Man and Superman

Man and the Evolutionary Process

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Man is a transitional being, he is not final. He is a middle term of the evolution, not its end, crown or consummating masterpiece.

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Man is not final, he is a transitional being. Beyond him awaits formation the diviner race, the superman.

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God is the beginning, middle and end of all things; but in the beginning He is concealed, in the middle partly and progressively manifest, in the end revealed.

The universe is such a manifestation of God under certain conditions and in the terms of a gradually unfolding harmony. These conditions and the movements which govern the rhythms of the harmony are the universal laws.

In this manifestation the two terms are involution and evolution. The material universe starts from an involution of God in the movement of inconscient Force and the forms of inert Matter and it is impelled by the divine impulse within it to the evolution of God through the increasing manifestation of consciousness and conscious power which must culminate in a perfect and infinite self-knowledge, self-mastery and self-delight. By the involution we mean a self-concealing of the Divine in a
descent of which the last rung is Matter, by the evolution a self-
revealing of the Divine in an ascent of which the last rung is
Spirit.

Since evolution or a gradual self-unfolding is the essential
movement of the universe, the impulse of all life in the universe
must be to self-fulfilment and the realisation of its utmost po-
tentialities. Behind each form of life there is a divine idea which
determines its form and its limits and the form circumscribes the
potentialities of the life. Therefore the self-fulfilment of the life is
contained within certain limits fixed by the nature of the life and
the law of its being and action which that nature determines.

The idea which thus determines is the cause and the form
which thus limits the sign of the Finite in the universe. The
universe is an infinity creating innumerable finite expressions of
itself in idea and form within its own infinite being. The one and
infinite is the soul and reality of each finite; the multiple finite is
the rhythm, movement and harmony of the infinite.

Therefore in and behind all finite life in the universe there
is an infinite reality seeking to arrive at itself which must in its
self-unfolding create finite forms of life which are yet able in
their consciousness and movement to manifest and realise the
infinite. Man is such a finite-infinite and the sole type of such a
form of life that yet exists upon the earth.

All life and mind on earth is the story of a Being, a Conscien-
tness, a Power, a Joy that is darkly imprisoned in the apparent
inconscience of Matter and is struggling for liberation. Blinded,
cabinéd, drugged, immured, it is yet ever striving to come out
of the black cell of this obscurity into its own light, wideness,
conscious sight and force, self-aware action, bliss, freedom,
harmony, perfection. It starts with small beginnings, as a vi-
bration in the metal, as a feeling out and drawing in and a
groping and [?infusing] in the plant, as a crude or minute power
of sensory life-urge rising to an instinctive reason and mind
and purposeful force in the insect, as a more organised and
conscious and emotional, even a roughly and narrowly thinking and planning vital being in the animal, and has persevered till it has broken into some half opening on itself in the thinking, reasoning, willing and aspiring nature of man, the Manu, the mental creature. Here at present it stands not by any means satisfied, but it would seem, feeling out for something more entirely itself, some supreme manhood or supermanhood, some beginning of godhead that would be at last its true self-finding and triumphant manifestation out of matter, even here in this limited and limiting earthly Nature.

This striving and slow outburst of Something that was hidden all along in Matter, in the Inconscient, is the whole sense of Evolution— not the mere development of a more and more organised living body out of protoplasm, as the scientists with their eyes fixed only or mainly on physical things would have it, but the struggle of Consciousness somnambulised in Matter to wake and free, find and possess itself more and more completely, the emancipation and slow self-revealing of a Soul secret at first in Force and Form, the growth of a Spirit.

This evolution, it is sometimes pretended, ends in man, man is the term and end; but this is because we miss the real values of the process. At first indeed we see this Spirit spending numberless millions of years to evolve a material system of worlds empty in the beginning of life, a lesser but vast enough series of millions to develop an earth on which life can inhabit, a lesser series of millions to make possible and train, raise life itself with but a feeble and restricted apparatus of mind; but once it has found a body, a brain, a living apparatus not perfect, but still sufficient it is no longer concerned mainly with evolving a body or [ ... ] an embodied life but can at last grapple with its own proper business. Evolution henceforth means the evolution of the consciousness, of mind and, if any such thing there be, of what is beyond mind,— and in that case as its last stride has been the evolution of the mental being, man, out of the vital being, the animal, so its next stride will be to evolve out of mental man a greater spiritual and supramental creature.
All mind and life on earth are the progressive manifestation of a Spirit or Being that has involved itself in Matter and is slowly evolving in Matter, against the inconscient resistance of a first rigid material self-formation and under its conditions, its own secret powers and nature. In the Inconscience in which it has involved itself, these powers, this nature seem not only to be hidden but contradicted; cast into their own opposites they emerge with difficulty and labour at first in flickers and faint glimpses, then growing into a better but still much diminished figure. But the evolution cannot be considered at an end until these diminished figures growing more and more free, developed, powerful arrive at their own complete fulfilment, revelation of their truth, native perfection, beauty and greatness. This is the aim of terrestrial existence — to reveal in Matter, in Time-Space, in figure and body what was once self-held only in an eternal unembodied self and spirit.

In order that this evolution might be, an implacable plunge of supreme Consciousness and Being into an apparent void of insentience, inconscience, non-existence was inevitable; for without that plunge, immergence, seeming yet effective annihilation [in] its opposite the creation of that phenomenon of cosmic Energy which we call Matter would have been impossible. Yet however effective this appearance is only an appearance. In the void of that Non-Existence all the powers of being are held involved and latent; in the impenetrable darkness of that Inconscience all the possibilities of consciousness lie ready to be evolved; in that insentience is a drowned Delight of Existence which emerging in the contradictory figures of pleasure and pain can struggle upwards towards cosmic expression of its own truth of the Bliss that supports all things.

To ask why this plunge was taken at all, why such an evolution slow, gratuitous, painful should ever have been undertaken is natural for man struggling painfully with his own transience, ignorance and suffering — inevitable consequences of that plunge or fall — but from the cosmic point of view
irrelevant and otiose. A possibility was there in the Infinite and outlined itself for manifestation, the lines of an evolutionary world amidst the numberless possibility or numbered reality of various universes, and it was undertaken because the Spirit in things is afraid of no possibility of itself but is rather ready to sanction all by its will towards manifest existence. To the Cosmic Spirit which sees things as a whole, the working out of this universe or any universe is self-justified, the obscure labour of the emergence no less than the glory of its completion and final perfection in a yet unattained light, bliss and greatness.

At any rate into this world of evolution something of the eternal spirit has thrown itself, with all in it that consented to the descent and to fulfil the world, not to escape from it, is the deepest meaning of the Spirit and Godhead within us and the universe.

This then must be our will in terrestrial existence — being mind in matter to grow into the Spirit, being man-animal to emerge into the Godhead, to expand out of our limited sense of existence into freedom and infinite wideness, out of the half figure of consciousness we have realised to be illumined into true consciousness, out of weakness to realise divine Mastery, out of the dual experience of pain and pleasure to emerge into possession of the cosmic Bliss of existence, out of the dull chrysalis of our limited selves to flower into oneness with the Divine Self that we are. For this is not an egoistic will in us but the meaning of the Divine Inhabitant for which he has undertaken bodily life and terrestrial existence.

Before there could be any evolution, there must needs be an involution of the Divine All that is to emerge. Otherwise there would be not an evolution, but a successive creation of things new, not contained in their antecedents, not their inevitable consequences or followers in a sequence but arbitrarily willed or miraculously conceived by an inexplicable
Chance, a stumblingly fortunate Force or an external Creator.

The long process of terrestrial formation and creation, the ambiguous miracle of life, the struggle of mind to appear and grow in an apparent vast Ignorance and to reign there as interpreter and creator and master, the intimations of a greater something that passes beyond the finite marvel of mind to the infinite marvels of the Spirit, are not a meaningless and fortuitous passing result of some cosmic Chance with its huge combination of coincidences; they are not the lucky play of some blind material Force. These things are and can be only because of something eternal and divine that concealed itself in energy and form of Matter.

The secret of the terrestrial evolution is the slow and progressive liberation of this latent indwelling spirit, the difficult appearance, the tardy becoming [of a] divine Something or Someone already involved with all its potential forces in a first formal basis of supporting substance, its greater slowly emerging movements locked up in one initial expressive power of Matter.

Man the thinker and seeker would not be here if he were not an embodied portion of an all-conscious Infinite that is superconscient above him but lies also hidden in the inconscience of the material universe.

The development of forms is not the most important or the most significant part of the evolutionary process; it is one sign of the thing that is being done, but it is not its essence. Material form is only a support and means for the progressive manifestation of the Spirit.

If all were chance or play of inconscient or inconsequent Force, there would be no reason why man with all his imperfections should not be the last word of this feat of unconscious intelligence or this haphazard miracle. It is because the Divine Spirit is there and his manifestation the meaning of the movement that a new power must emerge in the series that started from Matter.

