Sri Aurobindo’s
The Human Cycle

A Student’s Guide

By Muriel
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Chapter I: The Cycle of Society

Modern Science, obsessed with the idea of the sole existence of Matter, has long attempted to base upon physical data even its study of Soul and Mind. Its very psychology founded itself upon physiology and the scrutiny of the brain.

In history and sociology attention has been concentrated on the external data, while the deeper psychological elements have been very much neglected. Ex: The French Revolution, it is thought, would have happened just as it did, by economic necessity, even if Rousseau and Voltaire had never written and the eighteenth-century philosophic movement in the world of thought had never worked out its bold and radical speculations.

Recently, however, there is the beginning of a perception that behind the economic motives and causes there are profound psychological, even perhaps soul factors...

→ in pre-war Germany, a first psychological theory of history was conceived. The theorist (Lamprecht) supposed that human society progresses through certain distinct psychological stages: symbolic, typal and conventional, individualist and subjective.

We will leave aside the Western thinker’s own dealings with his idea and keep the suggestive names he has offered us.

The symbolic stage

Predominantly spiritual and religious (and actively imaginative in its religion).

A strongly symbolic mentality pervades its thought, customs and institutions. The symbol is of something which man feels to be present behind himself and his life and his activities— the Divine. All his religious and social institutions, all the moments and phases of his life are to him symbols.

Ex: Vedic age

• The religious institution of sacrifice governs the whole society (as a study of the Brahmanas and Upanishads shows us)

• The social institutions penetrated with the symbolic spirit. Ex: The hymn of the Rig Veda = marriage hymn → the whole sense of the hymn turns about the successive marriages of Surya, daughter of the Sun, with different gods and the human marriage is quite a subordinate matter. The human is an inferior figure and image of the divine.

• The ideal of the relation between man and woman governed by the symbolism of the relation between the Purusha and Prakriti, the male and female divine Principles in the universe. In the earlier Vedic times when the female principle stood on a sort of equality with the male in the symbolic cult, woman was as much the mate as the adjunct of man; in later times when the Prakriti has become subject in idea to the Purusha, the woman also depends entirely on the man. In the Tantrik Shakta religion which puts the female principle highest, there is an attempt which could not get itself translated into social practice, to elevate woman.
• the institution of the fourfold order, *caturvarna*, miscalled the **system of the four castes**.

The four orders are described as having sprung from the body of the creative Deity from his

- head → **Brahmins** = men of knowledge
- arms → **Kshatriyas** = men of power
- thighs → **Vaishyas** = producers and support of society
- feet → **Shudras** = servant

This symbol of the Creator’s body was more than an image, it expressed a divine reality. Human society = an attempt to express in life the cosmic Purusha. Man and the cosmos are both of them symbols and expressions of the same hidden Reality.

From this symbolic attitude came the tendency to make everything in society a sacrament, religious and sacrosanct, but as yet with a large and vigorous freedom in all its forms.

- The *spiritual idea* governs all;
- the *symbolic religious forms* which support it are fixed in principle;
- the *social forms* are lax, free and capable of infinite development.

*First*, the **symbolic idea** of the four orders...

<table>
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<th>...expressing the Divine in man as:</th>
<th>...answering to 4 cosmic principles:</th>
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<td>knowledge</td>
<td>the <strong>Wisdom</strong> that conceives the order and principle of things</td>
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<tr>
<td>power</td>
<td>the <strong>Power</strong> that sanctions, upholds and enforces it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production, enjoyment and mutuality</td>
<td>the <strong>Harmony</strong> that creates the arrangement of its parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service, obedience and work</td>
<td>the <strong>Work</strong> that carries out what the rest direct</td>
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*Next*, out of this idea there developed a firm but not yet rigid **social order** based upon

1. temperament and psychic type with a corresponding ethical discipline
2. the social and economic function.
The typal stage

Predominantly psychological and ethical; all else, even the spiritual and religious, is subordinate to the psychological idea and to the ethical ideal which expresses it.

The idea of the direct expression of the divine Being or cosmic Principle in man ceases to dominate and finally disappears.

This stage creates the great social ideals.

Ex: idea of social honour:

- of the Brahmin: purity, piety, high reverence for the things of the mind and spirit and disinterested possession and exclusive pursuit of learning and knowledge.
- of the Kshatriya: courage, chivalry, strength, a certain proud self-restraint and self-mastery, nobility of character and the obligations of that nobility.
- of the Vaishya: rectitude of dealing, mercantile fidelity, sound production, order, liberality and philanthropy.
- of the Shudra: obedience, subordination, faithful service, disinterested attachment.

But these cease to spring naturally out of the inner life of the man; they become a convention...

→ the typal passes naturally into the conventional stage.

The conventional stage

The external supports, the outward expressions of the spirit or the ideal become more important than the ideal.

Ex: the outward supports of the ethical fourfold order,— birth, economic function, religious ritual and sacrament, family custom,—each began to exaggerate.

At first, birth not of the first importance, for faculty and capacity prevailed; but afterwards, as the type fixed itself, its maintenance by education and tradition became necessary → hereditary groove. Birth and profession were together the double bond of the hereditary convention.

This rigidity once established, the maintenance of the ethical type passed from the first place to a secondary importance. Once ceasing to be indispensable, it came inevitably to be dispensed with.

Finally, even the economic basis began to disintegrate → birth, family custom and remnants, deformations, new accretions of meaningless or fanciful religious sign and ritual (caricature of the old profound symbolism) became the riveting links of the system of caste.

The unclean and diseased decrepitude of the old system has begun; it has become a name, a shell, a sham... (= present state of the caste system in India).
The tendency of the conventional age is to

- fix, arrange firmly, formalise,
- erect a system of rigid grades and hierarchies,
- stereotype religion,
- bind education and training to a traditional and unchangeable form,
- subject thought to infallible authorities

It has its golden age when the spirit and thought that inspired its forms are confined but yet living

but still: the Truth we strive to arrive at is not realised, not accomplished, and what we have of the reality has begun to fossilise and is doomed to be lost in rule and order and convention.

For always the form prevails and the spirit recedes...

It attempts to return, to revive the form but the time-tendency is too strong → ex:

- history of religion: the efforts of the saints and religious reformers become progressively more scattered, brief and superficial in their actual effects.
- India in her last millennium: the constant effort of the most powerful spiritual personalities kept the soul of the people alive but failed to resuscitate the ancient free force and truth and vigour.

**The individualistic age**

Arrives a period when the gulf between the convention and the truth becomes intolerable and the men of intellectual power arise, who, rejecting symbol and type and convention, seek the Truth that society has lost.

The Age of Protestantism has begun, the Age of Reason, the Age of Revolt, Progress, Freedom (a partial and external freedom betrayed by the conventional age into the idea that the Truth can be found in outsides).

A necessary passage to the subjective period of humanity.
Chapter II: The Age of Individualism and Reason

Comes as a result of the corruption and failure of the conventional, as a revolt.

The old truths have been lost and the conventions, which ape and replace them, have become devoid of real sense, exist only mechanically.

Men are compelled to perceive that the Truth is dead in them and that they are living by a lie → attempt to get back to some solid bed-rock of real and tangible Truth.

All the old general standards have become bankrupt, it is the individual who has to search out by his individual reason, intuition, idealism, desire, claim upon life (or whatever other light he finds in himself) the true law of the world and of his own being.

It is in Europe that the age of individualism has taken birth; the East has entered into it only by contact. Yet the truths which Europe has found covered only the physical and outward facts of life. If its rationalistic civilisation has swept so triumphantly over the world, it is because it found no deeper and more powerful truth to confront it; for all the rest of mankind was still in the inactivity of the last dark hours of the conventional age.

The dawn of individualism: a questioning, a denial

The individual finds:

- a religion imposed upon him which does not base its dogma and practice upon a living sense of ever verifiable spiritual Truth, but on the letter of an ancient book.
- true science and knowledge are either banned or else rendered obsolete by the habit of blind reliance on fixed authorities whose words are learnedly or ignorantly repeated.
- in politics: divine rights, established privileges, sanctified tyrannies armed with an oppressive power.
- in the social order: stereotyped reign of convention, fixed disabilities, fixed privileges, self-regarding arrogance of the high, blind prostration of the low, while the old functions are either not performed at all or badly performed merely as a part of caste pride.

He has to rise in revolt; on every claim of authority he has to turn the eye of a resolute inquisition.

→ the revolting individual flings off the yoke, declares the truth as he sees it and in doing so strikes at the root of the religious, the social, the political (momentarily perhaps even the moral) order of the community as it stands, because it stands upon the authority he discredits and the convention he destroys and not upon a living truth which can be successfully opposed to his own.

But: by what individual faculty or standard shall the innovator find out his new foundation or establish his new measures?

- In religion: a personal illumination supported by a theological/philosophical reasoning.
- In society and politics: a perception of natural right and justice which took its origin from the exasperation of suffering or from an awakened sense of general oppression.
The religious motive led at first, the social and political followed behind and then assumed the lead.

**The movement of religious freedom**

Right of the individual experience and illumined reason to determine the true sense of inspired Scripture and the true Christian ritual and order of the Church  → revolt

Ex: engendered the Episcopalian Churches, Calvinistic Puritanism, sects as the Anabaptist, Independent, Socinian, etc.

At first questioning:
- the conventional forms of religion,
- the mediation of the priesthood between God and the soul
- the substitution of Papal authority for the authority of the Scripture,

it could not fail to go forward and question:
- the Scripture itself
- all supernaturalism, religious belief or suprarational truth.

→ Atheism and secularism were its inevitable and predestined goal.

**The Renascence**

The evolution of Europe was determined less by the Reformation than by the Renascence.

Return of the ancient Graeco-Roman mentality:

- the free curiosity of the Greek mind, its eager search for first principles and rational laws, its delighted intellectual scrutiny of the facts of life by the force of direct observation and individual reasoning
- the Roman's large practicality and his sense for the ordering of life in harmony with a robust utility and the just principles of things.

But:

- The unrestrained use of individual illumination without outer standard = perilous experiment.
- The pursuit of social justice through the stark assertion of individual rights or class interests and desires = source of continual struggle and may end in an exaggerated assertion of the will in each to live his own life and to satisfy his own ideas and desires.

→ Imperative: the search for 2 supreme desiderata:

1. a general standard of Truth to which the individual judgment will be inwardly compelled to subscribe.
2. some principle of social order founded on a universally recognisable truth of things; that will put a rein on desire and interest.

→ Europe found them in the discoveries of physical Science.
The light and law of physical Science

Here were laws, principles, fundamental facts of the world and of our being which all could verify at once for themselves and which must therefore satisfy and guide the free individual judgment.

Here were laws and truths which justified and yet controlled the claims and desires of the individual; here a science which provided a standard, a norm of knowledge, a rational basis for life.

→ attempt to govern and organise human life by verifiable Science.

But: this discovery of universal laws of which the individual is almost a by-product and by which he must necessarily be governed, this attempt to govern the social life in conscious accordance with the mechanism of these laws seems to lead logically to the suppression of that very individual freedom which made the discovery and the attempt at all possible!

The result to which it seems to be driving us is a new ordering of society by a rigid economic or governmental Socialism in which the individual, deprived of his freedom (in his own interest!) must have his whole life determined for him by the well-ordered mechanism of the State → A curious new version, with very important differences, of the old Asiatic order of society. In place of the religio-ethical sanction there will be a scientific and rational or naturalistic motive and rule.

The rigidity of such a social state would greatly surpass that of its Asiatic forerunner; for there at least there were two important concessions:

• for the individual: the freedom of an early Sannyasa,
• for the group: the liberty to form a sub-society governed by new conceptions (ex: Sikh or Vaishnava).

But neither of these violent departures from the norm could be tolerated by a rigorously scientific society. There would grow up a fixed system of social morality and custom and a body of socialist doctrine which one could not be allowed to question.

→ a new typal order based upon purely economic capacity and function, rapidly petrifying into a system of rationalistic conventions.

This static order would at long last be broken by a new individualist age of revolt, led probably by the principles of an extreme philosophical Anarchism.

But: forces are, which seem likely to frustrate or modify this development...
Forces shaping the future

1) Rationalistic and physical Science has overpassed itself and must be overtaken by a mounting flood of psychological and psychic knowledge \(\rightarrow\) new view of the human being.

The Age of Reason is visibly drawing to an end; novel ideas are sweeping over the world.

Ex: Nietzsche’s Will-to-live, Bergson’s exaltation of Intuition above intellect or the latest German philosophical tendency to acknowledge a suprarational faculty and a suprarational order of truths.

\(\rightarrow\) mental poise which promise to give the succession not to a new typal order, but to a subjective age.

2) The West has awakened the slumbering East \(\rightarrow\) in its midst, increasing struggle between an imported Western individualism and the old conventional principle of society. Signs are that the individualistic period in the East will be neither of long duration nor predominantly rationalistic and secularist in its character. If the East follows its own bent and evolves a novel social tendency and culture, that is bound to have an enormous effect on the direction of the world’s civilisation; it will not be in favour of any re-ordering on the lines of a mechanical economism; it will rather be in the direction of subjectivism and practical spirituality.

3) Most important of all, the individualistic age of Europe has fixed among the idea-forces of the future 2 of a master potency:

- democratic conception of the right of all individuals to the full life and the full development of which they are individually capable.
- the individual is not merely a social unit, a member of a human pack; he is something in himself, a soul, a being, who has to fulfil his own individual truth and law. He demands freedom for his soul, for his nature, for his individual thought, will and conscience. If he is to merge these eventually, it cannot be into the dominating thought, will and conscience of others, but into something beyond \(\rightarrow\) That is a truth which, intellectually recognised and given its full exterior and superficial significance by Europe, agrees at its root with the profoundest and highest spiritual conceptions of Asia.
Chapter III : The Coming of the Subjective Age

The individualistic age in Asia

The aim, justification and seed-cause of an individualistic age go back to the need of rediscovering the substantial truths of life, thought and action.

It would seem that the shortest way would be to return to the original ideas themselves...

But:

• practical disadvantage: it tends after a time to restore force to the conventions which the Time-Spirit is seeking to outgrow,
• the need of a developing humanity is not to return to its old ideas. Its need is to progress.

A temporary reign of the critical reason largely destructive in its action is an imperative need for human progress.

In India, attempts to rediscover the truth have been conducted by a wide and tolerant spiritual reason, a plastic soul-intuition and deep subjective seeking, insufficiently militant and destructive.

The constructive force, insufficiently aided by the destructive, has not been able to make a wide and free space for its new formation.

With the period of European influence circumstances and tendencies powerful enough to enforce the beginnings of a new age of radical and effective revaluation of ideas and things.

The characteristic power of these influences has been rationalistic, utilitarian and individualistic. It has compelled the national mind to view everything from a new, searching and critical standpoint subjective Asiatic mind is being driven to adapt itself to the need for changed values of life and thought, forced to turn upon itself both by the pressure of Western knowledge and by the compulsion of a quite changed life-need and life-environment. What it did not do from within has come on it as a necessity from without.

From rationalism to subjectivism

The individualistic age is a radical attempt to discover the truth and law both of the individual being and of the world. It may begin with the endeavour to get back to the original truth, but from that first step it must proceed to others and in the end to a general questioning A revolutionary reconstruction of religion, philosophy, science, art and society is the last inevitable outcome.

It proceeds at first by the light of the individual mind, but it must go from the individual to the universal. For the effort of the individual shows him that of the universe, he is a part. From a new view and knowledge of the world, must proceed his new view and knowledge of himself.

In Europe, physical Science has proceeded by the discovery of the laws of the physical universe.

But: becomes apparent that the knowledge of the physical world is not the whole of knowledge; man is a mental as well as a physical and vital being and even more essentially so!
→ to find the truth of things and the law of his being he must go deeper and fathom the subjective secret of himself.

This he may attempt to do by the power of the critical and analytic reason but: in his study of himself and the world he cannot but come face to face with the soul in himself and in the world

→ intellectual reason = insufficient light → need of a deeper knowledge.

He can only know himself entirely by:

- becoming actively self-conscious (and not merely self-critical),
- living in his soul and acting out of it (rather than floundering on surfaces),
- putting himself into conscious harmony with that which lies behind his superficial mentality,
- enlightening his reason and making dynamic his action through this deeper light and power.

In this process:

- the rationalistic ideal begins to subject itself to the ideal of intuitional knowledge and a deeper self-awareness;
- the utilitarian standard gives way to the aspiration towards self-consciousness and self-realisation;
- the rule of living according to the manifest laws of physical Nature is replaced by the effort towards living according to the veiled Law and Will and Power.

**In the current of thought**

The transition from the rationalistic to a greater subjective age began by a rapid turning of the current of thought → movements contradictory of the old intellectual standards.

Materialism gave place first to vitalism → Nietzsche’s Will-to-power, new pluralistic and pragmatic philosophy which has its eye fixed on life rather than on the soul and seeks to interpret being in the terms of force and action rather than of light and knowledge. These tendencies were not a mere superficial recoil from intellectualism to life and action but an attempt to read profoundly and live by the Life-Soul.

Behind them, had begun to arise a new Intuitionalism, which seeks through the forms and powers of Life for that which is behind Life...

**In the art, music and literature**

First tendency: an increasing psychological vitalism → surface emotions, sensations and actions, minutely analysed in their details but without any wide or profound light of knowledge.

There succeeded: a turn towards a more truly psychological art, music and literature, mental, intuitional, psychic rather than vitalistic → aimed at a real rending of the veil, penetration into the hidden soul of things.
Rudimentary in its forms, but it pointed the direction: the discovery of a new world within which must eventually bring about the creation of a new world without in life and society.

**In the practical dealing with life**

**Advanced progressive tendencies** take their inspiration from this profounder subjectivism, **but** nothing has yet been firmly accomplished.

The dominant activities of the world, such as the enormous clash of nations in Europe and the stirrings and changes within the nations were rather the result of a confused half struggle half effort at accommodation between the old intellectual and materialistic and the new still superficial subjective and vitalistic impulses.

The formidable combination of

- a falsely enlightened **vitalistic motive-power**
- a great force of **servile intelligence** and reasoning contrivance subjected to it as instrument
- the genius of an accomplished **materialistic Science** as its Djinn

→ The **War** was the bursting of the explosive force so created. It produced a disintegrating chaos of the monstrous combination which produced it → Salutary ruin... Emptying the field of human life of the principal obstacles to a truer development.

Behind it all: **infant tendencies**, seed of a new subjective dealing of man with his own being, with his fellow-men and with the ordering of his individual and social life.

**Ex**: the new ideas about **education**:

- **Formerly**: education = mechanical forcing of the nature into arbitrary grooves of training and knowledge; family upbringing = constant repression and compulsory shaping of habits, thoughts, character into the mould.
- **Step forward**: discovery that education must be a bringing out of the child’s own intellectual and moral capacities to their highest possible value and must be based on the psychology of the child-nature. Still regarded as an object to be handled and moulded but glimmering of the realisation that each human being is a self-developing soul. Not yet realised: what this soul is or that the true secret is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That will itself take up most of the business of education!
- **Ultimate discovery**: man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education.

The nascent subjectivism has also shown itself in the **new collective self-consciousness** of man in that organic mass of his life which he has most firmly developed in the past: **the nation**.

It is here that we can see:

- powerful results, whether as a vitalistic or as a psychical subjectivism;
- actual drift, deficiencies, dangers;
- true purpose and conditions of a subjective age of humanity;
- the goal towards which the social cycle, entering this phase, is intended to arrive.
Chapter IV: The Discovery of the Nation-Soul

The parallel between the Individual and the Nation

The primal law and purpose of the individual life is to seek its own self-development: to find itself, to discover within itself the law and power of its own being and to fulfill it. This aim is inevitable because the individual is not merely the ephemeral physical creature but a self-manifesting spirit.

In the same way the primal law and purpose of a nation is to seek its own self-fulfilment; for this too is a being, a self-manifestation of the cosmic Spirit and it is there to express and fulfil in its own way and to the degree of its capacities the special truth and power and meaning of the cosmic Spirit that is within it.

The nation, like the individual, has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind. It essentially is a soul rather than has one; it is a group-soul.

From an objective to a subjective self-consciousness

The nation’s first definite self-consciousness is objective much more than subjective → the ordinary emotional conception of the nation centres round its geographical aspect, its most outward and material aspect, the passion for the land of our fathers, of our birth.

When we realise that the land is only the shell of the body, and begin to feel that its more real body is the men and women who compose the nation-unit, we are on the way to a subjective communal consciousness.

Then we have some chance of realising that even the physical being of the society is a subjective power, not a mere objective existence → the nation is in its inner self a great corporate soul.

The objective view of society

Has reigned throughout the history → National existence = political status, extent of the borders, economic well-being and expansion, laws, institutions and the working of these things. Political and economic motives predominate.

→ Historians have concluded that objective necessities are the only really determining forces. The few who still valued the psychological element have kept their eye fixed on individuals.

But: There was always a greater subjective force working behind individuals, policies, economic movements and the change of institutions; but it worked for the most part subconsciously.

When this subconscious power comes to the surface nations begin to enter into possession of their subjective selves.

There is always a vague sense of this subjective existence even on the surface of the mentality but it concerns itself with details (national idiosyncrasies, habits, prejudices, marked mental tendencies). It is an objective sense of subjectivity.

This has been the rule not only with the nation, but with all communities.
Ex: the Church → religious history has been almost entirely an insistence on things objective (rites, ceremonies, authority, church governments, dogmas, forms of belief) → the external religious history of Europe = discords, sanguinary disputations, “religious” wars, persecutions, State churches, etc. the very negation of the spiritual life!

A new psychological tendency

Now first we hear of the soul of a nation and see nations feeling for their souls, trying to find them.

Most powerful in new nations (ex: Germany) or in those struggling to realise themselves in spite of political subjection (ex: Ireland, India). Precisely because their objective life is feeble, there is more chance of their seeking for their individuality in that which is subjective and psychological → “to be ourselves” is now more and more a generally accepted motive of national life.

The shock of the war brought an emergence of the same deeper self-consciousness everywhere. Crude enough were most of its first manifestations: preparing not only “to be oneself”, but to live solely for and to oneself! → disastrous error.

→ It is necessary that the nations should become conscious not only of their own but of each other’s souls and learn to respect, to help and to profit by each other.

The example and the aggression of Germany

The great determining force has been the example and the aggression of Germany:

Example, because no other nation has so self-consciously, so methodically, so intelligently, and (from the external point of view) so successfully sought to find, to dynamise, to live itself and make the most of its own power of being;

Aggression, because the very nature and declared watchwords of the attack have tended to arouse a defensive self-consciousness in the assailed and forced them to perceive what was the source of this tremendous strength and to perceive too that they themselves must seek consciously an answering strength in the same deeper sources.

Germany was a nation preparing for the subjective stage:

• it had a certain kind of vision (intellectual rather than illuminated) and the courage to follow it (vital and intellectual rather than spiritual)
• being master of its destinies, it was able to order its own life so as to express its self-vision.

Germany was predestined to lead in the turn to subjectivism because of her:

• subjective capacities: her great philosophers (Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Nietzsche), her great thinker and poet (Goethe), her great musicians (Beethoven and Wagner);
• objective capacities: her scholars, educationists, scientists, organisers. The industry, the conscientious diligence, the fidelity to ideas, the honest and painstaking spirit of work.

→ there was a bridge between the vision and the force, which makes realisation possible...

J. W. von Goethe (1749-1832)
But: there was no pure transmission (ex: misapplication by Treitschke of the teaching of Nietzsche).

First she turned a deep eye of subjective introspection on herself and things and ideas in search of the truth of her own being and of the world,

Then a patient eye of scientific research on the objective means for organising what she had (or thought she had) gained.

And something was done...

It may be said, indeed, that the last result of the something done - the war - is not only discouraging enough, but a clear warning to abandon that path and go back to older and safer ways...

But: the misuse of great powers is no argument against their right use, and to go back is impossible.

⇒ we have all to do the same thing which Germany has attempted, but to take care not to do it likewise !

⇒ we have to see why and where was the failure :

She had mistaken her vital ego for herself; she had sought for her soul and found only her force. She had said: “I am my life and body”... There can be no greater mistake. The soul is something more and diviner than that. So to confine it, can only stifle the growth of the inner Reality and end in decay or extinction.

It is evident that there is a false as well as a true subjectivism...
Chapter V: True and False Subjectivism

The subjective stage is a critical juncture in which, our race begins to gaze deeper, to see and feel what is behind the outside and below the surface and therefore to live from within.

It is a step ...towards:  
• self-knowledge  
• living in and from the self

...away from:
• knowledge of things as the not-self
• living according to this objective idea of life and the universe.

How that step is taken, to what kind of subjectivity we arrive and how far we go in self-knowledge, here are the dangers of error!

There are in our being many apparent or representative selves and only one that is entirely secret and real; to rest in the apparent and to mistake it for the real is the one general error.

We may apply this truth to the attempt of man to live by the law of his subjective being.

Everywhere we are beginning to approach things from the subjective standpoint:

• in education, our object is to know the psychology of the child.
• in dealing with the criminal, there is a growing attempt to understand him and to change him from within.
• in the general view of society, we begin to regard the nation (or any other fixed grouping) as a living organism with a subjective being of its own.

So far, good; the wiser humanity of this new view of things is obvious. But so also are the limitations of our knowledge and experience on this new path and the possibility of serious errors...

The first danger arises from the historical fact of the evolution of the subjective age out of the individualistic; and the first enormous stumble has been to transform the error of individualistic egoism into the more momentous error of a great communal egoism.

