

Chapter XVI

The Integral Knowledge and the Aim of Life; Four Theories of Existence

When all the desires that cling to the heart are loosed away from it, then the mortal becomes immortal, even here he possesses the Eternal. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.*¹

He becomes the Eternal and departs into the Eternal.

*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.*²

This bodiless and immortal Life and Light is the Brahman.

*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.*³

Long and narrow is the ancient Path, — I have touched it, I have found it, — the Path by which the wise, knowers of the Eternal, attaining to salvation, depart hence to the high world of Paradise. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.*⁴

I am a son of Earth, the soil is my mother. . . . May she lavish on me her manifold treasure, her secret riches. . . . May we speak the beauty of thee, O Earth, that is in thy villages and forests and assemblies and war and battles. *Atharva Veda.*⁵

May Earth, sovereign over the past and the future, make for us a wide world. . . . Earth that was the water on the Ocean and whose course the thinkers follow by the magic of their knowledge, she who has her heart of immortality covered up by the Truth in the supreme ether, may she stablish for us light and power in that most high kingdom. *Atharva Veda.*⁶

O Flame, thou foundest the mortal in a supreme immortality

¹ IV. 4. 7. ² IV. 4. 6. ³ IV. 4. 7. ⁴ IV. 4. 8. ⁵ XII. 1. 12, 44, 56.
⁶ XII. 1. 1, 8.

for increase of inspired Knowledge day by day; for the seer who has thirst for the dual birth, thou createst divine bliss and human joy.
*Rig Veda.*⁷

O Godhead, guard for us the Infinite and lavish the finite.
*Rig Veda.*⁸

BUT BEFORE we examine the principles and process of the evolutionary ascent of Consciousness, it is necessary to restate what our theory of integral knowledge affirms as fundamental truths of the Reality and its manifestation and what it admits as effectual sides and dynamic aspects but is unable to accept as sufficient for a total explanation of existence and the universe. For truth of knowledge must base truth of life and determine the aim of life; the evolutionary process itself is the development of a Truth of existence concealed here in an original Inconscience and brought out from it by an emerging Consciousness which rises from gradation to gradation of its self-unfolding until it can manifest in itself the integral reality of things and a total self-knowledge. On the nature of that Truth from which it starts and which it has to manifest must depend the course of the evolutionary development, — the steps of its process and their significance.

First, we affirm an Absolute as the origin and support and secret Reality of all things. The Absolute Reality is undefinable and ineffable by mental thought and mental language; it is self-existent and self-evident to itself, as all absolutes are self-evident, but our mental affirmatives and negatives, whether taken separately or together, cannot limit or define it. But at the same time there is a spiritual consciousness, a spiritual knowledge, a knowledge by identity which can seize the Reality in its fundamental aspects and its manifested powers and figures. All that is comes within this description and, if seen by this knowledge in its own truth or its occult meaning, can be

⁷ I. 31. 7. ⁸ IV. 2. 11.

regarded as an expression of the Reality and itself a reality. This manifested reality is self-existent in these fundamental aspects; for all the basic realities are a bringing out of something that is eternal and inherently true in the Absolute; but all that is not fundamental, all that is temporary is phenomenal, is form and power dependent on the reality it expresses and is real by that and by its own truth of significance, the truth of what it carries in it, because it is that and not something fortuitous, not baseless, illusory, a vain constructed figure. Even what deforms and disguises, as falsehood deforms and disguises truth, evil deforms and disguises good, has a temporal reality as true consequences of the Inconscience; but these contrary figures, though real in their own field, are not essential but only contributory to the manifestation and serve it as a temporal form or power of its movement. The universal then is real by virtue of the Absolute of which it is a self-manifestation, and all that it contains is real by virtue of the universal to which it gives a form and figure.

The Absolute manifests itself in two terms, a Being and a Becoming. The Being is the fundamental reality; the Becoming is an effectual reality: it is a dynamic power and result, a creative energy and working out of the Being, a constantly persistent yet mutable form, process, outcome of its immutable formless essence. All theories that make the Becoming sufficient to itself are therefore half-truths, valid for some knowledge of the manifestation acquired by an exclusive concentration upon what they affirm and envisage, but otherwise valid only because the Being is not separate from the Becoming but present in it, constitutive of it, inherent in its every infinitesimal atom and in its boundless expansion and extension. Becoming can only know itself wholly when it knows itself as Being; the soul in the Becoming arrives at self-knowledge and immortality when it knows the Supreme and Absolute and possesses the nature of the Infinite and Eternal. To do that is the supreme aim of our existence; for that is the truth of our being and must therefore be the inherent aim, the necessary outcome of our becoming: this truth of our being becomes in the soul a necessity of manifestation, in matter a secret energy, in life an urge and tendency, a desire and a seeking, in mind

a will, aim, endeavour, purpose; to manifest what is from the first occult within it is the whole hidden trend of evolutionary Nature.

Therefore we accept the truth on which the philosophies of the supracosmic Absolute take their stand; Illusionism itself, even if we contest its ultimate conclusions, can still be accepted as the way in which the soul in mind, the mental being, has to see things in a spiritual-pragmatic experience when it cuts itself off from the Becoming in order to approach and enter into the Absolute. But also, since the Becoming is real and is inevitable in the very self-power of the Infinite and Eternal, this too is not a complete philosophy of existence. It is possible for the soul in the Becoming to know itself as the Being and possess the Becoming, to know itself as Infinite in essence but also as the Infinite self-expressed in the finite, the timeless Eternal regarding itself and its works in the founding status and the developing motion of Time-eternity. This realisation is the culmination of the Becoming; it is the fulfilment of the Being in its dynamic reality. This too then must be part of the total truth of things, for it alone gives a full spiritual significance to the universe and justifies the soul in manifestation; an explanation of things that deprives cosmic and individual existence of all significance cannot be the whole explanation or the solution it proposes the sole true issue.