The material universe would be a waste if wonderful desert
if Life had not appeared as the first index to some marvellous utility and an ultimate profound and moving significance. But life too by itself would be a movement without sequence to its purposeful initiation or any light to its own mystery if in Life there were not concealed an interpretative or at least a seeking power of consciousness that could turn upon its powers and try to grasp and direct them towards their own realised issue.

Our life is neither an accident nor a mechanism; it is not a freak of some wide-spread self-organising Chance, nor is it the result of a blind unaccountable material Necessity.

What we call Chance is a play of the possibilities of the Infinite; what we call Necessity is a truth of things working itself out in a Time-sequence of the Infinite.

It [our life] seems indeed to be born from a cosmic Inconscience which, pushed somehow towards world-building, does what it can or does what it must but in either case knows nothing of itself or of its own action. Yet is there a meaning in these workings, a conscious intention; our life is led by the will of some secret Being, secret perhaps within its own phenomenon, towards the solution of this packed cosmic Mystery, the unrolling of a willed and mighty Enigma.

What we see in and around us is a play of God, a “Lila”. It is a scene arranged, a drama played by the One Person with his own multitudinous personalities in his own impersonal existence,—a game, a plan worked out in the vast and plastic substance of his own world-being. He plays with the powers and forces of his Nature a game of emergence from the inconsciente Self out of which all here began, through the mixed and imperfect consciousness which is all we have now reached, towards a supreme consciousness, a divine nature.

This we cannot now know; our eyes are fixed on a partial outer manifestation which we see and call the universe—though even now we see and know very little of it or about it, know
perhaps a few of its processes but nothing fundamental, nothing of its reality, — and an inner partial manifestation which we do not see but experience and feel and call ourselves. Our mind is shut up in a cleft between these two fragments and tends to regard it as the whole of things and the only tangible and real existence.

It is so that the frog regards himself and his well. But we have to grow out of this frog consciousness and exceed the limits of this well. In the end we come to perceive that we have a truer and divine being of which our petty personality is only a surface and corrupted output, a truer and divine Consciousness in which we must become self-aware and world-aware discarding our present fragmentary and bounded mental vision of self and things.1

The term of our destiny is already known to us; we have to grow from what we are into a more luminous existence, from pleasure and pain into a purer and vaster and deeper bliss, from our struggling knowledge and ignorance into a spontaneous and boundless light of consciousness, from our fumbling strength and weakness into a sure and all-understanding Power, from division and ego into universality and unity. There is an evolution and we have to complete it: a human animality or an animal humanity is not enough. We must pass from the inadequate figure of humanity into a figure of the Godhead, from mind to supermind, from the consciousness of the finite to the consciousness of the Infinite, from Nature into Supernature.

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This is no vaulting imagination, but the inevitable outcome of our still unfulfilled being and incomplete nature, a necessity of the evolutionary world-urge: because things are what they are,

1 The following sentence from an earlier draft was not incorporated in the final version of this piece:

Our life is a journey towards the bliss of a vaster and happier existence, — not merely elsewhere in a far-off Paradise, but already here upon earth, ibaiva, in the terrestrial life and in an earthly [body.]
this too must be. For things are what they are, but not what they were; they cannot remain for ever what they are, but must grow into what they can be and shall be. And what they shall be can be nothing less than the exceeding of their present imperfection, the fullness of what they have only half become; but it may and must be something more than that, they must grow into their own concealed reality, their nature must reveal what is now concealed, their real self.

The perfection of species or of types is not what is aimed at; the type is often perfect [within its] limits, for it is the limits that make the type; the species too can be perfect in itself, perfect in its own variation of the genus and the genus perfect by the number and beauty or curiosity of its variations. But what we see in Nature is that it strives ever to exceed itself, to go beyond what it has yet done. For having achieved in the animal the whole of which animality was capable, it did not in achieving man endeavour to produce the perfect synthetic animal, it began at once working out something more than the animal. Man is to a certain extent a synthesis of several animals; he might even be said to synthetise all, from the worm and the skink, to the elephant and the lion; but as an animal he is terribly imperfect. His greatness lies in his being more than an animal and by this new nature he has exceeded the animal and made up for all his deficiencies even in the region of the struggle for life. Comparatively defenceless at first, he has become the master of the earth; he is not merely primus inter pares; he is a sovereign and the others are not any longer, even if they were ever his equals.

The world we live in is not a meaningless accident that has unaccountably taken place in the void of Space; it is the scene of an evolution in which an eternal Truth has been embodied, hidden in a form of things, and is secretly in process of unfoldment through the ages. There is a meaning in our existence, a purpose in our birth and death and travail, a
consummation of all our labour. All are parts of a single plan; nothing has been idly made in the universe; nothing is vain in our life.

The evolution is arranged or arranges itself according to this plan. It begins here with a system of worlds which seem to be dead, yet in perpetual motion; it proceeds towards birth and life and consciousness, justifying Matter; it finds the justification of birth in thinking man; [?] to divinity. A slow [?] of godhead in Matter, this is the sense of the material universe.

Man is a transitional being, he is not final. He is too imperfect for that, too imperfect in capacity for knowledge, too imperfect in will and action, too imperfect in his turn towards joy and beauty, too imperfect in his will for freedom and his instinct for order. Even if he could perfect himself in his own type, his type is too low and small to satisfy the need of the universe. Something larger, higher, more capable of a rich all embracing universality is needed, a greater being, a greater consciousness summing up in itself all that the world set out to be. He has, as was pointed out by a half blind seer, to exceed himself; man must evolve out of himself the divine superman: he was born for transcendence. Humanity is not enough, it is only a strong stepping stone; the need of the world is a superhuman perfection of what the world can be, the goal of consciousness is divinity. The inmost need of man is not to perfect his humanity, but to be greater than himself, to be more than man, to be divine, even to be the Divine.

To rest in humanity is to rest in imperfection; the perfect man would be a self-contented finality of incompleteness. His nature is transitional and there is therefore in it an innate tendency to strive towards something more.

— Unless indeed he turned aside from his destiny, became a two-legged termite content with a perfectly arranged or sufficiently comfortable material order. He would [ . . . . . ] exist, deteriorate or become stable like the ant or the dung-beetle or after attaining complete efficiency, disappear like the sloth, the mammoth, the pterodactyl or the dinosaur. His innate reason for existence would have ceased and with it his necessity for being.
But this cannot be; there is something in him that forbids it.
But this most—that humanity cannot realise itself except by passing into supermanhood.
The saint, the sage, the seer, the inspired man of action, the creator,—these are his summits of being. Beyond him is the supramental being, the spiritual superman.

Our existence in the cosmic order is not an accident, the purposeless freak of a Chance which happened to organise itself into a world or the product of a blind Force which has somehow managed to exist in what we call a void Space and executes there [soulless] inexplicable revolutions, as if compelled by its own causeless necessity; nor is man the result of a chemical combination of gases by an Energy which has somehow, being radically inconscient, succeeded without intending it to produce consciousness and started writing poems, painting pictures, producing civilisations, conceiving an inexistent God and invisible Creator. There is surely more in it than that; there was [an] Idea somewhere [and if it] has emerged it is because it was [ . . . ] and had to emerge.

If there is an intelligence which has appeared in Matter and is constantly developing its height and its range, this can only be because there was already an intelligence there, asleep, involved, latent or in some way a possibility of Matter, which has come forth from latency when things and conditions were ready. Or else it [is] because behind or in the world immanent in it there is an Intelligence which has created or is manifesting this world and at the right time has sent this power of itself [ . . . . . . . . . ]

The nature of evolution according to physical Science is a development of forms more and more suitable to an increasingly complex and subtle development of Life and incidentally only to a more and more complex and subtle consciousness serving the ends of Life. This consciousness is a temporary phenomenon beginning in each form with birth and ending with
death of the body. Consciousness then is a circumstance of body and incapable of survival of the body. There is no such thing per se as consciousness. A consciousness not dependent on the body, expressing itself in it as its instrument, a soul or spirit, is therefore a myth, an imagination; if it existed, it would be an unwarrantable intrusion into the nature of things as seen in this material universe; or, since everything in this universe is dependent on Matter, arose from Matter, is a circumstance or result of Matter and returns to Matter, soul too would be a circumstance or result of Matter, would act by it and in it only, would return finally to Matter. Consciousness itself is a phenomenon of Matter, is nothing but Matter in action, a combination of phenomenal action of chemical or other physical entities and operations and can be nothing else. It is unproven and unprovable, — though it may be that it is also not disproved and not disprovable. Either it must be left in a barren light or no light of agnosticism or is at most a matter of faith and not of knowledge.

But all this only means that Science has not any adequate means to deal precisely with the supraphysical nor can it collect and handle all the necessary data; it can deal only with the physical and with the physical side of the supraphysical; and that is not enough. Faith and knowledge are themselves supraphysical things with which Science cannot deal; for psychology at present is not a science; it is only a dispute between different bundles of inferences and guesses.

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Man is not final, he is a transitional being.

