Chapter VI

Reality and the Cosmic Illusion

The Eternal is true; the world is a lie. Vivekachudamani.¹

The Master of Maya creates this world by his Maya and within it is confined another; one should know his Maya as Nature and the Master of Maya as the great Lord of all. Swetaswatar Upishad.²

The Purusha is all this that is, what has been and what is yet to be; he is the master of Immortality and he is whatever grows by food. Swetaswatar Upishad.³

All is the Divine Being. Gita.⁴

But so far we have only cleared a part of the foreground of the field of inquiry; in the background the problem remains unsolved and entire. It is the problem of the nature of the original Consciousness or Power that has created or conceptively constructed or manifested the universe, and the relation to it of our world-cognition,—in sum, whether the universe is a figment of consciousness imposed on our mind by a supreme force of Illusion or a true formation of being experienced by us with a still ignorant but an increasing knowledge. And the true question is not of Mind alone or of a cosmic dream or a cosmic hallucination born of Mind, but of the nature of the Reality, the validity of the creative action that takes place in it or is imposed upon it, the presence or absence of a real content in its or our consciousness and its or our regard on the universe. On behalf of Illusionism it can be answered to the position put forward by us with regard to the truth of existence that all this

¹ Verse 20. ² IV. 9, 10. ³ III. 15. ⁴ VII. 19.
might be valid within the bounds of the cosmic Illusion; it is the system, the pragmatic machinery by which Maya works and maintains herself in the Ignorance: but the truths, possibilities, actualities of the cosmic system are true and actual only within the Illusion, outside that magic circle they have no validity; they are not abiding and eternal realities; all are temporary figures, the works of Knowledge no less than the works of Ignorance. It can be conceded that knowledge is a useful instrument of the Illusion of Maya, for escaping from herself, for destroying herself in the Mind; spiritual knowledge is indispensable: but the one true truth, the only abiding reality beyond all duality of knowledge and ignorance is the eternal relationless Absolute or the Self, the eternal pure Existence. All here turns on the mind's conception and the mental being's experience of reality; for according to the mind's experience or conception of reality will be its interpretation of data otherwise identical, the facts of the Cosmos, individual experience, the realisation of the supreme Transcendence. All mental cognition depends on three elements, the percipient, the perception and the thing perceived or percept. All or any of these three can be affirmed or denied reality; the question then is which of these, if any, are real and to what extent or in what manner. If all three are rejected as instruments of a cosmic Illusion, the farther and consequent question arises, is there then a reality outside them and, if so, what is the relation between the Reality and the Illusion?

It is possible to affirm the reality of the percept, of the objective universe, and deny or diminish the reality of the percipient individual and his perceptive consciousness. In the theory of the sole reality of Matter consciousness is only an operation of Matter-energy in Matter, a secretion or vibration of the brain-cells, a physical reception of images and a brain response, a reflex action or a reaction of Matter to the contacts of Matter. Even if the rigidity of this affirmation is relaxed and consciousness otherwise accounted for, still it is no more than a temporary and derivative phenomenon, not the enduring Reality. The percipient individual is himself only a body and brain capable of the mechanical reactions we generalise under the name of
consciousness: the individual has only a relative value and a temporary reality. But if Matter turns out to be itself unreal or derivative and simply a phenomenon of Energy, as seems now to be the probability, then Energy remains as the sole Reality; the percipient, his perception, the perceived object are only phenomena of Energy. But an Energy without a Being or Existence possessing it or a Consciousness supplying it, an Energy working originally in the void,—for the material field in which we see it at work is itself a creation,—looks itself very much like a mental construction, an unreality; or it might be a temporary inexplicable outbreak of motion which might cease at any time to create phenomena; the Void of the Infinite alone would be enduring and real. The Buddhist theory of the percipient and the perception and the percept as a construction of Karma, the process of some cosmic fact of Action, gave room to such a conclusion; for it led logically to the affirmation of the Non-Being, Void or Nihil. It is possible indeed that what is at work is not an Energy, but a Consciousness; as Matter reduces itself to Energy seizable by us not in itself but in its results and workings, so Energy could be reduced to action of a Consciousness seizable by us not in itself but in its results and workings. But if this Consciousness is supposed to work similarly in a Void, we are exposed to the same conclusion, that it is a creator of temporary phenomenal illusions and itself illusory; Void, an infinite Zero, an original Non-Existence is alone the enduring Reality. But these conclusions are not binding; for behind this Consciousness seizable in its works only there may be an invisible original Existence: a Conscious-Energy of that Existence could then be a reality; its creations too, made out of an infinitesimal substance of being impalpable to the senses but revealed to them at a certain stage of the action of Energy as Matter, would be real, as also the individual emerging as a conscious being of the original Existence in a world of Matter. This original Reality might be a cosmic spiritual Existence, a Pantheos, or it might have some other status; but in any case there would be, not a universal illusion or mere phenomenon, but a true universe.

In the classical theory of Illusionism a sole and supreme
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spiritual Existence is accepted as the one Reality: it is by its
essentiality the Self, yet the natural beings of which it is the
Self are only temporary appearances; it is in its absoluteness
the substratum of all things, but the universe erected on the
substratum is either a non-existence, a semblance, or else in
some way unreally real; it is a cosmic illusion. For the Reality is
one without a second, it is immutable in eternity, it is the sole
Existence; there is nothing else, there are no true becomings of
this Being: it is and must for ever remain void of name, feature,
formation, relation, happening; if it has a Consciousness, it can
only be a pure consciousness of its own absolute being. But what
then is the relation between the Reality and the Illusion? By what
miracle or mystery does the Illusion come to be or how does it
manage to appear or to abide in Time for ever?

As only Brahman is real, only a consciousness or a power
of Brahman could be a real creator and a creator of realities.
But since there can be no other reality than Brahman pure and
absolute, there can be no true creative power of Brahman. A
Brahman-consciousness aware of real beings, forms and hap-
penings would signify a truth of the Becoming, a spiritual and
material reality of the universe, which the experience of the
supreme Truth negates and nullifies and with which its sole
existence is logically incompatible. Maya's creation is a presen-
tation of beings, names, forms, happenings, things, impossible to
accept as true, contradictory of the indeterminable purity of the
One Existence. Maya then is not real, it is non-existent: Maya is
itself an illusion, the parent of numberless illusions. But still this
illusion and its works have some kind of existence and so must
in some way be real: moreover, the universe does not exist in a
Void but stands because it is imposed on Brahman, it is based in
a way on the one Reality; we ourselves in the Illusion attribute
its forms, names, relations, happenings to the Brahman, become
aware of all things as the Brahman, see the Reality through these
unrealities. There is then a reality in Maya; it is at the same time
real and unreal, existent and non-existent; or, let us say, it is
neither real nor unreal: it is a paradox, a suprarational enigma.
But what then is this mystery, or is it insoluble? how comes this
illusion to intervene in Brahman-existence? what is the nature of this unreal reality of Maya?

At first sight one is compelled to suppose that Brahman must be in some way the percipient of Maya, — for Brahman is the sole Reality, and if he is not the percipient, who then perceives the Illusion? Any other percipient is not in existence; the individual who is in us the apparent witness is himself phenomenal and unreal, a creation of Maya. But if Brahman is the percipient, how is it possible that the illusion can persist for a moment, since the true consciousness of the Percipient is consciousness of self, an awareness solely of its own pure self-existence? If Brahman perceives the world and things with a true consciousness, then they must all be itself and real; but since they are not the pure self-existence, but at best are forms of it and are seen through a phenomenal Ignorance, this realistic solution is not possible. Yet we have to accept, provisionally at least, the universe as a fact, an impossibility as a thing that is, since Maya is there and her works persist and obsess the spirit with the sense, however false, of their reality. It is on this basis that we have, then, to face and solve the dilemma.

If Maya is in some way real, the conclusion imposes itself that Brahman the Reality is in that way the percipient of Maya. Maya may be his power of differentiating perception, for the power of Maya consciousness which distinguishes it from the true consciousness of sole spiritual Self is its creative perception of difference. Or Maya must be at least, if this creation of difference is considered to be only a result and not the essence of Maya-force, some power of Brahman’s consciousness, — for it is only a consciousness that can see or create an illusion and there cannot be another original or originating consciousness than that of Brahman. But since Brahman is also self-aware for ever, there must be a double status of Brahman-Consciousness, one conscious of the sole Reality, the other conscious of the unrealities to which by its creative perception of them it gives some kind of apparent existence. These unrealities cannot be made of the substance of the Reality, for then they also must be real. In this view one cannot accept the assertion of the Upanishads that
the world is made out of the supreme Existence, is a becoming, an outcome or product of the eternal Being. Brahman is not the material cause of the universe: our nature — as opposed to our self — is not made of its spiritual substance; it is constructed out of the unreal reality of Maya. But, on the contrary, our spiritual being is of that substance, is indeed the Brahman; Brahman is above Maya, but he is also the percipient of his creations both from above and from within Maya. This dual consciousness offers itself as the sole plausible explanation of the riddle of a real eternal Percipient, an unreal Percept, and a Perception that is a half-real creator of unreal percepts.