The next affirmation which we put forward is that the fundamental reality of the Absolute is to our spiritual perception a Divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight of Being which is a supracosmic Reality, self-existent, but also the secret truth underlying the whole manifestation; for the fundamental truth of Being must necessarily be the fundamental truth of Becoming. All is a manifestation of That; for it dwells even in all that seem to be its opposites and its hidden compulsion on them to disclose it is the cause of evolution, on Inconscience to develop from itself its secret consciousness, on the apparent Non-Being to reveal in itself the occult spiritual existence, on the insensible neutrality of Matter to develop a various delight of being which must grow, setting itself free from its minor terms, its contrary dualities of

pain and pleasure, into the essential delight of existence, the spiritual Ananda.

The Being is one, but this oneness is infinite and contains in itself an infinite plurality or multiplicity of itself: the One is the All; it is not only an essential Existence, but an All-Existence. The infinite multiplicity of the One and the eternal unity of the Many are the two realities or aspects of one reality on which the manifestation is founded. By reason of this fundamental verity of the manifestation the Being presents itself to our cosmic experience in three poises, — the supracosmic Existence, the cosmic Spirit and the individual Self in the Many. But the multiplicity permits of a phenomenal division of consciousness, an effectual Ignorance in which the Many, the individuals, cease to become aware of the eternal self-existent Oneness and are oblivious of the oneness of the cosmic Self in which and by which they live, move and have their being. But, by force of the secret Unity, the soul in becoming is urged by its own unseen reality and by the occult pressure of evolutionary Nature to come out of this state of Ignorance and recover eventually the knowledge of the one Divine Being and its oneness with it and at the same time to recover its spiritual unity with all individual beings and the whole universe. It has to become aware not only of itself in the universe but of the universe in itself and of the Being of cosmos as its greater self; the individual has to universalise himself and in the same movement to become aware of his supracosmic transcendence. This triple aspect of the reality must be included in the total truth of the soul and of the cosmic manifestation, and this necessity must determine the ultimate trend of the process of evolutionary Nature.

All views of existence that stop short of the Transcendence and ignore it must be incomplete accounts of the truth of being. The pantheistic view of the identity of the Divine and the Universe is a truth, for all this that is is the Brahman: but it stops short of the whole truth when it misses and omits the supracosmic Reality. On the other side, every view that affirms the cosmos only and dismisses the individual as a by-product of the cosmic Energy, errs by laying too much emphasis

on one apparent factual aspect of the world-action; it is true only of the natural individual and is not even the whole truth of that: for the natural individual, the nature-being, is indeed a product of the universal Energy, but is at the same time a nature-personality of the soul, an expressive formation of the inner being and person, and this soul is not a perishable cell or a dissoluble portion of the cosmic Spirit, but has its original immortal reality in the Transcendence. It is a fact that the cosmic Being expresses itself through the individual being, but also it is a truth that the Transcendental Reality expresses itself through both the individual existence and the Cosmos; the soul is an eternal portion of the Supreme and not a fraction of Nature. But equally any view that sees the universe as existent only in the individual consciousness must very evidently be a fragmentary truth: it is justified by a perception of the universality of the spiritual individual and his power of embracing the whole universe in his consciousness; but neither the cosmos nor the individual consciousness is the fundamental truth of existence; for both depend upon and exist by the transcendental Divine Being.

This Divine Being, Sachchidananda, is at once impersonal and personal: it is an Existence and the origin and foundation of all truths, forces, powers, existences, but it is also the one transcendent Conscious Being and the All-Person of whom all conscious beings are the selves and personalities; for He is their highest Self and the universal indwelling Presence. It is a necessity for the soul in the universe — and therefore the inner trend of the evolutionary Energy and its ultimate intention — to know and to grow into this truth of itself, to become one with the Divine Being, to raise its nature to the Divine Nature, its existence into the Divine Existence, its consciousness into the Divine Consciousness, its delight of being into the divine Delight of Being, and to receive all this into its becoming, to make the becoming an expression of that highest Truth, to be possessed inwardly of the Divine Self and Master of its existence and to be at the same time wholly possessed by Him and moved by His Divine Energy and live and act in a complete self-giving

and surrender. On this side the dualistic and theistic views of existence which affirm the eternal real existence of God and the Soul and the eternal real existence and cosmic action of the Divine Energy, express also a truth of the integral existence; but their formulation falls short of the whole truth if it denies the essential unity of God and Soul or their capacity for utter oneness or ignores what underlies the supreme experience of the merger of the soul in the Divine Unity through love, through union of consciousness, through fusion of existence in existence.

The manifestation of the Being in our universe takes the shape of an involution which is the starting-point of an evolution, — Matter the nethermost stage, Spirit the summit. In the descent into involution there can be distinguished seven principles of manifested being, seven gradations of the manifesting Consciousness of which we can get a perception or a concrete realisation of their presence and immanence here or a reflected experience. The first three are the original and fundamental principles and they form universal states of consciousness to which we can rise; when we do so, we can become aware of supreme planes or levels of fundamental manifestation or self-formulation of the spiritual reality in which is put in front the unity of the Divine Existence, the power of the Divine Consciousness, the bliss of the Divine Delight of existence, — not concealed or disguised as here, for we can possess them in their full independent reality. A fourth principle of supramental truth-consciousness is associated with them; manifesting unity in infinite multiplicity, it is the characteristic power of self-determination of the Infinite. This quadruple power of the supreme existence, consciousness and delight constitutes an upper hemisphere of manifestation based on the Spirit's eternal self-knowledge. If we enter into these principles or into any plane of being in which there is the pure presence of the Reality, we find in them a complete freedom and knowledge. The other three powers and planes of being, of which we are even at present aware, form a lower hemisphere of the manifestation, a hemisphere of Mind, Life and Matter. These are in themselves powers of the superior principles; but wherever they manifest in

a separation from their spiritual sources, they undergo as a result a phenomenal lapse into a divided in place of the true undivided existence: this lapse, this separation creates a state of limited knowledge exclusively concentrated on its own limited world-order and oblivious of all that is behind it and of the underlying unity, a state therefore of cosmic and individual Ignorance.