What true subjectivism teaches us

The individual seeking for the law of his being can only find it safely if he regards clearly two great psychological truths:

1) The ego is not the self. There is one self of all and the soul is a portion of that universal Divinity. The fulfilment of the individual is not the utmost development of his egoistic intellect, vital force, physical well-being but the flowering of the divine in him.

The will to be, the will to power, the will to know are perfectly legitimate, their satisfaction the true law of our existence. But their satisfaction must not be egoistic, because they cannot so be satisfied.

So long as we live without self-knowledge, men and nations have to act and think egoistically. But subjectivism is an attempt at self-knowledge and there is no real gain in it if we only repeat the old error in new terms.

⇒ We must find out that the true individual is not the ego, but the divine individuality!
2) The individual is not only himself, but is in solidarity with all of his kind. Every time the society crushes or effaces the individual, it is inflicting a wound on itself. The individual too cannot flourish by himself; for the universal, the unity and collectivity of his fellow-beings, is his present source and stock. We are in our life and being not only ourselves but all others.

For there is a secret solidarity:

- our real “I” is a Supreme Being which is our true self and which it is our business to discover and consciously become;
- that Being is one in all, expressed in the individual and in the collectivity, and only by admitting and realising our unity with others can we entirely fulfil our true self-being.

These two truths apply not only to the individual but to the nation. Here was the first error of the German subjectivism.

False subjectivism : Germany’s egoistic self-vision

It looked into itself and saw that

- as a matter of life, That seemed to express itself as the ego
- the individual merely was a cell of the collective ego (conclusions of modern Science)

→ This collective ego was then the greatest actual organised expression of life.

But: all organised lives, all self-conscious egos are in a state of war and by the survival of the best is secured the highest advance of the race.

Where was the best, if not Germany itself?

→ To fulfil the collective German ego was at once the right law of reason, the supreme good of humanity and the mission of the supreme Teutonic race.

The logical consequences flowing from it

...each a separate subjective error:

1) Since the individual is only a cell of the collectivity, his life must be entirely subservient to the efficient life of the nation.

But where was that vague thing, the collectivity, and how could it express itself?

The State, there was the secret! → modern error of the cult of the State.

What Germany gained:

- an immense collective power
- a certain kind of perfection and scientific adjustment of means to end
- a high general level of economic, intellectual and social efficiency
- the tremendous momentary force which the luminous fulfilment of a great idea gives
What it had begun to lose:

- all that deeper life, vision, intuitive power, force of personality, psychical sweetness and largeness which the free individual brings as his gift to the race.

2) *Since the State is supreme and has a divine right to the obedience of the individual, the service of State and community is the only absolute rule of morality.*

Within the State this may include and sanction all other moral rules, because there no rebel egoism can be allowed, and all condition of war must be abrogated in obedience to the collective good.

In relation to other States, the condition is still that of war between egoisms, so there can enter no morality except that of success. To serve the State is the business of the individual and to that end **everything which succeeds is justifiable.** Inefficiency, incompetence, failure are the only immorality.

3) *Since the survival of the best is the highest good of mankind and the survival of the best is secured by the elimination of the unfit and the assimilation of the less fit, the conquest of the world by German culture is the straight path of human progress.*

In this view, culture is life governed by ideas, but ideas based on the truths of life and so organised as to bring it to its highest efficiency → all life not capable of this culture must be eliminated.

But **capacity** is always in humanity a matter of **race.** Logically, then:

- the Teutonic race is alone entirely capable → all Teutonic races must be taken into Germany
- races less capable but not wholly unfit must be Germanised
- others, hopelessly decadent (ex: Latins of Europe and America) or naturally inferior (ex: Africans and Asiatics), must be replaced (ex: Hereros) or dominated and exploited.

So evolution would advance, so the human race grow towards its perfection!

It was this gospel that had taken possession of the collective German mind.

Behind it there was:

- the **sincerity** which tries to look straight at one’s own conduct and the facts of life
- the (perverse) **honesty** to proclaim the real principles of that conduct.

**The two sides of the German gospel**

**Internal: the cult of the State** → Germany, even if for a time entirely crushed in the battle-field, seems to have already secured the victory in the moral sense. The unsparing compulsion - as against the assistance - of the individual by the State is almost everywhere either dominant or else growing; the champions of individual freedom are now a morally defeated army.

**External: the cult of international egoism** → The battle of ideas still goes on, but the German gospel threatens to sweep over all Europe.
A systematisation of strong actual tendencies

Note that what Germany has done is to systematise certain strong actual tendencies and principles of international action.

The theory of inferior and decadent races was loudly proclaimed by other than German thinkers.

Even the severity or brutality of her military methods was only a crystallising of certain recent tendencies. The use - and even the justification - of massacre and atrocious cruelty in war, in the course of commercial exploitation or in the repression of revolt has been quite recently witnessed in the other continents and certain outskirts of Europe.

From one point of view, it is well that terrible examples of the utmost logic of these things should be prominently forced on the attention of mankind; for by showing the evil stripped of all veils the choice between good and evil will be forced on the human conscience.

The root of the German error

The whole root of the German error lies in its mistaking life and the body for the self.

A gospel born of the application of a metaphysical logic to the conclusions of materialistic Science.

Thus she arrived at a bastard creed, an objective subjectivism which is miles apart from the true goal of a subjective age. The true individuality - of man and of the nation - lies not in its physical, economic, even its cultural life, but in something deeper whose roots are not in the ego, but in the Self.
Chapter VI : The Objective and Subjective Views of Life

The evolution of the individual and national ideals

The old individualistic doctrine of individual and national liberty

The principle of individualism is the liberty of the human being, regarded as a separate existence, to develop himself and fulfil his life according to his own desire governed by his reason; it admits no other limit to this right and this liberty except the obligation to respect the same individual liberty and right in others.

→ balance of this liberty and this obligation

Equally, in the life of nations:

• liberty = the ideal
• mutual respect for each other’s freedom = proper conduct of nations to one another.

But: the egoism of individual and nation does not wish to abide within these bounds...

→ the social law of the nation + international law are called in to enforce the violated principle.

The influence of these ideas is still powerful. In the recent European struggle the liberty of nations was set forth as the ideal for which the war was being waged, — in defiance of the patent fact that it had come about by nothing better than a clash of interests.

The idea of a nationalistic and imperialistic egoism

The growth of modern Science has created new ideas:

• on one side an exaggerated individualism or rather vitalistic egoism
• on the other the quite opposite ideal of collectivism.

Science investigating life discovered that:

1) the root nature of all living is a struggle to take the best advantage of the environment.

→ right for each to live his own life not merely by utilising others, but even at the expense of others. The first object of life is for the individual to survive as long as he may, to become strong, to dominate and to raise himself to his full stature of capacity.

Ex: Philosophies like Nietzsche’s, certain forms of Anarchism and Imperialism

2) not only is the individual life best secured and made efficient by association with others and subjection to a law of communal self-development, but what Nature seeks to preserve is not the individual but the type

→ the individual should live for all and subordinate and sacrifice himself to the growth, efficiency and progress of the race.
We have seen how the German mind took up both these ideas and combined them. It affirmed:

- the entire subordination of the individual to the community, nation or State
- the egoistic self-assertion of the individual nation as against others

→ nationalistic egoism.

**A new idea of human universalism**

But behind is striving to arise a new idea of human universalism or collectivism which demands of the nation that it shall subordinate its free separateness to the life of a larger collectivity, whether that of an imperialistic group or a continental or cultural unity (ex: united Europe) or the total united life of the human race.

**The objective and subjective views of life**

Subjectivism and objectivism start from the same data:

- the individual and the collectivity,
- the complex nature of each (with its various powers of the mind, life and body)
- the search for the law of their self-fulfilment and harmony.

**Objectivism : An external and mechanical view**

Objectivism proceeding by the analytical reason takes an external and mechanical view. It looks at the world as a thing, a process to be studied by an observing reason which places itself outside.

The laws of this process considered as mechanical rules, when they have been observed and distinguished by the reason, have by one’s will or by some will to be organised and applied, to be imposed:

- on the individual by his own abstract reason and will or by the reason and will of other individuals or of the group,
- on the group itself either by its own collective reason and will embodied in some machinery of control or by the reason and will of some other group external to it.

So the State is viewed as an entity in itself, as if it were something apart from the community and its individuals, something which has the right to impose itself on them.

Life is to be managed by a machinery through which it is passed and by which it is shaped.

A law outside oneself = governing idea
A mechanical process of management = conception of practice.
Subjectivism: The view of a containing and developing self-consciousness.

Subjectivism proceeds from within and regards everything from the point of view of a containing and developing self-consciousness.

The law is within ourselves; life is a self-creating process, a growth and development more and more conscious of that which we are potentially and hold within ourselves; the principle of its progress is an increasing self-recognition, self-realisation and a resultant self-shaping.

Reason and intellectual will are only a part of the means by which we recognise and realise ourselves.

Subjectivism asserts the supremacy of the life-impulse or the essential Will-to-be in opposition to the claims of the intellect or else affirms some deeper power of knowledge, called the intuition, which sees things in the whole.

What is meant by this intuition is the self-consciousness feeling, perceiving, grasping in its substance and aspects - rather than analysing in its mechanism - its own truth and nature and powers. The whole impulse is to get at the self, to live in the self, to see by the self, to live out the truth of the self internally and externally, but always from an internal initiation and centre.

But still: there is the question of the truth of the self... What is it, where is its real abiding-place?

The objective search for the self

The individual life and consciousness?

We may concentrate on the individual life and consciousness as the self and regard its power, freedom, increasing light and satisfaction and joy as the object of living and thus arrive at a subjective individualism.

The group consciousness?

We may lay stress on the group consciousness, the collective self; we may see man only as an expression of this group-self and subordinate the life of the individual to the growing power, efficiency, knowledge, happiness, self-fulfilment of the race or even sacrifice it.

A universal Being or Existence

We may enlarge the idea of the self and come subjectively to the realisation of a universal Being or Existence which fulfils itself in the world and the individual and the group with an impartial regard for all as equal powers of its self-manifestation.

Neither the separate growth of the individual nor the all-absorbing growth of the group can be the ideal, but an equal, simultaneous and parallel development of both, in which each helps to fulfil the other. These two would not be separate, opposite or really conflicting lines of tendency, but the same impulse of the one common existence.
The subjective search for the self

**The physical life?**
The search for the self may lean preponderantly to identification with the conscious physical life, because the body is or seems to be the frame and determinant here of the mental and vital movements and capacities.

→ A sort of **subjective materialism**, pragmatic and outward-going is a possible standpoint; but in this the subjective tendency cannot long linger. For its natural impulse is to go always inward.

**The vital being?**
It may identify itself with the vital being, the life-soul in us and its emotions, desires, impulses, seekings for power and growth and egoistic fulfilment.

→ **Vitalism** : man gets to the full conscious life within and feels all its power, joy and forceful potentiality pressing for fulfilment, regards himself as a profound, vital Will-to-be which uses body as its instrument and to which the powers of mind are servants and ministers.

**The mental being?**
It may rise to a conception of man as a mental and moral being, exalt to the first place his inner growth, power and perfection, individual and collective, and set it before us as the true aim of our existence.

→ **Subjective idealism** : seeks the fulfilment of man in the satisfaction of his inmost religious, aesthetic, intuitive, his highest intellectual and ethical, his deepest sympathetic and emotional nature and tries to subject to it the physical and vital existence, considered rather as a possible symbol and instrument of the subjective life flowing out into forms than as having any value in themselves. A certain tendency to mysticism, occultism and the search for a self independent of the life and the body accompanies this new movement.

**The discovery of the true Self**
It is possible to discover the true Self as something greater even than mind. Mind, life and body then become merely an instrumentation for the increasing expression of this Self in the world.

→ The true aim of our living would not be to perfect life, body and mind in themselves, but to develop them so as to make a fit basis and fit instruments for the revelation of the secret **Godhead** who is one and yet various in all of us. The ideal of human existence would be its progressive transformation into a conscious out-flowering of the joy, power, love, light, beauty of the transcendent and universal Spirit.
Chapter VII: The Ideal Law of Social Development

The true law of our development and the entire object of our social existence can only become clear to us when we have discovered not only what man has been in his past physical and vital evolution, but his future mental and spiritual destiny → subjective periods = the most fruitful and creative: he gets back to himself, back to the root of his living and infinite possibilities, and the potentiality of a new and perfect self-creation begins to widen before him.

The law of existence: Oneness and variation

Existence begins with a material figure of itself, a mould of firm substance into which and upon which it can build —worlds, the earth, the body. Here it fixes the essential law of its movement = all things are one (in their being and origin, in their general law of existence, in their interdependence); but each realises this unity of purpose and being on its own lines and has its own law of variation.

• In Matter variation is limited; there is variation of type, but, on the whole, uniformity of the individuals of the type.
• In the development of life, before mind has become self-conscious, the same law predominates;
• In proportion as life grows and still more when Mind emerges, the individual also arrives at a greater and more vital power of variation. He acquires the freedom to develop according to the general law of Nature and the general law of his type, but also according to the individual law of his being.

Man, the mental being in Nature, is especially distinguished from her less developed creatures by:

• a greater power of individuality,
• the liberation of the mental consciousness which enables him to understand more and more himself and his law of being and his development,
• the liberation of the mental will which enables him - under the secret control of the universal Will - to manage more and more the materials and lines of his development,
• the capacity to go beyond his mentality and get to some consciousness of the Reality which is his true being and possess consciously the Self and become the master of his own nature and the master of Nature.

The object of man's individual and social existence

To do this, to arrive through mind and beyond mind at the Self, - becoming one with it in his being, his force, his consciousness, his will, his knowledge -, to possess at once humanly and divinely both himself and the world is the destiny of man and the object of his individual and social existence.

This is done primarily through the individual man; for this end man has become an individual soul, that the One may find and manifest Himself in each human being.

But, that end is not achieved by the individual in his unaided mental force... He needs the help of the secret Divine:

• above his mentality in his superconscient self;
• around him in Nature and in his fellow-men.
Nor does he achieve his destiny for the sake of the individual soul alone, but for the world also or rather for God in the world.

And he achieves it by the stress, not really of his separate individual Will, but of the universal Will in its movement towards the goal of its cycles.

The object of society

The object of all society should be, therefore:

- first to provide the conditions of life and growth by which individual Man and the race through the growth of its individuals may travel towards this divine perfection.
- secondly, to express in the general life of mankind, the light, the power, the beauty, the harmony, the joy of the Self that has been attained and that pours itself out in a freer and nobler humanity.

Freedom and harmony: the two necessary principles

Freedom and harmony express the two necessary principles of variation and oneness,

- freedom of the individual, the group, the race,
- coordinated harmony of the individual’s forces and of the efforts of all individuals in the group, of all groups in the race, of all races in the kind

...and these are the two conditions of healthy progression and successful arrival.

To realise them and to combine them has been the obscure effort of mankind throughout its history.

Freedom for the individual: a divine instinct

Mankind upon earth is one foremost self-expression of the universal Being in His cosmic self-unfolding: he expresses the mental power. All mankind is one in its nature, physical, vital, emotional, mental (in spite of all differences of intellectual development) and the whole race has one destiny. But within this general nature and general destiny each individual has to follow the common aim on the lines of his own nature and to arrive at his possible perfection by a growth from within.

The group self has no true right to regard the individual as if he were only a cell of its body. Each individual man is that Self and sums up all human potentiality in his own being.

- True, his life and growth are for the sake of the world, but he can help the world only in proportion as he can be more and more freely and widely his own real self.
- True, he has to use the ideals, disciplines, systems of cooperation, but he can only use them well, if they are to his life means towards something beyond them and not burdens or despotic controls.
- True, he has to gather in his material from the minds and lives of his fellow-men and make the most of the experience of humanity’s past ages, but this he can only do successfully by making all this his own through assimilation of it to the principle of his own nature and through its subservience to the forward call of his enlarging future.
The liberty claimed by the struggling human mind for the individual is the divine instinct within him, the law of the Self, its claim to have room and the one primary condition for its natural self-unfolding.

**The community as an intermediary**

Individual man belongs not only to humanity in general, but also to his race-type, his class-type, his mental, vital, physical, spiritual type in which he resembles some, differs from others. According to these affinities he tends to group himself (in Churches, sects, communities, etc.).

But he is not and cannot be limited by any of these groupings. Nor can he be limited by his nationality; if by a part of himself he belongs to the nation, by another he exceeds it and belongs to humanity. And even there is a part of him which is not limited by humanity; he belongs by it to God.

The individual animal is dominated entirely by his type, subordinated to his group; individual man has already begun to share something of the infinity, complexity, free variation of the Self.

Thus the community stands as a mid-term and intermediary value between the individual and humanity and it exists not merely for itself, but for the one and the other and to help them to fulfil each other.

The absolute claim of the community, the society or the nation:

- to make its growth, perfection, greatness the sole object of human life,
- to exist for itself alone as against the individual and the rest of humanity,
- to take arbitrary possession of the one and make the hostile assertion of itself against the other the law of its action in the world...

...is an aberration of the human reason, quite as much as the claim of the individual to live for himself egoistically is an aberration and the deformation of a truth.

**The right to be oneself**

The truth deformed into this error is the same with the community as with the individual: the nation or community is an aggregate life that expresses the Self; it has like the individual the right to be itself, and its just claim is to defend its existence, to persist in developing according to the law of its own nature.

The only things that we can really call our rights are those conditions which are necessary to our free and sound development, → necessary to the development of the world and the fulfilment of the destiny of mankind.

Nor does this right to be oneself mean (with the community any more than with the individual) that it should shut itself up and refuse mental or physical commerce and interchange or spiritual or actual commingling with the rest of the world. For so it cannot grow or perfect itself. As the individual lives by the life of other individuals, so does the nation by the life of other nations, by accepting from them material for its own mental, economic and physical life; but it has to assimilate this material. To have the principle or rule of another nature imposed upon it by force is a menace to its existence. A free development from within is the best condition for growth and perfection.
The ideal law of development

A rule of perfect individuality and perfect reciprocity.

The law for the individual

- to perfect his *individuality* by a **free development from within**, but to respect and to aid and be aided by the same free development in others.
- to *harmonise his life* with the life of the *social aggregate* and to **pour himself out as a force** for growth and perfection on humanity.

The law for the community or nation

- to perfect its *corporate existence* by a **free development from within**, aiding and taking full advantage of that of the individual, but to respect and to aid and be aided by the same free development of other communities and nations.
- to *harmonise its life* with that of the *human aggregate* and to **pour itself out as a force** for growth and perfection on humanity.

The law for humanity

- to pursue its upward evolution towards the **finding and expression of the Divine** in the type of mankind, taking full advantage of the free development and gains of all individuals and nations and groupings of men.
- to work towards the day when mankind may be really - and not only ideally - **one divine family**, but to respect, aid and be aided by the free growth and activity of its individuals and constituent aggregates.

Naturally, this is an ideal law which the imperfect human race has never yet really attained and it may be very long before it can attain to it. Man has as yet neither the wideness of knowledge nor the flexibility of mind nor the purity of temperament which would enable him to follow the law of liberty and harmony rather than the law of discord and regimentation, compulsion and adjustment and strife.

Still it is the very business of a subjective age, it is the natural work and should be the conscious hope of man to know himself truly, to **find the ideal law of his being** and, if he cannot follow it ideally, still to **hold it before him and find out gradually the way**.
Chapter VIII : Civilisation and Barbarism

What do we mean when we say that **self-realisation** is the sense of individual and social development?

**The Self of man**

The Self of man is a thing hidden and occult; it is **not his body, his life or his mind**. Therefore neither the fullness of his physical, vital, nor mental nature can be either the last term or the true standard of his self-realisation.

Man has not possessed as a race this truth about himself...

The course of **evolution** proceeding

- from the vegetable to the animal,
- from the animal to the man,

starts in the latter from the subhuman; he has to take up into him the animal and even the mineral and vegetable: they constitute his physical nature, they dominate his vitality, they have their hold upon his mentality.

His **heritage** - from the subhuman origins...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>...of his body :</strong></th>
<th><strong>...of his life :</strong></th>
<th><strong>...of his physical mind :</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* proneness to many kinds of inertia,</td>
<td>* nomadic and predatory impulses,</td>
<td>* inability to think and act for himself,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* readiness to vegetate,</td>
<td>* blind servility to custom and the rule of the pack,</td>
<td>* incapacity for true freedom,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* attachment to the soil and clinging to his roots, to safe anchorages of all kinds</td>
<td>* mob.movements and openness to subconscious suggestions from the group-soul,</td>
<td>* distrust of novelty,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* subjection to the yoke of rage and fear,</td>
<td>* slowness to seize intelligently and assimilate,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* need of punishment and reliance on punishment</td>
<td>* downward propensity and earthward gaze</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is because of this heritage that he finds **self-exceeding** the most painful of endeavours. Yet to learn by what he has been, but also to know and **increase to what he can be**, is the task that is set for the mental being.
The body as the self: Materialistic barbarism

The time is passing away when the entire identification of the self with the body and the physical life was possible for the consciousness of the race (= primary characteristic of complete barbarism).

Mentality of the barbarian =

- To take the body and the physical life as the one thing important,
- to judge manhood by the physical strength, development and prowess,
- to be at the mercy of the instincts which rise out of the physical inconscient,
- to despise knowledge as a weakness and inferiority or look on it as a peculiarity and no necessary part of the conception of manhood.

It tends to reappear in the human being in the atavistic period of boyhood, but to the adult man in civilised humanity it is ceasing to be possible.

For:

- In the first place, by the stress of modern life, man is ceasing to be so much of a physical and becoming much more of a vital and economic animal.
- Moreover, the idea of the necessity of general education means the recognition that the mind - and not the life and the body - are the man and that without the development of the mind he does not possess his true manhood.

The idea of education is:

- still primarily that of intelligence, mental capacity and knowledge of the world and things,
- but secondarily also of moral training and of the development of the aesthetic faculties.

It is a return to the old Hellenic ideal, with a greater stress on capacity and utility and a very diminished stress on beauty and refinement.
The mind as the self: Civilisation vs. barbarism

The importance of general education

The old Hellenic or Graeco-Roman civilisation perished (among other reasons) because it only imperfectly generalised culture in its own society and was surrounded by huge masses of humanity who were still possessed by the barbarian habit of mind. Civilisation can never be safe so long as it nourishes in its bosom a tremendous mass of ignorance.

→ The Graeco-Roman culture perished
  
  • from without by the floods of Teutonic barbarism,
  • from within by the loss of its vitality.

It gave the proletariat some measure of comfort and amusement, but did not raise it into the light.

When light came to the masses, it was from outside in the form of the Christian religion (as an enemy of the old culture). It sought to capture the soul, but cared not for the thinking mind.

When the barbarians captured the Western world, it was content to Christianise them, but not to intellectualise. Distrustful even of the free play of intelligence, Christian ecclesiasticism and monasticism became anti-intellectual.

It was left to the Arabs to reintroduce the beginnings of scientific and philosophical knowledge into a semi-barbarous Christendom.

The half-pagan spirit of the Renaissance and a long struggle between religion and science completed the return of a free intellectual culture in the re-emerging mind of Europe.

Knowledge must be aggressive, if it wishes to survive and perpetuate itself; to leave an extensive ignorance either below or around it, is to expose humanity to the perpetual danger of a barbaric relapse.

The modern world does not leave room for a repetition of the danger. Science has armed the civilised races with weapons of organisation and aggression and self-defence which cannot be successfully utilised by any barbarous people. It has learned too that ignorance is an enemy it cannot afford to despise and has set out to remove it wherever it is found → ideal of general education = indispensable condition of national strength and efficiency, desirable for every nation that desires to be free and to survive...

→ the universalisation of knowledge and intellectual activity is now only a question of Time.

Science: the mind turning its gaze upon its vital and physical frame

The first tendencies of Science have been materialistic (knowledge of the physical universe) but this is a very different thing from the old identification of the self with the body.
Science in its very nature is knowledge, intellectuality, and its whole work has been that of the Mind turning its gaze upon its vital and physical frame and environment to know and conquer and dominate Life and Matter.

Even in its negative work the materialism of Science had a task to perform:

Science:
- despised and cast aside Philosophy.
- discouraged by its positive and pragmatic turn the spirit of poetry and art (poetry entered into an era of decline and decadence, painting followed the curve of Cubist extravagance and espoused monstrosities of shape and suggestion) → ugly realism and utilitarianism.
- in its war against obscurantism almost succeeded in slaying religion and the religious spirit.

But:
- Philosophy had become too much a thing of abstractions rather than a discovery of the real reality of things by which human existence can learn its law and aim and the principle of its perfection.
- Poetry and art had become too much cultured pursuits rather than a concrete seeing and significant presentation of truth and beauty and of the living idea and the secret divinity in things concealed by the sensible appearances of the universe.
- Religion itself had become fixed in dogmas and ceremonies, sects and churches and had lost direct contact with the living founts of spirituality.

→ A period of negation was necessary. They have learned that by finding the truth proper to themselves they must become the ministers of human existence.

The vital as the self: Economic barbarism

But if Science has rendered impossible the return of the barbarian mentality, it has encouraged both by its attitude to life and its discoveries another kind of barbarism that of the industrial, the commercial, the economic age. This economic barbarism is essentially that of the vital man who mistakes the vital being for the self and accepts its satisfaction as the first aim of life.

→ makes the satisfaction of wants and desires and the accumulation of possessions his standard and aim.

The essential barbarism of all this is its pursuit of vital success, satisfaction productiveness, accumulation, possession, enjoyment, comfort, convenience for their own sake. A full and well-appointed life is desirable, but on condition that it is also a true and beautiful life.