If there is not this dual consciousness, if Maya is the sole conscious power of Brahman, then one of two things must be true: either the reality of Maya as a power is that it is a subjective action of Brahman-consciousness emerging out of its silence and superconscient immobility and passing through experiences that are real because they are part of the consciousness of Brahman but unreal because they are not part of Its being, or else Maya is Brahman’s power of cosmic Imagination inherent in his eternal being creating out of nothing names, forms and happenings that are not in any way real. In that case Maya would be real, but her works entirely fictitious, pure imaginations; but can we affirm Imagination as the sole dynamic or creative power of the Eternal? Imagination is a necessity for a partial being with an ignorant consciousness; for it has to supplement its ignorance by imaginations and conjectures: there can be no place for such a movement in the sole consciousness of a sole Reality which has no reason to construct unrealities, for it is ever pure and self-complete. It is difficult to see what in its own being could impel or induce such a Sole Existence complete in its very essence, blissful in its eternity, containing nothing to be manifested, timelessly perfect, to create an unreal Time and Space and people it to all eternity with an interminable cosmic show of false images and happenings. This solution is logically untenable.

The other solution, the idea of a purely subjective unreal reality, starts from the distinction made by the mind in physical Nature between its subjective and objective experiences; for it is
the objective alone of which it is sure as entirely and solidly real. But such a distinction could hardly exist in Brahman-consciousness since here there is either no subject and no object or Brahman itself is the sole possible subject of its consciousness and the sole possible object; there could be nothing externally objective to Brahman, since there is nothing else than Brahman. This idea, then, of a subjective action of consciousness creating a world of fictions other than or distorting the sole true object looks like an imposition on the Brahman by our mind; it imposes on the pure and perfect Reality a feature of its own imperfection, not truly attributable to the perception of a Supreme Being. On the other hand, the distinction between the consciousness and the being of Brahman could not be valid, unless Brahman being and Brahman consciousness are two distinct entities, — the consciousness imposing its experiences on the pure existence of the being but unable to touch or affect or penetrate it. Brahman, then, whether as the supreme sole Self-Existence or the Self of the real-unreal individual in Maya, would be aware by his true consciousness of the illusions imposed on him and would know them as illusions; only some energy of Maya-nature or something in it would be deluded by its own inventions, — or else, not being really deluded, still persist in behaving and feeling as if it were deluded. This duality is what happens to our consciousness in the Ignorance when it separates itself from the works of Nature and is aware within of the Self as the sole truth and the rest as not-self and not-real, but has on the surface to act as if the rest too were real. But this solution negates the sole and indivisible pure existence and pure awareness of the Brahman; it creates a dualism within its featureless unity which is not other in its purport than the dualism of the double Principle in the Sankhya view of things, Purusha and Prakriti, Soul and Nature. These solutions then must be put aside as untenable, unless we modify our first view of the Reality and concede to it a power of manifold status of consciousness or a power of manifold status of existence.

But, again, the dual consciousness, if we admit it, cannot be explained as a dual power of Knowledge-Ignorance valid
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for the Supreme Existence as it is for us in the universe. For we cannot suppose that Brahman is at all subject to Maya, since that would mean a principle of Ignorance clouding the Eternal's self-awareness; it would be to impose the limitations of our own consciousness on the eternal Reality. An Ignorance which occurs or intervenes in the course of manifestation as a result of a subordinate action of Consciousness and as part of a divine cosmic plan and its evolutionary meaning, is one thing and is logically conceivable; a meaningless ignorance or illusion eternal in the original consciousness of the Reality is another thing and not easily conceivable; it appears as a violent mental construction which has no likelihood of validity in the truth of the Absolute. The dual consciousness of Brahman must be in no way an ignorance, but a self-awareness coexistent with a voluntary will to erect a universe of illusions which are held in a frontal perception aware at once of self and the illusory world, so that there is no delusion, no feeling of its reality. The delusion takes place only in the illusory world itself, and the Self or Brahman in the world either enjoys with a free participation or witnesses, itself separate and intangible, the play which lays its magical spell only upon the Nature-mind created for her action by Maya. But this would seem to signify that the Eternal, not content with its pure absolute existence, has the need to create, to occupy itself throughout Time with a drama of names and forms and happenings; it needs, being sole, to see itself as many, being peace and bliss and self-knowledge to observe an experience or representation of mingled knowledge and ignorance, delight and suffering, unreal existence and escape from unreal existence. For the escape is for the individual being constructed by Maya; the Eternal does not need to escape and the play continues its cycle for ever. Or if not the need, there is the will to so create, or there is theurge or the automatic action of these contraries: but, if we consider the sole eternity of pure existence attributed to the Reality, all alike, need, will, urge or automatism, are equally impossible and incomprehensible. This is an explanation of a sort, but it is an explanation which leaves the mystery still beyond logic or comprehension; for this dynamic consciousness of the
Eternal is a direct contradiction of its static and real nature. A Will or Power to create or manifest is undoubtedly there: but, if it is a will or power of the Brahman, it can only be for a creation of realities of the Real or a manifestation of the timeless process of its being in Time-eternity; for it seems incredible that the sole power of the Reality should be to manifest something contrary to itself or to create non-existent things in an illusory universe.

There is so far no satisfying answer to the riddle: but it may be that we err in attributing any kind of reality, however illusory at bottom, to Maya or her works: the true solution lies in facing courageously the mystery of its and their utter unreality. This absolute unreality seems to be envisaged by certain formulations of Illusionism or by certain arguments put forward in its favour. This side then of the problem has to pass under consideration before we can examine with confidence the solutions that rest on a relative or partial reality of the universe. There is indeed a line of reasoning which gets rid of the problem by excluding it; it affirms that the question how the Illusion generated, how the universe manages to be there in the pure existence of Brahman, is illegitimate: the problem does not exist, because the universe is non-existent, Maya is unreal, Brahman is the sole truth, alone and self-existent for ever. Brahman is not affected by any illusory consciousness, no universe has come into existence within its timeless reality. But this evasion of the difficulty is either a sophism which means nothing, an acrobacy of verbal logic, the logical reason hiding its head in the play of words and ideas and refusing to see or to solve a real and baffling difficulty, or else it means too much, since in effect it gets rid of all relation of Maya to Brahman by affirming her as an independent absolute non-reality along with the universe created by her. If a real universe does not exist, a cosmic Illusion exists and we are bound to inquire how it came into being or how it manages to exist, what is its relation or non-relation to the Reality, what is meant by our own existence in Maya, by our subjugation to her cycles, by our liberation from her. For in this view we have to suppose that Brahman is not the percipient of Maya or her works, Maya herself is not a power of Brahman-consciousness: Brahman is
superconscient, immersed in its own pure being or is conscious only of its own absoluteness; it has nothing to do with Maya. But in that case either Maya cannot exist even as an illusion or there would be a dual Entity or two entities, a real Eternal superconscious or conscious only of itself and an illusive Power that creates and is conscious of a false universe. We are back on the horns of the dilemma and with no prospect of getting free from our impalement on it, unless we escape by concluding that since all philosophy is part of Maya, all philosophy is also an illusion, problems abound but no conclusion is possible. For what we are confronted with is a pure static and immutable Reality and an illusory dynamism, the two absolutely contradictory of each other, with no greater Truth beyond them in which their secret can be found and their contradictions discover a reconciling issue.

If Brahman is not the percipient, then the percipient must be the individual being; but this percipient is created by the Illusion and unreal; the percept, the world, is an illusion created by an Illusion and unreal; the perceiving consciousness is itself an illusion and therefore unreal. But this deprives everything of significance, our spiritual existence and our salvation from Maya no less than our temporal existence and our immersion in Maya; all are of an equal unreality and unimportance. It is possible to take a less rigid standpoint and hold that Brahman as Brahman has nothing to do with Maya, is eternally free from all illusion or any commerce with illusion, but Brahman as the individual percipient or as the Self of all being here has entered into Maya and can in the individual withdraw from it, and this withdrawal is for the individual an act of supreme importance. But here a dual being is imposed on Brahman and a reality attributed to something that belongs to the cosmic Illusion,—to the individual being of Brahman in Maya, for Brahman as the Self of all is not even phenomenally bound and does not need to escape from her: moreover, salvation cannot be of importance if bondage is unreal and bondage cannot be real unless Maya and her world are real. The absolute unreality of Maya disappears and gives place to a very comprehensive even if perhaps only a
practical and temporal reality. To avoid this conclusion it may be said that our individuality is unreal, it is Brahman who withdraws from a reflection of itself in the figment of individuality and its extinction is our release, our salvation: but Brahman, always free, cannot suffer by bondage or profit by salvation, and a reflection, a figment of individuality is not a thing that can need salvation. A reflection, a figment, a mere image in the deceptive mirror of Maya cannot suffer a real bondage or profit by a real salvation. If it be said that it is a conscious reflection or figment and therefore can really suffer and enter into the bliss of release, the question arises whose is the consciousness that so suffers in this fictitious existence,—for there can be no real consciousness except that of the One Existence; so that once more there is established a dual consciousness for Brahman, a consciousness or superconscience free from the illusion and a consciousness subject to the illusion, and we have again substantiated a certain reality of our existence and experience in Maya. For if our being is that of the Brahman, our consciousness something of the consciousness of the Brahman, with whatever qualification, it is to that extent real,—and if our being, why not the being of the universe?

