

The Problem of Consciousness

The Triple Enigma

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Existence, consciousness and the significance of our conscious being, — a triple enigma confronts us when we look at them to discover their origin, foundations, nature, their innermost secret. We begin with a riddle, we end with a mystery.

Existence itself is the first riddle. What it is we do not know, we are ignorant how it came to be at all, we cannot say whether it is an eternal fact or a temporary phenomenon. It may be only an appearance or it may be real, not in itself but as a manifestation of some hidden Reality; but then of what is it the manifestation and how came it into being or why had it to be?

Consciousness of existence is a second insoluble miracle. It seems not to have been and now is and it may be that some day it will not be; yet it is a premier fact and without it being would not know of its own existence. Things might exist, but only as a useless encumbrance of a meaningless space, — consciousness makes being self-aware, gives it a significance. But what then is consciousness? Is it something in the very grain of being or an unstable result or fortuitous accident? To whom does it belong? to the world as a whole? or is it peculiar to individual being? Or has it come from elsewhere into this inanimate and inconscient universe? To what end this entry?

The significance of our conscious being in an inconscient material world is the last and worst enigma. What is the sense and justification of the individual, his consciousness, his feeling of self, his personality? Is our individuality real or apparent, temporary or permanent, a minor circumstance or a central

secret of the whole? Has it a meaning in the universe or in something beyond the universe? or is it only a chance outburst of Nature with no sense in it or any but a mechanical purpose?

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All these problems arise in our consciousness and in our consciousness alone can be found their solution—or to it or through it perhaps from a greater consciousness the solution must come. On the nature and validity of our consciousness depends the nature and validity of the discovery we shall make or the conclusions to which we can come. On the power of our consciousness depends the possibility or impossibility of putting into the terms of life the solutions our knowledge discovers. But most of all the appearance and development of consciousness in the inconscient world is the decisive factor, the one thing that gives its existence a light of meaning, a possibility of purpose, a hope of fulfilment and the soul's self-finding. To know, then, the nature of consciousness, its process, its birth, growth and destiny is for us a study of supreme importance.

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All the problem of existence turns around three things, the nature of being, the nature of consciousness and the secret of the dynamics, the energy of existence by which being and consciousness find each other and manifest what is within them. If we can discover these three things, all is known which we fundamentally need to know; the rest is application and process and consequence.

The problem of consciousness is the central problem; for it links the other two together and creates their riddle. It is consciousness that raises the problem it has to solve; without it there would be no riddle and no solution. Being and its energy would then fulfil themselves in form and motion and in cessation of form and motion without any self-awareness and without any enjoyment or fruition of their form and motion.

Existence would be a fact without significance, the universe an inanimate machine turning for ever — or for a time, — without any reason or issue in its turning. For it to have any significance there must be either a Mind or some other kind of Awareness that observes it, originates it perhaps, has joy in its turning, works out something by the turning of the machine for its own satisfaction or dissatisfaction; or there must be a consciousness that emerges by the turning and reveals being and energy to themselves and leads them to some kind of fulfilment. Even if it is only a temporary consciousness that emerges, yet that must be the one significant fact of being, the one thing that lights up its movements, makes it aware of itself, raises it to something that is more than a mere dead or blank self-existence, a One or a Many that is yet worth no more than a zero.

Even if what fundamentally is in being, is not consciousness but a superconscience, yet that must be one supreme kind of self-awareness, if not also all-awareness; for otherwise there would be no difference between superconscience and inconscience; the two would be only top-side and bottom-side of the same blank, yet mysteriously but vainly fruitful reality.

In the ancient tradition eternal and infinite Being and Consciousness carry in them as the result of their oneness or coexistence an eternal significance of Bliss, Ananda. If we suppose Being-Consciousness to carry in them an eternal and infinite energy that creates, as we say, expresses, as the Sanskrit term better puts it, the universe, then the bliss of eternal conscious being would contain in itself a bliss of eternal energy of consciousness and being finding itself in the joy of self-expression, self-manifestation, self-creation. That would be a sufficient explanation of the appearance of a phenomenal universe, there is in fact no other that is satisfactory. These then are there the three or the four terms underlying all the secret of existence, — Being, Consciousness-Energy, Bliss of being, Ananda.

