Nature
The World-Manifestation

The Divine and the Manifestation

All existence is Brahman, Atman & Iswara, three names for one unnameable reality which alone exists. We shall give to this sole real existence the general name of God, because we find it ultimately to be not an abstract state of Existence not conscious of itself, but a supreme & self-aware One who exists — absolutely in Himself, infinitely in the world & with an appearance of the finite in His various manifestations in the world.

God in Himself apart from all world manifestation or realisable relation to world manifestation is called the Paratpara Brahman, & is not knowable either to the knowledge that analyses or the knowledge that synthetically conceives. We can neither say of Him that He is personal or impersonal, existence or non-existence, pure or impure, Atman or unAtman. We can only say to every attempt to define Him positively or negatively, neti neti, Not this, not this. We can pass into the Paratpara Brahman, but we cannot know the Paratpara Brahman.

God in the world is Brahman-Iswara-Atman, Prakriti or Shakti and Jiva. These are the three terms of His world-manifestation.

The One and the Many are both of them eternal aspects of the Absolute Parabrahman which is Itself neither one nor many in an exclusive sense. It is beyond unity and multiplicity in its essential truth as it is beyond all other oppositions, but neither unity nor
multiplicity, neither the One nor the Many are illusions, they are both of them truths of the Absolute, otherwise they could have no existence nor could they come into existence. The world is a manifestation, and in it the absolute Parabrahman manifests as the Ishwara, the one Eternal, but also It manifests the multiplicity of the One in the Jiva. This creates in the manifestation the double aspect of Being and Becoming. But becoming does not mean that Being becomes what it never was before or that it ceases to be its eternal self; it manifests something that is already in its existence, a truth, a power, an aspect of itself; only the forms are temporal and can be deformed by the Ignorance. The Power of itself which thus manifests what is in its being is its Shakti, Maya or Prakriti, three names for the same thing. It is called Prakriti when it is seen in its executive aspect as working out the manifestation for the Purusha or Ishwara.

Whether we regard the soul that manifests in a body as a portion of the Divine, eternal therefore like the Divine, as is held by the Gita, or the Divine himself in his aspect of multiplicity, or a separate being dependent on the Divine, as is held by the dualists, or an illusory self-perception of the soul subject to Maya, the reality being the Divine himself, indivisible and ever unmanifested — one thing is certain that what appears as the Jiva is something unborn and eternal.

The self which we have to perfect, is neither pure atman which is ever perfect nor the ego which is the cause of imperfection, but the divine self manifested in the shifting stream of Nature.

Existence is composed of Prakriti & Purusha, the consciousness that sees and the consciousness that executes & formalises what we see. The one we call Soul, the other Nature. These are the first double term from which our Yoga has to start. When we come to look in at ourselves instead of out at the world and begin to analyse our subjective experience, we find that there are two parts of our being which can be,
to all appearance, entirely separated from each other, one
a consciousness which is still & passive and supports, and
the other a consciousness which is busy, active & creative,
and is supported. The passive & fundamental consciousness
is the Soul, the Purusha, Witness or Sakshi; the active &
superstructural consciousness is Nature, Prakriti, processive
or creative energy of the Sakshi. But the two seem at first
to stand apart & distinct, as if they had no share in each
other.

The Purusha, still & silent witness of whatever Prakriti
chooses to create, not interfering with her works, but reflect-
ing only whatever forms, names & movements she casts on
the pure mirror of his eternal existence and the Prakriti rest-
lessly creating, acting, forming & effecting things for the delight
of the Purusha, compose the double system of the Sankhyas.
But as we continue analysing their relations and accumulate
more and more experience of our subjective life, we find that
this seeing of the Purusha is in effect a command. Whatever
Prakriti perceives it to be the pleasure of the Purusha to see,
she tends to preserve in his subjective experience or to estab-
lish; whatever she perceives it to be his pleasure to cease to
see, she tends to renounce & abolish. Whatever he consents
to in her, she forces on him & is glad of her mastery & his
submission, but whenever he insists, she is bound eventually
to obey. Easily found to be true in our subjective experience,
this ultimate principle of things is eventually discovered by the
Yogin to determine even objective phenomena. The Purusha
& Prakriti are therefore not only the Witness & the Activity
witnessed, but the Lord & his executive energy. The Purusha is
Ishwara, the Prakriti is His shakti. Their play with each other
is both the motive & the executive force of all existence in the
universe.

The Divine is the eternal Self and Spirit; but Nature too is ever-
lasting power of the Self, eternal conscious-Force of the Spirit.
Mind, life and Matter are powers of that Power, energies of that Force, substance of that Spirit, Spirit and Matter are not separate and contrary creations, but Matter itself is a self-creation of the Spirit.

Being and Becoming are the single One. The One does not become the Many, but the One is for ever the Many even as the Many are for ever the One.

This by a self-existent self-knowledge thou shalt know, through a supramental knowledge by identity — the problem, the opposition, the shifts of philosophy, the rifts of Science, the fragmentary upliftings of Religion are the devices of a still ignorant consciousness, a [...] seeking knowledge.