→ in a commercial age the soul of man may linger a while, but cannot permanently rest.
Chapter IX : Civilisation and Culture

The four stages of Nature’s progress

Nature :

1. starts from Matter → The atoms and elements organise brute Matter

2. develops out of it hidden Life → the plant develops the living being

3. releases out of involution in life all the crude material of Mind → the animal prepares and brings to a certain kind of mechanical organisation the crude material of Mind

4. turns Mind upon itself and upon Life and Matter in a great mental effort to understand all three so that they may be used in the best way, elevated to their highest and widest potential aims by the action of the intelligent will → the knowledge and control of all these things and self-knowledge and self-control has been reserved for Man, Nature’s mental being.

Man’s first natural absorption in the body and the life is narrow and unintelligent; as his intelligence and mental force increase, he disengages himself to some extent, is able to mount higher, but is still tied to his vital and material roots by need and desire and has to return upon them with a larger curiosity, a greater power of utilisation, a more and more highly mental and, in the end, a more and more spiritual aim in the return.

The intention of Nature in Man

It would seem at first sight that since man is pre-eminently the mental being, the development of the mental faculties and the richness of the mental life should be his highest aim.

But there is a double motive of Nature: man is here to learn from her how to control and create...

- not only himself, his own inner existence, his mentality,
- but also his environment.

He has to turn Mind not only on itself, but on Life and Matter and the material existence.

And there comes the question whether he is not intended, not only to expand inwardly and outwardly, but to grow upward, exceeding himself into something more than mental, more than human, into a being spiritual and divine.

In any case the fullness of Life is his evident object, the widest life and the highest life possible to him, whether that be a complete humanity or a new and divine race.
We must recognise both his need of **integrality** and his impulse of **self-exceeding** if we would fix rightly the meaning of his individual existence and the perfect aim of his society.

**The pursuit of the Mental life for its own sake**

The pursuit of the mental life for its own sake is **what we ordinarily mean by culture**; but our mental existence is made up of many elements...

**Our mental existence : a complex matter**

*First*, we have its **lower and fundamental stratum** (nearest to the vital). It has two sides, the mental life of the **senses, sensations and emotions**, and the **active or dynamic** life of the mental being concerned with the organs of action and the field of conduct. We have **next** in the scale on one side the **moral** being, on the other the **aesthetic**; each of them attempts to possess and dominate the fundamental mind stratum and turn its experiences and activities to its own benefit. And we have, **above all** these, taking advantage of them, helping, forming, trying often to govern them entirely, the **intellectual** being, which is or should be the driver of man’s chariot.

![Diagram](null)

*Light & Force* 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mind</th>
<th>Vital</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>the Intellectual</strong> being</td>
<td><strong>Moral being and its ethical life</strong> Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Aesthetic being</strong> Beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Active or dynamic</strong> life concerned with the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>organs of action and the field of conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Emotional &amp; Sensational</strong> being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>senses, sensations and emotions</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The intelligence of man is not composed entirely and exclusively of the rational intellect and the rational will; there enters into it a deeper, more intuitive, more splendid and powerful, but much less clear, much less developed and as yet hardly at all self-possessing **light and force**. It tries to illuminate, it shows:

- a **Truth** greater and truer than the knowledge given by Reason and Science,
- a **Right** larger and more divine than the moralist’s scheme of virtues,
- a **Beauty** more profound, universal and entrancing than the sensuous or imaginative beauty worshipped by the artist,
- a **joy and divine sensibility** which leaves the ordinary emotions poor and pallid, a **Sense** beyond the senses and sensations,
- the possibility of a **diviner Life and action**.

It is caught and killed or at least diminished and stifled in formal creeds and pious observances but it is still the light of which the religious spirit and the spirituality of man is in pursuit.

This very **complexity** of his mental being (with the absence of any **one principle** which can safely dominate the others, of any **sure and certain light** which can guide) is man’s great embarrassment and **stumbling-block**. All the perversions of his mentality, the chaotic war of ideas and impulses and
tendencies, have arisen from the natural misunderstandings and conflicting claims of his many members.

Still in the midst of it all he has formed certain large ideas of culture and the mental life...

The distinction between civilisation and barbarism

We have first the distinction between civilisation and barbarism.

In its ordinary, popular sense:

- civilisation means the state of civil society, governed, policed, organised, educated, possessed of knowledge and appliances as opposed to that which has not these advantages.
- all the people different in general culture from themselves stigmatised as barbarians.

→ the word civilisation so used comes to have a merely relative significance...

Let us fix it upon this distinction that:

- barbarism is the state of society in which man is almost entirely preoccupied with his life and body, his economic and physical existence and has few means and little inclination to develop his mentality,
- while civilisation is the more evolved state of society in which to a sufficient social and economic organisation is added the activity of the mental life in most if not all of its parts.

The distinction between conventionally civilised and cultured

In a civilised society there is still the distinction between the partially, crudely, conventionally civilised and the cultured → the distinction between the cultured man and the Philistine.

The Philistine = the man who lives outwardly the civilised life, but is impervious to ideas, exercises no free intelligence, is innocent of beauty and art, vulgarises everything that he touches, religion, ethics, literature, life → = the modern civilised barbarian

His mental life is that of the lower substratum of the mind, he pulls the higher faculties down to the level of his senses, his sensations, his unenlightened and unchastened emotions, his gross utilitarian practicality.

His aesthetic side is little developed; either he cares nothing for beauty or has the crudest aesthetic tastes. He is often strong about morals, but it is conventional, unintelligent. He has a reason and the appearance of an intelligent will, but they are not his own, they are part of the group-mind, received from his environment. He is not mentally active, but mentally reactive.

The Philistine is not dead,—quite the contrary, he abounds, —but he no longer reigns. The sons of Culture have got rid of the old Goliath and replaced him by a new giant:
The sensational man who has got awakened to the necessity at least of some intelligent use of the higher faculties and is trying to be mentally active.

He is open to new ideas, he can catch at them and hurl them about in a rather confused fashion. He knows he has to think about ethical problems, social problems, problems of science and religion, to welcome new political developments, to look with as understanding an eye as he can attain to at all the new movements of thought and inquiry and action. He is a reader of poetry (Tagore, Whitman) as well as a devourer of fiction and periodical literature, he has perhaps no very clear ideas about beauty and aesthetics, but he has heard that Art is a not altogether unimportant part of life.

The theatre and the cinema and the radio exist for him: Science hastens to bring her knowledge and discoveries to his doors and equip his life with endless machinery; politics are shaped in his image...

The first results of this momentous change have been a little disconcerting to the thinker and to the lover of a high and fine culture; for if it has to some extent democratised culture or the semblance of culture, it does not seem at first sight to have elevated or strengthened it by this large accession of the half-redeemed from below. Nor does the world seem to be guided any more directly by the reason and intelligent will of her best minds than before.

Modern education has not in the mass redeemed the sensational man; it has only made necessary to him things to which he was not formerly accustomed: mental activity and occupations, intellectual and even aesthetic sensations, emotions of idealism. He still lives in the vital substratum, but he wants it stimulated from above.

It is still the activism and sensationalism of the crude mental being, but much more open and free. And the cultured find that they can get a hearing from him such as they never had from the pure Philistine, provided they can first stimulate or amuse him.

→ The higher mental life has been democratised, sensationalised, activised with both good and bad results.

A yet crude but enormous change has begun:

- Thought and Knowledge, if not yet Beauty, can get a hearing
- the mass of culture and of men who think and strive seriously to appreciate and to know has enormously increased
- even the sensational man has begun to undergo a process of transformation
- new methods of education, new principles of society are beginning to come into the range of practical possibility

→ which will create perhaps one day a race of men—not only a class—who have to some extent found and developed their mental selves, a cultured humanity.
Chapter X : Aesthetic and Ethical Culture

The ideal of a True Culture

Even when a nation or an age has developed within itself knowledge and science and arts, but still is content to be governed by the gross vital, commercial, economic view of existence, we say that it may be civilised in a sense, but it is not the realisation or the promise of a cultured humanity.

Therefore upon even the European civilisation of the nineteenth century we pass a certain condemnation: this was not the perfection to which humanity ought to aspire, this trend travels away from and not towards the higher curve of human evolution.

It was inferior as an age of culture to ancient Athens, to Italy of the Renascence, to ancient or classical India: they were more advanced in the art of life, knew better its object and aimed more powerfully at some clear ideal of human perfection.

In the range of the mind’s life itself, not to live principally in the sense-mind, but in the activities of:
• knowledge and reason and a wide intellectual curiosity,
• the cultivated aesthetic being,
• the enlightened will which make for character, high ethical ideals and a large human action,

not to be governed by our lower or our average mentality but by truth and beauty and the self-ruling will is the ideal of a true culture and the beginning of an accomplished humanity.

The quarrel between Culture and Conduct

In the past there seems often to have been a quarrel between culture and conduct → opposition which puts:
• on one side the pursuit of ideas and knowledge and beauty and calls that culture
• on the other the pursuit of character and conduct and exalts that as the moral life

→ the opposition which Arnold drew between Hebraism and Hellenism.

Hebraism and Hellenism : A great historical contrast

The trend of the Jewish nation which gave us the severe ethical religion of the Old Testament was dominated by the preoccupation of a terrestrial and ethical righteousness and the promised rewards of right worship and right doing, but innocent of science and philosophy, careless of knowledge, indifferent to beauty.

The Hellenic mind was largely dominated by a love of the play of reason for its own sake, but even more powerfully by a high sense of beauty, a clear aesthetic sensibility and a worship of the beautiful. Ethics were seen by it in the light of its master idea of beauty. In philosophy, it arrived at the conception of the Divine as Beauty.
The source of this psychological opposition

The conflict arises from that triangular disposition of the higher mentality.

There is in our mentality

- a side of will, conduct, character which creates the ethical man
- another side of sensibility to the beautiful which creates the artistic and aesthetic man.

The aesthetic man tends to be impatient of the ethical rule; he feels it to be a barrier to his aesthetic freedom; he is naturally hedonistic,—for beauty and delight are inseparable powers,—and the ethical rule tramples on pleasure.

The ethical man tends to distrust art and the aesthetic sense as something lax and emollient, something in its nature undisciplined and by its attractive appeals to the passions and emotions destructive of a high and strict self-control. He sees that it is hedonistic and he finds that the hedonistic impulse is non-moral and often immoral. He evolves the puritan who objects to pleasure on principle.

The misunderstanding between these two sides of our nature is an inevitable circumstance of our human growth which must try them to their fullest separate possibilities and experiment in extremes in order that it may understand the whole range of its capacities.

Examples of this opposition in society

Society is only an enlargement of the individual; therefore this contrast reproduces itself between social and national types.

We must not take as an instance of the ethical turn the middle-class puritanism in nineteenth-century England; that was not an ethical culture, but simply a local variation of the general type of bourgeois respectability — it was Philistinism. Nor should we take as an instance of the aesthetic such examples as London of the Restoration or Paris in certain brief periods of its history; that had for its principle the indulgence of the average sensational man freed from the conventions of morality by a superficial intellectualism and aestheticism.

To get at real examples of the type we must go back a little farther in time...

Early Rome and Sparta

Republican Rome presents itself as an almost unique experiment in high and strong character-building divorced as far as may be from the sweetness which the sense of beauty and the light which the play of the reason brings into character and uninspired by the religious temperament.

→ = the human will oppressing and disciplining the emotional and sensational mind in order to arrive at self-mastery and at the mastery of its environing world.

All supremely successful imperial nations have had this predominance of the will, the character, the impulse to self-discipline and self-mastery.
The kernel of the true ethical being = will, character, self-discipline, self-mastery. Its limitations: Early Rome and Sparta were barren of thought, art, poetry, literature, the larger mental life, all the amenity and pleasure of human existence; their art of life excluded or discouraged the delight of living. They were distrustful of free and flexible thought and the aesthetic impulse.

We have a curious example of the repercussion of this instinctive distrust even on a large and aesthetic Athenian mind in the utopian speculations of Plato who felt himself obliged in his Republic first to censure and then to banish the poets from his ideal polity.

The end of these purely ethical cultures: Either they pass away leaving nothing behind them by which the future can be attracted, as Sparta passed, or they collapse in a revolt of the complex nature of man against an unnatural restriction and repression, as the early Roman type collapsed into the egoistic and often orgiastic licence of later republican and imperial Rome.

The human mind needs to think, feel, enjoy, expand. It readily refuses the name of culture to those civilisations which have not allowed an intelligent freedom of development.

Ancient Athens

On the other hand, we are tempted to give the name of a full culture to all those periods and civilisations, whatever their defects, which have encouraged a freely human development and like ancient Athens have concentrated on thought and beauty and the delight of living.

There were in the Athenian development two distinct periods:

1) A period of art and beauty: the Athens of Phidias and Sophocles.

$\rightarrow$ the sense of beauty and the need of freedom of life and the enjoyment of life are the determining forces.

But without character, without some kind of high or strong discipline there is no enduring power of life. Athens exhausted its vitality within one wonderful century.

2) A period of thought: the Athens of the philosophers.

$\rightarrow$ it turned to that which had been lacking to it: the serious pursuit of truth and the evolution of systems of ethical self-discipline.

But it could only think, it could not successfully practise. The later Hellenic mind gave to Rome the great Stoic system of ethical discipline (which saved her in the midst of the orgies), but could not itself be stoical in its practice; for this thought was the opposite of its nature and not its fulfilment.

$\rightarrow$ insufficiency of the aesthetic view of life.
Italy of the Renascence

Efflorescence of art and poetry and the beauty of life.

= aesthetic culture divorced from the ethical impulse and at times even anti-ethical.

It had learning and curiosity, but gave very little of itself to high thought and truth.

It so corrupted religion as to provoke in the ethically minded Teutonic nations the violent revolt of the Reformation, which, though it vindicated the freedom of the religious mind, was an insurgency not so much of the reason,—that was left to Science,—but of the moral instinct and its ethical need.

→ The subsequent prostration and loose weakness of Italy was the inevitable result, it needed for its revival the new impulse of thought and will and character given to it by Mazzini.

The need of a higher principle

Neither the ethical being nor the aesthetic being is the whole man:

• Ethical conduct: backbone of the mental body, its kernel of will, character and self-discipline are almost the first condition for human self-perfection.
• Aesthetic sense: equally indispensable, for without that the self-perfection of the mental being cannot arrive at its object, which is on the mental plane the right and harmonious possession and enjoyment of the truth, power, beauty and delight of human existence.

But neither can be the highest principle.

We can combine them; enlarge the sense of ethics by the sense of beauty and delight; we can steady the delight of life by the introduction of the necessary will. These two powers, which represent in us the essential principle of energy and the essential principle of delight (Tapas and Ananda) can be thus helped by each other...

But they must be taken up and enlightened by a higher principle which must be capable of understanding and comprehending both equally and of disengaging and combining disinterestedly their purposes and potentialities.

That seems to be provided for us by the faculty of reason and intelligent will.

Our crowning capacity, it would seem to be by right the crowned sovereign of our nature...
Chapter XI : The Reason as Governor of Life

A governing and self-governing faculty

Reason using the intelligent will for the ordering of the inner and the outer life is undoubtedly the highest developed faculty of man at his present point of evolution; it is the sovereign, because the governing and self-governing faculty in the complexities of our human existence.

Man is distinguished from other terrestrial creatures by his capacity for seeking after a rule of life which is not the first instinctive rule of his natural existence. He seeks for an intelligent rule of which he himself shall be the governor. The instinct of man is to be master of his nature and free.

Nature becoming self-conscious

Nature becomes self-conscious in the individual, tries to know, modify, alter and develop, utilise, consciously experiment with herself and her potentialities.

In this change a momentous self-discovery intervenes:

there appears something...

- that is hidden in matter and in the first disposition of life
- and has not clearly emerged in the animal in spite of its possession of a mind...

there appears the presence of the Soul in things which

- at first was concealed in its own natural and outward workings, absorbed and (on the surface at least) self-oblivious;
- afterwards, becomes, as in the animal, conscious to a certain degree on the surface, but is still helplessly given up to the course of its natural workings and, not understanding, cannot govern itself and its movements;
- but finally, in man, turns its consciousness upon itself, seeks to know, endeavours to govern in the individual the workings of his nature and to govern too as far as possible the workings of Nature in mankind and in things.

The advantage of Reason over the other means of knowledge

The intellectual reason is not man’s only means of knowledge. All action, perception, aesthesis and sensation, all impulse and will, all imagination and creation imply a universal, many-sided force of knowledge at work...

But the intellect has this advantage over the others that it can disengage itself from the work, stand back from it to study and understand it disinterestedly, analyse its processes, disengage its principles. None of the other can do this: the principle of knowledge inherent within each force is involved and carried along in the action of the force. It exists for the fulfilment of the action, not for knowledge, it is concerned only with the particular action of the moment and does not look back reflectively or forward intelligently.
Reason, on the other hand, exists for the sake of knowledge, can prevent itself from being carried away by the action, can stand back from it, intelligently study, accept, refuse, modify, alter, improve, combine and recombine the workings and capacities of the forces in operation, can repress here, indulge there, strive towards an intelligent, intelligible, willed and organised perfection.

Reason is

- science, conscious art, invention;
- observation and can seize and arrange truth of facts;
- speculation and can extricate and forecast truth of potentiality;
- the idea and its fulfilment, the ideal and its bringing to fruition.

➔ it is the sovereign power by which man has become possessed of himself, student and master of his own forces.

The recent revolt against the sovereignty of the intellect

Recently, however, there has been a revolt against this sovereignty of the intellect, a dissatisfaction of the reason with itself and its own limitations and an inclination to give greater freedom and a larger importance to other powers of our nature.

Existence: too complex a thing

The sovereignty of the reason in man has been always indeed imperfect, in fact, a troubled, struggling, resisted and often defeated rule; but still it has been recognised as the authority. Its only widely acknowledged rival has been faith. Religion alone has been successful in its claim that reason must be silent before it; but for a time even Religion has had to submit to the sovereignty of the intellect. Life, imagination, emotion, the ethical and the aesthetic need have often claimed to exist for their own sake, but they have still been obliged to work under the partial control of reason.

Now, however, the thinking mind has become more disposed to question itself and to ask whether existence is not too complex a thing to be entirely seized and governed by the powers of the intellect. Vaguely it is felt that there is some greater godhead than the reason.

A greater godhead than the reason

To some this godhead is Life itself or a secret Will in life; they claim that this must rule and that the intelligence is only useful in so far as it serves that and that Life must not be repressed, minimised and mechanised by the arbitrary control of reason.

On the other hand, it is felt that reason is too analytical, too arbitrary, it falsifies life by its distinctions and set classifications there is some profounder and larger power of knowledge, intuition or another, which is more deeply in the secrets of existence. In fact, what the growing subjectivism of the human mind is beginning obscurely to see is that the one sovereign godhead is the soul itself which may use reason for one of its ministers, but cannot subject itself to its own intellectuality without limiting its potentialities and artificialising its conduct of existence.
The power and limitations of the human reason

Its highest power

The highest power of reason, because its pure and characteristic power, is the disinterested seeking after true knowledge. When knowledge is pursued for its own sake, then alone are we likely to arrive at true knowledge.

but if from the beginning we have only particular ends in view, then we limit our intellectual gain, distort the truth.

How the thinking man limits his reason

The thinking man ordinarily limits his reason to the working out of certain preferred ideas; he ignores or denies all that is not useful to these or does not assist or justify or actually contradicts or seriously modifies them,—except in so far as life itself compels him to accept modifications.

It is this subjection to the interests, needs, instincts, passions, prejudices, traditional ideas and opinions of the ordinary mind which constitutes the irrationality of human existence.

But even the man who is capable of governing his life by ideas, is not often capable of the highest, the free and disinterested use of his rational mind. He is subjected to the tyranny of ideas. He turns these ideas into interests, obscures them with his prejudices and passions and is unable to think freely about them.

→ individuals, masses of men, whole generations are carried away by certain ethical, religious, aesthetic, political ideas, espouse them with passion, pursue them as interests, seek to make them a system and lasting rule of life.

The ideas are to a certain extent fulfilled, they triumph for a time, but their very success brings disappointment and disillusionment...

because:

• they can only succeed by compromises and pacts with the inferior, irrational life of man which diminish their validity
• the ideas themselves are partial and insufficient; they are not the whole truth of life → cannot securely govern and perfect life.

Life escapes from the formulas and systems which our reason labours to impose on it. This is the cause why all human systems have failed in the end.

Mankind, has stumbled on from experiment to experiment. Compelled by nature to apply reason to life, yet possessing only a partial rationality limited in itself and confused by the siege of the lower members, it could do nothing else. For the limited imperfect human reason has no self-sufficient light of its own.
The difficulty of the reason in trying to govern our existence

Behind all this continuity of failure there has persisted a faith that the reason of man would end in triumphing over its difficulties.

There has been a great and ordered classification and mechanisation, a great discovery and practical result of increasing knowledge, but only on the physical surface of things. Vast abysses of Truth lie below in which are concealed the real springs of existence.

It is a question whether the intellectual reason will ever be able to give us an adequate account of these deeper and greater things or subject them to the intelligent will.

The whole difficulty of the reason in trying to govern our existence is that because of its own inherent limitations it is unable to deal with life in its complexity or in its integral movements; it is compelled to break it up into parts, to make artificial classifications.

When it limits itself

Reason can make itself a mere servant of life, content to furnish means and justifications for the interests, passions, prejudices of man. But this is obviously to abdicate its throne or its highest office and to betray the hope with which man set forth on his journey.

It may determine to found itself securely on the facts of life, with a prudent resolve not to venture too much forward into the unknown. But here again it abdicates; either it becomes a mere critic and observer or else, so far as it tries to lay down laws, it does so within very narrow limits of immediate potentiality and it renounces man’s drift towards higher possibilities, his saving gift of idealism.

In this limited use of the reason man cannot rest long satisfied. For his nature pushes him towards the heights.

When it attempts a higher action

When it attempts a higher action reason separates itself from life. Its very attempt at a disinterested and dispassionate knowledge carries it to an elevation where it loses hold of that other knowledge which our instincts and impulses carry within themselves, a hidden action of the universal Knowledge-Will inherent in existence.

Ideals and idealists are necessary. But reduce your ideal to a system and it at once begins to fail; apply your general laws and fixed ideas systematically as the doctrinaire would do, and Life very soon breaks through or transforms your system into something the originator would not recognise and would repudiate perhaps as the very contradiction of the principles which he sought to eternise.

The root of the difficulty

At the very basis of all our life and existence, internal and external, there is something on which the intellect can never lay a controlling hold: the Absolute, the Infinite.
There is not only an Absolute, an Infinite in itself which governs its own expression in many forms and tendencies, but there is also a principle of infinite potentiality and variation quite baffling to the reasoning intelligence; for the reason deals successfully only with the settled and the finite.

The real sovereign

The real sovereign is another than the reasoning intelligence. Man’s impulse to be free, master of Nature in himself and his environment cannot be really fulfilled until his self-consciousness has grown beyond the rational mentality, become aware of the true sovereign and either identified itself with him or entered into constant communion with his supreme will and knowledge.
Chapter XII : The Office and Limitations of the Reason

The rational or intellectual man is not the last and highest ideal of manhood, nor would a rational society be the last and highest expression of the possibilities of an aggregate human life.

The Spirit that manifests itself in man, is greater and profounder than his intellect and drives towards a perfection that cannot be shut in by the arbitrary constructions of the human reason.

Meanwhile, the intellect performs its function...

The action of the intelligence

Turned downward and outward

The intellect takes first the lower powers of his existence, it teaches them to understand themselves and to look through the reflecting eyes of the intelligence on the laws of their own action. It gives them self-knowledge and is a guide, teacher, purifier, liberator.

At the same time it plays the part of a judge and legislator, seeks to fix rules, provide systems which shall enable the powers to walk by a settled path. Here it finds after a time that its legislative action becomes a force for limitation and turns into a bondage and that the regularised system becomes a cause of petrifaction.

It has to bring in its own saving faculty of doubt. Under the impulse of the intelligence warned by the obscure revolt of the oppressed springs of life, ethics, aesthetics, the social, political, economic rule begin to question themselves and it awakens new movements of imagination, insight, self-knowledge and self-realisation by which old systems are transformed or disappear, new experiments are made and in the end larger potentialities and combinations are brought into play.

By this double action of the intelligence:

• affirming and imposing what it has seen (fixing a rule and order)
• in due season questioning what has been accomplished in order to make a new affirmation (liberating from rule and order)

...the progress of the race is assured.

Turned upward and inward

The intellect has also a more luminous functioning by which it accepts divinations from the hidden eternities. It is opened in this power of vision to a Truth above it from which it derives an indirect knowledge of the universal principles of our existence and its possibilities; it receives and turns what it can seize of them into intellectual forms and these provide us with large governing ideas by which our efforts can be shaped; it defines the ideals which we seek to accomplish (idées forces).

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Unfortunately, when translated into the forms of our intelligence and into the effort of our life, these powers become disparate and conflicting ideals:

Ex:  
- liberty vs. order,  
- good vs. beauty vs. truth,  
- the ideal of power vs. the ideal of love,  
- individualism vs. collectivism,  
- self-denial vs. self-fulfilment  
- and a hundred others...

The intellect presents us with the opposition of a number of such master ideas, finds each to be a truth to which something essential in our being responds → seeks to fulfil each in turn or tries to combine them...

but is contented with none of the combinations because none brings about their perfect reconciliation or their satisfied oneness.