It would not materially affect the fundamental satisfactoriness of this explanation that the world we live in is not a world of bliss, not a world of consciousness, — though it is in its evident appearance, a world of being and of energy of being, that it is in

its phenomenal basis inconscient and works itself out through process and labour and, when consciousness appears, through joy of being but also through pain of being. If the eternal creative Energy takes joy in that, has the Ananda of it (and without consciousness there can be no joy or Ananda), as a poet in the creation of his tragedy or comedy, then that would be a sufficient explanation of the existence of this universe, though we would still have to seek for its significance, the reason of this choice of pain and labour.

Consciousness then is the centre of the riddle. If we know what is Consciousness, where its action begins and ends — if it has a beginning and an ending, what is its process and the significance of its temporal appearance and action, we shall then be able to look deeply into being and its energy and understand and solve all their enigma.

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But here in our world of Matter the original and fundamental phenomenon we meet everywhere is a universal Inconscience, Consciousness appears to come in as only an incident, a development, a strange consequence of some ill-understood operations of Energy in inconscient Matter. It arises out of an original Inconscience, it dissolves or sinks back into the Inconscience. Once it has appeared it persists indeed but as a general phenomenon precariously manifested in individual living beings. It has the seeming either of an uncertain freak of inconscient Nature, — a disease some would conjecture, a phosphorescence playing upon the stagnant waters of inconscient being, active at certain points of animation, or a guest in a world in which it is alien, a foreign resident with difficulty able to maintain itself in a hardly amicable environment and atmosphere.

According to the materialist hypothesis consciousness must be a result of energy in Matter; it is Matter's reaction or reflex to itself in itself, a response of organised inconscient chemical substance to touches upon it, a record of which that inconscient substance through some sensitiveness of cell and nerve becomes

inexplicably aware. But such an explanation may account, — if we admit this impossible magic of the conscious response of an inconscient to the inconscient, — for sense and reflex action [yet] becomes absurd if we try to explain by it thought and will, the imagination of the poet, the attention of the scientist, the reasoning of the philosopher. Call it mechanical cerebration, if you will, but no mere mechanism of grey stuff of brain can explain these things; a gland cannot write Hamlet or pulp of brain work out a system of metaphysics. There is no parity, kinship or visible equation between the alleged cause or agent on the one side and on the other the effect and its observable process. There is a gulf here that cannot be bridged by any stress of forcible affirmation or crossed by any stride of inference or violent leap of argumentative reason. Consciousness and an inconscient substance may be connected, may interpenetrate, may act on each other, but they are and remain things opposite, incommensurate with each other, fundamentally diverse. An observing and active consciousness emerging as a character of an eternal Inconscience is a self-contradictory affirmation, an unintelligible phenomenon, and the contradiction must be healed or explained before this affirmation can be accepted. But it cannot be healed unless either the Inconscient has a latent power for consciousness — and then its inconscience is phenomenal only, not fundamental, — or else is the veil of a Consciousness which emerges out of a state of involution which appears to us as an inconscience.

There is no doubt a connection and interdependence between consciousness and the inconscient substance in which it resides and through which it seems to operate. Consciousness depends upon the body and its functionings, on the brain, nerves, gland-action, right physiological working, for its own firm state and action. It uses them as its instruments and, if they are injured or unable to act, the action of the consciousness may also be in part or whole impaired, impeded or suspended. But this does not prove that the action of consciousness is an action of the body and nothing else. There is an instrumentation and if the instrument is impaired, the user of the instrument can no longer manifest himself rightly through it; if it is destroyed, he

cannot operate any longer unless or until he can get another instrument. This then has to be seen whether the phenomena of consciousness are such that they make it necessary to suppose such a use or instrumentation of the body.

If so then either there must be a conscious being in us that is other than the body or else a conscious Energy that thinks, senses, observes, acts intelligently through the physical instrument. This is what we actually observe in our experience of ourselves that there is such a being or else such an energy at work in us and this self-experience is surely as valid, as binding as the accompanying experience of an inconscient substance or building of inconscient Matter which is its field and habitat. Both sides of the phenomenon must be given their value; to reject Matter as an illusion of Consciousness or Consciousness as a freak or disease of Matter are equally one-eyed views which miss the true problem and are not likely to lead to a satisfying solution.

