Chapter XIV

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil

The Lord accepts the sin and the virtue of none; because knowledge is veiled by Ignorance, mortal men are deluded.

_Gita._1

They live according to another idea of self than the reality, deluded, attached, expressing a falsehood,—as if by an enchantment they see the false as the true. _Maitri Upanishad._2

They live and move in the Ignorance and go round and round, battered and stumbling, like blind men led by one who is blind. _Mundaka Upanishad._3

One whose intelligence has attained to Unity, casts away from him both sin and virtue. _Gita._4

He who has found the bliss of the Eternal is afflicted no more by the thought, “Why have I not done the good? Why have I done evil?” One who knows the self extricates himself from both these things. _Taittiriya Upanishad._5

These are they who are conscious of the much falsehood in the world; they grow in the house of Truth, they are the strong and invincible sons of Infinity. _Rig Veda._6

The first and the highest are truth; in the middle there is falsehood, but it is taken between the truth on both sides of it and it draws its being from the truth. _Brihadaranyaka Upanishad._7

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1 V. 15. 2 VII. 10. 3 I. 2. 8. 4 II. 50. 5 II. 9. 6 VII. 60. 5. 7 The truth of the physical reality and the truth of the spiritual and superconscient reality. Into the intermediate subjective and mental realities which stand between them, falsehood can enter, but it takes either truth from above or truth from below as the substance out of which it builds itself and both are pressing upon it to turn its misconstructions into truth of life and truth of spirit. 8 V. 5. 1.
I

F IGNORANCE is in its nature a self-limiting knowledge oblivious of the integral self-awareness and confined to an exclusive concentration in a single field or upon a concealing surface of cosmic movement, what, in this view, are we to make of the problem which most poignantly preoccupies the mind of man when it is turned on the mystery of his own existence and of cosmic existence, the problem of evil? A limited knowledge supported by a secret All-Wisdom as an instrument for working out within the necessary limitations a restricted world-order may be admitted as an intelligible process of the universal Consciousness and Energy; but the necessity of falsehood and error, the necessity of wrong and evil or their utility in the workings of the omnipresent Divine Reality is less easily admissible. And yet if that Reality is what we have supposed it to be, there must be some necessity for the appearance of these contrary phenomena, some significance, some function that they had to serve in the economy of the universe. For in the complete and inalienable self-knowledge of the Brahman which is necessarily all-knowledge, since all this that is is the Brahman, such phenomena cannot have come in as a chance, an intervening accident, an involuntary forgetfulness or confusion of the Consciousness-Force of the All-Wise in the cosmos or an ugly contretemps for which the indwelling Spirit was not prepared and of which it is the prisoner erring in a labyrinth with the utmost difficulty of escape. Nor can it be an inexplicable mystery of being, original and eternal, of which the divine All-Teacher is incapable of giving an account to himself or to us. There must be behind it a significance of the All-Wisdom itself, a power of the All-Consciousness which permits and uses it for some indispensable function in the present workings of our self-experience and world-experience. This aspect of existence needs now to be examined more directly and determined in its origins and the limits of its reality and its place in Nature.

This problem may be taken up from three points of view, — its relation to the Absolute, the supreme Reality, its origin and place in the cosmic workings, its action and point of hold in the
individual being. It is evident that these contrary phenomena have no direct root in the supreme Reality itself, there is nothing there that has this character; they are creations of the Ignorance and Inconscience, not fundamental or primary aspects of the Being, not native to the Transcendence or to the infinite power of the Cosmic Spirit. It is sometimes reasoned that as Truth and Good have their absolutes, so Falsehood and Evil must also have their absolutes, or, if it is not so, then both must belong to the relativity only; Knowledge and Ignorance, Truth and Falsehood, Good and Evil exist only in relation to each other and beyond the dualities here they have no existence. But this is not the fundamental truth of the relation of these opposites; for, in the first place, Falsehood and Evil are, unlike Truth and Good, very clearly results of the Ignorance and cannot exist where there is no Ignorance: they can have no self-existence in the Divine Being, they cannot be native elements of the Supreme Nature. If, then, the limited Knowledge which is the nature of Ignorance renounces its limitations, if Ignorance disappears into Knowledge, evil and falsehood can no longer endure: for both are fruits of unconsciousness and wrong consciousness and, if true or whole consciousness is there replacing Ignorance, they have no longer any basis for their existence. There can therefore be no absolute of falsehood, no absolute of evil; these things are a by-product of the world-movement: the sombre flowers of falsehood and suffering and evil have their root in the black soil of the Inconscient. On the other hand, there is no such intrinsic obstacle to the absoluteness of Truth and Good: the relativity of truth and error, good and evil is a fact of our experience, but it is similarly a by-product, it is not a permanent factor native to existence; for it is true only of the valuations made by the human consciousness, true only of our partial knowledge and partial ignorance.

Truth is relative to us because our knowledge is surrounded by ignorance. Our exact vision stops short at outside appearances which are not the complete truth of things, and, if we go deeper, the illuminations we arrive at are guesses or inferences or intimations, not a sight of indubitable realities: our
conclusions are partial, speculative or constructed, our state-
ment of them, which is the expression of our indirect contact
with the reality, has the nature of representations or figures,
word-images of thought perceptions that are themselves images,
not embodiments of Truth itself, not directly real and authentic.
These figures or representations are imperfect and opaque and
carry with them their shadow of nescience or error; for they
seem to deny or shut out other truths and even the truth they
express does not get its full value: it is an end or edge of it that
projects into form and the rest is left in the shadow unseen or
disfigured or uncertainly visible. It might almost be said that
no mental statement of things can be altogether true; it is not
Truth bodied, pure and nude, but a draped figure, — often it is
only the drapery that is visible. But this character does not apply
to truth perceived by a direct action of consciousness or to the
truth of knowledge by identity; our seeing there may be limited,
but so far as it extends, it is authentic, and authenticity is a first
step towards absoluteness: error may attach itself to a direct or
identical vision of things by a mental accretion, by a mistaken
or illegitimate extension or by the mind’s misinterpretation, but
it does not enter into the substance. This authentic or identical
vision or experience of things is the true nature of knowledge
and it is self-existent within the being, although rendered in
our minds by a secondary formation that is unauthentic and
derivative. Ignorance in its origin has not this self-existence or
this authenticity; it exists by a limitation or absence or abeyance
of knowledge, error by a deviation from truth, falsehood by a
distortion of truth or its contradiction and denial. But it cannot
be similarly said of knowledge that in its very nature it exists
only by a limitation or absence or abeyance of ignorance: it
may indeed emerge in the human mind partly by a process of
such limitation or abeyance, by the receding of darkness from a
partial light, or it may have the aspect of ignorance turning into
knowledge; but in fact, it rises by an independent birth from our
depths where it has a native existence.