All existence is one in the Reality; manifold in its manifestation of the Reality. The Reality is the Absolute, the Spirit, the Self, the Being, the One-Existence, which is all and everywhere, but which is also more than all and nowhere. This One can be all because it is no one in particular, it can be all-pervading and eternal in its essence because it is not bound by Space or by Time. It is One but it is also multitudinous, its multitudes are the self-expression, not the denial, the abundance, not the division or fragmentation of its oneness. Each being of its multitudes seems to be a portion of the One, a finite of the Infinite, a time-face and time-form of the Eternal; but in and behind this appearance is the Reality, and there each is itself the One displaying something of itself, each is the Infinite in a finite phenomenon of itself, each is the Eternal playing in Time. But Time too is eternal, Time is eternity in extension and movement, therefore each is in its reality an eternal being of the Eternal, an infinite of the Infinite, a spirit of the One spirit, a self of the One Self. For the Reality is beyond our oppositions of one and many; its oneness and its multitude are for ever inherent in each other; yet it is bound neither by its unity nor its multiplicity, though both are true, because it is that of which both are intimate aspects, — it is the Absolute.
God is not a Being who creates & governs the universe, but the universe itself & all besides that is Timeless & Spaceless.

God is also a Being who creates the universe in Himself & governs it; for the universe is only one term of His existence. If one could conceive a centre that contains its own circle, we might have a just definition of God in the universe.

What is the Impersonality of God? It is the fact of the Is Not, the Is & the Becoming. And what is the personality of God? It is the fact that all this, the Is like the Becoming, the Is not like the Is, is aware of itself in Time & Space & beyond them.

The Impersonality of Love is a self-existent Delight which embraces, possesses & makes one in being all that manifests in Brahman. The Personality of Love is One who is aware of self-Delight & extends His Love in all creatures.

Personality & Impersonality are the same reality differently conceived by Knowledge. Ego is the consciousness of the One Infinite Personality reflected in a limiting form of consciousness & distorted by the limitation. The form itself is a face of the All which has forgotten in the succession of Time moments, in the coherence of Space-units all that is behind itself & involved in itself. Ego is a bridge by which it awakes to self-Ignorance & returns towards self-Knowledge.

If we stand on the bridge facing the world of Forms we tend towards the Relative; if we face away from them we tend towards the Absolute. It is only when we have crossed the bridge that we can easily & perfectly embrace the Relative in the Absolute.

Spirit & Matter, Pure Being & Being formally extended in Space are the two poles of the universe. In Spirit there is no ego; in substance of Matter there is no ego. In each pole ego loses itself, but in Spirit through synthesis, in Matter through dissolution.

Substance of matter, life & mind are the material which Ego uses to develop its conscious existence; there are higher infinite affirmations in which it fulfils its conscious existence.
There is a unity of essence & a unity of sum. The latter is only a synthetic formula & affirmation of multiplicity. The unity of essence is the true unity.

Unity & multiplicity are necessary to each other & one reality. Multiplicity is unity extended in its possibility; unity is multiplicity self-gathered into its essence.

The infinite Being in rest aware of its own eternal oneness. There is the everlasting silence of the Absolute.

The infinite Conscious Power in movement aware of its own eternal many-ness — the everlasting movement and creation of the Supreme.

As in the immobile ether arises, first sign of the creative impulse of Nature, vibration, Shabda, and this vibration is a line of etheric movement, is ether contacting ether in its own field of mobile self-force and that primal stir is sufficient to initiate all forms and forces, even such is the original movement of the Infinite.

But this vibration is not the stir of any material force or substance and this contact is not material contact. This is a vibration of consciousness in spiritual essence; this is the contact of consciousness with itself in spiritual substance.

This original movement, not original or first in Time, for it was from ever and continues for ever, but original in that action of consciousness which is an eternal repetition of all things in an eternal present. Or, if you will, an eternal past-present-future, the three simultaneous times of that ever packed Time of the Infinite that translates [to] our blind finite conception as the void timelessness of the Absolute.

All existence and all force proceeds from the One Supreme and all works of whatever being or whatever force are movements of the Universal and take place in the Eternal and Infinite.
The Supreme is not manifest to our minds encased in matter; numberless superphysical planes separate our terrestrial consciousness from all direct touch of our Source, and there can be no question of an unveiled immediate intimate presence and guidance of that Ineffable. And yet the Divine Consciousness and Force, the everlasting Chitshakti, the original Power, the transcendent and eternal Mother, because she holds the Supreme concealed in her, can put us into some kind of touch with that inexpressible Glory and communicate to us a highest Will and its consequence. This cannot be done through the mind; for the thinking mind can only form some inadequate and quite abstract conception of an Absolute or a supreme Person or an impersonal Principle or Presence. And even the higher mind that experiences returns only a pale reflection of Sachchidananda which it takes for that Ineffable or a vague sense of the Eternal or the Infinite. It cannot lay hold upon That and it cannot enter, for if it tries, either that vanishes from it or itself it disappears in a featureless trance, extinction, annihilation, void or dissolution, nirvikalpa samadhi, nirvana, vinasha, shunya, laya. But what the mind cannot do, the soul and a great secret Overmind can.

To the earth-mind God does not exist or is only a mental idea, an emotional or the Life-mind’s projection and self-image.

Chitshakti not mind has created the world. Chitshakti is the thing which the Scientists call in its various aspects Force & Energy, but it is no material Force or Energy, it is the divine power of self-conscious Being forming itself not materially, not in substance of matter but in the substance of that self-consciousness into these images of form and force which make up the world. What we call world, is a harmony of things seen not by the individual mind or even by universal mind, but rather seen through universal mind, as through a reflecting medium, by the Eye of divine Being. The eye that sees is immaterial, the things seen are
immaterial; for matter itself is only a form, image & appearance of eternal Spirit.