It is certainly possible, *prima facie*, that Consciousness may be a subordinate phenomenon dependent on Matter or, more accurately, on the Energy that formulates Matter. Our need then is to discover its exact nature, origin, function in a material world and the utmost limit of its possibilities for the human being; for to man matter is only a basis of his life, a material of his works, an opportunity; what is really important to him is consciousness, for it is his consciousness and use of consciousness that gives him his significance and importance to himself and the world; without it he would be nothing and mean nothing.

At any rate this is the fact that faces us, that there is an apparent Energy that seems to have built up this world which first in the animal and then more amply in man has become and works as a conscious Energy and that this transformation is the crucial and capital fact of our universe. It may well be that in it lies the secret of the significance of that universe. It may turn out on deeper enquiry that a Conscious Energy has created as its field an inconscient substance and is veiled in its creation and emerges in it, a Power, a Godhead releasing itself slowly and with difficulty out of its self-made chrysalis of material Inconscience.

It is not sufficient to examine the material, the physiological processes accompanying the functioning of consciousness and attempt to explain the functioning by its physical processes. This leaves consciousness itself unexplained; if it accounts to some extent, but imperfectly, for sense phenomena or mechanical thinking, it does not account in the least for the most important powers of our conscious energy; it does not account for reason, understanding, will, creative thought, conscious selection, the conscious intellectual and spiritual action and self-development of the human being. Yet these are of capital importance, for it is here that consciousness begins to unfold itself out of its chrysalis or matrix of inconscience and a half conscious first working and reveal its true nature. Here consciousness acts in its own right, in its own field and not as a product of the body. To see how the body uses consciousness may be within limits a fruitful science, but it is more important to see how consciousness uses the body and still more important to see how it evolves and uses its own powers. The physiological study of the phenomenon of consciousness is only a side-issue; the psychological study of it independent of all reference to the body except as an instrument is the fruitful line of inquiry. A body using consciousness is the first outward physical fact of our existence, the first step of our evolution; a consciousness using a body is its inner spiritual reality, it is what we have become by our evolution and more and more completely are[.]

What Is Consciousness?

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Consciousness — but what is consciousness? A word only conveniently ticketing a class of natural phenomena or a fundamental reality of existence?

Apparently a phenomenon which has only a small range intervening in an immense mass of things inconscient and without significance, consciousness alone gives a value to the universe. It

seems to have taken no part in the creation of the universe; it was not there in the beginning or even during the greater part of the history of the earth; it may not be there at its end. In the middle it plays a great role in the life of animal and man, but its action is crude and ill-developed in the animal, imperfect in the human creature. Its evolution wears the character of an episode in the long history of an inconscient world, a chapter that began some time ago, but one knows not why it intervened at all or how it will end or whether its appearance has any meaning, whether its developing importance has an accidental and meaningless or a purposeful and revelatory character. It may be a freak of creative Chance or it may be or may carry in itself the whole meaning of the world-drama.

In an inconscient universe, in a Nature or the working of an Energy which is fundamentally material, the emergence [of] Consciousness has at first the air of a surprising, a contradictory, an impossible event. For in such a world, in the working of such a Nature or Energy, how could it ever come into existence? Either there is no real consciousness, only an action of Matter or unconscious Energy which takes this inexplicable and deceptive form, or Nature or Energy is not fundamentally inconscient. Consciousness was always a possibility which at a certain stage chanced or was bound to take place, or it was a latent power that has become manifest. Or even it may be all Nature is really conscious and it is we who foist inconscience upon her because we are limited to a certain range and character of consciousness and cannot communicate with her other ranges or even detect their existence.

It has been held by a certain opinion that consciousness in itself does not exist, there are only phenomena of reactions of Matter to Matter or of Energy in Matter to Energy in Matter to which by generalisation we give the name. There is no person who is conscious, thinks, speaks, perceives, wills, acts; it is an organised body in which certain chemical, molecular, cellular, glandular and nerve activities take place and certain material results and reactions of these activities take place in the brain which take the form of these phenomena. It is the

body that thinks, perceives, wills, speaks, acts; it is Matter that goes through these operations and becomes aware of them; it may be said that brain-matter makes a record or notation of these actions and this notation is consciousness and this record is memory. There is nothing in the world except Matter and the operations of Matter.