Again, of good and evil it can be said that one exists by true
consciousness, the other survives only by wrong consciousness:
if there is an unmixed true consciousness, good alone can exist; it is no longer mixed with evil or formed in its presence. Human values of good and evil, as of truth and error, are indeed uncertain and relative: what is held as truth in one place or time is held in another place or time to be error; what is regarded as good is elsewhere or in other times regarded as evil. We find too that what we call evil results in good, what we call good results in evil. But this untoward outcome of good producing evil is due to the confusion and mixture of knowledge and ignorance, to the penetration of true consciousness by wrong consciousness, so that there is an ignorant or mistaken application of our good, or it is due to the intervention of afflicting forces. In the opposite case of evil producing good, the happier and contradictory result is due to the intervention of some true consciousness and force acting behind and in spite of wrong consciousness and wrong will or it is due to the intervention of redressing forces. This relativity, this mixture is a circumstance of human mentality and the workings of the Cosmic Force in human life; it is not the fundamental truth of good and evil. It might be objected that physical evil, such as pain and most bodily suffering, is independent of knowledge and ignorance, of right and wrong consciousness, inherent in physical Nature: but, fundamentally, all pain and suffering are the result of an insufficient consciousness-force in the surface being which makes it unable to deal rightly with self and Nature or unable to assimilate and to harmonise itself with the contacts of the universal Energy; they would not exist if in us there were an integral presence of the luminous Consciousness and the divine Force of an integral Being. Therefore the relation of truth to falsehood, of good to evil is not a mutual dependence, but is in the nature of a contradiction as of light and shadow; a shadow depends on light for its existence, but light does not depend for its existence on the shadow. The relation between the Absolute and these contraries of some of its fundamental aspects is not that they are opposite fundamental aspects of the Absolute; falsehood and evil have no fundamentality, no power of infinity or eternal being, no self-existence even by latency in the Self-Existent, no authenticity of an original inheritance.
It is no doubt a fact that once truth or good manifests, the conception of falsehood and evil becomes a possibility; for whenever there is an affirmation, its negation becomes conceivable. As the manifestation of existence, consciousness and delight made the manifestation of non-existence, inconscience, insensibility conceivable and, because conceivable, therefore in a way inevitable, for all possibilities push towards actuality until they reach it, so is it with these contraries of the aspects of the Divine Existence. It may be said on this ground that these opposites, since they must be immediately perceivable by the manifesting Consciousness on the very threshold of manifestation, can take rank as implied absolutes and are inseparable from all cosmic existence. But it must first be noted that it is only in cosmic manifestation that they become possible; they cannot pre-exist in the timeless being, for they are incompatible with the unity and bliss that are its substance. In cosmos also they cannot come into being except by a limitation of truth and good into partial and relative forms and by a breaking up of the unity of existence and consciousness into separative consciousness and separative being. For where there is oneness and complete mutuality of consciousness-force even in multiplicity and diversity, there truth of self-knowledge and mutual knowledge is automatic and error of self-ignorance and mutual ignorance is impossible. So too where truth exists as a whole on a basis of self-aware oneness, falsehood cannot enter and evil is shut out by the exclusion of wrong consciousness and wrong will and their dynamisation of falsehood and error. As soon as separateness enters, these things also can enter; but even this simultaneity is not inevitable. If there is sufficient mutuality, even in the absence of an active sense of oneness, and if the separate beings do not transgress or deviate from their norms of limited knowledge, harmony and truth can still be sovereign and evil will have no gate of entry. There is, therefore, no authentic inevitable cosmicity of falsehood and evil even as there is no absoluteness; they are circumstances or results that arise only at a certain stage when separativeness culminates in opposition and ignorance in a positive unconsciousness of knowledge and
a resultant wrong consciousness and wrong knowledge with its content of wrong will, wrong feeling, wrong action and wrong reaction. The question is at what juncture of cosmic manifestation the opposites enter in; for it may be either at some stage of the increasing involution of consciousness in separative mind and life or only after the plunge into inconscience. This resolves itself into the question whether falsehood, error, wrong and evil exist originally in the mental and vital planes and are native to mind and life or are proper only to the material manifestation because inflicted on mind and life there by the obscurity arising from the Inconscience. It may be questioned too whether, if they do exist in supraphysical mind and life, they were original and inevitable there; for they may rather have entered in as a consequence or a supraphysical extension from the material manifestation. Or, if that is untenable, it may be that they arose as an enabling supraphysical affirmation in the universal Mind and Life, a precedent necessity for their appearance in that manifestation to which they more naturally belong as an inevitable outcome of the creative Inconscience.

It was for a long time held by the human mind as a traditional knowledge that when we go beyond the material plane, these things are found to exist there also in worlds beyond us. There are in these planes of supraphysical experience powers and forms of vital mind and life that seem to be the prephysical foundation of the discordant, defective or perverse forms and powers of life-mind and life-force which we find in the terrestrial existence. There are forces, and subliminal experience seems to show that there are supraphysical beings embodying those forces, that are attached in their root-nature to ignorance, to darkness of consciousness, to misuse of force, to perversity of delight, to all the causes and consequences of the things that we call evil. These powers, beings or forces are active to impose their adverse constructions upon terrestrial creatures; eager to maintain their reign in the manifestation, they oppose the increase of light and truth and good and, still more, are antagonistic to the progress of the soul towards a divine consciousness and divine existence. It is this feature of existence that we see figured in the tradition of the
conflict between the Powers of Light and Darkness, Good and Evil, cosmic Harmony and cosmic Anarchy, a tradition universal in ancient myth and in religion and common to all systems of occult knowledge.

The theory of this traditional knowledge is perfectly rational and verifiable by inner experience, and it imposes itself if we admit the supraphysical and do not cabin ourselves in the acceptation of material being as the only reality. As there is a cosmic Self and Spirit pervading and upholding the universe and its beings, so too there is a cosmic Force that moves all things, and on this original cosmic Force depend and act many cosmic Forces that are its powers or arise as forms of its universal action. Whatever is formulated in the universe has a Force or Forces that support it, seek to fulfil or further it, find their foundation in its functioning, their account of success in its success and growth and domination, their self-fulfilment or their prolongation of being in its victory or survival. As there are Powers of Knowledge or Forces of the Light, so there are Powers of Ignorance and tenebrous Forces of the Darkness whose work is to prolong the reign of Ignorance and Inconscience. As there are Forces of Truth, so there are Forces that live by the Falsehood and support it and work for its victory; as there are powers whose life is intimately bound up with the existence, the idea and the impulse of Good, so there are Forces whose life is bound up with the existence and the idea and the impulse of Evil. It is this truth of the cosmic Invisible that was symbolised in the ancient belief of a struggle between the powers of Light and Darkness, Good and Evil for the possession of the world and the government of the life of man; — this was the significance of the contest between the Vedic Gods and their opponents, sons of Darkness and Division, figured in a later tradition as Titan and Giant and Demon, Asura, Rakshasa, Pisacha; the same tradition is found in the Zoroastrian Double Principle and the later Semitic opposition of God and his Angels on the one side and Satan and his hosts on the other, — invisible Personalities and Powers that draw man to the divine Light and Truth and Good or lure him into subjection to the undivine principle of Darkness and
Falsehood and Evil. Modern thought is aware of no invisible forces other than those revealed or constructed by Science; it does not believe that Nature is capable of creating any other beings than those around us in the physical world, men, beasts, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, germs and animalcule. But if there are invisible cosmic forces physical in their nature that act upon the body of inanimate objects, there is no valid reason why there should not be invisible cosmic forces mental and vital in their nature that act upon his mind and his life force. And if Mind and Life, impersonal forces, form conscious beings or use persons to embody them in physical forms and in a physical world and can act upon Matter and through Matter, it is not impossible that on their own planes they should form conscious beings whose subtler substance is invisible to us or that they should be able to act from those planes on beings in physical Nature. Whatever reality or mythical unreality we may attach to the traditional figures of past human belief or experience, they would then be representations of things that are true in principle. In that case the first source of good and evil would be not in terrestrial life or in the evolution from the Inconscience, but in Life itself, their source would be supraphysical and they would be reflected here from a larger supraphysical Nature.

