

ON MATERIALISM

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Extracts from "The Life Divine"
by Sri Aurobindo

Compiled by Kireet Joshi

THE MOTHER'S INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH, New Delhi
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In Europe and in India, respectively, the negation of the materialist and the refusal of the ascetic have sought to assert themselves as the sole truth and to dominate the conception of Life. In India, if the result has been a great heaping up of the treasures of the Spirit, — or of some of them, — it has also been a great bankruptcy of Life; in Europe, the fullness of riches and the triumphant mastery of this world's powers and possessions have progressed towards an equal bankruptcy in the things of the Spirit. Nor has the intellect, which sought the solution of all problems in the one term of Matter, found satisfaction in the answer that it has received.

Therefore the time grows ripe and the tendency of the world moves towards a new and comprehensive affirmation in thought and in inner and outer experience and to its corollary, a new and rich self-fulfilment in an integral human existence for the individual and the race.

Sri Aurobindo

PREFACE

"Know thyself". This has been one of the great messages of the East and the West since ancient times, and yet it has not been sufficiently pursued and applied. But it appears that the crisis through which humanity is passing today can be resolved if, as a first and essential step, this message is understood in greater fullness than ever before. For it is becoming increasingly clearer that without a radical change in human consciousness, we shall not be able to take the right road that needs to be taken. We need, therefore, to understand human consciousness in its full complexity and its multiple dimensions with a central focus on self-knowledge.

Fortunately, we find in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother an incomparable treasure of a systematic body of experiences, realisations and verifiable knowledge which can readily come to our aid.

We have, therefore, thought of bringing out a series of extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother that would stimulate seekers to read in depth what they have brought to us on this important subject.

We are beginning with the extracts from Sri Aurobindo's "The Life Divine" that pertain to the subject of materialism, since the appeal of materialism has still a great influence which has the potency to keep the doors of the deeper aspects of self-knowledge closed or sealed. While the truths underlying materialism have to be admitted and while we have to understand the real service that materialism has rendered to the cause of the advancement of knowledge, we need to realise that materialism is logically untenable and that advancing researches in the psychological operations of the mind and the supermind show clearly the insufficiency of the materialistic formula. Once this is accomplished, it will be easier to enter into the profundities of self-knowledge.

In the course of the series that we are planning, we propose to include Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's analysis of human psychology and to underline the new knowledge that they have placed before us in regard to the Supermind and how self-knowledge can extend its known boundaries to embrace the supramental faculties and how their operations can turn the course of human history at the present critical juncture.

We need to build a new world, and it is hoped that the extracts that we wish to cover in the present series will help the readers to explore the possibilities of building the new world on the basis of certain basic and secure foundations of knowledge and experience.

As indicated above, this series will be only intro-

ductory in character, and a detailed knowledge can be obtained only by an in-depth study of the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This series may therefore be regarded only as an invitation to the readers to enter into the portals of the vast body of writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Kireet Joshi

ON MATERIALISM

I

The materialist has an easier field; it is possible for him by denying Spirit to arrive at a more readily convincing simplicity of statement, a real Monism, the Monism of Matter or else of Force. But in this rigidity of statement it is impossible for him to persist permanently. (p. 7)

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(...) The denial of the materialist although more insistent and immediately successful, more facile in its appeal to the generality of mankind, is yet less enduring, less effective finally than the absorbing and perilous refusal of the ascetic. For it carries within itself its own cure. Its most powerful element is the Agnosticism which, admitting the Unknowable behind all manifestation, extends the limits of the unknowable until it comprehends all that is merely unknown. Its premise is that the physical senses are our sole means of Knowledge

and that Reason, therefore, even in its most extended and vigorous flights, cannot escape beyond their domain; it must deal always and solely with the facts which they provide or suggest; and the suggestions themselves must always be kept tied to their origins; we cannot go beyond, we cannot use them as a bridge leading us into a domain where more powerful and less limited faculties come into play and another kind of inquiry has to be instituted.

A premise so arbitrary pronounces on itself its own sentence of insufficiency. It can only be maintained by ignoring or explaining away all that vast field of evidence and experience which contradicts it, denying or disparaging noble and useful faculties, active consciously or obscurely or at worst latent in all human beings, and refusing to investigate supraphysical phenomena except as manifested in relation to matter and its movements and conceived as a subordinate activity of material forces. As soon as we begin to investigate the operations of mind and of supermind, in themselves and without the prejudgement that is determined from the beginning to see in them only a subordinate term of Matter, we come into contact with a mass of phenomena which escape entirely from the rigid hold, the limiting dogmatism of the materialist formula. And the moment we recognise, as our enlarging experience compels us to recognise, that there are in the universe knowable realities beyond the range of the senses and in man powers and faculties which determine rather

than are determined by the material organs through which they hold themselves in touch with the world of the senses, — that outer shell of our true and complete existence, — the premise of materialistic Agnosticism disappears. We are ready for a large statement and an ever-developing inquiry. (pp. 9-10)

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(...) The world of Matter is affirmed by the experience of the physical senses which, because they are themselves unable to perceive anything immaterial or not organised as gross Matter, would persuade us that the suprasensible is the unreal. This vulgar or rustic error of our corporeal organs does not gain in validity by being promoted into the domain of philosophical reasoning. Obviously, their pretension is unfounded. Even in the world of Matter there are existences of which the physical senses are incapable of taking cognisance. Yet the denial of the suprasensible as necessarily an illusion or a hallucination depends on this constant sensuous association of the real with the materially perceptible, which is itself a hallucination. Assuming throughout what it seeks to establish, it has the vice of the argument in a circle and can have no validity for an impartial reasoning.

Not only are there physical realities which are suprasensible, but, if evidence and experience are at all a test of truth, there are also senses which are supra-

physical¹ and can not only take cognisance of the realities of the material world without the aid of the corporeal sense-organs, but can bring us into contact with other realities, supraphysical and belonging to another world — included, that is to say, in an organisation of conscious experiences that are dependent on some other principle than the gross Matter of which our suns and earths seem to be made. Constantly asserted by human experience and belief since the origins of thought, this truth, now that the necessity of an exclusive preoccupation with the secrets of the material world no longer exists, begins to be justified by new-born forms of scientific research. The increasing evidences, of which only the most obvious and outward are established under the name of telepathy with its cognate phenomena, cannot long be resisted except by minds shut up in the brilliant shell of the past, by intellects limited in spite of their acuteness through the limitation of their field of experience and inquiry, or by those who confuse enlightenment and reason with the faithful repetition of the formulas left to us from a bygone century and the jealous conservation of dead or dying intellectual dogmas. It is true that the glimpse of supraphysical realities acquired by methodical research has been imperfect and is yet ill-affirmed; for the methods used are still crude and defective. But

1 *Sūkṣma indriya*, subtle organs, existing in the subtle body (*sūkṣma deha*), and the means of subtle vision and experience (*sūkṣma dṛṣṭi*)

these rediscovered subtle senses have at least been found to be true witnesses to physical facts beyond the range of the corporeal organs. There is no justification, then, for scouting them as false witnesses when they testify to supraphysical facts beyond the domain of the material organisation of consciousness. Like all evidence, like the evidence of the physical senses themselves, their testimony has to be controlled, scrutinised and arranged by the reason, rightly translated and rightly related, and their field, laws and processes determined. But the truth of great ranges of experience whose objects exist in a more subtle substance and are perceived by more subtle instruments than those of gross physical Matter, claims in the end the same validity as the truth of the material universe. The worlds beyond exist: they have their universal rhythm, their grand lines and formations, their self-existent laws and mighty energies, their just and luminous means of knowledge. And here on our physical existence and in our physical body they exercise their influences; here also they organise their means of manifestation and commission their messengers and their witnesses. (pp. 17-19)

II

(...) So long as we confine ourselves to sense-evidence and the physical consciousness, we can conceive nothing

and know nothing except the material world and its phenomena. But certain faculties in us enable our mentality to arrive at conceptions which we may indeed deduce by ratiocination or by imaginative variation from the facts of the physical world as we see them, but which are not warranted by any purely physical data or any physical experience. The first of these instruments is the pure reason.