That indeed belongs to a larger and higher consciousness where these opposites are ever harmonised and even unified because in their origin they are eternally one. But still every enlarged attempt of the intelligence increases the width and wealth of our nature and brings us nearer to that greater consciousness.

The individual and social progress of man has been thus a double movement of self-illumination and self-harmonising with the intelligence and the intelligent will as the intermediaries between his soul and its works.

He has had to bring out numberless possibilities of self-understanding, self-mastery out of his first crude life of instincts and impulses.

Not only he has to contrive continually some new harmony between the various elements of his being (physical, vitalistic, practical and dynamic, aesthetic, emotional and hedonistic, ethical, intellectual) but each of them again has to arrive at some order of its own disparate materials:

- In his ethics he is divided by different moral tendencies (ex: justice vs. charity, self-help vs. altruism, self-increase vs. self-abnegation, strength vs. love, activism vs. quietism).
- His emotions are necessary to his development and their indulgence essential to the out-flowering of his rich humanity; yet is he constantly called upon to coerce and deny them.
- His hedonistic impulse is called many ways by different fields, ideals of self-satisfaction.
- His aesthetic enjoyment, his aesthetic creation forms for itself different laws and forms; each seeks to impose itself as the best and the standard.
- His politics and society are a series of adventures and experiments among various possibilities (ex: autocracy, monarchism, military aristocracy, pseudo-democracy of various kinds, bourgeois or proletarian, individualistic or collectivist, socialism, anarchism...)

→ Mankind works out these difficulties by throwing out a constant variation of types (of character and temperament, of practical activity, aesthetic creation, polity, society, ethical order, intellectual system). All of these are so many experiments in the light of a progressive and increasing knowledge governed by a number of conflicting ideas: each of them gradually pushed as far as possible in its purity and again mixed and combined as much as possible with others so that there may be a more complex form and an enriched action. Through it all there is growing an accumulating stock of self-experience and self-actualisation.
The place of the intellect

This view of life and of the process of our development to which subjectivism leads us, gives us a truer vision of the place of the intellect in the human movement.

An imperfect light

We have seen that: the intellect has a double working:

- *dispassionate* → pursuit of truth for the sake of Truth
- *interested* → coloured by passion for practice, desire to govern life, fascination of an idea.

The superiority of reason over the other faculties → not confined to a separate absorbed action of its own, but plays upon all the others, discovers their law and truth.

But: Man in fact does not live for knowledge alone; he seeks knowledge for its utility to life → falls into that confusion and imperfection which pursues all human action.

So long as we pursue knowledge for its own sake, the reason is performing its natural function (ex: the philosopher, the scientist, the savant). But: when it tries to apply ideas to life, the human intellect stumbles and finds itself at fault.

Because in concerning itself with action the intelligence becomes partial and passionate and makes itself the servant of something other than the pure truth.

But even if the intellect keeps itself as impartial and disinterested as possible, still the truths it discovers or the ideas it promulgates become, the moment they are applied to life, the plaything of forces over which the reason has little control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ex: Science...</th>
<th>on one side:</th>
<th>on the other:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* has made discoveries which have...</td>
<td>served a practical humanitarianism</td>
<td>supplied monstrous weapons to egoism and mutual destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* has made possible a gigantic efficiency of organisation which has been used for...</td>
<td>the economic and social amelioration of the nations</td>
<td>turning each into a colossal battering-ram of aggression, ruin and slaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* has given rise to...</td>
<td>a large rationalistic and altruistic humanitarianism</td>
<td>a godless egoism, vitalism, vulgar will to power and success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* has...</td>
<td>drawn mankind together and given it a new hope</td>
<td>crushed it with the burden of a monstrous commercialism</td>
</tr>
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</table>

→ Reason is in its nature an imperfect light and once it applies itself to life it becomes subject to what it studies and the servant of the forces in whose obscure struggle it intervenes. It can be used to justify any idea, theory of life, system of society or government, ideal of individual or collective action...

Ask it not to lean to one idea alone, but to make an eclectic combination and it will satisfy you; only, there being any number of possible combinations, it will equally well justify the one or the other according as the spirit in man is attracted to or withdraws from it. For it is really that which decides and the reason is only a brilliant servant and minister of this secret sovereign.
The two articles of faith of the believer in reason

This truth is hidden from the rationalist because he is supported by two constant articles of faith,

- **first** that **his own reason is right** and the reason of others who differ from him is wrong,
- **secondly** that the **collective** human reason will eventually arrive at purity and be able to found human thought and life securely on a clear rational basis.

1) **My own reason is right**

is the common expression of our egoism and arrogant fallibility...

But expresses this truth that: it is the legitimate function of the reason to:

- justify to man his action and his hope and the faith that is in him
- give him that idea and knowledge (however restricted) and that dynamic conviction (however narrow and intolerant) which he needs in order that he may live, act and grow in the highest light available to him.

It justifies to him now this, now that, its power of sustaining opposite views are the whole secret of its value. It would not do indeed for it to support too conflicting views in *the same* individual (except at moments of awakening and transition), but in the collective body of men and in the successions of Time that is its whole business. For so man moves towards the infinity of the Truth by the experience of its variety → his reason helps him to progress, grow, enlarge himself.

2) **The collective reason will arrive at a final truth**

is also an error: the reason cannot arrive at any final truth because it can neither get to the root of things nor embrace the totality of their secrets; it deals with the finite, and has no measure for the infinite. Nor can reason found a perfect life for man or a perfect society. A purely rational human life would be a life deprived of its most powerful dynamic sources; would sterilise and petrify.

But this is true that: by constant enlargement, purification, openness the reason is bound to arrive at an intelligent sense even of that which is hidden from it.

**Reason’s true function: Minister of the Spirit**

Its limit is reached, its function is finished when it can say to man:

“There is a Soul, a Self, a God in the world and in man who works concealed and all is his self-concealing and gradual self-unfolding. His minister I have been, slowly to unseal your eyes, remove the thick integuments of your vision until there is only my own luminous veil between you and him. Remove that and make the soul of man one in fact and nature with this Divine; then you will know yourself, discover the highest and widest law of your being, become the possessors or at least the receivers and instruments of a higher will and knowledge than mine and lay hold at last on the true secret and the whole sense of a human and yet divine living.”
Chapter XIII: Reason and Religion

The inner justification of our existence

Reason is an insufficient guide for humanity in that great endeavour which is the real heart of human progress:

- not only the effort to survive and make a place for ourselves on the earth,
- not only having made to keep it and develop its best vital and egoistic or communal use;
- it is also the endeavour to arrive at a harmonised inner and outer perfection
- and to culminate in the discovery of the divine Reality and the complete and ideal Person within us and the shaping of human life in that image.

The ideals of social development

The Hellenic and Modern ideals

If that is the truth then

- neither the Hellenic ideal of an all-round philosophic, aesthetic, moral and physical culture (“a sound mind in a sound body”) governed by the enlightened reason of man and led by the wisest minds of a free society
- nor the modern ideal of an efficient culture and successful economic civilisation governed by the collective reason and organised knowledge of mankind

...can be either the highest or the widest goal of social development.

Both take it that man is partly a mental, partly a physical being with the mentalised physical life for his field and reason for his highest attribute and his highest possibility.

A Greater ideal

A still more ancient truth and ideal overtops both the Hellenic and the modern levels:

→ the truth that man is a developing spirit trying here to find and fulfil itself in the forms of mind, life and body

→ the greater ideal of a deeply conscious self-illumined, self-possessing, self-mastering soul in a pure and perfect mind and body. The wider field it seeks will be a new spiritualised life inward and outward, by which the perfected internal figures itself in a perfected external living → = old religious and spiritual ideal: hope of the kingdom of heaven within us and the city of God upon earth.

The means of attaining that ideal

If the soul is the true sovereign and its spiritual self-finding the ultimate secret of our evolution, then since the instinctive being is not the means of attaining that high end and since reason also is an
insufficient light and power, there must be **a superior range of being** by which alone an entire conscious self-fulfilment can become possible.

We must remember that our aim of self-fulfilment is an **integral** unfolding of the Divine within us.

The old idea of a **spiritualised typal society** did not provide all the conditions of our perfection → It proceeded upon the supposition that each man has his own peculiar nature which is born from and reflects *one* element of the divine nature. The character of each individual, his ethical type, his training, his social occupation, his spiritual possibility must be formed or developed within the conditions of that peculiar element; the perfection he seeks in this life must be according to its law → = theory of ancient Indian culture: the fourfold order of the **Brahmin**, **Kshatriya**, **Vaishya** and **Shudra**.

**But:** the **type is not the integral man**, it is the fixing and emphasising of the generally prominent part of his active nature. Each man contains in himself the whole divine potentiality and therefore the **Shudra** cannot be rigidly confined within his **Shudrahood**, nor the **Brahmin** in his **Brahminhood**, but each contains within himself the potentialities and the need of perfection of his other elements of a divine manhood.

The large development of the whole truth of our being in the realisation of a spontaneous and self-supported spiritual harmony can only be realised by the **evolution of the spiritual ranges** of our being and the unmasking of their inherent light and power, their knowledge and their divine capacities.

**The three powers of being**

We shall better understand what may be this higher being and those higher faculties, if we look at the dealings of the reason with the trend towards the absolute in our other faculties, its dealings with the **suprarational** in them and the **infrarational**, the two extremes between which our **intelligence** is some sort of mediator.

**The suprarational**

The spiritual or suprarational is always turned

- at its heights towards the **Absolute**;
- in its extension, living in the luminous infinite, its special power is to realise
  - the **infinite** in the finite,
  - the eternal **unity** in all divisions and differences.

Man in his spiritual realisation

- begins to find and seize hold on the satisfying intensities of the **absolute in the relative**,
- feels the large and serene presence of the **infinite in the finite**,
- discovers the reconciling law of a perfect **unity in all divisions** and differences.
The spiritual will in his outer as in his inner life and formulation must be to effect a great reconciliation between the secret and eternal reality and the finite appearances of a world which seeks to express and in expressing seems to deny it.

Our highest faculties then will be those which make this possible because they have in them the intimate light and power and joy by which these things can be grasped in direct knowledge and experience.

**The infrarational**

The infrarational has its origin and basis in the obscure infinite of the Inconscient; it wells up in instincts and impulses, which are really the crude intuitions of a subconscient physical, vital, emotional and sensational mind and will. Its struggle is towards definition, self-creation, towards finding some finite order of its obscure knowledge and tendencies.

But it has also the instinct and force of the infinite from which it proceeds; it contains obscure, limited and violent velleities that move it to grasp at the intensities of the absolute and pull them down into its finite action.

But because it proceeds by ignorance and not by knowledge, it cannot truly succeed.

**The rational**

The life of the reason and intelligent will stands between that upper and this nether power.

On one side it takes up and enlightens the life of the instincts and impulses and helps it to find on a higher plane the finite order for which it gropes.

On the other side it looks up towards the absolute, out towards the infinite, in towards the One,

but without being able to grasp and hold their realities...

**The relations between reason and religion**

The limitations of the reason become very strikingly apparent when it is confronted with the religious being of man and his religious life.

**The two attitudes of the reason**

The unaided intellectual reason faced with the phenomena is naturally apt to adopt one of two attitudes:

- Either it views the whole thing as a mass of superstition, a mystical nonsense, a farrago of ignorant barbaric survivals
- or it patronises religion, tries to explain its origins, to get rid of it by the process of explaining it away; or it labours gently or forcefully to reject or correct its superstitions, crudities, absurdities, to purify it into an abstract nothingness or persuade it to purify itself
in the light of the reasoning intelligence; or it allows it a role, leaves it perhaps for the 
edification of the ignorant, admits its value as a moralising influence or its utility to the State 
for keeping the lower classes in order, even perhaps tries to invent a rational religion.

The former attitude has played a powerful part in the history of human thought, but its intolerant 
negations are an arrogant falsity. The thoroughgoing rationalist asks the religious spirit to satisfy the 
material reason and even to give physical proof of its truths, while the very essence of religion is the 
discovery of the immaterial Spirit and the play of a supraphysical consciousness. He tries to judge 
religion by his idea of its externalities.

The more moderate attitude has also played its part in the history of human thought. Its attempts 
to explain religion have resulted in the compilation of an immense mass of amazingly ingenious 
perversions. It has built up immense façades of theory with stray bricks of misunderstood facts. Its 
efforts at the creation of a rational religion have failed.

**Reason and the suprarational side of religion**

The deepest heart, the inmost essence of religion is the search for God and the finding of God.

The knowledge of God is not to be gained by weighing the feeble arguments of reason for or against 
his existence: it is to be gained only by a self-transcending and absolute consecration, aspiration and 
experience. Nor does that experience proceed by anything like rational scientific experiment or 
rational philosophic thinking.

Reason has a part to play, but that part is quite secondary and subordinate:

→ its sphere is to explain as best it can, in its own language and to the 
   rational and intellectual parts of man, the truths, the experiences, the 
   laws of our suprarational and spiritual existence.

= work of spiritual philosophy in the East and of theology in the West.

A work of great importance at moments like the present when the 
intellect is again turning towards the search for the Divine. 
But even the highest philosophising cannot give a true inner knowledge, is not the spiritual light, 
does not open the gates of experience.

**Reason and the infrarational side of religion**

There is another level of the religious life in which reason might seem justified in interfering. For as 
there is the suprarational life in which religious aspiration finds entirely what it seeks, so too there is 
also the infrarational life of the instincts, impulses, sensations, crude emotions, vital activities from 
which all human aspiration takes its beginning. These too feel the touch of the religious sense, desire 
satisfactions. Religion includes this satisfaction also in its scope → Much impurity, ignorance, 
superstition, many doubtful elements must form as the result of this contact and union of our 
highest tendencies with our lower ignorant nature.

Here it would seem that reason has its legitimate part: to enlighten, purify, rationalise.
But owing to the peculiar nature of the religious being, its entire urge towards the suprarational, the rational mind cannot do anything here that is of a high positive value.

In its endeavour to get rid of the superstition and ignorance which have attached themselves to religious forms and symbols, intellectual reason unenlightened by spiritual knowledge tends to deny and to destroy the truth and the experience which was contained in them.

The life of the instincts and impulses on its religious side cannot be satisfyingly purified by reason, but rather by being sublimated, by being lifted up into the illuminations of the spirit. Religious reformation acts best when either it reilluminates rather than destroys old forms or, where destruction is necessary, replaces them by richer and not by poorer forms, and in any case when it purifies by suprarational illumination, not by rational enlightenment.

It must be an intuitive rather than an intellectual reason, touched always by spiritual intensity and insight. For the infrarational also has behind it a secret Truth. The heart has its knowledge, the life has its intuitive spirit. To root out these things from religion because the forms are defective without having the power to illuminate them or without replacing them by more luminous symbols, is not to purify but to pauperise.

**Reason lifted up by the spirit**

But the relations of the spirit and the reason need not be hostile. What is impossible or absurd to the unaided reason, becomes real and right to the reason lifted beyond itself by the power of the spirit and irradiated by its light.

The widest spirituality does not exclude or discourage any essential human activity or faculty, but works rather to lift all of them up out of their imperfection and groping ignorance, transforms them by its touch and makes them the instruments of the light, power and joy of the divine being and the divine nature.
Chapter XIV: The Suprarational Beauty

Religion is the seeking after the spiritual, the suprarational and therefore in this sphere the intellectual reason may well be an insufficient help and find itself out of its province, in the realm of a power and a light higher than its own.

But in the other spheres it may be thought that it has the right to the sovereign place, since these move on the lower plane. In its own sphere of finite knowledge, science, philosophy, the useful arts, its right, one would think, must be indisputable. But this does not turn out in the end to be true...

Everywhere it finds itself standing between the two other powers of our being and fulfilling the same function of an intermediary:

- On one side it is an enlightener and the corrector of our life-impulses and first mental seekings,
- on the other it is only one minister of the veiled Spirit and a preparer of the paths for the coming of its rule.

This is especially evident in the two realms which stand nearest to the reason and on either side of it: the aesthetic and the ethical being, the search for Beauty and the search for Good.

The search for Beauty: from infrarational to suprarational

Man’s seeking after beauty reaches its most intense and satisfying expression in the great creative arts, poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, but in its full extension there is no activity of his nature or his life from which it need or ought to be excluded.

In its origin this seeking for beauty is not rational; it springs from the roots of our life, it is an instinct of aesthetic satisfaction and an impulse of aesthetic creation and enjoyment. Starting from the infrarational parts of our being, this instinct and impulse begin with much imperfection and impurity and with great crudities both in creation and in appreciation.

It is here that the reason comes in to purify our appreciation and our creation by improved taste and right knowledge. While we are thus striving to learn and correct ourselves, it may seem to be the true law-giver (both for the artist and the admirer) and the creator in us of an aesthetic conscience. But this is true only in restricted bounds.

Where the greatest and most powerful creation of beauty is accomplished and its appreciation and enjoyment rise to the highest pitch, the rational is always surpassed. The creation of beauty in poetry and art does not fall within the sovereignty or even within the sphere of the reason. Creation comes by a suprarational influx of light and power which must work always by vision and inspiration. It may use the intellect for certain of its operations, but in proportion as it subjects itself to it, it loses in power and force of vision and diminishes the splendour and truth of the beauty it creates.
By itself the intelligence can only achieve talent. Genius, the true creator, is always suprarational in its nature and its instrumentation.

**When the rational tendency prevails**

Art-creation when it proceeds by means of the intellect, *constructs*, but does not create. Its success is formal and not of the spirit, a *success of technique* and not the embodiment of the imperishable truth of beauty seized in its inner reality, its divine delight.

There have been periods of artistic creation in which the rational tendency has prevailed. At their best these periods have achieved work of a certain greatness, but predominantly of an intellectual greatness and perfection of technique rather than achievements of a supreme inspired and revealing beauty; indeed their very aim has been not the discovery of the deeper truth of beauty, but truth of ideas and truth of reason.

**Classical vs. Romantic art and poetry**

The art-creation which lays a supreme stress on reason and taste claimed for itself the name of classical art; but the claim is of doubtful validity.

The spirit of the real, the great *classical* art and poetry is to bring out what is *universal* and subordinate individual expression to universal truth and beauty,

just as the spirit of *romantic* art and poetry is to bring out what is striking and *individual* and this it often does so powerfully or with so vivid an emphasis as to throw into the background of its creation the universal (on which yet all true art - romantic or classical - builds and fills in its forms).

In truth, all great art has carried in it both a classical and a romantic as well as a *realistic* element (understanding realism in the sense of the prominent bringing out of the external truth of things).

The type of art to which a great creative work belongs is determined by the prominence it gives to one element and the subdual of the others into subordination to its reigning spirit.

**Reason and the creation of beauty**

This predominance given to reason and taste first and foremost in the creation and appreciation of beauty arises from a temper of mind which is critical rather than creative.

In regard to creation its theory falls into a *capital error*. All artistic work in order to be perfect must have in the very act of creation the guidance of an inner power of discrimination constantly selecting and rejecting in accordance with a principle of truth and beauty which remains always faithful to a harmony, a proportion, an intimate relation of the form to the idea; there is at the same time an exact fidelity of the idea to the spirit, nature and inner body of the thing of beauty.

This discriminating inner sense rejects all that is foreign, superfluous; it selects and finds all that can bring out the full truth, the utter beauty, the inmost power.
But this discrimination is not that of the critical intellect, nor is the harmony, proportion, relation it observes that which can be fixed by any set law of the critical reason; it exists in the very nature and truth of the thing itself, the creation itself, in its secret inner law of beauty and harmony which can be seized by vision, not by intellectual analysis.

The critical intellect has no direct or independent part in the means of the inspired creator of beauty. It cannot give a method, process or rule by which beauty can or ought to be created.

Reason and the appreciation of beauty

In the appreciation of beauty it has a part, but it is not even there the supreme judge or law-giver. The business of the intellect is to analyse the elements, external processes, apparent principles of that which it studies and explain their relations and workings; in doing this it instructs and enlightens the lower mentality.

But as with truth of religion, so with the highest and deepest truth of beauty, the intellectual reason cannot seize its inner sense and reality, it can only help to remove the dullness and vagueness of the habitual perceptions and conceptions of the lower mind which prevent it from seeing beauty.

Reason has to aid itself by a more direct insight springing from the soul itself and to call on the intuitive mind to fill up the gap of its own deficiencies.

The development of the appreciation of beauty

We see this in the history of the development of literary and artistic criticism:

In its earliest stages the appreciation of beauty is instinctive, natural, inborn, a response of the aesthetic sensitiveness of the soul which does not attempt to give any account of itself to the thinking intelligence.

When the rational intelligence applies itself to this task, it is not satisfied with recording faithfully the nature of the response and the thing it has felt, but it attempts to analyse, to lay down what is necessary in order to create a just aesthetic gratification → grammar of technique, artistic law and canon of construction, mechanical rule of process for the creation of beauty. This brings in the long reign of academic criticism superficial, technical, artificial, governed by the false idea that technique is the most important part of creation and that to every art there can correspond an exhaustive science.

A time comes when the creator of beauty revolts and declares the charter of his own freedom, generally in the shape of a new law or principle of creation, and this freedom begins to widen itself and to carry with it the critical reason out of all its familiar bounds. A more developed appreciation emerges which begins to seek for new principles of criticism, to search for the soul of the work itself and explain the form in relation to the soul or to study the creator himself or the spirit, nature and ideas of the age he lived in. The intellect has begun to see that its highest business is not to lay down laws for the creator of beauty, but to help us to understand himself and his work, not only its form and elements but the mind from which it sprang and the impressions its effects create in the mind that receives.
Criticism’s consummation: The rational understanding is overpassed and a higher faculty opens, suprarational in its origin and nature. For the conscious appreciation of beauty reaches its height not by analysis of the beauty but by an exaltation of the soul in which it opens itself entirely to the light and power and joy of the creation. The soul of beauty in us identifies itself with the soul of beauty in the thing created and feels in appreciation the same divine intoxication and uplifting which the artist felt in creation. Criticism reaches its highest point when it becomes the record, account, right description of this response; it must become itself inspired, intuitive, revealing. In other words, the action of the intuitive mind must complete the action of the rational intelligence and it may even wholly replace it.

The search for Beauty: a search for the Divine

The place of reason and the limits of its achievement are precisely of the same kind in regard to beauty as in regard to religion. It helps to enlighten and purify the aesthetic instincts and impulses, but it cannot give them their highest satisfaction. It can only lead the aesthetic instinct, impulse, intelligence towards a greatest possible conscious satisfaction, but not to it; it has to hand them over to a higher faculty which is in direct touch with the suprarational. Because that which we are seeking through beauty is in the end that which we are seeking through religion: the Absolute, the Divine.

The search for beauty...

- is only in its beginning a satisfaction in the beauty of form, the beauty which appeals to the physical senses and the vital impressions, impulsions, desires.
- It is only in the middle a satisfaction in the beauty of the ideas seized, the emotions aroused, the perception of perfect process and harmonious combination.
- Behind them the soul of beauty in us desires the contact, the revelation, the delight of an absolute beauty in all things - which neither the senses and instincts can give, nor the reason and intelligence - but to which, through all these veils, the soul seeks to arrive.

When it can get the touch, it is then that the sense of beauty in us is really, powerfully, entirely satisfied. It is in truth seeking (as in religion) for the Divine, the All-Beautiful in man, in nature, in life, in thought, in art; for God is Beauty and Delight.

When we are able to identify ourselves in soul with this Absolute and Divine in all the forms and activities of the world and shape an image of our inner and our outer life in the highest image we can perceive and embody of the All-Beautiful, then the aesthetic being in us has fulfilled himself and risen to his divine consummation.

To find highest beauty is to find God;

to reveal, to embody, to create highest beauty

is to bring out of our souls the living image and power of God.
Chapter XV : The Suprarational Good

The great secret of life

We begin to see that all active being is a seeking for God. It is the great secret of life.

The seeking for God is also the seeking for our highest self. It is the seeking for something whose completeness comes only by a concrete and all-occupying sense of the Infinite and Absolute; it can be established in its integrality only by finding a value of the infinite in all finite things and by the attempt to raise all relativities to their absolutes and to reconcile their differences, oppositions and contraries by elevation and sublimation to some highest term in which all these are unified.

A One there is in which all the entangled discords of this multiplicity of separated, conflicting, ideas, forces, tendencies, instincts which we call life, can find:

- the unity of their diversity,
- the harmony of their divergences,
- the justification of their claims,
- the correction of their perversions and aberrations,
- the solution of their problems and disputes.

Knowledge seeks for that in order that Life may know its own true meaning and transform itself into the highest and most harmonious possible expression of a divine Reality.

All seeks for that:

- the infrarational gropes for it blindly along the line of its instincts, needs, impulses;
- the rational lays for it its trap of logic and order, follows out and gathers together its diversities, analyses them in order to synthetise;
- the suprarational gets behind and above things and into their inmost parts, to touch and lay hands on the Reality itself in its core and essence.

This truth comes most easily home to us in Religion and in Art, in the cult of the spiritual and of the beautiful, because there we can draw back from the limitations of the immediately practical and re-create our souls by the touch of the ideal and the universal → The value of Religion and Art lies in their immediate power for inner truth, for self-enlargement, for liberation.

But in other spheres of life, in the spheres of what we call especially practical life we are less ready to recognise the universal truth. We are content to be the slaves of an outward Necessity and think ourselves always excused when we admit as the law of our thought, will and action the yoke of immediate and temporary utilities.

Yet even there we must arrive eventually at the highest truth. Our daily life and our social existence are not things apart, we shall never find out their true meaning until we learn to see in them
a means towards the discovery and the individual and collective expression of our highest self. All life is only a lavish and manifold opportunity given us to discover, realise, express the Divine.