This is certain that when we go back into ourselves very deep away from the surface appearance, we find that the mind, heart and sensational being of man are moved by forces not under his own control and that he can become an instrument in the hands of Energies of a cosmic character without knowing the origin of his actions. It is by stepping back from the physical surface into his inner being and subliminal consciousness that he becomes directly aware of them and is able to know directly and deal with their action upon him. He grows aware of interventions which seek to lead him in one direction or another, of suggestions and impulses which had disguised themselves as original movements of his own mind and against which he had to battle. He can realise that he is not a conscious creature inexplicably produced in an unconscious world out of a seed of inconscient Matter and moving about in an obscure self-ignorance, but an
embodied soul through whose action cosmic Nature is seeking to fulfil itself, the living ground of a vast debate between a darkness of Ignorance out of which it emerges here and a light of Knowledge which is growing upwards towards an unforeseen culmination. The Forces which seek to move him, and among them the Forces of good and evil, present themselves as powers of universal Nature; but they seem to belong not only to the physical universe, but to planes of Life and Mind beyond it. The first thing that we have to note of importance to the problem preoccupying us is that these Forces in their action seem often to surpass the measures of human relativity; they are in their larger action superhuman, divine, titanic or demoniac, but they may create their formations in him in large or in little, in his greatness or his smallness, they may seize and drive him at moments or for periods, they may influence his impulses or his acts or possess his whole nature. If that possession happens, he may himself be pushed to an excess of the normal humanity of good or evil; especially the evil takes forms which shock the sense of human measure, exceed the bounds of human personality, approach the gigantic, the inordinate, the immeasurable. It may then be questioned whether it is not a mistake to deny absoluteness to evil; for as there is a drive, an aspiration, a yearning in man towards an absolute truth, good, beauty, so these movements — as also the transcending intensities attainable by pain and suffering — seem to indicate the attempt at self-realisation of an absolute evil. But the immeasurable is not a sign of absoluteness: for the absolute is not in itself a thing of magnitude; it is beyond measure, not in the sole sense of vastness, but in the freedom of its essential being; it can manifest itself in the infinitesimal as well as in the infinite. It is true that as we pass from the mental to the spiritual, — and that is a passage towards the absolute, — a subtle wideness and an increasing intensity of light, of power, of peace, of ecstasy mark our passing out of our limitations: but this is at first only a sign of freedom, of height, of universality, not yet of an inward absoluteness of self-existence which is the essence of the matter. To this absoluteness pain and evil cannot attain, they are bound to limitation and they are
derivative. If pain becomes immeasurable, it ends itself or ends that in which it manifests, or collapses into insensibility or, in rare circumstances, it may turn into an ecstasy of Ananda. If evil became sole and immeasurable, it would destroy the world or destroy that which bore and supported it; it would bring things and itself back by disintegration into non-existence. No doubt the Powers that support darkness and evil attempt by the magnitude of their self-aggrandisement to reach an appearance of infinity, but immensity is all they can achieve and not infinity; or, at most, they are able to represent their element as a kind of abysmal infinite commensurate with the Inconscient, but it is a false infinite. Self-existence, in essence or by an eternal inherence in the Self-existent, is the condition of absoluteness: error, falsehood, evil are cosmic powers, but relative in their nature, not absolute, since they depend for existence on the perversion or contradiction of their opposites and are not like truth and good self-existent absolutes, inherent aspects of the supreme Self-existent.

A second point of questioning emerges from the evidence given for the supaphysical and prephysical existence of these dark opposites: for that suggests that they may be after all original cosmic principles. But it is to be noted that their appearance does not extend higher than the lower supaphysical life-planes; they are “powers of the Prince of Air”, — air being in the ancient symbolism the principle of life and therefore of the mid-worlds where the vital principle is predominant and essential. The adverse opposites are not, then, primal powers of the cosmos, but creations of Life or of Mind in life. Their supaphysical aspects and influences on earth-nature can be explained by the coexistence of worlds of a descending involution with parallel worlds of an ascending evolution, not precisely created by earth-existence, but created as an annexe to the descending world-order and a prepared support for the evolutionary terrestrial formations; here evil may appear, not as inherent in all life, but as a possibility and a pre-formation that makes inevitable its formation in the evolutionary emergence of consciousness out of the Inconscient. However this may be, it is as an outcome
of the Inconscience that we can best watch and understand the origin of falsehood, error, wrong and evil, for it is in the return of Inconscience towards Consciousness that they can be seen taking their formation and it is there that they seem to be normal and even inevitable.

The first emergence from the Inconscient is Matter, and in Matter it would seem that falsehood and evil cannot exist, because both are created by a divided and ignorant surface consciousness and its reactions. There is no such active surface organisation of consciousness, no such reactions in material forces or objects: whatever indwelling secret consciousness there may be in them seems to be one, undifferentiated, mute; inertly inherent and intrinsic in the Energy that constitutes the object, it effectualises and maintains the form by the silent occult Idea in it, but is otherwise self-rapt in the form of energy it has created, uncommunicating and inexpressive. Even if it differentiates itself according to the form of Matter in a corresponding form of self-being, rūpam rūpam pratirūpo babhūva,\textsuperscript{9} there is no psychological organisation, no system of conscious actions or reactions. It is only by contact with conscious beings that material objects exercise powers or influences which can be called good or evil: but that good or evil is determined by the contacted being’s sense of help or harm, of benefit or injury from them; these values do not belong to the material object but to some Force that uses it or they are created by the consciousness that contacts it. Fire warms a man or burns him, but that is as involuntarily he meets it or voluntarily uses it; a medicinal herb cures or a poison kills, but the value of good or evil is brought into action by the user: it is to be observed too that a poison can cure as well as kill, a medicine kill or harm as well as cure or benefit. The world of pure Matter is neutral, irresponsible; these values insisted on by the human being do not exist in material Nature: as a superior Nature transcends the duality of good and evil, so this inferior Nature falls below it. The question may begin to assume a different aspect if we go behind physical knowledge and accept

\textsuperscript{9} Katha Upanishad, II. 2. 9.
the conclusions of an occult inquiry, — for here we are told that
there are conscious influences that attach themselves to objects
and these can be good or evil; but it might still be held that this
does not affect the neutrality of the object which does not act
by an individualised consciousness but only as it is utilised for
good or for evil or for both together: the duality of good and
evil is not native to the material principle, it is absent from the
world of Matter.

The duality begins with conscious life and emerges fully
with the development of mind in life; the vital mind, the mind of
desire and sensation, is the creator of the sense of evil and of the
fact of evil. Moreover, in animal life, the fact of evil is there, the
evil of suffering and the sense of suffering, the evil of violence
and cruelty and strife and deception, but the sense of moral evil
is absent; in animal life there is no duality of sin or virtue, all
action is neutral and permissible for the preservation of life and
its maintenance and for the satisfaction of the life-instincts. The
sensational values of good and evil are inherent in the form of
pain and pleasure, vital satisfaction and vital frustration, but the
mental idea, the moral response of the mind to these values are
a creation of the human being. It does not follow, as might be
hastily inferred, that they are unrealities, mental constructions
only, and that the only true way to receive the activities of Na-
ture is either a neutral indifference or an equal acceptance or,
intellectually, an admission of all that she may do as a divine or a
natural law in which everything is impartially admissible. That
is indeed one side of the truth: there is an infrarational truth
of Life and Matter which is impartial and neutral and admits
all things as facts of Nature and serviceable for the creation,
preservation or destruction of life, three necessary movements
of the universal Energy which are all connectedly indispensable
and, each in its own place, of equal value. There is too a truth of
the detached reason which can look on all that is thus admitted
by Nature as serviceable to her processes in life and matter and
observe everything that is with an unmoved neutral impartiality
and acceptance; this is a philosophic and scientific reason that
witnesses and seeks to understand but considers it futile to judge
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the activities of the cosmic Energy. There is too a suprarational truth formulating itself in spiritual experience which can observe the play of universal possibility, accept all impartially as the true and natural features and consequences of a world of ignorance and inconscience or admit all with calm and compassion as a part of the divine working, but, while it awaits the awakening of a higher consciousness and knowledge as the sole escape from what presents itself as evil, is ready with help and intervention where that is truly helpful and possible. But, nonetheless, there is also this other middle truth of consciousness which awakens us to the values of good and evil and the appreciation of their necessity and importance; this awakening, whatever may be the sanction or the validity of its particular judgments, is one of the indispensable steps in the process of evolutionary Nature.

But from what then does this awakening proceed? what is it in the human being that originates and gives its power and place to the sense of good and evil? If we regard only the process, we may agree that it is the vital mind that makes the distinction. Its first valuation is sensational and individual, — all that is pleasant, helpful, beneficial to the life-ego is good, all that is unpleasant, malefic, injurious or destructive is evil. Its next valuation is utilitarian and social: all that is considered helpful to the associated life, all that it demands from the individual in order to remain in association and to regulate association for the best maintenance, satisfaction, development, good order of the associated life and its units, is good; all that has in the view of the society a contrary effect or tendency is evil. But thinking mind then comes in with its own valuation and strives to find out an intellectual basis, an idea of law or principle, rational or cosmic, a law of Karma perhaps or an ethical system founded on reason or on an aesthetic, emotional or hedonistic basis. Religion brings in her sanctions; there is a word or law of God that enjoins righteousness even though Nature permits or stimulates its opposite, — or perhaps Truth and Righteousness are themselves God and there is no other Divinity. But, behind all this practical or rational enforcement of the human ethical instinct, there is a feeling that there is something deeper: all these standards are
either too narrow and rigid or complex and confused, uncertain, subject to alteration by a mental or a vital change or evolution; yet it is felt that there is a deeper abiding truth and something within us that can have the intuition of that truth,—in other words, that the real sanction is inward, spiritual and psychic. The traditional account of this inner witness is conscience, a power of perception in us half mental, half intuitive; but this is something superficial, constructed, unreliable: there is certainly within us, though less easily active, more masked by surface elements, a deeper spiritual sense, the soul’s discernment, an inborn light within our nature.