This imperfect thinker embarrassed by the limitations of his brain and senses, this ignorant mind seeking after the truth of himself and things and never arriving at a certain knowledge, this stumbling reasoner capable only of speculation and stiff logical conclusions but not of indubitable conclusions or of a complete or direct knowledge, this imperfect liver divided between his reasoning will and his half-governed impulsions and
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instinctive desires, this thing of bundles of ideas and sensations and lusts and longings, this hunter after forms and formulas, this suffering and sorrowing mixture of wisdom and imbecility we call man is not the final essay of Nature, her last word, the crown of her evolution, the summit of consciousness, her master creation.

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The central fact, the essential and cardinal significance of the evolution is not development and perfection of the outer and instrumental form, but the development [and] increasing perfection of consciousness. If human consciousness had been something complete, consummate, a ne plus ultra, then we could confidently say that here was the summit, here the crown and end of things and beings, here the perfected creation and the supreme terrestrial creator. Or if his consciousness though imperfect showed signs that it could arrive [at] the very top of possibility, rule earth and discover heaven, then we might believe that man was the last instrument by which Nature was passing from the terrestrial to the highest stage developing out of her initial inconscience a supreme conscient being.

But man seems to be by his very mould of nature a being with an animal living out of which he grew and a mental boundary beyond which he cannot pass.

For mind is the man, mind cramped into a body and entangled in the intricate machinery of a laborious and precarious physical organism which helps it less than it hampers. Mind’s only data for knowledge are the motions of terrestrial life, the motions and processes of the physical world and its own processes and motions. Its notions about other things are merely speculations, guesses, imaginations; it thinks about them by means of abstractions, it cannot grasp anything concrete. It can observe life and know it by observation and inferences from observation or it can know by theory; it can find out its constituent parts and its processes. Its knowledge of itself is of the same
variety; it traces out the processes of thinking, demarcates the observed constituents of personality; it evaluates men from what they say and do, not from what they are, for that it cannot see. It discovers by analysis or makes a synthesis by fitting together the fragments of things. Eventually it discovers the phenomenon, but misses the reality; it knows things as objects but knows nothing about things in themselves. Reality is beyond its grasp, it is only sure about the appearance. This is much for one who emerged out of nescient Matter and started as the ignorant animal, but it is not enough to make of man the crown of creation and the last apex of the evolution.

If man’s knowledge and his way of knowledge are imperfect, still more imperfect are his living and his doing. [His] works sometimes attain perfection. Some men have done well in poetry and the arts and crafts, more have done badly, most are conventional copyists or botchers. In science and works with a scientific basis, men have certainly done well and their works were often efficient or masterly, for there all is method and rule and there the human mind seeks to master and execute what he has to do and that he can always do. Few have insight in works, fewer have any originality. Journeyman’s work he can do, for man is essentially a journeyman. He is skilful in putting things [up], buildings, a job, a swindle. In pulling down he is perfect, a destroyer ne plus ultra. The world is full of his constructions, but more pervasive is his destruction; but that leaves few traces. But still the great doers are few in number, the good doers are many, the poor doers are legion, the evil doers hardly less. All this shows that he is a transitional and evolving animal, the highly evolved are rare, the poorly evolved numerous, the ill-evolved a multitude.

Living is more difficult than doing; though it is universal, and ought to have become easy by practice, it is commonly ill done, almost universally botched or half worked out. Human society is a ramshackle affair; it is top-heavy, over-elaborate and opulent at the top, below a multitudinous level. When he tries to reform his world, he sets out to level everything down towards
or even to the worst. He can force all things down to the level of a universal proletariat, but he cannot make of the proletariat a universal aristocracy.

There are two states of being, two levels or limits between which all existence stands or moves, a highest limit of supreme consciousness, an omniscient Superconscience, a nethermost limit of supreme unconsciousness, an omnipotent Inconscience. The secret of consciousness reveals itself only when we perceive these two limits and the movement between them which we call the universe.

There can be no consciousness without existence, for the consciousness of a Void or a Nihil is a vain imagination, a thing impossible. For Nothing cannot be conscious of anything—cannot be conscious of itself; if it were conscious of itself, it would at once be an existence aware of itself, it would cease to be a Nihil; it would at once be evident that it was all the time an Existence appearing to be Nihil, that it was Being or a Being unconscious, but now grown conscious of its own existence. A void conscious of itself is conceivable, but it would then be a void existence and not Nihil. There might be an eternal Non-Being, but that too could not be Nihil; eventually it could only be a supreme superconscient existence exceeding our notion of Being. A true Nihil would necessarily be as incapable of consciousness as of existence; out of it nothing could come as in it nothing could be, neither spirit nor soul nor mind nor Matter.

We have then at one end of things a supreme superconscient existence and [at the other] a supreme inconscient existence and between them we have consciousness in the universe; but both are two states of one Being; what is between also is movement of that one Being between its two ends, its two highest and lowest levels of self-manifestation. Ekam evadvitiyam.
All existence upon earth is an evolution of what has come down from a superconscious Eternity to be involved here in a subconscious Infinite.\(^2\)

That Eternity and this Infinite are the same Essence in opposite powers, but the one appears as a dark shadow of the other. The Superconscient is hidden from us because it is wrapped in its own being of illimitable light; the Inconscient escapes our search because it is plunged in its own veil of impenetrable darkness.

All that manifested from the Eternal has already been arranged in worlds or planes of its own nature, planes of subtle Matter, planes of Life, planes of Mind, planes of Supermind, planes of the triune luminous Infinite. But these worlds or planes are not evolutionary but typal.

A typal world is one in which some ruling principle manifests itself in its free and full capacity and energy and form are plastic and subservient to its purpose. Its expressions are therefore automatic and satisfying and do not need to evolve; they stand so long as need be and do not need to be born, develop, decline and disintegrate.

For evolution to be necessary there must be an opposing medium or recalcitrant instruments or an involution of the thing in its opposite. This is what has happened in the terrestrial world. Spirit has to evolve out of matter, consciousness out

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\(^2\) Three drafts of this piece exist; the first paragraph of each of them is identical, or almost so. From the third paragraph, the second and third drafts were developed on different lines by Sri Aurobindo. These two drafts have been printed as pieces 56 and 57. The first draft, much shorter, contains a few phrases not taken up in either of the other drafts. It is printed in its entirety below:

All existence upon earth is an evolution, in an ascending series of figures, of what came down from a superconscious Eternity to be involved here in a subconscious Infinite.

What was involved evolves slowly; each manifested term of the evolution is a step in the series and presupposes another step beyond it. There can be no finality until a perfect potential is reached which can express all the possibilities of the involved Godhead.

The evolution is from the Inconscient; therefore at first ignorant, feeling its way rather than consciously finding it. But its significant element is a growing consciousness which must at last emerge out of ignorance into Knowledge. When that happens the evolution will become conscious, aware of its way, no longer a stumbling search or precarious growth but a luminous outblossoming of the Divine.
of the Inconscient, life out of inanimation, mind out of a life that is void of thought; out of mind and its fragmentation and difficult piecing together of things the automatic completeness of the supramental knowledge.

There is a secret self-compulsion in the Inconscient to manifest what is involved — gaoled, suppressed and inactive within it, but also there is a stupendous Inertia, as of some fathomless cosmic sleep, that resists the will to manifest and retards the evolution. There is thus an upward levitation towards the luminous eternity of the Spirit strongly countered by a downward gravitation back towards the Inconscience.

This Inertia was needed in order that the evolution might be gradual by aeonic process and not an explosion of the concealed elements either into a rapid self-ordered typal series or into their original superconscience.

As a consequence of this retarding force what is involved evolves with difficulty and slowly. Evolution is a struggle between an insistent call to manifestation and an iron retardatory reluctant Inertia. Evolutionary existence is precarious because the downward gravitation back to its source contradicts powerfully both the stress from within towards permanence and the pull from above towards self-transcendence. Matter in our world can easily dissolve into its elements, life sink back into death, mind relapse into unconsciousness. A type evolved, animal or man, struggles slowly and with much difficulty into manifestation, it is less difficult for it to disappear, as disappeared the mastodon and the dinosaurs. Hence the law of a precarious impermanence laid on the forms of Matter which is corrected only for a time by the lavish will to reproduction in Nature.

As the evolution is from the Inconscient, it is not only a precarious but also an ignorant movement feeling its way rather than consciously finding it. But still its most significant term is a growing consciousness which must at last emerge out of ignorance into knowledge. When that happens, the evolution will become a willed and conscious movement, aware of its process and its way, no longer a stumbling search or a precarious growth
but a luminous outflowering of the Divine.  

The call to manifestation is composed of a double current of Force moving between two poles. There is a will or at least an urge in the Inconscient itself, slow, dumb, obscure but imperative and inevitable towards the revelation of its involved contents. But there is also a pressure from above from the already established Powers for their manifestation in Space-Time here and for their evolutionary possibilities in the world of Matter. A world of subtle Matter presses on the shapeless Inconscient for the manifestation of forms; a world of essential Life presses on form of Matter for the manifestation of an embodied life; a world of essential Mind presses on animate life for the manifestation of mind in the living body. This compulsion is so great as to contradict and counteract finally the refusing and retarding Inertia.