It may finally be put forward as a solution that the percipient individual and the percept universe are unreal, but Maya by imposing itself on Brahman acquires a certain reality, and that reality lends itself to the individual and to its experience in the cosmic Illusion which endures so long as it is subject to the illusion. But, again, for whom is the experience valid, the reality acquired while it endures, and for whom does it cease by liberation, extinction or withdrawal? For an illusory unreal being cannot put on reality and suffer from a real bondage or escape from it by a real act of evasion or self-extinction; it can only seem to some real self or being to exist, but in that case this real self must in some way or in some degree have become subject to Maya. It must either be the consciousness of Brahman that projects itself into a world of Maya and issues from Maya or it must be the being of Brahman that puts forth something of itself, its reality, into Maya and withdraws it again.
from Maya. Or what again is this Maya that imposes itself on Brahman? from where does it come if it is not already in Brahman, an action of the eternal Consciousness or the eternal Superconscience? It is only if a being or a consciousness of the Reality undergoes the consequences of the Illusion that the cycles of the Illusion can put on any reality or have any importance except as a dance of phantasmagoric marionettes with which the Eternal amuses himself, a puppet-show in Time. We are driven back to the dual being of Brahman, the dual consciousness of Brahman involved in the Illusion and free from the Illusion, and a certain phenomenal truth of being for Maya: there can be no solution of our existence in the universe if that existence and the universe itself have no reality, — even though the reality be only partial, restricted, derivative. But what can be the reality of an original universal and fundamentally baseless Illusion? The only possible answer is that it is a suprarational mystery, inexplicable and ineffable, — *anirvacaniya*.

There are, however, two possible replies to the difficulty, if we get rid of the idea of absolute unreality and admit a qualification or compromise. A basis can be created for a subjective illusion-consciousness which is yet part of Being, if we accept in the sense of an illusory subjective world-awareness the account of sleep and dream creation given to us in the Upanishads. For the affirmation there is that Brahman as Self is fourfold; the Self is Brahman and all that is is the Brahman, but all that is is the Self seen by the Self in four states of its being. In the pure self-status neither consciousness nor unconsciousness as we conceive it can be affirmed about Brahman; it is a state of superconscience absorbed in its self-existence, in a self-silence or a self-ecstasy, or else it is the status of a free Superconscient containing or basing everything but involved in nothing. But there is also a luminous status of sleep-self, a massed consciousness which is the origin of cosmic existence; this state of deep sleep in which yet there is the presence of an omnipotent Intelligence is the seed state or causal condition from which emerges the cosmos; — this and the dream-self which is the continent of all subtle, subjective or supraphysical experience, and the self of waking which is the
support of all physical experience, can be taken as the whole field of Maya. As a man in deep sleep passes into dreams in which he experiences self-constructed unstable structures of name, form, relation, happenings, and in the waking state externalises himself in the more apparently stable but yet transient structures of the physical consciousness, so the Self develops out of a state of massed consciousness its subjective and its objective cosmic experience. But the waking state is not a true waking from this original and causal sleep; it is only a full emergence into a gross external and objective sense of the positive reality of objects of consciousness as opposed to the subtle subjective dream-awareness of those objects: the true waking is a withdrawal from both objective and subjective consciousness and from the massed causal Intelligence into the superconscience superior to all consciousness; for all consciousness and all unconsciousness is Maya. Here, we may say, Maya is real because it is the self’s experience of the Self, something of the Self enters into it, is affected by its happenings because it accepts them, believes in them, they are to it real experiences, creations out of its conscious being; but it is unreal because it is a sleep state, a dream state, an eventually transient waking state, not the true status of the superconscient Reality. Here there is no actual dichotomy of being itself, but there is a multiplicity of status of the one Being; there is no original dual consciousness implying a Will in the Uncreated to create illusory things out of non-existence, but there is One Being in states of superconscience and consciousness each with its own nature of self-experience. But the lower states, although they have a reality, are yet qualified by a building and seeing of subjective self-constructions which are not the Real. The One Self sees itself as many, but this multiple existence is subjective; it has a multiplicity of its states of consciousness, but this multiplicity also is subjective; there is a reality of subjective experience of a real Being, but no objective universe.

It may be noted, however, that nowhere in the Upanishads is it actually laid down that the threefold status is a condition of illusion or the creation of an unreality; it is constantly affirmed that all this that is,—this universe we are now supposing to
have been constructed by Maya, — is the Brahman, the Reality. The Brahman becomes all these beings; all beings must be seen in the Self, the Reality, and the Reality must be seen in them, the Reality must be seen as being actually all these beings; for not only the Self is Brahman, but all is the Self, all this that is is the Brahman, the Reality. That emphatic asseveration leaves no room for an illusory Maya; but still the insistent denial that there is anything other than or separate from the experiencing self, certain phrases used and the description of two of the states of consciousness as sleep and dream may be taken as if they annulled the emphasis on the universal Reality; these passages open the gates to the illusionist idea and have been made the foundation for an uncompromising system of that nature. If we take this fourfold status as a figure of the Self passing from its superconscient state, where there is no subject or object, into a luminous trance in which superconscience becomes a massed consciousness out of which the subjective status of being and the objective come into emergence, then we get according to our view of things either a possible process of illusionary creation or a process of creative Self-knowledge and All-knowledge.

In fact, if we can judge from the description of the three lower states of Self as the all-wise Intelligence, the Seer of the subtle and the Seer of the gross material existence, this sleep state and this dream state seem to be figurative names for the superconscient and the subliminal which are behind and beyond our waking status; they are so named and figured because it is through dream and sleep — or trance which can be regarded

5 *Prāṇa.* Yajnavalkya in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states very positively that there are two planes or states of the being which are two worlds, and that in the dream state one can see both worlds, for the dream state is intermediate between them, it is their joining-plane. This makes it clear that he is speaking of a subliminal condition of the consciousness which can carry in it communications between the physical and the supraphysical worlds. The description of the dreamless sleep state applies both to deep sleep and to the condition of trance in which one enters into a massed consciousness containing in it all the powers of being but all compressed within itself and concentrated solely on itself and, when active, then active in a consciousness where all is the self; this is, clearly, a state admitting us into the higher planes of the spirit normally now superconscient to our waking being.
as a kind of dream or sleep—that the surface mental consciousness normally passes out of the perception of objective things into the inner subliminal and the superior supramental or overmental status. In that inner condition it sees the supra-physical realities in transcribing figures of dream or vision or, in the superior status, it loses itself in a massed consciousness of which it can receive no thought or image. It is through this subliminal and this superconscient condition that we can pass into the supreme superconscience of the highest state of self-being. If we make the transition, not through dream trance or sleep trance, but through a spiritual awakening into these higher states, we become aware in all of them of the one omnipresent Reality; there need be no perception of an illusionary Maya, there is only an experience of the passage from Mind to what is beyond it so that our mental structure of the universe ceases to be valid and another reality of it is substituted for the ignorant mental knowledge. In this transition it is possible to be awake to all the states of being together in a harmonised and unified experience and to see the Reality everywhere. But if we plunge by a trance of exclusive concentration into a mystic sleep state or pass abruptly in waking Mind into a state belonging to the Superconscient, then the mind can be seized in the passage by a sense of the unreality of the cosmic Force and its creations; it passes by a subjective abolition of them into the supreme superconscience. This sense of unreality and this sublimating passage are the spiritual justification for the idea of a world created by Maya; but this consequence is not conclusive, since a larger and more complete conclusion superseding it is possible to spiritual experience.

All these and other solutions of the nature of Maya fail to satisfy because they have no conclusiveness: they do not establish the inevitability of the illusionist hypothesis which, to be accepted, needs to be inevitable; they do not bridge the chasm between the presumed true nature of the eternal Reality and the paradoxical and contrary character of the cosmic Illusion. At the most a process is indicated that claims to make the coexistence of the two opposites conceivable and intelligible; but
it has no such force of certitude or illuminating convincingness effectively curing the improbability that its acceptance would be obligatory on the intelligence. The theory of the cosmic Illusion gets rid of an original contradiction, a problem and mystery which may be otherwise soluble, by erecting another contradiction, a new problem and mystery which is irreconcilable in its terms and insoluble. For we start with the conception or experience of an absolute Reality which is in its nature eternally one, supracosmic, static, immobile, immutable, self-aware of its pure existence, and a phenomenon of cosmos, dynamism, motion, mutability, modifications of the original pure existence, differentiation, infinite multiplicity. This phenomenon is got rid of by declaring it to be a perpetual Illusion, Maya. But this brings in, in effect, a self-contradictory dual status of consciousness of the One to annul a self-contradictory dual status of being of the One. A phenomenal truth of multiplicity of the One is annulled by setting up a conceptual falsehood in the One creating an unreal multiplicity. The One for ever self-aware of its pure existence entertains a perpetual imagination or illusory construction of itself as an infinite multiplicity of ignorant and suffering beings unaware of self who have to wake one by one to awareness of self and cease individually to be.

In face of this solution of a perplexity by a new perplexity we begin to suspect that our original premiss must have been somewhere incomplete, — not an error, but only a first statement and indispensable foundation. We begin to envisage the Reality as an eternal oneness, status, immutable essence of pure existence supporting an eternal dynamis, motion, infinite multiplicity and diversity of itself. The immutable status of oneness brings out of itself the dynamis, motion and multiplicity, — the dynamis, motion and multiplicity not abrogating but bringing into relief the eternal and infinite oneness. If the consciousness of Brahman can be dual in status or action or even manifold, there seems to be no reason why Brahman should be incapable of a dual status or a manifold real self-experience of its being. The cosmic consciousness would then be, not a creative Illusion, but an experience of some truth of the Absolute. This explanation, if
worked out, might prove to be more comprehensive and spiritually fecund, more harmonic in its juncture of the two terms of our self-experience, and it would be at least as logically tenable as the idea of an eternal Reality supporting in perpetuity an eternal illusion real only to an infinite multiplicity of ignorant and suffering beings who escape one by one from the obscurity and pain of Maya, each one by a separate extinction of itself in Maya.