Human reason has a double action, mixed or dependent, pure or sovereign. Reason accepts a mixed action when it confines itself to the circle of our sensible experience, admits its law as the final truth and concerns itself only with the study of phenomenon, that is to say, with the appearances of things in their relations, processes and utilities. This rational action is incapable of knowing what is, it only knows what appears to be, it has no plummet by which it can sound the depths of being, it can only survey the field of becoming. Reason, on the other hand, asserts its pure action, when accepting our sensible experiences as a starting-point but refusing to be limited by them it goes behind, judges, works in its own right and strives to arrive at general and unalterable concepts which attach themselves not to the appearances of things, but to that which stands behind their appearances. It may arrive at its result by direct judgment passing immediately from the appearance to that which stands behind it and in that case the concept arrived at may seem to be a result of the sensible experience and dependent upon it though it is really

a perception of reason working in its own right. But the perceptions of the pure reason may also — and this is their more characteristic action — use the experience from which they start as a mere excuse and leave it far behind before they arrive at their result, so far that the result may seem the direct contrary of that which our sensible experience wishes to dictate to us. This movement is legitimate and indispensable, because our normal experience not only covers only a small part of universal fact, but even in the limits of its own field uses instruments that are defective and gives us false weights and measures. It must be exceeded, put away to a distance and its insistences often denied if we are to arrive at more adequate conceptions of the truth of things. To correct the errors of the sense-mind by the use of reason is one of the most valuable powers developed by man and the chief cause of his superiority among terrestrial beings.

The complete use of pure reason brings us finally from physical to metaphysical knowledge. But the concepts of metaphysical knowledge do not in themselves fully satisfy the demand of our integral being. They are indeed entirely satisfactory to the pure reason itself, because they are the very stuff of its own existence. But our nature sees things through two eyes always, for it views them doubly as idea and as fact and therefore every concept is incomplete for us and to a part of our nature almost unreal until it becomes an experience. But the truths which are now in question, are of an

order not subject to our normal experience. They are, in their nature, "beyond the perception of the senses but seizable by the perception of the reason". Therefore, some other faculty of experience is necessary by which the demand of our nature can be fulfilled and this can only come, since we are dealing with the supraphysical, by an extension of psychological experience.

In a sense all our experience is psychological since even what we receive by the senses has no meaning or value to us till it is translated into the terms of the sense-mind, the Manas of Indian philosophical terminology. Manas, say our philosophers, is the sixth sense. But we may even say that it is the only sense and that the others, vision, hearing, touch, smell, taste are merely specialisations of the sense-mind which, although it normally uses the sense-organs for the basis of its experience, yet exceeds them and is capable of a direct experience proper to its own inherent action. As a result psychological experience, like the cognitions of the reason, is capable in man of a double action, mixed or dependent, pure or sovereign. Its mixed action takes place usually when the mind seeks to become aware of the external world, the object; the pure action when it seeks to become aware of itself, the subject. In the former activity, it is dependent on the senses and forms its perceptions in accordance with their evidence; in the latter it acts in itself and is aware of things directly by a sort of identity with them. We are thus aware of our emotions; we are aware of anger,

as has been acutely said, because we become anger. We are thus aware also of our own existence; and here the nature of experience as knowledge by identity becomes apparent. In reality, all experience is in its secret nature knowledge by identity; but its true character is hidden from us because we have separated ourselves from the rest of the world by exclusion, by the distinction of ourself as subject and everything else as object, and we are compelled to develop processes and organs by which we may again enter into communion with all that we have excluded. We have to replace direct knowledge through conscious identity by an indirect knowledge which appears to be caused by physical contact and mental sympathy. This limitation is a fundamental creation of the ego and an instance of the manner in which it has proceeded throughout, starting from an original falsehood and covering over the true truth of things by contingent falsehoods which become for us practical truths of relation.

From this nature of mental and sense knowledge as it is at present organised in us, it follows that there is no inevitable necessity in our existing limitations. They are the result of an evolution in which mind has accustomed itself to depend upon certain physiological functionings and their reactions as its normal means of entering into relation with the material universe. Therefore, although it is the rule that when we seek to become aware of the external world, we have to do so indirectly through the sense-organs and can experience

only so much of the truth about things and men as the senses convey to us, yet this rule is merely the regularity of a dominant habit. It is possible for the mind, — and it would be natural for it, if it could be persuaded to liberate itself from its consent to the domination of matter, — to take direct cognisance of the objects of sense without the aid of the sense-organs. This is what happens in experiments of hypnosis and cognate psychological phenomena. Because our waking consciousness is determined and limited by the balance between mind and matter worked out by life in its evolution, this direct cognisance is usually impossible in our ordinary waking state and has therefore to be brought about by throwing the waking mind into a state of sleep which liberates the true or subliminal mind. Mind is then able to assert its true character as the one and all-sufficient sense and free to apply to the objects of sense its pure and sovereign instead of its mixed and dependent action. Nor is this extension of faculty really impossible but only more difficult in our waking state, — as is known to all who have been able to go far enough in certain paths of psychological experiment.

The sovereign action of the sense-mind can be employed to develop other senses besides the five which we ordinarily use. For instance, it is possible to develop the power of appreciating accurately without physical means the weight of an object which we hold in our hands. Here the sense of contact and pressure is merely used as a starting-point, just as the data of sense-experi-

ence are used by the pure reason, but it is not really the sense of touch which gives the measure of the weight to the mind; that finds the right value through its own independent perception and uses the touch only in order to enter into relation with the object. And as with the pure reason, so with the sense-mind, the sense-experience can be used as a mere first point from which it proceeds to a knowledge that has nothing to do with the sense-organs and often contradicts their evidence. Nor is the extension of faculty confined only to outsides and superficialities. It is possible, once we have entered by any of the senses into relation with an external object, so to apply the Manas as to become aware of the contents of the object, for example, to receive or to perceive the thoughts or feelings of others without aid from their utterance, gesture, action or facial expressions and even in contradiction of these always partial and often misleading data. Finally, by an utilisation of the inner senses, — that is to say, of the sense-powers, in themselves, in their purely mental or subtle activity as distinguished from the physical which is only a selection for the purposes of outward life from their total and general action, — we are able to take cognition of sense-experiences, of appearances and images of things other than those which belong to the organisation of our material environment. All these extensions of faculty, though received with hesitation and incredulity by the physical mind because they are abnormal to the habitual scheme of our ordinary life and experience, difficult to set in

action, still more difficult to systematise so as to be able to make of them an orderly and serviceable set of instruments, must yet be admitted, since they are the invariable result of any attempt to enlarge the field of our superficially active consciousness whether by some kind of untaught effort and casual ill-ordered effect or by a scientific and well-regulated practice. (pp. 60-64)

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(...) All that our sense-experience tells us of, is form and movement. Forms exist, but with an existence that is not pure, rather always mixed, combined, aggregated, relative. When we go within ourselves, we may get rid of precise form, but we cannot get rid of movement, of change. Motion of Matter in Space, motion of change in Time seem to be the condition of existence. We may say indeed, if we like, that this is existence and that the idea of existence in itself corresponds to no discoverable reality. At the most in the phenomenon of self-awareness or behind it, we get sometimes a glimpse of something immovable and immutable, something that we vaguely perceive or imagine that we are beyond all life and death, beyond all change and formation and action. Here is the one door in us that sometimes swings open upon the splendour of a truth beyond and, before it shuts again, allows a ray to touch us, — a luminous intimation which, if we have the strength and firmness, we may hold to in our faith and make a start-

ing-point for another play of consciousness than that of the sense-mind, for the play of Intuition.

