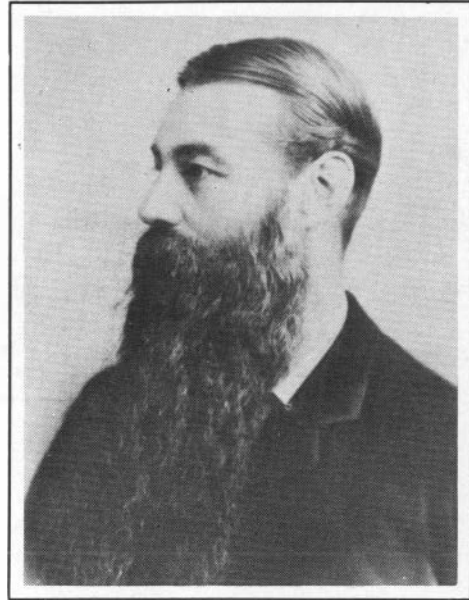
Samuel Alexander
(1859-1938)

Alexander's philosophy is called the philosophy of emergent evolution. According to him, when physical structure assumes a certain complexity, life 'emerges' as something new. When the physical structure alters in complexity, as it does when it produces a central nervous system, 'mind' emerges, and the gap between life and conscious behaviour is supposed to be covered. Alexander finds the explanation in a nissus or thirst of the universe for higher levels. It is the nissus that is creative, that satisfies the thirst.

But is nissus an unconscious drive coming by degrees to consciousness in man? Unless we assume the nissus to be a spiritual power ever drawing on its resources and ever expressing new forms, Alexander's whole account becomes unsatisfactory.

Lloyd Morgan, who comes very close to Alexander in his account of emergent evolution, acknowledges God as the nissus through whose Activity emergents emerge, and the whole course of emergent evolution is directed. According to him, God is not the emergent deity, but an Activity within which qualities emerge. God is the breath of the whole movement, the deep root which feeds the whole tree. The course of history is the gradual coming of God to Himself. Lloyd Morgan contends that emergent evolution is not predictable. But it is not in the strict sense undetermined like Bergson's creative evolution, not only unpredictable for human minds but, in principle, for all minds. Lloyd Morgan infers the coming of divinity from the purposeful direction of the universe, and he is inclined to make his God completely immanent. He maintains that the whole course of events subsumed under evolution is the expression of God's purpose.

Lloyd Morgan is basically an adherent of Spinoza, and although he speaks of 'emergence' in the evolutionary process, one suspects that changes occur according to rule, and there is no spontaneity.

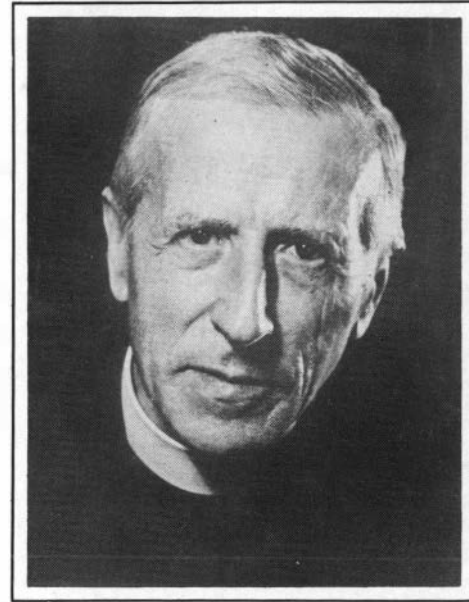


C. Lloyd Morgan
(1852-1936)

According to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), the evolutionary process cannot be described or evaluated in terms of its origin. What comes later is more than what was there earlier. There is, according to him, a developing process marked by increasing complexity. It is true that the powers and properties of matter, life, mind, history and values are not entirely different. They interpenetrate and produce an increasing complexity and concentration. In man, evolution becomes conscious of itself. Tracing the story of evolution, he examines the phenomena, big and small, from subatomic particles and cells to stellar galaxies, biospheric and noo-spheric. There are, according to him, two complementary tendencies in the evolutionary process, *differentiation* and *integration*. In his paleontological studies, he found that evolution tends towards unification.