What then is this spiritual or psychic witness or what is to it the value of the sense of good and evil? It may be maintained that the one use of the sense of sin and evil is that the embodied being may become aware of the nature of this world of inconscience and ignorance, awake to a knowledge of its evil and suffering and the relative nature of its good and happiness and turn away from it to that which is absolute. Or else its spiritual use may be to purify the nature by the pursuit of good and the negation of evil until it is ready to perceive the supreme good and turn from the world towards God, or, as in the Buddhistic ethical insistence, it may serve to prepare the dissolution of the ignorant ego-complex and the escape from personality and suffering. But also it may be that this awakening is a spiritual necessity of the evolution itself, a step towards the growth of the being out of the Ignorance into the truth of the divine unity and the evolution of a divine consciousness and a divine being. For much more than the mind or life which can turn either to good or to evil, it is the soul-personality, the psychic being, which insists on the distinction, though in a larger sense than the mere moral difference. It is the soul in us which turns always towards Truth, Good and Beauty, because it is by these things that it itself grows in stature; the rest, their opposites, are a necessary part of experience, but have to be outgrown in the spiritual increase of the being. The fundamental psychic entity in us has the delight of life and all experience as part of the progressive manifestation of the spirit, but the very principle of its delight of life is to gather
out of all contacts and happenings their secret divine sense and essence, a divine use and purpose so that by experience our mind and life may grow out of the Inconscience towards a supreme consciousness, out of the divisions of the Ignorance towards an integralising consciousness and knowledge. It is there for that and it pursues from life to life its ever-increasing upward tendency and insistence; the growth of the soul is a growth out of darkness into light, out of falsehood into truth, out of suffering into its own supreme and universal Ananda. The soul’s perception of good and evil may not coincide with the mind’s artificial standards, but it has a deeper sense, a sure discrimination of what points to the higher Light and what points away from it. It is true that as the inferior light is below good and evil, so the superior spiritual light is beyond good and evil; but this is not in the sense of admitting all things with an impartial neutrality or of obeying equally the impulses of good and evil, but in the sense that a higher law of being intervenes in which there is no longer any place or utility for these values. There is a self-law of supreme Truth which is above all standards; there is a supreme and universal Good inherent, intrinsic, self-existent, self-aware, self-moving and determined, infinitely plastic with the pure plasticity of the luminous consciousness of the supreme Infinite.

If, then, evil and falsehood are natural products of the Inconscience, automatic results of the evolution of life and mind from it in the processus of the Ignorance, we have to see how they arise, on what they depend for their existence and what is the remedy or escape. In the surface emergence of mental and vital consciousness from the Inconscience is to be found the process by which these phenomena come into being. Here there are two determining factors, — and it is these that are the efficient cause of the simultaneous emergence of falsehood and evil. First, there is an underlying, a still occult consciousness and power of inherent knowledge, and there is also an overlying layer of what might be called indeterminate or else ill-formed stuff of vital and physical consciousness; through this obscure difficult medium the emerging mentality has to force its way and has to
impose itself on it by a constructed and no longer an inherent knowledge, because this stuff is still full of nescience, heavily burdened and enveloped with the inconscience of Matter. Next, the emergence takes place in a separated form of life which has to affirm itself against a principle of inanimate material inertia and a constant pull of that material inertia towards disintegration and a relapse into the original inanimate Inconscience. This separated life-form has also to affirm itself, supported only by a limited principle of association, against an outside world which is, if not hostile to its existence, yet full of dangers and on which it has to impose itself, conquer life-room, arrive at expression and propagation, if it wishes to survive. The result of an emergence of consciousness in these conditions is the growth of a self-affirming vital and physical individual, a construction of Nature of life and matter with a concealed psychic or spiritual true individual behind it for which Nature is creating this outward means of expression. As mentality increases, this vital and material individual takes the more developed form of a constantly self-affirming mental, vital and physical ego. Our surface consciousness and type of existence, our natural being, has developed its present character under the compulsion of these two initial and basic facts of the evolutionary emergence.

In its first appearance consciousness has the semblance of a miracle, a power alien to Matter that manifests unaccountably in a world of inconscient Nature and grows slowly and with difficulty. Knowledge is acquired, created out of nothing as it were, learned, increased, accumulated by an ephemeral ignorant creature in whom at birth it is entirely absent or present only, not as knowledge, but in the form of an inherited capacity proper to the stage of development of this slowly learning ignorance. It might be conjectured that consciousness is only the original Inconscience mechanically recording the facts of existence on the brain-cells with a reflex or response in the cells automatically reading the record and dictating their answer; the record, reflex, response together constitute what appears to be consciousness. But this is evidently not the whole truth, for it might account for observation and mechanical action, — although it is not clear
how an unconscious record and response can turn into a conscious observation, a conscious sense of things and sense of self,—but does not credibly account for ideation, imagination, speculation, the free play of intellect with its observed material. The evolution of consciousness and knowledge cannot be accounted for unless there is already a concealed consciousness in things with its inherent and native powers emerging little by little. Further, the facts of animal life and the operations of the emergent mind in life impose on us the conclusion that there is in this concealed consciousness an underlying Knowledge or power of knowledge which by the necessity of the life-contacts with the environment comes to the surface.

The individual animal being in its first conscious self-affirmation has to rely on two sources of knowledge. As it is nescient and helpless, a small modicum of uninformed surface consciousness in a world unknown to it, the secret Conscious-Force sends up to this surface the minimum of intuition necessary for it to maintain its existence and go through the operations indispensable to life and survival. This intuition is not possessed by the animal, but possesses and moves it; it is something that manifests of itself in the grain of the vital and physical substance of consciousness under pressure of a need and for the needed occasion: but at the same time a surface result of this intuition accumulates and takes the form of an automatic instinct which works whenever the occasion for it recurs; this instinct belongs to the race and is imparted at birth to its individual members. The intuition, when it occurs or recurs, is unerring; the instinct is automatically correct as a rule, but can err, for it fails or blunders when the surface consciousness or an ill-developed intelligence interferes or if the instinct continues to act mechanically when, owing to changed circumstances, the need or the necessary circumstances are no longer there. The second source of knowledge is surface contact with the world outside the natural individual being; it is this contact which is the cause first of a conscious sensation and sense-perception and then of intelligence. If there were not an underlying consciousness, the contact would not create any
perception or reaction; it is because the contact stimulates into a feeling and a surface response the subliminal of a being already vitalised by the subconscious life-principle and its first needs and seekings that a surface awareness begins to form and develop. Intrinsically the emergence of a surface consciousness by force of life contacts is due to the fact that in both subject and object of the contact consciousness-force is already existent in a subliminal latency: when the life-principle is ready, sufficiently sensitive in the subject, the recipient of the contact, this subliminal consciousness emerges in a response to the stimulus which begins to constitute a vital or life mind, the mind of the animal, and then, in the course of the evolution, a thinking intelligence. The secret consciousness is rendered into surface sensation and perception, the secret force into surface impulse.

If this underlying subliminal consciousness were to come itself to the surface, there would be a direct meeting between the consciousness of the subject and the contents of the object and the result would be a direct knowledge; but this is not possible, first, because of the veto or obstruction of the Inconscience and, secondly, because the evolutionary intention is to develop slowly through an imperfect but growing surface awareness. The secret consciousness-force has therefore to limit itself to imperfect renderings in a surface vital and mental vibration and operation and is forced by the absence, holding back or insufficiency of the direct awareness to develop organs and instincts for an indirect knowledge. This creation of an external knowledge and intelligence takes place in an already prepared indeterminate conscious structure which is the earliest formation on the surface. At first this structure is only a minimum formation of consciousness with a vague sensational perception and a response-impulse; but, as more organised forms of life appear, this grows into a life-mind and vital intelligence largely mechanical and automatic in the beginning and concerned only with practical needs, desires and impulses. All this activity is in its initiation intuitive and instinctive; the underlying consciousness is translated in the surface substratum into automatic movements of the conscious stuff of life and body: the mind movements,
when they appear, are involved in these automatisms, they occur
as a subordinate mental notation within the predominant vital
sense-notation. But slowly mind starts its task of disengaging
itself; it still works for the life-instinct, life-need and life-desire,
but its own special characters emerge, observation, invention,
device, intention, execution of purpose, while sensation and im-
pulse add to themselves emotion and bring a subtler and finer
affective urge and value into the crude vital reaction. Mind is still
much involved in life and its highest purely mental operations
are not in evidence; it accepts a large background of instinct
and vital intuition as its support, and the intelligence developed,
though always growing as the animal life-scale rises, is an added
superstructure.