It is in our ethical being that this truest truth of practical life becomes most readily apparent.

The attempts of the reason to explain ethical life

The rational man has tried to reduce the ethical life to a matter of reason. He has never really succeeded...

A few examples

1) System of utilitarian ethics → substitution of a practical, outward and occasional test for the inner, subjective and absolute motive of ethics; reduction of ethical action to an impossibly scientific and quite impracticable jugglery of moral mathematics.

2) Hedonistic theory → refers all virtue to the pleasure and satisfaction of the mind in good.

3) Sociological theory → supposes ethics to be no more than a system of formulas of conduct generated from the social sense.

The ethical being escapes from all these formulas: its own eternal nature is not a growth of evolving mind, but a light from the ideal, a reflection in man of the Divine.

All these errors have a truth behind

1) Utility is a fundamental principle of existence and all fundamental principles of existence are in the end one; therefore it is true that the highest good is also the highest utility.

But: Good, not utility, must be the principle and standard of good; otherwise we fall into expediency, whose whole method is alien to the ethical. Moreover, the standard of utility must vary with the individual nature → there can be no reliable general law to which all can subscribe. Nor can ethics at all or ever be a matter of calculation.

There is only one safe rule for the ethical man, to stick to his principle of good, be faithful to the law of his nature

2) Neither is its law the pursuit of pleasure. It is true that the highest good is the highest bliss and also that in virtue growing, in good accomplished there is great pleasure...

But this is a side aspect. On the contrary, virtue comes to the natural man by a struggle with his pleasure-seeking nature and is often a deliberate embracing of pain, an edification of strength by suffering. The action of the ethical man is not motivated by even an inner pleasure, but by a call of his being, the necessity of an ideal, the figure of an absolute standard, a law of the Divine.

3) In the outward history of our ascent this does not at first appear clearly: there the evolution of man in society may seem to be the determining cause of his ethical evolution. For ethics only begins by the demand upon him of something other than his personal preference, vital pleasure or material
self-interest; and this demand seems at first to work on him through the necessity of his relations with others, by the exigencies of his social existence.

But this is not the core of the matter shown by the fact that the ethical demand does not always square with the social demand, nor the ethical standard always coincide with the social standard. On the contrary, the ethical man is often called upon to reject and do battle with the social demand, to break the social standard. That which determines his ethical being is his relations with God. He obeys an inner ideal, not an outer standard; he answers to a divine law in his being, not to a social claim or a collective necessity.

The ethical being: a seeking after the Eternal

It has been felt and said from of old that the laws of right are the laws of the gods. The age of reason has scouted this as a superstition or imagination. But still there is a truth in this which the rational denial of it misses and the rational confirmations of it (whether Kant’s categorical imperative or another) do not altogether restore.

If man’s conscience is a creation of his evolving nature, if his conceptions of ethical law are mutable and depend on his stage of evolution, yet at the root of them there is something constant.

- Below hides that secret of good in all things which the human being approaches and tries to deliver partially through ethical instinct and ethical idea;
- above is hidden the eternal Good which exceeds our partial and fragmentary ethical conceptions.

From infrarational to suprarational

Our ethical impulses and activities begin like all the rest in the infrarational and take their rise from the subconscient. They arise as an instinct of right, obedience to an ununderstood law, self-giving, self-sacrifice, love, self-subordination and solidarity. Man obeys the law at first without any inquiry into the why and the wherefore.

What the instincts and impulses seek after, the reason labours to make us understand, so that the will may come to use the ethical impulses intelligently and turn the instincts into ethical ideas.

In the end these ethical ideas and this intelligent ethical will which it has tried to train to its control, escape from its hold and soar up beyond its province. For the ethical being like the rest is a growth and a seeking towards the absolute, the divine, which can only be attained securely in the suprarational. It seeks after an absolute purity, right, truth, strength, love and self-giving.
A help towards the growth of the Divine within us

The reason is chiefly concerned with the apparent process, the outward act, its result and effect; by these it judges the morality.

But the value of our actions lies not so much in their apparent nature and outward result as in their help towards the growth of the Divine within us.

In fact ethics is not in its essence a calculation of good and evil in the action or a laboured effort to be blameless according to the standards of the world, it is an attempt to grow into the divine nature:

- Its parts of purity are an aspiration towards the inalienable purity of God's being;
- its parts of truth and right are a seeking after conscious unity with the law of the divine knowledge and will;
- its parts of sympathy and charity are a movement towards the infinity and universality of the divine love;
- its parts of strength and manhood are an edification of the divine strength and power.

Its high fulfilment comes when the being of the man undergoes this transfiguration; when he is inspired and piloted by the divine knowledge and will made conscious in his nature.

That can only be done,

- first by communication of the truth of these things through the intuitive mind as it purifies itself from egoism, self-interest, desire, passion and all kinds of self-will,
- finally through the suprarational light and power, present and in possession of his being.

Rising from its infrarational beginnings through its intermediate dependence on the reason to a suprarational consummation, the ethical is like the aesthetic and the religious being of man a seeking after the Eternal.
## Chapter XVI: The Suprarational Ultimate of Life

### The higher powers of our being

In all the **higher powers** of his life man is **seeking for God**:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>To...</th>
<th>Is the aim of...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>get at this as a <strong>spiritual presence</strong></td>
<td><strong>religion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grow into harmony with its eternal nature of <strong>right, love, strength and purity</strong></td>
<td><strong>ethics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enjoy and mould ourselves into the harmony of its eternal <strong>beauty and delight</strong></td>
<td>our <strong>aesthetic nature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know and be according to its eternal principles of <strong>truth</strong></td>
<td><strong>science and philosophy</strong> and of all our drive towards <strong>knowledge</strong></td>
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But all this seems to be something **above the natural** being or atmosphere of the individual and the society in their ordinary consciousness and their daily life. That life is practical and not idealistic; it is concerned not with good, beauty, spiritual experience, the higher truth, but with interests, physical needs, desires, vital necessities. This is real to it, all the rest belongs to its parts of ornament. To all that rest **society** gives a place, but its heart is not there. **For itself** it is content to follow mainly after its own inherent principle of **vital satisfaction**, vital necessity and utility, vital efficiency.

### Another power of our being: the life-power

The reason is that here we get to **another power of our being**: the life-power in us, the vitalistic, the dynamic nature. Its whole principle and aim is to be, to assert its existence, to increase, to expand, to possess and to enjoy: its native terms are **growth** of being, **pleasure** and **power**.

Human life is the human being at labour to impress himself on the material world with the greatest possible force and intensity and extension:

- his primary insistent aim must be to **live** and **make** for himself a **place** in the world,
- secondly, to **possess**, **produce** and **enjoy** with an ever-widening scope,
- finally to **spread** himself over all the earth-life and **dominate** it.

That is what the **Darwinians** have tried to express by their notion of the **struggle for life**.

But the struggle is not merely to last and live, but to increase, enjoy and possess: its method uses **not only** a principle and instinct of **egoism**, **but** a concomitant principle and instinct of **association**

→ **individualistic** self-assertion and **collective** self-assertion, strife and mutual assistance, **competitive** endeavour and **cooperative** endeavour.

From this character of the dynamism of life the whole structure of human society has come into being.
Life-power and the formation of society

The modern European idea of society

The modern European idea of society is founded upon the primary part played by this vital dynamism in the formation of society. The European (ever since the Teutonic mind took possession of western Europe) has been fundamentally the practical, dynamic and kinetic man, vitalistic in the very marrow of his thought and being.

In modern times this truth of his temperament has come aggressively to the surface and triumphed over the traditions of Christian piety and Latinistic culture.

For him, life in society consists in three activities:

1. the domestic and social life of man
2. his economic activities as a producer, wealth-getter and consumer
3. his political status and action

...and nothing more.

Learning and science, culture, ethics, aesthetics, religion are assigned their place as aids to life, but are no part of its very substance.

And if nowadays society eagerly seeks after science, that is because science (technology) helps prodigiously the satisfaction of its vital desires, needs and interests... but it does not turn to seek after an entirely scientific life.

The ancients' view of society

The ancients held a diametrically opposite view: they recognised the immense importance of the primary activities, but regarded this life as an occasion for the development of the rational, the ethical, the aesthetic, the spiritual being.

Greece and Rome laid stress on the three first alone,

Asia went farther, made these also subordinate and looked upon them as stepping-stones to a spiritual consummation.
The life-power in its appearance

It is familiar enough; for of that is made the very stuff and present form of our everyday life.

Its ideals

Its main ideals are:

- the **physical good** and **vitalistic well-being** of the individual and the community: the entire satisfaction of the desire for bodily health, long life, comfort, luxury, wealth, amusement, recreation,

- a constant and tireless expenditure of the mind and the dynamic life-force in remunerative **work** and **production**,

- **creations** and **conquests** of various kinds, wars, invasions, colonisation, discovery, commercial victory, travel, adventure, the **full possession and utilisation of the earth**.

Its cadre = the old existing forms (family, society, nation).

2 impulses = individualistic and collective.

The individualistic impulse

The primary impulse of life is individualistic \(\rightarrow\) makes family, social and national life a **means** for the greater satisfaction of the vital individual:

- **In the family** the individual seeks for the satisfaction of his vital instinct of **possession**, for the joy of **companionship**, and the fulfilment of his other vital instinct of self-**reproduction**.
- **In society** he finds a less intimate but a **larger expansion of himself** and his instincts, a wider field of companionship.
- **In the nation** he finds a means for the play of a remoter but **still larger sense of power** and expansion.

Carried to an excess this predominance creates the ideal of the **arriviste**, to whom family, society and nation are a **ladder to be climbed**, a thing to be conquered and dominated. In extreme cases the individualist turn isolates itself from the companion motive, reverts to a primitive **anti-social** feeling.
The collectivist or cooperative tendency

It shows itself first in the family ideal by which the individual subordinates himself and finds his vital satisfaction and practical account, not in his own predominant individuality, but in the life of a larger vital ego.

Ex: old aristocratic views of life; ancient Indian idea of the kula and the kuladharma, ideal of the British domestic Phillistine.

It is a larger vital ego that takes up the individual and englobes him in a more effective competitive and cooperative life unit.

The family like the individual accepts and uses society for its field and means of continuance, of vital satisfaction and well-being, of aggrandisement and enjoyment. But this life unit also, this multiple ego can be induced by the cooperative instinct in life to subordinate its egoism to the claims of the society and trained even to sacrifice itself. For the society is only a still larger vital competitive and cooperative ego that takes up both the individual and the family into a more complex organism and uses them for the collective satisfaction of its vital needs. The individual and family consent to this exploitation because they find their account in this wider vital life and have the instinct in it of their own larger growth, security and satisfaction.

The society is essentially economic in its aims and nature. That accounts for the predominantly economic and materialistic character of modern ideas of Socialism; for these ideas are the full rationalistic flowering of this instinct of collective life.

But since the society is one competitive unit among many of its kind, and since its first relations with the others are always potentially hostile, a political character is necessarily added, even predominates for a time over the economic and we have the nation or State.

The higher parts of man’s being vs. the vital instinct

What account are the higher parts of man’s being to make with this vital instinct or with it gigantic modern developments? Their first impulse must be to take hold of them and dominate and transform all this crude life into their own image; but when they discover that here is a power apart, that it seeks a satisfaction per se and accepts their impress to a certain extent, but not altogether — what then? Ethics and religion especially, proceed to an attitude of almost complete hostility:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To the vital instinct for ...</th>
<th>they oppose the ideal of ...</th>
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<tr>
<td>wealth and wellbeing</td>
<td>a chill and austere poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>pleasure</td>
<td>self-denial, absolute mortification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health and ease</td>
<td>ascetic’s contempt, disgust and neglect of the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incessant action and creation</td>
<td>calm and inaction, passivity, contemplation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>power, expansion, domination, rule, conquest</td>
<td>humility, self-abasement, submission, meek harmlessness, docility in suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sex (on which depends the continuance of the species)</td>
<td>unreproductive chastity and celibacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social and family instinct</td>
<td>anti-social ideal of the ascetic, the monk, the solitary, the world-shunning saint</td>
</tr>
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putting to death of the vital instincts, declare that life itself is an illusion or a kingdom of the flesh, the world and the devil,—accepting thus the claim of life itself: that it is not, was never meant to be, can never become... the kingdom of God!

Beyond a certain point this recoil tends to discourage along with the vital instincts the indispensable life-energy and renders them inert, feeble, narrow, unelastic, incapable of energetic reaction to force and circumstance. That was the final result in India of the age long pressure of Buddhism and Illusionism.

Even the higher being of man, which finds its account in a vigorous life dynamism, suffers in the end by this failure and contraction.

The ancient Indian ideal recognised this truth and divided life into four essential divisions:

- **artha**, vital interests
- **kama**, satisfaction of desires of all kinds
- **dharma**, ethics and religion
- **moksa**, liberation or spirituality

...and it insisted on the practice and development of all. Still it tended to put the last at the end of life and its habitat in another world, rather than here in life this rules out the idea of the kingdom of God on earth, the perfectibility of society and of man in society, the evolution of a new and diviner race.

**The life-power in its reality**

Let us look at this vital instinct and life dynamism in its own being.

**The very province of the infrarational**

We see that what we have described is the first stage of the vital being: the infrarational, the instinctive. It more fundamentally and obstinately resists elevation, because it is the very province of the infrarational, a first formulation of consciousness out of the Inconscient, nearest to it in the scale of being. But still it has too its rich elements of power, beauty, nobility, good, sacrifice, worship, divinity.

**Perfected by the power of rationalism**

Reason, in the garb no longer of philosophy, but of science, has increasingly proposed to take up all this physical and vital life and perfect it by the sole power of rationalism by a knowledge of the laws of Nature, of sociology, physiology, biology and health, by collectivism, by State education, by a new psychological education, etc. But it is not enough!

The ancient attempt of reason in the form of a high idealistic, rational, aesthetic, ethical and religious culture achieved only an imperfect discipline of the vital man and his instincts, sometimes only a polishing, a gloss.
The modern attempt of reason in the form of a broad and thorough rational, utilitarian and efficient instruction and organisation of man and his life is not succeeding any better.

These endeavours cannot be truly successful if our theory of life is right and if this great mass of vital energism contains in itself the imprisoned suprarational, if it has the instinctive reaching out for something divine, absolute and infinite which is concealed in its blind strivings.

Here too reason must be overpassed or surpass itself and become a passage to the Divine.

Absolute vital ideals: the first mark of the suprarational

The first mark of the suprarational, when it intervenes to take up any portion of our being, is the growth of absolute ideals; and since life is Being and Force and the divine state of being is Unity and the Divine in force is God as Power taking possession, the absolute vital ideals must be of that nature. Nowhere are they wanting:

- In the domestic and social life of man, we find hints of them → the strivings of love at its own self-finding, its reachings towards its absolute—the absolute love of man and woman, the absolute maternal or paternal, filial or fraternal love, the love of friends, the love of comrades, love of country, love of humanity. These can be made a first means of our growth into a spiritual unity of being with being.
- The economic development of life → attempt to get rid of the animal squalor and bareness which is what obligatory poverty really means, and to give to man the divine ease and leisure of the gods.
- Politics itself can be a large field of absolute idealisms: patriotism in its aspects of worship, self-giving, discipline, self-sacrifice. The great political ideals of man, monarchy, aristocracy, democracy have had for their soul some half-seen truth of the absolute and have carried with them a worship, a loyalty, a loss of self in the idea which have made men ready to suffer and die for them. War and strife themselves have been schools of heroism.

All this great vital, political, economic life of man with its two powers of competition and cooperation is stumbling blindly forward towards some realisation of power and unity → two divine directions.

The growth into a larger self

Life organises itself at first round the ego-motive and the instinct of ego-expansion is the earliest means by which men have come into contact with each other; the struggle for possession has been the first crude means towards union, the aggressive assertion of the smaller self the first step towards a growth into the larger self.

All has been therefore a half-ordered confusion of the struggle for life corrected by the need and instinct of association. For while Nature imposes the ego as a veil behind which she labours out the individual manifestation of the spirit, she also puts a compulsion on it to grow in being until it can at last expand or merge into a larger self. To assist in this growth Life-Nature throws up in itself ego-
enlarging, ego-exceeding, even ego-destroying instincts and movements → impulses of love, sympathy, self-denial, self-effacement, self-sacrifice, altruism, the drive towards universality in mind and heart and life.

These powers, unable to affirm their own absolute, to take the lead or dominate, obliged to compromise with the demands of the ego, even to become themselves a form of egoism, are impotent also to bring harmony and transformation to life. Instead of bringing peace they seem to increase the number and tension of conflict of the unreconciled forces, ideas, impulses.

The ideal and practical reason of man labours to find amidst all this the right law of life and action. But the order, the structure arrived at by the reason is always partial, precarious and temporary. It is disturbed by a pull from below and a pull from above. For these powers that life throws up to help towards the growth into a larger self, a wider being, are already reflections of something that is beyond reason, seeds of the spiritual, the absolute.

**Involution into its opposite : a difficult emergence**

Life has begun from an involution of the spiritual truth of things in what seems to be its opposite.

There is a Reality which:

- supports and pervades all things as the Cosmic Self and Spirit,
- can be discovered by the individual even here in the terrestrial embodiment as his own self and spirit,
- is, at its summits and in its essence, an infinite and eternal self-existent Being, Consciousness and Bliss of existence.

But what we seem to see as the source and beginning of the material universe is just the contrary - it wears to us the aspect of a Void, an infinite of Non-Existence, an indeterminate Inconscient, an insensitive blissless Zero out of which everything has yet to come.

When it begins to move, evolve, create, it puts on the appearance of an inconscient Energy which delivers existence out of the Void in the form of an infinitesimal fragmentation, the electron, then the atom, the molecule, and out of this fragmentation builds up a formed and concrete universe in the void of its Infinite → awakening of a life and a spirit in Matter

→ existence grows out of the Void,
→ consciousness emerges and increases out of the Inconscient,
→ an ascending urge towards pleasure, happiness, delight, divine bliss and ecstasy is inexplicably born out of an insensitive Nihil.

These phenomena betray the truth, that the Inconscient is only a mask of the Spirit; it imposes on the evolving life and soul the law of a difficult emergence.
Life and consciousness, no less than Matter, obey in their first appearance the law of fragmentation:

- **Life** organises itself *physically* round the plasm, the *cell*, *psychologically* round the small separative fragmentary *ego*.
- **Consciousness** itself has to concentrate its small beginnings in a poor *surface* formation.
- Even the *spiritual being* seems to obey this law and manifest as a unit in the whole a *spark* of itself that evolves into an *individual psyche*.

→ It is this little ego, this fragmented consciousness, this concealed soul-spark on which is imposed the task of meeting and **striving with the forces of the universe**, entering into contact with all that seems to it not itself, increasing under the pressure of inner and outer Nature **till it can become one with all existence**.

It has to **grow into self-knowledge** and world-knowledge:

- to get **within** itself and discover that it is a spiritual being,
- to get **outside** of itself and discover its larger truth as the cosmic Individual,
- to get **beyond** itself and know and live in some supreme Being, Consciousness and Bliss of existence.

For this immense task it is equipped only with the instruments of its original Ignorance.

- Its **limited being** is the cause of all the difficulty, discord, struggle, division that mars life.
- The limitation of its consciousness, **unable to dominate** or assimilate the contacts of the universal Energy, is the cause of all its suffering, pain and sorrow.
- Its limited power of consciousness formulated in an ignorant will **unable to grasp** or follow the right law of its life and action is the cause of all its error, wrongdoing and evil.

There is no other true cause.

Only when it **rises and widens out** of this limited separative consciousness **into the oneness** of the liberated Spirit, can it escape from these results of its growth out of the Inconscience.
The secret ultimates of life

Evolving out of its first involved condition in Matter and in plant life, effecting a first imperfect organised consciousness in the animal it arrives in man, the mental being, at the possibility of a new, a conscious evolution which will bring it to its goal and at a certain stage of his development it wakes in him the overmastering impulse to pass on from mental to spiritual being.

Life cannot arrive at its secret ultimates by following its first infrarational motive forces of instinct and desire. But neither can human reason give it what it searches after. Therefore with man as he is the upward urge in life cannot rest satisfied.

The ultimates of life are spiritual and only in the full light of the liberated self and spirit can it achieve them. That full light is a knowledge by inner unity and identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life seeks for...</th>
<th>But...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>self-knowledge</td>
<td>it is only by the light of the spirit that it can find it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a luminous guidance and mastery of its own movements</td>
<td>it is only when it finds within itself this inner self and spirit and by it or in obedience to it governs its own steps that it can have the illumined will it needs and the unerring leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the fulfilment of its instincts of love and sympathy, its yearnings after accord and union</td>
<td>these are crossed by opposing instincts and it is only the spiritual consciousness with its realised abiding oneness that can abolish these oppositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full growth of being</td>
<td>it can attain to it only when the limited being has found in itself its own inmost soul of existence and around it its own widest self of cosmic consciousness by which it can feel the world and all being in itself and as itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>power</td>
<td>it is only the power of the spirit and the power of this conscious oneness that can give it mastery of its self and its world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pleasure, happiness, bliss</td>
<td>only the spirit has the secret of an unmixed and abiding happiness or ecstasy, is capable of a firm tenseness of vibrant response to it, can achieve and justify a spiritual pleasure or joy of life as one form of the infinite and universal delight of being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a harmonious fulfilment of all its powers, now divided and in conflict</td>
<td>it is only in the consciousness of the one self and spirit that that is found, for there they arrive at their full truth and their perfect agreement in the light of the integral Self-existence</td>
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There is then a suprarational ultimate of Life no less than a suprarational Truth, Good and Beauty.
The endeavour to reach it is the spiritual meaning of this seeking and striving Life-nature.
Chapter XVII: Religion as the Law of Life

Since the infinite is the secret summit of existence and to reach the Divine the ultimate aim of our being and therefore of the whole development of the individual and the collectivity → reason cannot be the last and highest guide.

Where then are we to find the directing light and the regulating and harmonising principle?

The first answer which will suggest itself is that we shall find it in religion; for religion is that in man which aims directly at the Divine.

→ To make all life religion would seem to be the right way to the development of the ideal individual and society.

Religion as a guide

A great truth of our natural being

A certain pre-eminence of religion, an overtopping of all the other instincts and fundamental ideas by the religious instinct and idea has always been more or less the normal state of the human mind and of human societies (except in certain comparatively brief periods of their history, in one of which we find ourselves today).

We must suppose then that in this leading, this predominant part assigned to religion there is some great need and truth of our natural being.

An historic inefficiency

On the other hand, in a time of great activity, of high aspiration, such as the modern age has been (a time especially when humanity got rid of much that was cruel, evil, ignorant, not by the power of religion, but by the power of the awakened intelligence and of human idealism and sympathy) this predominance of religion has been violently attacked and rejected.

This revolt in its extreme form tried to destroy religion altogether. In its more moderate movements it put religion aside and banished its intermiscence in science, thought, politics, society, life in general, on the ground that it had been and must be a force for retardation, superstition, oppressive ignorance.

We are obliged to see that so long as man has not realised the divine and the ideal in his life, progress and not unmoving status is the necessary and desirable law of his life.

But historically and as a matter of fact the accredited religions have too often been a force for retardation. → It has needed a denial, a revolt of the oppressed human mind and heart to set religion right.
And why should this have been if religion is the true and sufficient guide and regulator of the whole of human life?

We cannot ignore the fact that such things were possible as:

- The blood stained and fiery track which Christianity has left furrowed across the mediaeval history of Europe,
- or the sanguinary comment which the Inquisition affords on the claim of religion to be the directing light and regulating power in ethics and society,
- or religious wars and wide-spread State persecutions on its claim to guide the political life of mankind.

... and we have to find its explanation.

The root of this evil

The root of this evil is not in true religion itself, but in its infrarational parts, in our ignorant human confusion of religion with a particular creed, sect, cult, religious society or Church.

So strong is the tendency to this error that:

- the old tolerant Paganism slew Socrates, persecuted faiths like the cult of Isis or the cult of Mithra and the religion of the early Christians;
- the still more fundamentally tolerant Hinduism led at one time to the milder mutual hatred and occasional persecution of Buddhist, Jain, Shaiva, Vaishnava.

The misdeeds of Churches and creeds

Churches and creeds have stood violently in the way of philosophy and science (ex: burned a Giordano Bruno, imprisoned a Galileo) because men had chosen to think that religion was bound up with certain fixed intellectual conceptions about God and the world which could not stand scrutiny → scrutiny had to be put down by fire and sword.

A narrow religious spirit often oppresses and impoverishes the joy and beauty of life, either from an intolerant asceticism or, as the Puritans, because they could not see that religious austerity is not the whole of religion, that God is love and beauty as well as purity.

In politics religion has often thrown itself on the side of power and resisted the coming of larger political ideals, because it was itself, in the form of a Church, supported by power.

It has often supported a rigid and outworn social system, because it thought its own life bound up with social forms with which it happened to have been associated and concluded that even a necessary change there would be a danger to its existence.
This error in its many shapes has been the great weakness of religion and the justification for the revolt of the intelligence, the aesthetic sense, the social and political idealism, even the ethical spirit of the human being, against what should have been its own highest tendency and law.

**True religion vs. religionism**

There are two aspects of religion, true religion and religionism.

**True religion** is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit.

Religionism, on the contrary, entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some religio-political or religio-social system. But these things are aids and supports, not the essence; precisely because they belong to the rational and infrarational parts, they can be nothing more and, if too blindly insisted on, may even hamper the suprarational light.