In a second possible answer on the illusionist basis to the problem, in the philosophy of Shankara which may be described as a qualified Illusionism, an answer which is presented with a force and comprehensiveness that are extraordinarily impressive, we make a first step towards this solution. For this philosophy affirms a qualified reality for Maya; it characterises it indeed as an ineffable and unaccountable mystery, but at the same time it does present us with a rational solution, at first sight thoroughly satisfactory, of the opposition which afflicts our mind; it accounts for our sense of the persistent and pressing reality of the universe and our sense of the inconclusiveness, insufficiency, vanity, evanescence, a certain unreality of life and phenomena. For we find a distinction made between two orders of reality, transcendental and pragmatic, absolute and phenomenal, eternal and temporal,—the former the reality of the pure being of Brahman, absolute and supracosmic and eternal, the latter the reality of Brahman in Maya, cosmic, temporal and relative. Here we get a reality for ourselves and the universe: for the individual self is really Brahman; it is Brahman who within the field of Maya seems phenomenally to be subjected to her as the individual and in the end releases the relative and phenomenal individual into his eternal and true being. In the temporal field of relativities our experience of the Brahman who has become all beings, the Eternal who has become universal and individual, is also valid; it is indeed a middle step of the movement in Maya towards liberation from Maya. The universe too and its experiences are real for the consciousness in Time and that consciousness is real. But the question of the nature and extent of this reality at once arises: for the universe and
ourselves may be a true reality though of a lesser order, or they may be partly real, partly unreal, or they may be an unreal reality. If they are at all a true reality, there is no place for any theory of Maya; there is no illusory creation. If they are partly real, partly unreal, the fault must lie in something wrong either in the cosmic self-awareness or in our own seeing of ourselves and the universe which produces an error of being, an error of knowledge, an error in the dynamis of existence. But that error can amount only to an ignorance or a mixed knowledge and ignorance, and what needs to be explained then is not an original Cosmic Illusion but the intervention of Ignorance in the creative consciousness or in the dynamic action of the Eternal and Infinite. But if universe and ourselves are an unreal reality, if to a transcendental consciousness all this has no truth of existence and its apparent reality ceases once we step out of the field proper to Maya, then the concession accorded with one hand is taken away by the other; for what was conceded as a truth turns out to have been all the time an illusion. Maya and cosmos and ourselves are both real and unreal, — but the reality is an unreal reality, real only to our ignorance, unreal to any true knowledge.

It is difficult to see why, once any reality is conceded to ourselves and to the universe, it should not be a true reality within its limits. It may be admitted that the manifestation must be on its surface a more restricted reality than the Manifested; our universe is, we may say, one of the rhythms of Brahman and not, except in its essential being, the whole reality: but that is not a sufficient reason for it to be set aside as unreal. It is no doubt so felt by mind withdrawing from itself and its structures: but this is only because the mind is an instrument of Ignorance and, when it withdraws from its constructions, from its ignorant and imperfect picture of the universe, it is impelled to regard them as nothing more than its own fictions and formations, unfounded, unreal; the gulf between its ignorance and the supreme Truth and Knowledge disables it from discovering the true connections of the transcendent Reality and the cosmic Reality. In a higher status of consciousness the difficulty disappears, the connection
is established; the sense of unreality recedes and a theory of illusion becomes superfluous and inapplicable. It cannot be the final truth that the Supreme Consciousness has no regard upon the universe or that it regards it as a fiction which its self in Time upholds as real. The cosmic can only exist by dependence on the supracosmic, Brahman in Time must have some significance for Brahman in timeless eternity; otherwise there could be no self and spirit in things and therefore no basis for the temporal existence.

But the universe is condemned as ultimately unreal because it is temporary and not eternal, a perishable form of being imposed on the Formless and Imperishable. This relation can be illustrated by the analogy of earth and the pot made out of earth: the pot and other forms so created perish and go back to the reality, earth, they are only evanescent forms; when they disappear there is left the formless and essential earth and nothing else. But this analogy can tell more convincingly the other way; for the pot is real by right of its being made out of the substance of earth which is real; it is not an illusion and, even when it is dissolved into the original earth, its past existence cannot be thought to have been unreal or an illusion. The relation is not that of an original reality and a phenomenal unreality, but of an original, — or, if we go back from earth to the invisible substratum and constituent ether, an eternal and non-manifest, — to a resultant and dependent, a temporal and manifested reality. Moreover, the pot form is an eternal possibility of earth substance, or ethereal substance, and while the substance exists the form can always be manifested. A form may disappear, but it only passes out of manifestation into non-manifestation; a world may disappear, but there is no proof that world-existence is an evanescent phenomenon: on the contrary, we may suppose that the power of manifestation is inherent in Brahman and continues to act either continuously in Time-eternity or in an eternal recurrence. The cosmic is a different order of the Real from the supracosmic Transcendence, but there is no need to take it as in any way non-existent or unreal to that Transcendence. For the purely intellectual conception that only the Eternal is real, whether we
take it in the sense that reality depends on perpetual duration or that the timeless only is true, is an ideative distinction, a mental construction; it is not binding on a substantial and integral experience. Time is not necessarily cancelled out of existence by timeless Eternity; their relation is only verbally a relation of contradiction; in fact, it is more likely to be a relation of dependence.

Similarly, the reasoning which cancels the dynamics of the Absolute, the imposition of the stigma of unreal reality on the pragmatic truth of things because it is pragmatic, is difficult to accept; for the pragmatic truth is after all not something quite other, quite separate and unconnected with spiritual truth, it is a result of the energy or a motion of the dynamic activity of the Spirit. A distinction must, no doubt, be made between the two, but the idea of an entire opposition can rest only on the postulate that a silent and quiescent status is the Eternal’s true and whole being; but in that case we must conclude that there is nothing dynamic in the Absolute and all dynamism is a contradiction of the supreme nature of the Divine and Eternal. But if a temporal or cosmic reality of any kind exists, there must be a power, an inherent dynamic force of the Absolute which brought it into being, and there is no reason to suppose that the power of the Absolute can do nothing but create illusions. On the contrary, the Power that creates must be the force of an omnipotent and omniscient Consciousness; the creations of the absolutely Real should be real and not illusions, and since it is the One Existence, they must be self-creations, forms of a manifestation of the Eternal, not forms of Nothing erected out of the original Void — whether a void being or a void consciousness — by Maya.

At the basis of the refusal to recognise the universe as real is the concept or experience of the Reality as immutable, featureless, non-active and realised through a consciousness that has itself fallen into a status of silence and is immobile. The universe is a result of dynamics in movement, it is force of being throwing itself out in action, energy at work, whether that energy be concepive or mechanical or a spiritual, mental, vital or
material dynamis; it can thus be regarded as a contradiction — or a derogation from self — of the static and immobile eternal Reality, therefore unreal. But as a concept this position of the thought has no inevitability; there is no reason why we should not conceive of the Reality as at once static and dynamic. It is perfectly rational to suppose that the eternal status of being of the Reality contains in it an eternal force of being, and this dynamis must necessarily carry in itself a power of action and movement, a kinesis; both status of being and movement of being can be real. There is no reason either why they should not be simultaneous; on the contrary, simultaneity is demanded, — for all energy, all kinetic action has to support itself on status or by status if it is to be effective or creative; otherwise there will be no solidity of anything created, only a constant whirl without any formation: status of being, form of being are necessary to kinesis of being. Even if energy be the primal reality, as it seems to be in the material world, still it has to create status of itself, lasting forms, duration of beings in order to have a support for its action: the status may be temporary, it may be only a balance or equilibrium of substance created and maintained by a constant kinesis, but while it endures it is real and, after it ceases, we still regard it as something that was real. The principle of a supporting status for action is a permanent principle, and its action is constant in Time-eternity. When we discover the stable Reality underlying all this movement of energy and this creation of forms, we do indeed perceive that the status of created forms is only temporary; there is a stability of repetition of the kinesis in a same persistent action and figure of movement which maintains substance of being in stable form of itself: but this stability is created, and the one permanent and self-existent status is that of the eternal Being whose Energy erected the forms. But we need not therefore conclude that the temporary forms are unreal; for the energy of the being is real and the forms made by it are forms of the being. In any case the status of the being and the eternal dynamis of the being are both real, and they are simultaneous; the status admits of action of dynamis and the action does not abrogate the status. We must therefore conclude that eternal
status and eternal dynamis are both true of the Reality which itself surpasses both status and dynamis; the immobile and the mobile Brahman are both the same Reality.