For if we examine carefully, we shall find that Intuition is our first teacher. Intuition always stands veiled behind our mental operations. Intuition brings to man those brilliant messages from the Unknown which are the beginning of his higher knowledge. Reason only comes in afterwards to see what profit it can have of the shining harvest. Intuition gives us that idea of something behind and beyond all that we know and seem to be which pursues man always in contradiction of his lower reason and all his normal experience and impels him to formulate that formless perception in the more positive ideas of God, Immortality, Heaven and the rest by which we strive to express it to the mind. For Intuition is as strong as Nature herself from whose very soul it has sprung and cares nothing for the contradictions of reason or the denials of experience. It knows what is because it is, because itself it is of that and has come from that, and will not yield it to the judgement of what merely becomes and appears. What the Intuition tells us of, is not so much Existence as the Existent, for it proceeds from that one point of light in us which gives it its advantage, that sometimes opened door in our own self-awareness. Ancient Vedanta seized this message of the Intuition and formulated it in the three great declarations of the Upanishads, "I am He", "Thou art That, O Swetaketu", "All this is the Brahman; this Self is the Brahman". (pp. 66-67)

III

Materialism indeed insists that, whatever the extension of consciousness, it is a material phenomenon inseparable from our physical organs and not their utiliser but their result. This orthodox contention, however, is no longer able to hold the field against the tide of increasing knowledge. Its explanations are becoming more and more inadequate and strained. It is becoming always clearer that not only does the capacity of our total consciousness far exceed that of our organs, the senses, the nerves, the brain, but that even for our ordinary thought and consciousness these organs are only their habitual instruments and not their generators. Consciousness uses the brain which its upward strivings have produced, brain has not produced nor does it use the consciousness. There are even abnormal instances which go to prove that our organs are not entirely indispensable instruments, — that the heart-beats are not absolutely essential to life, any more than is breathing, nor the organised brain-cells to thought. Our physical organism no more causes or explains thought and consciousness than the construction of an engine causes or explains the motive-power of steam or electricity. The force is anterior, not the physical instrument.

Momentous logical consequences follow. In the first place we may ask whether, since even mental consciousness exists where we see inanimation and inertia, it is not possible that even in material objects a universal

subconscious mind is present although unable to act or communicate itself to its surfaces for want of organs. Is the material state an emptiness of consciousness, or is it not rather only a sleep of consciousness — even though from the point of view of evolution an original and not an intermediate sleep? And by sleep the human example teaches us that we mean not a suspension of consciousness, but its gathering inward away from conscious physical response to the impacts of external things. And is not this what all existence is that has not yet developed means of outward communication with the external physical world? Is there not a Conscious Soul, a Purusha who wakes for ever even in all that sleeps?

We may go farther. When we speak of subconscious mind, we should mean by the phrase a thing not different from the outer mentality, but only acting below the surface, unknown to the waking man, in the same sense if perhaps with a deeper plunge and a larger scope. But the phenomena of the subliminal self far exceed the limits of any such definition. It includes an action not only immensely superior in capacity, but quite different in kind from what we know as mentality in our waking self. We have therefore a right to suppose that there is a superconscious in us as well as a subconscious, a range of conscious faculties and therefore an organisation of consciousness which rise high above that psychological stratum to which we give the name of mentality. And since the subliminal self in us thus rises

in superconscience above mentality, may it not also sink in subconsciousness below mentality? Are there not in us and in the world forms of consciousness which are submental, to which we can give the name of vital and physical consciousness? If so, we must suppose in the plant and the metal also a force to which we can give the name of consciousness although it is not the human or animal mentality for which we have hitherto preserved the monopoly of that description.

Not only is this probable but, if we will consider things dispassionately, it is certain. In ourselves there is such a vital consciousness which acts in the cells of the body and the automatic vital functions so that we go through purposeful movements and obey attractions and repulsions to which our mind is a stranger. In animals this vital consciousness is an even more important factor. In plants it is intuitively evident. The seekings and shrinkings of the plant, its pleasure and pain, its sleep and its wakefulness and all that strange life whose truth an Indian scientist has brought to light by rigidly scientific methods, are all movements of consciousness, but, as far as we can see, not of mentality. There is then a sub-mental, a vital consciousness which has precisely the same initial reactions as the mental, but is different in the constitution of its self-experience, even as that which is superconscient is in the constitution of its self-experience different from the mental being.

Does the range of what we can call consciousness cease with the plant, with that in which we recognise

the existence of a subanimal life? If so, we must then suppose that there is a force of life and consciousness originally alien to Matter which has yet entered into and occupied Matter, — perhaps from another world.¹ For whence, otherwise, can it have come? The ancient thinkers believed in the existence of such other worlds, which perhaps sustain life and consciousness in ours or even call it out by their pressure, but do not create it by their entry. Nothing can evolve out of Matter which is not therein already contained.

But there is no reason to suppose that the gamut of life and consciousness fails and stops short in that which seems to us purely material. The development of recent research and thought seems to point to a sort of obscure beginning of life and perhaps a sort of inert or suppressed consciousness in the metal and in the earth and in other “inanimate” forms, or at least the first stuff of what becomes consciousness in us may be there. Only while in the plant we can dimly recognise and conceive the thing that I have called vital consciousness, the consciousness of Matter, of the inert form, is difficult indeed for us to understand or imagine, and what we find it difficult to understand or imagine we consider it our right to deny. Nevertheless, when one has pursued consciousness so far into the

¹ The curious speculation is now current that Life entered earth not from another world, but from another planet. To the thinker that would explain nothing. The essential question is how Life comes into Matter at all and not how it enters into the matter of a particular planet.

depths, it becomes incredible that there should be this sudden gulf in Nature. Thought has a right to suppose a unity where that unity is confessed by all other classes of phenomena and in one class only, not denied, but merely more concealed than in others. And if we suppose the unity to be unbroken, we then arrive at the existence of consciousness in all forms of the Force which is at work in the world. Even if there be no conscient or superconscient Purusha inhabiting all forms, yet is there in those forms a conscious force of being of which even their outer parts overtly or inertly partake.