How, it is asked, do we make a permanent and changeless world out of a world of changing and transient objects? But this is to create a problem where there is none. We do nothing of the kind; what we do is to perceive by the senses a world of stability in constant motion, of sameness in spite of change. It is the world that is like that; we do not make it so; our senses receive, they do not create; if there is an error in their perceptions or images it is a passive imperfection of sensing that causes the wrong or altered image, it is not a willed and dynamic change like the liberties the artist takes with Nature.

Men are always changing, but man has a permanent character which does not alter. Tigers differ from each other and from themselves in the process of time, but the tiger is always the same animal and always as such recognisable. It is the details that vary and change, the type, the fundamental pattern is constant. So far our senses and our mind standing upon their data do not betray or deceive us. If they see a world that is stable and the same in spite of constant mobility and mutation, it is because the world is like that and it is therefore that we have to see it so and cannot see it otherwise. If there is a problem it is not what we make of it, not a problem of our psychology but why it is so, what is behind the mobility of the world and its stability, what is the cause or the significance or reality of it. There is no doubt the problem of what are mind and sense and their nature, their reality, their relation to the world and its cause or significance; but that too is a problem of metaphysics.

Are there then two worlds, the one changing and existing in time, the other changeless and eternal? Or are there rather two ways of knowing one and the same world? These questions, as they are put, are meaningless; for it is obvious that it is one world we are seeing and not two and that objects here belong to the same universe and not to two different universes at the
same time. It cannot be the truth that man belongs to one world and men in their mutability to another or that in seeing the changes and variations of the species tiger we are seeing the world in one way and when we see the persistence of type of the species we are knowing it in a different way. These artificial problems are the result of looking at words and concepts instead of things; we concentrate on the words and concepts “sameness” and “change”, see that they represent as abstractions ideas that stand opposed to each other, imagine that they are as opposed in fact as in our minds, are incompatible and therefore cannot coexist in the same world or cannot be true at the same time or in the same world-perception. As a matter of fact there is no such incompatibility; something that is permanently the same may be in constant change of its details of existence without losing its constant fundamental sameness. There is no reason why something should not be transient (not therefore unreal) in many of its phenomena, yet permanent in itself, in its being, whether that permanence be only a duration in time or eternal. No doubt, two worlds may meet, world of mind or spirit enter into world of Matter, but then their elements combine into one world, a world let us say of mind-informed or spirit-governed Matter; it is not two separate worlds that we are seeing at the same time and confusing together by the erroneous action of our mind and senses. Our souls, our minds may belong by origination to the mind world or spirit world, but here they are in the same world as the changing life and body and in so seeing it, we make no error.

A philosophy of change? But what is change? In ordinary parlance change means passage from one condition to another and that would seem to imply passage from one status to another status. The shoot changes into a tree, passes from the status of

1 These notes were written apropos of Bergson’s “philosophy of change”; “you” below would refer to a proponent of this philosophy.
shoot to the status of tree and there it stops; man passes from the status of young man to the status of old man and the only farther change possible to him is death or dissolution of his status. So it would seem that change is not something isolated which is the sole original and eternal reality, but it is something dependent on status, and if status were non-existent, change also could not exist. For we have to ask, when you speak of change as alone real, change of what, from what, to what? Without this “what” change could not be.

Change is evidently the change of some form or state of existence from one condition to another condition. Otherwise, what is it? Is it itself fundamental and absolute, not explicable or definable by any other term than itself, perceivable and intelligible as the sole reality by a naked intuition which feels and cries out “Change = reality” and then falls dumb and can say no more?

An object changes, a person changes, a condition of things changes. But can it be said that the object is no real object but only a continuity of change, or that a person is not a person but a continuity of change, a condition of things is not a condition and there are no things but there is only a continuity of change? This seems to be an illustration of the besetting sin of metaphysics — to exalt a word into a reality or an idea into a reality — without fathoming what is the reality which it tries to indicate. For to label with a word or name is not to fathom and to define, to erect a concept is not to fathom. Fathom for us then what is change before you ask us to accept it as the only reality. You may say I have fathomed it, I have seen it to be the one constant real, but do not ask me to define what it is; “listen rather in silence to the silence of Nature and you too will fathom”. But what if, so listening, I fathom other realities than change — let us say, immutable being as well as mutable force, status as well as change? To prevent that you plunge into speech and not silence, into dialectics of the intellect instead of the undebatably certitudes of intuition, and so abandon your own methodology. If intuition alone is to be used, then you must give a place to my intuition as well as yours and all, however
contradictory in appearance must stand until a greater intuition comes in to put all in their place, reconcile, include in a consistent whole.

In the world of our experience contradictories [are] often complements and necessary to each other’s existence. Change is possible only if there is a status from which to change; but status again exists only as a step that pauses, a step in the continuous passage of change or a step on which change pauses before it passes on to another step in its creative passage. And behind this relation is a duality of eternal status and eternal motion and behind this duality is something that is neither status nor change but contains both as its aspects — and That is likely to be the true Reality.

**Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss**

The nature of the Eternal is infinite Being, the nature of Being is Self-Awareness and all-Awareness or Consciousness, the nature of conscious Being is conscious Force aware of its self and its action, the nature of conscious self-awareness is infinite Bliss[.]

Identity is the first truth of existence; division is the second truth; all division is a division in oneness. There is one Existence which looks at itself from many self-divided unities observing other similar and dissimilar self-divided unities by the device of division.