According to him, all energy is essentially psychic. In his book *The Phenomenon of Man*, he conceives for man a superhuman future and presents a transcendental vision of omega-workings. Evolution is pushing man towards a higher goal, an omega point, which can be described as collective divinity. A cosmic divine manifestation is in the making.

Whitehead, who recalls the Platonic view of the cosmic process, maintains that nothing can emerge in the evolutionary process of the universe if its constituents were not already in existence. The qualities which are said to emerge historically in the philosophy of Alexander are ingredients into events from the beginning, according to Whitehead. The ingredience of eternal objects into events is the explanation of the historical becoming. He admits that at every step there is the emergence of what is genuinely new. Every event, according to him, is a miracle, but it embodies an idea from beyond the developing series of events in the universe. Whitehead suggests an eternal order and a creative reality. The cosmic series has a nusus towards the eternal order which is beyond itself, though it is increasingly realized in the cosmic.



Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
(1881-1955)

According to Whitehead, an actual event is the meeting point of a world of actualities, on the one side, and a world of ideal possibilities, on the other. Like Plato, Whitehead believes in eternal objects. He maintains that eternal objects in this interaction with creative passage issue in actuality, reckoning with space-time, limitation, causal push or drag of the past, and that ultimate irreducibility which we may only call God. It is God who envisages the realm of possibilities and the world of settled fact so as to focus them on each occasion for the creation of something new. It is He who determines the ideal plans of events by the imposition of His nature. In the words of Whitehead, 'The universe exhibits a creativity with infinite freedom, and a realm of forms with infinite possibilities; but this creativity and these forms are together impotent to achieve actuality apart from the completed ideal harmony, which is God.' God, according to Whitehead, is the home of the universals and the ideal harmony.

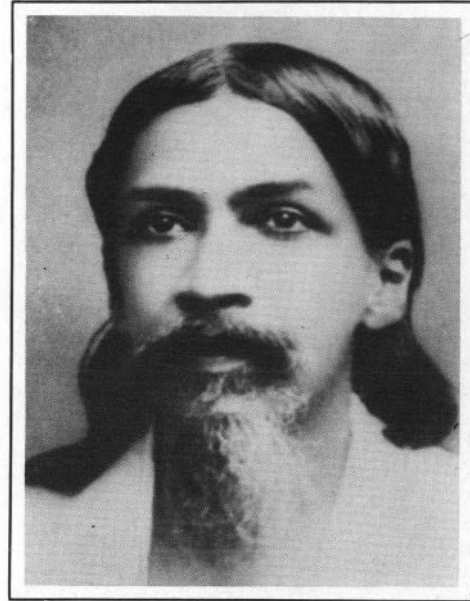
'Ingressive evolution' is a phrase that aptly describes Whitehead's theory. There is, according to Whitehead, a progressive ingression and incorporation into the cosmic series of the eternal order which God embraces in himself. The 'primordial' nature of God is the conceptual consciousness of the possibilities capable of harmonious concurrent realization. These possibilities are called by Whitehead 'eternal objects'. They are eternal forms or ideas, to use the Platonic expression, but unlike Plato's ideas, they are not substances, but possibilities, conceptually realized in God. They are not imaginary or abstract. Some of them are apprehended as possibilities logically prior to their manifestation in existence, and others as symbols of values that we pursue. The relation of form to the temporal world is that of potentialities to actualities. In the view of Whitehead, the temporary actualities realize the possibilities surveyed in God's nature. The order and purpose we see in the world is the result of actuality fulfilling the highest possibilities it sees before itself, which is the vision of God as relevant for it.



Alfred North Whitehead
(1861-1947)

According to Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) evolution presupposes an involutionary process. If Life evolves in Matter, and Mind in Life, it must be because Life is involved in Matter and Mind in Life. The material Inconscience is the involved Super-conscience. Evolution is fundamentally a spiritual phenomenon. It is a phenomenon of an evolutionary self-building of Spirit on a base of Matter, which is itself a formation of spiritual reality. There is first an involutionary foundation in which all that is to evolve is present, although not yet manifested or not yet organized. An original Inconscience without any previous deployment of consciousness cannot evolve consciousness. In the evolutionary process, there is a development of a triple character. 'An evolution of forms of Matter, more and more subtly and intricately organised so as to admit the action of a growing, a more and more complex and subtle and capable organisation of consciousness is the indispensable physical foundation. An upward evolutionary progress of the consciousness itself from grade to higher grade, an ascent, is the evident spiral line or emerging curve that, on this foundation, the evolution must describe. A taking up of what has already been evolved into each higher grade as it is reached and a transformation more or less complete so as to admit of a total changed working of the whole being and nature, an integration, must be also part of the process, if the evolution is to be effective.'

