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TRANSFORMATION AND FULFILMENT
IN SRI AUROBINDO AND TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

by

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ABSTRACT

The work is a comparison of the evolutionary theories of Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin, particularly in relation to the transformation of Matter and the fulfilment of human life. The main text falls naturally into three sections, but these are sub-divided into more precise parts.

The first section examines the background to Aurobindo's life and work, the early influential conditions in India, political involvement in Bengal, and events which may have shaped his philosophy. There follows a short introduction to Aurobindo's evolutionary thought; a discussion on the place of Aurobindo within the Hindu tradition, the Tantra, the major schools of the Vedanta, Non-dualism - Sankara, pluralism - Madhva, Qualified Non-dualism - the Visistadvaita of Ramanuja.

The second section discusses the main elements in the evolutionary thought of Teilhard de Chardin, and the meaning of certain terms peculiar to his work, the concept of Matter, Reflection, Complexity Consciousness, Omega, Creative Union, Centration.

The third section compares the two philosophies beginning with the fundamental premise of the relationship of Matter and Spirit in each system; the transformation of Matter and a possible influence of Sankhya philosophy in relation to this. Consideration is given to the conflicting views of scholars with regard to Aurobindo and Advaita Vedanta; the Higher and Lower Maya in Aurobindo compared to the Higher and Lower Knowledge in Sankara, and this also relates to the difference in the movement of evolution in Aurobindo and Teilhard. This is followed by discussion on the evolution of Consciousness in both, a comparison of the final stages of evolution and the ultimate point of human fulfilment. Throughout the work, the differences between Aurobindo and Teilhard are noted where possible.

The conclusion gives a brief impression of Aurobindo and Teilhard as may be discovered from a point of view retrospective to a careful study of their philosophies.

Declaration

I declare that the accompanying thesis, "Transformation and Fulfilment in Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin", has been composed by me, and is the result of my own work.

M. H. H.

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Mary H. Hodge

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARIES

Sri Aurobindo

Aurobindo Ghose was born in Calcutta on 15th August 1872. His father, a Bengali physician, Dr. Krishnadan Ghose, had been educated in England and had a lasting admiration for Western standards and the European way of life. He hoped to pass this on to his three sons and from a very early age, about three years old it is said, Aurobindo had an exclusively Western education. He first attended convent school in Darjeeling and at the age of seven left for school in England. During his time in England his contacts were completely European on the instructions of his father, and the home influence was undoubtedly Christian, since he was cared for within the family of an English clergyman.

He returned to India in his twenty-second year, a young English adult in all but parentage, proficient in several European languages, a good scholar in Western philosophy, but knowing nothing of his own native language, the sacred Sanskrit, or of Hindu religious and philosophical traditions. The change from an English home environment and academic life, to Bengal seething with ferment in the decades which preceded the granting of Indian independence, the impact of the caste system, of 'untouchables' and of violence, are all factors which have to be taken into account in the attempt to understand Aurobindo's silent attitude towards his English upbringing and Western influence.

Soon after his arrival in India, he entered the service of the State of Baroda, and taught English and French in Baroda College. During this time he was drawn into politics, and became associated with the Nationalist leader, Tilak. But although Aurobindo anticipated Gandhi in advocating the doctrine of non-violence, he was nevertheless suspected of revolutionary activity and was imprisoned for a year in Alipore in 1908. This was to be a major turning point in his life, and on his release he moved to Pondicherry which was French territory, and remained there until his death in December 1950.

Aurobindo's marriage to a young Bengali girl during his Baroda period seems to have made very little difference to his life, and it is doubtful if they ever lived together. Celibacy is the rule in his ashram at Pondicherry. Despite this, female companionship seems to have been important to Aurobindo for the French lady, Mrs. Mira Richard, whom he frequently mentions as "the Mother" lived permanently at the ashram from 1920. "The Mother" is said to have exercised a mysterious and dominant role both before and following Aurobindo's death. The system in the ashram follows the Guruvada, and the Mother seems to have had the status of a Guru. Most writers speculate on the power of the Mother in Aurobindo's life, but the true reason for her presence in the ashram remains unexplained.

Retirement to the ashram was not withdrawal from the world for Aurobindo, and he kept well informed in international affairs. He produced a regular philosophical review in which his major works, "The Life Divine",

"Essays on the Gita", "The Synthesis of Yoga", and the commentary on the "Isha Upanishad" first appeared as articles during 1914 to 1921. These were later completed between 1939 and 1950, his most important work "The Life Divine" from 1939 to 1940. Aurobindo died at the Pondicherry ashram in December 1950. Most writers agree that some idea of the uniqueness of his life is necessary to an understanding of his philosophy.

Teilhard de Chardin

Marie-Joseph-Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was born on 1st May 1881 at Sarcenat near Clermont. He was the fourth child of the marriage of Alexandre-Victor-Emmanuel, and Berthe-Adele de Dompierre d'Hornoy who had a family connection with Voltaire. In all there were eleven children, but most of them died while still very young.

Pierre's formal education began in April 1892 when he was enrolled in the Jesuit school, Notre-Dame de Mongre, Ville franche-sur-Saone, where from the start he showed great promise in the academic field. Soon after leaving school, he entered the Jesuit novitiate at Aix-en-Provence, and in October 1900 began his juniorate at Laval (Mayence). In 1901 the Laval community moved to Jersey and this began a period in which his interest in geology developed. It was to be further stimulated by his appointment as physics and chemistry teacher in the Jesuit school in Cairo, in September 1905. In Egypt Pierre Teilhard made regular expeditions, and in 1908 published a study on "The Eocene Strata of the Minieh Region". Following his period in Egypt he began four years of theological study at Hastings in Sussex, and was ordained in August 1911. During the immediate pre-war years 1912-1914, Teilhard studied science in Paris, but in January 1915 he was called for military service and served as a stretcher-bearer with the medical corps. He served with distinction and was awarded the Croix de Guerre and the Medaille Militaire. Soon after his return to civilian life he was made a Chevalier of the Legion of

Honour.

Pierre Teilhard took his final vows in May 1918 at Sainte-Foyles-Lyon, and soon afterwards returned to Jersey where he continued his studies for a degree in natural sciences at the Sorbonne. From 1920-1923, Teilhard taught geology in the Institut Catholique, and in August 1923 he was sent by that institute to assist in excavations in central China. He had his base in Tientsin and took part in international expeditions before returning to Paris in November 1924, and resuming his scientific connections in Europe. On the instructions of his religious superiors, Teilhard left the Institut Catholique in 1926, and that same year he returned to China to begin a second period in Tientsin which was to last till August 1927, when once again he returned to France. There is not much detail about Teilhard's activities in the year which he spent there during this period; but in 1928 he again left France and visited Yemen, French Somaliland and Ethiopia, journeys which are fully described in "Letters from a Traveller", arriving again in Tienstin in March 1929. At this time he was invited to take part in a Central Asian Expedition, and during the months when this was being organised he made brief visits to France and America, returning to await the departure of the Expedition from Peking in 1931. This ended in 1932, and Teilhard spent the next six years in Peking. After a brief interlude, he returned again to Peking and remained there from 1939 to 1946. During his remaining years, Teilhard spent brief periods in France

where he visited his old home at Sarcenat, and renewed connections in Paris and London. He eventually returned to New York where he died on Easter Sunday, 1955.

His major works include; "The Phenomenon of Man" written during Teilhard's second Peking period in 1940; published "Le Phénomène Humain", 1955; E.T. Collins, 1959; "The Future of Man", E.T., 1964; "Science and Christ", E.T., 1968; "Activation of Energy", E.T., 1970 [First French edition, 1963]; "Christianity and Evolution", 1969; "Towards the Future", E.T., 1973; "The Heart of Matter", 1978; and among Teilhard's more spiritual works, "Le Milieu Divin", E.T., 1960 and "Hymn of the Universe", 1961.

PART 1

CHAPTER 1INTRODUCTION

The aim of this work is to examine the theories of Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin as they relate to the evolutionary fulfilment of human life. Although their philosophies have elements in common, the thought of these two writers was independently developed, since neither had any knowledge of the other's work. This appears as a remarkable coincidence considering the fact that they start from such widely divergent points of view as Hinduism and Christianity, and because of this, their work is often seen as a bridge between Eastern and Western thought in its modern development. In Aurobindo's case, this is an expressed intention, for he hoped to show that the source of much of what is accepted as contemporary western thinking can be traced to ideas latent in the ancient Hindu scriptures. Unlike most Hindu philosophers, he goes back beyond the Vedanta to the Upanishads and even to the Vedas, to formulate a new interpretation which will serve the dual purpose of correcting what he regards as an often one-sided view of Hinduism, and which will at the same time support his theory of an element of modernism in traditional Hindu teaching. His philosophy has been described as an integral non-dualism because it proposes no essential distinction between Transcendent and existent, a proposition which in itself establishes the integrated reality of all that is, the distinguishing mark of Aurobindo's thought.

As a scientist, Teilhard de Chardin was naturally

concerned with the persistent opposition between science and religion, and as the two disciplines were so closely merged in his own life, he set out to show that a dividing line between the two is not inevitable. This meant a re-examination of certain Christian doctrines, an understanding of which Teilhard believed, had not developed with new insights and advancing thought over the centuries. But his main concern was to demonstrate to the Christian reader that the development of evolutionary theories need not be incompatible with orthodox Christian teaching. To do this, Teilhard uses the texts of St. Paul and St. John, as well as the theology of the early Fathers to show that Christianity is not opposed to, but actually contains the seed of modern thought which it is capable of incorporating without prejudice to any of its doctrines. At the same time, Teilhard hopes to persuade his fellow scientists that Christianity is compatible with a scientific viewpoint, and in furthering this aim he uses 'neutral' terms such as "Omega" and "amorisation" in the initial stages of his work. The need which they saw to re-examine their respective religions in the light of contemporary thinking, is a notable point of affinity in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin.

The examination of their work will begin with a brief review of the early life of Aurobindo, a necessary preliminary since his philosophy is unlikely to be understood without some knowledge of his unique background. Following this, there will be some discussion on the place of Aurobindo within the Hindu tradition taking into account

the Tantra and some of the major schools of the Vedanta. From this it is hoped, some knowledge of Aurobindo's philosophical position may be gained. After a brief introduction to the evolutionary thought of Teilhard de Chardin, there will be an examination of some of the key-terms in Teilhard which are unfamiliar when encountered for the first time. In the final section there will be an attempt to illustrate the elements both of affinity and divergence in the work of Aurobindo and Teilhard, particularly with regard to their respective propositions on the fulfilment of humanity through the process of convergent evolution.

In conclusion, brief reference may be made to the over-all impression which follows a study of the two writers under discussion.

Note: Aurobindo used the English form of Indian words and therefore the diacritical markings are omitted.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND TO AUROBINDO'S LIFE AND WORK

It is an indisputable fact that the first, or rather the only, intellectual influence on Aurobindo until the time of his early twenties, was European, and this is of major importance in assessing the true source of the many-stranded elements which come together in his philosophy. The situation which he came up against on his return to India in the early part of the century clearly had a lasting effect. In addition to the social unrest, especially in Bengal, there was a further split in society which probably forced Aurobindo into making a choice as to where his true affinity lay. Whereas the Tagores and other influential personalities, mostly English educated, were attracted to, and were inclined to adopt an Anglicised way of life, forming a society to promote that end, Aurobindo reacted to the situation in the opposite direction, claiming an Indian emphasis, almost, it would seem, to the exclusion of his English upbringing. This explains his move towards the Nationalist position which led to his association with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the results that followed.

It seems that Aurobindo's involvement in politics is sometimes misunderstood and is seen as a direction separate from the fundamentally religious orientation of his philosophy. The true position is that the political and the religious strands are completely integrated, for

the former is seen in terms of the latter. As Kees Bolle says,

"From his earliest speeches and writings, he regarded nationalism basically and principally as the work of God;"¹

and Bolle further goes on to say that Aurobindo was not unique in this for

". . . the struggle for independence was never merely a political issue for Indian leaders."²

However this may be, and Nehru says much the same thing, the urgency of preserving an undiluted national and religious identity seems to have been more pronounced in Aurobindo than in any of the other leaders of the time. It is said that his political ideals were expressed in religious terms which have yet to be surpassed, as were his views on the doctrine of ahimsa, something much more positive than the Passive Resistance by which it is usually understood. His pleas for non-violence seem not to have been effective. Nehru gives an historical account of the riots which broke out in 1907, in which Gangadhar Tilak played a leading part. This is probably the background to Aurobindo's arrest in Alipore in 1908.

The point to be stressed is that Aurobindo's political activity was the expression of a religious conviction. He saw the development of the nations as part of the evolutionary movement, and therefore within the Divine intention. The loss of the uniqueness of any nation is "a loss to humanity"³ itself for it diminishes the richness of diversity which he saw as the prerequisite of true unity. Thus Babel is a gift from God

to man, for it is meant to provide that diversity of spirit and culture which is essential to the differentiation in identity which is the end of evolution.

Nationalism will eventually disappear into the greater unity of internationalism and ultimately into a "single humanity",⁴ for it represents an egoism which is the enemy of all true religion, whether it is an egoism of individual, class, or nation. There is no doubt that

"... the state ideal, the small or the vast living machine, and the human ideal, the more and more distinct and luminous Person, the increasing God, stand in perpetual opposition,"⁵

and such statements which are common throughout his political works, are also to be taken into account in a true assessment of Aurobindo's interest in Marxism. His political works express a religious commitment, and this is set out at great lengths in "The Human Cycle", "The Ideal of Human Unity", and "War and Self-determination". It is most unlikely that R.C. Zaehner meant the statement to be taken literally when he says that

"it must be remembered that there is Aurobindo the mystic and Aurobindo the socialist,"⁶

for almost certainly he would not be implying a real division.

The tendency to see Aurobindo's work as categorised into phases such as the political, historical, philosophical and finally the mystical, seems quite definitely to be a mistake, for the same underlying principle of absolute unity is the focus which draws all of these aspects together into the one line of thought. Individuals must first be themselves in order to be of value to the

whole, for each must bring the essential contribution of his own uniqueness. This is the crux of Aurobindo's philosophy, namely, that diversity is the key to integrity. Not oneness but integrity is the Real.

From individuals to nations the same holds good, and thus he regarded the struggle in India as an overriding need to "be ourselves",⁷ for, he says,

"Uniformity is not the law of life. Life exists by diversity; it insists that every group, every being shall be, even while one with all the rest in universality, yet by some principle of variation unique."⁸

This is Aurobindo's thought in parvo, for it proclaims the identity which is the necessary condition of fulfilment, and the difference in which alone this possibility lies.

The period which he spent in the service of the State of Baroda is of great importance to the development of Aurobindo's thought. It was during his time as a teacher that he came to know his own Bengali language and became proficient in Sanskrit. This meant that for the first time the wealth of Hindu sacred writings became available to him and it is from this point that his interest in Yoga began. From this beginning he was later to develop the comprehensive synthesis of Yoga with which he hoped to replace the narrower methods of Yogic meditation.

The year of his imprisonment in Alipore is a major landmark in Aurobindo's life. Not surprisingly this experience proved to be a turning point for him, as it seems to have been for other Indian leaders. Nehru

describes his period of imprisonment in spiritual terms. He speaks of having experienced "a touch of eternity"⁹ in an all-pervading sense of the spirit. Aurobindo is said to have had a vision of Krishna, who spoke to him of the sanatana-dharma, giving him insights into the eternal religion which he had never previously known. This was recognised by him as a call, and on his release he moved to the French area, and eventually set up his ashram in Pondicherry, where he remained until his death in 1950.

Together with the social and political upheaval there was also a religious division in the Bengal to which Aurobindo returned at around the turn of the century. The British influence was accepted by many leading figures, mostly English educated intellectuals, but in other instances what was seen as infiltration was fiercely rejected, and this led to a deeply divided society. The European element was given an impetus through the support of outstanding men such as Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of the Brahmo-samaj, a society which aimed to unite whatever was best in Hinduism with Christian faith and ethics. He was joined by many well-known personalities, the most important probably being Debendranath Tagore, a man of tremendous reputation who is said to have lived a life marked by repeated mystical experience, and this support was continued by his son Rabindranath, India's mystic poet par excellence.

Another leading enthusiast of the Brahmo-samaj was Keshab Chandra Sen whose influence was to have lasting

results, for it was his unbounded admiration for Christian standards which was to lead to dissent within the society, and the founding of the second group, the Arya-Samaj by Dayananda Sarasvati in 1875. It has been noted by Aurobindo himself that his work most closely resembles that of Dayananda, whose clarion call of "Back to the Vedas" no doubt met with ready response, but the measure of affinity here depends upon the extent to which it is admitted that Aurobindo's thought has a truly Vedic source, rather than a Western foundation applied to Vedic concepts. There is further agreement in that both regarded political issues as the logical correlative of the religious life, but again it is clear that Aurobindo's political views were peculiarly his own, and were an integral part of his evolutionary theory. It would be difficult to draw the line of influence with any certainty. Dayananda claimed to have found in the Vedas a pure monotheism free from idolatry, and while it seems to be true to say that image worship is not included there, to deny the complex pantheon of gods in which now one is supreme and now another, seems to contradict the traditional opinion in a radical way. The Vedic gods are largely the personification of natural forces, "useful symbols,"¹⁰ Radhakrishnan says, and this would represent modern Hindu scholarship. Dayananda also maintained that the Vedas contained the seed of the scientific and technical discoveries of his day, but since he died in 1883 the claim is not so startling as Aurobindo's was to be, and in any case it seems not to have met with any

enthusiasm. The Arya-Samaj itself flourished, and apart from the determined task of protecting Hinduism from infiltration by other religions, it is credited with many social improvements and the raising of educational opportunities. A certain affinity with Dayananda, yes, but it should not be taken too far because Aurobindo's intention was not simply back to the Vedas empty-handed, but to take with him all that he cherished in the West and leave it there.

But if a definite limit is to be set in a comparison with Dayananda, the same is true in relation to others, most notably with Bal Gangadhar Tilak, with whom Aurobindo is so often linked. The truth is that they shared a common belief in the desired political end, but as to the means they differed radically. Tilak's violence and his incitement of the people to follow his methods were well recorded at the time, and it is quite certain that Aurobindo broke his association with him for this reason.

Of the others of his time there is one with whom, it is suggested, there is a deeper affinity. Vivekananda, the disciple of Ramakrishna, was, like Aurobindo, a poet, internationally minded, and passionately Hindu. Unlike him he followed Advaitan philosophy and had no burning interest in politics. Nevertheless there is a common interest in that both placed great importance on modern developments of the Yoga system and although Vivekananda's experimental type places great stress on reason, again for him too, "experience is the only source of knowledge."¹¹

In the course of his frequent trips abroad he came to admire western ideas and attitudes and finally was convinced that the ideal to be aimed at was a merging of western progress with India's spiritual background, but not at the expense of the Hindu religion. "Make a European society with India's religion"¹² he urged his followers; in other words, become western in equality, freedom, and so on, but remain a Hindu in culture and religion. It is not too unlike Aurobindo's declared intention.

In considering Aurobindo's place in the Indian scene of his time, then, it may be said that he had common ties with most of the figures who were his contemporaries, but to a limited extent. In any case, Hinduism was soon to feel the tremendous force of Gandhi, the most radical of "orthodox" Hindus. Gandhi recognised from the statements of the Arya-Samaj the variety of interpretations which could be applied to the Vedas, and proclaimed that one was no more valuable than another, and therefore he felt himself bound by none. It would hardly be disputed that there is a basic affinity between Aurobindo and Gandhi, for ahimsa is not negative but is a positive and dynamic force, the natural corollary of a burning conviction of the unity of life. It is a belief which Aurobindo and Gandhi shared and applied to everyday living.

In summing up the recognisable influences which have contributed to Aurobindo's work, the reader first comes up against the sheer vastness and scope of his writing,

which in itself makes him unique among modern Indian thinkers. This makes the task of separating every thread an impossible one, which it was no doubt intended that it should be, for an indissoluble integration is his key-note. Apart from this, Aurobindo's thought is backed by a formidable command of western philosophy, of world history, of political awareness on a world scale, complicated by the fact that he consciously transplants this vast intellectual wealth on to Vedic roots. But regardless of the inextricable manner in which these have been woven into his work, the indisputable fact is that the Vedas are a later influence on a mind already formed along a European way of thought. A western influence seems to be grudgingly acknowledged by most writers on Aurobindo, but it has never been given the importance which becomes clear in a long and serious study of his work. The question which must be put to those who deny such an influence, is how then do they explain the sometimes identical theory of Teilhard, for whom there is no question of any other influence apart from European? The answer to this is, that Aurobindo is simply saying with Teilhard, Bergson and others, that there is an element of mind in everything, for what Teilhard describes as the "within of things", and Aurobindo by various terms such as "the Involved" or "the Witness" and so on, indicate that "mind" is synonymous with "Life". They therefore affirm that there is no "lifeless" thing, and that the "mystery of existence" which has escaped the human understanding since earliest times will be revealed as ceaseless Divine activity with

which the entire universe vibrates as humanity "returns" to its essential normality. Consciousness Bergson likened to a rocket which shoots out from eternity and lights up for a moment through individual instances of being, the part of eternity which is time, on which its spent fragments fall back as Matter, and continues on into the infinity of radical dispersion. This makes of consciousness a beginningless and endless process, a trajectory traced outwith space and time. And if for Aurobindo it is more in the nature of an ascending/descending movement, then again it is one in which the high points are indistinguishable. And if further, discovery of the various stages in the evolution of consciousness are to be attributed to the development of western thought alone, then the question is still to be answered as to how these concepts lend themselves to the successful application of Upanishadic language.

The integrating genius of Aurobindo is recognised in the blending of elements of European thought with Indian religious insights carefully interpreted, and also in the harmony which he constructs between modern science and the concepts which "were arrived at by a very different method in the Vedanta."¹³ For Aurobindo, insight was endorsed by reason, and thus

"... we are able to apply Vedanta to fulfilment of life, and not only to escape from life,"¹⁴

an interpretation in which he achieves his desired end.

Involution demands the status of Reality for the world, and this in turn demands the fulfilment of the

world, and therefore this is the truth which must be seen to be hidden in the Vedas. It is this alone which can establish Aurobindo's philosophy as an authentic Hinduism.

It was not Aurobindo but his contemporary who described the evolution of human life as

" . . . the evolution of a consciousness which tries to be liberated from the bounds of individual separateness and to comprehend in its relationship a wholeness which may be named Man."¹⁵

Teilhard says that the intervening space will be bridged by a process of creation by ever greater union, the continuation of material evolution into a dimension of being which is infinite. Aurobindo says that this space represents for human life the moment of the "Gnostic change" reached by the evolution of consciousness into, as it were, an additional faculty having the capability of a breakthrough into the ultimate essentiality of being. This is mind fulfilling itself in the supramental which he says is

" . . . the scheme of the human understanding upon which the conclusions of the most ancient Vedanta were built."¹⁶

But significantly he then goes on to say that

"To develop the results arrived at on this foundation by the ancient sages is not my object [for] . . . as with all knowledge, old expression has to be replaced by new expression suited to a later mentality,"¹⁸

and this new expression Aurobindo found in western concepts.