This theory arose when physical Science concentrated on the operations of Matter, saw only Matter and energy of Matter everywhere; it persists even after that seeing of things has been severely shaken. For now we are driven to see and say that there is no such thing as Matter in itself; what we call Matter is only a mass of phenomena of Energy, events of energy, which our senses regard as objects and our minds classify under the general name of Matter. But we can still hold that all phenomena are phenomena of Energy acting in the forms or sensible events which we call Matter and the phenomena of consciousness are of that character. There is nothing else to it, nothing but the mobile and executive Energy, Nature, Prakriti; there is no soul, no Purusha. Consciousness would still be a general name for a brain-record and notation of these events of material Energy and this will still be the true character of thought, perception, will, speech, act. All these events are separate phenomena which may act and react on each other or group themselves together, but they are not the result or manifestations of any one general force or power of being that we can call Consciousness.

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Consciousness, — but what is consciousness?

And first of all we have to face the possibility that there is no such thing. For many hold that the word is an unreal generalisation invented to cover a class of material phenomena having their origin in Matter and material in their nature and essence, an operation of Matter on Matter and in Matter. Thoughts are only vibrations of the grey matter of the brain; they are not something other [than] that or capable of existing beyond the material plane; they cannot exist independently of the brain; brain is not

their instrument of expression or manifestation; they are [its] instrument made of its substance, dependent on [its] substance, inexistent without it. Mind is an action of Matter, not a separate power or force; there is nothing in it superior to the physicality of the body; it exists by the body and as a part of its activity, lasts along with it, dies with it. Mind is a product of gases, some operation of Nature's chemistry, glandular influences, nervous stimuluses; it is matter and records the operations of Matter.

But why then this appearance of mentality, of consciousness, of a conscious being? That too is only a trick of Matter. They are reflexes and reactions to the contacts of things outside, to other material objects, bodies, movements, forces. Sense and sensation are the reply of the nerves to stimulus of external and material things or to internal stimuli that are still material. To the experience of the body the result of these, recoils, reflexes, reactions, may seem mental, but that cannot alter the fact that they are material products of the workings of Matter.

Well, be it so; but still this mentality creates an awareness of self and things and the movements of self and things, even if both be only a body and so many other bodies, and it is difficult to describe awareness as an inconscient movement or condition or as the inconscient seeming to be conscious. Evidently we are in face of a general sophism invented by specialists of a limited field of data, the data of inconscient Matter, who are determined to force everything into its characteristic formulas and refuse to admit everything else. We must at least recover the right to see this awareness and its movements as they are or as they present themselves to us and see how far it leads us and whether indeed, even if it occurs in matter and the body, it does not lead us to something other than the body and other than Matter. The materialist contention that consciousness is not a separate power or force or manifestation of energy like electricity or magnetism or steam, but only a name for a particular bundle of brain phenomena, cannot hide the startling fact that inconscient and insentient Matter has become sentient and conscient even if it be only at points, in jets, in small masses.

This awareness has created at least the appearance of a

sentient and conscient being who not only becomes relatively aware of self and things, but can study them, discover their nature and process, determine and develop the possibilities of his own consciousness and the possibilities of the world's forces and processes, can will and can create, can ponder and philosophise, can write poetry and create works of art, can use [?] to modify and alter the world around him and make for himself a different life-environment, can look beyond Matter, can tend towards the heights of consciousness not yet developed, can envisage the Superconscient. If the consciousness that can do all this is not a force, a power in itself, it at least looks strangely like it. And we have the right, at least hypothetically, to study it as such a power or force and find out how far that leads us.

It may even lead us to the discovery of a Reality greater than the world of Matter or of Energy building up shapes of Matter and movements in Matter. It may take us beyond phenomena and appearances to the truth of things and to something that is the origin of all that seems to be[.]