In the descent into the material plane of which our natural life is a product, the lapse culminates in a total Inconscience out of which an involved Being and Consciousness have to emerge by a gradual evolution. This inevitable evolution first develops, as it is bound to develop, Matter and a material universe; in Matter, Life appears and living physical beings; in Life, Mind manifests and embodied thinking and living beings; in Mind, ever increasing its powers and activities in forms of Matter, the Supermind or Truth-Consciousness must appear, inevitably, by the very force of what is contained in the Inconscience and the necessity in Nature to bring it into manifestation. Supermind appearing manifests the Spirit's self-knowledge and whole knowledge in a supramental living being and must bring about by the same law, by an inherent necessity and inevitability, the dynamic manifestation here of the divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight of existence. It is this that is the significance of the plan and order of the terrestrial evolution; it is this necessity that must determine all its steps and degrees, its principle and its process. Mind, Life and Matter are the realised powers of the evolution and well-known to us; Supermind and the triune aspects of Sachchidananda are the secret principles which are not yet put in front and have still to be realised in the forms of the manifestation, and we know them only by hints and a partial and fragmentary action still not disengaged from the lower movement and therefore not easily recognisable. But their evolution too is part of the destiny of the soul in the Becoming, — there must be a realisation and dynamisation in earth-life and in Matter not only of Mind but of all that is above it, all that has descended indeed but is still concealed in earth-life and Matter.

Our theory of the integral knowledge admits Mind as a creative principle, a power of the Being, and assigns it its place in

the manifestation; it similarly accepts Life and Matter as powers of the Spirit and in them also is a creative Energy. But the view of things that makes Mind the sole or the supreme creative principle and the philosophies that assign to Life or Matter the same sole reality or predominance, are expressions of a half-truth and not the integral knowledge. It is true that when Matter first emerges it becomes the dominant principle; it seems to be and is within its own field the basis of all things, the constituent of all things, the end of all things: but Matter itself is found to be a result of something that is not Matter, of Energy, and this Energy cannot be something self-existent and acting in the Void, but can turn out and, when deeply scrutinised, seems likely to turn out to be the action of a secret Consciousness and Being: when the spiritual knowledge and experience emerge, this becomes a certitude,—it is seen that the creative Energy in Matter is a movement of the power of the Spirit. Matter itself cannot be the original and ultimate reality. At the same time the view that divorces Matter and Spirit and puts them as opposites is unacceptable; Matter is a form of Spirit, a habitation of Spirit, and here in Matter itself there can be a realisation of Spirit.

It is true again that Life when it emerges becomes dominant, turns Matter into an instrument for its manifestation, and begins to look as if it were itself the secret original principle which breaks out into creation and veils itself in the forms of Matter; there is a truth in this appearance and this truth must be admitted as a part of the integral knowledge. Life, though not the original Reality, is yet a form, a power of it which is missioned here as a creative urge in Matter. Life, therefore, has to be accepted as the means of our activity and the dynamic mould into which we have here to pour the Divine Existence; but it can so be accepted only because it is a form of a Divine Energy which is itself greater than the Life-force. The Life-principle is not the whole foundation and origin of things; its creative working cannot be perfected and sovereignly fulfilled or even find its true movement until it knows itself as an energy of the Divine Being and elevates and subtilises its action into a free channel for the outpourings of the superior Nature.

Mind in its turn, when it emerges, becomes dominant; it uses Life and Matter as means of its expression, a field for its own growth and sovereignty, and it begins to look as if it were the true reality and the creator even as it is the witness of existence. But Mind also is a limited and derivative power; it is an outcome of Overmind or it is here a luminous shadow thrown by the divine Supermind: it can only arrive at its own perfection by admitting the light of a larger knowledge; it must transform its own more ignorant, imperfect and conflicting powers and values into the divinely effective potencies and harmonious values of the supramental truth-consciousness. All the powers of the lower hemisphere with their structures of the Ignorance can find their true selves only by a transformation in the light that descends to us from the higher hemisphere of an eternal self-knowledge.

All these three lower powers of being build upon the Inconscient and seem to be originated and supported by it: the black dragon of the Inconscience sustains with its vast wings and its back of darkness the whole structure of the material universe; its energies unroll the flux of things, its obscure intimations seem to be the starting-point of consciousness itself and the source of all life-impulse. The Inconscient, in consequence of this origination and predominance, is taken now by a certain line of enquiry as the real origin and creator. It has indeed to be accepted that an inconscient force, an inconscient substance are the starting-point of the evolution, but it is a conscious Spirit and not an inconscient Being that is emerging in the evolution. The Inconscient and its primary works are penetrated by a succession of higher and higher powers of being and are made subject to Consciousness so that its obstructions to the evolution, its circles of restriction, are slowly broken, the Python coils of its obscurity shot through by the arrows of the Sun-God; so are the limitations of our material substance diminished until they can be transcended and mind, life and body can be transformed through a possession of them by the greater law of divine Consciousness, Energy and Spirit. The integral knowledge admits the valid truths of all views of existence, valid in their own field, but it seeks to get rid of their limitations and negations

and to harmonise and reconcile these partial truths in a larger truth which fulfils all the many sides of our being in the one omnipresent Existence.