The end of the evolutionary process would be to manifest the supramental consciousness-force in material body. Man is a transitional being, and the spiritual man is the sign of the new evolution. The intention of Nature in the evolution of the spiritual man is not merely to awaken him to the supreme Reality and release him from herself. There is a further intention—not only a revelation of the Spirit but a radical and integral transformation of Nature. The spiritual man has evolved, but not the supramental being who shall thenceforward be the leader of that nature. There is thus something that is not yet accomplished, and there becomes clear to view the much that has still to be done; 'there is a height still to be reached, a wideness still to be covered by the eye of vision, the wing of the will, the self-affirmation of the Spirit in the material universe.'



Sri Aurobindo
(1872-1950)

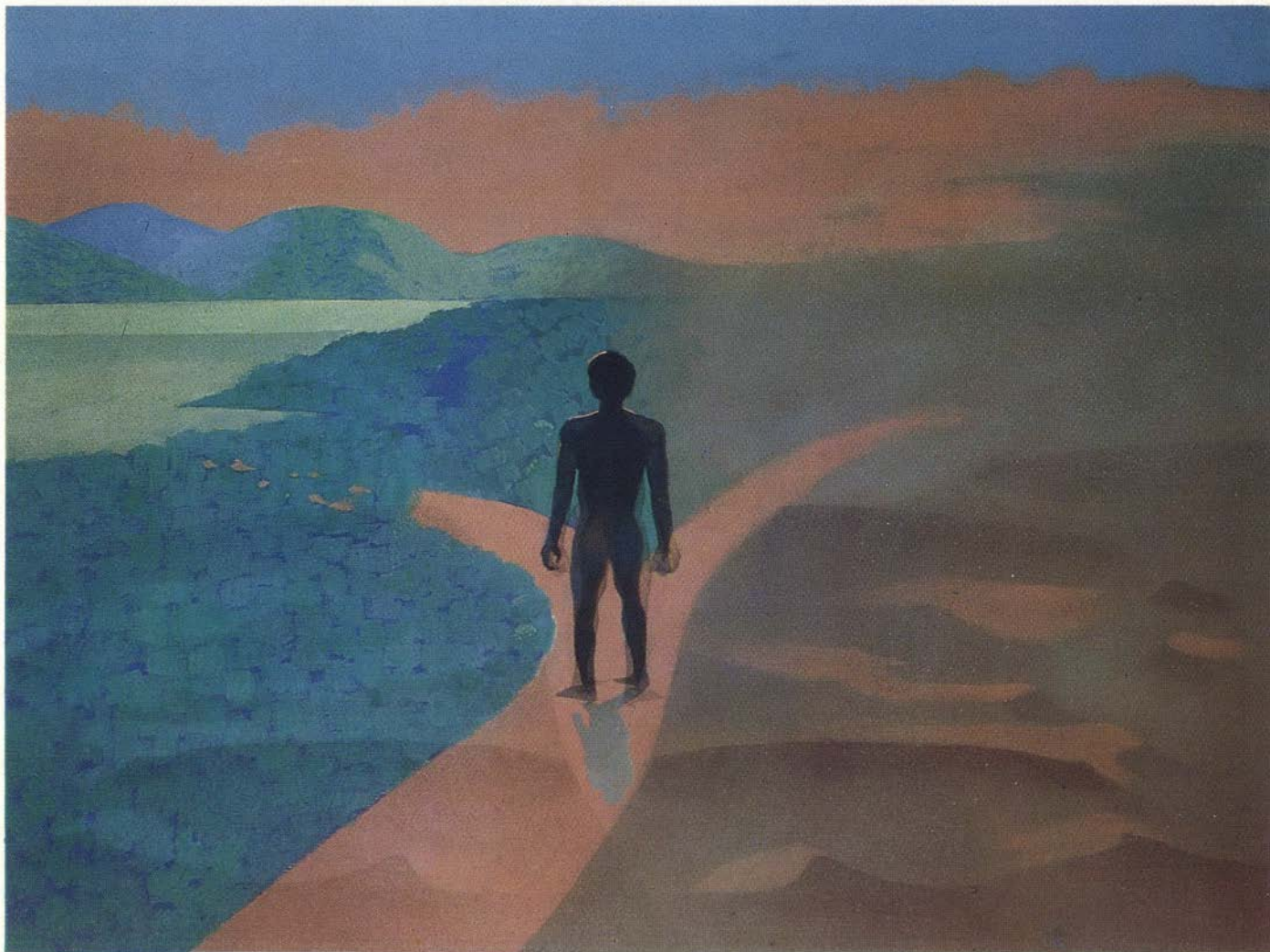
An Experiment in Evolution

A distinctive feature of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of evolution is that it is not speculative; its premises and conclusions are tested on the anvil of experimentation. 'The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious cooperation she wills to work out the superman, the god. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God?' Indeed, Sri Aurobindo made an experiment upon his entire integral being, using it as an evolutionary laboratory, so as to evolve and manifest higher and higher grades of consciousness reaching up to the supermind and to supramentalize the human body to the furthest extent possible. Even when he left his body, he assigned the task to his collaborator, whom he called The Mother (1878-1973), to continue the task of the supramentalization and integral transformation.