But in experience we find that for us it is, normally, a quiescence that brings in the stable realisation of the eternal and the infinite: it is in silence or quietude that we feel most firmly the Something that is behind the world shown to us by our mind and senses. Our cognitive action of thought, our action of life and being seem to overlay the truth, the reality; they grasp the finite but not the infinite, they deal with the temporal and not the eternal Real. It is reasoned that this is so because all action, all creation, all determining perception limits; it does not embrace or grasp the Reality, and its constructions disappear when we enter into the indivisible and indeterminable consciousness of the Real: these constructions are unreal in eternity, however real they may seem or be in Time. Action leads to ignorance, to the created and finite; kinesis and creation are a contradiction of the immutable Reality, the pure uncreated Existence. But this reasoning is not wholly valid because it is looking at perception and action only as they are in our mental cognition of the world and its movement; but that is the experience of our surface being regarding things from its shifting motion in Time, a regard itself superficial, fragmentary and delimited, not total, not plunging into the inner sense of things. In fact we find that action need not bind or limit, if we get out of this moment-cognition into a status of cognition of the eternal proper to the true consciousness. Action does not bind or limit the liberated man; action does not bind or limit the Eternal: but we can go farther and say that action does not bind or limit our own true being at all. Action has no such effect on the spiritual Person or Purusha or on the psychic entity within us, it binds or limits only the surface constructed personality. This personality is a temporary expression of our self-being, a changing form of it, empowered to exist by it, dependent on it for substance and endurance, — temporary, but not unreal. Our thought and action are means for this expression of ourselves and, as the expression is incomplete and evolutive, as it is a development of our natural being in Time, thought
and action help it to develop, to change, to alter and expand its limits, but at the same time to maintain limits; in that sense they are limiting and binding; they are themselves an incomplete mode of self-revelation. But when we go back into ourselves, into the true self and person, there is no longer a binding or limitation by the limits of action or perception; both arise as expressions of consciousness and expressions of force of the self operative for a free self-determination of its nature-being, for the self-unrolling, the becoming in time of something that is itself illimitable. The limitation, which is a necessary circumstance of an evolutive self-determination, might be an abrogation of self or derogation from self, from Reality, and therefore itself unreal, if it altered the essentiality or totality of the being; it would be a bondage of the spirit and therefore illegitimate if it obscured, by an alien imposition proceeding from a force that is not-self, the Consciousness that is the inmost witness and creator of our world-existence, or if it constructed something contrary to the Being's consciousness of self or will of becoming. But the essence of being remains the same in all action and formation, and the limitations freely accepted do not take from the being's totality; they are accepted and self-imposed, not imposed from outside, they are a means of expression of our totality in the movement of Time, an order of things imposed by our inner spiritual being on our outer nature-being, not a bondage inflicted on the ever-free spirit. There is therefore no reason to conclude from the limitations of perception and action that the movement is unreal or that the expression, formation or self-creation of the Spirit is unreal. It is a temporal order of reality, but it is still a reality of the Real, not something else. All that is in the kinesis, the movement, the action, the creation, is the Brahman; the becoming is a movement of the being; Time is a manifestation of the Eternal. All is one Being, one Consciousness, one even in infinite multiplicity, and there is no need to bisect it into an opposition of transcendent Reality and unreal cosmic Maya.

In the philosophy of Shankara one feels the presence of a conflict, an opposition which this powerful intellect has stated with full force and masterfully arranged rather than solved with
any finality,—the conflict of an intuition intensely aware of an absolute transcendent and inmost Reality and a strong intellectual reason regarding the world with a keen and vigorous rational intelligence. The intellect of the thinker regards the phenomenal world from the standpoint of the reason; reason is there the judge and the authority and no suprarational authority can prevail against it: but behind the phenomenal world is a transcendent Reality which the intuition alone can see; there reason—at least a finite dividing limited reason—cannot prevail against the intuitive experience, it cannot even relate the two, it cannot therefore solve the mystery of the universe. The reason has to affirm the reality of the phenomenal existence, to affirm its truths as valid; but they are valid only in that phenomenal existence. This phenomenal existence is real because it is a temporal phenomenon of the eternal Existence, the Reality: but it is not itself that Reality and, when we pass beyond the phenomenon to the Real, it still exists but is no longer valid to our consciousness; it is therefore unreal. Shankara takes up this contradiction, this opposition which is normal to our mental consciousness when it becomes aware of both sides of existence and stands between them; he resolves it by obliging the reason to recognise its limits, in which its unimpaired sovereignty is left to it within its own cosmic province, and to acquiesce in the soul's intuition of the transcendent Reality and to support, by a dialectic which ends by dissolving the whole cosmic phenomenal and rational-practical edifice of things, its escape from the limitations constructed and imposed on the mind by Maya. The explanation of cosmic existence by which this is brought about seems to be—or so we may translate it to our understanding, for there have been different expositions of this profound and subtle philosophy,—that there is a Transcendence which is for ever self-existent and immutable and a world which is only phenomenal and temporal. The eternal Reality manifests itself in regard to the phenomenal world as Self and Ishwara. The Ishwara by his Maya, his power of phenomenal creation, constructs this world as a temporal phenomenon, and this phenomenon of things which do not exist in the utterly Real is imposed by
Maya through our conceptive and perceptive consciousness on the superconscient or purely self-conscient Reality. Brahman the Reality appears in the phenomenal existence as the Self of the living individual; but when the individuality of the individual is dissolved by intuitive knowledge, the phenomenal being is released into self-being: it is no longer subject to Maya and by its release from the appearance of individuality it is extinguished in the Reality; but the world continues to exist without beginning or end as the Mayic creation of the Ishwara.

This is an arrangement which puts into relation with each other the data of the spiritual intuition and the data of the reason and sense, and it opens to us a way out from their contradiction, a spiritual and practical issue: but it is not a solution, it does not resolve the contradiction. Maya is real and unreal; the world is not a mere illusion, for it exists and is real in Time, but eventually and transcendentally it turns out to be unreal. This creates an ambiguity which extends beyond itself and touches all that is not the pure self-existence. Thus the Ishwara, though he is undeluded by Maya and the creator of Maya, seems himself to be a phenomenon of Brahman and not the ultimate Reality, he is real only with regard to the Time-world he creates; the individual self has the same ambiguous character. If Maya were to cease altogether from its operations, Ishwara, the world and the individual would no longer be there; but Maya is eternal, Ishwara and the world are eternal in Time, the individual endures so long as he does not annul himself by knowledge. Our thought on these premisses has to take refuge in the conception of an ineffable suprarational mystery which is to the intellect insoluble. But, faced with this ambiguity, this admission of an insoluble mystery at the commencement of things and at the end of the process of thought, we begin to suspect that there is a link missing. Ishwara is not himself a phenomenon of Maya, he is real; he must then be the manifestation of a truth of the Transcendence, or he must be the Transcendent itself dealing with a cosmos manifested in his own being. If the world is at all real, it also must be the manifestation of a truth of the Transcendence; for only that can have any reality. If the individual has the power
of self-discovery and entrance into the transcendent eternity and his liberation has so great an importance, it must be because he too is a reality of the Transcendence; he has to discover himself individually, because his individuality also has some truth of itself in the Transcendence which is veiled from it and which it has to recover. It is an ignorance of self and world that has to be overcome and not an illusion, a figment of individuality and world-existence.

It becomes evident that as the Transcendence is suprarational and seizable only by an intuitive experience and realisation, so also the mystery of the universe is suprarational. It has to be so since it is a phenomenon of the transcendent Reality, and it would not, if it were otherwise, be insoluble by the intellectual reason. But if so, we have to pass beyond the intellect in order to bridge the gulf and penetrate the mystery; to leave an unsolved contradiction cannot be the final solution. It is the intellectual reason that crystallises and perpetuates an apparent contradiction by creating its opposite or dividing concepts of the Brahman, the Self, the Ishwara, the individual being, the supreme consciousness or superconsciousness and the Mayic world-consciousness. If Brahman alone exists, all these must be Brahman, and in Brahman-consciousness the division of these concepts must disappear in a reconciling self-vision; but we can arrive at their true unity only by passing beyond the intellectual Reason and finding out through spiritual experience where they meet and become one and what is the spiritual reality of their apparent divergence. In fact, in the Brahman-consciousness the divergences cannot exist, they must by our passage into it converge into unity; the divisions of the intellectual reason may correspond to a reality, but it must be then the reality of a manifold Oneness. The Buddha applied his penetrating rational intellect supported by an intuitive vision to the world as our mind and sense see it and discovered the principle of its construction and the way of release from all constructions, but he refused to go farther. Shankara took the farther step and regarded the suprarational Truth, which Buddha kept behind the veil as realisable by cancellation of the constructions of consciousness but
beyond the scope of the reason’s discovery. Shankara, standing between the world and the eternal Reality, saw that the mystery of the world must be ultimately suprarational, not conceivable or expressible by our reason, anirvacan{ya; but he maintained the world as seen by the reason and sense as valid and had therefore to posit an unreal reality, because he did not take one step still farther. For to know the real truth of the world, its reality, it must be seen from the suprarational awareness, from the view of the Superconscience that maintains and surpasses and by surpassing knows it in its truth, and no longer from the view of the consciousness that is maintained by it and surpassed by it and therefore does not know it or knows it only by its appearance. It cannot be that to that self-creative supreme consciousness the world is an incomprehensible mystery or that it is to it an illusion that is yet not altogether an illusion, a reality that is yet unreal. The mystery of the universe must have a divine sense to the Divine; it must have a significance or a truth of cosmic being that is luminous to the Reality that upholds it with its transcending and yet immanent superconscience.

If the Reality alone exists and all is the Reality, the world also cannot be excluded from that Reality; the universe is real. If it does not reveal to us in its forms and powers the Reality that it is, if it seems only a persistent and yet changing movement in Space and Time, this must be not because it is unreal or because it is not at all That, but because it is a progressive self-expression, a manifestation, an evolving self-development of That in Time which our consciousness cannot yet see in its total or its essential significance. In this sense we can say that it is That and not That,—because it does not disclose all the Reality through any form or sum of its forms of self-expression; but still all its forms are forms of the substance and being of that Reality. All finites are in their spiritual essence the Infinite and, if we look deep enough into them, manifest to intuition the Identical and Infinite. It is contended indeed that the universe cannot be a manifestation because the Reality has no need of manifestation, since it is for ever manifest to itself; but so equally it can be said that the Reality has no need of self-illusion or illusion of any kind,
no need to create a Mayic universe. The Absolute can have no need of anything; but still there can be — not coercive of its freedom, not binding on it, but an expression of its self-force, the result of its Will to become, — an imperative of a supreme self-effectuating Force, a necessity of self-creation born of the power of the Absolute to see itself in Time. This imperative represents itself to us as a Will to create, a Will of self-expression; but it may be better represented as a force of being of the Absolute which displays itself as a power of itself in action. If the Absolute is self-evident to itself in eternal Timelessness, it can also be self-manifest to itself in eternal motion of Time. Even if the universe is only a phenomenal reality, still it is a manifestation or phenomenon of Brahman; for since all is Brahman, phenomenon and manifestation must be the same thing: the imputation of unreality is a superfluous conception, otiose and unnecessarily embarrassing, since whatever distinction is needed is already there in the concept of Time and the timeless Eternal and the concept of manifestation.