At this point we must take a step farther and begin to regard the metaphysical truth we have so stated as a determinant not only of our thought and inner movements but of our life direction, a guide to a dynamic solution of our self-experience and world-experience. Our metaphysical knowledge, our view of the fundamental truth of the universe and the meaning of existence, should naturally be the determinant of our whole conception of life and attitude to it; the aim of life, as we conceive it, must be structured on that basis. Metaphysical philosophy is an attempt to fix the fundamental realities and principles of being as distinct from its processes and the phenomena which result from those processes. But it is on the fundamental realities that the processes depend: our own process of life, its aim and method, should be in accordance with the truth of being that we see; otherwise our metaphysical truth can be only a play of the intellect without any dynamic importance. It is true that the intellect must seek after truth for its own sake without any illegitimate interference of a preconceived idea of life-utility. But still the truth, once discovered, must be realisable in our inner being and our outer activities: if it is not, it may have an intellectual but not an integral importance; a truth for the intellect, for our life it would be no more than the solution of a thought puzzle or an abstract unreality or a dead letter. Truth of being must govern truth of life; it cannot be that the two have no relation or interdependence. The highest significance of life to us, the fundamental truth of existence, must be also the accepted meaning of our own living, our aim, our ideal.

There are, roughly, from this view-point, four main theories, or categories of theory, with their corresponding mental attitudes and ideals in accordance with four different conceptions of truth of existence. These we may call the supracosmic, the cosmic and terrestrial, the supraterrrestrial or other-worldly, and the integral or synthetic or composite, the theories that try to reconcile the three factors — or any two of them — which the

other views tend to isolate. In this last category would fall our view of our existence here as a Becoming with the Divine Being for its origin and its object, a progressive manifestation, a spiritual evolution with the supracosmic for its source and support, the other-worldly for a condition and connecting link and the cosmic and terrestrial for its field, and with human mind and life for its nodus and turning-point of release towards a higher and a highest perfection. Our regard then must be on the three first to see where they depart from the integralising view of life and how far the truths they stand on fit into its structure.

In the supracosmic view of things the supreme Reality is alone entirely real. A certain illusoriness, a sense of the vanity of cosmic existence and individual being is a characteristic turn of this seeing of things, but it is not essential, not an indispensable adjunct to its main thought-principle. In the extreme forms of its world-vision human existence has no real meaning; it is a mistake of the soul or a delirium of the will to live, an error or ignorance which somehow overcasts the absolute Reality. The only true truth is the supracosmic; or, in any case, the Absolute, the Parabrahman is the origin and goal of all existence, all else is an interlude without any abiding significance. If so, it would follow that the one thing to be done, the one wise and needful way of our being is to get away from all living, whether terrestrial or celestial, as soon as our inner evolution or some hidden law of the spirit makes that possible. True, the illusion is real to itself, the vanity pretends to be full of purpose; its laws and facts — they are only facts and not truths, empirical and not real realities — are binding on us so long as we rest in the error. But from any standpoint of real knowledge, in any view of the true truth of things, all this self-delusion would seem to be little better than the laws of a cosmic madhouse; so long as we are mad and have to remain in the madhouse, we are perforce subject to its rules and we must make, according to our temperament, the best or the worst of them, but always our proper aim is to get cured of our insanity and depart into light and truth and freedom. Whatever mitigations may be made in the severity of this logic, whatever concessions validating life and personality for the time

being, yet from this view-point the true law of living must be whatever rule can help us soonest to get back to self-knowledge and lead by the most direct road to Nirvana; the true ideal must be an extinction of the individual and the universal, a self-annulment in the Absolute. This ideal of self-extinction which is boldly and clearly proclaimed by the Buddhists, is in Vedantic thought a self-finding: but the self-finding of the individual by his growth into his true being in the Absolute would only be possible if both are interrelated realities; it could not apply to the final world-abolishing self-affirmation of the Absolute in an unreal or temporary individual by the annulment of the false personal being and by the destruction of all individual and cosmic existence for that individual consciousness, — however much these errors may go on, helplessly inevitable, in the world of Ignorance permitted by the Absolute, in a universal, eternal and indestructible Avidya.

But this idea of the total vanity of life is not altogether an inevitable consequence of the supracosmic theory of existence. In the Vedanta of the Upanishads, the Becoming of Brahman is accepted as a reality; there is room therefore for a truth of the Becoming: there is in that truth a right law of life, a permissible satisfaction of the hedonistic element in our being, its delight of temporal existence, an effective utilisation of its practical energy, of the executive force of consciousness in it; but, the truth and law of its temporal becoming once fulfilled, the soul has to turn back to its final self-realisation, for its natural highest fulfilment is a release, a liberation into its original being, its eternal self, its timeless reality. There is a circle of becoming starting from eternal Being and ending in it; or, from the point of view of the Supreme as a personal or superpersonal Reality, there is a temporary play, a game of becoming and living in the universe. Here, evidently, there is no other significance of life than the will of the Being to become, the will of consciousness and the urge of its force towards becoming, its delight of becoming; for the individual, when that is withdrawn from him or fulfilled in him and no longer active, the becoming ceases: but otherwise the universe persists or always comes back into manifestation,

because the will to become is eternal and must be so since it is the inherent will of an eternal Existence. It may be said that one defect in this view of things is the absence of any fundamental reality of the individual, of any abiding value and significance of his natural or his spiritual activity: but it can be replied that this demand for a permanent personal significance, for a personal eternity, is an error of our ignorant surface consciousness; the individual is a temporary becoming of the Being, and that is a quite sufficient value and significance. It may be added that in a pure or an absolute Existence there can be no values and significances: in the universe values exist and are indispensable, but only as relative and temporary buildings; there can be no absolute values, no eternal and self-existent significances in a Time-structure. This sounds conclusive enough and it seems that nothing more can be said about the matter. And yet the question remains over; for the stress on our individual being, the demand on it, the value put on individual perfection and salvation is too great to be dismissed as a device for a minor operation, the coiling and uncoiling of an insignificant spiral amid the vast circlings of the Eternal's becoming in the universe.