When human intelligence adds itself to the animal basis, this
basis still remains present and active, but it is largely changed,
subtilised and uplifted by conscious will and intention; the auto-
matic life of instinct and vital intuition diminishes and cannot
keep its original predominant proportion to the self-aware men-
tal intelligence. Intuition becomes less purely intuitive: even
when there is still a strong vital intuition, its vital character is
concealed by mentalisation, and mental intuition is most often
a mixture, not the pure article, for an alloy is added to make it
mentally current and serviceable. In the animal also the surface
consciousness can obstruct or alter the intuition but, because its
capacity is less, it interferes less with the automatic, mechanical
or instinctive action of Nature: in mental man when the intuition
rises towards the surface, it is caught at once before it reaches
and is translated into terms of mind-intelligence with a gloss
or mental interpretation added which conceals the origin of the
knowledge. Instinct also is deprived of its intuitive character by
being taken up and mentalised and by that change becomes less
sure, though more assisted, when not replaced, by the plastic
power of adaptation of things and self-adaptation proper to the
intelligence. The emergence of mind in life brings an immense
increase of the range and capacity of the evolving consciousness-
force; but it also brings an immense increase in the range and
capacity of error. For evolving mind trails constantly error as
its shadow, a shadow that grows with the growing body of consciousness and knowledge.

If in the evolution the surface consciousness were always open to the action of intuition, the intervention of error would not be possible. For intuition is an edge of light thrust out by the secret supermind, and an emergent truth-consciousness, however limited, yet sure in its action, would be the consequence. Instinct, if it had to form, would be plastic to the intuition and adapt itself freely to evolutionary change and the change of inner or environing circumstance. Intelligence, if it had to form, would be subservient to intuition and would be its accurate mental expression; its brilliancy would perhaps be modulated to suit a diminished action serving as a minor, not, as it is now, a major function and movement, but it would not be erratic by deviation, would not by its parts of obscurity sink into the false or fallible. But this could not be, because the hold of Inconscience on the matter, the surface substance, in which mind and life have to express themselves, makes the surface consciousness obscure and unresponsive to the light within; it is impelled moreover to cherish this defect, to substitute more and more its own incomplete but better grasped clarities for the unaccountable inner intimations, because a rapid development of the truth-consciousness is not the intention in Nature. For the method chosen by her is a slow and difficult evolution of Inconscience developing into Ignorance and Ignorance forming itself into a mixed, modified and partial knowledge before it can be ready for transformation into a higher truth-consciousness and truth-knowledge. Our imperfect mental intelligence is a necessary stage of transition before this higher transformation can be made possible.

There are, in practical fact, two poles of the conscious being between which the evolutionary process works, one a surface nescience which has to change gradually into knowledge, the other a secret Consciousness-Force in which all power of knowledge is and which has slowly to manifest in the nescience. The surface nescience full of incomprehension and inapprehension can change into knowledge because consciousness is there involved
in it; if it were intrinsically an entire absence of consciousness, the change would be impossible: but still it works as an incon science trying to be conscious; it is at first a nescience compelled by need and outer impact to feeling and response and then an ignorance labouring to know. The means used is a contact with the world and its forces and objects which, like the rubbing of tinders, creates a spark of awareness; the response from within is that spark leaping out into manifestation. But the surface nescience in receiving the response from an underlying source of knowledge subdues and changes it into something obscure and incomplete; there is an imperfect seizure or a misprision of the intuition that answers to the contact: still by this process an initiation of responsive consciousness, a first accumulation of ingrained or habitual instinctive knowledge begins, and there follows upon it first a primitive and then a developed capacity of receptive awareness, understanding, reply of action, previsional initiation of action,—an evolving consciousness which is halfknowledge, half-ignorance. All that is unknown is met on the basis of what is known; but as this knowledge is imperfect, as it receives imperfectly and responds imperfectly to the contacts of things, there can be a misprision of the new contact as well as a misprision or deformation of the intuitive response, a double source of error.

It is evident, in these conditions, that Error is a necessary accompaniment, almost a necessary condition and instrumenta tion, an indispensable step or stage in the slow evolution towards knowledge in a consciousness that begins from nescience and works in the stuff of a general nescience. The evolving consciousness has to acquire knowledge by an indirect means which does not give even a fragmentary certitude; for there is at first only a figure or a sign, an image or a vibration physical in character created by contact with the object and a resulting vital sensation which have to be interpreted by mind and sense and turned into a corresponding mental idea or figure. Things thus experienced and mentally known have to be related together; things unknown have to be observed, discovered, fitted into the already acquired sum of experience and knowledge. At each
step different possibilities of fact, significance, judgment, interpretation, relation present themselves; some have to be tested and rejected, others accepted and confirmed: to shut out error is impossible without limiting the chances of acquisition of knowledge. Observation is the first instrument of the mind, but observation itself is a complex process open at every step to the mistakes of the ignorant observing consciousness; misprision of the fact by the senses and the sense-mind, omission, wrong selection and putting together, unconscious additions made by a personal impression or personal reaction create a false or an imperfect composite picture; to these errors are added the errors of inference, judgment, interpretation of facts by the intelligence: when even the data are not sure or perfect, the conclusions built on them must also be insecure and imperfect.

Consciousness in its acquisition of knowledge proceeds from the known to the unknown; it builds a structure of acquired experience, memories, impressions, judgments, a composite mental plan of things which is of the nature of a shifting and ever modifiable fixity. In the reception of new knowledge, what comes in to be received is judged in the light of past knowledge and fitted into the structure; if it cannot properly fit, it is either dovetailed in anyhow or rejected: but the existing knowledge and its structures or standards may not be applicable to the new object or new field of knowledge, the fitting may be a misfitting or the rejection may be an erroneous response. To misprision and wrong interpretation of facts, there is added misapplication of knowledge, miscombination, misconstruction, misrepresentation, a complicated machinery of mental error. In all this enlightened obscurity of our mental parts a secret intuition is at work, a truth-urge that corrects or pushes the intelligence to correct what is erroneous, to labour towards a true picture of things and a true interpretative knowledge. But intuition itself is limited in the human mind by mental misprision of its intimations and is unable to act in its own right; for whether it be physical, vital or mental intuition, it has to present itself in order to be received, not nude and pure, but garbed with a mental coating or entirely enveloped in an ample mental vesture;
so disguised, its true nature cannot be recognised and its relation
to mind and its office are not understood, its way of working is
ignored by the hasty and half-aware human intelligence. There
are intuitions of actuality, of possibility, of the determining truth
behind things, but all are mistaken by the mind for each other.
A great confusion of half-grasped material and an experimental
building with it, a representation or mental structure of the
figure of self and things rigid and yet chaotic, half formed and
arranged half jumbled, half true half erroneous, but always
imperfect, is the character of human knowledge.

Error by itself, however, would not amount to falsehood;
it would only be an imperfection of truth, a trying, an es-
say of possibilities: for when we do not know, untried and
uncertain possibilities have to be admitted and, even if as a
result an imperfect or inapt structure of thought is built, yet it
may justify itself by opening to fresh knowledge in unexpected
directions and either its dissolution and rebuilding or the dis-
covery of some truth it concealed might increase our cognition
or our experience. In spite of the mixture created the growth
of consciousness, intelligence and reason could arrive through
this mixed truth to a clearer and truer figure of self-knowledge
and world-knowledge. The obstruction of the original and en-
veloping inconscience would diminish, and an increasing men-
tal consciousness would reach a clarity and wholeness which
would enable the concealed powers of direct knowledge and
intuitive process to emerge, utilise the prepared and enlightened
instruments and make mind-intelligence their true agent and
truth-builder on the evolutionary surface.

