A pragmatic mentalism would not be in its essential principle other than the attempt already made by the race to make the intellectual Reason the governor of life, but this has been done hitherto by a reason preoccupied with the external fact and subjected to it; mind has attempted to read the law of life and its possibilities and organise life anew within those limits by invention, device, regulation, mechanisms of many kinds, or it has attempted to govern life by mental ideals of an abstract order, such as democracy or socialism, and devise an appropriate machinery materialising that mental abstraction so as to make the dominance of the idea practical and viable. A subjectivist pragmatic mentalism would try to act more subtly and plastically on life; it would seek for “truth of being”, some idea or ideal of its perfection or practice or efficiency, right way of being or living, and attempt to let that grow in the individual and govern his nature, grow in the collective life and govern its formations. Or it would place the development and organisation of the mental life of man as the primary consideration and life and society as a convenience for this true aim of human existence. A new civilisation no longer vitalistic or mainly political and economic, but intellectual, cultural, idealistic, taking up the ancient ideal of man, the perfected mental being in an ennobled life and sound body, a great expansion of human mind and intellect, a mankind more mentally alive, even a human race grown capable of culture and not only of a greater external civilisation, thus fulfilling on a large human and universal scale the tendencies which in the past appeared only in a few favoured countries and epochs and even then imperfectly and mostly in a cultured class, might be the consequence of this change. That prospect has its attractions, and for the humanist and the intellectual it is in one form or another their utopia of the future. But this would not really
carry the human evolution farther; it would only give it for a
time a larger, finer and freer movement in its widest attainable
circle. If the mentality remained too pragmatic, too eager to
rationalise or organise life according to the idea, the peril of
mechanisation and standardisation would be there. If the mental
ideas governing the individual and social life took a settled form,
became a cultural system of the mind, this system would after a
time exhaust its possibilities and human life would settle down
into a groove, satisfied and non-evolutive, as happened in the
Graeco-Roman world or in China or elsewhere where the mental
intellect became the predominant power of life. If this arrest
were avoided either by the multiplication of different cultures—
different peoples acting upon each other but escaping the ten-
dency to replication and standardisation which is the tendency
of the human collective mind or by a free progressiveness of the
human intelligence making constantly new ideas, new ideals,
still the movement would eventually be in a circle or an ellipsis
which could be a constant description of a new-old movement in
the same field. In fact our external mind moving on the surface
tends always to exhaust itself rapidly; if it expends itself slowly,
conservatively, at a leisurely pace, it can create a civilisation and
culture which will last for centuries or even for one or more
thousands of years; but that too will exhaust itself in time; if
it throws itself into a brilliant or rapid movement as in ancient
Greece or in modern Europe a few centuries are likely to see the
end of this flaming up as of a new star. Afterwards there must
be stagnation, decline and a renewal of the mental circle.

This is because mind and thought are not the sovereign
principle or highest term of our existence; mind and thought
therefore can to a certain extent fulfil themselves, but they can-
not fulfil life nor can they give to man his complete self. Mind is
an instrument, not the self of man; nor the complete reality or
highest reality of his being. It is a mediator between the being
and life; it seeks to know truth of being and truth of life and
bring them together. Truth of idea therefore is effective only so
far as it can interpret truth of spirit and truth of life, it has
itself no essential existence; when it erects itself as a mental
abstraction, it has no reality and no effective power; it is only an index, a figure. It can become effective only by taking up life and catching hold of some vital force to effectuate it, but usually it ends by [ . . . ], exhausting or stereotyping and sterilising the force it uses; or it can become effective only when it canalises and brings out into action of mind and life an inner truth of being, a truth of spirit and it is then powerful only so long as it replenishes itself from its spiritual source and so keeps itself true and alive.