Necessarily, in such a view, the word consciousness changes its meaning. It is no longer synonymous with mentality but indicates a self-aware force of existence of which mentality is a middle term; below mentality it sinks into vital and material movements which are for us subconscious; above, it rises into the supramental which is for us the superconscient. But in all it is one and the same thing organising itself differently. This is, once more, the Indian conception of Chit which, as energy, creates the worlds. Essentially, we arrive at that unity which materialistic Science perceives from the other end when it asserts that Mind cannot be another force than Matter, but must be merely development and outcome of material energy. Indian thought at its deepest affirms on the other hand that Mind and Matter are rather different grades of the same energy, different organisations of one conscious Force of Existence.

But what right have we to assume consciousness as the just description for this Force? For consciousness implies some kind of intelligence, purposefulness, self-knowledge, even though they may not take the forms habitual to our mentality. Even from this point of view everything supports rather than contradicts the idea of a universal conscious Force. We see, for instance, in the animal, operations of a perfect purposefulness and an exact, indeed a scientifically minute knowledge which are quite beyond the capacities of the animal mentality and which man himself can only acquire by long culture and education and even then uses with a much less sure rapidity. We are entitled to see in this general fact the proof of a conscious Force at work in the animal and the insect which is more intelligent, more purposeful, more aware of its intention, its ends, its means, its conditions than the highest mentality yet manifested in any individual form on earth. And in the operations of inanimate Nature we find the same pervading characteristic of a supreme hidden intelligence, "hidden in the modes of its own workings".

The only argument against a conscious and intelligent source for this purposeful work, this work of intelligence, of selection, adaptation and seeking is that large element in Nature's operations to which we give the name of waste. But obviously this is an objection based on the limitations of our human intellect which seeks to impose its own particular rationality, good enough for limited human ends, on the general

operations of the World-Force. We see only part of Nature's purpose and all that does not subserve that part we call waste. Yet even our own human action is full of an apparent waste, so appearing from the individual point of view, which yet, we may be sure, subserves well enough the large and universal purpose of things. That part of her intention which we can detect, Nature gets done surely enough in spite of, perhaps really by virtue of her apparent waste. We may well trust to her in the rest which we do not yet detect.

For the rest, it is impossible to ignore the drive of set purpose, the guidance of apparent blind tendency, the sure eventual or immediate coming to the target sought, which characterise the operations of World-Force in the animal, in the plant, in inanimate things. So long as Matter was Alpha and Omega to the scientific mind, the reluctance to admit intelligence as the mother of intelligence was an honest scruple. But now it is no more than an outworn paradox to affirm the emergence of human consciousness, intelligence and mastery out of an unintelligent, blindly driving unconsciousness in which no form or substance of them previously existed. Man's consciousness can be nothing else than a form of Nature's consciousness. It is there in other involved forms below Mind, it emerges in Mind, it shall ascend into yet superior forms beyond Mind. For the Force that builds the worlds is a conscious Force, the Existence which manifests itself in them is conscious Being and a perfect emergence of its

potentialities in form is the sole object which we can rationally conceive for its manifestation of this world of forms. (pp. 85-90)

IV

(...) In the infinite consciousness of a self-aware infinite Existence knowledge must be everywhere implicit or operative in the very grain of its action; but we see here at the beginning of things, apparent as the base or the nature of the creative world-energy, an Inconscience, a total Nescience. This is the stock with which the material universe commences: consciousness and knowledge emerge at first in obscure infinitesimal movements, at points, in little quanta which associate themselves together; there is a tardy and difficult evolution, a slowly increasing organisation and ameliorated mechanism of the workings of consciousness, more and more gains are written on the blank slate of the Nescience. But still these have the appearance of gathered acquisitions and constructions of a seeking Ignorance which tries to know, to understand, to discover, to change slowly and strugglingly into knowledge. As Life here establishes and maintains its operations with difficulty on a foundation and in an environment of general Death, first in infinitesimal points of life, in quanta of life-form and life-energy, in increasing aggregates that create more and more complex organisms, an intricate life-machinery,

Consciousness also establishes and maintains a growing but precarious light in the darkness of an original Nescience and a universal Ignorance.

Moreover the knowledge gained is of phenomena, not of the reality of things or of the foundations of existence. Wherever our consciousness meets what seems to be a foundation, that foundation wears the appearance of a blank, — when it is not a void, — an original state which is featureless and a multitude of consequences which are not inherent in the origin and which nothing in it seems to justify or visibly to necessitate; there is a mass of superstructure which has no clear native relation to the fundamental existence. The first aspect of cosmic existence is an Infinite which is to our perception an indeterminate, if not indeterminate. In this Infinite the universe itself, whether in its aspect of Energy or its aspect of structure, appears as an indeterminate determination, a “boundless finite”, — paradoxical but necessary expressions which would seem to indicate that we are face to face with a suprarational mystery as the base of things; in that universe arise — from where? — a vast number and variety of general and particular determinates which do not appear to be warranted by anything perceptible in the nature of the Infinite, but seem to be imposed, — or, it may be, self-imposed, — upon it. We give to the Energy which produces them the name of Nature, but the word conveys no meaning unless it is that the nature of things is what it is by virtue of a Force which

arranges them according to an inherent Truth in them; but the nature of that Truth itself, the reason why these determinates are what they are is nowhere visible. It has been possible indeed for human Science to detect the process or many processes of material things, but this knowledge does not throw any light on the major question; we do not know even the rationale of the original cosmic processes, for the results do not present themselves as their necessary but only their pragmatic and actual consequence. In the end we do not know how these determinates came into or out of the original Indeterminate or Indeterminable on which they stand forth as on a blank and flat background in the riddle of their ordered occurrence. At the origin of things we are faced with an Infinite containing a mass of unexplained finites, an Indivisible full of endless divisions, an Immutable teeming with mutations and differentiae. A cosmic paradox is the beginning of all things, a paradox without any key to its significance.

It is possible indeed to question the need of positing an Infinite which contains our formed universe, although this conception is imperatively demanded by our mind as a necessary basis to its conceptions, — for it is unable to fix or assign a limit whether in Space or Time or essential existence beyond which there is nothing or before or after which there is nothing, — although too the alternative is a Void or Nihil which can be only an abyss of the Infinite into which we refuse to look; an infinite mystic zero of Non-Existence would

replace an infinite x as a necessary postulate, a basis for our seeing of all that is to us existence. But even if we refuse to recognise anything as real except the limitless expanding finite of the material universe and its teeming determinations, the enigma remains the same. Infinite existence, infinite non-being or boundless finite, all are to us original indeterminates or indeterminables; we can assign to them no distinct characters or features, nothing which would predetermine their determinations. To describe the fundamental character of the universe as Space or Time or Space-Time does not help us; for even if these are not abstractions of our intelligence which we impose by our mental view on the cosmos, the mind's necessary perspective of its picture, these too are indeterminates and carry in themselves no clue to the origin of the determinations that take place in them; there is still no explanation of the strange process by which things are determined or of their powers, qualities and properties, no revelation of their true nature, origin and significance.