The cosmic-terrestrial view which we may take next as the exact opposite of the supracosmic, considers cosmic existence as real; it goes farther and accepts it as the only reality, and its view is confined, ordinarily, to life in the material universe. God, if God exists, is an eternal Becoming; or if God does not exist, then Nature, — whatever view we may take of Nature, whether we regard it as a play of Force with Matter or a great cosmic Life or even admit a universal impersonal Mind in Life and Matter, — is a perennial becoming. Earth is the field or it is one of the temporary fields, man is the highest possible form or only one of the temporary forms of the Becoming. Man individually may be altogether mortal; mankind also may survive only for a certain short period of the earth's existence; earth itself may bear life only for a rather longer period of its duration in the solar system; that system may itself one day come to an end or at least cease to be an active or productive factor in the Becoming; the universe we live in may itself dissolve or contract again into

the seed-state of its Energy: but the principle of Becoming is eternal—or at least as eternal as anything can be in the obscure ambiguity of existence. It is indeed possible to suppose a persistence of man the individual as a psychic entity in Time, a continuous terrestrial or cosmic ensouling or reincarnation without any after-life or other-life elsewhere: in that case one may either suppose an ideal of constantly increasing perfection or approach to perfection or a growth towards an enduring felicity somewhere in the universe as the aim of this endless Becoming. But in an extreme terrestrial view this is with difficulty tenable. Certain speculations of human thought have tended in this direction, but they have not taken a substantial body. A perpetual persistence in the Becoming is usually associated with the acceptance of a greater supraterrrestrial existence.

In the ordinary view of a sole terrestrial life or a restricted transient passage in the material universe, — for possibly there may be thinking living beings in other planets, — an acceptance of man's mortality and a passive endurance of it or an active dealing with a limited personal or collective life and life-aims are the only choice possible. The one high and reasonable course for the individual human being, — unless indeed he is satisfied with pursuing his personal purposes or somehow living his life until it passes out of him, — is to study the laws of the Becoming and take the best advantage of them to realise, rationally or intuitively, inwardly or in the dynamism of life, its potentialities in himself or for himself or in or for the race of which he is a member; his business is to make the most of such actualities as exist and to seize on or to advance towards the highest possibilities that can be developed here or are in the making. Only mankind as a whole can do this with entire effect, by the mass of individual and collective action, in the process of time, in the evolution of the race experience: but the individual man can help towards it in his own limits, can do all these things for himself to a certain extent in the brief space of life allotted to him; but, especially, his thought and action can be a contribution towards the present intellectual, moral and vital welfare and the future progress of the race. He is capable of a certain nobility

of being; an acceptance of his inevitable and early individual annihilation does not preclude him from making a high use of the will and thought which have been developed in him or from directing them to great ends which shall or may be worked out by humanity. Even the temporary character of the collective being of humanity does not so very much matter, — except in the most materialist view of existence; for so long as the universal Becoming takes the form of human body and mind, the thought, the will it has developed in its human creature will work itself out and to follow that intelligently is the natural law and best rule of human life. Humanity and its welfare and progress during its persistence on earth provide the largest field and the natural limits for the terrestrial aim of our being; the superior persistence of the race and the greatness and importance of the collective life should determine the nature and scope of our ideals. But if the progress or welfare of humanity be excluded as not our business or as a delusion, the individual is there; to achieve his greatest possible perfection or make the most of his life in whatever way his nature demands will then be life's significance.

The supraterrrestrial view admits the reality of the material cosmos and it accepts the temporary duration of earth and human life as the first fact we have to start from; but it adds to it a perception of other worlds or planes of existence which have an eternal or at least a more permanent duration; it perceives behind the mortality of the bodily life of man the immortality of the soul within him. A belief in the immortality, the eternal persistence of the individual human spirit apart from the body is the keyword of this conception of life. That of itself necessitates its other belief in higher planes of existence than the material or terrestrial, since for a disembodied spirit there can be no abiding place in a world whose every operation depends upon some play of force, whether spiritual, mental, vital or material, in and with the forms of Matter. There arises from this view of things the idea that the true home of man is beyond and that the earth life is in some way or other only an episode of his immortality or a deviation from a celestial and spiritual into a material existence.

But what then is the character, the origin and the end of

this deviation? There is first the idea of certain religions, long persistent but now greatly shaken or discredited, that man is a being primarily created as a material living body upon earth into which a newly born divine soul is breathed or else with which it is associated by the fiat of an almighty Creator. A solitary episode, this life is his one opportunity from which he departs to a world of eternal bliss or to a world of eternal misery either according as the general or preponderant balance of his acts is good or evil or according as he accepts or rejects, knows or ignores a particular creed, mode of worship, divine mediator, or else according to the arbitrary predestining caprice of his Creator. But that is the supraterrrestrial theory of life in its least rational form of questionable creed or dogma. Taking the idea of the creation of a soul by the physical birth as our starting-point, we may still suppose that by a natural law, common to all, the rest of its existence has to be pursued beyond in a supraterrrestrial plane, when the soul has shaken off from it its original matrix of matter like a butterfly escaped from the chrysalis and disporting itself in the air on its light and coloured wings. Or we may suppose preferably a preterrestrial existence of the soul, a fall or descent into matter and a reascension into celestial being. If we admit the soul's pre-existence, there is no reason to exclude this last possibility as an occasional spiritual occurrence, — a being belonging to another plane of existence may, conceivably, assume for some purpose the human body and nature: but this is not likely to be the universal principle of earth-existence or a sufficient rationale for the creation of the material universe.