But here the second condition or factor of the evolution
intervenes; for this seeking for knowledge is not an impersonal
mental process hampered only by the general limitations of
mind-intelligence: the ego is there, the physical ego, the life ego
bent, not on self-knowledge and the discovery of the truth of
things and the truth of life, but on vital self-affirmation; a mental
ego is there also bent on its own personal self-affirmation and
largely directed and used by the vital urge for its life-desire and
life-purpose. For as mind develops, there develops also a mental
individuality with a personal drive of mind-tendency, a mental temperament, a mind formation of its own. This surface mental individuality is ego-centric; it looks at the world and things and happenings from its own standpoint and sees them not as they are but as they affect itself: in observing things it gives them the turn suitable to its own tendency and temperament, selects or rejects, arranges truth according to its own mental preference and convenience; observation, judgment, reason are all determined or affected by this mind-personality and assimilated to the needs of the individuality and the ego. Even when the mind aims most at a pure impersonality of truth and reason, a sheer impersonality is impossible to it; even the most trained, severe and vigilant intellect fails to observe the twists and turns it gives to truth in the reception of fact and idea and the construction of its mental knowledge. Here we have an almost inexhaustible source of distortion of truth, a cause of falsification, an unconscious or half-conscious will to error, an acceptance of ideas or facts not by a clear perception of the true and the false, but by preference, personal suitability, temperamental choice, prejudgment. Here is a fruitful seed-plot for the growth of falsehood or a gate or many gates through which it can enter by stealth or by an usurping but acceptable violence. Truth too can enter in and take up its dwelling, not by its own right, but at the mind’s pleasure.

In the terms of the Sankhya psychology we can distinguish three types of mental individuality, — that which is governed by the principle of obscurity and inertia, first-born of the Inconscience, tamasic; that which is governed by a force of passion and activity, kinetic, rajasic; that which is cast in the mould of the sattwic principle of light, harmony, balance. The tamasic intelligence has its seat in the physical mind: it is inert to ideas, — except to those which it receives inertly, blindly, passively from a recognised source or authority, — obscure in their reception, unwilling to enlarge itself, recalcitrant to new stimulus, conservative and immobile; it clings to its received structure of knowledge and its one power is repetitive practicality, but it is a power limited by the accustomed, the obvious, the established and familiar and already secure; it thrusts away all that is new
and likely to disturb it. The rajasic intelligence has its main seat in the vital mind and is of two kinds: one kind is defensive with violence and passion, assertive of its mental individuality and all that is in agreement with it, preferred by its volition, adapted to its outlook, but aggressive against all that is contrary to its mental ego-structure or unacceptable to its personal intellectualty; the other kind is enthusiastic for new things, passionate, insistent, impetuous, often mobile beyond measure, inconstant and ever restless, governed in its idea not by truth and light but by the zest of intellectual battle and movement and adventure. The sattwic intelligence is eager for knowledge, as open as it can be to it, careful to consider and verify and balance, to adjust and adapt to its view whatever confirms itself as truth, receiving all that it can assimilate, skilful to build truth in a harmonious intellectual structure: but, because its light is limited, as all mental light must be, it is unable to enlarge itself so as to receive equally all truth and all knowledge; it has a mental ego, even an enlightened one, and is determined by it in its observation, judgment, reasoning, mental choice and preference. In most men there is a predominance of one of these qualities but also a mixture; the same mind can be open and plastic and harmonic in one direction, kinetic and vital, hasty and prejudiced and ill-balanced in another, in yet another obscure and unreceptive. This limitation by personality, this defence of personality and refusal to receive what is unassimilable, is necessary for the individual being because in its evolution, at the stage reached, it has a certain self-expression, a certain type of experience and use of experience which must, for the mind and life at least, govern nature; that for the moment is its law of being, its dharma. This limitation of mind-consciousness by personality and of truth by mental temperament and preference must be the rule of our nature so long as the individual has not reached universality, is not yet preparing for mind-transcendence. But it is evident that this condition is inevitably a source of error and can at any moment be the cause of a falsification of knowledge, an unconscious or half-wilful self-deception, a refusal to admit true knowledge, a readiness to assert acceptable wrong knowledge as true knowledge.
This is in the field of cognition, but the same law applies to will and action. Out of ignorance a wrong consciousness is created which gives a wrong dynamic reaction to the contact of persons, things, happenings: the surface consciousness develops the habit of ignoring, misunderstanding or rejecting the suggestions to action or against action that come from the secret inmost consciousness, the psychic entity; it answers instead to unenlightened mental and vital suggestions, or acts in accordance with the demands and impulsions of the vital ego. Here the second of the primary conditions of the evolution, the law of a separate life-being affirming itself in a world which is not-self to it, comes into prominence and assumes an immense importance. It is here that the surface vital personality or life-self asserts its dominance, and this dominance of the ignorant vital being is a principal active source of discord and disharmony, a cause of inner and outer perturbations of the life, a mainspring of wrong-doing and evil. The natural vital element in us, in so far as it is unchecked or untrained or retains its primitive character, is not concerned with truth or right consciousness or right action; it is concerned with self-affirmation, with life-growth, with possession, with satisfaction of impulse, with all satisfactions of desire. This main need and demand of the life-self seems all-important to it; it would readily carry it out without any regard to truth or right or good or any other consideration: but because mind is there and has these conceptions, because the soul is there and has these soul-perceptions, it tries to dominate mind and get from it by dictation a sanction and order of execution for its own will of self-affirmation, a verdict of truth and right and good for its own vital assertions, impulses, desires; it is concerned with self-justification in order that it may have room for full self-affirmation. But if it can get the assent of mind, it is quite ready to ignore all these standards and set up only one standard, the satisfaction, growth, strength, greatness of the vital ego. The life-individual needs place, expansion, possession of its world, dominance and control of things and beings; it needs life-room, a space in the sun, self-assertion, survival. It needs these things for itself and for those with whom it associates itself, for its own
ego and for the collective ego; it needs them for its ideas, creeds, ideals, interests, imaginations: for it has to assert these forms of I-ness and my-ness and impose them on the world around it or, if it is not strong enough to do that, it has at least to defend and maintain them against others to the best of its power and contrivance. It may try to do it by methods it thinks or chooses to think or represent as right; it may try to do it by the naked use of violence, ruse, falsehood, destructive aggression, crushing of other life-formations: the principle is the same whatever the means or the moral attitude. It is not only in the realm of interests, but in the realm of ideas and the realm of religion that the vital being of man has introduced this spirit and attitude of self-affirmation and struggle and the use of violence, oppression and suppression, intolerance, aggression; it has imposed the principle of life-egoism on the domain of intellectual truth and the domain of the spirit. Into its self-affirmation the self-asserting life brings in hatred and dislike towards all that stands in the way of its expansion or hurts its ego; it develops as a means or as a passion or reaction of the life-nature cruelty, treachery and all kinds of evil: its satisfaction of desire and impulse takes no account of right and wrong, but only of the fulfilment of desire and impulse. For this satisfaction it is ready to face the risk of destruction and the actuality of suffering; for what it is pushed by Nature to aim at is not self-preservation alone, but life-affirmation and life-satisfaction, formulation of life-force and life-being.

It does not follow that this is all that the vital personality is in its native composition or that evil is its very nature. It is not primarily concerned with truth and good, but it can have the passion for truth and good as it has, more spontaneously, the passion for joy and beauty. In all that is developed by the life-force there is developed at the same time a secret delight somewhere in the being, a delight in good and a delight in evil, a delight in truth and a delight in falsehood, a delight in life and an attraction to death, a delight in pleasure and a delight in pain, in one’s own suffering and the suffering of others, but also in one’s own joy and happiness and good and the joy and happiness and good of others. For the force of life-affirmation affirms alike the
good and the evil: it has its impulses of help and association, of generosity, affection, loyalty, self-giving; it takes up altruism as it takes up egoism, sacrifices itself as well as destroys others; and in all its acts there is the same passion for life-affirmation, the same force of action and fulfilment. This character of vital being and its trend of existence in which what we term good and evil are items but not the mainspring, is evident in subhuman life; in the human being, since there a mental, moral and psychic discernment has developed, it is subjected to control or to camouflage, but it does not change its character. The vital being and its life-force and their drive towards self-affirmation are, in the absence of an overt action of soul-power and spiritual power, Atmashakti, Nature’s chief means of effectuation, and without its support neither mind nor body can utilise their possibilities or realise their aim here in existence. It is only if the inner or true vital being replaces the outer life-personality that the drive of the vital ego can be wholly overcome and the life-force become the servant of the soul and a powerful instrumentation for the action of our true spiritual being.