Above on the summits of existence is all that is beyond Mind and all that is the complete splendour of the Spirit. These too wait for their hour of manifestation, their turn for revelation in Time and Space and the evolving series of the powers of the Eternal.

All existence upon earth is an evolution of what has come down from a superconscious Eternity to be involved here in a subconscious Infinite.

The superconscious Eternity to which we tend and the subconscious Infinite from which we rise — for we are a part of both and we stand between them as their developing link — are opposite powers of the same Being, are indeed, in their essence, one and the same Being; but one appears to our experience as a dark and void shadow of the other. The Superconscient is hidden

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3 The incomplete passage that follows apparently was intended for insertion here:

A third consequence of the origin of the evolution is its character of struggle and suffering. For all is involved here in its opposite. Being descends into the phenomenon of Non-Being and has to emerge from it. Consciousness descends into the worldwide Inconscience and is involved in its night. Force descends into
from us because it is wrapped in its own being of illimitable light; the Inconscient escapes our search because it is plunged in its own veil of impenetrable darkness.

What comes down from the Superconscient is self, spirit, the wide and all-containing Essence of the eternal existence. It plunges, carrying its powers in it, into an infinite ocean of inconscience, \textit{aparaketam salilam}, and hides itself there. It hides itself and its powers from itself—it appears in us as its own opposite.

The Self is an immortal and unseizable essence and substance of all things, it is a pure omnipresent omniscient omnipotent existence. It appears to our experience when we emerge from the subconscient as a mysterious Void or Nihil, indeterminable yet from it all things and forms are, inconscient yet flowering into consciousness, inert yet manifesting enormous energies, lifeless yet the parent of life, insensible yet a fountain of pain and pleasure. This impossibility, this universal contradiction is unreal and born of our ignorance; yet that ignorance is not ours, but a result of the inconscience which was imposed on itself as a veil by the involved Self and Spirit. For if that Inconscience were not there, the evolutionary emergence of the Self which is the law and object of this universe would not have been possible; all would have flowered into a manifestation too immediate, too irresistibly powerful in its process, too absolute.

The Self, the Spirit is a pure existence, a spiritual substance that is self-aware and therefore all-aware. It is in its nature an absolute and omniscient consciousness, eternally comprehending all itself, all in itself and would naturally manifest as an absolute, unwalled, indivisible knowledge. It becomes an inconscience out of which consciousness struggles brokenly into light, seeking and groping for itself, groping after signs and intimations of its substance, but finding at first only fragmentary signs and separated forms and objects which seem not itself. The consciousness in the individualised form becomes aware of itself by the shock of things outside that are or seem to be not itself. It becomes aware of itself as a separated form and only when it grows more and more deeply self-conscious slowly becomes aware of all outside
it as part of its own continuous indivisible existence.

The nature of the Spirit's consciousness is a self-existent Force which in action becomes a spontaneously self-manifesting or, as it seems to us, self-creating and self-determining energy. It is omnisciently omnipotent and creates out of itself what it wills under whatever conditions it wills — for its will is that of an infinite and infinitely variable self-aware oneness whose steps, no matter what they are, are by necessity the movement of a perfect Truth and Knowledge. But it is by an equal necessity the very opposite when the manifestation of the Substance of things becomes the working of a void Inconscience. For even if that Inconscience be only apparent because an all-knowledge and its force are hidden there, yet this error, this phenomenon of Inconscience is and was intended to be dynamic and operative. In other words, all had to look and appear as the gropings of an Inconscience whose results in their upshot were yet those of an ordered and imperative Intelligence. An inert Soul guiding with a strange and blind sureness the steps of a somnambulist Nature would be no inadequate image of the apparent Spirit of this material universe.

This material world sprung from the subconscious Infinite appears to us as if [it] were the sole actual universe and even perhaps the only creation possible. But that is because we are limited by our senses which we now know to be restricted in their field and even there fallible. The material senses by their very nature can perceive only material things and from that our still infantile external reason infers that only material things exist and there is nothing else. All forms that are immaterial or of another substance than ours are and cannot but be illusions, hallucinations, unreal images. But a being otherwise constituted in consciousness or sense could well see this world in other figures than present themselves to ours. Another would see perhaps other worlds made of another, a subtler material or an essentially mental or vital or spiritual substance. A world is only an arrangement of things as experienced by consciousness of the Spirit and this consciousness can see all kinds of things in all kinds of ways according to whatever plane of itself, whatever medium and whatever instruments it has produced for its
cosmic purpose. We shall understand nothing of existence if we confine our vision to the particular view of things our primary consciousness and its instruments which are physical impose upon us; for this consciousness is only a surface phenomenon of ourselves and our total being is far deeper, higher and vaster than that, our possibilities extend infinitely beyond their present limit, and the world also is far more complex than the first crude inexplicable mystery of Matter would lead us to imagine.

The immense material world in which we live is not the sole reality but only one of innumerable potential and existent universes; all of them need not have either Matter as we know it or the Inconscient for their base. Indeed this world of matter is itself dependent on many planes of consciousness and existence which are not material; for these have not this gross substance as their foundation or as the medium of their instrumentation of energy and consciousness or their primary condition of existence.

All the powers that are involved here in the inconscient Infinite and that we see rising out of it,—mind, life and what is beyond mind no less than matter itself—have their previous existence and are not merely evolutionary results of Nature in this universe. They have not only a preexistence but also their separate planes of manifestation in which each in turn is, as matter is here, the foundation, the medium of instrumentation, the primary condition of existence.

All terrestrial existence is the slow surge of a hidden Consciousness mounting up out of an apparent Inconscience towards its own perfect and luminous manifestation. This is the secret of evolution and its significance.\(^4\)

There is a spirit secret even in things immobile,—there is an All-Consciousness disguised in the Inconscient. In Matter life

\(^4\) Sri Aurobindo left out the sentence that follows when he revised the first draft of this piece:

All else is only veils and means and forms, conditions and stages, action and counter-action of this great half-veiled becoming which is the heart of the earth’s enigma.
is embedded, in Life is an enveloped mind, in Mind is concealed a greater supramental and spiritual being not yet manifested. These are the significant and illumining terms of the riddle.

Evolution is the labour of Nature, or let us say at once of the Energy of the secret Spirit, working in the semblance and under the limiting conditions of an inconscient Power to release these latencies each in its turn out of their involution in the original Inconscience.

It is an All-consciousness that is working, the force of a self-aware cosmic Spirit, and the emergence of its secret powers is implied in the very nature of existence; therefore the result is inevitable.

Science has discovered a physical evolution hidden in the past history of the earth of which the living record remains in the embryo; but the physical evolution is only an outward sign, means and material condition of a still more secret evolution. A spiritual evolution, an evolution of consciousness is the inner fact which alone illumines the problem of earth existence and opens to it its true solution; apart from it our life here has no intelligible significance.

Ancient Indian thought discovered an evolution from birth to birth, from the life of tree and plant to the life of insect and animal, from the life of the animal to the life of man, attained with difficulty through the ages. This slowly attained human life it took to be the key of release from the baffling circle of the enigma. After some eighty and more lakhs of births, says the Tantra, a soul reaches the human form and consciousness and sooner or later finds the secret of escape from birth in time into the birthless and deathless Eternity from which it came.

These two discoveries seem at first sight quite unconnected and disparate. In one it is a physical Life in the cosmos that evolves and the individual is only an ephemeral member of the species, the species a means of this cosmic evolution. Mind is indeed the term and the mental human being the crown of this inexplicable emergence; when human progress is over, when the race decays and perishes, the cosmic evolution will be at an
end, for it has nothing more then it can do. In man it has shot its bolt; nothing more is possible. Consciousness emerging out of the Inconscient has achieved this shoddy and splendid, this winging and limping miracle of the ever-seeking creative Mind of Man and sinks back into the Inconscient; its emergence had no discoverable significance, its brief play and cessation make no difference to the meaningless rounds of an inconscient universe.

In the Indian view it is the individual that evolves from birth to birth and the hierarchy of the vegetal, animal, human kinds [is] a fixed unchanging ladder for its ascent. A successive creation of higher and higher species is envisaged in the Upanishads as well as the Puranas and heredity affirmed as a means of conscious continuity of the human embodiment of the Spirit, but still the evolution is individual and not cosmic, spiritual not physical. Yet here too this persistent phenomenon of spiritual embodiment appearing from the bodiless Spirit and evolving back into the bodiless Spirit seems to be devoid of significance.