Being is one; division is a device or a secondary condition of consciousness; but the primary truth of consciousness also is a truth of oneness and identity. One consciousness organised in many self-divided unities of consciousness is the subjective nature of existence.
The objective side of consciousness is force, because consciousness is a power of being. The eternal primary action of this force is to make for its own consciousness forms or figures of its being.

All force is inherently conscious force. Inhabiting and supporting every individual or universal form of being there is and must be some conscious power of being. But conscious force has the faculty of absorbing itself in its works and forms; there is in consciousness the power of self-oblivion. This self-oblivion is the primary phenomenon of material existence. But as [in] the sleeping or unconscious or self-oblivious man there is a subliminal self which neither sleeps nor forgets itself nor is unconscious, so in what appears to [be] inconscient form worked by an inconscient force or power of being there is, discoverable by extending knowledge, such a conscious power and that must be part of the conscious force of being of the one existence.

The nature of being aware of itself, in possession of all its consciousness and force is the inherent delight of its own existence. For experience shows that all complete possession of self is delight, only imperfection of possession creates imperfection or apparent absence of delight. But the one existence takes an equal delight in all the universal forms and figures of its own being, and this delight is the cause and support of universal and individual existence. For this reason all creation also and all action of force has secretly or overtly delight or a seeking for delight or [some] attraction as its first motive cause, although the apparent object or aim of the action may seem to be of a different character.

These truths do not appear entirely to us because we start from division but they become self-evident when we get to a larger consciousness open to the conscious unity underlying things or one with the one conscious existence.

The One Existence whether we call it or him God, Brahman, Purusha or by some other name is in its or his nature infinite existence aware of itself and its own eternal bliss of existence. Or speaking less in terms of division and analysis it is one existence, consciousness, bliss in an inalienable unity.
The object and condition of Life is Ananda; the means of Ananda is Tapas; the nature of Tapas is Chit; the continent and basis of Chit is Sat. It is therefore by a process of Sat developing its own Ananda through Tapas which is Chit that the Absolute appears as the extended, the eternal as the evolutionary, Brahman as the world. He who would live perfectly must know Life, he who would know Life, must know Sacchidananda.

Pleasure is not Ananda; it is a half-successful attempt to grasp at Ananda by means which ensure a relapse into pain. Therefore it is that pleasure can never be an enduring possession. It is in its nature transient and fugitive. Pain itself is obviously not Ananda; neither is it in itself anything positive, real and necessary. It has only a negative reality. It is a recoil caused by the inability to command pleasure from certain contacts which becomes habitual in our consciousness and, long ingrained in it, deludes us with the appearance of a law. We can rise above transitory pleasure; we can get rid of the possibility of pain.

Pleasure, therefore, cannot be the end & aim of life; for the true object and condition of Life is Ananda and Ananda is something in its nature one, unconditioned and infinite. If we make pleasure the object of life, then we also make pain the condition of life. The two go together and are inseparable companions. You cannot have one for your bed-fellow without making a life-companion of the other. They are husband and wife and, though perpetually quarrelling, will not hear of divorce.

But neither is pain the necessary condition of life, as the Buddhists say, nor is extinction of sensation the condition of bliss.

The world lives in and by Ananda. From Ananda, says the Veda, we were born, by Ananda we live, to Ananda we return, and it adds that no man could even have the strength to draw in his breath and throw it out again if there were not this heaven
of Bliss embracing our existence as ether embraces our bodies, nourishing us with its eternal substance and strength and supporting the life and the activity. A world which is essentially a world of bliss — this was the ancient Vedantic vision, the drishti of the Vedic drashta, which differentiates Hinduism in its early virility from the cosmic sorrow of Buddhism and the cosmic disillusionment of Mayavada. But it is possible to fall from this Bliss, not to realise it with the lower nature, in the Apara Prakriti, not to be able to grasp and possess it. Two things are necessary for the fullness of man's bliss, — the fullness of his being and the fullness of his knowledge creating by their union the fullness of his strength in all its manifestations, viryam, balam, bhrajjas, tejas, ojas. For Ananda, Sat & Chit make one reality, and Chit is in its outward working pure force to which our Rishis gave the name of Tapas. To attain even here upon earth this fullness of bliss dependent upon fullness of existence, illumination and force, must always be humanity’s drift, man’s collective endeavour. To attain it within himself here and beyond, iha ca amutra ca, must always be the drift of the human unit, the individual's endeavour. Wherever the knowledge in him thinks it can grasp this bliss, it will fix its heaven. This is Swarga, Vaikuntha, Goloka; this is Nirvana.

The bliss of the Brahman can be described as the eternity of an uninterrupted supreme ecstasy. There is no opposition or incompatibility between these two states in the nature of the Brahman. Bliss there is the keen height and core of peace; peace there is the intimate core and essence of bliss. There is no turbidity or turbulence in the being of the Brahman; its ineffable poignancy is eternal in its self-poise.

The essential mark of the descent of the consciousness from its highest grade in the supreme spirit is the constant diminution of the power of Sachchidananda, the intensity of its force, force of being, force of consciousness, force of bliss. The intensity of all these three in the supreme status is ineffable;
in the Supermind the intensity of consciousness is ever luminous and undiminished; in overmind it is already diminished and diffuse; the highest intensity of mind is a poor thing in comparison with the splendour of overmind, and so it goes diminishing till it reaches an apparent zero which we call inconscience.

The degree and amount of pain which mind, life and body can bear is by our human standards considerable; but their capacity for pleasure is very limited and pale in its intensity, low in its degree. What we call ecstasy would seem to a god to be ridiculously thin and vapid and edgeless. Its capacity of duration also is pitifully brief and measurable by the moments.