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At the other extreme of human mentality we meet a similar and more devastating denial. Consciousness has no real existence; or, so far as it exists at all, it is as a dynamic Power, a creator of illusions. There is nothing sound or real in what it builds; there is nothing true in what it sees; the world it shows us is [an] impossible chimera, a mass of figments and falsehoods. The sole consciousness that is true is the self-awareness of some absolute Silence, a spaceless immobile Infinite, a timeless featureless Eternity. Or, as the materialist sees only a bundle of phenomena material and dependent on Matter or a fortuitous result of material operations, so the Nihilistic Buddhist sees only a bundle of associations, *sanskaras*, which stuck together produce the false appearance of a continuity of concrete phenomena or a stream of momentary perceptions giving the impression of a false self and coherent world, a coherent personality, but if the bundle is dissolved, if the stream ceases to flow, all dissolves and

collapses and shows the empty Nothingness which is the only eternal truth and the sole eternal reality. This superconscient Nothingness has no need of consciousness [for] the greatness of its emptiness or its everlasting peace of unconscious bliss. To return to Nothingness is the only use or meaning of existence.

Here too we seem to be in front of [the] sophism of a specialist seizing the sole salient and striking side, the one prominent aspect of Truth in which he is versed putting aside all the rest as inconsistent or invalid. After all the world exists and is too persistent and effective and solid a phenomenon to be put aside or merely whistled off the field with an airy "It is not"; — a mirage is ineffectual and recedes or fades if it is touched, an illusion dissolves if revealed but this is stupendously effective, overwhelmingly persistent and we have to sound all its possibilities before dismissing it as something vain and trifling. World-consciousness may be only one aspect of our being, but it is a big and momentous aspect and it too should be given its full chance of justifying itself before it is ruled out of court. The eternal reality of a pure immobile existence and its self-awareness is also a truth of our being. But it is not impossible that these are two aspects of one Reality and not so incompatible as the metaphysical logician imagines. This is what we propose to do integrally and with a full and exhaustive inquiry before we decide either way. The chances are that so enormous a thing as this world is something more than an astonishing chimera. The chances are that when two such great aspects of existence confront each other, there is a connection somewhere, a reconciliation of their contraries. It is possible that both are aspects, static and dynamic, of some absolute Reality from which both have drawn their own reality and in which they have their true and inevitable place.

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In any case consciousness is the one thing by which we can consider or decide the question at all. It is the one thing by which we know at all that world exists or can inquire into its

truth and its meaning. If consciousness has no reality and no value, then there is nothing by which we can know the truth, — one explanation of things has then as little value as the other, neither can be claimed as the truth. The consciousness by which we affirm the featureless sole Reality can be as fallacious as that by which we affirm our individual self and the universe.

If consciousness is the self-awareness of the eternal Existence, it can only be this self-awareness seeing its own power and the works of its power as a real world. If consciousness is a creation of the evolution, it is also the one thing by which it receives some value, the one thing by which its values can be reckoned, its [. . .], its one central and essential value. It is not by the development of forms that evolution reaches its height, but by the evolution of consciousness. The degree of consciousness is the degree of evolution; the extent to which consciousness has developed its powers, range, height, its fulness of vision and self-vision, is the measure of the evolution's development of its work and aim, its progress towards its goal, if goal indeed it has and is not the incoherent working out of an accidental Chance. Indeed, if we look at the way in which the Inconscient has devised the world and the sequences by which it has arrived at intelligence, we have some reason [to think] that it is a secret Consciousness which has made this world and under the mask of inconscience has emerged as a slow process of an Ignorance developing Knowledge.

If so, it may well be that it is the self-awareness of the [eternal Existence] that is working out in the formula of inconscient Matter and ignorant Life and half-awakened Mind its own self-manifestation in the material universe.

But what is consciousness and what its relation to existence? How and why did it come into being in an inconscient universe, a universe which even if it originated by an inexplicable chance, has assumed the proportions of a huge and complex inexorable mechanism repeating the same processes through the

aeons without respite or cessation? By what spiritual or mechanical necessity? by what mechanical chance or accidental process of Energy? To what end or purpose, if any purpose there can be in an inconscient mechanism of brute Necessity or inexplicably organised Chance or any end in a movement which never had any reason for beginning? Does consciousness exist or is it a fortuitous illusion? Who or what is it that becomes conscious in the animal and in the body of the human being?