It is also sometimes supposed that the solitary life on earth is a stage only and the development of the being nearer to its original glory occurs in a succession of worlds which are so many other stages of its growth, stadia of its journey. The material universe, or earth especially, will then be a sumptuously appointed field created by a divine power, wisdom or caprice for the enacting of this interlude. According to the view we choose to take of the matter, we shall see in it a place of ordeal, a field of development or a scene of spiritual fall and exile. There is too an Indian view which regards the world as a garden of the

divine Lila, a play of the divine Being with the conditions of cosmic existence in this world of an inferior Nature; the soul of man takes part in the Lila through a protracted series of births, but it is destined to reascend at last into the proper plane of the Divine Being and there enjoy an eternal proximity and communion: this gives a certain rationale to the creative process and the spiritual adventure which is either absent or not clearly indicated in the other accounts of this kind of soul movement or soul cycle. Always there are three essential characteristics in all these varying statements of the common principle: — first, the belief in the individual immortality of the human spirit; secondly, as a necessary consequence, the idea of its sojourn on earth as a temporary passage or a departure from its highest eternal nature and of a heaven beyond as its proper habitation; thirdly, an emphasis on the development of the ethical and spiritual being as the means of ascension and therefore the one proper business of life in this world of Matter.

These are the three fundamental ways of seeing, each with its mental attitude towards life, that can be adopted with regard to our existence; the rest are usually midway stations or else variations or composites which attempt to adapt themselves more freely to the complexity of the problem. For, practically, it is impossible for man taken as a race, whatever a few individuals may succeed in doing, to guide his life permanently or wholly by the leading motive of any of these three attitudes, uniquely, to the exclusion of the others' claim upon his nature. A confused amalgam of two or more of them, a conflict or division of his life-motives between them or some attempt at synthesis is his way of dealing with the various impulses of his complex being and the intuitions of his mind to which they appeal for their sanction. Almost all men normally devote the major part of their energy to the life on earth, to the terrestrial needs, interests, desires, ideals of the individual and the race. It could not be otherwise; for the care of the body, the sufficient development and satisfaction of the vital and the mental being of man, the pursuit of high individual and large collective ideals which start from the idea of an attainable human perfection or nearer approach to

perfection through his normal development, are imposed upon us by the very character of our terrestrial being; they are part of its law, its natural impulse and rule, its condition of growth, and without these things man could not attain to his full manhood. Any view of our being which neglects, unduly belittles or intolerantly condemns them, is therefore by that very fact, whatever its other truth or merit or utility, or whatever its suitability to individuals of a certain temperament or in a certain stage of spiritual evolution, unfit to be the general and complete rule of human living. Nature takes good care that the race shall not neglect these aims which are a necessary part of her evolution; for they fall within the method and stages of the divine plan in us, and a vigilance for her first steps and for the maintenance of their mental and material ground is a preoccupation which she cannot allow to go into the background, since these things belong to the foundation and body of her structure.

But also she has implanted in us a sense that there is something in our composition which goes beyond this first terrestrial nature of humanity. For this reason the race cannot accept or follow for a very long time any view of being which ignores this higher and subtler sense and labours to confine us entirely to a purely terrestrial way of living. The intuition of a beyond, the idea and feeling of a soul and spirit in us which is other than the mind, life and body or is greater, not limited by their formula, returns upon us and ends by resuming possession. The ordinary man satisfies this sense easily enough by devoting to it his exceptional moments or the latter part of his life when age shall have blunted the zest of his earthly nature, or by recognising it as something behind or above his normal action to which he can more or less imperfectly direct his natural being: the exceptional man turns to the supraterrrestrial as the one aim and law of living and diminishes or mortifies as much as possible his earthly parts in the hope of developing his celestial nature. There have been epochs in which the supraterrrestrial view has gained a very powerful hold and there has been a vacillation between an imperfect human living which cannot take its large natural expansion and a sick ascetic longing for the celestial life

which also does not acquire in more than a few its best pure and happy movement. This is a sign of the creation of some false war in the being by the setting up of a standard or a device that ignores the law of evolutionary capacity or an overstress that misses the reconciling equation which must exist somewhere in a divine dispensation of our nature.

But, finally, there must open in us, as our mental life deepens and subtler knowledge develops, the perception that the terrestrial and the supraterrrestrial are not the only terms of being; there is something which is supracosmic and the highest remote origin of our existence. This perception is easily associated by spiritual enthusiasm, by the height and ardour of the soul's aspiration, by the philosophic aloofness or the strict logical intolerance of our intellect, by the eagerness of our will or by a sick disgust in our vital being discouraged by the difficulties or disappointed by the results of life, — by any or all of these motive-forces, — with a sense of the entire vanity and unreality of all else than this remote Supreme, the vanity of human life, the unreality of cosmic existence, the bitter ugliness and cruelty of earth, the insufficiency of heaven, the aimlessness of the repetition of births in the body. Here again the ordinary man cannot really live with these ideas; they can only give at most a greyness and restless dissatisfaction to the life in which he must still continue: but the exceptional man abandons all to follow the truth he has seen and for him they can be the needed food of his spiritual impulse or a stimulus to the one achievement that is now for him the one thing that matters. Periods and countries there have been, in which this view of being has become very powerful; a considerable part of the race has swerved aside to the life of the ascetic, — not always with a real call to it, — the rest adhered to the normal life but with an underlying belief in its unreality, a belief which can bring about by too much reiteration and insistence an unnerving of the life-impulse and an increasing littleness of its motives, or even, by a subtle reaction, an absorption in an ordinary narrow living through a missing of our natural response to the Divine Being's larger joy in cosmic existence and a failure of the great progressive human idealism

by which we are spurred to a collective self-development and a noble embrace of the battle and the labour. Here again there is a sign of some insufficiency in the statement of the supracosmic Reality, perhaps an overstatement or a mistaken opposition, a missing of the divine equation, of the total sense of creation and the entire will of the Creator.