Actually to our Science this infinite or indeterminate Existence reveals itself as an Energy, known not by itself but by its works, which throws up in its motion waves of energism and in them a multitude of infinitesimals; these, grouping themselves to form larger infinitesimals, become a basis for all the creations of the Energy, even those farthest away from the material basis, for the emergence of a world of organised Matter, for the emergence of Life, for the emergence of

Consciousness, for all the still unexplained activities of evolutionary Nature. On the original process are erected a multitude of processes which we can observe, follow, can take advantage of many of them, utilise; but they are none of them, fundamentally, explicable. We know now that different groupings and a varying number of electric infinitesimals can produce or serve as the constituent occasion — miscalled the cause, for here there seems to be only a necessary antecedent condition, — for the appearance of larger atomic infinitesimals of different natures, qualities, powers; but we fail to discover how these different dispositions can come to constitute these different atoms, — how the differentiae in the constituent occasion or cause necessitate the differentiae in the constituted outcome or result. We know also that certain combinations of certain invisible atomic infinitesimals produce or occasion new and visible determinations quite different in nature, quality and power from the constituent infinitesimals; but we fail to discover, for instance, how a fixed formula for the combination of oxygen and hydrogen comes to determine the appearance of water which is evidently something more than a combination of gases, a new creation, a new form of substance, a material manifestation of a quite new character. We see that a seed develops into a tree, we follow the line of the process of production and we utilise it; but we do not discover how a tree can grow out of a seed, how the life and form of the tree come to be implied in the substance or energy of the seed or, if

that be rather the fact, how the seed can develop into a tree. We know that genes and chromosomes are the cause of hereditary transmissions, not only of physical but of psychological variations; but we do not discover how psychological characteristics can be contained and transmitted in this unconscious material vehicle. We do not see or know, but it is expounded to us as a cogent account of Nature-process, that a play of electrons, of atoms and their resultant molecules, of cells, glands, chemical secretions and physiological processes manages by their activity on the nerves and brain of a Shakespeare or a Plato to produce or could be perhaps the dynamic occasion for the production of a Hamlet or a Symposium or a Republic; but we fail to discover or appreciate how such material movements could have composed or necessitated the composition of these highest points of thought and literature: the divergence here of the determinants and the determination becomes so wide that we are no longer able to follow the process; much less understand or utilise. These formulae of Science may be pragmatically correct and infallible, they may govern the practical how of Nature's processes, but they do not disclose the intrinsic how or why; rather they have the air of the formulae of a cosmic Magician, precise, irresistible, automatically successful each in its field, but their rationale is fundamentally unintelligible.

There is more to perplex us; for we see the original indeterminate Energy throwing out general determinates of itself, — we might equally in their relation to

the variety of their products call them generic indeterminate, — with their appropriate states of substance and determined forms of that substance: the latter are numerous, sometimes innumerable variations on the substance-energy which is their base: but none of these variations seems to be predetermined by anything in the nature of the general indeterminate. An electric Energy produces positive, negative, neutral forms of itself, forms that are at once waves and particles; a gaseous state of energy-substance produces a considerable number of different gases; a solid state of energy-substance from which results the earth principle develops into different forms of earth and rock of many kinds and numerous minerals and metals; a life principle produces its vegetable kingdom teeming with a countless foison of quite different plants, trees, flowers; a principle of animal life produces an enormous variety of genus, species, individual variations: so it proceeds into human life and mind and its mind-types towards the still unwritten end or perhaps the yet occult sequel of that unfinished evolutionary chapter. Throughout there is the constant rule of a general sameness in the original determinate and, subject to this substantial sameness of basic substance and nature, a profuse variation in the generic and individual determinates; an identical law obtains of sameness or similarity in the genus or species with numerous variations often meticulously minute in the individual. But we do not find anything in any general or generic determinate

necessitating the variant determinations that result from it. A necessity of immutable sameness at the base, of free and unaccountable variations on the surface seems to be the law; but who or what necessitates or determines? What is the rationale of the determination, what is its original truth or its significance? What compels or impels this exuberant play of varying possibilities which seem to have no aim or meaning unless it be the beauty or delight of creation? A Mind, a seeking and curious inventive Thought, a hidden determining Will might be there, but there is no trace of it in the first and fundamental appearance of material Nature.

A first possible explanation points to a self-organising dynamic Chance that is at work, — a paradox necessitated by the appearance of inevitable order on one side, of unaccountable freak and fantasy on the other side of the cosmic phenomenon we call Nature. An inconscient and inconsequent Force, we may say, that acts at random and creates this or that by a general chance without any determining principle, — determinations coming in only as the result of a persistent repetition of the same rhythm of action and succeeding because only this repetitive rhythm could succeed in keeping things in being, — this is the energy of Nature. But this implies that somewhere in the origin of things there is a boundless Possibility or a womb of innumerable possibilities that are manifested out of it by the original Energy, — an incalculable Inconscient which we find some embarrassment in calling either an

Existence or a Non-Existence; for without some such origin and basis the appearance and the action of the Energy is unintelligible. Yet an opposite aspect of the nature of the cosmic phenomenon as we see it appears to forbid the theory of a random action generating a persistent order. There is too much of an iron insistence on order, on a law basing the possibilities. One would be justified rather in supposing that there is an inherent imperative Truth of things unseen by us, but a Truth capable of manifold manifestation, throwing out a multitude of possibilities and variants of itself which the creative Energy by its action turns into so many realised actualities. This brings us to a second explanation, — a mechanical necessity in things, its workings recognisable by us as so many mechanical laws of Nature; — the necessity, we might say, of some such secret inherent Truth of things as we have supposed, governing automatically the processes we observe in action in the universe. But a theory of mechanical Necessity by itself does not elucidate the free play of the endless unaccountable variations which are visible in the evolution: there must be behind the Necessity or in it a law of unity associated with a coexistent but dependent law of multiplicity, both insisting on manifestation; but the unity of what, the multiplicity of what? Mechanical Necessity can give no answer. Again the emergence of consciousness out of the Inconscient is a stumbling-block in the way of this theory; for it is a phenomenon which can have no place in an all-pervading

truth of inconscient mechanical Necessity. If there is a necessity which compels the emergence, it can be only this, that there is already a consciousness concealed in the Inconscient, waiting for evolution and when all is ready breaking out from its prison of apparent Nescience. We may indeed get rid of the difficulty of the imperative order of things by supposing that it does not exist, that determinism in Nature is imposed on it by our thought which needs such an imperative order to enable it to deal with its surroundings, but in reality there is no such thing; there is only a Force experimenting in a random action of infinitesimals which build up in their general results different determinations by a repetitive persistence operative in the sum of their action; thus we go back from Necessity to Chance as the basis of our existence. But what then is this Mind, this Consciousness which differs so radically from the Energy that produced it that for its action it has to impose its idea and need of order on the world she has made and in which it is obliged to live? There would then be the double contradiction of consciousness emerging from a fundamental Inconscience and of a Mind of order and reason manifesting as the brilliant final consequence of a world created by inconscient Chance. These things may be possible, but they need a better explanation than any yet given before we can accord to them our acceptance.

