

27 November 1957

“It is open also to doubt whether the evolution is likely to go any farther than it has gone already or whether a supramental evolution, the appearance of a consummated Truth-Consciousness, a being of Knowledge, is at all probable in the fundamental Ignorance of the earthly Nature....

Admitting that the creation is a manifestation of the Timeless Eternal in a Time Eternity, admitting that there are the seven grades of Consciousness and that the material Inconscience has been laid down as a basis for the reascent of the Spirit, admitting that rebirth is a fact, a part of the terrestrial order, still a spiritual evolution of the individual being is not an inevitable consequence of any of these admissions or even of all of them together. It is possible to take another view of the spiritual significance and the inner process of terrestrial existence. If each thing created is a form of the manifest Divine Existence, each is divine in itself by the spiritual presence within it, whatever its appearance, its figure or character in Nature. In each form of manifestation the Divine takes the delight of existence and there is no need of change or progress within it. Whatever ordered display or hierarchy of actualised possibilities is necessitated by the nature of the Infinite Being, is sufficiently provided for by the numberless variation, the teeming multitude of forms, types of consciousness, natures that we see everywhere around us. There is no teleological purpose in creation and there cannot be, for all is there in the Infinite: the Divine has nothing that he needs to gain or that he has not; if there is creation and manifestation, it is for the delight of creation, of manifestation, not for

27 November 1957

any purpose. There is then no reason for an evolutionary movement with a culmination to be reached or an aim to be worked out and effectuated or a drive towards ultimate perfection.”

The Life Divine, SABCL, Vol. 19, pp. 826–27

This is an argument Sri Aurobindo is presenting. As he has said, it is *one* way of looking at the problem and solving it, but that does not mean that this is his own point of view. And this is exactly what he does throughout the book, all the time; he presents different arguments, different points of view, different conceptions, and once he has placed all these problems before us, then he comes and gives the solution. And that is why our method of reading has a drawback, for I read one paragraph to you and if we stop there, it seems as though he had proved his own point of view; and then, if by chance one doesn't remember very well and the next time I read another paragraph in which he expounds another point of view — sometimes totally different, sometimes even opposite — and we stop there, the conclusion is: this too is his point of view. So there is a contradiction. And then if we continue, there are two or three contradictions! I am telling you this because I have heard people who read in a rather superficial way and perhaps also don't read continuously enough — people who consider themselves extremely intelligent and learned — who have told me, “But Sri Aurobindo repeats himself all the time in this book! He tells us the same thing again in almost every paragraph.” (*Mother laughs*) For he presents all other points of view, then gives his own, the conclusion; then once again he presents every point of view, gives all the problems, and ends up by proving the truth of what he wants to teach us — so he “repeats himself”!

After all, of course, one has only to read attentively enough to avoid falling into this trap. One must be careful, not come to a conclusion in the middle of a subject, not say to oneself, “Ah, look! Sri Aurobindo says it is like that.” He does not say it is

Questions and Answers

“like that”, he tells you there are *some people* who say it is like that. And he shows you the problem as it is presented by many people, and then once again the same problem as presented by other people; and only when he has finished explaining to us all the points of view does he give his own conclusion. And what is exceedingly interesting is that his conclusion is always a synthesis: all the other points of view find their place provided they are properly arranged. This excludes nothing, it combines everything and synthesises all points of view.

But as we have a lesson every three weeks, we have time (*laughing*) to forget all we have read before! I don't know if you can remember the problem that was set?... No?...

Is there or is there not an individual evolution?... There is a universal evolution — Sri Aurobindo has shown this — but within this universal evolution, is there or is there not an individual evolution?... Now, he has given us one theory — which holds together perfectly, which is quite logical, you see — but in which it is not at all necessary to postulate an individual evolution. The whole universal plan is logical, can be logically proved, without introducing the necessity of an individual evolution.

But if we continue with patience, in a little while he will prove to us why and how this notion of individual evolution must be introduced into the system of explanation that will be chosen. But what I should like to know is whether this problem has any reality for you or not — whether it corresponds to something you understand or not. If you have followed that, it is possible to conceive of a progressive, evolving universe, in which the individual is not necessarily evolving individually...

I must ask you questions to find out whether you understand first of all the difference between universal and individual evolution, and how both can proceed.

How does Nature proceed in its universal evolution? I think, you have understood this, haven't you?