In experience even on the spiritual plane so long as we do not transcend the spirit in mind, there is a difference between peace and Ananda. Peace is the Divine static, Ananda the Divine dynamic. Peace is a negative-positive; it is positive of itself, of status, of eternity, of the essential, of the abstract-concrete, of force in rest. It is or tends to be negative of all that is less than itself, contradictory to itself or more than itself, of the dynamic, of action, of creation, of time and happening, of the substantial concrete, of force in motion. Or when it allows these things or even feels or supports them, it is with a certain disinterested separateness. It has essentially the character of the Witness Spirit or at the most of the disinterested Witness-Creator. Ananda is in its every fibre a positive of positives. It affirms and rejoices in all that is native to peace, but it affirms too and rejoices in all that peace negates or regards with a sovereign separateness. Ananda is an all embracing and creative force. There can be in the world’s tangle of conflicting forces an Ananda of pain and suffering and in the full manifestation pain and suffering no longer remain themselves but are transformed into Ananda. But these opposing differences prove in the end to be part of the separative mental creation, the disjunctive Maya in which we live. In supermind experience peace is always full
of Ananda and by its Ananda can act and create; Ananda is for ever full of the divine peace and its most vehement ecstatic intensity contains no possibility of disturbance. At the height of the supramental Infinite peace and Ananda are one. For there status and dynamis are inseparable, rest and action affirm each other, essence and expression are one indivisible whole.

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One that is Two that are Many, — this is the formula of the eternal and timeless manifestation in the worlds of Sachchidananda.

One who is Two and becomes the Two who become Many, — this is the formula of the perpetual manifestation in time in the three worlds of Mind, Life and Matter.

One who is in himself for ever the Two and for ever innumerable All and Eternal and Infinite, this is the indication of the Supreme who is beyond Time and Timelessness in the highest Absolute.

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The One is Four for ever in his supramental quaternary of Being, Consciousness, Force and Ananda.

Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Krishna, these are the eternal Four, the quadruple Infinite.

Brahma is the Eternal’s Personality of Existence; from him all is created, by his presence, by his power, by his impulse.

Vishnu is the Eternal’s Personality of Consciousness; in him all is supported, in his wideness, in his stability, in his substance.

Shiva is the Eternal’s Personality of Force; through him all is created, through his passion, through his rhythm, through his concentration.

Krishna is the Eternal’s Personality of Ananda; because [of] him all creation is possible, because of his play, because of his delight, because of his sweetness.
Brahma is Immortality, Vishnu is Eternity, Shiva is Infinity; Krishna is the Supreme’s eternal, infinite, immortal self-possession, self-issuing, self-manifestation, self-finding.

**Manifestation, Not Illusion**

40

As earth when it becomes pot, floor or oven, never ceases to be earth, so the Being even though it becomes all things and persons, is ever and immutably the same.

Becoming does not cancel Being; after millions of events in a million universes have passed in the Infinite, its infinity remains the same for ever.

The Mayavadins fix their definition, their rigid iti to the Parabrahman, the Absolute, and say that since it is that, it can never be anything else and therefore the world must be an illusion. But the Absolute is beyond all definitions, descriptions, qualifications, he is [not] bound by them, neither by features nor featurelessness, by unity nor multiplicity[.]

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It is said by certain Adwaitists with an unusual largeness of philosophic toleration that the views of all other philosophies are true on the way or at least useful and mark stages in the realisation of the Truth, but the highest realisation is the truth of Monistic Adwaita — there is only the One and nothing else. This concession comes to nothing; for it means that other spiritual experiences are only temporarily helpful delusions or helpful half truths and the only true truth is Adwaita. The dispute remains; for all the other schools also will claim theirs as the highest truth. The mind cannot arrive at a perfect toleration, because the mind needs a cut and defined truth opposed or superior to all others. In the supermind, the aspect of the One is true like all other aspects; all are equally true but none solely true.
The position taken up by the Illusionists must first be firmly stated; for often there is a great nebulousness in the minds both of its supporters and antagonists which leaves room for much confused thinking and the real issue, the vital point gets obscured. We must first give this admission to the defence for whatever it is worth, that Illusionism does not affirm the absolute non-existence of the universe but only that it is an existence which is in its beginning and its end a non-existence and in its middle it is an existence which amounts to non-existence. It is real while it lasts to the mind that creates it; but it is not really real,—it is only phenomenally existent, like a dream, like a hallucination, like the imaginations of a person in delirium.

Three questions arise from this proposition. Is this hallucinatory creation of the universe a truth or is the theory itself a hallucination of the logical mind or of the experiencing consciousness? Secondly, if true, how does the illusion come about and how is it possible? Thirdly, who is the victim of the hallucination?

The whole theory arises from and turns on one original proposition of which it is the logical consequence. It is this that Brahman the one real, original and eternal existence is, firstly, self-existent, secondly, featureless and relationless, thirdly, un-modifiable, immutable, incapable therefore of developing feature and relation, fourthly, solely existent, for there is and can be nothing else but that in existence. None of these original positions about the Brahman imposes itself irrefutably upon the intellect; there are philosophies which deny them one and all and with quite as good a show of logic as any the logical apparatus of the Mayavada can furnish us. In fact, what we first see as the one experience of our consciousness is not this at all, but just the opposite. We see that every thing reduces itself not to an existence at all, but to a continuity of the action of Force, Karma as the Buddhists call it. We see that this action of Force exists only by an infinite flux of feature and relation, the stream of the Buddhist figure. Apart from that it is nothing, it is the Buddhist sunya or Nihil, and the reduction of the universe to
its original starting point, the escape out of it is not a return to the self-existent, but a return to Nihil, a Nirvana or extinction. Far, then, from being immutable and incapable of modification, it is in its very nature a constant modification and mutation. Eliminate the stream of becoming and the result is not Being, but a zero. This is the difficulty which the Mayavada has to surmount, the logic which it has to refute.