That equation can only be found if we recognise the purport of our whole complex human nature in its right place in the cosmic movement; what is needed is to give its full legitimate value to each part of our composite being and many-sided aspiration and find out the key of their unity as well as their difference. The finding must be by a synthesis or an integration and, since development is clearly the law of the human soul, it is most likely to be discovered by an evolutionary synthesis. A synthesis of this kind was attempted in the ancient Indian culture. It accepted four legitimate motives of human living, — man's vital interests and needs, his desires, his ethical and religious aspiration, his ultimate spiritual aim and destiny, — in other words, the claims of his vital, physical and emotional being, the claims of his ethical and religious being governed by a knowledge of the law of God and Nature and man, and the claims of his spiritual longing for the Beyond for which he seeks satisfaction by an ultimate release from an ignorant mundane existence. It provided for a period of education and preparation based on this idea of life, a period of normal living to satisfy human desires and interests under the moderating rule of the ethical and religious part in us, a period of withdrawal and spiritual preparation, and a last period of renunciation of life and release into the spirit. Evidently, if applied as a universal rule, this prescribed norm, this delineation of the curve of our journey, would miss the fact that it is impossible for all to trace out the whole circle of development in a single short lifetime; but it was modified by the theory of a complete evolution pursued through a long succession of rebirths before one could be fit for a spiritual liberation. This synthesis with its spiritual insight, largeness of view, symmetry, completeness did much to raise the tone of human life; but eventually it collapsed: its place was occupied by an exaggeration of the impulse of

renunciation which destroyed the symmetry of the system and cut it into two movements of life in opposition to each other, the normal life of interests and desires with an ethical and religious colouring and the abnormal or supernormal inner life founded on renunciation. The old synthesis in fact contained in itself the seed of this exaggeration and could not but lapse into it: for if we regard the escape from life as our desirable end, if we omit to hold up any high offer of life-fulfilment, if life has not a divine significance in it, the impatience of the human intellect and will must end by driving at a short cut and getting rid as much as possible of any more tedious and dilatory processes; if it cannot do that or if it is incapable of following the short cut, it is left with the ego and its satisfactions but with nothing greater to be achieved here. Life is split into the spiritual and the mundane and there can only be an abrupt transition, not a harmony or reconciliation of these parts of our nature.

A spiritual evolution, an unfolding here of the Being within from birth to birth, of which man becomes the central instrument and human life at its highest offers the critical turning-point, is the link needed for the reconciliation of life and spirit; for it allows us to take into account the total nature of man and to recognise the legitimate place of his triple attraction, to earth, to heaven and to the supreme Reality. But a complete solution of its oppositions can be arrived at only on this basis that the lower consciousness of mind, life and body cannot arrive at its full meaning until it is taken up, restated, transformed by the light and power and joy of the higher spiritual consciousness, while the higher too does not stand in its full right relation to the lower by mere rejection, but by this assumption and domination, this taking up of its unfulfilled values, this restatement and transformation, — a spiritualising and supramentalising of the mental, vital and physical nature. The terrestrial ideal, which has been so powerful in the modern mind, restored man and his life on earth and the collective hope of the race to a prominent position and created an insistent demand for a solution; this is the good it has accomplished. But by overdoing and exclusiveness it unduly limited man's scope, it

ignored that which is the highest and in the end the largest thing in him, and by this limitation it missed the full pursuit of its own object. If mind were the highest thing in man and Nature, then indeed this frustration might not result; still, the limitation of scope would be there, a narrow possibility, a circumscribed prospect. But if mind is only a partial unfolding of consciousness and there are powers beyond of which Nature in our race is capable, then not only does our hope upon earth, let alone what is beyond it, depend upon their development, but this becomes the one proper road of our evolution.

Mind and life themselves cannot grow into their fullness except by the opening up of the larger and greater consciousness to which mind only approaches. Such a larger and greater consciousness is the spiritual, for the spiritual consciousness is not only higher than the rest but more embracing. Universal as well as transcendent, it can take up mind and life into its light and give them the true and utmost realisation of all for which they are seeking: for it has a greater instrumentality of knowledge, a fountain of deeper power and will, an unlimited reach and intensity of love and joy and beauty. These are the things for which our mind, life and body are seeking, knowledge, power and joy, and to reject that by which all these arrive at their utmost plenitude is to shut them out from their own highest consummation. An opposite exaggeration demanding only some colourless purity of spiritual existence nullifies the creative action of the spirit and excludes from us all that the Divine manifests in its being: it leaves room only for an evolution without sense or fulfilment, — for a cutting off of all that has been evolved is the sole culmination; it turns the process of our being into the meaningless curve of a plunge into Ignorance and return out of it or erects a wheel of cosmic Becoming with only an escape-issue. The intermediary, the supraterrrestrial aspiration cuts short the fulfilment of the being above by not proceeding to its highest realisation of oneness and diminishes it below by not allowing a proper amplitude of sense to its presence in the material universe and its acceptance of life in an earthly body. A large relation of unity, an integration, restores the balance, illumines

the whole truth of being and links together the steps of Nature.