One dies and is born again.... Physically, isn't it that?

Yes, I am speaking of the outer world, the physical world as we see it.

One dies and is born...

No, that is something else. What you say — dying and being born again, dying and being reborn — that is the process of individual evolution, provided that something of the individual persists through life and death, for if he died entirely and disintegrated entirely, what could be reborn? Necessarily something must persist — persist through the rebirths — otherwise it is no longer the same person. If nothing persists, it is not the individual who progresses, it is Nature. Nature makes use of matter; with this matter she produces forms — I am telling you this in an oversimplified way, but still — she has at her disposal a mass of matter and she makes combinations; she makes a form, then this form develops, but it disintegrates, it does not persist as an individual element. Why doesn't it persist? Because Nature needs matter, substance to make other forms. So she unmakes what she has made, then out of this she makes something else, and she continues in this way, and this could go on indefinitely without the individual progressing: the *whole* progresses.

Supposing you have some plasticine — you know plasticine for modelling, don't you? Good. You make a form, then when you have finished, you don't like it, so you break it up and make it into a paste again and try another form. You have made some progress, you try, you arrange; you say, "That didn't work, I am going to try this", and your form is a little better but it is still not what you want; so once again you break it, put some water, make a paste and then begin another form. And you can go on indefinitely. It is always the same substance but not the same being, for each one of your forms has its own particular existence as a form, and the moment you break it, nothing is left.

You may try to perfect the same form or try other forms; you may try, for instance, to make a dog or a horse, and then if

Questions and Answers

you have not succeeded, you may begin again and make another horse or dog, but you may also begin something else. If you build a house and don't like your house, you demolish it and build another on another model, but nothing is left of the first house except the memory, if you want to keep it. In the same way, Nature begins with completely unconscious and amorphous matter, then tries one form and another; only, instead of doing as we would, one thing at a time, she makes millions of them all at once. But it is simply a matter of scale, it is because Nature has more means at her disposal, that is all. But that does not necessarily imply that there is something permanent — like a principle of life or a principle of consciousness — which enters into a form and persists when this form is broken to enter into another. It could simply be as you with your plasticine: you make something, unmake it, make it again, unmake it again, indefinitely, and there is nothing left — as I said — except the memory of what was made before. But if we admit individual evolution, there is something permanent which passes from one form to another and, with each new form, makes a new progress and becomes capable of entering into a higher form, more and more, until this “something” becomes a perfectly conscious being at the end of the evolution. Then this being would have a personal evolution which would duplicate — it won't be independent but simultaneous — and complement the evolution of Nature or rather *make use of* the evolution of Nature as a field for its own individual evolution.... Do you catch it this time? Good!

What Sri Aurobindo has presented here is the explanation of a world which would function quite logically and comprehensibly without any need of an individual being passing from one form into another, without anything permanent which would be free from all destruction, all death, which would persist through all its forms and would itself have a personal, individual progression *parallel* to the evolution of Nature.... It is as though in the form you have made, at the centre there were a little precious

27 November 1957

stone which you had placed there and wanted to cover with successive forms. You transfer your little precious stone from one form to another — and the comparison is still incomplete, for the precious stone becomes more and more precious as it passes from one object to another — and it would be as though, by passing from one form to another, it became more and more luminous and pure, and more and more clear-cut in form.

There. Do you understand or not?

A little.

A little. Ah! That's already something.

So, to round it off, do you think there is an individual evolution or not?... Do you have any experience of it?... And how could you have the experience? That would become interesting. How can individual evolution be experienced apart from the collective evolution of Nature?

Can you give the answer?

Unless one is conscious of the principle that is eternal in oneself, how can one know whether...

Ah! Good, that's good. That is all right, but then it amounts to asking you if you are conscious of this eternal principle which is in your being!

(Silence)

Are you going to look and see if you can find it within you?

Why is it so hidden?

Perhaps simply because one does not give it enough attention! If one took the trouble to open the doors, perhaps one would find it.... It is obviously a gentleman who does not like—a

Questions and Answers

gentleman or a lady or something, or anything — which does not like ostentation, does not force itself on your attention at the surface. But perhaps it is waiting for you to go in search of it? Perhaps it is sitting very quietly, at the very back of the house, and you must open the doors one after another.

I don't find that it is hidden. I find it visible everywhere, all the time, at every moment, in all things.

Shall we look? Shall we go and look?

(Meditation)