This then is the origin and nature of error, falsehood, wrong and evil in the consciousness and will of the individual; a limited consciousness growing out of nescience is the source of error, a personal attachment to the limitation and the error born of it the source of falsity, a wrong consciousness governed by the life-ego the source of evil. But it is evident that their relative existence is only a phenomenon thrown up by the cosmic Force in its drive towards evolutionary self-expression, and it is there that we have to look for the significance of the phenomenon. For the emergence of the life-ego is, as we have seen, a machinery of cosmic Nature for the affirmation of the individual, for his self-disengagement from the indeterminate mass substance of the subconscient, for the appearance of a conscious being on a ground prepared by the Inconscience; the principle of life-affirmation of the ego is the necessary consequence. The individual ego is a pragmatic and effective fiction, a translation of the secret self into the terms of surface consciousness, or a subjective substitute for the true self in our surface experience:
the inner Divinity, but it is still pushed secretly towards an evolutionary unification in diversity; it has behind itself, though finite, the impulse to the infinite. But this in the terms of an ignorant consciousness translates itself into the will to expand, to be a boundless finite, to take everything it can into itself, to enter into everything and possess it, even to be possessed if by that it can feel itself satisfied and growing in or through others or can take into itself by subjection the being and power of others or get thereby a help or an impulse for its life-affirmation, its life-delight, its enrichment of its mental, vital or physical existence.

But because it does these things as a separate ego for its separate advantage and not by conscious interchange and mutuality, not by unity, life-discord, conflict, disharmony arise, and it is the products of this life-discord and disharmony that we call wrong and evil. Nature accepts them because they are necessary circumstances of the evolution, necessary for the growth of the divided being; they are products of ignorance, supported by an ignorant consciousness that founds itself on division, by an ignorant will that works through division, by an ignorant delight of existence that takes the joy of division. The evolutionary intention acts through the evil as through the good; it has to utilise all because confinement to a limited good would imprison and check the intended evolution; it uses any available material and does what it can with it: this is the reason why we see evil coming out of what we call good and good coming out of what we call evil; and, if we see even what was thought to be evil coming to be accepted as good, what was thought to be good accepted as evil, it is because our standards of both are evolutionary, limited and mutable. Evolutionary Nature, the terrestrial cosmic Force, seems then at first to have no preference for either of these opposites, it uses both alike for its purpose. And yet it is the same Nature, the same Force that has burdened man with the sense of good and evil and insists on its importance: evidently, therefore, this sense also has an evolutionary purpose; it too must be necessary, it must be there so that man may leave certain
things behind him, move towards others, until out of good and evil he can emerge into some Good that is eternal and infinite.

But how is this evolutionary intention in Nature to fulfil itself, by what power, means, impulsion, what principle and process of selection and harmonisation? The method adopted by the mind of man through the ages has been always a principle of selection and rejection, and this has taken the forms of a religious sanction, a social or moral rule of life or an ethical ideal. But this is an empirical means which does not touch the root of the problem because it has no vision of the cause and origin of the malady it attempts to cure; it deals with the symptoms, but deals with them perfunctorily, not knowing what function they serve in the purpose of Nature and what it is in the mind and life that supports them and keeps them in being. Moreover, human good and evil are relative and the standards erected by ethics are uncertain as well as relative: what is forbidden by one religion or another, what is regarded as good or bad by social opinion, what is thought useful to society or noxious to it, what some temporary law of man allows or disallows, what is or is considered helpful or harmful to self or others, what accords with this or that ideal, what is prompted or discouraged by an instinct which we call conscience,—an amalgam of all these viewpoints is the determining heterogeneous idea, constitutes the complex substance, of morality; in all of them there is the constant mixture of truth and half-truth and error which pursues all the activities of our limiting mental Knowledge-Ignorance. A mental control over our vital and physical desires and instincts, over our personal and social action, over our dealings with others is indispensable to us as human beings, and morality creates a standard by which we can guide ourselves and establish a customary control; but the control is always imperfect and it is an expedient, not a solution: man remains always what he is and has ever been, a mixture of good and evil, sin and virtue, a mental ego with an imperfect command over his mental, vital and physical nature.

The endeavour to select, to retain from our consciousness and action all that seems to us good and reject all that seems to
us evil and so to re-form our being, to reconstitute and shape ourselves into the image of an ideal, is a more profound ethical motive, because it comes nearer to the true issue; it rests on the sound idea that our life is a becoming and that there is something which we have to become and be. But the ideals constructed by the human mind are selective and relative; to shape our nature rigidly according to them is to limit ourselves and make a construction where there should be growth into larger being. The true call upon us is the call of the Infinite and the Supreme; the self-affirmation and self-abnegation imposed on us by Nature are both movements towards that, and it is the right way of self-affirmation and self-negation taken together in place of the wrong, because ignorant, way of the ego and in place of the conflict between the yes and the no of Nature that we have to discover. If we do not discover that, either the push of life will be too strong for our narrow ideal of perfection, its instrumentation will break and it will fail to consummate and perpetuate itself, or at best a half result will be all that we shall obtain, or else the push away from life will present itself as the only remedy, the one way out of the otherwise invincible grasp of the Ignorance. This indeed is the way out usually indicated by religion; a divinely enjoined morality, a pursuit of piety, righteousness and virtue as laid down in a religious code of conduct, a law of God determined by some human inspiration, is put forward as a part of the means, the direction, by which we can tread the way that leads to the exit, the issue. But this exit leaves the problem where it was; it is only a way of escape for the personal being out of the unsolved perplexity of the cosmic existence. In ancient Indian spiritual thought there was a clearer perception of the difficulty; the practice of truth, virtue, right will and right doing was regarded as a necessity of the approach to spiritual realisation, but in the realisation itself the being arises to the greater consciousness of the Infinite and Eternal and shakes away from itself the burden of sin and virtue, for that belongs to the relativity and the Ignorance. Behind this larger truer perception lay the intuition that a relative good is a training imposed by World-Nature upon us so that we may pass through
it towards the true Good which is absolute. These problems are of the mind and the ignorant life, they do not accompany us beyond mind; as there is a cessation of the duality of truth and error in an infinite Truth-Consciousness, so there is a liberation from the duality of good and evil in an infinite Good, there is transcendence.

There can be no artificial escape from this problem which has always troubled humanity and from which it has found no satisfying issue. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil with its sweet and bitter fruits is secretly rooted in the very nature of the Inconscience from which our being has emerged and on which it still stands as a nether soil and basis of our physical existence; it has grown visibly on the surface in the manifold branchings of the Ignorance which is still the main bulk and condition of our consciousness in its difficult evolution towards a supreme consciousness and an integral awareness. As long as there is this soil with the unfound roots in it and this nourishing air and climate of Ignorance, the tree will grow and flourish and put forth its dual blossoms and its fruit of mixed nature. It would follow that there can be no final solution until we have turned our inconscience into the greater consciousness, made the truth of self and spirit our life-basis and transformed our ignorance into a higher knowledge. All other expedients will only be makeshifts or blind issues; a complete and radical transformation of our nature is the only true solution. It is because the Inconscience imposes its original obscurity on our awareness of self and things and because the Ignorance bases it on an imperfect and divided consciousness and because we live in that obscurity and division that wrong knowledge and wrong will are possible: without wrong knowledge there could be no error or falsehood, without error or falsehood in our dynamic parts there could be no wrong will in our members; without wrong will there could be no wrong-doing or evil: while these causes endure, the effects also will persist in our action and in our nature. A mental control can only be a control, not a cure; a mental teaching, rule, standard can only impose an artificial groove in which our action revolves mechanically or with difficulty and
which imposes a curbed and limited formation on the course of our nature. A total change of consciousness, a radical change of nature is the one remedy and the sole issue.