**The quarrel between heaven and earth**

**From a wrong affirmation of the spirit...**

By spirituality religion seems often to mean something remote from earthly life, different from it, hostile to it. It seems to condemn the pursuit of earthly aims as a trend opposed to the turn to a spiritual life

→ then obviously religion has no positive message for human society in the proper field of social effort, or for the individual in any of the lower members of his being.

It becomes still more sterilising if spirituality takes the form of a religion of sorrow and suffering and austere mortification and the gospel of the vanity of things; in its exaggeration it leads to such nightmares of the soul as that terrible gloom and hopelessness of the Middle Ages.

This pessimistic attitude with regard to the world, becomes a force for the discouragement of life and cannot, therefore, be a true law and guide for life.

... to a wrong negation

The Western recoil from religion, that making of the ordinary earthly life our one preoccupation, that labour to fulfil ourselves by the law of the lower members, divorced from all spiritual seeking, was an opposite error, the contrary ignorant extreme.

Perfection cannot be found in such a limitation and restriction; for it denies the complete law of human existence, its deepest urge, its most secret impulse. Only by the light and power of the highest can the lower be perfectly guided, uplifted and accomplished.
The spiritual attitude which can guide human life

The monastic attitude implies a fear, an aversion, a distrust of life and its aspirations, and one cannot wisely guide that with which one is entirely out of sympathy, that which one wishes to minimise and discourage.

The spiritual man who can guide human life towards its perfection is one who has lived fully the life of man and found the word of the supra-intellectual, supramental, spiritual truth. He has risen above these lower limitations and can view all things from above, but also he is in sympathy with their effort and can view them from within; he has the complete inner knowledge and the higher surpassing knowledge. (ex: ancient Indian idea of the Rishi)

Therefore he can guide the world humanly as God guides it divinely, because like the Divine he is in the life of the world and yet above it.

Spirituality as the Law of Life

In spirituality, then, understood in this sense, we must seek for the directing light and the harmonising law, and in religion only in proportion as it identifies itself with this spirituality. So long as it falls short of this, it is one human activity and power among others, and it cannot wholly guide the others. If it seeks always to fix them into the limits of a creed, it must be prepared to see them revolting; for they must move by the law of their being.

Spirituality respects the freedom of the human soul, because it is itself fulfilled by freedom.

The deepest meaning of freedom is: the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one’s own nature, dharma.

It will give that freedom to:

• philosophy and science,
• man’s seeking for political and social perfection,
• all his other powers and aspirations.

Only it will be vigilant to illuminate them so that they may grow into the light and law of the spirit, not by suppression and restriction, but by a self-searching, self-controlled expansion and a many-sided finding of their greatest, highest and deepest potentialities.

For all these are potentialities of the spirit.
Chapter XVIII : The Infrarational Age of the Cycle

A satisfying evolution of the nascent spirituality is the possibility to which an age of subjectivism is a first glimmer of awakening. A greater, more spiritualised subjective understanding of the individual and communal self and its life and a growing reliance on the spiritual light and the spiritual means for the final solution of its problems are the only way to a true social perfection.

The free rule, the predominant lead, control and influence of the developed spiritual man is our hope for a divine guidance of the race. A spiritualised society can alone bring about a reign of individual harmony and communal happiness.

Certainly, this will not come about easily.

Often the decisive turn is preceded by an apparent emphasising and raising to their extreme of things which seem the very denial of the new creation. That need be no index of a practical impossibility of the new birth, but on the contrary may be the sign of its approach.

Certainly, the whole effort of a subjective age may go wrong; but this happens oftenest when by
- the insufficiency of its materials,
- a great crudeness of its starting point
- a hasty shallowness or narrow intensity of its inlook into itself and things...
... it is foredoomed to a fundamental error of self-knowledge.

It becomes less likely when the spirit of the age is full of freedom, variety and a many-sided seeking, a persistent effort after knowledge and perfection in all the domains of human activity; that can well convert itself into an intense and yet flexible straining after the divine.

The three stages of social and individual evolution

There are three stages of the human evolution in both individual and society.

Infrarational

Men still act principally out of their instincts, impulses, spontaneous ideas, vital intuitions or obey a customary response to desire, need and circumstance.

Rational

Man’s intelligent will more or less developed becomes the judge, arbiter and presiding motive of his thought, feeling and action, the moulder, destroyer and recreator of his leading ideas, aims and intuitions.

Suprarational or spiritual

Man will develop progressively a greater spiritual, supra-intellectual and intuitive, perhaps in the end a more than intuitive, a gnostic consciousness. He will be able to perceive a higher divine end, a divine sanction, a divine light of guidance for all he seeks to be, think, feel and do → a higher spiritual living for which the clarities of the reason are a necessary preparation and into which they too will be taken up.
These stages are inevitable in the psychological evolution of mankind for they depend on the very nature of his being.

But we must not suppose that they are naturally exclusive and absolute in their nature, or complete in their tendency or fulfilment when they come, or rigidly marked off from each other in their action or their time. For they not only arise out of each other, but may be partially developed in each other and they may come to coexist in different parts of the earth at the same time.

But, especially, since man as a whole is always a complex being, he cannot be any of these things exclusively or absolutely (so long as he has not exceeded himself into the superman and divinised his whole being).

**The development of Reason and Spirit in the infrarational age**

Thus an infrarational period of human and social development need not be without its elements of reason and of spirituality.

**Bond-slaves of the infrarational nature**

Even the savage has some coherent idea of this world and the beyond, a theory of life and a religion. But the unrefined reason and unenlightened spirit in him cannot work for their own ends; they are bond-slaves of his infrarational nature.

**Represented by exceptional individuals**

At a higher stage of development the infrarational stage of society may arrive at a very lofty order of civilisation. It may have great intuitions of the meaning of life, admirable ideas of the arrangement of life, a harmonious social system, an imposing religion (in which symbol and ceremonial will form the largest portion). Pure reason and pure spirituality will not govern the society, but will be represented, if at all, by individuals.

- If the development of reason is strongest, this may lead to an age of:
  - great individual thinkers who seize on some idea of life and erect that into a philosophy,
  - critical minds who judge life, not yet with a luminous largeness, but still with power of intelligence,
  - a preeminent social thinker here and there who, taking advantage of some crisis, is able to get the society to modify itself on the basis of some clearly rational principle.

  Ex: the beginnings of the mobile and progressive period of the Greek civilisation.

- If spirituality predominates, there will be great mystics capable of delving into the profound and still occult psychological possibilities of our nature who will divine and realise the truth of the self and spirit in man

  Ex: prehistoric India
But these things are only a first beginning of light in the midst of a humanity which is still infrarational as well as infra-spiritual and, even when it undergoes the influence of these precursors, responds only obscurely to their inspirations and turns everything into infrarational form. It cannot lay hold either on the intellectual form or the spiritual heart of their significance.

**A larger and more diffused force**

As reason and spirituality develop, they begin to become a larger and more diffused force, less intense perhaps, but wider and more effective on the mass.

- The *mystics* become the sowers of the seed of an immense spiritual development in which whole classes of society and even men from all classes seek the light.

**Ex:** India in the age of the Upanishads.

- The solitary individual *thinkers* are replaced by a great number of writers, poets, thinkers, rhetoricians, sophists, scientific inquirers, who pour out a profuse flood of acute speculation and inquiry stimulating the thought-habit and creating even in the mass a generalised activity of the intelligence.

**Ex:** Greece in the age of the sophists.

The spiritual development, arising uncurbed by reason in an infrarational society, has often a tendency to outrun at first the rational and intellectual movement. For the greatest illuminating force of the infrarational man is an inferior intuition arising out of the force of life in him, and the transition from this to an intensity of inner life and the growth of a deeper spiritual intuition which outleaps the intellect and seems to dispense with it, is an easy passage.

But for humanity at large this movement cannot last; the mind and intellect must develop to their fullness so that the spirituality may rise securely upward upon a broad basis.

Therefore reason in its growth

- either does away with the distinct spiritual tendency for a time (*ex:* ancient Greece),
- or accepts it but spins out around its first data and activities a vast web of the workings of the intelligence → the early mystic seer is replaced by the philosopher-mystic, the religious thinker and even the philosopher pure and simple (*ex:* India).

For a time the new growth and impulse may seem to take possession of a whole community (*ex:* Athens or old Aryan India). But these early dawns cannot endure in their purity, so long as the race is not ready. There is a crystallisation, a lessening of the first impetus, a new growth of infrarational forms.

So long as the hour of the rational age has not arrived, the irrational period of society cannot be left behind; and that arrival can only be when not a class or a few but the multitude has learned to think. Until then we have as the highest possible development a mixed society, infrarational in the mass, but saved for civilisation by a higher class.
**In the human mass**

Nature in her human mass tends to move forward slowly towards a greater application of reason and spirituality.

Her difficulties proceed from two sides:

*From without:* she develops reason and spirituality in the mass by exceptional communities or nations, but the exceptional nation (ex: Greece and later Rome in ancient Europe, India, China and Persia in ancient Asia) is surrounded by enormous masses of the old infrarational humanity and endangered by this menacing proximity; for until a developed science comes in to redress the balance, the barbarian has always a greater physical force and power of aggression than the cultured peoples → the light and power of civilisation always collapses in the end before the attack of the outer darkness. Then ascending Nature has to train the conquerors with long difficulty to develop among themselves what their incursion has temporarily destroyed. A certain loss is always the price of this advance.

*From within:* even within the communities themselves reason and spirituality at this stage are always hampered and endangered by existing in a milieu and atmosphere not their own:

- the elite, the classes in charge of these powers, are obliged to throw them into forms which the mass of human ignorance will accept → both tend to be stifled by these forms, to get stereotyped, fossilised.
- since they are after all part of the mass, these higher enlightened elements are themselves much under the influence of their infrarational parts and do not, except in individuals, arrive at the entirely free play of the reason or the free light of the spirit.
- there is always the danger of these elements gravitating downward to the ignorance below or even collapsing into it.

**Nature guards herself** by various devices for maintaining the tradition of intellectual and spiritual activity in the favoured classes:

- here she makes it a point of honour for them to preserve and promote the national culture,
- there she establishes a preservative system of education and discipline.

And in order that these things may not degenerate into mere traditionalism, she brings in a series of intellectual or spiritual movements which by their shock revivify and regenerate.

**Finally,** she reaches the point when, all immediate danger of relapse overcome, she can proceed to her next decisive advance: the attempt to universalise first of all the habit of reason and the application of the intelligent will to life → = the rational age of human society.
Chapter XIX: The Curve of the Rational Age

The present age may be characterised as an attempt to discover and work out the right principle and secure foundations of a rational system of society. It has been an age of progress.

Progress is of two kinds:

- **adaptive**, with a secure basis in an unalterable social principle and constant change only in the circumstances and machinery of its application to suit fresh ideas and fresh needs,
- **radical**, with no long-secure basis, but instead a constant root questioning of the practical foundations and even the central principle of the established society.

→ modern age = constant series of *radical* progressions. This series seems to follow a typical course.

A typical course of progression

**Luminous seed-time and period of enthusiastic effort and battle**

A principle of society is put forward by the thinker, seizes on the general mind and becomes a social gospel.

**Partial victory and brief era of possession**

Brought into practice, it dethrones the preceding principle and takes its place as the foundation of the community’s life. Men live for a time in the enthusiasm. After a little they begin to feel less at ease with the first results and are moved to adapt the new system. Still men do not yet think of questioning their social principle, but are intent only to perfect its forms.

**Disillusionment and birth of a new idea and endeavour.**

A time, however, arrives when the reason becomes dissatisfied and sees that it is only erecting a mass of new conventions and that there has been no satisfying change. The opposition of the few thinkers who have already, perhaps almost from the first, started to question the sufficiency of the social principle is accepted by increasing numbers; there is a movement of revolt and the society starts on the familiar round to a new *radical progression*.

This process has to continue until the reason can find a principle of society which will satisfy it. The question is whether it will ever be satisfied...
Reason as a social renovator

Three successive stages

The progress of the reason as a social renovator and creator, if not interrupted, would pass through 3 successive stages:

1. **individualistic** and increasingly democratic with **liberty** for its principle,
2. **socialistic**, in the end perhaps a governmental communism with **equality** and the State for its principle,
3. **anarchistic**, either a loose voluntary cooperation or a free communalism with **brotherhood** or comradeship and not government for its principle.

Pre-rational vs. rational methods of mentalising life

It is not that in the preindividualistic, pre-rational ages there were no thinkers; but they did not think in the characteristic method of the logical reason, and did not proceed on the constructive side by the carefully mechanising methods of the highly rationalised intelligence. Their thought were much less logical than spontaneously intelligent. They looked upon life as it was and sought to know its secret by keen discernment, intuition and insight.

The form in which they shaped their attempt to understand and mentalise life was:

- **symbols** embodying the actual and ideal truth of life and being,
- **types** setting them in an arrangement and psychological order,
- **institutions** giving them a material fixity in their effectuation by life.

But reason seeks to understand and interpret life by **one kind of symbol** only, the **idea**; it generalises the facts of life according to its own strongly cut ideative conceptions so that it may be able to master and arrange them, and having hold of an idea it looks for its largest general application.

Always questioning **facts** so that it may find the ideas by which they can be more and more adequately explained.

Always questioning **ideas** in order to see whether:

- they square with **actual** facts
- there are not **new** facts to suit which they must be modified or enlarged or which can be evolved out of them.

For reason lives not only in **actual** facts, but in **possibilities**, not only in **realised truths**, but in **ideal truths**; and the ideal truth once seen, the impulse of the idealising intelligence is to see too whether it cannot be turned into a fact the age of reason must always be an age of progress.
The necessity of a universal questioning

The old method of mentalising life ceased to serve its purpose as soon as the symbols, types, institutions it created became conventions. Man may for a time live by the mere tradition of things but the necessity of questioning all his conventions arises, and by that necessity reason gets her first real chance of an entire self-development.

Reason can accept no tradition merely for the sake of its antiquity or its past greatness → it has to ask: 1) whether the tradition contains at all any still living truth,
                    2) whether it contains the best truth available to man for the government of his life.

Reason can accept no convention merely because men are agreed upon it → it has to ask whether they are right in their agreement, whether it is not an inert and false acquiescence.

Reason cannot accept any institution merely because it serves some purpose of life → it has to ask whether there are not greater and better purposes which can be best served by new institutions.

There arises the necessity of a universal questioning → idea that society can only be perfected by the universal application of the rational intelligence to the whole of life.

The reason of each and all : Individualistic democracy

This reason which is to be universally applied...
...cannot be the reason of
  • a ruling class; for that always means in practice the misapplication of reason degraded into a servant of power,
  • a few pre-eminent thinkers; for, if the mass is infrarational, the application of their ideas becomes in practice disfigured.
...must be the reason of each and all seeking for a basis of agreement.

→ = principle of individualistic democracy:
  • the reason and will of every individual in the society must be allowed to count equally with the reason and will of every other in determining its government, in selecting the essential basis and in arranging the detailed ordering of the common life.
  • each individual must be allowed to govern his life according to the dictates of his own reason and will so far as that can be done without impinging on the same right in others.
A gulf between the ideal and the practice

In practice these ideas will not hold, for the ordinary man is not yet a rational being:

- he is not naturally able to form a reasonable judgment, but thinks either according to his own interests, impulses and prejudices or else according to the ideas of others,
- he does not yet use his reason in order to come to an agreement with his fellows, but rather to enforce his own opinions by struggle and conflict with the opinions of others,
- he does not use his freedom to arrive at a rational adjustment of his life with the life of others; his natural tendency is to enforce the aims of his life even at the expense of others.

† wide gulf between the ideal and the first results of its practice †
inevitable disillusionment.

The individualistic democratic ideal in actual practice:

- First, brings us to the more and more precarious rule of a dominant class - in the name of democracy - over the ignorant mass.
- Secondly, since the ideal of freedom and equality is abroad and cannot any longer be stifled, it must lead to the increasing effort of the exploited masses to assert their down-trodden right and to turn, if they can, this pseudo-democratic falsehood into the real democratic truth † war of classes †
- Thirdly, it develops inevitably as part of its process a perpetual strife of parties, a battle of conflicting interests.
- Finally, individualistic democratic freedom results fatally in an increasing stress of competition † ordered conflict, which ends in the survival not of the spiritually, rationally or physically fittest, but of the most fortunate and vitally successful.

This is not a rational order of society!

Education as the natural remedy?

The natural remedy for the first defects would seem to be education.

But a rational education means necessarily three things:

- to teach men how to observe and know rightly the facts on which they have to form a judgment † capacity of observation and knowledge
- to train them to think fruitfully and soundly † capacity of intelligence and judgment
- to fit them to use their knowledge and their thought effectively for their own and the common good † capacity of action and high character

Unfortunately the actual education given in the most advanced countries has not had the least relation to these necessities † this has led many to deny the efficacy of education and its power to transform the human mind and driven them to condemn the democratic ideal as a fiction.
The benefits for the race

Democracy and its panacea of education and freedom have certainly done something for the race:

- The people are, for the first time erect, active and alive (and where there is life, there is hope!)
- Some kind of knowledge and some kind of active intelligence have been much more generalised. Men are being trained to use their minds, to apply intelligence to life. They are more able now to choose the thought they shall accept and the rule they shall follow.
- Equal educational equipment and equal opportunity of life have by no means been acquired; but there is a much greater equalisation.

A new defect: the scramble for wealth

But here a new and enormous defect has revealed itself... For given even perfect equality of educational and other opportunity to what purpose or in what manner is the opportunity likely to be used?

Man, the half infrarational being, demands three things for his satisfaction,

- power (if he can have it),
- the use and reward of his faculties,
- the enjoyment of his desires.

In the old societies the possibility of these could be secured by him to a certain extent according to his birth, his fixed status and the use of his capacity within the limits of his hereditary status.

That basis once removed and no proper substitute provided, the same ends can only be secured by success in a scramble for the one power left, the power of wealth.

→ has developed:

- a huge organised competitive system,
- a frantically rapid and one-sided development of industrialism
- under the garb of democracy, an increasing plutocratic tendency.

→ result: transition of the rational mind from democratic individualism to democratic socialism.
The reason of the collectivity: Socialistic democracy

Socialism, born in a revolt against capitalism, an uprising against the rule of the successful bourgeois and the plutocrat, has worked itself out by a war of classes; it has started from an industrialised social system and itself taken on at the beginning a purely industrial and economic appearance → disfigure its true nature.

Its true nature = the attempt of the human reason to carry on the rational ordering of society to its fulfilment, its will to get rid of unbridled competition, to replace a system of organised economic battle by an organised order and peace.

A basis of equality

This can no longer be done:

• on the old lines, an artificial or inherited inequality; for that is a falsehood,
• on the basis of individual liberty; for that has broken down in the practice.

It has to be done:

• on the basis of equality, not a political only, but a perfect social equality.

→ Equality of opportunity which cannot be secured without Equality of status which again is impossible if personal, or at least inherited right in property is to exist → abolishes the right of personal property and makes war on the hereditary principle.

Who then is to possess and administer the property? The community as a whole.

The denial of the individual

→ To justify this idea, the socialistic principle has practically to deny the existence of the individual or his right to exist except as a member of the society and for its sake. He belongs entirely to the society, not only his property, but himself, his labour, his capacities, the education it gives him and its results, his mind, his knowledge, his individual life, his family life, the life of his children.

Moreover, since his individual reason cannot be trusted to work out naturally a right and rational adjustment of his life with the life of others, it is for the reason of the whole community to arrange that too for him → The collective reasoning mind and will of the community will determine not only the principles and all the details of the economic and political order, but the whole life of the community and of the individual as a working, thinking, feeling cell of this life, the development of his capacities, his actions, the use of the knowledge he has acquired, the whole ordering of his vital, his ethical, his intelligent being.

→ it is evidently these rigours to which things must tend if the collectivist idea is to prevail...
Inconsistent with the facts of life

Even at its best the collectivist idea contains several fallacies inconsistent with the real facts of human life and nature that must lead to its discredit and eventual replacement by a third stage of the inevitable progression:

1. **Individualistic democracy** = Liberty protected by a State in which all are politically equal.
2. **Socialistic democracy** = Social and political equality enforced through a perfect and careful order by a State which is the organised will of the whole community.
3. **Intellectual and spiritual Anarchism** = a third form of society founding an essential rather than formal liberty and equality upon **fraternal comradeship** in a free community.

Totalitarianism as the destiny of the collectivist ideal

The fading away of the democratic trinity

In fact the claim to equality like the thirst for liberty is individualistic in its origin,—it is not native or indispensable to the essence of the collectivist ideal.

Equality like individualistic liberty may turn out to be not a panacea but an obstacle in the way of the best management and control of life by the collective reason and will of the community.

But if both equality and liberty disappear, there is left only one member of the democratic trinity, brotherhood or comradeship, that has some chance of survival as part of the social basis. It seems to square better with the spirit of collectivism...

But comradeship without liberty and equality can be nothing more than the like association of all in common service to the life of the nation under the absolute control of the collectivist State.

In fact the democratic trinity, stripped of its godhead, would fade out of existence; the collectivist ideal can very well do without them, for none of them belong to its grain and very substance.

Totalitarianism seems to be the natural, almost inevitable destiny, the extreme and fullest outcome of the collectivist idea and impulse.

For the essence of Socialism, its justifying ideal, is the governance and strict organisation of the total life of the society as a whole and in detail by its own conscious reason and will for the best good and common interest of all:

→ If a democratic polity and machinery best assure such a working it is this that will be chosen and the result will be Social Democracy.

→ But if a non-democratic polity and machinery are found to serve the purpose better, then there is nothing inherently sacrosanct for the collectivist mind in the democratic ideal; it can be thrown on the rubbish-heap!

Ex: Russian communism so discarded democratic liberty. Non-proletarian totalitarianism goes farther and discards democratic equality no less than democratic liberty.
The swing away from Rationalism

Rationalisation is no longer the turn; its place is taken by a revolutionary mysticism.

Ex: In Russia the Marxist system of Socialism has been turned almost into a gospel.

Ex: In Fascist countries the swing away from Rationalism is marked and open; a surface vital subjectivism has taken its place and it is in the name of the national soul and its self-expression and manifestation that the leaders and prophets teach and violently enforce their totalitarian mystique.

The essential features are:

- the seizure of the life of the community by a dominant individual leader, Fuhrer, Dux, dictator, head of a small active minority, the Nazi, Fascist or Communist party, and supported by a militarised partisan force;
- a rapid crystallisation of the social, economic, political life of the people into a new rigid organisation effectively controlled at every point;
- the compulsory casting of thought, education, expression, action, into a set iron mould, a fixed system of ideas and life-motives, with a fierce and ruthless, often a sanguinary repression of all that denies and differs;
- a total unprecedented compression of the whole communal existence so as to compel a maximum efficiency and a complete unanimity of mind, speech, feeling, life.

If this trend becomes universal, it is the end of the Age of Reason.

An abrupt cessation of the Age of Reason?

Reason cannot do its work if the mind of man is denied freedom. But neither can a subjective age be the outcome; for the growth of subjectivism also cannot proceed without plasticity, without movement of self-search, without room to move, expand, develop, change. The result is likely to be rather the creation of a tenebrous No Man’s Land where obscure mysticisms, materialistic, vitalistic or mixed, clash and battle for the mastery of human life.

But this consummation is not certain. Totalitarian mysticism may not be able to carry out its menace of occupying the globe.

In that case the curve of the Age of Reason, now threatened with an abrupt cessation, may prolong and complete itself. The subjective turn of the human mind and life, avoiding a premature plunge into any general external action before it has found itself, may have time and freedom to evolve, to seek out its own truth and so become ready to take up the spiral of the human social evolution where the curve of the Age of Reason naturally ends by its own normal evolution and make ready the ways of a deeper spirit.
Chapter XX : The End of the Curve of Reason

The rational Collectivist idea

The truth behind the idea

There is behind the collectivist idea a great truth: every society represents a collective being and in it and by it the individual lives and he owes to it all that he can give it. More, it is only by a certain relation to the society, a certain harmony with this greater collective self that he can find the complete use for his many developed or developing powers and activities.

An excellent theory

Since it is a collective being, it must, one would suppose, have a discoverable collective reason and will which should find more and more its right expression and right working. And since this reason is - according to the original idea - that of all in a perfect equality, it might naturally be trusted to seek out and work out its own good.

The right organisation of social life on a basis of equality ought to give each man his proper place in society, his full training and development for the common ends, his due share of work, leisure and reward, the right value of his life in relation to the collective being, society.

If it be objected that to bring about this result the liberty of the individual will have to be destroyed, it might be answered that the right of the individual to any kind of egoistic freedom as against the State which represents the mind, the will, the good and interest of the whole community, is a dangerous fiction.

Individual liberty may well mean in practice an undue freedom given to his infrarational parts, precisely the thing in him that has to be thoroughly controlled, if he is to become a reasonable being.

This control can be most wisely and effectively carried out by the collective reason and will of the State which is larger, better, more enlightened than the individual’s. The enlightened individual may well come to regard this collective reason and will as his own larger mind and find in a happy obedience to it a strong delivery from his own smaller and less rational self.

A discrepancy between the set ideas and the actual facts

This theory ignores the complexity of man’s being...

And especially it ignores the soul of man and its supreme need of freedom, of the control also of his lower members, no doubt, but of a growing self-control, not a mechanical regulation by the mind and will of others. Obedience too is a part of its perfection,—but a free and natural obedience to a true guiding power and not to a mechanised government and rule.