This opens the way for other explanations which make Consciousness the creator of this world out of an

apparent original Inconscience. A Mind, a Will seems to have imagined and organised the universe, but it has veiled itself behind its creation; its first erection has been this screen of an inconscient Energy and a material form of substance, at once a disguise of its presence and a plastic creative basis on which it could work as an artisan uses for his production of forms and patterns a dumb and obedient material. All these things we see around us are then the thoughts of an extracosmic Divinity, a Being with an omnipotent and omniscient Mind and Will, who is responsible for the mathematical law of the physical universe, for its artistry of beauty, for its strange play of samenesses and variations, of concordances and discords, of combining and intermingling opposites, for the drama of consciousness struggling to exist and seeking to affirm itself in an inconscient universal order. The fact that this Divinity is invisible to us, undiscoverable by our mind and senses, offers no difficulty, since self-evidence or direct sign of an extracosmic Creator could not be expected in a cosmos which is void of his presence: the patent signals everywhere of the works of an Intelligence, of law, design, formula, adaptation of means to end, constant and inexhaustible invention, fantasy even but restrained by an ordering Reason might be considered sufficient proof of this origin of things. Or if this Creator is not entirely supracosmic, but is also immanent in his works, even then there need be no other sign of him, — except indeed to some consciousness

evolving in this inconscient world, but only when its evolution reached a point at which it could become aware of the indwelling Presence. The intervention of this evolving consciousness would not be a difficulty, since there would be no contradiction of the basic nature of things in its appearance; an omnipotent Mind could easily infuse something of itself into its creatures. One difficulty remains; it is the arbitrary nature of the creation, the incomprehensibility of its purpose, the crude meaninglessness of its law of unnecessary ignorance, strife and suffering, its ending without denouement or issue. A play? But why this stamp of so many undivine elements and characters in the play of One whose nature must be supposed to be divine? To the suggestion that what we see worked out in the world is the thoughts of God, the retort can be made that God could well have had better thoughts and the best thought of all would have been to refrain from the creation of an unhappy and unintelligible universe. All theistic explanations of existence starting from an extracosmic Deity stumble over this difficulty and can only evade it; it would disappear only if the Creator were, even though exceeding the creation, yet immanent in it, himself in some sort both the player and the play, an Infinite casting infinite possibilities into the set form of an evolutionary cosmic order.

On that hypothesis, there must be behind the action of the material Energy a secret involved Consciousness, cosmic, infinite, building up through

the action of that frontal Energy its means of an evolutionary manifestation, a creation out of itself in the boundless finite of the material universe. The apparent inconscience of the material Energy would be an indispensable condition for the structure of the material world-substance in which this Consciousness intends to involve itself so that it may grow by evolution out of its apparent opposite; for without some such device a complete involution would be impossible. If there is such a creation by the Infinite out of itself, it must be the manifestation, in a material disguise, of truths or powers of its own being: the forms or vehicles of these truths or powers would be the basic general or fundamental determinates we see in Nature; the particular determinates, which otherwise are unaccountable variations that have emerged from the vague general stuff in which they originate, would be the appropriate forms or vehicles of the possibilities that the truths or powers residing in these fundamentals bore within them. The principle of free variation of possibilities natural to an infinite Consciousness would be the explanation of the aspect of inconscient Chance of which we are aware in the workings of Nature, — inconscient only in appearance and so appearing because of the complete involution in Matter, because of the veil with which the secret Consciousness has disguised its presence. The principle of truths, real powers of the Infinite imperatively fulfilling themselves would be the explanation of the opposite aspect of a mechanical Necessity which we see

in Nature, — mechanical in appearance only and so appearing because of the same veil of Inconscience. It would then be perfectly intelligible why the Inconscient does its works with a constant principle of mathematical architecture, of design, of effective arrangement of numbers, of adaptation of means to ends, of inexhaustible device and invention, one might almost say, a constant experimental skill and an automatism of purpose. The appearance of consciousness out of an apparent Inconscience would also be no longer inexplicable.

All the unexplained processes of Nature would find their meaning and their place if this hypothesis proved to be tenable. Energy seems to create substance, but, in reality, as existence is inherent in Consciousness-Force, so also substance would be inherent in Energy, — the Energy a manifestation of the Force, substance a manifestation of the secret Existence. But as it is a spiritual substance, it would not be apprehended by the material sense until it is given by Energy the forms of Matter seizable by that sense. One begins to understand also how arrangement of design, quantity and number can be a base for the manifestation of quality and property; for design, quantity and number are powers of existence-substance, quality and property are powers of the consciousness and its force that reside in the existence; they can then be made manifest and operative by a rhythm and process of substance. The growth of the tree out of the seed would be accounted for, like all other similar phenomena, by the

indwelling presence of what we have called the Real-Idea; the Infinite's self-perception of the significant form, the living body of its power of existence that has to emerge from its own self-compression in energy-substance, would be carried internally in the form of the seed, carried in the occult consciousness involved in that form, and would naturally evolve out of it. There would be no difficulty either in understanding on this principle how infinitesimals of a material character like the gene and the chromosome can carry in them psychological elements to be transmitted to the physical form that has to emerge from the human seed; it would be at bottom on the same principle in the objectivity of Matter as that which we find in our subjective experience, — for we see that the subconscious physical carries in it a mental psychological content, impressions of past events, habits, fixed mental and vital formations, fixed forms of character, and sends them up by an occult process to the waking consciousness, thus originating or influencing many activities of our nature.

On the same basis there would be no difficulty in understanding why the physiological functionings of the body help to determine the mind's psychological actions: for the body is not mere unconscious Matter: it is a structure of a secretly conscious Energy that has taken form in it. Itself occultly conscious, it is, at the same time, the vehicle of expression of an overt Consciousness that has emerged and is self-aware in

our physical energy-substance. The body's functionings are a necessary machinery or instrumentation for the movements of this mental Inhabitant; it is only by setting the corporeal instrument in motion that the Conscious Being emerging, evolving in it can transmit its mind formations, will formations and turn them into a physical manifestation of itself in Matter. The capacity, the processes of the instrument must to a certain extent reshape the mind formations in their transition from mental shape into physical expression; its workings are necessary and must exercise their influence before that expression can become actual. The bodily instrument may even in some directions dominate its user; it may too by a force of habit suggest or create involuntary reactions of the consciousness inhabiting it before the working Mind and Will can control or interfere. All this is possible because the body has a "subconscient" consciousness of its own which counts in our total self-expression; even, if we look at this outer instrumentation only, we can conclude that body determines mind, but this is only a minor truth and the major Truth is that mind determines body. In this view a still deeper Truth becomes conceivable; a spiritual entity ensouling the substance that veils it is the original determinant of both mind and body. On the other side, in the opposite order of process, — that by which the mind can transmit its ideas and commands to the body, can train it to be an instrument for new action, can even so impress it with

its habitual demands or orders that the physical instinct carries them out automatically even when the mind is no longer consciously willing them, those also more unusual but well attested by which to an extraordinary and hardly limitable extent the mind can learn to determine the reactions of the body even to the overriding of its normal law or conditions of action, — these and other otherwise unaccountable aspects of the relation between these two elements of our being become easily understandable: for it is the secret consciousness in the living matter that receives from its greater companion; it is this in the body that in its own involved and occult fashion perceives or feels the demand on it and obeys the emerged or evolved consciousness which presides over the body. Finally, the conception of a divine Mind and Will creating the cosmos becomes justifiable, while at the same time the perplexing elements in it which our reasoning mentality refuses to ascribe to an arbitrary fiat of the Creator, find their explanation as inevitable phenomena of a Consciousness emerging with difficulty out of its opposite — but with the mission to override these contrary phenomena and manifest by a slow and difficult evolution its greater reality and true nature. (pp. 295-306)

V

(...) It is a fact that mankind almost from the beginning of its existence or so far back as history or tradition can go, has believed in the existence of other worlds and in the possibility of communication between their powers and beings and the human race. In the last rationalistic period of human thought from which we are emerging, this belief has been swept aside as an age-long superstition; all evidence or intimations of its truth have been rejected a priori as fundamentally false and undeserving of inquiry because incompatible with the axiomatic truth that only Matter and the material world and its experiences are real; all other experience purporting to be real must be either a hallucination or an imposture or a subjective result of superstitious credulity and imagination or else, if a fact, then other than what it purported to be and explicable by a physical cause: no evidence could be accepted of such a fact unless it is objective and physical in its character; even if the fact be very apparently supraphysical, it cannot be accepted as such unless it is totally unexplainable by any other imaginable hypothesis or conceivable conjecture.