In this integration the supracosmic Reality stands as the supreme Truth of being; to realise it is the highest reach of our consciousness. But it is this highest Reality which is also the cosmic being, the cosmic consciousness, the cosmic will and life: it has put these things forth, not outside itself but in its own being, not as an opposite principle but as its own self-unfolding and self-expression. Cosmic being is not a meaningless freak or phantasy or a chance error; there is a divine significance and truth in it: the manifold self-expression of the spirit is its high sense, the Divine itself is the key of its enigma. A perfect self-expression of the spirit is the object of our terrestrial existence. This cannot be achieved if we have not grown conscious of the supreme Reality; for it is only by the touch of the Absolute that we can arrive at our own absolute. But neither can it be done to the exclusion of the cosmic Reality: we must become universal, for without an opening into universality the individual remains incomplete. The individual separating himself from the All to reach the Highest, loses himself in the supreme heights; including in himself the cosmic consciousness, he recovers his wholeness of self and still keeps his supreme gain of transcendence; he fulfils it and himself in the cosmic completeness. A realised unity of the transcendent, the universal and the individual is an indispensable condition for the fullness of the self-expressing spirit: for the universe is the field of its totality of self-expression, while it is through the individual that its evolutionary self-unfolding here comes to its acme. But this supposes not only a real being of the individual, but the revelation of our secret eternal oneness with the Supreme and with all cosmic existence. In his self-integration the soul of the individual must awake to universality and to transcendence.

The supraterrrestrial existence is also a truth of being; for the material is not the only plane of our existence; other planes of consciousness there are to which we can attain and which have already their hidden links with us: not to reach up to whatever greater regions of the soul are open to us, not to have the experience of them, not to know and manifest their law in

ourselves is to fall short of the height and fullness of our being. But worlds of a higher consciousness are not the only possible scene and habitation of the perfected soul; nor can we find in any unchanging typical world the final or total sense of the Spirit's self-expression in the cosmos: the material world, this earth, this human life are a part of the Spirit's self-expression and have their divine possibility; that possibility is evolutionary and it contains the possibilities of all the other worlds in it, unrealised but realisable. Earth-life is not a lapse into the mire of something undivine, vain and miserable, offered by some Power to itself as a spectacle or to the embodied soul as a thing to be suffered and then cast away from it: it is the scene of the evolutionary unfolding of the being which moves towards the revelation of a supreme spiritual light and power and joy and oneness, but includes in it also the manifold diversity of the self-achieving spirit. There is an all-seeing purpose in the terrestrial creation; a divine plan is working itself out through its contradictions and perplexities which are a sign of the many-sided achievement towards which are being led the soul's growth and the endeavour of Nature.

It is true that the soul can ascend into worlds of a greater consciousness beyond the earth, but it is also true that the power of these worlds, the power of a greater consciousness has to develop itself here; the embodiment of the soul is the means for that embodiment. All the higher powers of Consciousness exist because they are powers of the Supreme Reality. Our terrestrial being has also the same truth; it is a becoming of the One Reality which has to embody in itself these greater powers. Its present appearance is a veiled and partial figure and to limit ourselves to that first figure, to the present formula of an imperfect humanity, is to exclude our divine potentialities; we have to bring a wider meaning into our human life and manifest in it the much more that we secretly are. Our mortality is only justified in the light of our immortality; our earth can know and be all itself only by opening to the heavens; the individual can see himself aright and use his world divinely only when he has entered into greater planes of being and seen the light of the Supreme and lived in the being and power of the Divine and Eternal.

An integration of this kind would not be possible if a spiritual evolution were not the sense of our birth and terrestrial existence; the evolution of mind, life and spirit in Matter is the sign that this integration, this completed manifestation of a secret self contained in it is its significance. A complete involution of all that the Spirit is and its evolutionary self-unfolding are the double term of our material existence. There is a possibility of self-expression by an always unveiled luminous development of the being, a possibility also of various expression in perfect types fixed and complete in their own nature: that is the principle of becoming in the higher worlds; they are typical and not evolutionary in their life principle; they exist each in its own perfection, but within the limits of a stationary world-formula. But there is also a possibility of self-expression by self-finding, a deployment which takes the form and goes through the progression of a self-veiling and an adventure of self-recovery: that is the principle of becoming in this universe of which an involution of consciousness and concealment of the spirit in Matter is the first appearance.

An involution of spirit in the Inconscience is the beginning; an evolution in the Ignorance with its play of the possibilities of a partial developing knowledge is the middle, and the cause of the anomalies of our present nature, — our imperfection is the sign of a transitional state, a growth not yet completed, an effort that is finding its way; a consummation in a deployment of the spirit's self-knowledge and the self-power of its divine being and consciousness is the culmination: these are the three stages of this cycle of the spirit's progressive self-expression in life. The two stages that have already their play seem at first sight to deny the possibility of the later consummating stage of the cycle, but logically they imply its emergence; for if the inconscience has evolved consciousness, the partial consciousness already reached must surely evolve into complete consciousness. It is a perfected and divinised life for which the earth-nature is seeking, and this seeking is a sign of the Divine Will in Nature. Other seekings also there are and these too find their means of self-fulfilment; a withdrawal into the supreme peace or ecstasy, a

withdrawal into the bliss of the Divine Presence are open to the soul in earth-existence: for the Infinite in its manifestation has many possibilities and is not confined by its formulations. But neither of these withdrawals can be the fundamental intention in the Becoming itself here; for then an evolutionary progression would not have been undertaken, — such a progression here can only have for its aim a self-fulfilment here: a progressive manifestation of this kind can only have for its soul of significance the revelation of Being in a perfect Becoming.