To play down the western element is to distort Aurobindo's work in denying its purpose. In admitting that intelligence was not enough, Bergson continued

science into metaphysics. But again classical metaphysics was not enough since it did not escape from the level of intellectual discourse, and displayed this limitation by accepting being as the ultimate and becoming as the derivative. The reversal of this is the truth for Bergson, and so he urged the rejection of metaphysical systems

" . . . which embrace all the possible and sometimes the impossible."¹⁹

Similarly Aurobindo wants to emphasise that the Indian philosophers

"avoided the besetting sin of metaphysics, the tendency to battle in the clouds because it deals with words as if they were imperative facts instead of symbols."²⁰

There are no great debates in the Upanishads, for the question there is not "what dost thou think?" but "what dost thou know?", the one relating to reason the other to intuition. This is the distinction made by Bergson in redefining metaphysics as the science of the intuition, which not only completes the intellect,

" . . . but by developing also another faculty, complementary to the intellect, we may open a perspective on the other half of the real."²¹

It is this perspective which Aurobindo describes when he says that

"The master-word of the subconscious is Life, the master-word for the super-conscious is Light. Intuition is knowledge is that which is common between them, the foundation of which is conscious or effective identity between that which knows and that which is known."²²

For an appreciation of Aurobindo's work, it is as necessary to accept a western core in his philosophy as

it is to recognise the Vedic spirit which pervades it. It in no way diminishes Aurobindo's achievements to suggest that perhaps there is not much that is written in the present day on the coming of the Spirit through the medium of human consciousness which does not relate in some way to Hegelian philosophy. Thomas Aykara compares Aurobindo's theory with the emergence of the Absolute Spirit in Hegel's 'Phenomenology', and also draws attention to the mutual identification of pure being and non-being in both Hegel and Aurobindo. Aykara²³ goes on to make the relevant point that in a sense Aurobindo completes Hegel by providing the concrete experience of the real in place of the ideal. This in turn perhaps marks some affinity, however tenuous, between Aurobindo and Feuerbach who first translated this way of thinking into concrete terms and so paved the way for a different application of this methodology to human society.

It is perhaps also true to say that there is not much written on creative evolution which is completely independent of Bergson, as Teilhard generously acknowledges, and there cannot be much written on the essential Person, source, creator and final fulfilment of human personality, which is truly independent of Christ. Aurobindo, whose scholarship is formidable, international and multi-directional, seems to agree that the final power is Personal. "Thou art That,"²⁴ says the Upanishad, but it may not be exclusively in relation to the "That" that Aurobindo discovers the place of human fulfilment.

Aurobindo's purpose is not to belittle western intellectual achievements, but to claim them. The unshakeable foundation of his philosophy is the momentous discovery of evolution; that this evolution is progressive; that this progression is inevitable; that this inevitability rests on the primacy of consciousness in existence; that therefore psychical states do not depend for their existence on an existential consciousness, for consciousness presupposes experience and not vice versa; that this experience indicates a primordial unity which is "re-called" in intuition; that therefore time is identical with eternity, and consciousness identical with the self-consciousness of the Unmanifest, however this is understood.

NOTES

1. Kees Bolle, "The Persistence of Religion", p. 80.
2. Ibid., p. 79.
3. Sri Aurobindo, "The Ideal of Human Unity" in 'the Human Cycle', p. 494.
4. Ibid., p. 473.
5. Ibid., p. 273.
6. R. C. Zaehner, "Evolution in Religion", p. 36.
7. Sri Aurobindo, "The Human Cycle", p. 40.
8. Sri Aurobindo, "The Ideal of Human Unity", p. 490.
9. Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Discovery of India", p. 6-7.
10. Radhakrishnan, "Contemporary Indian Philosophy".
11. Vivekananda, "Letters of Swami Vivekananda", p. 390f.
12. Ibid., p. 390f.
13. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 20.
14. Ibid., p. 88.
15. Rabindranath Tagore, "The Religion of Man", p. 29.
16. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 100.
17. Ibid., p. 100.
18. Ibid., p. 101.
19. Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution", p. 362.
20. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 105.
21. Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution", p. 362.
22. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 99.
23. Thomas Aykara, "Cosmic Consciousness", p. 183n.
24. Chandogya Upanishad, 6.8.6.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY

The modern Hinduism of Sri Aurobindo effectively combines the stimulation of European thought with the attraction of Eastern spirituality, thus achieving a balance and establishing the interdependence of the rationalistic emphasis of the first, with the mystical orientation of the second. Only in such a combination can there be found a credible foundation for the spiritual evolution which is the essence of his philosophy and the aim of his integral Yoga. The term 'modern' as applied to the thought of Aurobindo is a valid one if it is understood not as a reversal of traditional Indian religious thinking, but as its expansion. Re-tracing Hindu thought beyond the emergence of Vedantic philosophy to the original Vedic writings, he discovers there not only affirmation of the essential unity, the ultimate One, which is a basic characteristic, but also finds there justification for the extension of the 'Real' to include Matter as well as Spirit. He thus attributes to the phenomenal a positive value usually accorded to Spirit alone, a significance arising from its essential relationship to a final integrated Spiritual Life. It will be seen, however, that such an orientation in his thought is necessary to the construction of his theory because of the double movement he discovers in the process of evolution. The exclusive emphasis on the spiritual, basic

to the monism of Advaita, can support an ascending movement, and so evolution, which is the second stage of his theory, but not a descent of the Spirit, or involution, which precedes it. The very notion of evolution contains within itself the idea of a necessary involution, since it must be said that whatever evolves is already involved within the material elements. If Spiritual Being is held to be both source and active agent in Nature, then, since all Nature is seen to evolve, it must be concluded that Spirit has always been involved in every aspect of Nature. To say that the evolutionary process is to be understood as Spiritual ascent, is to say that Spirit is present, though dormant, in the atoms of Matter, and that evolution is simply its gradual awakening, its movement towards complete self-manifestation. This is not the result of chance, or external force, but is movement in accordance with the directing force of an inner necessity. In order fully to understand Aurobindo's whole theory of the fulfilment of man, it is important to appreciate the strength of his conviction regarding the descent of the Spirit into Matter. All that man is, or can become is already present in the atom. The fullness of being is present in the atom because it is first present in the Force which forms the atom, and which is everywhere the same in essence. It is the submental sensation in plant life, is that which is released into instinctive consciousness in the animal, is that which gains status of Mind in human life, is the potential of yet unattained powers of Mind and Consciousness to the highest level of intuition

in Identity.

The fundamental conviction upon which Aurobindo develops his theory of fulfilment, therefore, is that all creation will in the end become that which was contained and intended in its seed, and for him, this seed is the Spirit. Observable change is simply the outward sign of an infinitely more complex and subtle development. This is described as the unfolding of power after power culminating at the point at which Self-disclosure of the Spirit is reached. Man is conscious life with the power of reflection, and in retrospect he is seen to have been the purpose of the evolutionary movement thus far, and it is here that incomplete man will attain his final destiny, for he is the medium of the ultimate spiritualisation of all creation.

Matter is the fit and noble material out of which Spirit constructs his phenomenal existence, and the seemingly extreme terms of existence are, in fact, identical in essence for Matter 'also is Brahman',¹ the external body of the Divine Being. The essential identity of Matter and Spirit is obscured, and the two appear as irreconcilable opposites when the series of ascending terms between them is denied. Thus the two, which are inter-linked, and interdependent, become polarised when one is acclaimed as pure Spirit, and the other set in opposition as unintelligent Matter (or else one God, the other Nature). Complete affirmation is impossible in these circumstances, for an either/or situation is established, and, as the course of human thought shows,

there is an inevitable over-emphasis on one, and denial of the other. Such polarised alternatives are seen in what is usually represented as typical of the thought of East and West (more accurately of India and Europe) according to which, in the former case, the ascetic emphasis led to the impoverishment of life through the neglect of material contributions on both the personal and national level, and in the latter case, Western life came to be dominated by a materialistic orientation, almost to the exclusion of the spiritual.

If it is claimed that reconciliation of this division is to be discovered in the thought of Aurobindo, it must begin from the premise that both the materialist and his opponent have a glimpse of the truth. To the materialist it has to be said, yes, the world is real, but does not have existence in its own right, for it is a form assumed by a conscious energy, but also, yes, the world is unreal insofar as it has yet to discover this reality in a universal sense. The 'One' must have self-sufficiency, but at the same time, be the source of multiplicity, which, through progressive evolutionary change, will ascend towards a final re-unification which will in effect be a transformation of the elements of multiplicity.

Unity of Matter and Spirit does not consist simply in the enveloping of the Spirit within Matter, and therefore recognition of an ascending series is quite indispensable. Here the illustration in the Sankhya applies. In this there is classification of the five

elemental states of substance from ether to earth in a way which progresses from the most subtle to the less subtle, from the ethereal to the concrete condition, and therefore Matter is the last stage of consciousness, the culmination of diversity in form. Thus the ascending series is a progressively more subtle elevation beyond material formulation, which is to say, towards unification; ascent is the movement away from the resistance of Matter, the attempt to go from material substance to pure substance, from form in which consciousness "sleeps" as

" . . . involved and absorbed in the result of its own self-formation and therefore self-oblivious",²

to Essence, in which it is the self-possessed absolute.

The relationship of Matter to Spirit is not then one of simple union but is complex process, and what Aurobindo means by involution is not something which is the particular occasion of a particular moment which precedes a static situation, but is continuous event for evolution is not the opposite, but the corresponding movement.

Aurobindo maintains that whatever may be the signs, or indications of a movement towards unity in human affairs, it is only through the operation of Supermind that man's irreversible fulfilment will be achieved. What will be the power possessed by this Supermind which has the capacity to transform human nature? For Aurobindo the answer is Love - a love as yet unknown in human life. He claims that the great thinkers whom the human race has produced have been as yet unable to grasp the fundamental truth that eventually, Love is the sure

and only basis for the fulfilment of human life. Reason has always been acclaimed as the exalted attribute of man, the quality which has distinguished him from the animal, has made him God-like. It is a distortion which has persisted, despite the fact that reason alone cannot bring man to an understanding of his own existence, or the nature of his destiny, for the solution to the problem of human life "lies not in the reason but in the soul of man".³ From the point of view of fulfilment seen as an evolutionary progress towards integrity, discursive thought can be an obstacle, for its great achievement is analysis, and therefore the primary ability of reason is not union, but division. Love transcends reason, since it has the capacity for union, indeed by its very nature it must unite properly to be called love. The human race has not as yet learned this, Aurobindo says, or has grasped it only dimly, is capable only of a weak reflection of the undreamed of power of this new cosmic force upon which its final destiny and fulfilment rests. The significance of the evolving force of Love cannot be over-estimated in the thought of Aurobindo. The Love which is envisaged is the power, already developing, by which men can break out of the exclusiveness, the particularisation of love which has limited the human race to the individual category. Many have said that it is not "natural" for men to be able to love beyond his close circle of existence. This is precisely the point. It is this boundary, the natural, which limits human life, and which has to be overcome. Man should, and eventually

will, according to Aurobindo, manifest within himself and in his relationships, the same integrated order which marks the cosmic scene, of which he is a part, for cosmic harmony should be no less the property of the microcosm, than it is of the macrocosm.

Aurobindo holds the inevitability of evolution, the conceptive end of which is Sachidananda, combining, in certain respects, the static Absolute of the philosophic schools, and the living God of religious experience who operates in time. Evolution, then, embraces and is active, both in the social dimension, that of the evolving collective phenomenon in human life, and also in inner awareness. But in both aspects it is a 'return' to a level of being of which man has been dimly aware, and has understood only with the surface of the mind, yet it is 'the ancient secret', the way back to the realm of the Spirit. The idea of 'return' in Aurobindo cannot be overstressed for it is the intimate co-relative of the descent/ascent which is the foundation of his thought, the meaning of his cryptic statement, "Heaven we have possessed, but not yet the earth".⁴

Because it proposes unity, Aurobindo's system may be described as a type of monism, but because it rejects the Brahman/Atman principle in favour of a developing identity of Unmanifest/Manifest it is more accurately non-dualism, holding the dispersion of the All in Infinite Space and Time, and Its concentration in the individual within the limits of Space and Time. It is this which marks human life as the expression of an essential form

of Truth, and also allows Aurobindo to speak of the purpose of evolution as the fulfilment of man in his 'return' to the fullness of Divine Being, not in any hereafter, but in the concrete world.

The characteristic which marks the presence of Reality in the world is a Consciousness which is pre-existent and essential, becoming more deeply involved in the world as human consciousness evolves towards it. In maintaining that Consciousness holds the key to human fulfilment, Aurobindo is not simply urging the individual to achieve a state at which he is conscious of universal existence, but to enter into it, to experience the reception of it in sensation, the passive, and by uniting with it in awareness, the active. This is to live in the dimension which surpasses the merely egotistical sphere, from which an influence then radiates not only to the individual being of others, but even to the physical world. In discussing Aurobindo's theory of individual responsibility for the spiritualisation of the race, Zaehner says that

"even a single soul fully integrated into the Divine life must sooner or later make its attraction felt throughout the entire world:"⁵

This kind of power is sometimes said to radiate from a Cosmic Consciousness in Aurobindo, but since even this level of consciousness is to be surpassed according to his theory, it is properly the effective principle of a Gnostic Consciousness which is in reality more profound than the physical reality which it effects and which it finally governs. Although Aurobindo speaks in terms of

'recovery', which is the soul's realisation of itself as "an Immortal portion of the Divine",⁶ an individual self of the Self-Existent, being in the world is always dependent and the relationship develops in the category of being and not of nature.

Aurobindo develops his theory of spiritual evolution on the sequence of

Matter		Being
Life	Supermind	Consciousness
Mind		Bliss

a formula which is already in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. The lower triad is also the basic progression in observable evolution, and on this basis Aurobindo can claim an affinity between ancient Hinduism and modern scientific thinking. But the higher triad is not strictly speaking progressive, for it is the ultimate of Sat-cit-ananda, and these three principles of Transcendence are each other. This is seen by R.C. Zaehner as an "almost exact counterpart of the Christian Trinity",⁷ which is absolutely One in itself, but is also the essence of multiplicity, but perhaps it is a point which needs further study. Between the levels of Mind and Supermind Aurobindo recognises other less definable gradations by which he conveys the gradual rise of consciousness from the mental into the intuitive category of Gnosis.

Intuition

The awakening of the intuitive faculty is the event of over-riding importance in Aurobindo's theory of the

evolution of Consciousness. This is the new beginning which is nevertheless within an unbroken continuum, infinitely extended. This is the moment in which human consciousness truly becomes the medium of the Spirit, the secret potentiality of self-conscious existence, which reaches its final goal in the one res completa which for Aurobindo is the total subjectivity of the Identical. The faculty of Intuition in Aurobindo is related to what he refers to as the "forgetfulness" of Man, who "identifies himself solely with the name and form he wears in existence"⁸ forgetting the totality of which he is a part,

"yet all that he forgets is contained, present and effective, in the all-retaining consciousness within him".⁹

Aurobindo, like Bergson, affirms that the past is ever present as an effective influence, and this is a key element in his theory of a unitary Consciousness which is 'becoming' in human life. If it is right to say that man is the sum product of a long biological improvement, then it must also be right to say that he is possessed of the accumulation of all levels of consciousness, not simply as retained by individual experience, but also of whatever relates to the "given-ness", a common essence which he inherits and without which there would be no basis for the extra-existential faculty of intuition. The way back to a "remembering" is the breakthrough from a separated individual conscious existence in the recovery of unity in essential Consciousness. Man can return, Aurobindo maintains, for the difference is not essential but is merely phenomenal, and this makes the present condition a

"willed ignorance". Intuition is the unerring sign of this possibility, for it is the

"one door which sometimes swings open upon the splendour of a truth beyond . . . and brings to man those brilliant messages from the Unknown which are the beginning of his higher knowledge".¹⁰

According to Aurobindo, intuition has a four-fold power which effects the physical, cognitive, volitional, emotional, and all of these aspects of life respond to the dynamism of the evolving Consciousness. The 'idea', for example, is charged with the power of effectuation, and the word expressing this idea has this same power, the rationale of the Indian mantra. This theory is fundamental to Aurobindo's integral Yoga. It explains his insistence on the Guruvada, for this power is also applied to the spoken word of the Guru to the disciple and it accounts for Aurobindo's emphasis on the work of the Guru as "a trust from above".¹¹ It is this importance which he attaches to intuition which explains Aurobindo's note that the word does not really convey the strength of meaning which is demanded of it. "I use the word for want of a better",¹² he says, and so it is to be understood not simply in the sense of the Jungian channel of possibilities, even infinite possibilities, but rather as consciousness caught in matter, un-free, remembering freedom, which makes intuitive knowledge recognition rather than cognition. It is in the light of intuition, Aurobindo says, that

"we can perceive the possibility of a Divine life for man in the world which will at once justify science by disclosing a living sense and intelligible aim for the cosmic and terrestrial evolution, and realise by the transfiguration of the human soul into the Divine the great dream of all high religions".¹³

NOTESINTRODUCTION TO AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY

1. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 36.
2. Ibid., p. 365.
3. Ibid., p. 256.
4. Sri Aurobindo, "The Human Cycle", p. 116.
5. R.C. Zaehner, "Evolution and Religion", p. 38.
6. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 174.
7. R.C. Zaehner, "Evolution and Religion", p. 13.
8. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 444.
9. Ibid., p. 444.
10. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 102.
11. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 61.
12. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 102.
13. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 40.

PART 2

CHAPTER 4

THE TANTRA AND INTEGRAL YOGA

It has been said that Aurobindo's

"... Yoga system and the philosophical, devotional and ascetic life of the many devotees around him would have been unthinkable without a Tantric background".¹

The fact that Aurobindo is a native of Bengal, which was and perhaps still is a stronghold of the Tantric cult in India seems to be claimed as support for the view of a direct influence to the extent that the Tantric element can so clearly be identified in his work. Nevertheless, in a philosophy so intricately woven from so many different strands, it is very difficult to define the extent of a Tantric affinity, and perhaps the best approach is to see what is not Tantric, and from there judge what is left.

[i] The first point must be the basic difference in Aurobindo's Yoga. All Yoga, Aurobindo says, is motivated by the Divine impulse and attraction which works within the human soul which then turns towards that "by which it finds its greatest being",² but this in itself is not enough for integral Yoga. In the

"former Yogas it was the experience of the Spirit which is always free and one with the Divine that was sought"³

and this required of the individual only the degree of change which would clear obstacles preventing this end. What Aurobindo envisages is the radical transformation of

life and the world which will effect a Divine life in Matter. The truth of this one existence is love, and therefore Aurobindo says,

"Love is the essential motive of this Yoga and as is the whole nature of love, so will be its crown and fulfilment".⁴

The aim of the Tantra is not only liberation, for it can stop at a "cosmic enjoyment of the power of the Spirit" which in a sense becomes the motive or object. For Aurobindo this is

"only the first stage of the realisation of that growing of the being into the higher or Divine Consciousness which we call transformation".⁵

(ii) Secondly, the Tantric method starts from the lowest level and moves upwards to a summit, and so the stress on the awakening of the Kundalini releasing the Shakti which then rises through the six psychic centres of the body, opening the lotus of each Chakra as it ascends. There is a corresponding Mantra to each stage in this progressive awakening, from the Muladhara, or lowest, which has "Lam", to the Ajna located between the eyebrows which has the sacred symbol "OM". Finally the sahasradala, or thousand petalled lotus opens to the intuition. The important point is that this describes a subjective experience, and even though it is said that it can be a group practice, this is very far from what Aurobindo means by the collective. The group in this case would seem to be only a simultaneous experience by individuals, if that, whereas Aurobindo anticipates the unified experience of a single consciousness as of one person. If individual ecstasy is the highest aim in human life, then evolution

is meaningless. While Aurobindo describes the Tantric sequence he puts no emphasis on the rise of Shakti through the physical, since he maintains that man is a spirit in mind more than in body and so assumes in him a capacity to begin on that level. In integral Yoga stress is on

"the utilisation of the powers of the soul in mind and the turning of the triple key of knowledge, works and love in the locks of the spirit".⁶

This means that Hathayoga can be dispensed with, and Rajayoga will be only an informal element, for since the

"methods of integral Yoga must be mainly spiritual, dependence on physical methods or fixed psychic or psycho-spiritual processes would be the substitution of a lower for a higher 'action'".⁷

But the main opposition is on the point of individualism, and Aurobindo often underlines his rejection of systems which are concerned only with individual release, for

"We regard the spirit in man not solely as an individual being travelling to a transcendent unity with the Divine, but as a universal being capable of oneness with the Divine in all souls and in all nature".⁸

While the soul's liberation and enjoyment of union with the Divine must be the first aim of Yoga, it then becomes

"a part of the collective Yoga of the Divine nature in the human race, . . . and the individual becomes in his natural being, a self-perfecting instrument for the perfect outflowering of the Divine in humanity".⁹

(iii) Thirdly, the use of the Mantra is sometimes seen as a direct link between the Tantra and Aurobindo, but again this may not be specifically Tantric for it is common to all yogic systems. Aurobindo points this out in saying

that ". . . the use of the Mantra, sacred symbol, name or mystic formula which is of so much importance in the Indian systems of Yoga and common to them all."¹⁰

The Mantra relates to the mystical value of the spoken word as epitomised in the sruti, the eternal wisdom "heard" by the seers, and it therefore belongs to all Indian traditions as the source of their validity. The eternal sounds are co-ordinated with the powers that inhere in the universe, and since the secret power of the Mantra is purely mystical, it is irrelevant whether the Mantras are linguistically meaningful or not.

The same significance applies to the Guruvada on which Aurobindo insisted in the ashram, and which is also seen as a Tantric element in his Yoga. Except in very rare cases, "The Word from without"¹¹ is needed in realisation, and this may be a word from the past or "the more powerful word of the living Guru". This word is representative of the Divine and is part of a law which governs Nature. Aurobindo illustrates this in the example of Ramakrishna, who, although he often reached realisation, always accepted the word of a teacher but showed by the quickness of his realisation that it was

"a concession to the general rule by which effective knowledge must be received as by a disciple from a Guru".¹²

Again, because this is part of the "hearing" it may not be solely a Tantric element in Aurobindo.

[iv] Fourthly, although Aurobindo has a lot to say about sacrifice, this is most likely misunderstood if it is seen as other than the influence of the Gita. Initially the sacrifice he speaks of is the descent,

"this sacrifice of the Purusha, the Divine Soul submitting itself to Force and Matter"¹³

as the seed of the redemption of the world of Inconscience and Ignorance, and this is what the Gita means when it says that

"with sacrifice for their companion, the All-Father created these peoples".¹⁴

Aurobindo in his Yoga gives instructions on the conscious offering of every act however humble, which turns the whole of life into a conscious sacrifice, for just as descent is a sacrifice on the part of the Divine, so ascent to the Divine life is the human journey, "the acceptable sacrifice". This is really the orientation of his long discussion on sacrifice. It relates to the central theme of Love in Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, for while this may start with the way of knowledge or of works as well as of Love "where they meet is the beginning of its joy of fulfilment", and "Love it cannot miss even if it does not start from it, for Love is the crown of works, and the flowering of knowledge".¹⁵

[v] Fifthly, the prominent place of "the Mother" is sometimes seen as a Tantric tendency in Aurobindo, but it seems impossible to say with any certainty what this represents in the complex thinking and varied influences of his life. In some instances it applies to India, a common enough symbolism, but again it may be a kind of legacy from his own unusual childhood. Apart from this, an obsession with the idea of "the Mother" seems to occur often in Hinduism, and Aurobindo's fixation may not be all that different. Ramakrishna, for example, seems to have

had an obsessive attraction to "the Mother" from his youth, so much so that it is doubtful if his childhood marriage was ever anything other than a token arrangement. By this time he had become convinced that all women should be considered in the light of "the Mother", of whom, it is claimed, he had recurring visions. Again with Ramakrishna this could not be attributed to a Tantric influence, for it is a characteristic which was evident before his acquaintance with that tradition. John Hick says that

"in the typical Indian conceptions of deity the female principle still plays a distinctly larger part than in the West",¹⁶

and this may be all that it amounts to.