Sri Aurobindo discovered in the ancient systems of Yoga some of the basic clues for the experiment. He did not, however, find in any one of them *the* secret that would enable him to eventually bring about the mutation of the human species. He and The Mother, therefore, experimented, day after day, for years and decades, and they developed a synthesis of Yoga and laboured to perfect it.



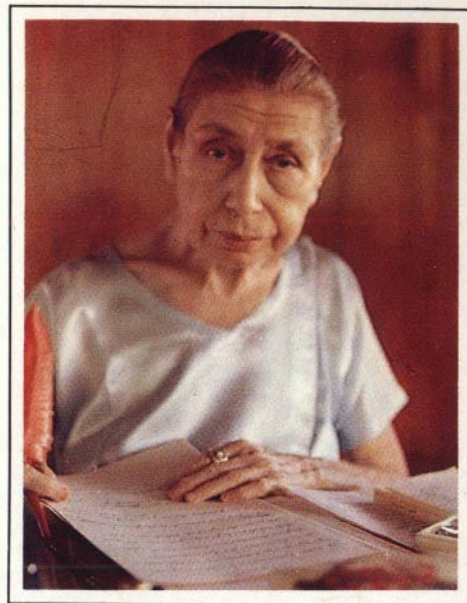
The practical necessity of this experiment was not merely to advance knowledge; nor was this experiment directed towards seeking any personal gain, gratification or glory. But Sri Aurobindo and The Mother saw that the contemporary human crisis cannot truly be met without the evolutionary saltation or mutation. There are, according to them, only two alternatives before mankind today: either a revolutionary and evolutionary ascent towards the supramental manifestation on the earth or abyss.



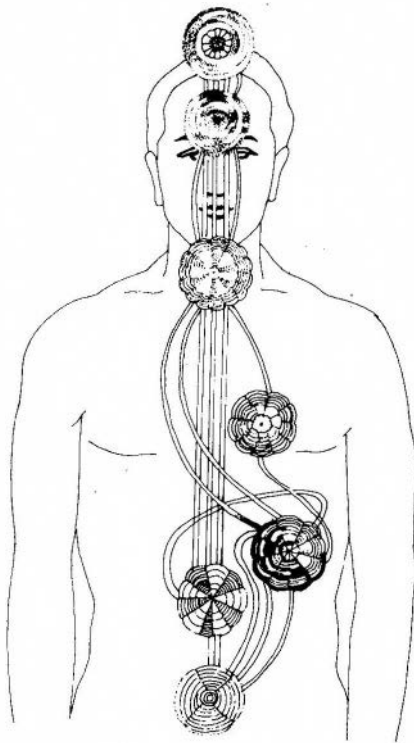
An account of the momentous experiments undertaken by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother cannot truly be given; they can only be glimpsed from the records they have left. Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Letters on Yoga*, *The Mother*, *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, and The Mother's own account of the supramental action on the earth, recorded by Satprem (born 1924) and published in 13 volumes as *L'Agenda de Mère*, give us some indications of both the secret and the fulfilment of their momentous experiments.