The collective being is a fact: but it is a soul and life, not merely a mind or a body.
Each society develops into a sort of group-soul. But it has no discoverable common reason and will belonging alike to all its members; for the group-soul rather works out its tendencies by a diversity of opinions, of wills...

→ government by the organised State = **government by a number of individuals**. Even when it is the majority that nominally governs, in fact it is always the reason and will of a comparatively few effective men—and not really any common reason and will of all.

**The oppression of the individual by the State**

In the old infrarational societies, what governed was not the State, but the group-soul itself evolving its life organised into customary institutions and self-regulations to which all had to conform. This entailed indeed a great subjection of the individual to the society, but it was not felt, because the individualistic idea was yet unborn and such diversities as arose were naturally provided for in one way or another.

As State government develops, we have a real **suppression or oppression** of the minority by the majority or the majority by the minority, **of the individual by the collectivity**, finally, of all by the relentless mechanism of the State.

Man needs freedom of thought and life and action in order that he may grow.

If his individual mind and reason are ill-developed, he may consent to grow in the mass (with that subtle half-conscient general evolution common to all). But as he develops individual reason and will, he needs room for an increasing play of individual freedom and variation. If only a free play in thought and reason is allowed, but the free play of the intelligent will in life and action is inhibited, then an intolerable contradiction and falsity will be created.

→ dissatisfaction and revolt are sure to set in in the clearest and most vigorous minds of the society and propagate themselves throughout the mass. This may very well take the form of anarchistic thought.

The State can only combat it by an education that will seek to **drill the citizen in a fixed set of ideas**, aptitudes, propensities and by the **suppression of freedom of speech and thinking**; but this remedy will be in a rational society self-contradictory. And if from the first freedom of thought is denied, that means the end of the Age of Reason and of the ideal of a rational society.

This is the **central defect** through which a socialistic State is bound to be convicted of insufficiency.
**The tendency to mechanisation**

Even if the socialistic State became really the expression of the free reasoned will of the majority in agreement, collectivism pretends to **regulate life** not only in its few fundamental principles and its main lines, but in its details! → the suppression or oppression of individual freedom by the will of the majority or of a minority would still be there; for a **thoroughgoing scientific regulation** of life can only be brought about by a thoroughgoing **mechanisation** of life.

This tendency to mechanisation is the inherent defect of reason when it turns to govern life.

**Life** differs from the mechanical order of the physical universe with which the reason has been able to deal victoriously. It is a **mobile, progressive** and **evolving force**, — the increasing expression of an infinite soul in creatures.

The progress of Life involves the development and interlocking of an immense number of things that are in conflict. To **find amid** these **oppositions** some **principle of unity**, which will make possible a larger and better development on a basis of harmony, must be the common aim of humanity.

This can only be done when the soul discovers itself in its highest and completest spiritual reality and effects a progressive upward transformation of its **life-values into** those of the spirit; for there they will all find their spiritual truth and in that truth their standing-ground of mutual recognition and reconciliation.

This is a work the **reason cannot do**. The business of the reason is intermediate: it is to observe and understand this life by the intelligence and discover for it the direction in which it is going and the laws of its self-development → it is obliged to adopt temporarily fixed view-points none of which is more than partially true and to create systems none of which can really stand as the final expression of the integral truth of things.

In the realm of **thought**, reason is able with impunity to allow the most opposite view-points and systems to exist. **But** when it seeks to govern **life**, it is obliged to fix its view-point, to crystallise its system; every change becomes a thing doubtful and difficult, all the consequences of which cannot be foreseen, while the conflict of view-points and systems leads to strife and revolution.

The reason mechanises in order to arrive at fixity of conduct and practice; but mechanism can never truly succeed in dealing with conscious life, because it is **contrary to the law of life**, its **dharma**.

→ The attempt at a rational ordering of society can **never arrive at perfection** by its own methods, because reason is neither the first principle of life, nor can be its last.

The question remains whether anarchistic thought supervening upon the collectivistic can any more successfully find a satisfying social principle. If it gets rid of mechanism, on what will it build?
A necessary stage in social progress

The collectivist period is a necessary stage in social progress. For the vice of individualism is that in insisting upon the free development and self-expression of the life and the mind or the life-soul in the individual, it tends to exaggerate the egoism and prevent the recognition of unity with others.

Collectivism insists upon that unity by entirely subordinating the life of the isolated ego to the life of the greater group-ego. When again the individual asserts his freedom, he may have learned to do it on the basis of this unity.

Collectivism may itself in the end realise this aim if it can modify its own dominant principle far enough to allow for a free individual development on the basis of unity. But to do that it must first spiritualise itself: it cannot do it on the basis of the logical reason.

The Anarchistic ideal

Anarchistic thought cannot but develop in proportion as the pressure of society on the individual increases.

We need not attach much importance to the grosser vitalistic or violent anarchism which seeks forcibly to react against the social principle or claims the right of man to “live his own life” in the egoistic or crudely vitalistic sense.

But there is a higher, an intellectual anarchistic thought...

The truth behind the idea

It recovers in its aim and formula a truth of nature and of the divine in man, that all government of man by man by the power of compulsion is an evil, a violation, a suppression or deformation of a natural principle of good which would otherwise grow and prevail for the perfection of the human race.

Questioning the social principle itself

Even the social principle in itself is questioned and held liable for a sort of fall in man from a natural to an unnatural and artificial principle of living.

The exaggeration and weakness of this exclusive idea are evident: man does not actually live as an isolated being, nor can he grow by an isolated freedom. He grows by his relations with others and his freedom must exercise itself in a progressive self-harmonising with the freedom of his fellow-beings → social principle perfectly justified.

We have the old dogma that man was originally innocent and perfect and no social law or compulsion was needed. But this theory has to recognise a downward lapse of man from his natural perfection. The fall was not brought about by the introduction of the social principle in the
arrangement of his life, but rather the social principle and the governmental method of compulsion had to be introduced as a result of the fall.

But if we regard the evolution of man not as a fall from perfection but a gradual ascent, a growth out of the infrarational, it is clear that only by a social compulsion on the vital and physical instincts of his infrarational egoism, a subjection to the needs and laws of the social life, could this growth have been brought about.

The principle of social compulsion may not have been always used quite wisely, but in the earlier stages of his evolution it was clearly inevitable, and until man has grown out of the causes of its necessity, he cannot be really ready for the anarchistic principle of living.

But it is at the same time clear that the more the outer law is replaced by an inner law, the nearer man will draw to his true and natural perfection. And the perfect social state must be one in which governmental compulsion is abolished and man is able to live with his fellow-man by free agreement and cooperation.

But by what means is he to be made ready for this great and difficult consummation?

**Intellectual anarchism: Reason and Sympathy**

Intellectual anarchism relies on two powers in the human being:

1) The enlightenment of his reason: the mind, enlightened, will claim freedom for itself, but will equally recognise the same right in others. A just equation will of itself emerge.

   This might conceivably be sufficient, if the life of the individual could be lived in a predominant isolation. But our existence is closely knit with the existences around us and there is a common life, a common work, a common effort and aspiration. To ensure coordination and prevent clash in this constant contact another power is needed.

2) A natural human sympathy: which, if it is given free play under the right conditions, can be relied upon to ensure natural cooperation: the principle of fraternity.

- A free equality founded upon spontaneous cooperation, not on governmental force and social compulsion, is the highest anarchistic ideal.

This leads us...

- *either* towards a free cooperative communism, a unified life where the labour and property of all is there for the benefit of all,
- *or* else to communalism, the free consent of the individual to live in a society where the just freedom of his individuality will be recognised, but the surplus of his labour and acquisitions will be used or given by him without demur for the common good.
But, it is difficult to see how...

- a Stateless Communism can operate on the large and complex scale necessitated by modern life.
- a free communalism could be established or maintained without some kind of governmental force and social compulsion or how it could fail to fall away in the end either on one side into a rigorous collectivism or on the other to struggle, anarchy and disruption.

For the logical mind in building its social idea takes no sufficient account of the infrarational element in man, the vital egoism: that is his most constant motive and it defeats in the end all the calculations of the idealising reason.

If that ego force is too much rationalised, too much denied an outlet, then the life of man becomes artificial, mechanical, uncreative. If it is not suppressed, it tends in the end to assert itself and derange the plans of the rational side of man.

If Reason were the secret highest law of the universe or if man the mental being were limited by mentality, it might be possible for him by the power of the reason to evolve out of the dominance of infrarational Nature. He could then live securely in his best human self as a perfected rational and sympathetic being: the sattvic man.

But the rational being is only a middle term of Nature’s evolution. A rational satisfaction cannot give him safety from the pull from below nor deliver him from the attraction from above.

→ We are compelled to aim higher!

**Spiritual anarchism: Soul and Oneness**

As it expresses itself at the present day, there is much in it that is exaggerated and imperfect. Its seers seem often to preach an impossible self-abnegation of the vital life and an asceticism which instead of purifying and transforming the vital being, seeks to suppress and even kill it; life itself is impoverished.

But apart from these excesses, we seem here to be near to the discovery of the saving motive-force: The solution lies not in the reason, but in the soul of man!

→ It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order. It is a spiritual (greater than rational) enlightenment that can alone illumine the vital nature of man and impose harmony on its self-seekings, antagonisms and discords. A deeper brotherhood, a yet unfound law of love is the only sure foundation possible for a perfect social evolution.

But this brotherhood and love will not proceed by the vital instincts or the reason. Nor will it found itself in the natural heart of man.
It is in the soul that it must find its roots; the love which
is founded upon a deeper truth of our being, the
brotherhood or the spiritual comradeship which is the
expression of an inner realisation of oneness.

For so only can egoism disappear and the true
individualism of the unique godhead in each man found
itself on the true communism of the equal godhead in the
race; for the Spirit, the inmost self, the universal Godhead in every being is that whose very nature
of diverse oneness it is to realise the perfection of its individual life and nature in the existence of all,
in the universal life and nature.

It means that no machinery invented by the reason can perfect either the individual or the collective
man \(\rightarrow\) an inner change is needed in human nature, a decisive turn of mankind to the spiritual ideal,
the beginning of a constant ascent and guidance towards the heights.

And that beginning may mean the descent of an influence that will alter at once the whole life of
mankind in its orientation and enlarge for ever its potentialities and all its structure.
Chapter XXI : The Spiritual Aim and Life

The normal human society

An external compulsion

The normal human society starts from the gregarious instinct modified by a diversity and possible antagonism of interests, from an association and clash of egos; it tries first to patch up an accommodation of converging interests and a treaty of peace between discords, founded on a series of implied contracts, adjustments which become customs, and to these it gives the name of social law.

Man as a physical, vital and mental being

The normal society treats man essentially as a physical, vital and mental being:

- It develops a system of mental growth and efficiency, an intellectual, aesthetic and moral culture.
- It evolves the vital side of life and creates an ever-growing system of economic efficiency and vital enjoyment.
- Depressing by its mental and vital overgrowth the natural vigour of the physical and animal man, it tries to set the balance right by systems of physical culture, a cumbrous science of habits and remedies intended to cure the ills it has created.

In the end, however, society tends to die by its own development.

A radical defect in the process of civilisation

There is a radical defect somewhere in the process of human civilisation.

Our civilised development of life ends in an exhaustion of vitality; our civilised mentality, after disturbing the balance of the human system to its own greater profit, finally discovers that it has exhausted and destroyed that which fed it.

Civilisation has created many more problems than it can solve, has multiplied excessive needs and desires, has developed a jungle of claims and artificial instincts...

The more advanced minds begin to declare civilisation a failure. But the remedy proposed is either a halt or even a retrogression, or a reversion to “Nature” which is impossible, or even carrying artificial remedies to their acme (more Science, more mechanical devices, ...). As well say that to carry a disease to its height is the best way to its cure.
The radical defect of all our systems is their deficient development of the spiritual element, the soul in man which is his true being.

Even to have a healthy body, a strong vitality and an active and clarified mind, carries man no more than a certain distance; afterwards he tires for want of a satisfying aim. These three are means to an ulterior end and cannot be made for ever an aim in themselves.

Add a rich emotional life governed by a well-ordered ethical standard, and still there is the savour of something left out.

Add a religious system and a widespread spirit of belief and piety, and still you have not found the means of social salvation.

The ancient intellectual cultures of Europe ended in disruptive doubt and sceptical impotence, the pieties of Asia in stagnation and decline.

Modern society has discovered a new principle of survival: progress. But the aim of that progress it has never discovered. More knowledge, more equipment, convenience, comfort, enjoyment, a greater complexity of the social economy,... lead nowhere.

Only in its new turn inwards, towards a greater subjectivity, is there a better hope, for modern progress may so discover that the real truth of man is to be found in his soul.

The falsehood of the old social use of religion

It will be said that this is an old discovery and that it governed the old societies under the name of religion.

But it was made for the life of the individual only, and it looked beyond the earth for its fulfilment.

Human society itself never seized on the discovery of the soul as a means for the discovery of the law of its own being.

The use society made of old religions:

• a sanction to its mass of customs and institutions
• a veil of mystery against human questioning
• a shield of darkness against the innovator
• a socio-religious machinery (à Church, priesthood, ceremonies, creeds and dogmas, which one had to obey under pain of condemnation)

→ This false socialisation of religion has been always the chief cause of its failure to regenerate mankind. Nothing can be more fatal to religion than for its spiritual element to be crushed by its outward aids and forms and machinery.
The signs of this failure of religion:

- coincidence of the greatest religious fervour with darkest ignorance, stagnancy, cruelty, injustice and oppression, or with an organisation of the most ordinary existence,— the end of all this a widespread revolt.
- when the too scrupulously exact observation of a socio-religious system and its rites and forms becomes the law and most prominent aim of religion rather than any spiritual growth.
- when the individual is obliged to flee from society in order to find room for his spiritual growth; in the monastery, on the mountain-top, in the cavern, in the desert and the forest. Division between life and the spirit = sentence of condemnation upon human life. Either it is left to circle in its routine or it is decried as worthless and unreal, and loses that confidence in itself and inner faith in the value of its terrestrial aims (sraddha) without which it cannot come to anything. For the spirit of man must strain towards the heights; when it loses its tension of endeavour, the race must become stagnant or even sink towards darkness.

The spiritual society

Man as a soul

The true and full spiritual aim in society will regard man not as a mind, a life and a body, but as a soul incarnated for a divine fulfilment upon earth, not only in heavens beyond.

→ regard the life, mind and body neither as ends in themselves, nor as mortal members which have only to be dropped off for the rescued spirit to flee away, but as first instruments of the soul of an unseized diviner purpose. It will believe in their destiny and help them to believe in themselves, but in their highest and not only in their lowest possibilities. Their destiny will be to spiritualise themselves so as to grow into visible members of the spirit, lucid means of its manifestation. For, accepting the truth of man’s soul as a thing entirely divine in its essence, it will accept also the possibility of his whole being becoming divine.

As it will regard man the individual, it will regard too man the collectivity as a soul-form of the Infinite → it will hold sacred all the different parts of man’s life which correspond to the parts of his being, all his physical, vital, dynamic, emotional, aesthetic, ethical, intellectual, psychic evolution, and see in them instruments for a growth towards a diviner living. It will regard every human society, from the same standpoint: sub-souls, means of a complex manifestation of the Spirit.
A free development from within

But it will not seek to enforce even this one uplifting dogma by any external compulsion upon the lower members (→ nigraha = a repressive contraction of the nature which may lead to an apparent suppression of the evil, but not to a real growth of the good); it will rather hold up this creed and ideal as a light and inspiration to all his members to grow into the godhead from within themselves, to become freely divine.

A large liberty will be the law of a spiritual society and the increase of freedom a sign of the growth of human society towards the possibility of true spiritualisation. To spiritualise in this sense a society of slaves (slaves of power, authority, custom, dogma, slaves of all sorts of imposed laws which they live under rather than live by them, slaves internally of their own weakness, ignorance and passions from whose worst effect they seek or need to be protected by another and external slavery), can never be a successful endeavour. They must shake off their fetters first in order to be fit for a higher freedom.

Spiritual aim and fullness of life

The spiritual aim will recognise that man as he grows in his being must have as much free space as possible for all its members to grow in their own strength, to find out themselves and their potentialities. In their freedom they will err, because experience comes through many errors, but each has in itself a divine principle and they will find it out.

→ True spirituality will not lay a yoke upon science and philosophy or compel them to square their conclusions with any statement of dogmatic religious or even of assured spiritual truth, as some of the old religions attempted.

Each part of man’s being has its own dharma which it must follow:

The dharma of science, thought and philosophy is to seek for truth by the intellect dispassionately, without prepossession and prejudgment, with no other first propositions than the law of thought and observation itself imposes. In the end, if left free in their action, they will find the unity of Truth with Good and Beauty and God. But meanwhile they must be left free even to deny God. Often we find atheism a necessary passage to deeper religious and spiritual truth.

The highest aim of the aesthetic being is to find the Divine through beauty. But in order that it may come to do this, it must first endeavour to see and depict man and Nature and life for their own sake, for behind these first characters lies always the beauty of the Divine. The dogma that Art must be religious or not be at all, is a false dogma, just as is the claim that it must be subservient to ethics or utility or scientific truth or philosophic ideas.
Even with the lower nature of man, the spiritual aim will seek for a free self-rule and development from within rather than a repression of his dynamic and vital being from without. It will present to them the truth of the spirit in themselves, translated into their own fields of action, presented in a light which illumines all their activities and shows them the highest law of their own freedom.

Ex:

- It will not escape from scientific materialism by a barren contempt for physical life or a denial of Matter, but pursue rather the sceptical mind into its own affirmations and denials and show it there the Divine.
- It will not try to slay the vitality in man by denying life, but will rather reveal to life the divine in itself as the principle of its own transformation.

The spiritual aim will seek to fulfil itself therefore in a fullness of life.

It will not proceed by

- a scornful neglect of the body,
- an ascetic starving of the vital being,
- a puritanic denial of art and beauty and the aesthetic joy of life,
- a neglect of science and philosophy as poor, negligible or misleading intellectual pursuits.

It will be all things to all, but in all it will be at once their highest aim and meaning and the most all-embracing expression of themselves.

It will aim at establishing in society the true inner theocracy. It will reveal to man the divinity in himself and build up in his outer life also the kingdom of God which is first discovered within us. It will show man the way to seek for the Divine in every way of his being, and so find it and live in it, that however he lives and acts, he shall live and act in the Divine.
Chapter XXII: The Necessity of the Spiritual Transformation

The two complementary powers of our being

Our conduct of life is governed by the balance between two powers:

- an implicit will central to the life and inherent in the main power of its action
- whatever modifying will can come in from the Idea in mind and operate through our mental instruments to give this life force a conscious orientation and method.

Life finds its own centre in our vital and physical being, in its cravings, its needs, its demand for persistence, growth, expansion, enjoyment, its reachings after power, possession, activity, splendour and largeness.

The first self-direction of this Life-Force, its first orderings of method are instinctive, subconscious and magnificently automatic → ease, spontaneity, beauty, self-satisfaction of the subhuman life.

It is a sense of this truth that makes the thinker speak of a life according to Nature as the remedy for all our ills. An attempt to find such a rule in the essential nature of man has inspired many conceptions of ethics, society and individual self-development down to the philosophy of Nietzsche. The common defect is to miss the true character of man and the true law of his being, his Dharma...

Man’s true character

What is our self and what is our real nature?

Nietzsche’s idea that to develop the superman out of our present unsatisfactory manhood is our real business, is in itself an absolutely sound teaching. His formulation of our aim, “to become ourselves”, “to exceed ourselves”, could not be bettered. But then the question is: what is our self, and what is our real nature?

It is something divine, is the answer. Certainly, but in what shall we find the seed of that divinity and what is the poise in which the superman can abide and be secure from lapse?

Is it the intellect and will, the buddhi? But this is so perplexed, divided against itself, uncertain, so splendidly futile, so at war with and yet so dependent upon our lower nature.

Therefore we say, not the intellect and will, but that supreme thing in us yet higher than the Reason, the spirit, here concealed behind the coatings of our lower nature, is the secret seed of the divinity and will be, when discovered and delivered, luminous above the mind, the wide ground upon which a divine life of the human being can be with security founded.
Man is not perfect in its own nature

When we speak of the superman, we speak evidently of something abnormal or supernormal to our present nature → the very idea of it becomes easily repugnant to our normal humanity.

But normal humanity is itself something abnormal in Nature! Abnormality in Nature is no necessary sign of imperfection, but may well be an effort at a much greater perfection. But this perfection is not found until the abnormal can find its own secure normality, the right organisation of its life in its own kind and power and on its own level.

Man has not found → though he is infinitely greater than the plant or the animal, he is not perfect in his own nature like the plant and the animal. This opens out to us an immense vista of self-development and self-exceeding!

Man at his highest is a half-god who has risen up out of the animal Nature, but the thing which he has started out to be, the whole god, is something so much greater than what he is that it seems to him as abnormal to himself as he is to the animal.

The cause of Man’s imperfection

What is the defect from which all his imperfection springs?

A failure to solve the riddle of its double nature

Man seems to be a double nature:

- an animal nature of the vital and physical being which lives according to its instincts, impulses, desires, its automatic orientation and method,
- a half-divine nature of the self-conscious intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, intelligently emotional, intelligent dynamic being

The aim of the animal part is to increase vital possession and enjoyment.

The aim of the semi-divine part is also to grow, possess and enjoy, but ...

- to possess and enjoy intelligently, aesthetically, ethically, by the powers of the mind much more than by the powers of the life and body,
- to possess and enjoy, not so much the vital and physical (except in so far as that is necessary as a foundation), but things intellectual, ethical and aesthetic, and to grow not so much in the outward life (except in so far as that is necessary to the security, ease and dignity of existence), but in the true, the good and the beautiful.

This is the manhood of man.

This means that man has developed a new power of being, a new soul-power (life and body being also a soul-power), and is under an inherent obligation not only to look at the world and revalue all in it from this new elevation, but to compel his whole nature to obey this power and reshape itself
in its mould, and even to **reshape his environmental life into some image of this greater truth**. In doing this lies his *svadharma*, his true rule and way of being, the way of his perfection and his real happiness.

Now this is precisely **what man has failed to do**...

He has laid some yoke of the intellectual, ethical, aesthetic rule on his vital and physical parts. But more he has not been able to do. The transformation of his life into the image of the true, the good and the beautiful seems as far off as ever.

**The root of the failure**

The root of the whole failure is that he has **not been able to shift upward the implicit will central to his life**, it is still situated in his vital and physical being, its drift is towards vital and physical enjoyment. The higher life is still only an intruder; it interferes constantly with the normal life, scolds, encourages, discourages, lectures, but has no power to transform.

Therefore these **two elements live together** in a continual, a mutual perplexity, made perpetually uneasy, uncomfortable and ineffectual by each other, somewhat **like an ill-assorted wife and husband**, always at odds and yet half in love with or at least necessary to each other, unable to beat out a harmony, yet condemned to be **joined in an unhappy leash** until death separates them.

All the dissatisfaction of the human mind comes from man’s practical failure to solve the riddle and the difficulty of his double nature.

**The incapacity of Mind to transform Life**

This failure is due to the fact that this higher power is **only a mediator**, and that to transform the vital and physical life in its image is not the intention of Nature.

Life cannot be entirely rational, cannot conform entirely to the ethical or the aesthetic or the scientific and philosophic mentality; mind is **not the destined archangel of the transformation**.

Dominated, repressed life may be, but it reserves its right; and though individuals or a class may establish this domination for a time, Life in the end circumvents the intelligence; it re-establishes its instincts; or if it fails in this, it has its revenge in its own decay which brings about the decay of the society.

There are times when mankind perceives this fact and, renouncing the attempt to dominate the life-instinct, determines to use the intelligence for its service and to give it light in its own field instead of enslaving it to a higher but chimerical ideal.
When mind renounces to dominate life

The problem: A titanic development of the vital Life

Such a period was the recent materialistic age → the intellect of man decided to study Life and Matter, to admit only that, to recognise mind only as an instrument of Life and Matter, and to devote all its knowledge to a tremendous expansion of the vital and physical life →

- The ethical mind persisted painfully, but with a tendency to yield up the fortress of the moral law to the life-instinct,
- The aesthetic intelligence flourished as a rather glaring exotic ornament,
- Reason became the magnificent servant of Life and Matter.

The titanic development of the vital Life is ending in a world war, a struggle between the most “efficient” and “civilised” nations for the possession and enjoyment of the world. For that is what the great war signified and was in its real origin; and if a nobler idea was awakened, it was only under the scourge of Death and before the terrifying spectre of a mutual destruction. Even so the awakening was by no means complete, nor everywhere quite sincere.

The solution: the Spirit as the master of life

The first result of this imperfect awakening seemed likely to be a return to an older ideal, with a will to use the reason and the ethical mind better and more largely. But such an attempt, cannot be the real and final solution; if our effort ends there, we shall not arrive.

The solution lies in an awakening to our real, because our highest self and nature, a spiritual self and spiritual nature that will use the mental being, but spiritualised, and transform by a spiritual ideality the aim and action of our vital and physical nature. For this is the formula of man in his highest potentiality, and safety lies in tending towards our highest and not in resting content with an inferior potentiality.

We have then to return to the pursuit of an ancient secret: the ideal of the kingdom of God, the secret of the reign of the Spirit over mind and life and body.

It is because they have never quite lost hold of this secret, that the older Asiatic nations have survived so persistently and can now raise their faces towards a new dawn.

It is true that they have for a time failed in life, where the European nations who trusted to the flesh and the intellect have succeeded; but that success has always turned into a catastrophe.