If stripped of their limitations the two discoveries can be regarded as complementary rather than disparate. There is evidently an evolution; Matter first manifests out of the Formless — inanimate in appearance; in Matter life manifests unconscious in appearance; in life mind manifests in the animal but instinctive and irrational in appearance; in life-mind thinking mind appears rational but yet self-ignorant in appearance, — for it seeks to know but yet does not know the secret and significance of its own existence. It is not yet undisputed but it is affirmed that in thinking man spirit is moving towards manifestation, spirit aware of itself and of its own secret and significance. Thus far at least an evolution is indisputable and we may affirm without hesitation that there is a cosmic Existence here which first achieves a material manifestation of itself or a manifestation in itself, a material formula, then on that basis a life formulation, a vital formula, on that again a mental formulation, a mind formula. It is possible that on that again it is preparing a spiritual formulation of self-affirmation and self-knowledge which will complete the emergence.

There is also very evidently an evolution of forms, generic
and individual in the genus and species, which enables the formulation to be effective, each in its own kind, organised so as to express more and more definite and superior possibilities of matter, more and more definite and superior possibilities of life, more and more definite and superior possibilities of mind,—more than this cannot yet be positively asserted, but this much is asseverable. If we can add that in the mental formula, in the mentalised life and body of man, a spiritual emergence is in process which has not yet reached its full possibility and that possibility is the emergence of the spiritual man or supramental being, then the object of the physical evolution and its significance becomes clear. The evolution of bodies is only a means for the evolution of consciousness and the spiritual formulation will be that in which the cosmic Existence will find its own full affirmation, manifest through the original veil of Matter its self-awareness, self-knowledge, self-realisation. The Cosmic Spirit hidden in the Inconscience is then the Alpha, its manifestation in the consciousness of spiritualised man the Omega.

The Stages of Evolution
Matter, Life, Mind, Supermind

The evolution of the earth nature is not finished because it has manifested only three powers out of the seven-fold scale of consciousness that is involved in manifested Nature. It has brought out from its apparent inconscience only the three powers of Mind and Life and Matter.

Matter, one might say from a certain viewpoint, is purely a matter of mathematics. That cannot be said of Mind or of Life.

Then again, Matter is a matter of formulas. Everything purely material is created according to a formula.
Again, Matter is a matter of magic. It is a thing of magical and irrational or suprarational formulas.

Lastly, all Matter is *matra*, a thing of degrees, measures, quantities.

We find that water is produced by a combination in a fixed quantity of the two first elements, hydrogen and oxygen. We do not know or do not yet know why this should be so. All we can say is that [it] is a fixed law of Nature that when this formula is scrupulously followed without deviation something called water appears,—becomes a phenomenon of material Nature. There seems to be no reason in this miracle. We could partly understand if oxygen and hydrogen by their very nature tended to produce in any combination water or something like water, but only in the fixed amounts could bring out the perfect article.

But this is not the case; only by the fixed relative combination can it be done. This formula then is of the nature of a magic formula. Only by pronouncing a fixed combination of words or syllables or sounds can the [. . .] magic result follow and not otherwise. Any variation voids the effect and leaves the incantation barren.

Hydrogen itself is produced by a combination of a fixed number of electrons or electric particles of energy in a fixed relative position in their movement. Oxygen is produced by another such combination. The elements are alike in kind, it is a positional quantitative [*remainder of piece missing*]

Ether and material space are different names for the same thing. Space, in its origin at least if not in its universal character, is an extension of the substance of consciousness in which motion of energy can take place for the relations of being with being or force with force and for the building up of symbolic forms on which this interchange can be supported. Ether is
space supporting the works of material energy and the symbolic forms it creates; it is, speaking paradoxically but to the point, immaterial or essential matter.[1]

62

Matter is but a form of consciousness; nevertheless solve not the object entirely into its subjectivity. Reject not the body of God, O God lover, but keep it for thy joy; for His body too is delightful even as His spirit.

Perishable and transitory delight is always the symbol of the eternal Ananda, revealed and rapidly concealed, which seeks by increasing recurrence to attach itself to some typal form of experience in material consciousness. When the particular form has been perfected to express God in the type, its delight will no longer be perishable but an eternally recurrent possession of mental beings in matter manifest in their periods & often in their moments of felicity.

63

Evolution is the one eternal dynamic law and hidden process of the earth-nature.

An evolution of the instruments of the spirit in a medium of matter is the whole fundamental significance of the values of the earth-existence. All its other laws are its values of operation and process; the spiritual evolution is its one pervading secret sense.

* 

The history of the earth is first an evolution of organised forms by the working of material forces.

There follows on this initial stage an evolution of life in the form and an organisation of a hierarchy of living forms by the working of liberated life-forces. The next step is an evolution of mind in living bodies and an organisation of more and more conscious lives by the process of developing mind forces. But
Man and Superman

even this is not the end; for there are higher powers of consciousness beyond mind which await their turn and must have their act in the great play, their part of the creative Lila.

* *

Matter, the medium of all this evolution, is seemingly inconscient and inanimate; but it so appears to us only because we are unable to sense consciousness outside a certain limited range, a fixed scale or gamut to which we have access. Below us there are lower ranges to which we are insensible and these we call subconscience or inconscience. Above us are higher ranges which are to our inferior nature an unseizable superconscience.

The difficulty of Matter is not an absolute inconscience but an obscured consciousness limited by its own movement, vaguely, dumbly, blindly self-aware, only mechanically responsive to anything outside its own form and force. At its worst it can be called not so much inconscience as nescience. The awakening of a greater and yet greater consciousness in this Nescience is the miracle of the universe of Matter.

This nescience of Matter is a veiled, an involved or a somnambulist consciousness which contains all the latent powers of the Spirit. In every particle, atom, molecule, cell of Matter there lives hidden and works unknown all the omniscience of the Eternal and all the omnipotence of the Infinite.

The evolution of forms and powers by which Matter will become more and more conscious until passing beyond form and life and mind it becomes aware with the supernal awareness of the eternal and infinite Spirit in his own highest ranges, this is the meaning of earth existence. The slow self-manifesting birth of God in Matter is the purpose of the terrestrial Lila.

* * *

Matter is at once a force and a substance. Matter is original being, Brahman made concrete in atomic division; Matter is original substance-force, Brahman-Shakti made active in an obscure
involution of the spirit’s powers, in a self-forgetful nescience.

Matter-force casts matter-substance, material Shakti casts Matter-Brahman into form expressive of its own most characteristic powers. When that has been done, the physical world is ready for the splendid intrusion of conscious Life into the force-driven inertia of material substance.

Matter is not the only force, nor the only substance. For Life and Mind too and what is beyond Mind are also forces that are substances but of another kind and degree.

Spirit is the original force-substance; all these others are kinds and derivations of force of spirit, degrees and modifications [of] substance of spirit. Matter too is nothing but a power and degree of the spirit; Matter too is substance of the Eternal.

But the Matter that we see and sense is only an outermost sheath and coating; behind it are other subtler degrees of physical substance which are less dense with the atomic nescience and it is easier for Life and Mind to enter into them and operate. If finer invisible physical layers or couches did not exist supporting this gross visible physical world, that world could not abide; for then the fine operations of transmission between Spirit and Matter [could not] be executed at all and it is these that render the grosser visible operations possible. The evolution would be impossible; life and mind and beyond-mind would be unable to manifest in the material universe.

There is not only this material plane of being that we see, there is a physical life plane proper to the vital physical operation of Nature. There is a physical mind plane proper to a mental physical operation of Nature. There is a physical supermind plane proper to the supramental physical operation of Nature. There is too a plane of physical spirit power or infinite physical Being-Consciousness-Force-Bliss proper to the spiritual physical operations of Nature. It is only when we have discovered and separated these planes of Nature and of our physical being and analysed the synthesis of their contributions to the whole play that we shall discover how the evolution of vital, mental and spiritual consciousness became possible in inconscient Matter.
But there is more; for beyond these many couches of the physical existence are other supraphysical degrees, a many layered plane of Life, a many layered plane of Mind, planes of Supermind, of Bliss, of Consciousness Force and of infinite Being on which the physical existence depends for its origination and its continuance. It is higher planes that flood the constantly unfolding unseen energies which have raised its evolution from the obscurity in which it began to the splendour of a light of consciousness to which the highest human mind shall only be the feeble glimmer of a glowworm fire before the sun in its flaming glories.

There is a stupendous hierarchy of grades of consciousness between darkest Matter and most luminous spirit. Consciousness in Matter has to go on climbing to the very top of the series and return with all it has to give us before the evolution can utterly fulfil its purpose.

* * *

Matter, Life, Mind, Supermind or Gnosis, and beyond these the quadruple power of a supreme Being-Consciousness-Force-Bliss—these are the grades of the evolutionary ascent from inconscience to the Superconscience.

Life does not wholly come into the earth from outside it; its principle is there always in material things. But, imprisoned in the apparent inanimate inertia or blind force movement of Matter, it is bound by its movements and unable to manifest its own independent or dominant existence.

Life is there in the earth, rock, metal, gas, atom, electron and the other more subtle yet undiscovered forces and particles that constitute material energy and form. It is in everything, but at first a hardly detectable presence organised only to support secretly material energies, processes, formations and transformations; it is there as an involved power for the building and expression of Form of Matter, not for the expression of Life. It is not in possession of itself, not self-conscious in the form, not pushed towards self-manifestation; a helpless tool and
instrument, not a free agent, it is a servant of Matter and a slave of the Form, not the master of the house.