In summing up the Tantric element in Aurobindo, it would not be denied that there is such a factor but that it does not seem to constitute an influence. Kees Bolle who maintains such a presence in Aurobindo's theory, nevertheless says in examining integral Yoga that the

"only important difference seems an addition which can be understood in terms of India's widening horizon"¹⁷

and although it is not the connotation which is implied, the "wide horizon" seems to pinpoint the improbability of Aurobindo's association with Tantric practices. It is stressed, of course, that what is suggested in such a claim is the right-hand Tantra which would not include maithuma, physical union with a goddess and associated practices, something which is nowhere implied.

The natural affinity of the two systems on certain points would include:

- (a) the removal of the caste barrier which is a feature of Tantrism;
- (b) the equality of the female sex which is not a common element in other traditions;
- (c) to a limited extent the use of symbolism, a temporary facility for Aurobindo;
- (d) the beginning of ascent from the solid state of Matter; although again the mythical union of Siva and Sakti is far removed from Aurobindo's identification of Matter and Spirit.

In the end it is what Aurobindo himself says about the Tantra which has the greatest relevance. At the beginning of his "Synthesis of Yoga" he says,

"There still exists in India a remarkable Yogic system . . . which starts from a great central principle of Nature. This system is the way of the Tantra. Owing to certain of its developments Tantra has fallen into discredit . . . especially owing to the developments of its left-hand path, Vamamarga, which, not content with exceeding the duality of virtue and sin and instead of replacing them by spontaneous rightness of action, seemed to make a method of self-indulgence, a method of unrestrained social immorality."¹⁸

In its origin, he goes on to say, Tantra was a great and puissant system based on ideas which were partially true, and even the division of right-hand and left-hand paths followed a profound perception, for in the old symbolism the words "Dakshina and Vama" represented the distinction between the way of knowledge and the way of Ananda.

Finally,

"as in the general tendency of Prakriti, Tantric Yoga lost its principles in its machinery and became a thing of formulae and occult mechanism . . . fallen from their original intention".¹⁹

Aurobindo often refers to the Tantra throughout his work and especially in his integral Yoga, but it seems to be a way of pointing out something in his system which may also be found there. Unless there is some other factor which has been overlooked or misunderstood, or some additional development which is to be taken into account, it is difficult to accept the statement that Aurobindo's work would not have been what it is without a Tantric background.

NOTESTHE TANTRA AND INTEGRAL YOGA

1. Kees Bolle, "The Persistence of Religion", p. xvi.
2. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 546.
3. Sri Aurobindo, "Lights on Yoga", p. 7.
4. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 536.
5. Sri Aurobindo, "Lights on Yoga", p. 14.
6. Sri Aurobindo, "Synthesis of Yoga", p. 586.
7. Ibid., p. 520.
8. Ibid., p. 587.
9. Ibid., p. 587.
10. Ibid., p. 516.
11. Ibid., p. 48.
12. Ibid., p. 48.
13. Ibid., p. 98.
14. Ibid., p. 98.
15. Ibid., p. 527.
16. John Hick, "Towards a Christian Theology of Other Religions.
17. Kees Bolle, "The Persistence of Religion", pp. 93f.
18. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 37.
19. Ibid., p. 38.

CHAPTER 5

AUROBINDO AND THE VEDANTA

INTRODUCTION

The Vedanta stands at the pinnacle of articulated interpretation of the Hindu sacred writings. The teaching which it contains is said to rest on, and to draw its authenticity from, the triple foundation, prasthan-triya of the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, and the Vedanta-Sutra of Badarayana [c400 A.D.]. Thus it constitutes "the consummation of Indian thought" in which "we may truly look for the highest type of the Indian ideal".¹ It introduces that post-Vedic period which has been called "the age of the systems" as distinct from the earlier unsystematised period which came to an end around the beginning of the Christian era. Originally indicating the 'anta' or end of the Veda in the Upanishads, Vedanta came subsequently to be regarded as embodying the aim or fulfilment, and in this sense 'end' of Vedic teaching. The term has therefore both a chronological and an authoritative connotation.

That both a monistic and a dualistic interpretation is possible is clear from the various schools which arose all claiming the authority of the Upanishads. By far the most influential of these is that of Sankara, who in a philosophical approach, developed an absolute non-dualistic interpretation. The influence of Sankara is such, that whatever factors may be listed to account for

the decline of Buddhism in India, and these would include the Muslim invasion, the loss of royal patronage as in the time of Asoka, the threat to the stratified caste system which it constituted, nevertheless the powerful effect of Sankara's philosophy which reinforced Hinduism cannot be left out. Eventually the struggle for supremacy was between Advaitan and Buddhist philosophy, and it was one in which the Advaita Vedanta of Sankara triumphed. Although the particular monism taught by Sankara did not originate in his work, for it is in the earlier Karika of Gaudapada, it was due to Sankara's development and the systematic form in which the doctrine was set out, particularly in his bhasya on the Vedanta-Sutra, that Advaitan philosophy gained such power and attraction.

Radhakrishnan says that

"In one or other of its forms, the Vedanta determines the world view of the Hindu thinkers of the present time".²

AUROBINDO AND ADVAITA VEDANTA

Before turning to the main points of comparison between Aurobindo's system of unity and the monism of the Advaita, a brief look may be taken at the background to Sankara's philosophy. The period in which he wrote is important to an understanding of his system.

Radhakrishnan¹ notes that opinion differs on the date of Sankara's work, and ranges from the middle or end of 6th century [Telang], around 680 [Bhandarkar], while Müller and others maintain that Sankara probably lived between 788 and 820 and this is usually accepted. The situation was one in which different schools of thought came successively to predominate, although as Hiriyanna² says, at one time it seemed as if Buddhism had once and for all gained the upper hand. In its original form Buddhism had relatively little impact on the mass of the people and this came only with later development.

An important factor was the tremendous and lasting impetus which the new religion received with the conversion of Asoka [circa 250 B.C.] under whose missionary zeal Buddhism became a world religion. Another significant development was the rise of Mahayana from about the 1st century A.D. Radhakrishnan³ speaks of a renewal of Hinduism as early as the 6th century and it was about this time that Buddhism was declining in the south of India. The

Pallava rulers who reigned supreme in that area had first been Buddhists but later became Vaisnavites and subsequently Saivites. As against both the asceticism of the Buddhists and the devotional practices of the theistic sects, the Mimamsakas were urging a re-emphasis of Vedic ritual. The reaction of men like Kumarila was to reject the supreme importance of Prana, and emphatically to restate the value of Karma and the "householder" (Grhastha) stage of Hindu life.

It is against this background of fluctuation in religious dominance that Sankara developed his philosophic system of Advaita Vedanta. As a religious figure he was at one and the same time Radhakrishnan says, "both champion of orthodox faith and spiritual reformer",⁴ and this same writer sees his work as an attempt to take the tide of opinion away from the "brilliant luxury of the Puranas" back to the "mystic truth of the Upanishads".⁵ There is no doubt that Sankara planned to redress the imbalance of the Mimamsaka over-emphasis on ritual, but of equal concern would be the theism which "veiled the truth in a mist of sentiment",⁶ and this last would explain the vehemence with which later reformers, especially Ramanuja, rejected Advaitan philosophy and urged a return to theistic practices. It is such a reaction which probably gave rise to the many Bhakti cults following the development of Visistadvaita. However this may be it seems certain that Sankara felt compelled to give a spiritual direction to his age, by

"formulating a philosophy and religion which

could satisfy the ethical and spiritual needs of the people better than the systems of Buddhism, Mimamsa and Bhakti".⁷

To trace the true source of Vedantic philosophy is to return to the Vedanta or Brahma-Sutra of Badarayana.

There is confusion about the date of this work. Western scholars tend towards a late date around 200 A.D. while Indian scholars favour a much earlier date as early as 500-200 B.C., and Müller believes that it predates the Gita. It is Sankara's Bhasya on the Brahma-Sutra which is his most important work and is the basis of Advaita Vedanta in the systematised form in which it is known today. But again the main elements in this philosophy had already appeared in an earlier work, the Karika of Gaudepada, dated according to Jacobi around 550 A.D.

Radhakrishnan makes this point clear when he says,

"the central principles of the Advaita philosophy such as the orders of reality, the identity of Brahman and Atman, Maya, the inapplicability of causation to ultimate reality, jnana, as the direct means to moksa and the inconceivability of absolute nothing, are set forth in the Karika".⁸

Hiriyanna endorses this view, saying that the Karika which set out to summarise the teaching of the Mandukya Upanishad, really give "an admirable summary of Advaitic teaching".⁹ Govinda who had studied under Gaudapada was Sankara's teacher and so the Advaita was brought to a systematic perfection by him in the 8th century.

This brief background sketch may be enough to confirm that the monistic ideas in Advaita are very much older than Sankara's works in which they are developed. In turning now to the question of whether Aurobindo's

philosophy is a modern restatement of Sankara as has been suggested, comparison will be confined to three key factors, the first of which is the identification of the Atman with Brahman.

I Brahman/Atman

This formula is the very foundation of Advaitan philosophy and Sankara saw it as authenticated in the Tat-Tvam-Asi of the Chandogya Upanishad [VI.8.6]. In the first place it is to be emphasised that Sankara's theory is not one of "unity" but of "non-duality" which is something quite different. "Unity" implies differentiation whereas the Brahman/Atman means just that, total identification, the Atman is Brahman apart from which nothing is. The exclusiveness which reserves the term Reality for the Brahman/Atman alone marks the first fundamental difference between Aurobindo and Sankara and it is described by the former as the "trenchant distinction of a partial logic"¹⁰ which must be put aside. In an obvious reference to Sankara, Aurobindo speaks of the error of a system which

"declares that because the One is the reality the Many are an illusion, and because the Absolute is Sat, the one existence, the relative is Asat and non-existent".¹¹

In rejecting the Advaitan position Aurobindo claims that

"if in the Many we pursue insistently the One, it is to return with the benediction and the revelation of the One confirming itself in the Many",¹²

and this is constantly repeated throughout his work in phrases like "the infinitely manifold One", and "the multitudinous union of the One".¹³ Ninian Smart says that Sankara's interpretation of the union of Brahman/

Atman is, "this oneness is numerical identity"¹⁴ and the latter himself describes his system simply as A-dvaita, not two. Certain it is that the Advaitan Brahman is beyond all spatial relations, for here Reality is not to be understood as the unity which underlies diversity for these are relative to each other and so cannot constitute an ultimate which is only to be found in the non-phenomenal source of both these states.

In outlining the opposition of Aurobindo to the Brahman/Atman doctrine, it is important to avoid the implication that for Aurobindo the Many compose the One or that reality is the one encompassing the Many. The true contrast is that for Aurobindo "the Many also are Brahman",¹⁵ the basis of his integral philosophy.

In summing up the comparison of Sankara's doctrine of Brahman/Atman with Aurobindo's integral non-dualism, it may be said that the latter maintains the prior involution within existence of multiple forms of matter; further that because of this within these varied forms Reality is present; further that this presence provides both the motivation and power for "return" to a primordial unity; that this is the meaning of evolution, which can only be the gradual impression on existence of the inherent power of essentiality. Not only is such reasoning poles apart from the Brahman/Atman formula, it is also quite foreign to Indian thinking in general. The non-differentiation of the Atman and Brahman in Sankara is summed up by Raju,

"The Atman is the same as the Brahman as involved in the mind, the senses and the physical body; and the Brahman is the same as the Atman without

that involvement. When man is able to realise his Atman without the mind etc., he realises the Brahman",¹⁶

Aham Brahma asmi.

II The Nirguna and Saguna Brahman

On the nature of the Absolute itself the two philosophies are again divergent. The Advaita distinguishes between the Nirguna and Saguna Brahman, the one qualityless and aloof, the other involved in the Gunas of existence. The Saguna is as it were, the face of Brahman turned manwards or as Radhakrishnan says, "Brahman passed through the moulds of logic is Isvara or Saguna"¹⁷ for the Advaitin, but the point is that the creator god Isvara will in Sankara's system eventually be seen to be like his works, Maya, not ultimate, for "Isvara disappears for him who recognises the oneness of Brahman/Atman".¹⁸ The activity of the Saguna as Isvara is seen to be that he projects the Infinite into the finite

"and when that which makes the Absolute into the relative is destroyed, what remains is the absolute".¹⁹

This is a description of the state of Anubhava in which the forms cease to have any real existence for the individual consciousness. It is a state which Sankara claims is available to all, but the asceticism which this path to moksa demands makes it an attainment of the elite few. The experience of anubhava is not unmediated in the true sense of passing beyond uninterpreted sensation, but is nevertheless higher than mediated reflective knowledge. Its place within the grades of consciousness can be understood from Radhakrishnan's description that

"Anubhava and adhyasa, intuition and intellect, point to a fissure between the infinite reality and the finite mind".²⁰

Because of its position between intellectual knowledge and spiritual vision, it may be likened to the Overmind level in Aurobindo.

It was due to the influence of Advaita Vedanta, Aurobindo maintains, that the distinction between the qualityless and the qualified Brahman became entrenched in Indian thought. Such a process of reasoning on the nature of Brahman contradicts the one-ness of being which he sees as inherent in the early Upanishads, and which at one time predominated. To restore this unity of being is the aim of Aurobindo's philosophy, just as not only realisation of one-ness but the practice of one-ness-in-difference throughout all aspects of life, is the essence of Integral Yoga.

He therefore claims that the distinction between the Nirguna and the Saguna is error, for the silent and the active Brahman are not different, "the one denying the other affirming a cosmic illusion",²¹ but are necessary to each other as "two aspects, positive and negative of the one Brahman".²² The Nirguna, Aurobindo says, is not incapable of qualities, "rather it is this very Nirguna or No-Quality who manifests himself as Saguna"²³ or as Ananta-Guna, of infinite quality. Evolution is a process of return to "our being in both", which is to say to being

"one with the Nirguna in essence, one with the Saguna . . . in our nature".²⁴

The difference between Aurobindo and Sankara may not seem to be important on this point, but again the significance relates to the division of being and to the fact that the Brahman/Atman doctrine eventually reduces even the Saguna to illusion, for as Hiriyanna says, "the conception of Saguna Brahman involves Adhyasa"²⁵ and therefore cannot be regarded as ultimate. The concept includes not merely reality but also appearance, and it is only the element of reality which is ultimate for the Advaita.

The Absolute, or Nirguna Brahman of Advaitin philosophy is so remote and devoid of quality that it came to be identified with the Sunyavada of Madhyamika Buddhism. This school of thought was developed by Nagarjuna around the 2nd century A.D. and holds the doctrine of Asatkhyati which maintains non-being, Asat, as the sole truth and therefore to claim the status of being for phenomena is error. Even to think of reality in terms of the Sunya is inappropriate and is acceptable only on grounds of convenience, since this forms the opposite of Purna or fullness, and therefore degrades the Absolute, which transcends the pairs of opposites. So far there seems to be some affinity with the Madhyamika Sunya and Sankara's Nirguna Brahman, but nevertheless Raju maintains that Nagarjuna is wrongly termed a nihilist since he claimed that the Sunya is neither negative nor positive, neither Being nor Non-Being, and therefore is not Nothingness. Further, Sunya also means zero and so it is the source of infinite possibilities making the infinite series of positive numbers as well as negative



numbers possible, and Raju goes on to draw a parallel with the word "Purna" which also indicates the infinite zero in the Isavasya Upanishad. Opinion seems not to be unanimous, for Hiriyanna says that "the void is the only truth for the Madhyamika".²⁶ But whatever the true position may be, the important point is that the indefiniteness of the Sunya seems to have some affinity with the Advaitan Nirguna which is likewise anirvacaniya, and which Sankara also refuses to characterise even as the One, except in the sense of secondless. The fact that the Advaitan Brahman has even been discussed in relation to the Madhyamika concept, gives some idea of the unapproachable remoteness of Sankara's Absolute, in which the only end for being, Aurobindo says, is "dissolution into the sole truth of an eternal Silence".²⁷ As against this, he posits an Identical towards which all life is moving, and within which every existent thing has its 'place'. This means that Brahman is involved in human existence not simply as the impassive and inactive Atman, but as the motivating Force in terrestrial evolution. Hiriyanna appears to support Aurobindo's rejection of the aloofness of the Nirguna. He says that

"one should be careful in understanding what exactly is meant when the Upanishad describes Brahman as nirguna and therefore as indefinable and unknowable. It is not in every sense beyond the reach of words. This would be to deprive the Upanishads of the whole of their purpose. Even granting that the negative definition is the only possible one, it does not follow that the Nirguna Brahman is a blank".²⁸

Hiriyanna goes on to quote Sankara, for he says that

"being the Absolute in the true sense of the term, it may appear as 'nothing' to the 'dull-witted' as Sankara says",

but this, Hiriyanna maintains, is to be compared with Bradley's statement that "I still insist that for thought what is not relative is nothing".²⁹

The point which Hiriyanna seems to be making on the positive power of the negative definition is paralleled in Aurobindo, who, in rejecting the distinction of the Nirguna and Saguna, says that the

"Upanishad indicates clearly enough the relative nature of this opposition when it speaks of the Supreme as the 'Qualitied who is without qualities'".³⁰

For Aurobindo, Brahman is the unity of one Person in whom is discovered the truth of Identity, and this personal element is possibly the most profound difference between the Advaita and Aurobindo's integral non-dualism. What is described in the realisation of ever higher states of consciousness, is not simply an inexpressible mode of existence, or a "positive zero" but a transcendent Existent who

"transcends all definition by personality, and yet is always that which is the essence of Personality".³¹

On the last point; the question is now being asked whether the Brahman of Sankara is impersonal. T.M.P. Mahadevan³² while holding strictly to the non-dualism of Sankara, maintains that Brahman here is not impersonal. The notion of "Person", he says, is not developed in Hindu thought, and is something foreign to Sanskrit tradition. Other concepts which were used for Deity and Man are

inadequate means of conveying the idea of Person although this is the term which may be implied. This seems to reflect the search for a deeper understanding of what is meant by Person, in current Indian thought, for later Mahadevan goes on to make the more positive statement that "if the Brahman of Sankara is anything, it is surely not impersonal".³³ However, there seems to be no "proof-text" which could support the idea of a personal Absolute in the Advaita. The Atman has no such possibility. It is simply a screen of the Self on which human life is reflected and it plays no active part in individual experience. Among Indian scholars, Aurobindo emphasises the Brahman as Personal in opposition to the Advaitan concept; Radhakrishnan stresses the Brahman as indeterminate and impersonal, for although he indicates the personal nature of Isvara, it is not the Absolute; Raju says that "Brahman as the Absolute is impersonal"³⁴ in the Advaita; Hiriyanna says of the Advaitan Brahman, that "familiar categories of thought are all inapplicable to it",³⁵ and since it is Nirguna, "nothing which the mind can think of can actually belong to it". It seems then, that the general trend of opinion leaves the position unchanged, and the impersonal aspect of the Brahman remains for the present.

In contrast to the static Brahman/Atman, Aurobindo posits dynamic process, a co-ordinated movement in which he establishes the relationship of the One and the Many as primarily essential as well as existentially necessary; primarily essential because of the one-ness of being implied

in the priority of a unitarian consciousness, a theory not confined to Aurobindo; existentially necessary because diversity of phenomena is a vital part of Aurobindo's system, not only with regard for the need of the One for the Many, but also because it is a pre-requisite for the fulfilment of human life seen as the recovery of Identity in difference. Just as the One is a unity in multiplicity, so the Identical is Identity which includes non-identity. The reality of identity-in-difference is no less essential to Aurobindo's theory of human fulfilment, than it is to the Christian doctrine of salvation.

Aurobindo wants to restore the balance which he says was lost by the concentration on the doctrine of Brahman/Atman, and so he emphasises the other Upanishadic statement which seems to support total integrity.

III All is Brahman; Sarvam Khalwidam Brahma

The statement from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is quite literally a root foundation of Aurobindo's philosophy, the text which he claims not only justifies his theory of total integration, but establishes this as authentic Upanishadic teaching. An imbalance has become entrenched in Indian thinking because of an excessive concentration on the other formula, "One without a second",³⁶ beginning with Buddhism and subsequently strengthened by Sankara's philosophy, a concentration which, he says, "disturbed the balance of the old Aryan world".³⁷ The importance which Aurobindo places on establishing a true balance between these two statements is quite easily understood. The overriding significance

which was attached to the "One without a second" meant that the human aspiration was exclusively upwards towards a Divine, while the related possibility of descent was almost completely overlooked. Thus the Sannyasin may have grasped the Reality in its full height, but not like the ancient Vedantins, in "its full extent and comprehensiveness".³⁸ This underlines a further major difference between the work of Aurobindo and Sankara, for the latter's theory cannot support the descending movement which is an essential part of integral non-dualism.

But although Aurobindo accuses Sankara of imbalance because of his concentration on the Tat, the "all is Brahman" with which he hopes to counteract this may not completely fit his theory, as will later be seen, and there is the impression that it is a means not only of combating Sankara's "Maya of many names and forms",³⁹ but is meant fundamentally to support the essentiality of concrete existence. This basic premise is the true significance of involution, the term by which Aurobindo identifies the initial impetus of the Spirit into Matter, without which his process of integration is meaningless. However this may be, the level of phenomena marks the limit to which the statement "all is Brahman" may be applied to Aurobindo's system. In the Upanishad the statement is related to the imagery of the spider which creates its own dwelling, not from any external substance but from its own body, and thus by analogy all is Brahman in a unity which no degree of multiplicity can even diminish. This is the source of the triple formula,

"Brahman is in all things, all things are in Brahman, all things are Brahman",⁴⁰

the essential unity necessary to the convergence of the end in the beginning, for "Brahman is the Alpha and the Omega".⁴¹ Aurobindo thus establishes that "Omnipresent reality"⁴² which is the unifying element indispensable to his theory, for this presence, because of essentiality, cannot differ in different forms of being. In saying that Matter is a self-extension of Brahman it may be asked if this means that Matter has the status of pure existence. The true status of Matter in Aurobindo will be considered in discussing the evolutionary theory. For the present, it may be enough to say that for the mental level of consciousness some form of atomic existence however minute, is a necessary relationship. Eventually, Form and Quality as conditions and appearances of the movement, will "pass into That from which they have come",⁴³ and can then no longer be described by the terms which are now appropriate to them. Thus Aurobindo can say that by the

"very definition of the relative, all things in the movement contain, are contained in and are the Absolute"⁴⁴

and on this basis, by the formula "All is Brahman", he indicates that Matter is one with pure existence. This concealed reality which Aurobindo sees as the truth of Matter has no affinity whatsoever with the changeless substratum on which is suspended the phenomena of Mayic illusion in Sankara. Vivarta-vada rules out any real relationship and therefore the contrast with Aurobindo's

theory of the extension of reality into matter always remains.

Despite the importance which Aurobindo places on the implied integrity of the Upanishadic "All is Brahman", there seems to be a limit in its application, to his own theory. In the first place, the Upanishadic imagery refers to a static abode of the Real, whereas Aurobindo wants to emphasise that Matter is a dynamic form of Reality in process. Secondly, however acceptable the illustration may be as a sort of aetiology of the material world, the Upanishad does not refer to self-conscious being, which, in Aurobindo's theory, is not formed by an unmanifest Power, but is this Power in existence. Taken literally, as is the Brahman/Atman, then the "All is Brahman" does not provide much scope for fulfilment of being through a progressive consciousness in which material existence and conscious being represent diffusion of the infinite in the first, and its concentration in the second within Space and Time.