The one thing that can be described as an unreal reality is our individual sense of separateness and the conception of the finite as a self-existent object in the Infinite. This conception, this sense are pragmatically necessary for the operations of the surface individuality and are effective and justified by their effects; they are therefore real to its finite reason and finite self-experience: but once we step back from the finite consciousness into the consciousness of the essential and infinite, from the apparent to the true Person, the finite or the individual still exists but as being and power and manifestation of the Infinite; it has no independent or separate reality. Individual independence, entire separateness are not necessary for individual reality, do not constitute it. On the other hand, the disappearance of these finite forms of the manifestation is evidently a factor in the problem, but does not by itself convict them of unreality; the disappearance may be only a withdrawal from manifestation. The cosmic manifestation of the Timeless takes place in the successions of Time: its forms must therefore be temporary in their appearance on the surface, but they are eternal in their essential power of
manifestation; for they are held always implicit and potential in the essence of things and in the essential consciousness from which they emerge: timeless consciousness can always turn their abiding potentiality into terms of time actuality. The world would be unreal only if itself and its forms were images without substance of being, figments of consciousness presented to itself by the Reality as pure figments and then abolished for ever. But if manifestation or the power of manifestation is eternal, if all is the being of Brahman, the Reality, then this unreality or illusoriness cannot be the fundamental character of things or of the cosmos in which they make their appearance.

A theory of Maya in the sense of illusion or the unreality of cosmic existence creates more difficulties than it solves; it does not really solve the problem of existence, but rather renders it for ever insoluble. For, whether Maya be an unreality or a non-real reality, the ultimate effects of the theory carry in them a devastating simplicity of nullification. Ourselves and the universe fade away into nothingness or else keep for a time only a truth which is little better than a fiction. In the thesis of the pure unreality of Maya, all experience, all knowledge as well as all ignorance, the knowledge that frees us no less than the ignorance that binds us, world-acceptance and world-refusal, are two sides of an illusion; for there is nothing to accept or refuse, nobody to accept or refuse it. All the time it was only the immutable superconscient Reality that at all existed; the bondage and release were only appearances, not a reality. All attachment to world-existence is an illusion, but the call for liberation is also a circumstance of the illusion; it is something that was created in Maya which by its liberation is extinguished in Maya. But this nullification cannot be compelled to stop short in its devastating advance at the boundary fixed for it by a spiritual Illusionism. For if all other experiences of the individual consciousness in the universe are illusions, then what guarantee is there that its spiritual experiences are not illusions, including even its absorbed self-experience of the supreme Self which is conceded to us as utterly real? For if cosmos is untrue, our experience of the cosmic consciousness, of the universal Self, of
Brahman as all these beings or as the self of all these beings, the One in all, all in the One has no secure foundation, since it reposes in one of its terms on an illusion, on a construction of Maya. That term, the cosmic term, has to crumble, for all these beings which we saw as the Brahman were illusions; then what is our assurance of our experience of the other term, the pure Self, the silent, static or absolute Reality, since that too comes to us in a mind moulded of delusion and formed in a body created by an Illusion? An overwhelming self-evident convincingness, an experience of absolute authenticity in the realisation or experience is not an unanswerable proof of sole reality or sole finality: for other spiritual experiences such as that of the omnipresent Divine Person, Lord of a real Universe, have the same convincing, authentic and final character. It is open to the intellect which has once arrived at the conviction of the unreality of all other things, to take a farther step and deny the reality of Self and of all existence. The Buddhists took this last step and refused reality to the Self on the ground that it was as much as the rest a construction of the mind; they cut not only God but the eternal Self and impersonal Brahman out of the picture.

An uncompromising theory of Illusion solves no problem of our existence; it only cuts the problem out for the individual by showing him a way of exit: in its extreme form and effect, our being and its action become null and without sanction, its experience, aspiration, endeavour lose their significance; all, the one incommunicable relationless Truth excepted and the turning away to it, become equated with illusion of being, are part of a universal Illusion and themselves illusions. God and ourselves and the universe become myths of Maya; for God is only a reflection of Brahman in Maya, ourselves are only a reflection of Brahman in illusory individuality, the world is only an imposition on the Brahman’s incommunicable self-existence. There is a less drastic nullification if a certain reality is admitted for the being even within the illusion, a certain validity for the experience and knowledge by which we grow into the spirit: but this is only if the temporal has a valid reality and the experience in it has a real validity, and in that case what we
are in front of is not an illusion taking the unreal for real but an ignorance misapprehending the real. Otherwise if the beings of whom Brahman is the self are illusory, its selfhood is not valid, it is part of an illusion; the experience of self is also an illusion: the experience “I am That” is vitiated by an ignorant conception, for there is no I, only That; the experience “I am He” is doubly ignorant, for it assumes a conscious Eternal, a Lord of the universe, a Cosmic Being, but there can be no such thing if there is no reality in the universe. A real solution of existence can only stand upon a truth that accounts for our existence and world-existence, reconciles their truth, their right relation and the truth of their relation to whatever transcendent Reality is the source of everything. But this implies some reality of individual and cosmos, some true relation of the One Existence and all existences, of relative experience and of the Absolute.

The theory of Illusion cuts the knot of the world problem, it does not disentangle it; it is an escape, not a solution: a flight of the spirit is not a sufficient victory for the being embodied in this world of the becoming; it effects a separation from Nature, not a liberation and fulfilment of our nature. This eventual outcome satisfies only one element, sublimates only one impulse of our being; it leaves the rest out in the cold to perish in the twilight of the unreal reality of Maya. As in Science, so in metaphysical thought, that general and ultimate solution is likely to be the best which includes and accounts for all so that each truth of experience takes its place in the whole: that knowledge is likely to be the highest knowledge which illumines, integralises, harmonises the significance of all knowledge and accounts for, finds the basic and, one might almost say, the justifying reason of our ignorance and illusion while it cures them; this is the supreme experience which gathers together all experience in the truth of a supreme and all-reconciling oneness. Illusionism unifies by elimination; it deprives all knowledge and experience, except the one supreme merger, of reality and significance.

But this debate belongs to the domain of the pure reason and the final test of truths of this order is not reason but spiritual illumination verified by abiding fact of spirit; a single decisive
spiritual experience may undo a whole edifice of reasonings and conclusions erected by the logical intelligence. Here the theory of Illusionism is in occupation of a very solid ground; for, although it is in itself no more than a mental formulation, the experience it formulates into a philosophy accompanies a most powerful and apparently final spiritual realisation. It comes upon us with a great force of awakening to reality when the thought is stilled, when the mind withdraws from its constructions, when we pass into a pure selfhood void of all sense of individuality, empty of all cosmic contents: if the spiritualised mind then looks at individual and cosmos, they may well seem to it to be an illusion, a scheme of names and figures and movements falsely imposed on the sole reality of the Self-Existent. Or even the sense of self becomes inadequate; both knowledge and ignorance disappear into sheer Consciousness and consciousness is plunged into a trance of pure superconscient existence. Or even existence ends by becoming too limiting a name for that which abides solely for ever; there is only a timeless Eternal, a spaceless Infinite, the utterness of the Absolute, a nameless Peace, an overwhelming single objectless Ecstasy. There can certainly be no doubt of the validity — complete within itself — of this experience; there can be no denial of the overwhelming decisive convincingness — ekātma-pratyaya-sāram — with which this realisation seizes the consciousness of the spiritual seeker. But still all spiritual experience is experience of the Infinite and it takes a multitude of directions; some of them — and not this alone — are so close to the Divine and the Absolute, so penetrated with the reality of Its presence or with the ineffable peace and power of the liberation from all that is less than It, that they carry with them this overwhelming sense of finality complete and decisive. There are a hundred ways of approaching the Supreme Reality and, as is the nature of the way taken, so will be the nature of the ultimate experience by which one passes into That which is ineffable, That of which no report can be given to the mind or expressed by any utterance. All these definitive culminations may be regarded as penultimates of the one Ultimate; they are steps by which the soul crosses the limits of Mind into the
Absolute. Is then this realisation of passing into a pure im-
mobile self-existence or this Nirvana of the individual and the
universe one among these penultimates, or is it itself the final
and absolute realisation which is at the end of every journey
and transcends and eliminates all lesser experience? It claims to
stand behind and supersed, to sublate and to eliminate every
other knowledge; if that is really so, then its finality must be
accepted as conclusive. But, against this pretension, it has been
claimed that it is possible to travel beyond by a greater negation
or a greater affirmation, — to extinguish self in Non-Being or
to pass through the double experience of cosmic consciousness
and Nirvana of world-consciousness in the One Existence to a
greater Divine Union and Unity which holds both these real-
isations in its vast integral Reality. It is said that beyond the
duality and the non-duality there is That in which both are held
together and find their truth in a Truth which is beyond them.
A consummating experience which proceeds by the exceeding
and elimination of all other possible but lesser experiences is, as
a step towards the Absolute, admissible. A supreme experience
which affirms and includes the truth of all spiritual experience,
gives to each its own absolute, integralises all knowledge and
experience in a supreme reality, might be the one step farther
that is at once a largest illuminating and transforming Truth of
all things and a highest infinite Transcendence. The Brahman,
the supreme Reality, is That which being known all is known;
but in the illusionist solution it is That, which being known,
all becomes unreal and an incomprehensible mystery: in this
other experience, the Reality being known, all assumes its true
significance, its truth to the Eternal and Absolute.