But above the material world there is a plane of dominant Life that presses down upon this material universe and seeks to pour into it whatever it can of its own types, powers, forces, impulsions, manifesting creative godheads. When in the material world form is ready, the Gods and Life-Daemons of this higher plane are attracted to put their creative touch upon Matter. Then there comes a rapid and sudden efflorescence of Life; the plant, the animalcule, the insect, the animal appear. A Life-Soul and a Life-Force with its many and always more complex movements are manifested in what seemed once to be inert and inanimate substance. Life souls, life minds, animal existences are born and evolve; a new world appears that is born and contained in this world of Matter and yet surpasses it in its own dynamic nature.

At each capital step of Nature’s ascent there is a reversal of consciousness in the evolving spirit. As when a climber turns on a summit to which he has laboured and looks down with an exalted and wider power of vision on all that was once above or on a level with him but is now below his feet, the evolutionary being not only transcends his past self, his former now exceeded status, but commands from a higher grade of self-experience and vision, with a new apprehending feeling or a new comprehending sight and effectuating power, in a greater system of values, all that was once his own consciousness but is now below his tops and belongs to an inferior creation. This reversal is the sign of a decisive victory and the seal of a radical progress in Nature.

The new consciousness attained in the spiritual evolution is always higher in grade and power, always larger, more comprehensive, wider in sight and feeling, richer and finer in faculties, more complex, organic, dominating than the consciousness that was once our own but is now left behind us. There are greater breadths and spaces, heights before impossible, unexpected depths and intimacies. There is a luminous expansion
that is the very sign manual of the Supreme upon his work. 5

Mark too that each of the great radical steps forward already taken by Nature has been infinitely greater in its change, incalculably vaster in its consequences than its puny predecessor. There is a miraculous opening to an always richer and wider expression, there is a new illuminating of the creation and a dynamic heightening of its significances. There is in this world we live in no equality of all on a flat level, but a hierarchy of ever-increasing precipitous superiorities pushing their mountain-shoulders upwards towards the Supreme.

Plant-life is a most significant progress upon the mineral, but the difference is as nothing compared with the gulf that divides the dumb vitality of the plant from the conscious experience of the animal. The hiatus between the animal and the human is so great in consciousness, however physically small, that the scientists’ alleged cousinship of monkey and man looks psychologically almost incredible. And yet the difference between vital animal and mental man is as nothing to that which will be between man’s mind and the superman’s vaster consciousness and richer powers. That past step will be to this new one as the snail’s slow march in the grass to a Titan’s sudden thousand league stride from continent to continent.

Evolution on the terrestrial plane, even in the dullest brute matter is only in outward appearance a progression of physical function and form; in its essential fact, in its inner meaning, in its significant power, it is a progression of consciousness, a spiritual or psychological change.

At each step the spirit heightens its stature, perfects its instruments, organises better its self-expression; a new consciousness comes in, takes up the old and gives it an extended movement and another significance, adds greater, richer, more

5 The following passage from the first draft of this piece was not incorporated by Sri Aurobindo in the present draft:

Illuminating his creation here and pointing out to it its own significance it suggests the culmination of ever-ascending superiorities in the Supreme and the opening of released ever-increasing widenesses in the Infinite.
complex movements of which the first formulation was incapable.

In the sub-vegetal world all movements, all stimulus, all reaction are of a material and if dynamic, of a mechanically dynamic character. Even the life movements that exist there, as in the mineral, are of the most rigidly automatic, unindividualised and mechanical and external nature, birth, formation, fatigue, sleep, death. Mental or psychic powers and significances there are, as an occult knowledge discovers, but of these the form seems not aware; it is something behind the life of the mineral, a consciousness supporting rather than inhabiting it, using but not used by it, that is their possessor.

In the plant world for the first time a true vital consciousness appears in earth Nature.

65

All the trend and purpose of Nature in terrestrial existence is to manifest the yet unmanifested. Her continual aim is to develop out of what has been evolved that which has not been evolved but is waiting to [be] liberated out of latency. This continual evolution is the whole meaning of terrestrial existence.

What has already been evolved is form of matter with life and mind housed in it, what has yet to be evolved is supermind liberating from their narrow limits and transforming mind and life and matter.

Here on earth and in the material universe matter has been the first term, the basis of things, the condition of all that must evolve here. Life can evolve here only so far as it can persuade or compel matter to give it a form and an instrumentation. Mind too has to accommodate itself to the means given it by an organised living body. There is no reason to suppose however that life in itself is limited in its possibilities to the small range realised by the living animal or human body; or the potentialities [of] mind limited to the field of powers accorded to it by the brain, nerves and physical senses, its ingenious but still very poor and unreliable instruments here.
In a world where life and not matter was the first term, condition and basis, in a vital world life would be free to organise itself in its own way with a free energy in plastic and pliable forms and its ranges of possibilities would be immense and circumscribed by no rigid limits.

But what shall be the gain won for the earth-consciousness we embody by this unprecedented ascent out of mind to whatever may be beyond it and what the significance of the supramental change? To what end shall man leave his safe human limits for this godlike but hazardous adventure?

First consider what was gained when earthly Nature passed from the brute inconscience and inertia of the first organised forms in what seems to us inanimate Matter to the vibrant sensibility of the plant range. Life was gained; the gain was the beginning of the mute groping and involved consciousness that reaches out to growth, to sense-vibration, to waking and sleep, to hunger and thirst, to physical pain and pleasure, to a preparation for vital yearnings and a living joy and beauty. That was begun which still is unfinished — the first step towards a conscious consciousness and what shall yet be the divine Ananda.6

In the plant earth-nature achieved a first figure of life, but the creature she made could not possess it, because this first organised life-consciousness had feeling and seeking, woke and slept, hungered and was satisfied, thirsted and drank and grew and flourished, had pleasure of some contacts and suffered from others, but was still externally blind, dumb, deaf, chained to the soil from which it was born, involved in its own nerve and tissue. It could not get out of this primitive formula, could not get behind its nerve-self as does the vital mind of the animal, still less could turn down from above it to know and realise its own motions as does the thinking and observing mind of man and to

6 Not joy or pleasure, but the bliss of existence and its movements from which the world arose.
control them. This was a decisive but an imprisoned gain; for there was still a gross oppression of the original Inconscience which had covered up with the brute phenomenon of Matter and energy of Matter all signs of the Spirit. Nature could no-wise stop here, because she held so much in her that was still occult, potential, unexpressed, unorganised, suppressed, latent; the evolution had perforce to go farther. The animal had to replace the plant at the head and top of Nature.

And what then was gained when Nature passed from the obscurity of the plant kingdom to the awakened sense and desire and emotion and the free mobility of animal life? The gain was liberated sense and feeling and desire and courage and cunning and the contrivance of the objects of desire, passion and action and hunger and battle and conquest and the sex-call and play and pleasure, and all the joy and pain of the conscious living creature. Not only the life of the body which the animal has in common with the plant but a life-mind that appeared for the first time in the earth-story and grew and grew from form to more organised form till it reached in the best the limit of its own formula.

The animal achieved a first form of mind, but could not possess it, because this first organised mind consciousness was enslaved in a narrow scope, tied to the first functionings of the physical body and brain and nerve, tied to serve the physical life and its desires and needs and passions, limited to the insistent uses of the vital urge, to natural longing and feeling and action, bound by its own inferior instrumentation, its spontaneous combinings of association and memory and instinct. It could not get away from them, could not get behind them as man’s intelligence gets behind them to observe them; still less could it turn down on them from above as do human reason and will to control, enlarge, reorder, exceed, sublimate.

Mind emerges out of life in matter; it is incapable of manifesting
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directly in the material form. It is there, but it acts mechanically in the somnambulism of an original force of inconscience and inertia. This and no more is what we mean by the inconscience of Matter; for although consciousness is there, it is involved, inorganic, mechanical in its action; it supports the works of Force by its inherent presence, but not by its light of active intelligence. This is why material Nature does the works of a supreme and miraculous intelligence and yet there seems to be no intervention of any indwelling Seer or Thinker.

68

Because man is a mental being, he naturally imagines that mind is the one great leader and actor and creator or the indispensable agent in the universe. But this is an error; even for knowledge mind is not the only or the greatest possible instrument, the one aspirant and discoverer. Mind is a clumsy interlude between Nature’s vast and precise subconscient action and the vaster infallible superconscient action of the Godhead.

There is nothing mind can do that cannot be better done in the mind’s immobility and thought-free stillness.

When mind is still, then Truth gets her chance to be heard in the purity of the silence.

Truth cannot be attained by the mind’s thought but only by identity and silent vision. Truth lives in the calm wordless Light of the eternal spaces; she does not intervene in the noise and cackle of logical debate.