But although it may not be seen to provide an irrefutable "proof-text", the statement underlines the fact that the essential identification of Brahman and Matter is authentic Upanishadic teaching, and that it also has some support in the Veda which speaks of the one seed and many becomings. It also tends to support Aurobindo's theory that in an evolutionary age, an understanding of Hinduism is itself evolutionary.

The point which it is hoped has been emphasised as the fundamental difference between Aurobindo and Sankara

rests on the distinction between an Absolute which is a logical relationship existing between the Mind and its object, and Aurobindo's essential relationship of expression and source. It should also be noted that Aurobindo does not develop his theory in terms of an Absolute although this is a common concept in Hinduism. An Absolute, relating as it does to the intellect, did not suit Aurobindo's theory since he was concerned with an essential identity of being, and this explains the supreme value which he placed on the Personal, allowing not only for identity-in-difference, but also for the final element in his theory which is the force of Love..

NOTESAUROBINDO AND ADVAITA VEDANTAIntroduction

1. Hiriyanan, "Outlines of Indian Philosophy", p. 25.
2. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 431.

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1. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 447.
2. Hiriyanan, "Outlines of Indian Philosophy", p. 25.
3. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 449.
4. Ibid., p. 449.
5. Ibid., p. 449.
6. Ibid., p. 449.
7. Ibid., p. 449.
8. Ibid., pp. 452f.
9. Hiriyanan, "Centuries of Indian Philosophy", p. 339.
10. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 54.
11. Ibid., p. 54.
12. Ibid., p. 54.
13. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, pp. 1037 and 1055.
14. Ninian Smart, "Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy", p. 27.
15. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 53.
16. P.T. Raju, "The Philosophical Traditions of India", p. 181.
17. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 540.
18. Ibid., p. 638.
19. Ibid., p. 639.
20. Ibid., p. 513.
21. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 40.
22. Ibid., p. 40.

23. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 363.
24. Ibid., p. 364.
25. Hiriyantha, "Outlines of Indian Philosophy", p. 371.
26. Ibid., p. 221.
27. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 10.
28. Hiriyantha, "Outlines of Indian Philosophy", p. 375.
29. Ibid., p. 375a Note.
30. Sri Aurobindo, "Synthesis of Yoga", p. 363.
31. Ibid., p. 366.
32. T.M.P. Mahadevan (Indian View of Person)
"Contemporary Indian Philosophy", p. 51.
33. T.M.P. Mahadevan, University of Madras Lecture, March 1978.
34. P.T. Raju, "Philosophical Traditions of India", p. 178.
35. Hiriyantha, "Outlines of Indian Philosophy".
36. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.
37. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 34.
38. Ibid., p. 37
39. Ibid., p. 10.
40. Ibid., p. 221.
41. Ibid., p. 51.
42. Ibid., p. 47.
43. Ibid., p. 115.
44. Ibid., p. 116.

CHAPTER 6

MADHVA

Sankara's system represents a watershed in Indian thinking in much the same way as does Hegel's philosophy in the development of Western thought. The more important schools of Indian philosophy which came after Sankara can be seen in terms of reaction to the Advaita Vedanta and Aurobindo is no exception. Both theistic and dualistic schools arose within the Vedanta in opposition to Sankara's non-dualistic monism, and these may be ably represented by Madhva who wrote around the 13th century. He was a Vaisnavite, who seems to have accepted much of Ramanuja's philosophy. Radhakrishnan sees Madhva's philosophy as a "leading form of reaction against Sankara's Advaitism"¹ and although he describes it as dualistic, because of the separation of Brahman and Atman, if this system were to be summed up in a phrase it would have to be "radical pluralism", at the opposite end of the philosophical spectrum from Advaita. Raju puts more emphasis on the pluralism; he writes, "Madhva is the philosopher . . . of absolute difference",² and advocates a system of an infinite number of atmans as well as a limitless number of material entities all having their own peculiarities.

As R.C. Zaehner says,³ Madhva's system maintains a three-fold distinction, that of Lord, individual monads and non-intelligent substances, but what he means is that these represent the three entities which exist from all

eternity, and which are fundamentally different from one another. It is not a simple case of differentiation, however, for there is an additional difference between individuals themselves, and also between material substances. This constitutes a five-fold scheme of things, the "five great distinctions"⁴ and it leads to a very complex situation with regard to the possibility of fulfilment for human life. A brief outline of the divisions may be enough to allow a comparison with Aurobindo's position.

The world is real. It had no beginning and will have no end. Madhva maintained a real difference in the first place, [i] between the Atman and Brahman; [therefore his theory is dvaita, or dual]. [ii] between matter and the Brahman. [iii] between one Atman and another. [iv] between the atmans and matter. [v] between one material entity and another.

In rejecting universals, Madhva says that a substance is really a kind of amalgam of properties which places it in a complicated situation of relationship to other substances, and the important point is, that in speaking of 'Substance' he is not referring to inert matter alone, for he includes life-monads in the term. The significance of this is, that every substance has a different place within the whole scheme of existence and since life-monads are included he claims a basis for maintaining an essential difference between all life-monads as well as difference of substances, for each has its own worth and place in the scale of existence. The

implication of insisting upon an inherent and essential difference between all life-monads is that it establishes variation in quality not only of life itself, but of final fulfilment. This seems to be a departure from the law of Karma which is generally accepted throughout Hinduism. Within each life there is a built-in fatalistic element, a kind of inner determination of individual souls which provides them with their destiny, and so salvation depends on given characteristics which the individual cannot change. On the basis of this essential and unchangeable difference it is quite logical to claim, which Madhva does, that there is a qualitative difference in the nature of release, a view which appears to be unparalleled in Indian thought. It seems as if Madhva, having posited an essential difference between the life-monads in existence, simply accepts the inescapable consequence of a qualitative difference in final destiny. Distinction in quality of release follows the classification of the three gunas. Where the Sattvic guna has dominated in life, the soul will be destined for endless bliss, while those who have been under the sway of Rajas will be condemned to a dreary and endless round of samsara. Worst of all will be the Tamasic soul who has been trapped in the lowest of all the gunas and will simply fall into hell. In this theory of radical pre-destination, Madhva not only proposes different grades of release but different grades of non-release. Even among the elite who attain to the state of perpetual bliss there is still differentiation, one state of salvation differing in

quality from another for

"even among the souls entitled to salvation, no two souls possess the same degree of eligibility."⁵

Aurobindo retains the concept of the gunas, as he says all Indian philosophies and yogic systems do. All men are a mixture of the three gunas, and life is a situation in which one may for a time predominate and give way to another. The richness and variety of life is accounted for by the ever changing control exercised by the gunas.

But even the individual who has attained to the dominance of the Sattvic, the highest of the gunas, is not perfect, for Aurobindo sees the perfect state as that in which the control of the gunas is transcended. This is the aim of his Yoga of Self-perfection. In Madhva's view, the gunas persist into and determine the quality of liberation. There is nothing that the individual can do to change this since the gunas are fixed. By contrast, Aurobindo says that the conflict in the gunas is caused by the imperfection of the lower state of human nature, and as such they come within the inevitability of the evolutionary movement. Therefore, as the lower state is transformed, "even the gunas go back to their Divine principles."⁶

It is said that the element of pre-destination indicates a Christian influence on Madhva, but this seems not to take into account the fact that he holds a multiplicity of value within human life itself and this fundamental element is incompatible with such a theory.

Radhakrishnan says that there is little evidence to support a Christian influence. The intricate and depressing view of existence which is presented by Madhva is in stark contrast to Aurobindo's theory of human life in the world as an essential harmony temporarily disrupted. The insistence on the element of inevitability which marks Aurobindo's work has no affinity whatsoever with the predestination theory of Madhva. The distinction in Aurobindo is that the final destiny of the individual is not different from what already he essentially is, and since essentiality is indivisible, the potential is possessed equally by each "living atom".⁷ As against the qualitative difference of individual beings insisted upon by Madhva, there is in Aurobindo the secret identity of each with the "one Identical", for it is the Identical which is "their root, their cause of form, the power⁸ of their varying powers, their constituting substance,"⁹ and life is simply the evolutionary process in which "we become ourselves",¹⁰ in a return to differentiated unity.

Against the two kinds of knowledge associated with Sankara, Madhva held that it was absurd to maintain a "knowledge" which is subsequently falsified by a "higher knowledge" since this represented a contradiction. Yet such an objection is perhaps not a valid criticism of Sankara, because the Advaitan position does not imply a lack of knowledge in the first instance, but a lack of awareness of the true nature of reality, a vastly different proposition. It is not a case of the simple denial of perceptual knowledge, for as already noted,

sensory perception establishes the existence though not the being or reality of an object, and therefore involves a valid existential experience. Further, Sankara does not define his system in terms of error and correction, but in terms of veiling and unveiling of an 'ever present Reality, in which empirical knowledge is not falsified as Madhva claimed. Legitimate to a particular degree which is not yet final is the Advaitan position on phenomena, not a prajnana as Madhva maintained which involves both the relative and the absolute, and for this reason the use of higher and lower "truths" is more appropriate in discussing Advaitan philosophy as seems to be recognised by some writers. Aurobindo's treatment of knowledge allows a legitimate if inferior place for sensory perception, that is, it is a valid truth for the moment, for the present level of consciousness. But this does not mean that his view approaches any nearer to the position of Madhva than does the Advaitan, for always the intervening factor is involution, divine descent which bestows infinite possibilities through the faculty of intuition into which the sensory is subsumed. Such a view overcomes the simplistic pluralist reduction of knowledge to data attained on one level and contradicted on another, which Madhva claimed was the Advaitan position and is far removed from Madhva's own position of the certainty of perceptual knowledge. Aurobindo explains the existence of solid form in terms of the need of a mentalised state to relate to gross matter, in other words for the spirit to be known to the senses. This need is

transcended in the course of evolution. It is not knowledge discarded however, since all knowledge is valid where every form of matter is spirit.

Yet paradoxically there is a point on which the integrated system of Aurobindo comes closer to the radical Dvaitan theory of Madhva, than it does to the monism of Sankara, for separation of the Lord from the world and the dependency of the life monads leaves room for a devotional aspect, which represents an important element in Madhva's reaction to Advaitan philosophy. Similarly for Aurobindo the way of Bhakti lies at the very heart of his integral Yoga. The aim of all yoga is union, and in this system it is preceded by the "Sadhana of devotion",¹¹ the adoration which is a "petal of the flower of love"¹² leading to that final unfolding of the lotus of the spirit, the delight of the Godhead "that passes human understanding".¹³ The whole dimension of devotionism is lacking in Advaita and so the reaction of the later theistic schools of the Vedanta. One of the more obvious reasons for Madhva's vehement opposition to Sankara, is that pure Monism was destructive of the Vaisnavite Bhakti and devotional practices so important to the sect which proclaims the supreme Godhead of Visnu. It is true that for Madhva, meditation and devotion does not follow the traditional practice of the emptying of the mind, for the individual is urged towards a concentrative consideration of the manifold system which for Madhva constitutes reality, and to contemplate the status of the individual as compared

to that of the Lord with regard to this whole scheme of things. But however that may be, the point remains that the element of Bhakti made possible by the belief in a personal God, identifies common ground between Aurobindo and Madhva.

Despite the direct opposition of total integrity as against radical pluralism, there are nevertheless two elements in which the theories meet, and they are important; the first is the theism which allows Bhakti, and the other is the status of Reality for the world.

NOTESMADHVA

1. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", p. 737.
2. P.T. Raju, "The Philosophical Traditions of India", p. 198.
3. R.C. Zaehner, "Hinduism", p. 100.
4. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", p. 738.
5. Ibid., p. 744.
6. Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 663.
7. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. I, p. 297.
8. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 68.
9. Ibid., p. 68.
10. Ibid., p. 1113.
11. Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 546.
12. Ibid., p. 547.
13. Ibid., p. 551.

CHAPTER 7

VISISTADVAITA

The Vedantic school of Visistadvaita, or qualified non-dualism, was developed by Ramanuja, a Vaisnavite philosopher who wrote in the eleventh century. The Vaisnavite religion follows the worship of Vishnu, an important if not the supreme solar deity in the Rig Veda. Ramanuja's purpose was to further the doctrine of salvation by means of bhakti, and in order to achieve this, he set out to illustrate that this is the teaching of the Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahma-sutra. This view is impossible for the Advaita Vedanta which had come to predominate, and so as Radhakrishnan says, it is the

"uncompromising monism of Sankara which made it necessary for Ramanuja to reiterate the theistic view of the Vedas."¹

Ramanuja's position represents a mid-way point between the absolute monism of Sankara, and the radical Dvaita of Madhva.

It is the Visistadvaita which Aurobindo has in mind when he speaks of the

"qualified Monism which arose as a protest against the metaphysical excesses of Buddhist Nihilism and illusionist Advaita."²

If Sankara appeals to the intellect, Ramanuja appeals to the heart, for whereas Sankara had proclaimed the "way of knowledge" Ramanuja advocates the "way of devotion", and in reply to the Advaitan jnana-marga, develops the system of bhakti-marga. In paving the way

for the devotional aspect which he sought to establish, Ramanuja posited a distinction between the Atman and Brahman, and so separation of the individual and the object of worship, a position directly opposed to their complete identification in Sankara. Yet he conceded the element of monism in sruti as establishing a relationship between the self and Brahman, and therefore he maintained that the self, world, and God are distinct, though in some sense a unity. In this way he avoids any denial of the implications of monism in the Tat. Nevertheless, because of this distinction in unity, he had to show that in some way the Absolute can embrace both the changing and the changeless. He does this by the development of a system which recognises the ultimacy of matter [acit], individual soul [cit] and God [Isvara], involving the first two in a relationship similar to that which exists between the soul and the body. In philosophical terms, his view of Reality consists of a triad which is at the same time a unity, in which the first two components, or visesanas, in this case self and the world, are dependent on the visesya, the third, in this case God. But since the visesanas are completely dependent, that is, can neither exist by themselves nor separately but only by virtue of the visesya, the complex forms a whole, [visista], and thus the particular type of non-dualism associated with Ramanuja is known as Visistadvaita. The changeless aspect of the Absolute is illustrated along the familiar lines of the ever present "I" which underlies and retains its identity through the various cognitive states. This changeless subject

Ramanuja identifies as the Lord, and thus it is possible to maintain the reality of a changeless identity which is prior to, and unaffected by psychical change, while at the same time accepting the changes in the cosmos which is the body of the Lord. In this analogy with the duality experienced within the human person, Ramanuja is able to maintain that God is both changeless and changing without contradiction.

As Radhakrishnan says, it is this which allows Ramanuja to account for the harmony of the universe and the interaction of the reals so as to form one world, for

"the world is one on account of the supreme mind which gives organic connection to the multiplicity of spiritual reals, and a place and a function to each of them."³

Ramanuja's true proposition is that

"souls, matter, and God are three, on account of their natural differences [svarupabheda], but one on account of the identity of the modes and substance [prakara and prakari]."⁴

Radhakrishnan is careful to point out that in this case 'identity' means only inseparable existence.

But if prakriti is the abode of the soul and therefore of God himself, all that exists is but a form or expression of God, and this must also be said of the material organisation which is the human individual, which in turn leads to the problem that if God as visesya is "controller" of the whole complex, it must include human actions. Ramanuja avoids an unacceptable determinism by modifying the idea of total subjection and dependency in the introduction of a measure of freedom for the individual soul. The reasoning by which he reconciles the seemingly

irreconcilable is very much like the doctrine of Divine Grace in Christianity, even to the extent of allowing for the intervention of grace independent of human merit. It is thus not too far removed from the Christian formula of salvation as consisting of Divine initiative and human response to a freely given grace. At the same time, it bears very little resemblance to Aurobindo's idea of Divine attraction which operates on the soul analogous to that of the magnetic field on material substances, which applies unselectively to the mass of humanity itself. Nevertheless there is no disagreement on the basic premise regarding the nature of the jiva which in both systems is not simply the occasion of individual experience, but having an essential relationship with God, is an eternal reality.

The notion of "expansion" is also present in Ramanuja and is developed in the concept of dharma-bhuta-jnana peculiar to the Visistadvaita. This may be likened to a kind of light of the soul which is contracted in existence [samsara] but which is capable of expansion to the ultimate level of total comprehension.

This is not to say that there is a material transformation but it is to say that Ramanuja's description of the path to release is subtly different from the traditional language of other Hindu systems, and that it bears some limited resemblance to the contemporary thinking of Aurobindo. Movement which is both inward and outward can also be claimed for the Visistadvaita, inward in the sense that the material enshrines the jiva, which in turn

enshrines the Divine essence, outward in that the process of knowledge begins from within, from the soul outwards to the senses, a theory which has an important bearing on Ramanuja's concept of the unified nature of knowledge and his insistence on the reality of sensory perception.

The Theory of Knowledge

In contrast to the rigid classification of knowledge in the Advaita, Ramanuja posits a unified concept, and whereas Sankara's philosophy equates perception with existence, Ramanuja maintains that objects exist before they are known which means that since they are not dependent on relationship to a self, their reality is not relative but is absolute. Thus in the Visistadvaita, knowledge implies the simultaneous experience of the 'that' of an object, [prakarina], and the 'what', [prakara]. In the development of his theory of knowledge, Ramanuja formulates the doctrine of sat-khyati, which is claimed to have a Vedic source, and which maintains that only what exists is knowable, thus denying any distinction in types of reality. All knowledge is valid and is always knowledge of what exists, since only what exists can be known, but with the important qualification that it need not be of all that exists. Ramanuja is not saying that all that is known in his theory of sat-khyati, since reality is only partially revealed, and complete revelation which is human vision extended to the maximum, is achieved only in moksa. Knowledge gained by the senses is in fact a selective process in which the knowing

faculty concentrates simply on whatever relates to the practical demands of human life, and is therefore not all embracing, but what it does know it knows with certainty. Error is accounted for in several ways, in the first place by definition, namely that knowledge as such logically excludes it, since "error" could not have been knowledge in the first place; by the element of omission inherent in the doctrine of sat-khyati; and finally by the Vedantic concept of panca-karana, which maintains that all objects of sensory perception contain all five bhutas in different degrees, and therefore whatever is perceived in them is necessarily true and real, though may not be all of their truth or reality. Knowledge in itself then, cannot progress, but the dharma-bhuta-jnana operates from within each jiva and illumines each object for reception by the senses so it is capable of expansion to embrace an ever widening field, which is not a variation in the quality of knowledge but in degree of revelation. In this way Ramanuja maintains the ideal of perfect knowledge implied in the doctrine of sat-khyati. To give a brief example; in Sankara's illustration of the rope mistaken for a snake, this would not be an instance of appearance and reality for Ramanuja, since both would have existence and reality in his theory, for "cognition belongs to the atman and is never mistaken."⁵

The Doctrine of Prapatti

There is just one other element to be considered in this brief examination of the Visistadvaita before

placing Aurobindo's system alongside it for the purpose of comparison, and this concerns the method and nature of release. The means of achieving moksa is seen more or less as that which follows the traditional path of Yoga, in which the basic karma yoga is the first step, giving way to jnana-yoga under the direction of a guru. The purpose here is realisation of the jiva as distinct from the body, senses and so on, thus overcoming the tendency to identify the jiva with the physical aspects with which it is surrounded. Knowledge of the jiva is followed by knowledge of God through the practice of Bhakti-yoga, the last stage in Yogic discipline which for Ramanuja implies a loving relationship with a personal God, culminating in union. An important aspect of this is that for the Visistadvaita it does not indicate passage to a disembodied state, but rather is transformation in which the jiva, now in its natural condition of moksa, is enshrined in a purified body. Release through this method, however, since it involves the study of the Veda and the Upanishads, is possible only for the three higher castes in the Hindu social structure, and for this reason Ramanuja introduces the concept of prapatti, which quite literally maintains the possibility of salvation through grace to all regardless of class. It is no doubt the insistence of prapatti, the message of hope for the otherwise hopeless, which accounts in some measure for the popularity of Visistadvaita. Also, it was a quite remarkable doctrine for Ramanuja to proclaim writing at the time in which he did, when Buddhism was just passing as the religion of India, a

decline in which arguably an important factor was the threat to the caste system which has an economic as well as a religious dimension. [With regard to this view it is sometimes pointed out that Jainism which has a close doctrinal affinity with Buddhism survived, but the Jains accepted the caste structure.]

The doctrine of prapatti had an effect which went beyond the religious field and into society itself, for as Hiriyanna says,

"the inclusion by Ramanuja in his doctrine of a means to salvation accessible to all explains the wide popularity it has always commanded, and the social uplift of the lower classes to which it has led is of great value in the history of India."⁶

Aurobindo's position compared

Because of the importance of the Visistadvaita school within the Vedanta, a short comparison may be made to discover areas of agreement and dissimilarity between this influential system and Aurobindo's philosophy. A summary of the more important elements may be enough to give some indication of Aurobindo's position.

[1] The basic affinity would seem to be in the mutual belief in a personal God, thus allowing the practice of Bhakti which is a central part of both systems. The term "Bhakti" as Radhakrishnan points out has profound implications and means more than simple devotion. Bhakti, it is said, "can move mountains"; for Bhakti, "nothing is impossible."⁷ As a Vaisnavite, Ramanuja would already have been involved in Bhakti, and the intense devotional

practices associated with that religion, which has its source in the Rig Veda. The true place of Bhakti in Aurobindo becomes clear only in a study of his Yoga system, but it marks an important area of agreement with Ramanuja. The doctrine of prapatti would again find ready acceptance in Aurobindo's philosophy, for not only was he opposed to the caste system, but he also maintained the inevitability of fulfilment for humanity itself, and for every individual depending on choice.

[ii] The basic premise in Ramanuja is the relationship of God and world as that of inseparable union, and this again is a striking similarity. The emphasis here is designed no doubt to counteract Sankara's view of the human being as merely the temporary form which surrounds the Atman, of no more consequence than the jar which is broken to release the enclosed space. As against this the Visistadvaita claims an eternal union which endures even in moksa. There is a similarity in Aurobindo's theory of spiritual matter, although it cannot be taken too far. For example, Ramanuja's Vedanta could conceivably stand even if it did not insist on this union as eternal and inseparable, whereas such a union, or rather identification, is the necessary foundation of Aurobindo's philosophy. The further development in the Visistadvaita, such as the unalterable union which so vigorously endorses the significance of existence and human life, is assumed, perhaps too easily, to be a reaction to Advaitan illusionism. In some respects it introduces a weakness into Ramanuja's system, for it

naturally leads to a rather obscure notion of the nature of moksa, which must necessarily include the physical in an eternal state. The problem is overcome in Aurobindo by transformationism which derives authentication from the retrospective discoveries of science projected as a continuum into a future process.

There is some agreement then, between Aurobindo and Ramanuja on the Divine as having a real relationship to the world, but because of the divergent implications which indicate different sources, affinity is merely formal and not essential. This distinction has to be taken into account in assessing the statement that

"long ago Ramanuja affirmed the full reality of the world,"⁸

and while this seems to be true, it is not a complete parallel with Aurobindo's meaning of Reality.

[iii] The true nature of knowledge is an important issue in this comparison. What appears in this case to be further agreement, on closer examination is seen actually to be division. There is no idea of progressive knowledge in Ramanuja to match the process in Aurobindo. For the first there is progressive revelation through the means of the dharma-bhuta-jnana, but no variation in the quality of knowledge itself. Indeed again it marks a weakness in Visistadvaita, for it is difficult to understand the claim of certainty for sensory knowledge while admitting that not all that exists may be known, and yet at the same time forbidding the proposition of incomplete knowledge. Certainly the discrepancy is allowed for in the possibility

of expansion associated with the dharma-bhuta-jnana, but pending this expansion to the ultimate it would seem that in mundane parlance knowledge is incomplete. But what really gives the indelible stamp of difference between this and Aurobindo's integral non-dualism is not in the long run fine points of philosophic argument, but as always the essential element of process.