Three possible solutions. Consciousness has not come into being but was and is always there, a fundamental power of existence, latent or involved or concealed from our mind and sense even in what we call inanimate and unconscious things. It has not come into existence but has emerged from existence; involved it has evolved in the general evolutionary process. Or consciousness is only a phenomenon, a surprising result of certain inconscient processes of Nature, unintentional but actual, unnecessary and accidental or else somehow inevitable as an output of chemical and other physical energies which could not help imposing itself at a certain point of their activity in the natural course of things. It did not exist before that point was reached; when another point has been reached it may go out of existence. Or again the world is a creation of an extra-cosmic or immanent conscious Being personal or impersonal who has either put his consciousness or a consciousness resembling his into his mechanical creation to be an element there or else has infused it from within into the mechanical self-expression in which he has chosen to dwell as its upholder, inspirer, inhabitant.

What is meant by consciousness? what is this phenomenon which seems to have so small a part in the vast inconscient mass of things and is yet the sole element here that can give any value to the universe?

And to come to the heart of the difficulty — is it indeed only a phenomenon, an appearance that has emerged in the course of the workings of an Energy which was, is and will always remain inconscient? Or is it something fundamental, an inherent reality

or a latent character or power of that Energy and bound to emerge at some time once it had begun its workings?

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It is to a mass of ill-connected and ill-understood phenomena that we give this name of consciousness; when these are at work we say that a man or animal is conscious, when they are suspended we say that he or it is unconscious; where they are absent, as in a tree, we suppose the object, even if it has life, to be inscient by its very nature, incapable of sensation no less than empty of thought and will. Where life is not, inscience seems to us a still more self-evident character of the thing or being. Man alone is fully conscious, for he alone is aware of himself, reflective on things, in full possession of mental capacities and their aware and observant use. Mind and consciousness are almost synonymous to our ordinary notions; where consciousness is not mentalised, we find it difficult to recognise its presence, hardly possible to follow its movements; even in the animal we are apt to regard it as reflex movement not aware of itself, undeveloped, primitive.

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All that exists or can exist in this or any other universe can be rendered into terms of consciousness; there is nothing that cannot be known. This knowing need not be always a mental knowledge. For the greater part of existence is either above or below mind, and mind can know only indirectly what is above or what is below it. But the one true and complete way of knowing is by direct knowledge.

All can be rendered into terms of consciousness because all is either a creation of consciousness or else one of its forms. All exists in an infinite conscious existence and is a part or a form of it. In proportion as one can share directly or indirectly, completely or incompletely in the eternal awareness of this Infinite, or momentarily contact or enter into it, or formulate some

superior or inferior power of its consciousness or knowledge, one can know what it knows, in part or whole, by a direct knowing or an indirect coming to knowledge. A conscious, half conscious or subconscious participation in the awareness of the Infinite is the basis of all knowledge.

All things are inhabited by this consciousness, even the things that seem to us insciant and the consciousness in one form can communicate with or contact the consciousness in another or else penetrate or contain or identify with it. This in one form or another is the true process of all knowledge; the rest is ignorant appearance.

All things are one self; it is the one Knower who knows himself everywhere, from one centre or another in the multiplicity of his play. Otherwise no knowledge would be possible.

The Secret below the Surface

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All life, all existence is an enigma to the human mind, because the mind is a light which sees only the surfaces of things or at most a little below the surface and is moreover limited by its own circumscribed area of vision. It cannot see what is beyond those limits and yet there are an infinity of things beyond its circle. It cannot see what is above, it cannot see what is within, it cannot see what is below. But what is on the surface is never the truth of things; the surface presents us only with facts not with truths, with phenomena not with realities, with imperfect indications, not with the realisation of things in themselves. The secret, the truth, the reality of things is above, within, below, it is not on their surface.

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There is a meaning in the universe, an intention in cosmic existence; there is a significance of the individual, his life is a sign and has a purpose.