Indeed, if the human body were a functioning of Matter, and if Matter were merely chemical and nothing more, then it is obvious that any divinization or divine transformation of the body or of anything else would be nothing but an illusion, an imagination, a senseless and impossible chimera. But even if we suppose a soul or a conscious will at work in the body, it could not arrive at a divine transformation if there were no radical change in the bodily instrument itself and in the organization of its material workings. As Sri Aurobindo points out, 'A radical transformation of the functioning and, it may well be, of the structure and certainly of the two mechanical and material impulses and driving forces of the bodily system would be imperative ... A total transformation of the body would demand a sufficient change of the most material part of the organism, its constitution, its processes and its set-up of nature.' Sri Aurobindo conceives of the possibility where all the physical life and its necessary activities could be maintained and operated by higher agencies and grades of consciousness in a freer and ampler way and by a less burdensome and restricting method. The evolutionary urge, he maintains, would proceed to a change of the organs themselves in their material working and use and diminish greatly the need of their use and even of their existence.

According to Sri Aurobindo, this might well be part of a supreme total transformation of the body, though this too might not be final. He admits that to envisage such changes is to look for ahead and minds attached to the present form of things may be unable to give credence to their possibility.



The Mother
(1878-1973)



A radical transformation of the functioning and, it may well be, of the structure and certainly of the too mechanical and material impulse and driving forces of the bodily system would be imperative. What agency could be found which we could make the means of this all-important liberation and change? Something there is in us or something has to be developed, perhaps a central and still occult part of our being containing forces whose powers in our actual and present make-up are only a fraction of what could be, but if they became complete and dominant would be truly able to bring about with the help of the light and force of the soul and the supramental truth-consciousness the necessary physical transformation and its consequences. This might be found in the system of Chakras revealed by Tantric knowledge and accepted in the systems of Yoga, conscious centres and sources of all the dynamic powers of our being organising their action through the plexuses and arranged in an ascending series from the lowest physical to the highest mind centre and spiritual centre called the thousand-petalled lotus where ascending Nature, the Serpent Power of the Tantrics, meets the Brahman and is liberated into the Divine Being. These centres are closed or half closed within us and have to be opened before their full potentiality can be manifested in our physical nature: but once they are opened and completely active, no limit can easily be set to the development of their potencies and the total transformation to be possible.

At the same time, Sri Aurobindo acknowledges that all does not have to be fundamentally changed; on the contrary, all that is still needed in the totality has to be preserved, but all has to be perfected. 'The human body has', says Sri Aurobindo, 'in it parts and instruments that have been sufficiently evolved to serve the divine life; these have to survive in their form, though they must be still farther perfected, their limitation of range and use removed, their liability to defect and malady and impairment eliminated, their capacities to cognition and dynamic action carried beyond the present limits.' On the other hand, new powers have also to be acquired by the body which our present humanity could not hope to realize, could not even dream of or could only imagine. In Sri Aurobindo's own words:

The body itself might acquire new means and ranges of communication with other bodies, new processes of acquiring knowledge, a new aesthesis, new potencies of manipulation of itself and objects. It might not be impossible for it to possess or disclose means native to its own constitution, substance or natural instrumentation for making the far near and annulling distance, cognising what is now beyond the body's cognizance, acting where action is now out of its reach or its domain, developing subtleties and plasticities which could not be permitted under present conditions to the needed fixity of a material frame. These and other numerous potentialities might appear and the body become an instrument immeasurably superior to what we can now imagine as possible. There could be an evolution from a first apprehending truth-consciousness to the utmost heights of the ascending ranges of supermind and it may pass the borders of the supermind proper itself where it begins to shadow out, develop, delineate expressive forms of life touched by a supreme pure existence, consciousness and bliss which constitute the worlds of a highest truth of existence, dynamism of Tapas, glory and sweetness of bliss, the absolute essence and pitch of the all-creating Ananda. The transformation of the physical being might follow this incessant line of progression and the divine body reflect or reproduce here in a divine life on the earth something of this highest greatness and glory of the self-manifesting Spirit.'