For it cannot be denied that the universe, the thing from which all our conscious experience starts, is such a constant stream of becoming, a round of mutations and modifications, a mass of features and relations. The question is how is it maintained? what is [it] that gives an appearance of permanence to the impermanent, of stability to the unstable, of a sum of eternal sameness in which all the elements of the sum are in constant instability and all capable of mutation? The Buddhist admits that it is done by an action of consciousness, by idea and association, vijnana, sanskara; but ideas and associations are themselves Karma, action of Force, themselves impermanent, only they create an appearance of permanence, by always acting in the same round, creating the same combination of forms and elements, as the flame and stream appear always the same, though that which constitutes them is always impermanent. The modern Materialist says that it is material Force or an eternal Energy which takes the form of Matter and follows always the same inherent law of action. The Mayavadin says on the contrary that it is Consciousness, but a consciousness which is in its reality immutable and unmodifiable self-existence, only it produces a phenomenon of constant modification and mutation. How is this possible? There lies the riddle, for it is a direct self-contradiction. To escape from it, he alleges that the phenomenon has no reality at all, but is an illusion.

To deal with this theory at all, we have first to admit that consciousness is the cause and continent of the universe and that it exists only in consciousness and not at all in itself. How does he [the Mayavadin] propose to prove it? It is by an appeal to reason and experience. Our reason tells us that we have no knowledge of the existence of the universe except by our
conscious mentality, no possibility of knowing it; the universe can only be allowed to exist by a consciousness admitting its existence, supporting it by its assent. If by any chance, law or process our consciousness can cease finally to be aware of the universe, then so far as we are concerned, the universe no longer exists; it is annulled to us, it was an illusion from which we are released, as when a dream or hallucination ceases. Any such final upshot proves that originally also the universe was non-existent, for otherwise, if it had existed for us eternally without beginning, it would also continue for us eternally without end. But even if it ceases for us, it still continues in existence, is capable of being observed and lived in by others. How is that? We must suppose, that since it exists cosmically, its existence must be admitted and supported by the assent of a universal consciousness by which and for which it is or rather seems to be. Well, if by any chance, law or process this universal consciousness ceases finally to be aware of the universe, then the universe no longer exists for anybody or anything at all; it is proved to be an utter illusion, existent phenomenally only so long as the universal consciousness admitted it, but capable of coming to an end and therefore shown to be non-existent in its beginning and in its end non-existent. Now our ultimate experience is that there is a last and highest state of consciousness in which the universe does thus cease for the individual to be. What is that state? It is samadhi, a trance of consciousness in which the sole experience is thus expressed, “I am in bliss” and the sole memory brought back is “I was in bliss.” In this state the universe has for the individual no existence; he is released from it. Therefore this highest state of experience is one of which only three things can be affirmed, existence, consciousness of existence, bliss of the consciousness of existence; but it is a pure existence without other feature or any relation. But how is this proved to be the ultimate state of our conscious being? Well, it is the knowledge of the sages who have entered into it that it is the ultimate state, it is the knowledge left behind them that they have finally passed away into it not to return to consciousness of the phenomenal world, and it is confirmed by the authority of the Veda. Reason tells
us that such a condition must be the ultimate condition, since it is one infinitely beyond the phenomenal and to which the phenomenal arrives by self-elimination, and being the ultimate it must be also the original: the phenomenal which disappears from it, must originally have been imposed on it. There is no rational escaping from that conclusion.

Well, the individual soul can escape from consciousness of the universe, but what of the universal consciousness? For so long as the universe goes on existing — and who shall say that it is not for all eternity? — this escape may only prove that the individual soul goes into a state of unconsciousness or absorbed self-consciousness, like a man going to sleep or falling into a trance, while the world goes on around him just as before essentially unaffected and not at all annulled by his unconsciousness of it. But in the first place this highest power of the individual consciousness cannot be peculiar to it, for it must be a power of the general and universal; the individual reflects the universal, for it is only the law of the universal that can be repeated with individual modifications in the law of the individual. Secondly, the universal soul is the same in all; for that is the experience of the highest knowledge and consciousness, that there [is] one self in all, featureless, immutable, unmodifiable, the same amidst all the changes of phenomena. As this self can draw back that which supports the individual into it, so it is and must be capable of drawing back that which supports the universal. In one case the stream of phenomena centred around its individual reflection ceases, in the other the stream of phenomena centred around its universal reflection. A theory only? But it is justified by reason acting on our total experience which sees the lower or phenomenal and the higher or eternal and sees how the phenomenal disappears, vanishes away from the face of the eternal.