It should be evident that this demand for physical valid proof of a supraphysical fact is irrational and illogical; it is an irrelevant attitude of the physical mind which assumes that only the objective and physical is fundamentally real and puts aside all else as merely subjective. A supraphysical fact may impinge on the physi-

cal world and produce physical results; it may even produce an effect on our physical senses and become manifest to them, but that cannot be its invariable action and most normal character or process. Ordinarily, it must produce a direct effect or a tangible impression on our mind and our life-being, which are the parts of us that are of the same order as itself, and can only indirectly and through them, if at all, influence the physical world and physical life. If it objectivises itself, it must be to a subtler sense in us and only derivatively to the outward physical sense. This derivative objectivisation is certainly possible; if there is an association of the action of the subtle body and its sense-organisation with the action of the material body and its physical organs, then the supraphysical can become outwardly sensible to us. This is what happens, for example, with the faculty called second sight; it is the process of all those psychic phenomena which seem to be seen and heard by the outer senses and are not sensed inwardly through representative or interpretative or symbolic images which bear the stamp of an inner experience or have an evident character of formations in a subtle substance. There can, then, be various kinds of evidence of the existence of other planes of being and communication with them; objectivisation to the outer sense, subtle-sense contacts, mind contacts, life contacts, contacts through the subliminal in special states of consciousness exceeding our ordinary range. Our physical mind is not the whole of us nor, even

though it dominates almost the whole of our surface consciousness, the best or greatest part of us; reality cannot be restricted to a sole field of this narrowness or to the dimensions known within its rigid circle.

If it be said that subjective experience or subliminal images can easily be deceptive, since we have no recognised method or standard of verification and a too great tendency to admit the extraordinary and miraculous or supernatural at its face value, this may be admitted: but error is not the prerogative of the inner subjective or subliminal parts of us, it is also an appanage of the physical mind and its objective methods and standards, and such liability to error cannot be a reason for shutting out a large and important domain of experience; it is a reason rather for scrutinising it and finding out in it its own true standards and its characteristic appropriate and valid means of verification. Our subjective being is the basis of our objective experience, and it is not probable that only its physical objectivisations are true and the rest unreliable. The subliminal consciousness, when rightly interrogated, is a witness to truth and its testimony is confirmed again and again even in the physical and the objective field; that testimony cannot, then, be disregarded when it calls our attention to things within us or to things that belong to planes or worlds of a supraphysical experience. At the same time belief by itself is not evidence of reality; it must base itself on something more valid before one can accept it. It is evident that the beliefs of

the past are not a sufficient basis for knowledge, even though they cannot be entirely neglected: for a belief is a mental construction and may be a wrong building; it may often answer to some inner intimation and then it has a value, but, as often as not, it disfigures the intimation, usually by a translation into terms familiar to our physical and objective experience, such as that which converted the hierarchy of the planes into a physical hierarchy or geographical space-extension, turned the rarer heights of subtle substance into material heights and placed the abodes of the gods on the summits of physical mountains. All truth supraphysical or physical must be founded not on mental belief alone, but on experience, — but in each case experience must be of the kind, physical, subliminal or spiritual, which is appropriate to the order of the truths into which we are empowered to enter; their validity and significance must be scrutinised, but according to their own law and by a consciousness which can enter into them and not according to the law of another domain or by a consciousness which is capable only of truths of another order; so alone can we be sure of our steps and enlarge firmly our sphere of knowledge. (pp. 771-774)

VI

But, first, it is well that we should recognise the enormous, the indispensable utility of the very brief period

of rationalistic Materialism through which humanity has been passing. For that vast field of evidence and experience which now begins to reopen its gates to us, can only be safely entered when the intellect has been severely trained to a clear austerity; seized on by unripe minds, it lends itself to the most perilous distortions and misleading imaginations and actually in the past encrusted a real nucleus of truth with such an accretion of perverting superstitions and irrationalising dogmas that all advance in true knowledge was rendered impossible. It became necessary for a time to make a clean sweep at once of the truth and its disguise in order that the road might be clear for a new departure and a surer advance. The rationalistic tendency of Materialism has done mankind this great service.

For the faculties that transcend the senses, by the very fact of their being immeshed in Matter, missioned to work in a physical body, put in harness to draw one car along with the emotional desires and nervous impulses, are exposed to a mixed functioning in which they are in danger of illuminating confusion rather than clarifying truth. Especially is this mixed functioning dangerous when men with unchastened minds and unpurified sensibilities attempt to rise into the higher domains of spiritual experience. In what regions of unsubstantial cloud and semi-brilliant fog or a murk visited by flashes which blind more than they enlighten, do they not lose themselves by that rash and premature adventure! An adventure necessary indeed

in the way in which Nature chooses to effect her advance, — for she amuses herself as she works, — but still, for the Reason, rash and premature.

It is necessary, therefore, that advancing Knowledge should base herself on a clear, pure and disciplined intellect. It is necessary, too, that she should correct her errors sometimes by a return to the restraint of sensible fact, the concrete realities of the physical world. The touch of Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a supraphysical Knowledge. It may even be said that the supraphysical can only be really mastered in its fullness — to its heights we can always reach — when we keep our feet firmly on the physical. "Earth is His footing",¹ says the Upanishad whenever it images the Self that manifests in the universe. And it is certainly the fact that the wider we extend and the surer we make our knowledge of the physical world, the wider and surer becomes our foundation for the higher knowledge, even for the highest, even for the Brahmavidya.

In emerging, therefore, out of the materialistic period of human Knowledge we must be careful that we do not rashly condemn what we are leaving or throw away even one tittle of its gains, before we can summon perceptions and powers that are well grasped and secure, to occupy their place. Rather we shall

1 "Padbhyām pṛthivī." — *Mundaka Upanishad*. II.1.4.

"Pṛthivi pājasyam." — *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. I. 1. 1.

observe with respect and wonder the work that Atheism has done for the Divine and admire the services that Agnosticism has rendered in preparing the illimitable increase of knowledge. In our world error is continually the handmaid and pathfinder of Truth; for error is really a half-truth that stumbles because of its limitations; often it is Truth that wears a disguise in order to arrive unobserved near to its goal. Well, if it could always be, as it has been in the great period we are leaving, the faithful handmaid, severe, conscientious, clean-handed, luminous within its limits, a half-truth and not a reckless and presumptuous aberration.