But since the root of the difficulty is a split, limited and separative existence, this change must consist in an integration, a healing of the divided consciousness of our being, and since that division is complex and many-sided, no partial change on one side of the being can be passed off as a sufficient substitute for the integral transformation. Our first division is that created by our ego and mainly, most forcefully, most vividly by our life-ego, which divides us from all other beings as not-self and ties us to our ego-centricity and the law of an egoistic self-affirmation. It is in the errors of this self-affirmation that wrong and evil first arise: wrong consciousness engenders wrong will in the members, in the thinking mind, in the heart, in the life-mind and the sensational being, in the very body-consciousness; wrong will engenders wrong action of all these instruments, a multiple error and many-branching crookedness of thought and will and sense and feeling. Nor can we deal rightly with others so long as they are to us others, beings who are strangers to ourselves and of whose inner consciousness, soul-need, mind-need, heart-need, life-need, body-need we know little or nothing. The modicum of imperfect sympathy, knowledge and good-will that the law, need and habit of association engender, is a poor quantum of what is required for a true action. A larger mind, a larger heart, a more ample and generous life-force can do something to help us or help others and avoid the worst offences, but this too is insufficient and will not prevent a mass of troubles and harms and collisions of our preferred good with the good of others. By the very nature of our ego and ignorance we affirm ourselves egoistically even when we most pride ourselves on selflessness and ignorantly even when we most pride ourselves on understanding and knowledge. Altruism taken as a rule of life does not deliver us; it is a potent instrument for self-enlargement and for correction of the narrower ego, but it does not abolish it nor transform it into the true self one with all; the ego of the altruist is as powerful and absorbing as the ego of the selfish and it is
often more powerful and insistent because it is a self-righteous and magnified ego. It helps still less if we do wrong to our soul, to our mind, life or body with the idea of subordinating our self to the self of others. To affirm our being rightly so that it may become one with all is the true principle, not to mutilate or immolate it. Self-immolation may be necessary at times, exceptionally, for a cause, in answer to some demand of the heart or for some right or high purpose but cannot be made the rule or nature of life; so exaggerated, it would only feed and exaggerate the ego of others or magnify some collective ego, not lead us or mankind to the discovery and affirmation of our or its true being. Sacrifice and self-giving are indeed a true principle and a spiritual necessity, for we cannot affirm our being rightly without sacrifice or without self-giving to something larger than our ego; but that too must be done with a right consciousness and will founded on a true knowledge. To develop the sattwic part of our nature, a nature of light, understanding, balance, harmony, sympathy, good-will, kindness, fellow-feeling, self-control, rightly ordered and harmonised action, is the best we can do in the limits of the mental formation, but it is a stage and not the goal of our growth of being. These are solutions by the way, palliatives, necessary means for a partial dealing with this root difficulty, provisional standards and devices given us as a temporary help and guidance because the true and total solution is beyond our present capacity and can only come when we have sufficiently evolved to see it and make it our main endeavour.

The true solution can intervene only when by our spiritual growth we can become one self with all beings, know them as part of our self, deal with them as if they were our other selves; for then the division is healed, the law of separate self-affirmation leading by itself to affirmation against or at the expense of others is enlarged and liberated by adding to it the law of our self-affirmation for others and our self-finding in their self-finding and self-realisation. It has been made a rule of religious ethics to act in a spirit of universal compassion, to love one’s neighbour as oneself, to do to others as one would have them do to us, to feel the joy and grief of others as one’s
own; but no man living in his ego is able truly and perfectly
to do these things, he can only accept them as a demand of his
mind, an aspiration of his heart, an effort of his will to live by
a high standard and modify by a sincere endeavour his crude
ego-nature. It is when others are known and felt intimately as
oneself that this ideal can become a natural and spontaneous
rule of our living and be realised in practice as in principle.
But even oneness with others is not enough by itself, if it is a
oneness with their ignorance; for then the law of ignorance will
work and error of action and wrong action will survive even if
diminished in degree and mellowed in incidence and character.
Our oneness with others must be fundamental, not a oneness
with their minds, hearts, vital selves, egos,—even though these
come to be included in our universalised consciousness,—but
a oneness in the soul and spirit, and that can only come by
our liberation into soul-awareness and self-knowledge. To be
ourselves liberated from ego and realise our true selves is the
first necessity; all else can be achieved as a luminous result,
a necessary consequence. That is one reason why a spiritual
call must be accepted as imperative and take precedence over
all other claims, intellectual, ethical, social, that belong to the
domain of the Ignorance. For the mental law of good abides in
that domain and can only modify and palliate; nothing can be a
sufficient substitute for the spiritual change that can realise the
true and integral good because through the spirit we come to
the root of action and existence.

In the spiritual knowledge of self there are three steps of
its self-achievement which are at the same time three parts of
the one knowledge. The first is the discovery of the soul, not
the outer soul of thought and emotion and desire, but the secret
psychic entity, the divine element within us. When that becomes
dominant over the nature, when we are consciously the soul and
when mind, life and body take their true place as its instruments,
we are aware of a guide within that knows the truth, the good,
the true delight and beauty of existence, controls heart and in-
tellect by its luminous law and leads our life and being towards
spiritual completeness. Even within the obscure workings of the
Ignorance we have then a witness who discerns, a living light that illumines, a will that refuses to be misled and separates the mind’s truth from its error, the heart’s intimate response from its vibrations to a wrong call and wrong demand upon it, the life’s true ardour and plenitude of movement from vital passion and the turbid falsehoods of our vital nature and its dark self-seekings. This is the first step of self-realisation, to enthrone the soul, the divine psychic individual in the place of the ego. The next step is to become aware of the eternal self in us unborn and one with the self of all beings. This self-realisation liberates and universalises; even if our action still proceeds in the dynamics of the Ignorance, it no longer binds or misleads because our inner being is seated in the light of self-knowledge. The third step is to know the Divine Being who is at once our supreme transcendent Self, the Cosmic Being, foundation of our universality, and the Divinity within of which our psychic being, the true evolving individual in our nature, is a portion, a spark, a flame growing into the eternal Fire from which it was lit and of which it is the witness ever living within us and the conscious instrument of its light and power and joy and beauty. Aware of the Divine as the Master of our being and action, we can learn to become channels of his Shakti, the Divine Puissance, and act according to her dictates or her rule of light and power within us. Our action will not then be mastered by our vital impulse or governed by a mental standard, for she acts according to the permanent yet plastic truth of things,—not that which the mind constructs, but the higher, deeper and subtler truth of each movement and circumstance as it is known to the supreme knowledge and demanded by the supreme will in the universe. The liberation of the will follows upon the liberation in knowledge and is its dynamic consequence; it is knowledge that purifies, it is truth that liberates: evil is the fruit of a spiritual ignorance and it will disappear only by the growth of a spiritual consciousness and the light of spiritual knowledge. The division of our being from the being of others can only be healed by removing the divorce of our nature from the inner soul-reality, by abolishing the veil between our becoming and our self-being, by bridging the remoteness of
our individuality in Nature from the Divine Being who is the omnipresent Reality in Nature and above Nature.

But the last division to be removed is the scission between this Nature and the Supernature which is the Self-Power of the Divine Existence. Even before the dynamic Knowledge-Ignorance is removed, while it still remains as an inadequate instrumentation of the spirit, the supreme Shakti or Supernature can work through us and we can be aware of her workings; but it is then by a modification of her light and power so that it can be received and assimilated by the inferior nature of the mind, life and body. But this is not enough; there is needed an entire remoulding of what we are into a way and power of the divine Supernature. The integration of our being cannot be complete unless there is this transformation of the dynamic action; there must be an uplifting and change of the whole mode of Nature itself and not only some illumination and transmutation of the inner ways of the being. An eternal Truth-Consciousness must possess us and sublimate all our natural modes into its own modes of being, knowledge and action; a spontaneous truth-awareness, truth-will, truth-feeling, truth-movement, truth-action can then become the integral law of our nature.

END OF BOOK TWO, PART I