All truths, even those which seem to be in conflict, have
their validity, but they need a reconciliation in some largest
Truth which takes them into itself; all philosophies have their
value,—if for nothing else, then because they see the Self and
the universe from a point of view of the spirit’s experience of
the many-sided Manifestation and in doing so shed light on
something that has to be known in the Infinite. All spiritual
experiences are true, but they point towards some highest and
widest reality which admits their truth and exceeds it. This is, we may say, a sign of the relativity of all truth and all experience, since both vary with the outlook and the inlook of the knowing and experiencing mind and being; each man is said to have his own religion according to his own nature, but so too each man may be said to have his own philosophy, his own way of seeing and experience of existence, though only a few can formulate it. But from another point of view this variety testifies rather to the infinity of aspects of the Infinite; each catches a partial glimpse or a whole glimpse of one or more aspects or contacts or enters into it in his mental or his spiritual experience. To the mind at a certain stage all these view-points begin to lose their definitiveness in a large catholicity or a complex tolerant incertitude, or all the rest may fall away from it and yield place to an ultimate truth or a single absorbing experience. It is then that it is liable to feel the unreality of all that it has seen and thought and taken as part of itself or its universe. This “all” becomes to it a universal unreality or a many-sided fragmental reality without a principle of unification; as it passes into the negativing purity of an absolute experience, all falls away from it and there remains only a silent and immobile Absolute. But the consciousness might be called to go farther and see again all it has left in the light of a new spiritual vision; it may re-
cover the truth of all things in the truth of the Absolute; it may reconcile the negation of Nirvana and the affirmation of the cosmic consciousness in a single regard of That of which both are the self-expressions. In the passage from mental to overmind cognition this many-sided unity is the leading experience; the whole manifestation assumes the appearance of a singular and mighty harmony which reaches its greatest completeness when the soul stands on the border between Overmind and Supermind and looks back with a total view upon existence.

This is at least a possibility that we have to explore and pursue this view of things to its ultimate consequence. A con-
sideration of the possibility of a great cosmic Illusion as the explanation of the enigma of being had to be undertaken because this view and experience of things presents itself powerfully at
the end of the mental spiral where that reaches its point of breaking or point of cessation; but once it is ascertained that it is not the obligatory end of a scrupulous inquiry into the ultimate truth, we can leave it aside or refer to it only when needed in connection with some line of a more plastic course of thought and reasoning. Our regard can now be concentrated on the problem that is left by the exclusion of the illusionist solution, the problem of the Knowledge and the Ignorance.

All turns round the question “What is Reality?” Our cognitive consciousness is limited, ignorant, finite; our conceptions of reality depend on our way of contact with existence in this limited consciousness and may be very different from the way in which an original and ultimate Consciousness sees it. It is necessary to distinguish between the essential Reality, the phenomenal reality dependent upon it and arising out of it, and the restricted and often misleading experience or notion of either that is created by our sense-experience and our reason. To our sense the earth is flat and, for most immediate practical purposes, within a limit, we have to follow the sense reality and deal with the flatness as if it were a fact; but in true phenomenal reality the flatness of the earth is unreal, and Science seeking for the truth of the phenomenal reality in things has to treat it as approximately round. In a host of details Science contradicts the evidence of the senses as to the real truth of phenomena; but, still, we have to accept the cadre provided by our senses because the practical relations with things which they impose on us have validity as an effect of reality and cannot be disregarded. Our reason, relying on the senses and exceeding them, constructs its own canons or notions of the real and unreal, but these canons vary according to the standpoint taken by the reasoning observer. The physical scientist probing into phenomena erects formulas and standards based on the objective and phenomenal reality and its processes: to his view mind may appear as a subjective result of Matter and self and spirit as unreal; at any rate he has to act as if matter and energy alone existed and mind were only an observer of an independent physical reality which is unaffected.
by any mental processes\textsuperscript{6} or any presence or intervention of a cosmic Intelligence. The psychologist, probing independently into mind consciousness and mind unconsciousness, discovers another domain of realities, subjective in its character, which has its own law and process; to him Mind may even come to appear as the key of the real, Matter as only a field for mind, and spirit apart from mind as something unreal. But there is a farther probing which brings up the truth of self and spirit and establishes a greater order of the real in which there is a reversal of our view both of the subjective mind realities and objective physical realities so that they are seen as things phenomenal, secondary, dependent upon the truth of self and the realities of the spirit. In this deeper search into things mind and matter begin to wear the appearance of a lesser order of the real and may easily come to appear unreal.

But it is the reason accustomed to deal with the finite that makes these exclusions; it cuts the whole into segments and can select one segment of the whole as if it were the entire reality. This is necessary for its action since its business is to deal with the finite as finite, and we have to accept for practical purposes and for the reason’s dealings with the finite the cadre it gives us, because it is valid as an effect of reality and so cannot be disregarded. When we come to the experience of the spiritual which is itself the whole or contains the whole in itself, our mind carries there too its segmenting reason and the definitions necessary to a finite cognition; it cuts a line of section between the infinite and the finite, the spirit and its phenomena or manifestations, and dubs those as real and these as unreal. But an original and ultimate consciousness embracing all the terms of existence in a single integral view would see the whole in its spiritual essential reality and the phenomenon as a phenomenon or manifestation of that reality. If this greater spiritual consciousness saw in things only unreality and an entire disconnection with the truth of the spirit, it could not have — if it were itself a Truth-consciousness

\textsuperscript{6} This position has been shaken by the theory of Relativity, but it must hold as a pragmatic basis for experiment and affirmation of the scientific fact.
— any reason for maintaining them in continuous or recurrent existence through all Time: if it so maintains them, it is because they are based on the realities of the spirit. But, necessarily, when thus integrally seen, the phenomenal reality would take on another appearance than when it is viewed by the reason and sense of the finite being; it would have another and deeper reality, another and greater significance, another and more subtle and complex process of its movements of existence. The canons of reality and all the forms of thought created by the finite reason and sense would appear to the greater consciousness as partial constructions with an element of truth in them and an element of error; these constructions might therefore be described as at once real and unreal, but the phenomenal world itself would not become either unreal or unreal-real by that fact: it would put on another reality of a spiritual character; the finite would reveal itself as a power, a movement, a process of the Infinite.

An original and ultimate consciousness would be a consciousness of the Infinite and necessarily unitarian in its view of diversity, integral, all-accepting, all-embracing, all-discriminating because all-determining, an indivisible whole-vision. It would see the essence of things and regard all forms and movements as phenomenon and consequence of the essential Reality, motions and formations of its power of being. It is held by the reason that truth must be empty of any conflict of contradictions: if so, since the phenomenal universe is or seems to be the contrary of the essential Brahman it must be unreal; since individual being is the contrary of both transcendence and universality, it must be unreal. But what appear as contradictions to a reason based on the finite may not be contradictions to a vision or a larger reason based on the infinite. What our mind sees as contraries may be to the infinite consciousness not contraries but complementaries: essence and phenomenon of the essence are complementary to each other, not contradictory, — the phenomenon manifests the essence; the finite is a circumstance and not a contradiction of the infinite; the individual is a self-expression of the universal and the transcendent, — it is not a contradiction or something quite other than it, it is the universal concentrated and selective, it is
one with the Transcendent in its essence of being and its essence of nature. In the view of this unitarian comprehensive seeing there is nothing contradictory in a formless Essence of being that carries a multitude of forms, or in a status of the Infinite supporting a kinesis of the Infinite, or in an infinite Oneness expressing itself in a multiplicity of beings and aspects and powers and movements, for they are beings and aspects and powers and movements of the One. A world-creation on this basis is a perfectly natural and normal and inevitable movement which in itself raises no problem, since it is exactly what one must expect in an action of the Infinite. All the intellectual problem and difficulty is raised by the finite reason cutting, separating, opposing the power of the Infinite to its being, its kinesis to its status, its natural multiplicity to its essential oneness, segmenting self, opposing Spirit to Nature. To understand truly the world-process of the Infinite and the Time-process of the Eternal, the consciousness must pass beyond this finite reason and the finite sense to a larger reason and spiritual sense in touch with the consciousness of the Infinite and responsive to the logic of the Infinite which is the very logic of being itself and arises inevitably from its self-operation of its own realities, a logic whose sequences are not the steps of thought but the steps of existence.

But what has been thus described, it may be said, is only a cosmic consciousness and there is the Absolute: the Absolute cannot be limited; since universe and individual limit and divide the Absolute, they must be unreal. It is self-evident indeed that the Absolute cannot be limited; it can be limited neither by formlessness nor by form, neither by unity nor by multiplicity, neither by immobile status nor by dynamic mobility. If it manifests form, form cannot limit it; if it manifests multiplicity, multiplicity cannot divide it; if it manifests motion and becoming, motion cannot perturb nor becoming change it: it cannot be limited any more than it can be exhausted by self-creation. Even material things have this superiority to their manifestation; earth is not limited by the vessels made from it, nor air by the winds that move in it, nor the sea by the waves that rise on its surface. This impression
of limitation belongs only to the mind and sense which see the
finite as if it were an independent entity separating itself from
the Infinite or something cut out of it by limitation: it is this
impression that is illusory, but neither the infinite nor the finite
is an illusion; for neither exists by the impressions of the sense
or the mind, they depend for their existence on the Absolute.