We have then as a fact a supreme state of existence which is self-existent, the original I am, which is featureless bliss and consciousness of being, immutable, eternal and this seems to be common to all beings, secret in all, the real self of all. But what then of the world? It is a mass of constant modifications of
consciousness and being, itself in its nature modification of consciousness or of being or of both. It cannot be a modification of nothing, it must be a modification of something. If consciousness and being are the first fact, real, eternal, is it not a modification of conscious being, of this real, this eternal something, and itself therefore real? Is it not itself eternal, an eternal continuity of modification, uninterrupted continual or else interrupted and recurringly continual? Must we not then suppose two states of the Brahman, a primary state of eternal unmodified being, a secondary state of eternal continuity of modifications of being, becomings of the Brahman? Does not the Vedantic statement that all comes from the Brahman, exists by it, returns to it, imply that all is eternally contained in it and all are modifications of it? In that case, we cannot say that the Eternal Being is absolutely unmodifiable. No, says the Illusionist, the supreme eternal self is not only unmodified, but unmodifiable and nothing else but the eternal unmodifiable self exists really; all else is seeming. How then do all these modifications come about? What is the clue to this mystery, the cause of this magic of illusion?

Maya, answers the Illusionist. And what is Maya? It is a power of the eternal consciousness of Brahman by which there comes about an apparent modification of consciousness of which all these modifications we call the universe are the outcome. The modification is apparent, not real, yet a fact, unreally, non-existently existent. Maya exists, yet does not exist; and its results too are apparent, not real, yet while Maya lasts, they are a fact we have to deal with, unreally, non-existently existent. We have to escape from them, by escaping from Maya. We do not understand. How can the unmodifiable consciousness undergo at all even an apparent modification, to say nothing of such portentous results of the modification? To that there is no explanation, there can be no explanation. It takes place beyond the intellect, before the intellect can at all exist and cannot be understood by the intellect; it must be accepted as a fact; it is a fact that Maya is, it is a fact that Maya can be escaped from, and therefore not being eternal, is transient, is unreal, is not. To see this and escape is our only business. Only while it lasts,
are we concerned with the modifications. But what is meant
by saying while it lasts and who is it that is subject to it and
escapes from it? Is it Brahman who is subject to Maya? No,
Brahman the eternally unmodifiable consciousness aware only
of the bliss of its self-existence cannot be subject to Maya, does
not behold this phenomenal illusion. For if he did, we returning
into that, should also behold it and could not by the returning
escape from it. It is the individual soul only that is subject to
Maya and escapes from it. But who is this individual soul? Is
it the self in the individual, the Jivatman, and is the self in the
individual different from the eternal Self? No, the individual self
is the eternal Brahman, for there is only one self and not many.
But then the Jivatman also cannot be subject to Maya or escape
from it. There is then nobody subject to it, nobody who escapes.
And really that is so, says the illusionist, but what seems to us
now to be the individual self, is a reflection of the eternal Self
in the mind, and it is that which is subject to Maya and suffers
by it. But what then is Mind? It is a result of Maya, it is an
illusory movement of consciousness, it is that for which and by
which the universe exists. Get rid of its action, its movement,
and the illusion will cease; you will be free. But then again who
is this you? If I am really the eternal, then I, the individual do
not exist; my real self, to use a desperately foolish language,
— since that means an individual in possession of a self which
cannot be, as my individuality is an illusion,— my real self is
in eternal bliss and not being affected cannot care whether this
false, nonexistently existent I is bound or escapes, suffers or is
in bliss. To whom then does it matter? Only to Maya and mind.
Well, then, it is an affair between Maya and mind, and they
can settle it between themselves. Precisely, the Illusionist will
reply; to you, the mental being, it does matter because you are
in Maya, you suffer, however phenomenally, however unreal,
and the only way to get rid of it is to abolish Maya by abolishing
yourself, your mental individuality, her result by which alone she
eexists; then you will not exist, Maya and the world will exist
for other mental beings; but you will undergo extinction in the
Brahman, for you Brahman only will exist. How for me, since I
can only be either in Maya or out of it, either individually aware of Maya and not of my real self or else non-existent individually? How can ‘I’ be aware of my real self only and of nothing else? It is possible; for as the mind falsely reflects Brahman by Maya as the individual, so free from Maya, it can truly reflect Brahman and it ceases to be individual mind, although in an individual body it still seems to be individually released. Really, it is Brahman expelling Maya from the consciousness, then the mind is taken up into Samadhi, extinguished in Samadhi, and this is the [prefatory] sign. Fix your mind upon that, look at things practically, and do not ask inconsistent questions, as to how there can be individual salvation when there is no individual self to be saved. These questions do not arise once the release is made, they arise in Maya which is a practical fact and can receive only a practical solution.

Well that is a kind of answer. But how am I to know that it is not an evasion of the difficulty? What if I say that really the unmodifiable Brahman is not the highest truth? that the Brahman is aware at once of his unmodified eternal self and of his eternally modified cosmic existence, Akshara and Kshara, but he is himself beyond both, and that my real way of escape is to be the same, to be aware of my eternal self and of all the universe as modifications of my self; that with this transcendence and universality comes perfect bliss, and that the fact that I, still existing in Maya, can be blissfully aware of one Self everywhere and of all things in the universe is a proof of my assertion? This seems to me at least as good a theory as your theory of Maya; and if you say, how is that possible, I can either allege reasons or answer like you, it is a supraintellectual fact and we have to take it as a fact and find the practical way of realising it. If you want me to reject it in favour of your theory, give me at least some help. Make me realise how the world can be nonexistently existent, how the unmodifiable can be apparently modified, how I can exist only beyond the world and yet exist in it so palpably that I must struggle to get out of it, how Brahman exists only beyond Maya and yet by me exists in Maya, how mind is the result of Maya, an instrument to see world and is
yet capable of getting rid of Maya and seeing only the Brahman, how being by my individuality subject to Maya, and only able to escape by getting rid of my individuality, I am yet to become individually aware of Brahman and get an individual salvation, while all the rest of the world by which alone I am individual in my experience is still subject to it, how an unreal individual can realise Brahman.