Thought in the mind can at most be Truth’s brilliant and transparent garment; it is not even her body. Look through the robe, not at it, and you may see some hint of her form. There can be a thought-body of Truth, but that is the spontaneous supramental Thought and Word that leap fully formed out of the Light, not any difficult mental counterfeit and patchwork. The supramental Thought is not a means of arriving at Truth, for Truth in the supermind is self-found or self-existent, but a way of expressing her. It is an arrow from the Light, not a bridge to reach it.
Cease inwardly from thought and word, be motionless within you, look upward into the light and outward into the vast cosmic consciousness that is around you. Be more and more one with the brightness and the vastness. Then will Truth dawn on you from above and flow in on you from all around you.

But only if the mind is no less intense in its purity than its silence. For in an impure mind the silence will soon fill with misleading lights and false voices, the echo or sublimation of its own vain conceits and opinions or the response to its secret pride, vanity, ambition, lust, greed or desire. The Titans and the Demons will speak to it more readily than the divine Voices.

Silence is indispensable, but also there is needed wideness. If the mind is not silent, it cannot receive the lights and voices of the supernal Truth or receiving mixes with them its own flickering tongues and blind pretentious babble. Active, arrogant, noisy, it distorts and disfigures what it receives. If it is not wide, it cannot house the effective power and creative force of the Truth. Some light may play there but it becomes narrow, confined and sterile. Or the force that is descending is cabined and thwarted and withdraws again from this rebellious foreign plane to its vast native heights. Or even if something comes down and remains, it is a pearl in the mire; for no change takes place in the nature or else there is formed only a thin intensity that points narrowly upward to the summits but can hold little and diffuse less upon the world around it.

Reason is a clarified, ordered and organised Ignorance. It is a half-enlightened Ignorance seeking for truth, but a truth which it insists on founding upon the data and postulates of the Ignorance. Reason is not in possession of the Truth, it is a seeker. It is [unable to] discover the Truth or embody it; it leaves Truth covered but rendered into mental representations, a verbal and ideative scheme, an abstract algebra of concepts, a theory of the Ignorance. Sense-evidence is its starting point and it never really gets away from that insecure beginning. Its concepts start from
sense-data and though like a kite it can fly high into an air of abstractions, it is held to the earth of sense by a string of great strength; if that string is broken it drifts lazily in the clouds and always it falls back by natural gravitation to its original earth basis—only so can it receive strength to go farther. Its field is the air and sky of the finite, it cannot ascend into the stratosphere of the spiritual vision, still less can it move at ease in the Infinite.

70

Mind can never be a perfect instrument of knowledge. For even if it could be free from all positive error, even if it could be all intuitive and infallibly intuitive, it could still present and organise only half truths or separated truths and these too not in their own body but in luminous representative figures put together to make an accumulated total or a massed structure.

71

The office of intellect is not to fathom reality, but to fabricate and preside over action; intellect cannot comprehend life and reality. Intellect (logic) goes round the object, intuition enters into the object; one stops at the [?], the other enters into the absolute.

72

Intuition,—but what do we mean when we speak of intuition? What is its origin, nature, working, and how is it connected with intelligence and sense and instinct, our other ways of knowing, or what is the difference? Is intuition the one means of true and complete knowledge or does it need intelligence, sense, instinct to complete it? Is there a greater power of direct and absolute and complete knowledge of which intuition is only a special or part action,—some first and last potency, the Alpha and Omega
of an all-knowledge, the all-knowledge that we attribute to God or to the Spirit of the universe?

These are the queries it is proposed to answer here; but the answer can come only from intuition itself, from a direct seeing and experience, for if intuition exists, it and its way of working must obviously be something beyond the reasoning intelligence and therefore not entirely seizable by the reasoning intelligence.

I know myself because I am myself, I know the movements of my mind, joy, anger, love, thought, will, because they are myself or parts of myself; I have a direct knowledge of myself, a knowledge by identity. Observation, reasoning there can be as a subsidiary process; but it is not by observation or reasoning that I know them; I feel and know my anger or love as part of myself and have no need to observe or to reason in order to know that I am angry or that I love.

Intuition is a direct knowledge self-existent and independent of means and devices; it is naturally self-existent and founded upon a knowledge by identity; or when it is gained, it is either by identification or by a knowledge arising from some intimate contact made possible by an underlying or occult identity.

Nothing has the value of truth for the supramental if it is only thought or understood with the intelligence. That is a shadow or reflection and shadows can always distort, at best only adumbrate; reflections can always misform or mistranslate and at best have not the truth-substance. It is only when the object is entered into, seen with an inner and surrounding vision, possessed in experience, taken into our living universal & identifying individual consciousness, made one with us in the Truth that is, holds, comprehends, actuates all things, — only then is there the characteristic process of the supermind, the way of directness, the sincerity and power, the magnificence and general wholeness of the gnosis[.]
But what is supermind and where is it in this world of half lights, in which consciousness is a constructor of ideas, images and sensations that at once inform and mislead, representations that are half truths, half misrepresentations, symbols of things, not things in themselves, relative impressions but nothing absolute. Our senses give us the forms of things as they seem to our senses, not as they are; for they would appear quite different to other senses than ours; our mind builds the great mass of its idea of the world and things on this insecure basis, or if it corrects the evidence of the senses, it is in the light of a reason whose conceptions of Time, Space and Substance are equally imperfect, equally relative, empirically valid up to a certain point, but fundamentally dubious and insecure. Is not this the only consciousness possible, or at least the highest of which we are capable and have we any evidence of a higher power of awareness and knowledge or any ground to suppose that there are beings greater than man who possess it? Is not this world and must it not be always a world of Ignorance, knowledge partial at the best, all knowledge here relative, pragmatic, indirect and no knowledge either here or anywhere that can be called supreme, direct or absolute? If absolute knowledge there is it must be the sheer consciousness of the Featureless Infinite, the One Self, the void or formless Spirit, and there can be no other.

I mean by the supermind a power, a level, an organisation of consciousness which is not only above the human mind, but above all that can be called mind, — another higher and wider essence and energy of consciousness altogether. Mind is that which seeks after truth of any kind or of all kinds within its range, labours to know it, attempts to direct and utilise it. But by supermind I mean a divine awareness which inherently possesses truth, knows it by its own intrinsic identity with it and puts it into action or effect spontaneously by its own sovereign power
without any need of endeavour or labour. Mind even though it seeks after knowledge and can sometimes grasp its figure or touch its shadow, is a product of the cosmic Inconscient or of a Half-Conscience-Ignorance; supermind is an eternal Truth-consciousness, a divine Knowledge self-maintained for ever and luminous in its own right beyond all Ignorance.

The Emergence of the Superman

A god has veiled himself in the earth & mire and beauty and perfection lie unevolved in masses of ordure. This is the play of God with His substance in Matter.

In the atom there is hidden all the will & intelligence & joy that created the universe. In Man they have emerged, but blinking & dazzled by the gleam of their own sunlight, bewildered at themselves & each other. They stumble up against each other, strive & wrestle blindly; for they cannot even [in] the highest man accomplish altogether their own unity & harmony.

An ignorance in which is packed up all knowledge, a mighty inertia in which all cosmic force strives helplessly, an insensibility which conceals the pain and strain of all ecstasy present, but held back, this is the outer face of material Nature and our starting point.

The Spirit awakening out of this veil gradually and with difficulty but inevitably is the secret sense of life. The power to accomplish the perfect awakening against accumulated difficulties, is God's offer to man throughout his cycles.

The perfection & the unity of the divine knowledge, will, delight in the mould of his universalised individuality is the destiny of man, his ascent to Godhead and the unfolding in him of Superman.

Mind evolved is man; supermind unevolved conceals in him the superman.
This is the meaning of our existence here, its futuristic value and inherent trend of power, to rise above ourselves, to grow into gods, to reveal God in a world of material forms and forces.

Earth and conscious life upon earth are not a freak of cosmic Chance, a meaningless accident in the vacant history of nebula and electron and gas and plasm; they are the field of a game of the Gods with the destiny of our souls as the stake of their wager.

To evolve Godhead out of the mud of matter, some divinest consciousness out of a primal inconscience and a struggling ignorance, immortality out of death, undying bliss out of pain and sorrow, the everlasting Truth out of the falsehoods and denials of this relative world is their great and daring gamble.

All life upon earth is the evolution of a divine Spirit that is concealed as by a self-formed mask and robe in the appearance of Matter. Out of that involution it evolves, manifests by a series of ascendent steps its suppressed powers and, once this process has begun, will not cease till the Godhead is manifest in Matter.

Man is a struggling transitional term, an intermediate being who has gathered up into himself the consciousness of the mineral and the vegetable, of the insect and the animal, and is fashioning and refining in the confused twilight and chaos of a half knowledge founded on Ignorance the materials of the god that is to be born.