The true truth of things is not apparent on the surface, it is something hidden. Truth is not obvious, it comes always as a discovery, Life is the working out of a secret, the process and progress of a mystery; we too are not what we seem to be, we have to find and become ourself.

What we seem to be is a thinking human animal. What we are and have to become is God; the secret purpose of our existence here is to find the occult Reality of ourselves and the world, to become Divine.

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Our existence in the world has a reality which is other than that which strikes our mind and senses on the surface. It contains a secret, a mystery which we have to discover, for through that discovery we must move both to the realisation of our self and spirit and the perfection and fulfilment of our life in Nature.

Our life is not an illusion nor a delirium nor is Nature a Maya, a fabricator of dreams or a dealer in vanities as certain religions would have it nor is one the outcome of a blind Force or the trick [of] a blind self-regulating Chance, the other an unconscious Power as it must be if the materialists' dogma were true. Our life is neither a freak of God nor a freak of Nature; it has a conscious plan although a secret plan, a significance although an occult and mystic significance.

The plan, the significance are secret and mysterious to us because we live on the surface of ourselves and things and are not in touch with either their core or their height or depths. Science on one side, Religion and Philosophy on the other try to arrive at the hidden Truth, but each touches and only just touches one end of it and refuses to go farther and discover the other end or the link and reconciling relation between these two poles of existence.

It is said in the Veda of Agni, the flame of the creative Will and Force, that he hides his two extremities; only his middle is patent and visible. The head of Agni is occult in some superconscious height, his feet are plunged in the abyss of the

material Inconscience. Consciousness emerging in the universe of life and mind is the bridge and link between the two poles. But our human consciousness is a term in the chain which is aware only of itself and sees all the rest in its own terms; it cannot identify itself with the other links and misses their significance and their purpose. It stands on the middle of the bridge looking all around it, but the bridgeheads are to its sight invisible. It cannot see what is there, but only speculate, infer or conjecture.

Science questing with its measuring rod of empirical experiment begins to have a dark glimpse of the Inconscient; it knows the universe as an organised freak that has emerged from the material Inconscience and will go back to its source. Religion and Philosophy rise on the wings of spiritual experience or in a balloon of metaphysical logic into some stratosphere of super-conscious Reality, they seem to discover a God or Self or Spirit or Absolute and try to map it with the intellect or to turn it into a dynamic spiritual formula. But they are unable to reconcile these three terms of being; their physical experiments or their spiritual experiences are valid, but each has hold of only one end of the enigma.

Science has discovered Evolution; Religion and Philosophy have discovered something of that which is involved and evolves in this cosmic Existence. But the two discoveries have refused to shed light upon each other; each has shut itself up in its own formulas. This is because each is a creation and activity of Mind, Science of the concretising experimental mind, Philosophy of the abstracting intellectual mind, Religion of the dynamic spiritual mind. But Mind is bound always by its partial formulations of the Truth; Mind grasps formulas or images but is itself grasped by its own creations, it cannot get free from them or go beyond them. But the mind's concepts and formulas are only fragmentary representations of Truth or pointers or abstract schemas and images, not her very self and reality. Either a deeper inner soul-vision or a higher overmental or supramental consciousness is needed to discover Truth in her very face and body.

Then only can both ends of the riddle be firmly seized and connected together, the whole of existence seen in one gaze and life compelled to unmask its fathomless significance[.]

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A mysterious something involved in Matter, concealed by it, evolving from it but in a material house or figure, striving to reveal itself in life and mind, but concealed by its forms of life, concealed by its forms of mind, shooting out from them glimpses of itself, glimpses that hint but do not elucidate, — this is what we can see, and we see no more; the rest is speculation and conjecture. Is this something native to Matter, born in it and destined to die in it? Or is it an alien, a temporary visitor? Is Matter itself only a mask of it, a phenomenon of Energy, as it now more and more seems to be? Energy itself is a movement, a force of concealed Consciousness, Consciousness the sign of a hidden spiritual Being. But if so, what possible significance or purpose can there be in this involution, this material self-concealment and self-imprisonment, this slow tormented emergence of the Spirit?

Two lines of enquiry seem to give, though imperfectly and in opposition, a positive base for a reply to the question and the riddle, — the experiments of the scientist and the experience of the mystic.