The Absolute is in itself indefinable by reason, ineffable to
the speech; it has to be approached through experience. It can
be approached through an absolute negation of existence, as
if it were itself a supreme Non-Existence, a mysterious infinite
Nihil. It can be approached through an absolute affirmation of
all the fundamentals of our own existence, through an abso-
lute of Light and Knowledge, through an absolute of Love or
Beauty, through an absolute of Force, through an absolute of
peace or silence. It can be approached through an inexpressible
absolute of being or of consciousness, or of power of being, or
of delight of being, or through a supreme experience in which
these things become inexpressibly one; for we can enter into
such an ineffable state and, plunged into it as if into a luminous
abyss of existence, we can reach a superconscience which may
be described as the gate of the Absolute. It is supposed that it
is only through a negation of individual and cosmos that we
can enter into the Absolute. But in fact the individual need only
deny his own small separate ego-existence; he can approach
the Absolute through a sublimation of his spiritual individuality
taking up the cosmos into himself and transcending it; or he may
negate himself altogether, but even so it is still the individual
who by self-exceeding enters into the Absolute. He may enter
also by a sublimation of his being into a supreme existence or
super-existence, by a sublimation of his consciousness into a
supreme consciousness or superconscience, by a sublimation of
his and all delight of being into a super-delight or supreme ec-
stasy. He can make the approach through an ascension in which
he enters into cosmic consciousness, assumes it into himself and
raises himself and it into a state of being in which oneness and
multiplicity are in perfect harmony and unison in a supreme
status of manifestation where all are in each and each in all
and all in the one without any determining individuation — for the dynamic identity and mutuality have become complete; on the path of affirmation it is this status of the manifestation that is nearest to the Absolute. This paradox of an Absolute which can be realised through an absolute negation and through an absolute affirmation, in many ways, can only be accounted for to the reason if it is a supreme Existence which is so far above our notion and experience of existence that it can correspond to our negation of it, to our notion and experience of non-existence; but also, since all that exists is That, whatever its degree of manifestation, it is itself the supreme of all things and can be approached through supreme affirmations as through supreme negations. The Absolute is the ineffable overtopping and underlying and immanent and essential in all that we can call existence or non-existence.

It is our first premiss that the Absolute is the supreme reality; but the issue is whether all else that we experience is real or unreal. A distinction is sometimes made between being and existence, and it is supposed that being is real but existence or what manifests as such is unreal. But this can stand only if there is a rigid distinction, a cut and separation between the uncreated Eternal and created existences; the uncreated Being can then be taken as alone real. This conclusion does not follow if what exists is form of Being and substance of Being; it would be unreal only if it were a form of Non-Being, \textit{asat}, created out of the Void, \textit{śūnya}. The states of existence through which we approach and enter into the Absolute must have their truth, for the untrue and unreal cannot lead into the Real: but also what issues from the Absolute, what the Eternal supports and informs and manifests in itself, must have a reality. There is the unmanifest and there is the manifestation, but a manifestation of the Real must itself be real; there is the Timeless and there is the process of things in Time, but nothing can appear in Time unless it has a basis in the timeless Reality. If my self and spirit are real, my thoughts, feelings, powers of all kinds, which are its expressions, cannot be unreal; my body, which is the form it puts out in itself and which at the same time it inhabits, cannot be a
nothing or a mere unsubstantial shadow. The only reconciling explanation is that timeless eternity and time eternity are two aspects of the Eternal and Absolute and both are real, but in a different order of reality: what is unmanifest in the Timeless manifests itself in Time; each thing that exists is real in its own degree of the manifestation and is so seen by the consciousness of the Infinite.

All manifestation depends upon being, but also upon consciousness and its power or degree; for as is the status of consciousness, so will be the status of being. Even the Inconscient is a status and power of involved consciousness in which being is plunged into another and opposite state of non-manifestation resembling non-existence so that out of it all in the material universe may be manifested; so too the superconscient is consciousness taken up into an absolute of being. For there is a superconscient status in which consciousness seems to be luminously involved in being and as if unaware of itself; all consciousness of being, all knowledge, self-vision, force of being, seem to emerge from that involved state or to appear in it: this emergence, in our view of it, may appear to be an emergence into a lesser reality, but in fact both the superconscience and the consciousness are and regard the same Real. There is also a status of the Supreme in which no distinction can be made between being and consciousness,—for they are too much one there to be thus differentiated,—but this supreme status of being is also a supreme status of the power of being and therefore of the power of consciousness; for the force of being and the force of its consciousness are one there and cannot be separated: it is this unification of eternal Being with the eternal Consciousness-Force that is the status of the supreme Ishwara, and its force of being is the dynamis of the Absolute. This status is not a negation of cosmos; it carries in itself the essence and power of all cosmic existence.

But still unreality is a fact of cosmic existence, and if all is the Brahman, the Reality, we have to account for this element of unreality in the Real. If the unreal is not a fact of being, it must be an act or a formation of consciousness, and is there not
then a status or degree of consciousness in which its acts and formations are wholly or partly unreal? If this unreality cannot be attributed to an original cosmic Illusion, to Maya, there is still in the universe itself a power of illusion of Ignorance. It is in the power of the Mind to conceive things that are not real, it is in its power even to create things that are not real or not wholly real; its very view of itself and universe is a construction that is not wholly real or wholly unreal. Where does this element of unreality begin and where does it stop, and what is its cause and what ensues on the removal of both the cause and the consequence? Even if all cosmic existence is not in itself unreal, cannot that description be applied to the world of Ignorance in which we live, this world of constant change and birth and death and frustration and suffering, and does not the removal of the Ignorance abolish for us the reality of the world which it creates, or is not a departure out of it the natural and only issue? This would be valid, if our ignorance were a pure ignorance without any element of truth or knowledge in it. But in fact our consciousness is a mixture of the true and the false; its acts and creations are not a pure invention, a baseless structure. The structure it builds, its form of things or form of the universe, is not a mixture of reality and the unreal so much as a half comprehension, a half expression of the real, and, since all consciousness is force and therefore potentially creative, our ignorance has the result of wrong creation, wrong manifestation, wrong action or misconceived and misdirected energy of the being. All world-existence is manifestation, but our ignorance is the agent of a partial, limited and ignorant manifestation,—in part an expression but in part also a disguise of the original being, consciousness and delight of existence. If this state of things is permanent and unalterable, if our world must always move in this circle, if some Ignorance is the cause of all things and all action here and not a condition and circumstance, then indeed the cessation of individual ignorance could only come by an escape of the individual from world-being, and a cessation of the cosmic ignorance would be the destruction of world-being. But if this world has at its root an evolutionary principle, if
our ignorance is a half-knowledge evolving towards knowledge, another account and another issue and spiritual result of our existence in material Nature, a greater manifestation here becomes possible.

A farther distinction has to be made in our conceptions of unreality, so as to avoid a possible confusion in our dealings with this problem of the Ignorance. Our mind, or a part of it, has a pragmatic standard of reality; it insists on a standard of fact, of actuality. All that is fact of existence is to it real, but for it this factuality or reality of the actual is limited to the phenomena of this terrestrial existence in the material universe. But terrestrial or material existence is only a part manifestation, it is a system of actualised possibilities of the Being which does not exclude all other possibilities not yet actualised or not actualised here. In a manifestation in Time new realities can emerge, truths of being not yet realised can put forth their possibilities and become actual in the physical and terrestrial existence; other truths of being there may be that are supraphysical and belong to another domain of manifestation, not realised here but still real. Even what is nowhere actual in any universe, may be a truth of being, a potential of being, and cannot, because it is not yet expressed in form of existence, be taxed as unreal. But our mind or this part of it still insists on its pragmatic habit or conception of the real which admits only the factual and actual as true and is prone to regard all else as unreal. There is then for this mind an unreality which is of a purely pragmatic nature: it consists in the formulation of things which are not necessarily unreal in themselves but are not realised or perhaps cannot be realised by ourselves or in present circumstances or in our actual world of being; this is not a true unreality, it is not an unreal but an unrealised, not an unreal of being but only an unreal of present or known fact. There is, again, an unreality which is conceptual and perceptive and is caused by an erroneous conception and perception of the real: this too is not or need not be an unreality of being, it is only a false construction of consciousness due to limitation by Ignorance. These and other secondary movements of our ignorance are not the heart of the problem, for that turns
upon a more general affliction of our consciousness and the world-consciousness here; it is the problem of the cosmic Ignorance. For our whole view and experience of existence labours under a limitation of consciousness which is not ours alone but seems to be at the basis of the material creation. Instead of the original and ultimate Consciousness which sees reality as a whole, we see active here a limited consciousness and either a partial and unfinished creation or a cosmic kinesis that moves in a perpetual circle of meaningless change. Our consciousness sees a part and parts only of the Manifestation,—if manifestation it be,—and treats it or them as if they were separate entities; all our illusions and errors arise from a limited separative awareness which creates unrealities or misconceives the Real. But the problem becomes still more enigmatic when we perceive that our material world seems to arise directly, not out of any original Being and Consciousness, but out of a status of Inconscience and apparent Non-Existence; our ignorance itself is something that has appeared as if with difficulty and struggle out of the Inconscience.

This then is the mystery,—how did an illimitable consciousness and force of integral being enter into this limitation and separativeness? how could this be possible and, if its possibility has to be admitted, what is its justification in the Real and its significance? It is the mystery not of an original Illusion, but of the origin of the Ignorance and Inconscience and of the relations of Knowledge and Ignorance to the original Consciousness or Superconsciousness.