Asia temporarily failed not because she followed after things spiritual, but because she did not follow after the spirit sufficiently, did not learn how entirely to make it the master of life. Her mind either made a gulf and a division between life and the Spirit or else rested in a compromise between them and accepted as final socio-religious systems founded upon that compromise.
Towards Man’s perfection

It is possible to superimpose the spiritual life on the mental, vital and physical nature and either to impoverish the vital and physical existence and to depress the mental in order to give the spiritual an easier domination, or else to make a compromise and leave the lower being to its pasture on condition of its doing frequent homage to the spiritual existence.

This is the most that human society has ever done in the past… to rest there is to miss the heart of the matter!

Not a humanity leading its ordinary life, what is now its normal round, touched by spiritual influences, but a humanity aspiring wholeheartedly to a law that is now abnormal to it until its whole life has been elevated into spirituality, is the steep way that lies before man towards his perfection and the transformation that it has to achieve.

The secret of the transformation

1) The transference of our centre of living to a higher consciousness:

The central will implicit in life must be no longer the vital will in the life and the body, but the spiritual will. Now it comes to us hardly disclosed, weakened, disguised in the mental Idea; but it is in its own nature supramental and it is its supramental power and truth that we have to discover.

2) A change of our main power of living:

The main power of our living must be no longer the inferior vital urge of Nature but that spiritual force still retired in our depths, waiting for our transcendence of the ego and the discovery of the true individual in whose universality we shall be united with all others.

→ To transfer from the vital being (the instrumental reality in us) to the spirit (the central reality), to elevate to that height our will to be and our power of living is the secret.

A choice between the domination of the vital or the spirit

All that we have done hitherto is some half-successful effort to transfer this will and power to the mental plane; but the mental idea in us is always intermediary; although it can follow for a time after its own separate satisfaction, it cannot rest for ever satisfied with that alone.

It must

• either gravitate downwards and outwards towards the vital and physical life
• or it must elevate itself inwards and upwards towards the spirit.
This is why in thought, in art, in conduct, in life we are always divided between two tendencies:

- **realistic** → seems to us more real, more solidly founded, more in touch with actualities because it relies upon a reality which is patent, sensible and already accomplished;
- **idealistic** → seems to us something unreal, fantastic, unsubstantial, nebulous, a thing more of thoughts and words than of live actualities, because it is trying to embody a reality not yet accomplished.

Submission to the actual by a **compromise is easy**; discovery of the spiritual truth and the **transformation** of our actual way of living is **difficult**: but it is precisely this difficult thing that has to be done. Our idealism is always the most rightly human thing in us, but as a mental idealism it is a thing ineffective. To be effective it has to convert itself into a spiritual realism.

This upward transference of our will to be and our power of life → the very principle of our perfection.

That will, that power must choose between the domination of the vital part in us and the domination of the spirit.

**Nature’s perfection vs. Man’s perfection**

**Nature** can rest in the round of vital being, can produce there a perfection satisfied with its own limits → **Ex**: in the plant and the animal.

In man she has developed the mind which is an outflowering of the life towards the light of the Spirit, and the life and the body are now instrumental and no longer their own aim →

**The perfection of man cannot**

- consist in pursuing the unillumined round of the physical life
- be found in the wider rounds of the mental being; for that also is instrumental and tends towards something else beyond it, supramental.

→ The perfection of man lies in the unfolding of the ever-perfect Spirit.

The lower perfection of Nature in the plant and the animal comes from an instinctive, an automatic, a subconscient obedience in each to the vital truth of its own being.

The higher perfection of the spiritual life will come by a spontaneous obedience of spiritualised man to the **truth of his own realised being**.

This spontaneity will not be instinctive and subconscient, it will be intuitive and fully, integrally conscious, a glad obedience to a spontaneous principle of spiritual light, to the force of a unified and integralised highest truth, largest beauty, good, power, joy, love, oneness.
The object of this force will be:

- a growth which is a divine manifestation,
- a possession and enjoyment spiritual and of the spirit in things,
- an enjoyment that will use, but will not depend on the mental, vital and physical

→ an illimitable perfection capable of endless variation in its forms, but securely the same in all variations, one but multitudinously infinite.

**The coming of this perfection**

This perfection cannot come by the mental idea dealing with the Spirit as it deals with life, trying to give this higher force a conscious orientation and method. Still less can it come if we chain the spirit to some fixed mental idea or system, to a particular arrangement of forms and actions and declare all departure from that a deviation from spiritual living. That was the mistake made in Asia, this is to subject the higher to the lower principle.

Man’s true freedom and perfection will come **when the spirit within bursts through the forms** of mind and life and, winging above to its own gnostic height, turns upon them from that light to seize them and transform into its own image.

The mind and the intellect are not the key-power of our existence. Concealed in the mind and life, there is a power that sees by identity and intuition. But so long as this power has to work for the mind and life and not for itself, we cannot get the benefit of this inner Daemon.

All man has yet developed, including the intellect, are now no longer sufficient for him. To **discover this greater Light within** should be henceforward his preoccupation. Then will his philosophy, art, science, ethics, social existence, vital pursuits be no longer an exercise of mind and life, done for themselves, but a means for the discovery of a greater Truth.
Chapter XXIII: Conditions for the Coming of a Spiritual Age

Readiness of the Individual and the Communal Mind

The importance of the individual mind

A change of this kind must necessarily be accomplished in the individual and in a great number of individuals before it can lay any effective hold upon the community.

It is only through the individual mind that the mass can arrive at a clear knowledge and creation of the thing it held in its subconscious self.

It is because man is not like the material formations of Nature or like the animal, because she intends in him a more and more conscious evolution, that individuality is so much developed in him and so absolutely important and indispensable.

All great changes therefore find their first clear and effective power in the mind and spirit of an individual or of a limited number of individuals.

The mass follows, but unfortunately in a very imperfect and confused fashion which usually ends in the failure or distortion of the thing created.

If the spiritual change is to be effected, it must unite two conditions: There must be

1. The individual and the individuals who are able to see, to develop, to re-create themselves in the image of the Spirit and to communicate both their idea and its power to the mass.
2. At the same time a mass, a society, a communal mind which is capable of receiving and effectively assimilating, ready to follow and effectively arrive, not compelled by its own inherent deficiencies to stop on the way.

Such a simultaneity has never yet happened...
A subjective turn of the communal mind

What then will be that readiness of the common mind of man which will be most favourable to this change?

Here the first essential sign must be the growth of the subjective idea of life,— the idea of the soul, the inner being, its powers, its possibilities, its growth, its expression and the creation of a true, beautiful and helpful environment for it as the one thing of first and last importance.

These ideas are likely first to declare their trend in philosophy, in psychological thinking, in the arts, poetry, painting, sculpture, music, in the main idea of ethics, in the application of subjective principles by thinkers to social questions, even perhaps, to politics and economics.

There will be new unexpected departures of science, discoveries that thin the walls between soul and matter, attempts to extend exact knowledge into the psychological and psychic realms.

There will be a labour of religion to reject its past heavy weight of dead matter and revivify its strength in the fountains of the spirit.

Moving upward from Matter to Spirit

A subjective age may stop very far short of spirituality; for the subjective turn is only a first condition, not the thing itself. The search for the Reality, the true self, may follow out the natural order described by the Upanishad (seekings of Bhrigu, son of Varuna):

1) first the seeker found the ultimate reality to be Matter and the physical, the material being, the external man our only self and spirit;

2) next he fixed on Life as the Reality and the vital being as the self and spirit;

3) third he penetrated to Mind and the mental being;

4) only afterwards could he get beyond the superficial subjective through the supramental Truth-Consciousness to the eternal.

Only if it is intended that he shall now at last arrive, will the Spirit break each insufficient formula and compel the thought of man to press forward:
First stage: Matter as the sole reality

The material formula, which governed the greater part of the nineteenth century, burdened man with a servitude to the machinery of the outer material life.

Second stage: Life as the original reality

The first attempt to get to the living reality in things and away from the mechanical idea of life, landed us in a surface vitalism.

The two formulas inextricably locked together lit up and flung themselves on the pyre of the world-war. The vital élan brought us no deliverance, but only used the machinery already created with a vehement attempt to live more rapidly, more intensely, to pile up a gigantic efficiency of the collective life.

To live, to act, to grow, to increase the vital force, to understand, utilise and fulfil the intuitive impulse of life are excellent things, if they are directed to something beyond the mere vitalistic impulse and are governed by that within which is higher than Life. The Life-power is an instrument, a Life-power that sees nothing beyond itself (→ Titanism, demonism) will end in something violent, foredoomed in its very nature to excess and ruin.

Third stage: Mind as the original reality

Beyond the subjectivism of the vital is the possibility of a mental subjectivism.

It would at first appear as a highly mentalised pragmatism: increasing tendency to rationalise entirely man and his life, to govern existence by an ordered scientific plan → bound to fail because reason and rationality are not the whole of man or of life, reason is only an intermediate interpreter, it can only mechanise life in a more intelligent way than in the past;

Hereafter this tendency may rise to the higher idea of man as a mental being, a soul in mind that must develop itself individually and collectively in the life and body.

It would realise that the elevation of the human existence will come not through material efficiency alone or the complex play of his vital and dynamic powers, not solely by mastering through the aid of the intellect the energies of physical Nature, but through the greatening of his mental and psychic being and a discovery, bringing forward and organisation of his subliminal nature and its forces, the utilisation of a larger mind and a larger life waiting for discovery within us.

It would see in life an opportunity for the joy and power of knowledge, of beauty, of the human will mastering not only physical Nature, but vital and mental Nature.
It might discover secret mind-powers and life-powers and use them for a freer liberation of man.

It might arrive at new psychic relations, a more sovereign power of the idea to realise itself in the act, inner means of overcoming the obstacles of distance and division.

Such a turn of human thought, ideas of life, if it took hold of the communal mind, would lead to a profound revolution throughout the whole range of human existence:

• It would give it a new tone and atmosphere, a loftier spirit, wider horizons, a greater aim.
• It might develop a science which would bring the powers of the physical world into a real (and not only a contingent and mechanical) subjection and open the doors of other worlds.
• It might develop an achievement of Art and Beauty which would make the greatness of the past a comparatively little thing and save the world from utilitarian ugliness.
• It would open up a closer and freer interchange between human minds and a kindlier interchange between human hearts and lives.

This mental and psychic subjectivism would have its dangers, greater even than those that attend a vitalistic subjectivism, because its powers of action also would be greater, but it would have the chance of a detecting discernment, strong safeguards and a powerful liberating light.

**Becoming the true Mental being: a necessary stage**

Moving with difficulty upward from Matter to spirit, this is perhaps a necessary stage of man’s development. This was one principal reason of the failure of past attempts to spiritualise mankind, that they endeavoured to spiritualise at once the material man by a sort of rapid miracle. The endeavour may succeed with individuals, but when it passes beyond the few, the forceful miracle of the spirit flags; unable to transform by inner force, the new religion—for that is what it becomes—tries to save by machinery → loses the spirit and perishes quickly or decays slowly.

All attempts of the vitalistic, the intellectual and mental, the spiritual endeavour to deal with material man through his physical mind chiefly or alone is overpowered by the machinery it creates.

If mankind is to be spiritualised, it must first in the mass cease to be the material or the vital man and become the psychic and the true mental being.

It is a sign of great promise, that the wheel of civilisation has been following its past and present curve upward from a solid physical knowledge through a successive sounding of higher and higher powers that mediate between Matter and Spirit:
• The human intellect has been first drawn to exhaust the possibilities of materialism by an immense dealing with life and the world upon the basis of Matter as the sole reality.
• Afterwards it had begun to turn towards the conception of existence as the large pulsation of a great evolving Life, the creator of Matter, which would have enabled it to deal with our existence on the basis of Life as the original reality.
• And already it has in germ, in preparation a third conception, the discovery of a great self-expressing and self-finding inner Mind other than our surface mentality as a master-power of existence, and that should lead towards a rich attempt to deal with our possibilities and our ways of living on the basis of Mind as the original reality.

It would also be a sign of promise if these conceptions succeeded each other with rapidity; for that would show that there is a readiness in our subconscious Nature.

**Fourth stage: Spirit as the original and sole reality**

The true secret can only be discovered if in the third stage, in an age of mental subjectivism, the idea becomes strong of the mind itself as no more than a secondary power of the Spirit’s working and of the Spirit as the great Eternal, the original and the sole reality. Then only will the real, the decisive endeavour begin and life and the world be studied, known, dealt with in all directions as the self-finding and self-expression of the Spirit. Then only will a spiritual age of mankind be possible.

**Trying to realise three essential truths of existence**

A spiritual human society would start from and try to realise three essential truths of existence: God, freedom, unity. Three things which are one, for you cannot realise freedom and unity unless you realise God.

**God**

God is only waiting to be known, while man seeks for him everywhere and creates images of the Divine, but all the while truly finds, effectively erects and worships images only of his own mind-ego and life-ego. When this ego pivot is abandoned and this ego-hunt ceases, then man gets his first real chance of achieving spirituality.

A spiritualised society would live like its spiritual individuals, not in the ego, but in the spirit, not as the collective ego, but as the collective soul. This freedom from the egoistic standpoint would be its first and most prominent characteristic.

But the elimination of egoism would not be brought about by persuading or forcing the individual to immolate his personal will and aspirations and his hard-won individuality to the collective egoism of the society.

What the spiritual man seeks is to find by the loss of the ego the self which is one in all and perfect and complete in each and by living in that to grow into the image of its perfection.
It is this *kingdom of God within* (the result of the finding of God not in a distant heaven but within ourselves) of which the state of society in a spiritual age would be the result and the external figure.

Therefore a society which was even initially spiritualised would make *the revealing and finding of the divine Self* in man the *guiding aim of all its activities*, its education, its knowledge, its science, its ethics, its art, its economical and political structure.

As it was to some imperfect extent in the ancient Vedic times with the cultural education of the higher classes, so it would be then with all *education*.

It would embrace all *knowledge* in its scope, but would make the whole trend and aim and the permeating spirit

- *not* mere worldly efficiency (though that efficiency would not be neglected)
- *but* this *self-developing and self-finding* and all else as its powers.

It would pursue the physical and psychic *sciences*

- *not* in order merely to know the world and Nature in her processes and to use them for material human ends,
- *but* still more to *know* through and in and under and over all things the *Divine in the world* and the ways of the Spirit in its masks and behind them.

It would make it the aim of *ethics*

- *not* to establish a rule of action whether supplementary to the social law or partially corrective of it, the social law that is after all only the rule of the human herd,
- *but* to *develop the divine nature* in the human being.

It would make it the aim of *art*

- *not* merely to present images of the subjective and objective world,
- *but* to see them with the significant and creative vision that goes behind their appearances and to *reveal the Truth and Beauty* of which things visible to us and invisible are the forms, masks or symbols.

It would treat in its *sociology* the individual, from the saint to the criminal,

- *not* as units of a social problem to be passed through some skilfully devised machinery and either flattened into the social mould or crushed out of it,
- *but* as *souls* suffering and entangled in a net and to be rescued, souls growing and to be encouraged to grow, souls grown and from whom help and power can be drawn by the lesser spirits.
The aim of its economics would be

- not to create a huge engine of production,
- but to give to all men the joy of work according to their own nature and free leisure to grow inwardly, as well as a simply rich and beautiful life for all.

In its politics it would

- not regard the nations within the scope of their own internal life as enormous State machines regulated and armoured with man living for the sake of the machine, neither would it be content to maintain these nations or States in their mutual relations as noxious engines,
- but it would regard the peoples as group-souls, the Divinity concealed and to be self-discovered in its human collectivities, group-souls meant like the individual to grow according to their own nature and by that growth, to help the whole race in the one common work of humanity: to find the divine Self in the individual and the collectivity and to realise its greatest possibilities in the inner life of all and their outer action and nature.

**Freedom**

It is into the Divine within them that men have to grow; it is not an external idea or rule that has to be imposed on them from without. Therefore the law of a growing inner freedom will be most honoured.

But so long as man has not come within measurable distance of self-knowledge, he cannot escape from the law of external compulsion → he is the slave of others (his family, caste, clan, his Church, society, nation); he cannot but be that and they too cannot help throwing their crude and mechanical compulsion on him, because he and they are the slaves of their own ego, of their own lower nature.

We must feel and obey the compulsion of the Spirit if we would establish our inner right to escape other compulsion: we must make our lower nature the willing slave, the conscious and illumined instrument of the divine Being within us, for spiritual freedom is not the egoistic assertion of our separate mind and life but obedience to the Divine Truth.

But God respects the freedom of the natural members and gives them room to grow in their own nature so that by natural growth and not by self-extinction they may find the Divine in themselves. The subjection which they finally accept must be a willing subjection of recognition and aspiration to their own source of light and power and their highest being.

A spiritual age of mankind will not try to make man perfect by machinery or keep him straight by tying up all his limbs. Its aim will be to diminish as soon and as far as possible the need of the element of external compulsion by awakening the inner divine compulsion of the spirit within
Unity

Each man has to grow into the Divine Reality within himself through his own individual being, 
therefore is a certain growing measure of freedom a necessity of the being as it develops and 
perfect freedom the sign and the condition of the perfect life.

But also, the Divine whom he thus sees in himself, he sees equally in all others and as the same Spirit in all, 
therefore too is a growing inner unity with others a necessity of his being and perfect unity the sign and 
condition of the perfect life.

If the divinity sought were a separate godhead within oneself or if one sought God for oneself alone, then the result might be a grandiose egoism.

But he who sees God in all, will serve freely God in all with the service of love. He will seek not only his own freedom, but the freedom of all, not only his own perfection, but the perfection of all. He will not live either for himself or for the State and society, for the individual or the collective ego, but for something much greater, for God in himself and for the Divine in the universe.

The spiritual age will be ready to set in when the common mind of man begins to be alive to these truths and to be moved by this triple Spirit. That will mean the turning of the cycle of social development out of its incomplete repetitions on a new upward line towards its goal.

Having set out with a symbolic age, in which man felt a great Reality behind all life which he sought through symbols, it will reach an age in which he will begin to live in that Reality, not through the symbol, by the power of the type or of the convention or of the individual reason and intellectual will, but in our own highest nature which will be the nature of that Reality fulfilled in the conditions of terrestrial existence.

This is what the religions called the kingdom of God on earth,—his kingdom within in man’s spirit and therefore his kingdom without in the life of the peoples.
Chapter XXIV: The Advent and Progress of the Spiritual Age

The importance of living the ideal

**To become divine in consciousness and act**

If a subjective age, is to find its outlet and fruition in a spiritualised society and the emergence of mankind on a higher evolutionary level, it is not enough that certain ideas favourable to that turn of human life should take hold of the general mind.

It is not enough even that the idea of the kingdom of God on earth, a reign of spirituality, freedom and unity, should become definitely an ideal of life. That would be a very great step forward, but by itself it might only bring about a half-hearted or else a strong but only partially and temporarily successful attempt to bring something of the manifest spirit into human life and its institutions.

More is needed; a general spiritual awakening and aspiration in mankind is indeed the large necessary motive-power, but the effective power must be something greater. There must be a dynamic re-creating of individual manhood in the spiritual type.

For the way that humanity deals with an ideal is to be satisfied with it as an aspiration which is for the most part left only as an aspiration, accepted only as a partial influence. The ideal is not allowed to mould the whole life, but only more or less to colour it.

But spirituality is nothing if it is not lived inwardly and if the outward life does not flow out of this inward living. Symbols, types, conventions, ideas are not sufficient. Truth is what we create, and first, what we create within us, in other words, what we become.

Undoubtedly, spiritual truth exists eternally beyond independent of us in the heavens of the spirit; but it is of no avail for humanity here, it does not become truth of earth, truth of life until it is lived. The divine perfection is always there above us; but for man to become divine in consciousness and act and to live inwardly and outwardly the divine life is what is meant by spirituality.

**An individual change in each human life**

This can only be brought about by an individual change in each human life. The collective soul is there only as a great half-subconscious source of the individual existence. As will be the spirit and life of the individuals constituting it, so will be the realised spirit of the collectivity and the true power of its life.

Therefore the coming of a spiritual age must be preceded by the appearance of an increasing number of individuals who are no longer satisfied with the normal intellectual, vital and physical
existence of man, but perceive that a greater evolution is the real goal of humanity and attempt to effect it in themselves, to lead others to it and to make it the recognised goal of the race.

The failure of past accesses of spirituality

The coming of a new religion

A great access of spirituality in the past has ordinarily had for its result the coming of a new religion and its endeavour to impose itself as a new universal order. This prevented rather than helped any deep and serious achievement.

The aim of a spiritual age of mankind must indeed be one with the essential aim of subjective religions (\(\rightarrow\) a new birth, a new consciousness, an upward evolution of the human being, a descent of the spirit into our members, a spiritual reorganisation of our life); but if it limits itself by the imperfect means of a religious movement, it is likely to register another failure.

A religious movement brings usually a wave of spiritual excitement and aspiration that communicates itself to a large number of individuals and there is as a result a temporary uplifting and an effective formation. But the wave after a few generations begins to subside; the formation remains.

Sources of failure of religious movements

1) In order to bind together the faithful and to mark them off from the unregenerated outer world, there will have grown up a religious order, a Church, dogmas, ceremonials, ...

\(\rightarrow\) spirituality is increasingly subordinated to intellectual belief, to outward forms of conduct and to external ritual, the higher to the lower motives, the one thing essential to aids and instruments and accidents.

2) The ambition of a particular religious belief and form to universalise and impose itself is contrary to the variety of human nature and to at least one essential character of the Spirit \(\rightarrow\) a spacious inner freedom and a large unity into which each man must be allowed to grow according to his own nature.

3) The usual tendency of these creedal religions is to turn towards an after-world and to make the regeneration of the earthly life a secondary motive. But, the ascent of man into heaven is not the key... rather his ascent here into the spirit and the descent also of the spirit into his normal humanity and the transformation of this earthly nature. For that and not some post mortem salvation is the real new birth for which humanity waits.
The Leaders of the future spiritual march

The individuals who will most help the future of humanity in the new age will be those who will recognise a spiritual evolution as the destiny and therefore the great need of the human being. Even as the animal man has been largely converted into a mentalised humanity, so too now an evolution of the present type of humanity into a spiritualised humanity is the need of the race.

They will be comparatively indifferent to particular belief and form and will only hold as essential the faith in this spiritual conversion, the attempt to live it out and whatever knowledge can be converted into this living.

They will not make the mistake of thinking that this change can be effected by machinery and outward institutions; they will know that it has to be lived out by each man inwardly.

They will adopt the inward view of the East which bids man seek the secret of his destiny and salvation within; but also they will accept, though with a different turn given to it, the importance which the West rightly attaches to life and to the ‘making the best we know and can attain’ the general rule of all life.

They will not accept the theory that the many must necessarily remain on the lower ranges of life and only a few climb into the light, but will strive to regenerate the life of the earth and hold that faith in spite of all previous failure. For by the doing the difficulty will be solved. A true beginning has to be made; the rest is a work for Time.

These pioneers will consider nothing as outside their scope. For every part of human life has to be taken up by the spiritual,—not only the intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, but the dynamic, vital, physical; therefore for none of these things or the activities that spring from them will they have contempt or aversion, however they may insist on a change of the spirit and a transmutation of the form. They will hold that all can be made the spirit’s means of self-finding and all can be converted into its instruments of divine living.

And they will see that the great necessity is the conversion

- of the normal into the spiritual mind → the stumbling intellectual reason has to be converted into the precise and luminous intuitive, until that again can rise into higher ranges to overmind and supermind or gnosis.
- The uncertain and stumbling mental will has to rise towards the sure intuitive and into a higher divine and gnostic will,
- The psychic sweetness, fire and light of the soul behind the heart, has to alchemise our crude emotions and the hard egoisms and clamant desires of our vital nature.
- All our other members have to pass through a similar conversion
The leaders will start from and use the knowledge and the means that past effort has developed, but will not take them as they are without change or limit themselves by what is now known, but will follow the method of the Spirit in Nature → A constant rediscovery and new formulation and larger synthesis in the mind, a mighty remoulding in its deeper parts because of a greater enlarging Truth not discovered or not well fixed before.

This endeavour will be a supreme and difficult labour even for the individual, but much more for the race. It may well not advance rapidly. Even when the first decisive change is reached, all humanity will not be able to rise to that level → division into:

- those who are able to live on the spiritual level
- those who are only able to live in the light that descends from it into the mental level.
- And below these too there might still be a great mass not yet ready for the light.

This hierarchy would not mean an egoistic domination of the undeveloped by the more developed, but a guidance of the younger by the elder brothers of the race and a constant working to lift them up. And for the leaders too this ascent to the first spiritual levels would not be the end of the divine march, there would be still yet higher levels.

**The possible destiny of mankind**

But once the foundation has been secured, the rest develops by a progressive self-unfolding and the soul is sure of its way.

This at least is the highest hope, the possible destiny that opens out before the human view, and it is a possibility which the progress of the human mind seems on the way to redevelop.

**If the light that is being born increases**, if the number of individuals who seek to realise the possibility in themselves and in the world grows large and they get nearer the right way, then the Spirit who is here in man, now a concealed divinity, a developing light and power, will descend more fully as the Avatar of a yet unseen and unguessed Godhead from above into the soul of mankind and into the great individualities in whom the light and power are the strongest.

There will then be fulfilled the change that will prepare the transition of human life from its present limits into those larger and purer horizons; the earthly evolution will have taken its grand impetus upward and accomplished the revealing step in a divine progression of which the birth of thinking and aspiring man from the animal nature was only an obscure preparation and a far-off promise.