[iv] Rather less clearly defined is a common idea of what in Aurobindo is termed "a need of creation", for Ramanuja is also concerned with the significance of the world, understandably since together with the self and God the concrete has eternal endurance. Here there is no theory of transformation, although as a visesana matter is constantly changing. But since selves are in some sense the body of the Lord, there is an element of necessity in the Visistadvaita with regard to creation arising from a belief in a necessary expression of the inseparable unity of selves, world and God.

Thus every aspect of existence is accounted for almost in terms of classical theology, as arising from a consequential necessity relating to the Divine nature, for in Ramanuja no less than in Christianity, the love of God is unconditional. But again the limiting factor qualifying real comparison, is Ramanuja's insistence on the co-eternity of God and creation. The contemporaneous nature of what is quite literally cause and effect is a very difficult philosophical proposition and although it is perhaps not expressed in Ramanuja in terms of causation, the premise of a controlling visaya and subordinate visesanas seems to

amount to this, making acceptance no easier.⁹

However, "necessity" may be regarded as a bridge between Aurobindo and the Visistadvaita, a point which has some significance since Hinduism is not usually deeply concerned with the why of concrete existence. But the underlying reasoning between the two is quite distinct, for Aurobindo is at pains to point out that the creative Force is not obliged to manifest itself in existence, and "need" is not understood along these lines. Here "Maya" in its original Vedic meaning as the power which has the capability of measuring, limiting, and so of formation is the key to Aurobindo's theory of creation. But potentiality of movement and formation does not imply the compulsion to move into form. What constitutes Divine necessity here is the need of complete Self-manifestation of the One in and through the Many, the essential need of Existence to express in relation within individual life in existence, ". . . even as of Itself it exists in identity."¹⁰

The true significance rests on the fact that "Unity" in Aurobindo is not undifferentiated, but is essentially a multiplicity, and therefore necessity relates to the need of "becoming" of Pure Existence in human life, even though It is independently of this. This is the operation of the Divine Lila in Aurobindo, the "delight" which is a difficult concept for the western mind, but which more or less signifies the infinite possibility of essential expression in variety of form. Again it is not simply the random manifestation of omnipotence, but is self-extension of Existence which inheres within it, governing

its direction and inspiring it towards a final destiny, for ". . . always we perceive a process . . ." which marks the limit of comparison between Aurobindo and Ramanuja, or indeed any other Hindu writer.

Another area of important common ground in Ramanuja and Aurobindo, is that both maintain the infinite potentiality of matter, which, even after dissolution continues to exist in subtle form. Raju says that for the Visistadvaita, even the atmans have a body, not the gross body of Prakriti, but of the Suddhasattva or pure substance which is separate from the sattva associated with the gunas. It is here that Aurobindo most nearly approaches the Visistadvaita, for creation in Ramanuja's theory is also the movement from the most subtle to the gross, and dissolution is the process in reverse. As in Aurobindo, the system is parinama, or the becoming of the cause in the effect. But the philosophy which first maintained the transformation of matter in terms of the subtle to the gross and return, pre-dates Ramanuja's theory since it is developed in the Sankhya which is as old as the Upanishads, and may even have what Radhakrishnan describes as "vague anticipations"¹¹ in the Rig Veda. To say that there is agreement between Aurobindo and Ramanuja, therefore, on the transformation of matter, seems simply to say that both appear to follow the analysis of substance already developed in Sankhya philosophy.

Again, the unity within existence of the triad selves, world, and God in Ramanuja, seems to be essentially different from the identity-in-difference

which is fundamental to Aurobindo's theory. It is not clear whether Ninian Smart is implying an understanding of Ramanuja which would support this view. Speaking of the doctrine of aprthaksiddhi, or inseparability, of body and soul in Ramanuja, he says that this means not only a "continuous association",¹² but also that "the two are mutually defined."¹³ This would seem to imply identity rather than inseparability. But Ninian Smart then goes on to say

"the idea that the body is instrumental to the purposes of the self implies that the latter has conscious ends; thus the difference between self and body is that the latter does not itself possess experience, but conditions the experiences of the former."¹⁴

Thus he seems to be saying that the term 'body' necessarily implies inclusion of self and vice versa, and so is inseparability differently expressed, but not different from Radhakrishnan's insistence on inseparable existence rather than identity.

The doctrine of aprthaksiddhi, Hiriyantha says, is the "pivot on which Ramanuja's whole philosophy turns,"¹⁵ and its importance for the present comparison is that the body is described as "that which a soul controls, supports and utilises for its own ends,"¹⁶ and so by analogy matter and souls, since they are the body of God, are directly controlled by Him. It is this which marks the true difference with Aurobindo. The triad in Ramanuja is more of a synthetic whole, and seems to be in direct contrast to the identity-in-difference which is crucial to Aurobindo's integral non-dualism.

In Ramanuja there is no fulfilment of the world as such and although he maintains a fulfilment of the physical body in some sense, this seems to follow inevitably from the prior proposition of eternal union, as something which has to be said, and the precise nature of moksa with regard to the body is not fully developed. Perhaps it should be accepted that Ramanuja's position is coloured by the fact that his system is developed in opposition to Sankara, and that the vehemence of his rejection of the Advaita is to some extent explained by the threat which this represented to the Vaisnavite religion. Thus his reaction goes beyond denial and tends towards what may be seen as an extreme position.

For example, in contradicting Sankara's rejection of the self, Ramanuja does not simply claim the self as real, but proposes the eternity of the self, and in opposing the illusionist position with regard to the world, Ramanuja demands not only a relative significance but the reality of being implied in co-eternity. This means, again as Ninian Smart points out, that "there is no possibility of God's having once existed and the cosmos not,"¹⁷ although this does not establish identity. From a kind of analogia personae, he goes on to illustrate that, just as the definition of person demands the dual aspect of consciousness and bodily state, so Ramanuja's cosmos and God are, in a similar way, complementary and not identical.

Aurobindo's position with regard to Ramanuja's Visistadvaita may be summed up; it could be said that of

the Vedantic schools this is the system with which Aurobindo has most in common. This is claimed on the basis of a mutual insistence on [a] the reality of God, [b] the effectiveness of Bhakti, [c] the true existence of individual selves, [d] the idea of Love as a possibility of the self by means of the activity of the Divine power in the world.

NOTESVISISTADVAITA

1. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 668.
2. Sri Aurobindo, "Synthesis of Yoga", p. 360.
3. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 685.
4. Ibid., p. 685.
5. P.J. Raju, "The Philosophical Traditions of India", p. 193.
6. Hiriyanna, "Outlines of Indian Philosophy", p. 413.
7. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 665.
8. Kees Bolle, "The Persistence of Religion", p. 88.
9. It is true that Ramanuja accepts the theory of Satkaryavada which would be material cause, as Radhakrishnan says, "Alteration of state is the meaning of causation."
10. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 66.
11. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 250.
12. Ninian Smart, "Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy", p. 108.
13. Ibid., p. 108.
14. Ibid., p. 108.
15. Hiriyanna, "Outlines of Indian Philosophy", p. 399.
16. Ibid., p. 399.
17. Ninian Smart, "Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy", p. 109.

CHAPTER 8

THE MEANING OF SACHIDANANDA

This brief examination of the Hindu concept of Sachidananda, a composite of the terms, sat, cit, and ananda, is an attempt to illustrate that this Ultimate, common in Indian thought and rooted in the Upanishad, may not be the final end of evolution in Aurobindo. The problem is the common one of attempting to define the indefinable by the use of concepts, the mere "toys of the mind"¹ which must be transcended. There is a limit to the positive as all branches of philosophy and theology recognise, in any attempt to grasp the nature of the Absolute, on reaching which, the intellect reverts to the negative, [the via negativa of classical theology].

The Indian sages spoke of Brahman positively - It is Matter, It is Life, It is All, - then at this limit of the positive expression, the neti, neti - not this, not that. Thus while it is Sachidananda, in the way in which it is Life, Mind, All, it cannot be defined by Sachidananda. Aurobindo could not be clearer in his illustration of this:

". . . yet it cannot be defined by any of these things, not even by our largest conception of Sachidananda."²

The sages therefore, went beyond Sachidananda, and arrived at Asat, Non-Being; with Sachidananda there is the end of the conceivable and with Asat is encountered the barrier of the inconceivable. As in familiar theological parlance, the negative term does not negate the positive concept, but

indicates the inadequacy of the positive, so implies extension beyond the possible limit of the positive. Indeed, the negative application points to an absolute positive with a force which the limitation of the positive statement cannot achieve. In other words, it is not opposition, but is the application of the full force of meaning which goes beyond the positive statement, and is contained in the negative. Aurobindo sums this up when he says that

" . . . the positive and the negative exist not only side by side, but in relation to each other, and by each other."3

The positive and the negative form a sequence.

Thus the positive statement which limits, is followed by the negative, which denies not the positive but the limitation implied in it. Clearly then, Sachidananda is not the Absolute, for this is an infinite positive not reducible in any sense,

"not even by our largest conception of Sachidananda."

Conversely, again as familiar in theology, because it has been defined it cannot be the Absolute -

" . . . necessarily, since there is on this plane the absolute and the play of absolute, it is ineffable by any of the conceptions of our mind or by signs of the phenomenal, or ideal realities of which mind-conceptions are the figures in our intelligence. These realities are themselves only relative symbols of those ineffable absolutes. The symbol, the expressive reality, may give an idea, a perception, sense, vision, contact even of the thing itself to us, but at last we get beyond it to the thing it symbolises, transcend idea, vision, contact, pierce through the ideal and pass to the real realities, the identical, the supreme, the timeless and eternal, the infinitely infinite."4

What can this mean, other than that there is an experience of Sachidananda available to the various levels of evolutionary progression, and this seems to be stated quite unambiguously later, in that Man, in his transition from plane to plane, may

"Embrace on each successively, his oneness with the world and with Sachidananda realised as the Purusha/Prakriti."⁵

This being so, what then constitutes the difficulty for lower being, mentalised man in attaining Sachidananda?

This seems to consist in the impossibility for this level of experiencing simultaneously the creative force of consciousness within Time and Space, ["the infinite delight in things which is also Sachidananda"],⁶ and the knowledge of an infinite consciousness beyond Time and Space, which he also possesses ["... the infinite delight of fathomless peace"].⁷

The term then, or perhaps one should say the condition of Sachidananda, although of essential significance, is an indication of something which surpasses itself. It is known as a "delight" which is infinite though pervading both the finite and infinite, yet is beyond these opposites and is not merely their reconciliation. The beyond of Sachidananda, therefore, can only indicate what is, an absolute integrity which encompasses external phenomena, and to which the phenomenal will "return", as fulfilled entity to its source.

Irrespective of the profound importance and significance attributed to the concept of Sachidananda both in this work and in Indian thinking in general, the

term does not seem to convey the full force of ultimacy for Aurobindo.

The category which does hold the significance of finality in Aurobindo's thought on the experience of the Absolute, is the Identical, a concept which also reaches the depths of his fundamental premise of absolute integrity. This is the resting place of the fully evolved spiritual entity which is essential Man.

The full and final force of descent, which Man will be aware of not only spiritually, but physically, awaits the appropriate point of Man's ascent; Being awaits its evolutionary fulfilment in "unimaginable completeness".⁸

To speak of the "beyond of Sachidananda", therefore, is to indicate the idea of a unified principle of conscious life which exists independently of all external phenomena, or perhaps in theistic terms, the God behind the conceivable god. Yet in saying that this "beyond" transcends the intellect, it is not to imply that only the silence usually associated with Eastern mysticism is the appropriate attitude. This would be to leave out the progression of consciousness, in order that some intellectual idea may be arrived at by means of applying the experience of a heightened consciousness, something already known, into a projected possible state.

The true perspective is to be sought in comparison with procedure throughout the lower levels of consciousness, in which the present experience always holds an indication and a promise of a further unfolding. Whatever is articulated with regard to Man's own discerning is, so to

speak, his own work, and thus Sachidananda is within the understanding, but as something which points beyond it. It is in striving to reach above this understanding that human consciousness is introduced to

"that more vast something out of which our understanding is cut."⁹

and although these are Bergson's words, they are helpful in the effort to grasp the role and status of the intellect in its relation to what lies beyond. To a possible objection that here Bergson speaks of an understanding which is "detached" from the whole, and that therefore the emphasis on continuity may be lacking, it could be said that there is implied nevertheless the unity of a primal reality into which

"we shall get back more and more completely in proportion as we compel ourselves to transcend pure intelligence."¹⁰

The "getting back" of which Bergson speaks, it is suggested, is the "return" of Aurobindo, the "re-call" of existential consciousness to its non-existent primal wholeness. The "more vast something" is then the beyond of Sachidananda, not vague, unknowable, not even remote, because it is extension, the limit of extension which awaits as the climax of a fully evolved consciousness, the paradox of expansion which is in reality contraction. As such, it can only be the Identical, and Sachidananda, although authenticated in the Upanishad, is in Aurobindo's thought but a signpost on the way, the experience which overflows the accompanying state of consciousness and points beyond itself.

It is further proposed that this contains the whole crux of Aurobindo's theory, that the exhaustive treatment which he gives to the process of descent/ascent, however necessary within the religious context in which this part of his work occurs, may be understood in terms of extension and return to the Identical, without doing any violence whatsoever to the theory of an integrity which is primal, evolutionary, and ultimate. In other words, extension can only be of the Identical, and to propose its return to something which is otherwise categorised, seems to eliminate both extension, synonymous with descent, and the all-important identity of essence. This, it is proposed, Aurobindo does not do.

NOTESSACHIDANANDA

1. Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 487.
2. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. II, p. 127.
3. Ibid., p. 128.
4. Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 384.
5. Ibid., p. 485.
6. Ibid., p. 376.
7. Ibid., p. 376.
8. Ibid.
9. Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution", p. 210.
10. Ibid.

CHAPTER 9

THE MEANING OF MAYA

The word "Maya" as Radhakrishnan points out, is highly ambiguous, having a sometimes subtle difference of meaning within the various systems. It is a commonly held view that Sankara rejects phenomenal existence as unreal, a misunderstanding which perhaps diminishes the true stature of Advaitan philosophy. The mistake seems to arise because the "illusion" associated with "Maya" in Advaita Vedanta is often equated with the imaginary, which leads to the idea of a non-existent world. The main problem relates to an understanding of the real as opposed to the existent. For Sankara, to be perceived is to exist, although this does not mean that the phenomenal is Sat, or even has this potential. Radhakrishnan sums up the Advaitan position when he says,

"That which does not exist may be real, while that which does may not be so; for the real it is impossible to exist",¹

and in modern theology this seems to be what Tillich means when he says that "To say that God exists is to deny Him".²

In defining the distinction between Aurobindo and Sankara on the meaning of Maya, it is not enough simply to say that the former claims potentiality for the crudest matter, which the latter denies. The extent of divergence can be briefly set out if the simile which Sankara himself used is adopted. His description of appearance and reality

centres around the instance of a coiled rope which someone has mistaken for a snake. Such an incident, according to the Advaita, can be described as "illusion" but not in the sense of "imagined", since the rope had to exist in the first place, although it is subsequently mistaken for something different from its own existential reality. Thus the object perceived is the primary experience. In discussing Advaitan illusionism Radhakrishnan says that "everything we perceive is perceived as existent",³ and it is in this sense of something experienced as being that the rope is said to be real.

This illustrates the dual activity of Maya, in Sankara, that of concealment of the real and projection of the unreal in conjunction with Avidya with which it is as closely identified as Brahman is to Atman, for "even as Brahman and Atman are one so are Maya and Avidya one".⁴ Maya is the objective side of existence of which Avidya is the subjective experience. But Avidya is not merely subjective for it is a profound and impersonal force operating through the individual consciousness which it nevertheless transcends. Radhakrishnan believes that Avidya is "involved in the very roots of our being and so is another name for finitude".⁵ It includes the natural and persistent human habit of Adhyasa, the attributing of reality to something essentially different from it. Yet the condition is not inevitable since the Advaitan system illustrates that the bonds of Avidya can be broken for despite its transcendent nature it is overcome in the greater power of knowledge.

The Advaitan Maya is described by Raju who says that

"what is not self explanatory and yet cannot be denied as an unreality is Maya".⁶

It is not separate from the Gunas; as Tamas Maya veils Brahman; as Rajas it is source of the forms of the concrete world; as Sattva it is the source and sustainer or consciousness. Like the snake in Sankara's illustration Maya is neither existent nor non-existent. It is not an existent object but neither is it non-existent since it is experienced, and therefore it is described by the four-cornered negation, that is, neither existent nor non-existent, nor both, nor neither. Here the Advaitins follow the exact Madhyamika definition of the Sunya except that in the latter philosophy even the rope would be illusory.

In summing up the relevant aspects of the Advaitan Maya, it is said that,

- [1] Maya accounts for the objective aspect of the concrete world always accompanied by Avidya, the experience of appearance as reality.
- [2] The process of veiling, Avarana, has a double aspect that of glossing over the one reality with the substitution of a false "overlay".
- [3] Therefore only by a dual process can the higher truth be established, that is, in the attainment of Vidya by the same subject in reference to the same object.
- [4] Just as the experience of the snake obscured the underlying reality of the rope, so the world is a veil

which conceals the truth of Brahman. The relationship of Brahman to the empirical world is therefore that of appearance to reality.

[5] Brahman is "cause" of the world only in the sense that the rope causes the snake. The underlying "substratum persists and is real"⁷ and it is this which is the heart of the Vivarta-vada. It is Vivarta and not Parinama since the cause remains untouched by the effects.

[6] The denial of value to concrete life could not be clearer. Radhakrishnan says,

"in a hundred ways Sankara urges that there is never anything worthy of pursuit in empirical life",⁸

and for this reason he goes on to say that "supreme fulfilment is the reward of supreme renunciation",⁹ for the Advaitin. Nevertheless it is not simply retreat from the world which is the crux of Advaitin philosophy, but renunciation of the self, in the attainment of paravidya in the realisation of the Atman as Brahman.

[7] The Maya-vada has been described as "the chief characteristic of the Advaitan system".¹⁰ In this doctrine the world is not Abhava, non-existent, nor according to Sankara is it Sunya, but it is not ultimate reality, nor can it be since for Sankara the real is both non-spatial and indivisible. On this point Radhakrishnan points out that

"whatever is spatial is divisible, and the latter is always a produced effect and not a reality which is unproduced and indivisible and therefore non-spatial",¹¹

which confirms that the temporal is clearly excluded from

reality in Sankara's philosophy.

Finally it should be noted that "Unreal the world is, illusory it is not".¹² The world exists but Brahman is.

Maya in Aurobindo

A theory of Maya in the sense of illusion, Aurobindo says,

"creates more difficulties than it solves; it does not really solve the problem of existence, but rather renders it forever insoluble".¹³

The element of illusion in the Advaita Vedanta arose because

"Sankara, standing between the world and the eternal Reality, saw that the mystery of the world must be ultimately supra-rational . . . anirvacaniya, but he maintained the world as seen by the reason and sense as valid and had therefore to posit an unreal reality, because he did not take one step further".¹⁴

Aurobindo himself takes this further step, and claims that the truth of the world is known only in a suprarational awareness through the development of a Superconscience which is finally Divine.

Although Sankara was obliged to posit a Maya of illusion, Aurobindo wants to emphasise the fact that this is not the true meaning of the term, and that this is altogether different from the 'illusionism' with which it is associated in the philosophical schools. Originally, Aurobindo says, it described an all comprehending and formative consciousness, which

". . . outlines, moulds forms in the Formless, psychologises and seems to make knowable the Unknowable, geometrocises and seems to make measureable the limitless"¹⁵

and so it has a definable and recognisable function.

This relates to the fact that Infinite Consciousness is involved always in infinite activity which produces only infinite results. To produce a finite world or transitory phenomena from infinite reality is the work of a different kind of power. The Vedic seers named this power 'Maya', and therefore it is the name for the ability of an infinite consciousness to delineate or limit, to make visible the limitless from infinite existence. When Aurobindo says that the world is Maya, the word has a completely different meaning from its use in the Advaita. Here it does not mean unreal or illusion, for while the phenomenal cannot be said to be the essential truth of Absolute Being in its fundamental unity, it is the phenomenal truth of its free extension into infinitely mutable form.

It may be argued that although Aurobindo wants to return to the original Vedic meaning, there is nevertheless an illusory aspect in his theory since he still maintains the idea of a Higher and a Lower Maya. This can be described as illusory only in the sense that it admits the limitation of the present mental level of consciousness, which as yet cannot see itself as the Totality of which it is an instance. It is therefore not illusion but is the limit of truth for a particular stage in evolution.

Aurobindo claims that

" . . . the distinction between the lower and the higher Maya is the link in thought and in cosmic Fact which the illusionist philosophies miss or neglect", 16

and by this he means that Fundamentally Maya is the "selective Faculty" by which Infinite Consciousness, the Totality in which "all is all", can become confined within the separative consciousness of phenomenal being. Here "all is in each" and "each is in all",¹⁷ but the limitation of particularised consciousness is such that while the individual can accept the latter proposition the first eludes him. In other words there seems to be no difficulty for the individual in believing that each subsists within the all, but that he is the particularised occasion of all that is, seems to be regarded as mere fantasy. This is lower Maya, for Infinite Consciousness being essentially indivisible, "all in each" is necessarily true. To pass beyond this is simply to pass beyond the mental, and in the progress of evolution to know the indivisibility of essence; the higher Maya in which "each" and "all" co-exist ". . . in the inseparable unity of the one truth and the multiple symbol".¹⁸

This is to reach "that other Maya"¹⁹ concealed by the Maya of mentality. Aurobindo's use of the higher and the lower Maya relates to the higher and lower hemispheres, the Parardha and Aparardha of the Vedas, which in turn are each subject to the triple division of Matter Life Mind, on the lower, and Being Consciousness Bliss on the higher. What he is saying is that the illusionist schools miss out the uniting and creative principle of the Upanishadic "Fourth Name" which is Supermind for Aurobindo, and they therefore substitute a Maya which is a creation of the mind,

"a fixed yet fleeting nightmare which could neither be classified as an illusion nor as a reality",²⁰

a reference to the Mithya in which Sankara places phenomenal existence.

Aurobindo's examination of Maya in the 'Advaita Vedanta and the associated illusionist schools and his opposition to the understanding of Maya which they include may be summed up in its main elements.

Given the doctrine of Brahman/Atman, and an illusionist Maya, Aurobindo asks, [i] who is the creator? To preserve the integrity of Brahman, Sankara says that Maya which accounts for everything in existence, is the power of the creative Isvara. But since only Brahman is, as the sole and supreme Existence, then such a power must eventually be seen to issue from this Absolute. This Aurobindo says, contradicts what Sankara describes as the indeterminate purity of the One Existence, which in its immutable eternity must remain forever void of "name, feature, formation, relation and happening".²¹ Thus the One Reality creates something contrary to itself as non-existent things in an illusory universe. It is essentially the Self, and yet "the natural beings of which it is the Self"²² are no more than appearances. It is the substratum of everything, yet the universe which is its overlay is non-existent. Even if such problems could be solved, the question always remains as to why a sole Reality which has no reason to construct unrealities since it is forever pure and self-complete and timelessly perfect, should create an unreal

Time and Space. Aurobindo sees this element in Advaita as logically untenable, an impasse which only a theory of Self-manifestation of Existence in the "timeless process of its own being in Time-eternity"²³ can resolve. For Aurobindo, the Advaitan Maya fails to solve the problem of creation in that system, and he develops the drawbacks which arise from such an understanding in great detail.