The instrument of man is mind and thinking and willing mind-force — just as the instrument of the animal is life instinct and feeling and remembering life force and the instrument of the plant and tree existence is the vital push and the dynamism of material energy turning into force of life. As these lower states developed up to a point at which Mind-intelligence could descend into the organised living body and take up the earth-past to mentalise and transform it, so Mind in man has to develop up to a point at which a consciousness greater than Mind can descend into the mind and living body and take up the human material to supramentalise and transform it into godhead. This is man’s rise to the Infinite.
An air from a consciousness greater than mind has already been felt by many of those who have climbed to the human summits and to the glow that has come from above they have given many names, *bodhi*, intuition, gnosis. But these things are only the faint edge of that greater light thrust into the pallid twilight that we call mind. Only when the lid between mind and supermind has been utterly rent apart and the full power of the sun of a divine Gnosis can pour down — not trickling through mind as in diminished and deflected beams — and transform the whole mind and life and body of the human creature, can man's labour finish. Then only shall begin the divine play and the free outpouring of the liberated self-creating Spirit.

To rise into this greater consciousness above our mental level of humanity as man has risen above the level of the life-mind of the beast, to grow from mind into supermind, from twilight into light, from the mind's half-consciousness into what is now to us superconscient, from a narrow imprisoned ego into the transcendent and universalised individual, from a struggling half effective into a throned and master power, from little transient joys and sorrows into an unalloyed divine delight, this is the goal of our journey, the secret of our struggle.

This is our way of emergence from the now dark riddle of the earth and unsolved problem of human life. If there were not this secret sense in all we are and do, there would be no significance in the material world and no justification for our earth-existence.

A gnostic superman is the future master of the earth and rescuer of the divine meaning out of the ambiguous terms of this great world-enigma.

All that baffles us in existence can find its solution, if we can read it in the light of intention that comes from its source. The original Light points us from our preoccupation with our roundabout and puzzling course to the revealing significance of its aim; for the world's source and origin and its aim are one.
The Cause and Fount of all things is the Divine and the end and aim of all things is the Divine. The finite in Time reveals its own deep and abiding sense when it opens to the Eternal and throws itself into the Infinite.

The only true knowledge — for all the rest is either false or only true in a limited field, half-true and therefore, from the vision of the whole, false — is that which reads everything in the sense and light of the Divine. If man would open himself to the Divine Light, he would begin at last to know; but he prefers always to read everything in the light of man’s consciousness, man’s sense, man’s aims and hopes in his little half lit circle.

But man was not the beginning of the manifested universe or even of the earth-cycle, so also he is not its end and fulfilment. There was much before he appeared; there will be much after he has gone — or fallen into a subordinate place.

Human consciousness is a half term in earth nature’s climb from the electron and atom, gas and metal through the vegetable and animal and human formulas to the god and Titan and through the god to the Divine. It is not in the light of the realised alone that we should read the earth-riddle; it is in the light of the unrealised that we shall understand the realised and know why all was and to what all was moving in Nature.

At present what we know best is man and mind and what mind and its several senses see or infer about the universe. But mind is not the highest possible instrument and mental man is not the last creation possible to the capacities of creative evolution in the material universe.

There is indeed the real man as well as this that is apparent. The apparent is this imperfect and struggling humanity, the real is the Purusha, the conscious being within us. The Conscious Being within us, one with the Being in whom we live and move, is indeed the cause and beginning and the end and aim of existence. But our humanity is only a transitory phase of the Conscious Being within us.

Man is not final.
The transition from manhood to supermanhood is, in one sense, a self-exceeding, a ceasing to be what we now are in order to become something else or more. In another sense it is a self-becoming, a flowering out of something concealed by our present state, a latent godhead that already is and always was our true being.

Supermanhood is for us a self-exceeding because man, pragmatically and to his own surface awareness, is a small, confused, limited, still ignorant formation of evolutionary Nature,—if supermanhood is intended, then either he has himself to become superman or, if he cannot or will not achieve it, he must make way for some creature greater than he who will have both the will and the power.

But again supermanhood is at bottom a self-becoming because what we now call ourselves is only the surface man, a thinking and living body; but this [is] only the top of a wave, not the whole sea that secretly we are. All that makes supermanhood is there at least in material in our secret depths and on our still more occult height; what in outward fact, in appearance, in present self-awareness man is not but must become, is already there within him; he has only to find himself in order to become that greater self and nature.

Man [is a] transitional being, not the final end of the evolution and the crown of terrestrial existence.

This ignorant, imperfect and divided being, with his labouring uncertain thought and half-successful will, this toiling and fluctuating experiment, this field of the attempt at emergence of a thousand things that are striving to be, is no consummation of the struggle of cosmic Force; he is only a laboratory in which Nature seeks for its own concealed secret, makes tentative efforts at what she has been missioned to achieve.
As man arose out of the animal, so out of man superman shall come.

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Man is a transitional being; he is not final. As it did not begin with him, neither does it end with him. He is not its evident crown, not its highest issue, not the last clear sum of Nature. Nature has not brought out in man her highest possibilities; she has not reached in him the supreme heights of consciousness and being; as there was before him the infrahuman, the insect and animal, so there shall be after him the superhuman, the superman.

Man may himself become the superman, he may become all that he is not now; but for that he must exceed himself. It is not by clinging to his present imperfect consciousness that he can take the next step in the evolution. He must discover and release the spiritual godhead within him, realise his divine possibilities, be himself the giant potential something, the divine someone who has been struggling into emergence out of the original plasm that imprisoned it since began the mystery of terrestrial Nature.

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Man cannot be final, he is a transitional being. This is very clear from the incompleteness and imperfection of all his powers of consciousness; he can only arrive at some limited form of temporary and unstable perfection by much labour and struggle; and yet the search for perfection is ingrained in his nature. There is something that he is not yet which he has to be; he is reaching always towards the something yet unrealised; his whole life and nature is a preparation, an endeavour of Nature towards what is beyond him.

The human consciousness is limited in every direction; it does not know itself, it does not know the world around it, it does not know the origin and meaning and use of its existence.
But it strives always to know, to find the truth of its being, the right use of its life, the end towards which Nature in him is tending; this it does with a seeking and blundering movement; man’s consciousness is an ignorance struggling towards knowledge; it is a weakness training itself for power; it is a thing of pleasure and suffering that tries to lay hands on the true delight of existence.

All that we see in us and around us in this material world is a mystery-play of the Eternal and Infinite; it is the large total and the curiously variable detail of steps and circumstances in a self-discovery or self-unfolding of a Divinity who has hidden his real from his manifested self in the vast black disguise of the inconscience of Nature.

This is the constant miracle that is the key to the meaning of existence, — the miracle of the birth and growth of life and consciousness in the inanimation and inconscience of the material universe.

The birth and growth of consciousness is the whole sense of evolution. For evolution is not in its inner and essential character a development of more and more organised forms of Matter. This development is only an outer instrumentation for the evolution of life and of consciousness in life. That again in its deepest inmost sense is a growth embodying the slow self-discovery and self-revelation of a soul or spirit in a form of living matter.

The evolution has been an ascension starting from forms that seem to be inanimate and inconscient objects, for in them the spirit in things is asleep, through a leisurely waking in plant and animal till it reached with difficulty a beginning of self-awareness in man the mental being, the first and only speaking, thinking, reasoning creature. But there is no ground for the idea cherished by this imperfect human being that he is the summit and last word of the evolution. Humanity is one step in the destiny of the evolving spirit, the last before it assumes something of its own divinity delivered and apparent; his imperfect life and consciousness must develop itself into the type of the fully conscious being, after man or out of him must be born the superman.
This consummation can only take place by an evolution of the consciousness of the individual and humanity beyond its present stage of development; it can take place only if man is ready to take the turn towards which Nature has been slowly leading him, to discover himself, to know himself as soul and spirit, to see and lay firm hold on the Reality behind world and life and things after which he has been seeking through the ages. Nature’s first evolution has been an evolution of Matter, of physical objects, of the stage, scenery, external conditions and instruments of the drama of an evolving conscious Life in Matter. In life itself she has been content at first to organise a physicality, an externality of life; the evolution of the body has been the sign, the instrument, the apparent cause of the evolution of consciousness. Even when she has arrived at the evolution of Mind, the mind of a humanity which is capable not only of knowing outwardly the external world but of going within itself, of knowing itself, of knowing the secret things, powers, forces which are behind itself and behind the works of a surface external Nature, still she has been most careful to organise a surface Mind dealing with surface and external things and an organisation of personality which is superficial and not the whole of ourselves, a wave only of the ocean of our hidden being, our secret reality. To build an ego which will deal with material life and nature as its user but also as its subject, a life that is bound by matter, a mind that is bound by both matter and life has been her main preoccupation. But still the evolution of consciousness is the real and central fact which gives a significance otherwise altogether lacking to the mechanical structure of the universe. Man is here not merely to utilise his world for the service of his individual and collective ego; he is here as a medium in which the Spirit within, the secret growing Consciousness can evolve farther its self-manifestation, arrive from a partial to a complete consciousness and, since life itself is there only as a means of this evolution and an image of it, at a complete and perfect individual and social life. If the psychological truth of our being is the real and central truth, more central and important than the physical, this
must be its true nature, a conscious being growing towards its own completeness of consciousness and growing too towards its expression and formation in a complete individual and social life.