A certain kind of Agnosticism is the final truth of all knowledge. For when we come to the end of whatever path, the universe appears as only a symbol or an appearance of an unknowable Reality which translates itself here into different systems of values, physical values, vital and sensational values, intellectual, ideal and spiritual values. The more That becomes real to us, the more it is seen to be always beyond defining thought and beyond formulating expression. "Mind attains not there, nor speech."² And yet as it is possible to exaggerate, with the Illusionists, the unreality of the appearance, so it is possible to exaggerate the unknowableness of the Unknowable. When we speak of It as unknowable, we mean, really, that It escapes the grasp of our thought and speech, instruments which proceed always

² *Kena Upanishad*. I. 3.

by the sense of difference and express by the way of definition; but if not knowable by thought, It is attainable by a supreme effort of consciousness. There is even a kind of Knowledge which is one with Identity and by which, in a sense, It can be known. Certainly, that Knowledge cannot be reproduced successfully in the terms of thought and speech, but when we have attained to it, the result is a revaluation of That in the symbols of our cosmic consciousness, not only in one but in all the ranges of symbols, which results in a revolution of our internal being and, through the internal, of our external life. Moreover, there is also a kind of Knowledge through which That does reveal itself by all these names and forms of phenomenal existence which to the ordinary intelligence only conceal It. It is this higher but not highest process of Knowledge to which we can attain by passing the limits of the materialistic formula and scrutinising Life, Mind and Supermind in the phenomena that are characteristic of them and not merely in those subordinate movements by which they link themselves to Matter.

The Unknown is not the Unknowable;¹ it need not remain the unknown for us, unless we choose ignorance or persist in our first limitations. For to all things that are not unknowable, all things in the universe, there correspond in that universe faculties which can

¹ Other is That than the Known; also it is above the Unknown. *Kena Upanishad.*

take cognisance of them, and in man, the microcosm, these faculties are always existent and at a certain stage capable of development. We may choose not to develop them; where they are partially developed, we may discourage and impose on them a kind of atrophy. But, fundamentally, all possible knowledge is knowledge within the power of humanity. And since in man there is the inalienable impulse of Nature towards self-realisation, no struggle of the intellect to limit the action of our capacities within a determined area can for ever prevail. When we have proved Matter and realised its secret capacities, the very knowledge which has found its convenience in that temporary limitation must cry to us, like the Vedic Restrainers, "Forth now and push forward also in other fields." ¹

If modern Materialism were simply an unintelligent acquiescence in the material life, the advance might be indefinitely delayed. But since its very soul is the search for Knowledge, it will be unable to cry a halt; as it reaches the barriers of sense-knowledge and of the reasoning from sense-knowledge, its very rush will carry it beyond and the rapidity and sureness with which it has embraced the visible universe is only an earnest of the energy and success which we may hope to see repeated in the conquest of what lies beyond, once the stride is taken that crosses the barrier. We see already that advance in its obscure beginnings.

¹ *Rig Veda*. I. 4. 5.

Not only in the one final conception, but in the great line of its general results Knowledge, by whatever path it is followed, tends to become one. Nothing can be more remarkable and suggestive than the extent to which modern Science confirms in the domain of Matter the conceptions and even the very formulae of language which were arrived at, by a very different method, in the Vedanta, — the original Vedanta, not of the schools of metaphysical philosophy, but of the Upanishads. And these, on the other hand, often reveal their full significance, their richer contents only when they are viewed in the new light shed by the discoveries of modern Science, — for instance, that Vedantic expression which describes things in the Cosmos as one seed arranged by the universal Energy in multitudinous forms.¹ Significant, especially, is the drive of Science towards a Monism which is consistent with multiplicity, towards the Vedic idea of the one essence with its many becomings. Even if the dualistic appearance of Matter and Force be insisted on, it does not really stand in the way of this Monism. For it will be evident that essential Matter is a thing non-existent to the senses and only, like the Pradhana of the Sankhyas, a conceptual form of substance; and in fact the point is increasingly reached where only an arbitrary distinction in thought divides form of substance from form of energy.

¹ *Swetaswatara Upanishad*. VI. 12.

Matter expresses itself eventually as a formulation of some unknown Force. Life, too, that yet unfathomed mystery, begins to reveal itself as an obscure energy of sensibility imprisoned in its material formulation; and when the dividing ignorance is cured which gives us the sense of a gulf between Life and Matter, it is difficult to suppose that Mind, Life and Matter will be found to be anything else than one Energy triply formulated, the triple world of the Vedic seers. Nor will the conception then be able to endure of a brute material Force as the mother of Mind. The Energy that creates the world can be nothing else than a Will, and Will is only consciousness applying itself to a work and a result.

What is that work and result, if not a self-involution of Consciousness in form and a self-evolution out of form so as to actualise some mighty possibility in the universe which it has created? And what is its will in Man if not a will to unending Life, to unbounded Knowledge, to unfettered Power? Science itself begins to dream of the physical conquest of death, expresses an insatiable thirst for knowledge, is working out something like a terrestrial omnipotence for humanity. Space and Time are contracting to the vanishing-point in its works, and it strives in a hundred ways to make man the master of circumstance and so lighten the fetters of causality. The idea of limit, of the impossible begins to grow a little shadowy and it appears instead that whatever man constantly wills, he must in the end

be able to do; for the consciousness in the race eventually finds the means. It is not in the individual that this omnipotence expresses itself, but the collective Will of mankind that works out with the individual as a means. And yet when we look more deeply, it is not any conscious Will of the collectivity, but a superconscious Might that uses the individual as a centre and means, the collectivity as a condition and field. What is this but the God in man, the infinite Identity, the multitudinous Unity, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, who having made man in His own image, with the ego as a centre of working, with the race, the collective Narayana¹, the visvamanava² as the mould and circumscription, seeks to express in them some image of the unity, omniscience, omnipotence which are the self-conception of the Divine? "That which is immortal in mortals is a God and established inwardly as an energy working out in our divine powers."³ It is this vast cosmic impulse which the modern world, without quite knowing its own aim, yet serves in all its activities and labours subconsciously to fulfil.

But there is always a limit and an encumbrance, — the limit of the material field in the Knowledge, the encumbrance of the material machinery in the Power. But here also the latest trend is highly significant of a

1 A name of Vishnu, who, as the God in man, lives constantly associated in a dual unity with Nara, the human being.

2 The universal man.

3 *Rig Veda*. IV. 2. 1.

freer future. As the outposts of scientific Knowledge come more and more to be set on the borders that divide the material from the immaterial, so also the highest achievements of practical Science are those which tend to simplify and reduce to the vanishing-point the machinery by which the greatest effects are produced. Wireless telegraphy is Nature's exterior sign and pretext for a new orientation. The sensible physical means for the intermediate transmission of the physical force is removed; it is only preserved at the points of impulsion and reception. Eventually even these must disappear; for when the laws and forces of the supra-physical are studied with the right starting-point, the means will infallibly be found for Mind directly to seize on the physical energy and speed it accurately upon its errand. There, once we bring ourselves to recognise it, lie the gates that open upon the enormous vistas of the future.

Yet even if we had full knowledge and control of the worlds immediately above Matter, there would still be a limitation and still a beyond. The last knot of our bondage is at that point where the external draws into oneness with the internal, the machinery of ego itself becomes subtilised to the vanishing-point and the law of our action is at last unity embracing and possessing multiplicity and no longer, as now, multiplicity struggling towards some figure of unity. There is the central throne of cosmic Knowledge looking out on her widest dominion; there the empire of oneself with the empire

of one's world;¹ there the life² in the eternally consummate Being and the realisation of His divine nature³ in our human existence. (pp. 10-17)

1 *Svārājya and Sāmrājya*, the double aim proposed to itself by the positive Yoga of the ancients.

2 *Sālokya-mukti*, liberation by conscious existence in one world of being with the Divine.

3 *Sādharma-mukti*, liberation by assumption of the Divine Nature.

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