[ii] who is the percipient? Since all mental consciousness depends on three elements, the percipient, the perception and the perceived, the question arises in a Maya of illusion as to which of these, if any, are real. Even if all three are rejected as illusion, the question still remains as to whether there is a Reality apart from them, and what is its relation to the illusion. In the Advaitan Maya-Vada, to be perceived is to exist, and since the fact of existence is not denied, who perceives the Maya and so confers existence on phenomena?

At first glance, Aurobindo says,

"one is compelled to suppose that Brahman must in some way be the percipient of Maya",²⁴

since Brahman is the sole being. There cannot be any other percipient in existence, if the individual is himself Maya. Such a solution has to be discarded, however, because Brahman can be conscious only of the Real, which would exclude unreal phenomena. The other possibilities which Aurobindo examines also come up against the insurmountable problem of the illusion of the Advaitan Maya and its works, and again he proposes that the only possibility rests in a different understanding of Maya as a real and limiting

Power of Brahman which allows an extension of Reality into existence. Thus the distinction which is made between being and existence, in which it is supposed that "being is real but existence or what manifests as such is unreal",²⁵ is overcome if what exists is also "form of Being and substance of Being",²⁶ and again Aurobindo emphasises that

"our whole view and experience of existence labours under a limitation of consciousness . . ." ²⁷

which sees only a part of the manifestation.

[iii] Finally, who profits by release? If the world is Maya as the Monist says, then individual salvation is meaningless. Here the individual being is to be released from the illusion of a self into the realisation of his identity with the Self. This would seem to imply an individual soul distinct from the world and from the Supreme, and yet the Monist would say that an individual soul is an illusion and non-existent, except within the inexplicable mystery of Maya. Again in

"the thesis of the pure unreality of Maya, . . . the knowledge that frees us no less than the ignorance which binds us . . . are two sides of an illusion; for there is nothing to accept or refuse, and nobody to accept or refuse it".²⁸

Therefore, Aurobindo says in emphasising the point,

"we arrive at the escape of an illusory non-existent soul, from an illusory non-existent bondage in a non-existent world".²⁹

In the Advaita Vedanta, according to Radhakrishnan, there is the admission of the Jivatman, or the individual self, for the Jiva is said to be one in essence with the Atman, and so he says,

"the metaphysical identity between the supreme Atman and the Jiva must be allowed".³⁰

Aurobindo dismisses such a claim for he maintains that there is no real self of the individual, but only a Self apart from the universe, "ever unborn . . . ever unaffected by the mutations of phenomena"³¹ and therefore any suggestion by the Advaita of an individual self is simply a concession to normal language. In almost identical terms, Ninian Smart says that the illusion of a self is again a "bewitchment produced by language".³² Because of his rejection of the Jiva in Advaita, Aurobindo says that even the states of bondage and release are only illusion of Maya.

The individual in Moksa has no more reality, according to Advaitan philosophy than has the space when the jar is broken. But even if he could possibly have admitted any enduring quality in human life, there always would remain the insurmountable problem for Sankara of how the diverse instances of personal being can possibly be fulfilled in an undifferentiated Absolute.

Sankara's position is sometimes seen as identical to the Buddhist Anatta doctrine, but even a momentary consideration would seem to pinpoint a difference. While the latter would not admit to an enduring self, it appears at least to allow for a temporary association of the five skandhas which constitute conscious being, while Sankara would deny even a transitory reality to the physical which is simply a veil on the Atman. The Madhyamika would not only deny the existence of a self which treads the Path,

it would also deny the Path itself. Sankara's system seems to be saved from the extreme position of the Sunya-vada by the reality of the substratum. If it were not for this substratum, if for example the world had its origin in non-being, this would seem to negate all reality. Even the illusory snake does not have its origin in nothing but in something which has existence.

It is worth noting, however, that Aurobindo rejects the analogy of the snake and the rope in his criticism of the Advaitan Maya. For he says that it rests

"upon an error due to a resemblance between a present real and another and absent real"³³

and so can have no true application to the imposition of a multiple and mutable unreality upon a unique immutable Real.

Hiriyanna says that the resemblance of Sankara's theory to Madhyamika Buddhism is only apparent. The Madhyamika position should be understood as claiming the impossibility of thought to rest in the relative, whereas according to Sankara it is equally impossible for it to rest on absolute nothing. Therefore, Hiriyanna says,³⁴ quoting the Upanishad, the Advaita denies only "names and forms", and not what appears under their guise.

The Advaitans avoid the issue of how the unreal universe manages to be there in the first place, by saying that the question is illegitimate since the world is non-existent, an intellectual device which Aurobindo dismisses as "an acrobacy of verbal logic", the "logical reason hiding itself in the play of words".³⁵ It solves nothing,

for even if a real universe is denied a cosmic illusion still exists.

The conflict of a self-existent Absolute and an unreal cosmic Maya is resolved, Aurobindo claims, by a return to the basic issue. He maintains that the denial of reality to the world is based on a concept of Reality as immutable, realised by a consciousness which is itself immutable. Because dynamic energy is seen to pervade all aspects of life in the world, whether this be spiritual, mental, or vital and since it is reasoned that all action limits, then this contradicts the immutable and eternal Reality of Advaitan philosophy.

Such a conflict is not inevitable. It is possible to conceive Reality which is simultaneously both static and dynamic, an unformed static Reality underlying constant movement and continuous formation. The primal reality in existence appears to be Energy, an Energy known not by itself but by its works, for the world is seen to be the product of a ceaseless and pervasive movement. But even a primal energy must create status of itself as a base for its activity, since

"the principle of a supporting status for action is a permanent principle, and its action is constant in Time-eternity",³⁶

and so the need for substance of being and a creation of form. The substance which is indicated is "spiritual substance",³⁷ the first in Aurobindo's descending/ascending series of substance which, it is proposed, follows the Sankhyas, for "Spirit itself is pure substance"³⁸ beyond a sensory cognition, and so the need for recreation

of material forms which can be experienced by the senses. The forms must be recognised as only temporary, for while they have a certain stability it is a created "stability of repetition"³⁹ and the only permanent and self-existent status is that of eternal Being which is their source.

In claiming that the One Existence contains not only eternal status of being, but eternal force of being Aurobindo illustrates that simultaneity of being is not only conceivable but is demanded. Although material formation is temporary it is nevertheless real for it issues from a Reality which can produce only forms of its own being. This is the basis of Aurobindo's claim that Matter is simply a form of Spirit, for in the end substance in its "utter purity" is pure existence, "self aware by identity".⁴⁰

In other words Aurobindo is saying that both "eternal status" and "eternal dynamis"⁴¹ relate to the silent and the active Brahman, in contrast to Advaita which recognises only the first and therefore must claim the non-existence of the second. Such a division negates the very basic premise in Aurobindo's theory of the Reality of the One Existence, and this explains the fact that he frequently returns to this theme throughout his work. The mutual identification of the silent and the active Brahman is based on the fact that each is necessary to the other, for,

"It is out of this Silence that the Word which creates the world forever proceeds; For the Word expresses that which is self-hidden in the Silence. It is an eternal passivity which makes

possible the perfect freedom and omnipotence of an eternal divine activity in innumerable cosmic systems. For the becomings of that activity derive their energies and their illimitable potency of variation and harmony from the impartial support and a consent to this infinite fecundity of the immutable Being".⁴²

In denying the possibility of maintaining an uncreated Absolute, and a creative activity which is somehow separate from it, Aurobindo underlines his opposition to a principle which is the very root philosophy of Advaita. The implications are far reaching. The distinction which Sankara had to make between being and existence no longer stands if phenomenal existence is not essentially different from uncreated Being. For Aurobindo all that exists is a "manifestation of That"⁴³ and, it may be added, is equally That differing only in degree of manifestation which is the same as to say in quality of consciousness.

A view of Reality as simultaneously static and dynamic, self extended as consciousness into existence having the inevitability of a total manifestation because it has an essential and not merely a phenomenal dimension, is the true contrast to Sankara's immutable Absolute and the intermediary Maya which both is and is not. In a clear reference to Advaita Aurobindo claims that such an understanding of the real and the "true nature of Maya" compels

a "departure from the later pure excesses of the dialectical intellect and a return to the original Vedantic conception",⁴⁴

a claim which confirms his conviction that the ancient writings are not in conflict with modern thinking, for eventually manifestation is another name for evolution.

Yet even when setting out his direct opposition to the Advaitan Maya, Aurobindo pays tribute to the genius of Sankara, for

"while giving every tribute to the magnificent fearlessness of these extreme conclusions, to the uncompromising logical force and acuity of these speculations, inexpugnable so long as the premisses are granted, admitting the truth of two of the main contentions, the sole Reality of the Brahman and the fact that our normal conceptions about ourselves and world existence are stamped with ignorance, . . . we are obliged to withdraw from the hold so powerfully laid by this conception of Maya on the intelligence".⁴⁵

In the end it is not by dialectical discussion or the examination of ideas that the "obsession of this long established view of things"⁴⁶ can be reversed but only by a successful fathoming of the relevance and significance of consciousness.

NOTESMEANING OF MAYA

1. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 527.
2. Paul Tillich, "Systematic Theology", Vol. 1, p. 227.
3. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 508.
4. Ibid., p. 587.
5. Ibid., p. 508.
6. P.T. Raju, "The Philosophical Traditions of India", p. 232.
7. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 508.
8. Ibid., p. 631.
9. Ibid., p. 632.
10. Ibid., p. 565.
11. Ibid., p. 528.
12. Ibid., p. 583.
13. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 261.
14. Ibid., p. 258.
15. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 153.
16. Ibid., p. 174.
17. Ibid., p. 175.
18. Ibid., p. 175.
19. Ibid., p. 175.
20. Ibid., p. 176.
21. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 224.
22. Ibid., p. 223.
23. Ibid., p. 230.
24. Ibid., p. 224.
25. Ibid., p. 278.
26. Ibid., p. 278.

27. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, pp. 283F.
28. Ibid., pp. 261F.
29. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 59.
30. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 605.
31. Ibid., p. 699.
32. Ninian Smart, "Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy", p. 45.
33. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 208.
34. Hiriyantha, "Outlines of Indian Philosophy", p. 373.
35. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 231.
36. Ibid., p. 249.
37. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 387.
38. Ibid., p. 387.
39. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 249.
40. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 362.
41. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 249.
42. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 40.
43. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 558.
44. Ibid., p. 300.
45. Ibid., p. 300.
46. Ibid., p. 300.

PART 3

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION TO TEILHARD'S EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

"Creative Union" is the dominant theme in Teilhard's philosophy, and is the foundation of his evolutionary thought. Not only is it the means by which matter comes into existence, it is also the principle which applies throughout the evolutionary movement. It is finally that act by which the human race is fulfilled, and in this sense fully created by convergence in Omega. To this extent, Teilhard's theory can be described as a continuous creation by union, through the power of an evolutionary Love.

The possibility of human fulfilment starts from the fundamental position which Teilhard outlines, of individual existence which has emerged as a result of the long gestation of the material world. Following a further process in which the complexification evident scientifically in the particles of matter will be paralleled in the Noosphere of human reflection, Teilhard envisages a final end in the Pauline Christ, as Origin, Impetus and Goal.

Essentially, therefore, Teilhard is saying that evolution, notwithstanding its "dead-ends", is unidirectional, displaying a coherent and irreversible ascent to fulfilment.

It is possible reasonably to propose such a fulfilment for mankind, because since the advent of the Noosphere, man himself directs his own evolution towards the spiritual

the deepest element of his own being, on which level communion is possible, thus allowing the final union of Personality bestowed by the ultimate power of Love as Caritas. The development of Teilhard's theory calls for a new orientation in thinking, especially with regard to the doctrines of Creation, Man, Redemption, and a deeper understanding of the meaning of "Christ".

Yet Teilhard does not put forward an inflexible completed theory. He does not seek to convert the reader to ideas which are still fluid, but rather to open horizons through which he may experience the sense of belonging to a Whole. To achieve this, Teilhard hopes to replace what he sees as the outdated view of man as a static centre of the world, with the vision of man as the active medium of evolution, a task which he maintains calls for "nothing short of devotion".

The time has come, Teilhard says, when the opposition between science and religion should be overcome, and a physics of the future must take into account the "within" as well as the "without". In developing his theory, he sets out to show that evolutionary philosophy is not incompatible with Christian thinking, and he therefore extends his observations in the scientific field into the Christian dimension, which in turn he hopes to apply universally. To his fellow scientist he says that man in his wholeness must be included in a coherent picture of the world, and to his fellow Christian he says that the essence of Christianity is nothing more nor less than a belief in the unification of the world in God, by the

power of the Incarnation. These are the two elements which are irreversibly combined in Teilhard's evolutionary philosophy.

CHAPTER 11

CONVERGENT EVOLUTION IN TEILHARD de CHARDIN

An understanding of Teilhard's thought must begin from the basis of "Matter" and an appreciation of the unique meaning which he applies to this term. It is this which gives to the already familiar theory of material evolution a new dimension, constituting as M. Barthélemy^{MADAME.} says,

"the discovery of matter as an absolutely new reality."¹

Not only is his treatment of Matter the key to his evolutionary theory, but also, as she goes on to say, it is the foundation of Teilhard's spirituality.² The first element which is to be considered in his thought, therefore, is the

Concept of Matter.

Teilhard's theory of Matter, Spirit and Being and their relationship form what from his earliest work he has termed a "philosophy of union".³ That is to say, that these three aspects of existence in their correspondence within an evolutionary process, encompass all that is from the solid state to the climax of material organisation associated with the power of self-reflection. The unceasing process which occurs within each elemental particle, and in an identical manner between separate material entities, point to the significance of Matter itself in relation to

- [a] its true value within human life;
 - [b] its essential role in evolutionary fulfilment;
 - [c] its essential nature as Energy;
 - [d] as a manifestation of diversity in unity;
- each of which is necessary in

"coming to see ourselves as a part of a vast and continuing process"⁴

and the discovery of "a Whole" of which "we are the elements."⁵ On the primitive level Teilhard sees matter as displaying three characteristics; it is

"radically particulate yet essentially related, and lastly prodigiously active."⁶

These three properties of matter, "Plurality, unity, energy"⁷ although they subsist within an indivisible whole, are in their separate instances, necessary to the particular concept of Matter which Teilhard wants to illustrate as the observable level of evolution, the stage of complexification, followed by the present state which Donald Gray describes as "the genesis of the Spirit."⁸

The fact of multiplicity is a matter of everyday experience in all grades of phenomena from grains of sand to galactic systems. Attempts to reach oneness by reductionism or sub-division result in successive states of ever increasing multiplicity, and this is a vital point in Teilhard's discussion on the nature of matter, for the final end which he proposes is that of a unity in difference and not the loss of diversity in total Identity.

Despite the existence of the radical multiple, however, there is no such state as "pure multiplicity"⁹ since to follow the process of dissociation to the

ultimate degree is to arrive at the concept of Nothingness, for "Real Nothingness . . . is pure multiplicity,"¹⁰ that is to say, that it constitutes "complete diversity combined with total disunity"¹¹ and therefore is non-existence. This explains Teilhard's theory, that all Matter which fails to unify will "vanish in pure Plurality."¹² Nevertheless, it is not a non-existence or Nothingness which is mere nullity, for, since it

"stands at the threshold of being on which all possible worlds must converge . . ."¹³

and is at the same time

"the direction from which the world emerges for us,"¹⁴

it may be understood in the Heideggerian sense as the veil of Being, the "Nothing",¹⁵ the vastness of that which gives every being the warrant to be. In other words, Teilhard, in speaking of the "absolute multiplicity"¹⁶ as non-existent, acknowledges the concept of Nothingness as dialectically necessary to the actuality of Being, just as earlier Bergson had described the idea of Nothing as containing "as much matter as the idea of All."¹⁷

The fact of unity on the elemental level of Matter is confirmed by the way in which the minute particles "manifest a perfect identity of mass and behaviour,"¹⁸ a unison of movement which for Teilhard extends from the atom to the immensity of the physical universe, for the microcosm displays the same capabilities and tendencies as the macrocosm, thus giving the impression of an all-pervading and organised plurality. It is on the basis of this "unity of plurality,"¹⁹ to use Bergson's phrase, that

Teilhard claims the presence of "something"²⁰ which provides a cohesion, for a "mysterious identity must absorb and cement"²¹ the elementary atoms of matter. Later this will be seen to apply not only to the elements of matter, but also to the human thinking particles in a way which will confirm, [a] the irresistible attraction of a unifying Centre, and [b] by means of a "specifically new state of consciousness,"²² the mysterious force as the hitherto unknown power of Love. In this term Teilhard does not mean the "mutual internal affinity,"²³ although that too, but the "amorisation"²⁴ of all human activity, reaching its supreme form in sola caritas.

On the basic material level, then, there is a potential relationship of each atom with every other atom, the "strange property"²⁵ which Teilhard maintains is encountered "even in the human molecule."²⁶ It is this unceasing tendency towards union on the lowest levels of existence, which, in the course of evolution, makes Love possible in human life.

On the basis of an observable movement of unification in all material formations, Teilhard maintains that

"some germ of inwardness and spontaneity, that is to say of consciousness,"²⁷

inheres in "every element of the Universe,"²⁸ thus establishing the evolutionary process as the progression of Consciousness from the periphery of the Many into union with the already "One".

The fact of Energy; because of this movement on every level of existence, both animate and inanimate, and because it

is everywhere consistent in its operation, Teilhard can say that,

"In the last analysis, somehow or other, there must be a single energy operating in the world."²⁹

At this point in his work he defines energy as

"the measure of that which passes from one atom to another in the course of their transformations,"³⁰

but later he is obliged to expand this in terms of the two energies which are a fact of human existential experience. The tangential and radial energies which operate along the twin curves of the "inner" and "outer", which in fact represent the spiritual and the physical, co-operate in the course of ordinary activity, but with a correspondence which eludes definition. What force exists between the idea and its actuality, the one a matter of inner occurrence, the other of its outward expression? The question for Teilhard is that of identifying the element which moulds these two seemingly opposed forces into a single manifestation of Power, thus uniting the two layers of the world.

The two energies seem to introduce a duality into Teilhard's system, for he concedes that although they co-operate they

"are powerless either to combine or to be transformed into one another directly, because they operate at different levels;"³¹

and for this same reason a merging of the two "is no sooner glimpsed than it has to be abandoned."³² In any attempt to bring them together, "their mutual independence becomes as clear as their interrelation,"³³ and the solution to this impasse must await the further development

of Teilhard's evolutionary theory.

Meantime, the basic functions of the two aspects of energy may be made clear in relation to Teilhard's evaluation of Matter. While "all energy is psychic in nature"³⁴ [because it is the movement of an ultimately non-existent Consciousness], Radial energy is essential to the evolutionary process. "Essential" is meant here in the truest sense, that is, as having a relation in essence to the pre-existent point of attraction which Teilhard calls Omega. Because the power of radial energy is that which achieves ever greater centricity and more advanced complexity, it is the means by which the multiple is progressively unified. In Teilhard's thought, this is the same as to say that it is creative. It also confirms the evolutionary movement as the ascent of Consciousness, for "union increases only through an increase in consciousness."³⁵

The priority of Consciousness is no less necessary for Teilhard than it is for Bergson, for it is this basic theory which provides [a] the claim of inherence, and [b] the creative nature of what inheres, thus allowing both to identify the evolving principle as consciousness and finally as Spirit. Teilhard speaks of

"a certain mass of elementary consciousness originally imprisoned in matter"³⁶

just as throughout his work on Creative Evolution, Bergson sees Matter as "loaded with consciousness."³⁷

Further discussion on the role of Consciousness in Teilhard belongs within an examination of his evolutionary

thought, but the radial energy as an element which is essential to this, is summed up by Rideau; it is "Spiritual and internal, increasing and irreversible," it is "an energy of ascent, of arrangement and unification," as well as ". . . creation too, of the progressive complexity of beings."³⁸

Tangential energy is the "outer" activity. What passes between the two energies is to be understood not only as constant movement, but as interrelated action. This is a crucial point when considering the question of human consciousness, the "inner" and the particular way in which in Teilhard, this is related to the "outer" or cerebral organisation, as will later be seen.

By utilising tangential energy, particles continually advance in association, which is to say they become more centred, and so increase in terms of radial energy. It is this unceasing motion towards centration which forms the hub of Teilhard's evolutionary thought, for it provides the cyclic principle which allows him later to posit Omega.

Tangential energy connects elements of the same order, that is to say, not of the same material class, but of the same degree of complexity and the same level of centricity. Teilhard seems to be saying that the tangential energy is expendable, for it will "gradually exhaust itself following the principle of entropy."³⁹ The course of the tangential he describes as

"A rocket in the wake of time's arrow, that bursts only to be extinguished; an eddy rising on the bosom of a descending current,"⁴⁰

a description akin to the Bergsonian idea of Matter itself as the burnt out energy which falls back in the wake of an ascending Consciousness.⁴¹

Finally, Matter is Total. It admits of no division whatsoever, and therefore any attempt to reach an understanding of the totality by analysis of a part is described by Teilhard as "an intellectual dodge."⁴² Seen in its concrete reality, "the stuff of the universe" cannot be divided, for as "a kind of gigantic atom" it forms in its totality "the only real indivisible."⁴⁴ Following an analysis of the various "names" of Matter according to degree of integration, Teilhard finally defines its totality;

"The elements of the World, taken together with the sum of their linkages as they converge on Spirit; that is what we might call total Matter."⁴⁵

If the meaning of Matter in Teilhard's thought can be summed up, it may be said;

- [a] it describes something which "does not exist outside of some principle of union,"⁴⁶ and is by this token a co-principle of existence.
- [b] emerging from "an abyss of increasing dissociation"⁴⁷ it moves, by evolutionary convergency towards "an abyss of complexification"⁴⁸ in differentiated union with an unassailable Whole.
- [c] Nevertheless, "we cannot hope ex revelatione that the whole of its mass will finally succumb to the attraction of Spirit"⁴⁹ and whatever cannot be assimilated must return to Plurality which is Non-Being.

- [d] This means that within existence there is a double movement of Matter, an "involution" as well as an "evolutive"⁵⁰ aspect. Involution in this case does not mean extension of the Spirit into, or simultaneous with, material existence as it does elsewhere, but means the reduction or progressive decadence of the phenomenon of Matter in accordance with the principle of entropy.
- [e] Matter seen as "that which can be united"⁵¹ is a positive entitative principle "which is consummated in Spirit";⁵² seen as "something which has no vestige of consciousness . . . it does not exist."⁵³

The unification of Matter and Spirit, therefore, is a fundamental proposition in Teilhard's theory of Matter. This confirms Madaule's earlier statement, and also provides a legitimate basis for Teilhard's reverence for Matter. It is not a claim that Matter per se is infinite, but that it has an infinite potential of transformation in form.

NOTESCONVERGENT EVOLUTION IN TEILHARD DE CHARDINCONCEPT OF MATTER

1. Madeleine Barthélemy-Madaule, "Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin", p. 96.
2. Ibid., p. 11.
3. Ibid., p. 11.
4. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 17.
5. Ibid., p. 17.
6. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 44.
7. Ibid., p. 44.
8. Donald P. Gray, "The One and the Many", p. 16f.
9. Teilhard de Chardin, "Écrits du Temps de la Guerre", p. 114.
10. Ibid., p. 114.
11. Teilhard de Chardin, "Mon Univers" in "Science and Christ", p. 74.
12. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 232.
13. Teilhard de Chardin, "Écrits du Temps de la Guerre", p. 114.
14. Teilhard de Chardin, "Mon Univers" in "Science and Christ", p. 74.
15. Martin Heidegger, "Existence and Being" [Werner Brock] p. 325f.
16. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 74.
17. Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution", p. 314.
18. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 45.
19. Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution", p. 272.
20. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 46.
21. Ibid., p. 46.
22. Ibid., p. 323.
23. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 235.

24. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 50.
25. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 47.
26. Ibid., p. 47.
27. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Appearance of Man", p. 139.
28. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 205.
29. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 69.
30. Ibid., p. 40.
31. Ibid., p. 69.
32. Ibid., p. 69.
33. Ibid., p. 69.
34. Ibid., p. 70.
35. Ibid., p. 35.
36. Ibid., p. 78.
37. Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution", p. 191.
38. Émile Rideau, "Teilhard de Chardin. A Guide to his Thought", p. 79.
39. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 70.
40. Ibid., p. 57.
41. Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution", p. 272.
42. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 47.
43. Ibid., p. 47.
44. Ibid., p. 47.
45. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 229.

CHAPTER 12Complexity Consciousness

A few brief points should be made in relation to the biosphere before turning to the transition of life into the Noosphere, the "thinking layer".¹ In his detailed examination of the long process which preceded the advent of Thought, Teilhard seems to be emphasising certain basic principles and without these his thought cannot be seen in its continuity.

[a] In the first place he appears to be saying that there is no inevitability in the emergence of life itself. The phenomenon of life

"might well be nothing more than the properties peculiar to matter when carried to a high degree of arrangement and centration,"²

and therefore it can be seen to be no more than a possibility dependent upon an ideal organisation of material formation. Nevertheless, because it is a threshold, "a crisis of the first magnitude, the beginning of a new order",³ Teilhard wants to separate the phenomenon of life from the "numerous other periodical and secondary events on earth",⁴ for it is in seeing the advent of life as one "of the principle landmarks [or parameters] of the sidereal evolution of the globe"⁵ that the sense of proportion and values is rectified and thus the perspective of the world is renewed. The "unity of the biosphere"⁶ is of fundamental importance to the evolutionary theory, and Teilhard sees this unity in the living substance which, spread over the earth, "traces the lineaments of one single and gigantic organism"⁷ just as

earlier Bergson had seen the whole series of the living as "one single immense wave flowing over matter".⁸

[b] Secondly, he wants to underline the unrepeatability of life as well as its irreversibility. The genesis of life on earth belongs to the category of absolutely unique events because the conditions which make them possible are non-recurrent. At only one point in the curve of terrestrial evolution did the earth's elements reach that "privileged condition"⁹ which permitted the emergence of life, for

"protoplasm was formed once and only once on earth, just as nuclei and electrons were formed once and once only in the cosmos."¹⁰

The phenomenon therefore, can never be repeated and life propagates itself in the world as a "solitary pulsation",¹¹ in conjunction with which there is an evolutionary process which is both "continuous and irreversible".¹²

[c] Thirdly, Teilhard emphasises the remarkable power of association which is to be of profound importance to the self-conscious aim of evolution as unassailable but differentiated union. The movement towards association is not accidental or spasmodic, but is the most significant, as well as the most universal and constant expedient. A further element is introduced with the observation that association occurs not simply on the horizontal, as it were, but is additive, and therefore supports the theory of a definite ascent to the improbable category of reflective life. The additive process is not to be seen as characteristics superimposed like successive layers, but is

"more like a tree which acquires successive rings according to the particular fashion of its growth",¹³

in a way which is predetermined or directed. In its application to human existence, Teilhard maintains that the "additive zone"¹⁴ is "for each of us a sort of matrix, as real in its own way as our mother's womb",¹⁵ and what he seems to envisage is a continuous build-up of individual experience into a common pool, thus forming a "true racial memory"¹⁶ as the collective heritage of humanity. The idea of "memory" is not developed by Teilhard, and his treatment of the "additive" is a point on which he comes close to the Bergsonian theory, in which the concept is a central issue. The unity of the biosphere which underlies the plurality of beings, affirms that man is one in continuity with the primitive ancestor and so with all that descends from it in divergent directions, and in this sense the individual can be said to "remain united with the totality of beings by invisible bonds". Human life is an organism, is the improbable end term of an additive process, in which there occurs nevertheless, an event of a qualitative distinction. This additive power, which is characteristic of all living matter, accomplishes the complexities in organic life, the "outer", a process which affects the evolution of consciousness, the "inner" and therefore through an extension into the "infinitely complex", Teilhard links the phenomenon of human life, self-reflection and decision, to the phenomenon of matter.

He appears to be saying that since every infinite is characterised by effects peculiar to itself, and since

matter partakes of the infinite because of the infinite potential of additive complexity, then the specific property of organised states of matter is consciousness. The significance of the "inner" here is twofold; not only does it manifest the power of creative unification, it also establishes a universal psychism which varies in accordance with altered states of matter. The principle is not applied to man alone as an organisation. Complete exteriority, total transience, is, like absolute multiplicity, synonymous with nothingness in the non-existent sense. This means that everything in existence, however minute, must possess the rudiments of immanence, and the universe, before the chemical conditions developed for the birth of organic life, "already constituted a nucleus of consciousness".¹⁷ In the human organisation, it became dominant. The primacy of consciousness, then, is no less necessary to Teilhard's system than it was for Bergson who first proclaimed it.

Nevertheless, Teilhard constantly stresses that what elevates man above other forms of life is not quantity of elements but complexity of structure.

Because consciousness, or inwardness is the endowment of all things in existence, even of the "extremely simple and extremely numerous corpuscles",¹⁸ and because linked to complexity it forms the thread of continuity in Teilhard's evolutionary thought, his own definition is indispensable to an understanding of what this hyphenated term implies. He seems most clearly to provide this in his work, "The Appearance of Man" where he writes,

"Life is apparently nothing but the privileged exaggeration of a fundamental cosmic tendency [as fundamental as entropy or gravitation] which may be called the 'Law of complexity-consciousness' and which can be expressed as follows;

'Left long enough to itself, under the prolonged and universal play of chance, matter manifests the property of arranging itself in more and more complex groupings, and at the same time in ever-deepening layers of consciousness; this double and combined movement of physical infolding and psychic interiorisation once started, continuing, accelerating, and growing to its utmost extent'",

a definition which establishes not only a necessary and essential relationship between complexity and consciousness, but also confirms the psychic as the central principle in Teilhard's evolutionary thought. Following Bergson, he will later describe this force in terms of "spiritual energy".¹⁹

The inter-related activity of complexification and consciousness reached a climax in the degree of centration which allowed the "step of reflection",²⁰ that

"critical point traversed by consciousness when by force of concentration, it ends by reflecting on itself"²¹

and following the "grain of Matter"²² and of life, "we now see constituted the grain of thought".²³ This is the birth of the Noosphere, in which Teilhard says, "the earth finds its soul!"²⁴ It is the power of reflection which gives to every individual human life, the promise of "Person". A reflective centre once formed "can no longer change except by involution upon itself"²⁵ and so it marks not an end but a beginning, for the co-ordination of complexity and consciousness has reached the stage in which consciousness turns in upon itself in a convergent

movement towards its own Centre. [Denny distinguishes between the double sense of the term 'reflection'; he uses this spelling when Teilhard is indicating the Cartesian sense of the ability to know that one knows; and 'reflexion' for the all-important element in Teilhard of convergence of consciousness, as a means of emphasis.]

It may be conceded that the relationship between the complexity of matter, the "without" and the corresponding increase in consciousness, the "within" still presents a problem in Teilhard's theory, despite his lengthy definition. This arises because he appears to maintain a causal relationship between cerebral complexity and quality of consciousness. He seems to confirm this by defining Consciousness at this stage in his work as the "specific effect of organised complexity . . ."26 and this raises the question of how, in this case, the problem of the "outer" dominating and controlling the "inner", can be overcome, thus preserving the necessary and essential freedom of the "inner". If a causal relationship is conceded, it means that Consciousness on every level, even that of self-reflection is dependent upon an always future appropriate organisation of matter suited to its manifestation, and this does not seem to be resolved by Teilhard's insistence on the element of "inevitability". The problem does not arise in similar theories of the evolution of Consciousness. Bergson, for example, although he maintains an infinity both of complexity and of consciousness, does not propose a causal relationship

between them. His position is, that while it seems "as if" consciousness arises from cerebral complexity, "as if" conscious activity reflected a particular state of organisation, in reality they simply correspond,

"because equally they measure, the one by complexity of structure and the other by intensity of awareness, the quantity of choice"27

The question of the determinism on the part of the complex, therefore, does not occur here.

In reference to Teilhard's position, Rideau seems to accept a causal relationship which is unstated but nevertheless justified. Wildiers, on the other hand, points out that because an increase in complexity occurs in conjunction with an expansion of consciousness, this is not in itself proof that the one is a consequence of the other. The most that can be said, he maintains, is that "such a relationship is strongly to be suspected"28 a view which seems to disturb him, for he goes on to say that it is a question for science and not for philosophy. Although Wildiers cannot state the issue, he wants to reject any intention by Teilhard to imply that consciousness depends simply on degree of organic complexity. In the end he believes that complexity-consciousness is only a means of connecting the two layers of the world, as Teilhard himself says, "not only in their position, . . . but in their motion".29

A possible line of solution may be considered in Teilhard's proposal that,

"In concrete reality, there are not both matter and spirit [for] the stuff of the universe is spirit-matter",31

thus overcoming the dichotomy and perhaps filling the gap. But again this is weakened by the concrete reality of the existential situation as that of "matter becoming spirit"³² and so the verbal equation of matter - spirit, simply leads to the perennial problem of being and becoming. Another possibility lies in discovering whether or not the "without" provides capabilities which are never fully exploited by the "within", and therefore to opt for a lack or limitation of freedom is simply to posit a culpable restriction in which the actual never reaches the potential of the human intellect. To a possible objection here that Teilhard does not specifically equate the "within" with "intellect", it would be said that the potential of consciousness itself is never actually reached at any given level. Elsewhere it is said that this awaits the development of an additional faculty or "sense"³³ in mankind, which would be capable of accommodating the full potential of consciousness evolved into intuition.

The problem posed in Teilhard's theory of complexity/consciousness passes from philosophy through metaphysics into science, but the last, as he himself says, "has provisionally decided to ignore the question".³⁴ Apart from the causal implication which, however inadvertently, seems to be present in his theory, Teilhard offers no solution but merely observes that it appears to be impossible "to establish a simple correspondence"³⁵ between inner consciousness and outer complexity. This does not mean that complexity/consciousness is not a fact, for indeed as Teilhard shows it is an observable fact. It

is to say that the precise nature of the communication which passes between these two dominant aspects of human existence is as yet indefinable.

The term complexity/consciousness in itself simply means that quality of consciousness is proportionally related to the simplicity or complexity of material organisation. It is a fundamental principle in Teilhard's theory of evolution as progressive spiritualisation, for,

"spiritual perfection (or conscious centrality) and material synthesis (or complexity) are but the two aspects or connected parts of one and the same phenomenon".³⁶

In this progression a major change occurs when evolution produces the quality of consciousness related to the appropriate organisation which allows the emergence of Reflection. Until now being has changed by degree; reflection marks a change of category which is the beginning of convergence.

To sum up the concept of complexity/consciousness, it may be said that:

- (a) it represents the inseparable relationship of "inner" and "outer", of consciousness and physical organisation;
- (b) the two correspond through evolutionary development in the creative process of unification;
- (c) nevertheless, the exact nature of this correspondence remains undefined and this raises the question of the freedom of the "inner" in the process of spiritualisation, in relation to the "outer" of physical matter;
- (d) the combined operation of complexity and consciousness

has produced the power of Reflection, the unique characteristic of human life.

NOTESCOMPLEXITY CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 202.
2. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Appearance of Man", p. 214.
3. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 87.
4. Ibid., p. 112.
5. Ibid., pp. 112F.
6. Ibid., p. 124.
7. Ibid., p. 124.
8. Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution", p. 263.
9. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 112.
10. Ibid., p. 112.
11. Ibid., p. 113.
12. Ibid., p. 111.
13. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 31.
14. Ibid., p. 34.
15. Ibid., p. 31.
16. Ibid., p. 47.
17. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 47.
18. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Vision of the Past", pp. 225F.
19. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 67.
20. Ibid., p. 188.
21. Ibid., p. 115.
22. Ibid., p. 192.
23. Ibid., p. 192.
24. Ibid., p. 202.
25. Ibid., p. 300.
26. Ibid., p. 327.
27. Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution", p. 283.

28. N.M. Wildiers, "An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin", p. 75.
29. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 66.
30. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Énergie Humaine", p. 74.
31. Ibid., p. 74.
32. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 50.
33. M. Barthélemy-Madaule, "Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin", p. 23.
34. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 68.
35. Ibid., p. 68.
36. Ibid., p. 66.

Reflection

In assessing the phenomenon of life and discovering the superiority of man, Teilhard maintains that the only element which confirms this without question is that of reflection. He describes this quality of consciousness as

"The power acquired by a consciousness to turn in upon itself, to take possession of itself as of an object endowed with its own consistence and value . . . no longer merely to know but to know that one knows"1

Thus it is that from the diffusion of perceptions and experiences, the individual life came to be constituted as a centre in which all external impressions merge into a unity, a unity which is conscious of its own organisation. The consequences of such a transformation, as Teilhard describes it, are immense, and on a par he believes with any facts recorded in the field of physics or astronomy. At this point, being doubles back upon itself in entering a new sphere which means, as Teilhard says, that "In reality, another world is born."2

Intellectual and artistic activity, the aesthetic and the spiritual, mark the effervescence of the newly constituted centre as it explodes onto itself. The change in category of consciousness is not only a gulf separating what has gone before, but is also a threshold anticipating what is to come, for Teilhard sees reflection as the seed of the spiritual concept of "Person". This is the "new dimension"3 which he discovers in evolution, the coming unification of the multiple in a Personal Centre. From

the individual reflection there arises the human reality, but from the transmissible and increasing stream of reflection, there arises the human species. It is reflection therefore, which marks the true genesis of the human species.

In the "Sense of the Species"⁴ Teilhard's evolutionary thinking descends from the borderline of metaphysics into the concrete historical situation. Man, he says, is "a species which converges"⁵ and this is an indication of the form which the new phase of evolution takes on. Reflection is the beginning of the phase of convergence which means that consciousness turns inward towards the centre of man himself first as an individual and subsequently as a species. The activity of the combined force of complexity/consciousness does not end with the emergence of reflection; in a sense it begins for it now applies to man himself. Just as this power arranged material particles throughout a long process into the organisation of man, so the same unifying and therefore creative force, working within the self-consciousness of each individual, will establish a unified race which Teilhard calls an "ultra-humanity".⁶ It is in this sense that he sees the human species (as distinct from the individual), as being "still in the embryonic state".⁷ At one point Teilhard seems to have been pessimistic on the possibility of a "collective reflection"⁸ for he saw dispersed humanity as a "turbulent ant-hill"⁹ characterised by "mutual repulsion",¹⁰ but despite this, the same inevitability which marked the lower stages also applies in the Noosphere, no longer by

direction but by "free consent".¹¹ He points out that

"All history bears witness to the fact that .
nothing has ever been able to prevent an idea
from spreading and becoming universal"¹²

and therefore he speaks of the "re-birth of the Sense of the Species".¹³ The hope of such a re-birth, clearly rests on the movement in the world from dispersal to socialisation, which he sees within reflective life as the "essential phenomenon of hominisation".¹⁴

The Noosphere, then, is the realm of man. Four characteristics establish his uniqueness; [a] as a psycho-chemical complexity he must be considered to be the most highly synthesised form of matter known in the universe; [b] complexity of organisation makes him the most perfectly centred of all cosmic particles; [c] a high degree of psychic development places him in a different category from all other beings; [d] finally, he is the last product of evolution, an analysis which arises from Teilhard's examination of man as a phenomenon, and not as the recipient of revelation.

The characteristic cosmic structure of the sphere is seen by Teilhard as a significant factor in the human capacity for association, for it imposes what he described as a "forced coalescence".¹⁵ The force of compression has played an important part in the development of human life, and the point which Teilhard wants to stress here is the stimulation of Thought as a result of proximity. It may be said, then, that the impulse towards hominisation rests on, [i] coalescence; [ii] the sphere; [iii] the psychical curvature of thought towards the inner; as the elements

which counteract the tendency to dispersion. It is the physical limitation of the sphere which compels psychical energy to turn inwards in conjunction with increasing outward complexity, and for this reason Teilhard pictures the Noosphere as an increasingly intricate network of psychic activity.

The final achievement of the Noosphere is the complete convergence of the thinking particles upon a Centre in a union which differentiates. That "union differentiates"¹⁶ is a constant emphasis in Teilhard, thus maintaining the specifically Christian understanding of the nature of spiritual union, as distinct from that which applies elsewhere. Even in the evolutionary sense, self-identity is preserved because the true foundation of the unity of individuals is that they share equally the priority of a Consciousness which precedes and is implied in existential experience, for, as Teilhard's evolutionary theory illustrates, what constitutes man is prior to the biological organisation of the human being.

By its very nature, evolution cannot simply grind to a halt like some form of energy which is running out, and Teilhard is saying that the new 'material' of present and future evolution is the reflective thought of the Noosphere in which direction on the lower levels has given way to 'inspiration' implying the free consent of the individual in his own progression. This is the meaning of Teilhard's much quoted phrase "we are evolution".¹⁷ Along the axis of total convergence on the Centre of individual centres, the limit of the world will

be reached.

The association of the "Ego with the All"¹⁸ is at first Teilhard says, disconcerting. This is because "we have not sufficiently meditated upon"¹⁹ the nature of consciousness, which he maintains, three-fold, having the capability of, in the first place centering everything partially upon itself; secondly of centering itself upon itself constantly; thirdly, by this power of centering onto itself it is brought into closer association with other centres, all of which seem to illustrate the convergent movement of unity as progressive, but still leaves unexplained the nature of the All itself.

The difficulties, or as Teilhard puts it,

"the repulsions as regards the opposition between the All and the Person"²⁰

could be overcome if the Noosphere is seen as a whole which is both closed and centred, and therefore space and time are also convergent and become "truly humanised".²¹ This creates the condition in which the All and the Personal, since they are both "centred", converge simultaneously onto each other, and therefore allows Teilhard to posit the "Hyper-Personal"²² quality of Omega. [By applying a relative to what has previously been posited as an Absolute, Teilhard almost certainly in an inadvertent way, introduces the element of degree.]

The final point of convergence of the world must have the quality of Person, but there is no implication of degree in the term "God-Omega",²³ for Omega is not simply the end of the evolutionary series, for as he says

it is both within and yet outside of the process. Apart from this, Omega for Teilhard is not only Personal, but is also personalising Centre, in other words, it is the analogia entis expressed in terms which can accommodate an evolutionary fulfilment of humanity. Personality can no more be independently attained than can being.

Given Teilhard's spiritual evolution, God must be temporal as well as eternal. Bruteau seems to see the dual fact of immanence and transcendence as Teilhard's confrontation with the age-old problem of the one and the many. But the need

"to establish a balance between God's intimate presence in the world and His inviolable transcendence of the world"²⁴

would seem to apply only if this is seen from the point of view of a theology which understands eternity as the nunc stans and the aseity of God is preserved in the idea of the "wholly other". Despite the fact that Rideau sees Teilhard's thought as "diametrically opposed to Heidegger",²⁵ (and he is speaking here only on the basis of the initial question "why is there something rather than nothing?"), according to Schubert Ogden's interpretation, the problem which Bruteau finds in Teilhard is answered most clearly in Heidegger. The concept which overcomes the dilemma is that of "infinite temporality",²⁶ not that Divine Being is determined, but that the Divine temporality as involved in the world, is itself infinite. The evolutionary theory as Teilhard presents it, is saying just this; there is no "becoming" God, but a progressively deeper experience of the Spirit in the material world, offering to man a capacity for the infinite, which, as a

species, he must inevitably reach.

In seeing the dominance of the ego as the condition which is to be overcome in human life, Teilhard once again indicates the over-riding importance of the species, which, in the evolutionary course of reflection, will reach the spiritualised state of a "common soul of humanity"²⁷ in pure subjectivity freed from the limitations of individual being. The true evolution of the world, Teilhard says, "takes place in souls and in their union",²⁸ and this is what he means when he says that "man must believe in humanity more than in himself",²⁹ an attitude which must first emerge on the social level, and subsequently on the spiritual. But even on the level of socialisation this process cannot proceed by external force. There must be "an atmosphere of non-coercion",³⁰ which is to say of free consent; But finally this amounts to attraction, as Teilhard says, between Centre and centre in a way analogous to that which operates within the magnetic field. This leads again to Teilhard's insistence on the true emergence of the force of Love which is the "blood of spiritual evolution";³¹ the final ecstasy of Mankind in unassailable unity.

Summing up the importance of Reflection in Teilhard's thought;

[a] Reflection marks a 'change in consciousness which is not simply a matter of degree but of category marking a changed state of life on earth, for it is the emergence of a new power.

[b] it is not different from the Cartesian reflective cogito, for it is, as Teilhard says, the move from simply knowing, the ability of lower orders, to "the knowing that one knows".³² This is a capability possessed only by man, and therefore Reflection marks the birth of the species.

[c] it is the beginning of convergence; evolution continues as it did on the level of the material elements, but here the "particles" are the individual centres of consciousness, which, in the evolutionary process, will first move towards ever greater association centre to centre, and finally emerge as a differentiated unity onto Omega.

[d] the new force which will accomplish the evolution of Reflection is Love, the full power of which is yet to be experienced by man.

NOTESREFLECTION

1. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 183.
2. Ibid., p. 183.
3. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 193.
4. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 240.
5. Ibid., p. 301.
6. Ibid., p. 270.
7. Ibid., p. 294.
8. Ibid., pp. 222-295.
9. Ibid., p. 281.
10. Ibid., p. 281.
11. Ibid., p. 286.
12. Ibid., p. 283.
13. Ibid., p. 287.
14. Ibid., p. 157.
15. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 263.
16. Ibid., p. 288.
17. Ibid., p. 256.
18. Ibid., p. 284.
19. Ibid., p. 284.
20. Ibid., p. 285.
21. Ibid., p. 285.
22. Ibid., p. 286.
23. Ibid., p. 316.
24. Beatrice Bruteau, "Evolution toward Divinity", p. 28.
25. Émile Rideau, "Teilhard de Chardin; A Guide to his Thought", p. 336.
26. See Schubert Ogden's essay "The Temporality of God", an interpretation of Heidegger's concept in "The Reality of God", p. 144ff.

Notes on "Reflection" [continued].

27. Teilhard de Chardin, "Human Energy", p. 137.
28. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 48.
29. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Making of a Mind", p. 236.
30. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 243.
31. Teilhard de Chardin, "Human Energy", p. 32.
32. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 183.

The Doctrine of Love

Claude Cuénot has said that although Teilhard was to "remain long imbued with scholasticism",¹ he moved away from a rigid adherence to the "categories of Thomistic synthesis",² and this is a tendency which is very clear in his writing. It is not a complete rejection, but is more an appeal for the re-examination of certain traditional views in recognition of the fact that "since the days of St. Thomas the universe has taken on a new dimension",³ which Teilhard believes should be taken into account in an on-going understanding of Christian doctrine. Wildiers seems to agree with this assessment, for he says that Teilhard is not looking for a new theology, but only that

"theology should remain true to a centuries old tradition by expressing Christian doctrine in a language likely to be understood by men and women of to-day",⁴

just as in the past, St. Thomas and others formulated doctrine in accordance with the thought patterns and the cultural developments of their own time. Teilhard himself simply says that,

"it would be more useful for me to be guided more by scholasticism without thinking that there is no other path for an idea . . . than the Aristotelian way",⁵

which seems to confirm that what he is rejecting is a system of thought from which much of Christian doctrine was developed, but which cannot accommodate modern thinking such as the evolutionary theory, and new insights on the nature of Matter itself.