The Mayavadin answers that as it is the Maya power of the Self which creates the ignorance in each individual, so it is the Self in each individual which enables him to have the knowledge by removing from him the Maya power. How this can be, can only be explained by analogies. As a man mistakes a rope for a snake, and then discovers it is a rope and there is no snake, so the mind thinks there is a world where there is only Brahman and discovers in the end that there is only Brahman; — or as a man mistakes mother of pearl for real pearl and runs after it and is then disillusioned and leaves it to go after the reality. As a pot is only a name and form of earth and earth is the only reality, so the world and the individual are only a name and form; break the pot, it will go back to its original earth; break the name and form in the consciousness, get rid of the individual, and there will be only Brahman in the consciousness. There are many golden ornaments, but the reality of them all is the gold; it is that alone which has value. So Brahman only is worth having; the rest is name and form and mere vanity. Or if these analogies seem to be only physical images not valid for a supraphysical fact, observe how you dream. The dream has no reality, yet is real to your consciousness while it lasts. The you in the dream is an unreal you; you awake to your real self. So the world is a dream; falling asleep to the world, the dream ceases; awake to the Brahman, the dream is convinced of unreality. That is the only possible and a quite sufficient answer.

Is it a sufficient answer? Does it prove the main point that the world consciousness is an apparent and unreal modification of the ever unmodifiable Brahman and therefore to be dispelled as quickly as possible, so that I may cease to exist, except insofar as I already eternally exist, not at all as I, but as the Brahman?
Above all, does it show that my one practical business is to get rid of a world consciousness which is of no value and has no purpose except self-bewilderment, and become again what I ought never to have ceased to be in my unreal consciousness, as indeed I am still that in my real consciousness, the featureless and immutable Spirit? Is the world really a valueless dream, a purposeless delirium of ignorance? Have we no other true spiritual business here except to get out of it? These are the real questions that the soul of man asks of the illusionist thinker, and we have to judge his answer.

Existence is not a fluke, a random creation by nobody, a thing that unaccountably happened to be. It carries in itself the Word of God, it is full of a hidden Divine Presence.

Existence is not a blind machine that somehow came and started a set ignoble motion without object or sense or purpose. Existence is a Truth of things unfolding by a gradual process of manifestation, an evolution of its own involved Reality.

Existence is not an illusion, a Maya that had no reason, no business to exist, could not exist, does not exist but only seems to be. A mighty Reality manifests in itself this marvellous universe.

All that is is the manifestation of a Divine Infinite. The universe has no other reason for existence.

There is an eternal manifestation and there is a temporal manifestation; both are without end or beginning even as That which manifests is without end or beginning. Time and its creations are for ever.

The temporal manifestation is cast partly in a gradation of enduring types; partly it moves through a long unrolling series of vicissitudes of change and new formation and is evolutionary in its process.
The typal worlds do not change. In his own world a god is always a god, the Asura always an Asura, the demon always a demon. To change they must either migrate into an evolutionary body or else die entirely to themselves that they may be new born into other Nature.

All that is is the manifestation, even as all that is not is the self-reservation, of a Supreme, an Infinite who veils himself in the play of impersonal forces, in the recesses of a mysterious Inconscience and will at last rediscover here his most intimate presence, his most integral power, light, beauty, Ananda and all vast and ineffable being through a growing illumination of the still ignorant consciousness now evolving in Matter, a consciousness of which Man is only one stage, at once the summit of an ascent that is finished and the starting point of a far greater ascension that is still only preparing its commencement.

All manifestation that is not evolution is a play and self-formulation of the One Infinite in one term or another of his existence, consciousness-force, Ananda, his self-knowledge, self-power, self-delight, for the glory, joy and beauty of the play and for no other reason.

All evolution is the progressive self-revelation of the One to himself in the terms of the Many out of the Inconscience through the Ignorance towards self-conscious perfection.

The evolution has a purpose, but it is a purpose in a circle. It is not a straight line or other figure of progression from the not to the is, from the less to the more.

There is no beginning or end of the Universe in space or time; for the universe is the manifestation of the Eternal and Infinite.

Manifestation is not an episode of the Eternal. It is his face and body of glory that is imperishable, it is the movement of his joy and power that needs not to sleep or rest as do finite things from their labour.

In the beginning, it is said, was the Eternal, the Infinite, the
One. In the middle, it is said, is the finite, the transient, the many. In the end, it is said, shall be the One, the Infinite, the Eternal.

For when was the beginning? At no moment in Time, for the beginning is at every moment; the beginning always was, always is and always shall be. The divine beginning is before Time and in Time and beyond Time for ever. The Eternal Infinite and One is an endless beginning.

And where is the middle? There is no middle; for the middle is only the junction of the perpetual end and the eternal beginning; it is the sign of a creation which is new at every moment. The creation was for ever, is for ever, shall be for ever. The eternal Infinite and One is the magical middle term of his own existence; it is he that is this beginningless and endless creation.

And when is the end? There is no end. At no conceivable moment can there be a cessation. For all end of things is the beginning of new things which are still the same One in an ever developing and ever recurring figure. Nothing can be destroyed for all is He who is for ever. The Eternal Infinite and One is the unimaginable end that is the never closing gate upon new interminable vistas of his glory.