It may be said that all Teilhard's objections to

scholastic theology are concerned with the fact that the system is not flexible enough to allow for the discoveries of modern science and developing ideas. In this situation, the issues which are raised by a rapidly advancing technology remain untouched by religious interpretation, and therefore, Teilhard says, the earlier hostility between "experience and Revelation" has given way in the progress of physics to a "much more general and much deeper schism"⁶ between science and faith. Because his theory proposes a reconciliation between these two poles of human experience, Teilhard has to put forward a restatement of certain elements of doctrine formulated in an age which could not have foreseen such a need. By far the most important development to be accommodated is the theory of evolution, and therefore Teilhard concentrates on the scholastic notion of creation which must be seen no longer as static event but as dynamic process, and participation which must be understood as all-inclusive. Three areas are relevant for the present;

(a) Participation Teilhard is not rejecting the idea of participation itself, but clearly he must apply some extension to this doctrine which is the basis of the analogia entis, and which therefore describes the relationship between the human mode of being and the Divine. What he is condemning is the exclusiveness of the notion of participation in its application to man alone, leaving "all the rest",⁷ by which he means the world, as merely an addition. This is incompatible with Teilhard's theory of immanence, which gives an essential value to Matter,

but not only this, it also makes it impossible for him to maintain the concept of creative union which is the crux of his evolutionary movement. As it is traditionally understood, participation separates man from concrete existence, and therefore he cannot be the medium for the creative process which includes the world itself. Because of this the concept which, by analogy, confirms man's participation in the Divine Being, is described by Teilhard as a "self-styled revelation of man's uselessness",⁸ and so he says he allows himself "to criticise so sharply the notion of participation . . ."⁹ Nothing less than an extension of this concept to include the infinite potential of matter can support Teilhard's system, in the first place because matter itself is defined in terms of union with the Spirit, and secondly because he sees creation as in some sense, the "completion and fulfilment of the Absolute Being himself".¹⁰ This is a very controversial element in Teilhard's thought; but his position here is so clearly stated that it could hardly be questioned. In rejecting the complete self-sufficiency of the Divine, Teilhard points to the importance of looking

"more deeply into His immanent character . . . since it is in this immanence that the new vision of God that we look for consists".¹¹

This theory is developed in the "Activation of Energy", and he goes on to support it in terms of creative union and cosmogenic convergence. For Teilhard,

"to create is to unite; to unite is to form one with something; it is to be immersed in it; to be immersed is to become a particle within it",¹²

and therefore despite the traditional idea of transcendence

and self-sufficiency of Absolute Being,

"something characteristic of Him is inevitably impressed on nature since to some degree He informs it by causing it to emerge from non-being".¹³

This in itself does not appear to deny self-sufficiency, but Teilhard expands this by saying that

"some sort of complement is added to Him by the creative act, once the latter is expressible in terms of union"¹⁴

and this seems to say that given the basic premise of Being = Union, modification of self-sufficiency inevitably follows. In other parts of his work, Teilhard is not so clear on the question.

The idea that creation is in some way complementary to the Divine is often seriously criticised, whereas the fundamental proposition of creative union, of which it appears to be the logical necessity, seems generally to be acceptable.

As a consequence of his theory of the real relationship between the Creator and the totality of concrete existence, Teilhard replaces the "participated Being of extra-position and divergence" with "participated Being of pleromisation and convergence",¹⁵ which transforms the idea of creative Causality into creative Union, and this means that the Thomistic analogy is extended to include the world. Teilhard's position on the idea of participation may be summarised;

- (i) He rejects the narrow interpretation of this doctrine which appears to separate man from the world, thus allowing him no part in earthly fulfilment.

- [ii] Participation cannot support his theory of creation in which union with the Spirit is sole Cause.
- [iii] It goes against his idea of immanence as evolutionary motivation, in other words, given the doctrine of participation as it stands, the theory of spiritual evolution which Teilhard proposes is without foundation.

[b] The element of contingency Émile Rideau says that for Teilhard,

"the total freedom of creation is associated with the rejection of its arbitrary character",¹⁶

and Teilhard himself says that

"to create, even for omnipotence, should not be understood as an instantaneous act, but as a process or act of synthesis".¹⁷

The idea of process follows the orthodox teaching of the perfection of the Creator in contrast to the imperfection of the creature, a state which Teilhard says, excludes the possibility of direct contact, and so man's need for the development of a capacity which will allow communication, and finally union with God. The omnipotent creative act also takes the form of a transition from the initial state of radical dispersion to that of a "final harmony",¹⁸ a view of creation necessary to Teilhard, since he maintains that even the multiple "at the opposite pole from God",¹⁹ has the potentiality of participated being. So far, this seems to be more or less a re-statement of Teilhard's own position, but it is as far as he can go with contingency, for it cannot support the vital element of creative union or its inevitable consequence of spiritual evolution.

This seems to be the main reason why Teilhard rejects the idea of a contingent creation, and urges the acceptance of a relationship between God and the cosmos which is not merely that of efficient causation, but which will freely permit the development of an evolutionary system which proposes the Spirit as a becoming Presence in existence. This would replace the entrenched scholastic position in which, Teilhard says, the world is "merely accessory".²⁰ A doctrine which would allow the idea of creation as happening within an historic and dynamic world situation is as necessary to-day, according to Teilhard, as was the "Logos" doctrine to the early theologians who were describing a static world.

Teilhard's objection to contingent creation appears to be two-fold; in the first place, it seems to deny any purpose in the whole cosmic arrangement; secondly, because it implies a once-for-all event, it leaves no room for a continuous process, for, in denying the essential value which immanence confers, there remains no basis on which a spiritual fulfilment of the earth itself can be maintained.

[c] Creation as a Gratuitous Act as it is defined in scholasticism is criticised by Teilhard for two reasons.

[i] In the first place, the God of the medieval concept is always transcendent, and Teilhard admits the difficulty of applying the usual attributes of such a God to what he calls "the God of evolution".²¹ As the world is something apart from the scholastic Transcendent, so man is separate from the world, a theology which Teilhard sees as

destructive, not only of human dignity, but also of the possibility of any meaningful place for human activity. Creation seen as more or less the whim of Divine benevolence fails to answer the 'why' of the world or of human existence, for

"What need is filled by the fundamental fragmentation of being, driven from its source before returning to it?".²²

This is the question, Teilhard says, which must be answered if the value of human life and the true nature of the Incarnation is to be fully understood. In place of the benevolent act, Teilhard proposes a new understanding in which 'God creates by Love' is no longer a statement to be believed, but a progressive force to be experienced. His theory of creation by the unifying force of Love begins from the analogy of physics, in which acceleration creates the material mass, from which Teilhard claims that in the same way union generates being, and therefore, as Émile Rideau says, he proposes Unire in place of Esse. This establishes the all-important principle which maintains that the phenomenon of being is defined by union. It is an equation which is already justified in Teilhard's concept of Matter, in which the first element is not being but union which generates being out of pure multiplicity. This primacy of the Spirit is important to the doctrine of Love for two reasons, in the first place because it confirms the reality of Spirit-Matter as the fundamental principle of existence, and secondly, it identifies unification as the creative process. Since Love alone has the power to unite,

Teilhard is saying that creative evolution proceeds according to the force of Love. In philosophical terms, it establishes the priority of consciousness over existence accounting for the otherwise inexplicable attraction between the elemental particles, the tendency towards union even "in the molecule itself",²³ without which, Teilhard says, Love could not appear in "hominised form".²⁴ In a metaphysics of union, the creative act has a "sharply defined significance and structure,"²⁵ which in an analogous way is a sort of "trinitisation",²⁶ and the parallel which Teilhard seems to be indicating is the creative ascent of mankind into the unity of a common consciousness, as of one person, but a one-ness which nevertheless maintains and intensifies individual identity.

Although Teilhard opposes the scholastic doctrine of creation by Love as it stands, mainly because it is a static understanding formulated for the needs of a static world, his own theory is a re-statement of the creative power of Divine Love applied to the discoveries of science and the various levels of human experience.

[ii] A second point on which Teilhard finds the early statement of creation by Love as unsatisfactory, is on the question of "need". He sees a concept of Love which is not response to need as both inexplicable and degrading, and he includes this element in an evolution of Love which responds to an ever increasing need for unification towards a more profound experience of Love. The most rudimentary form of Matter comes into existence as a result of the need for union with the Spirit, and although

"still bedewed with the multiple",²⁷ by token of its existence, it is already possessed of the seed of Love. In the progress of this "current of Love"²⁸ the need in human life gives birth to humanity itself, and "the new need"²⁹ of spiritualised consciousness for communion centre to centre produces the Ultra-Humanity. From the inherent need for the Absolute, which Teilhard calls "the sacred appetite for being"³⁰ comes the irreversible unity in Omega, in which there is the final discovery of self-identity in differentiated union. This evolutionary progress of Love can be discovered in the various definitions which Teilhard applies throughout his work. For example, in "The Phenomenon of Man" which discusses the nature of Matter, Love is defined as

" . . . the more or less direct trace marked on the element by the psychical curvature of the universe upon itself",³¹

a definition which sets Love within the radial sphere and therefore relates it to the movement of centricity, which is the same as to say of greater complexity and closer union. In the further development of evolution which this accomplishes, the curve of centricity becomes more clear, and Love is now seen as

" . . . the internal affectively apprehended aspect of the affinity which draws together the elements of the world centre to centre",³²

and in this definition Love has progressed from the mutual attraction on the atomic level which sets Matter in motion, into the influence of "the pull of the living".³³ Because it is a conscious affinity between centre and centre, this stage in the evolution of Love marks the

beginning of the "rise of the other",³⁴ for here the vague atomic sympathy becomes hominised and is transformed into Love. This qualitative ascent in category of Love as a consequence of advancing centricity, also means an increased complexity of the thinking particles, which in turn means greater power of creative unification, and further, because it is movement between individual centres of consciousness what is being created must be of a quality which exceeds the mere sum of the centres. Teilhard is making this point when he speaks of a "synthesis" of man, which indicates a qualitative rise, and he confirms this when he says that

"... consciousness in mankind taken as a whole, is greater than the sum of individual consciousness",

a distinction which becomes more definite as consciousness moves more deeply into the abyss of complexity, that is, towards its own infinity.

From the moment that the potentiality of non-being becomes the actuality of being through union with the Spirit, Teilhard sees the progress of Love as invincible and therefore he identifies Love as Energy in applying the definition -

"Love is the higher and universal form of spiritual energy in which all the energies of the soul are transformed and exalted the moment they enter the field of Omega".³⁵

Because this form of energy is the only existent force which has the capacity to unite, Teilhard is saying that evolution cannot proceed except in relation to an increasing power and quality of Love.

The importance of sexuality within a cosmic system based on union, is recognised by Teilhard, since it is as "structurally essential"³⁶ here as it is to every organised system of thought, and he rules out any developed theory, whether it be of philosophy or religion, which fails to find a place for this most fundamental reality. Sexual love is the "most universal, most formidable, and most mysterious of cosmic energies",³⁷ and the definition which applies here, "Love is the word we use to designate attractions which are personal in nature".³⁸ Despite its inherent power, however, this form of Love is selective and exclusive, and in the course of evolutionary ascent even this will be surpassed, and without ceasing to be physical, sexual love will become spiritualised. It will come about as the inevitable effect of the "novel environment"³⁹ created by the emergence of Thought, and this will evolve among individuals enabling them to develop the

"faculty for associating with and reacting upon one another, no longer for the preservation of the species, but for the creation of a common consciousness".⁴⁰

The evolution of such a consciousness will mean that the "other"⁴¹ is no longer a "closed fragment",⁴² for it will be the discovery of each other as not merely the elements of the same thing, but as a "single Spirit in search of itself".⁴³ The spiritualisation of sexual love as it gradually becomes detached from "the flesh",⁴⁴ is Teilhard's answer to what the future development of love might be within the evolutionary nature of qualitative

change, and it leads to his final definition of Love.

Aided by a new form of psychic energy, the "personalising depths of Love"⁴⁵ will combine with the totalisation of what is essential and most universal in the heart of the cosmos, a description of the power of Love in the process of transition from individual to Person. The difference between these two terms as Teilhard uses them is of great importance. He defines 'individuality' not simply as distinction, but as separateness, a definition which implies a resistance to unification and a tendency towards the multiple. Person is defined in terms of "irreplaceable uniqueness",⁴⁶ and so is a cardinal fact in a universe which is evolving towards a unity, which, under the law of union, is differentiated.

In finally describing its essential function as personalisation, Teilhard is indicating the ultimate progression of Love into the supreme quality of Caritas, that power which sanctifies all degrees of human love, and marks the beginning of a new phase in the cosmic process of spiritualisation which Teilhard calls "the epoch of Personality".⁴⁷ Caritas is not acquired but is bestowed as human life advances to become absorbed in the Spirit, and as Teilhard says, it radiates from the creative Centre of Omega to be transmitted centre to centre by the process of "amorisation".⁴⁸ The term "amorisation" is a key-concept in Teilhard because it describes the means by which the earth itself becomes enveloped in a common bond of Love, and he defines it as,

"... the magnetic attraction of an objective that is capable, because its nature is super-personal, of releasing deep in our souls the forces of Love, besides which other forms of spiritual energy fade into insignificance and are as nothing".⁴⁹

This "Breakthrough into Amorisation",⁵⁰ as Teilhard describes it, is an essential consequence of the cosmic event of Reflection, for here the evolution of complexity/consciousness reaches its fullest extent in the recognition of a collective destiny realised by a common consciousness.

This is the mark of the Ultra-Human, which, because it is a synthesis, is of a quality superior to the sum of the conscious parts, and this means that the more "other" each thinking particle becomes, the more profoundly it discovers itself as "self".⁵¹

Teilhard gives his own brief summary of the ascent of Love. At first, he says,

"Love seems to be no more than a charm, but later becomes the 'essence of all spiritual activity'. Gradually through experience, it becomes 'the chief part of that activity', and finally reaches its only and supreme form - Sola Caritas."⁵²

Summary

Teilhard rejects the scholastic statement 'God creates by Love' as it stands, because it was formulated to serve the need of an age which regarded creation as static. He replaces this with a concept of Love, which, because it unifies, is creative and which operates in an evolutionary way in existence.

His theory of Love begins with the primal elements of Matter which are seen to move towards association under

the influence of some hidden attraction, effecting a continuous creation by means of a process of unification. It is this 'sympathy' on the material level, Teilhard says, which gives the assurance of Love in the hominised layer.

The correspondence of complexity and consciousness continues on the level of Reflection, and the power of Love operating on the particles of conscious centres creates by uniting these in an ever closer union, analogous to the process on the material level, finally achieving the common consciousness of an Ultra-Humanity.

This is the last phase of evolution, in which a Totalised Humanity turns in upon itself as each individual finds his own unique Personality in differentiated identity with a central Person. This is the power of Love in the ultimate form of Caritas.

The evolution of Love can be seen in the various definitions which Teilhard applies throughout his work, indicating the qualitative progression from the mutual attraction within the atom to the supreme level of Caritas which completes and fulfils human life in the spiritual quality of Person.

Discussion

Teilhard's theory of Love is open to criticism, and much of this seems to centre on his rejection of creation by Love as it is traditionally understood. Henri de Lubac says that Teilhard left verbal problems behind, and appears deliberately to have entered the

field of doctrine because he wanted to deal with creation. The subject had been in Teilhard's thoughts since his earliest writings, and he seems to have worked towards an ever more precise definition of the creative act in relation to the evolutionary theory. As early as 1917 he had given his work the title Creative Union, [L'Union Créatrice], following "Creative Evolution",⁵³ beginning the development of his metaphysics of union, but as late as 1948 he could write that he could

"not shut his eyes to the precarious and provisional element in such a metaphysics."⁵⁴

In rejecting the criticism that in Teilhard "the mystery of creation ex nihilo"⁵⁵ is radically excluded, Henri de Lubac points out that Teilhard affirms that "God could dispense with the world",⁵⁶ and that he explains the element of "inevitability" which is undoubtedly present in his work, as "a consequence upon the free will of the Creator".⁵⁷ Teilhard's position with regard to the doctrine ex nihilo has already been discussed, and from this it may be said that he strengthens this doctrine by re-stating it in terms more acceptable to the modern mind already familiar with the 'Nothing'. The extremely dispersed multiple which Teilhard describes as Nothingness is not in existence, but awaits the Spirit, in other words the Divine Fiat by which it comes into being through unification. This also answers de Lubac's question as to whether the metaphysics of union implies a co-existence of Matter with God, for what Teilhard is describing in the idea of radical multiplicity is in no

sense matter, not even in its most vague or formless state, but is a unifiable potential, which, together with the principle of unification, forms the terms of the dialectic which bring the synthesis of Matter into existence. The question does not arise in Teilhard's major work which is essentially an examination of the human phenomenon, and it is nowhere suggested that man himself is ex nihilo, since he is formed from matter already in existence, and owes his being to an act of union.

Henri de Lubac admits that Teilhard " . . . did not achieve a perfectly clear and coherent formulation of his thought"⁵⁸ on a precise definition of the nature of the creative act, nevertheless it cannot be said that he rejects or compromises creation ex nihilo.

In discussing Teilhard's rejection of the traditional statement, God creates by Love, Nicolas Corte says that Teilhard "lacked a profound enough view of Love",⁵⁹ and goes on to say that for this reason, he "Speaks readily of the Incarnation, but less readily of the Redemption".⁶⁰ Corte is in agreement here with Louis Cognet's criticism, that on the idea of Love as well as on other points, Teilhard seems to have expressed theories inadmissible to traditional Christian doctrine.

The answer which is to be found in Teilhard returns once again to the fact that a static theology of the medieval period cannot meet the needs of the present time, in which science has shown that constant evolutionary movement is an observable fact. Formerly, Teilhard says, "all that was needed for our emotional and intellectual

satisfaction"⁶¹ was a Creator of the "efficient"⁶² type, whereas a universe which is accepted as evolutionary needs a God of the "animating"⁶³ type, the God of creative union rather than the God of efficient Cause, and Teilhard seems to be saying that theology has still to come to terms with the scientifically confirmed fact of evolution.

From the pastoral point of view, he sees the events of Christianity as having been presented in a perfectly viable way, but intellectually these can only be seen as an "arbitrary series of events"⁶⁴ which are not organically connected. Speaking on this point, Norbert Wildiers refers to the "open question"⁶⁵ which has been left regarding the true place of Incarnation, and whether this event should be seen as arising from human fault, having therefore only an accidental significance, or whether the supreme revelation of God was the summit of the original plan of creation. This is the alternative in Christian theology between the Thomistic and the Scotist view, and it may be seen that Teilhard tends towards the latter position, in which Incarnation is an integral part of the creative act. Teilhard applies his evolutionary theory as a continuation of a theology which will confirm the significance of Incarnation as an active principle in creation, for, as Wildiers says,

"the whole point of the exercise for him, is to indicate the place of Christ in a creation with an evolving and convergent character".⁶⁶

It is not surprising, therefore, that Teilhard should focus his attention on this event through which he hopes to establish an organic connection between the Person of

Christ and a world in evolution. Because of this, it is true to say, Teilhard's understanding of the Redemption emphasises an aspect different from that of the expiatory role which is usually understood. As his system develops, God is seen to be no less prime mover from a future point in terms of time and existence than He is in the scholastic doctrine, and He cannot be this, Teilhard says, unless He is both incarnate and redeeming. He sees the act of Redemption as inseparable from "Christification", which is Christ universalised in an active way, redeeming man and the earth through a re-creation in which Love is the motivating principle. What Teilhard seems to be saying, is that man is redeemed by becoming fully created.

It seems fair to say that this view is not radically different from patristic theology, and may even be seen as its extension. Patristic doctrine includes the redemption of the earth itself, and just as Teilhard was earlier seen to have extended the notion of "participation" to the cosmos to meet the needs of modern evolutionary thinking, so now he seems to be applying the patristic understanding of Redemption in a cosmic sense. The difference would have to be noted, however, that the scholastic doctrine of "participation" is theo-centric, whereas Teilhard is speaking of a Christic-centricity.

He justifies this by reference to the words of St. Paul, that Christ will incorporate all things to Himself,⁶⁷ and from the standpoint of modern knowledge, Teilhard is saying that this applies not only to man, for He must carry the "noogenesis of the cosmos to the natural term of

its maturity",⁶⁸ and this means that every layer of evolution including the cosmic power of Reflection, and "the totality of the psychic potential involved in the earth",⁶⁹ will be redeemed by unification in the course of an evolutionary Love.

While Emile Rideau says that Teilhard

"does not seem sufficiently to have retained in the Redemption, its aspect of God's judgement of history . . . ".⁷⁰

he goes on to say that

"we should note that the Church has allowed theologians great freedom in interpreting the mystery of Redemption, and that theology has gradually moved away from an over-juridical concept of the redemptive act towards one that emphasises the element of Love".⁷¹

It is this freedom which Teilhard appears to be claiming, and again he seems to see his theory of redemption by the creative process as authenticated in patristic theology, for he says,

"in the dogmas of the Redemption, Christian thought and piety has primarily concentrated on . . . the idea of expiatory reparation. Right from the beginning, however, the picture included another element - and this a positive one, - of re-construction and re-creation".⁷²

Teilhard points out that this aspect was already well established in Augustine.

Nicolas Corte agrees with a patristic source for Teilhard's theory of Redemption and says,

"To a juridical conception of Redemption, Teilhard prefers a conception which he got from the Greek Fathers . . . ".⁷³

It is this which critics must know they are condemning when Teilhard's theory is rejected.

In an evolutionary process of salvation such as Teilhard suggests, the question naturally arises as to what significance is to be placed on "the Cross" in this case. Again this is a point on which Teilhard is open to criticism. His position with regard to the relevance of the Cross is expressed most clearly, it seems, in the "Milieu Divin", where he is seen to be completely against the practice of the Cross

"presented for our adoration not so much as a sublime end to be attained by transcending ourselves",⁷⁴

but as the "symbol of sadness, limitation and repression,"⁷⁵ which implies that "the Kingdom of God is established in mourning".⁷⁶ Teilhard sees this as something which goes against the current of man's energies and aspirations, and he wants to see an attitude in which the Cross symbolises

"not so much the expiation of fault, but the rising up of creation through effort . . . bearing not only the sin, but also the burden of the world's progress".⁷⁷

Seen in this way, Teilhard says, the Cross takes on a new gravity as the focal point of "an action whose intensity is inexpressible" of One who "leads the course of universal progress towards God".⁷⁸

It is an orientation in Christian thinking which fails to satisfy critics such as Nicolas Corte, who says that although Teilhard

"often returns to the mystery of the Cross, he no longer gives it its full meaning",⁷⁹

or of Louis Cognet, who reminds Teilhard of the meaning of the Cross as the "final and absolutely gratuitous

summit of Love".⁸⁰ Again it may be true to say that Teilhard wants to extend the symbol of the Cross beyond the confines of faith into the dimensions of a cosmic salvation effected by a cosmic Love. In this case, Henri de Lubac should have the last word, for he says that if Teilhard's thought sometimes seems too extreme,

"we should not take exception to it until we are sure that it is only because of what we have been used to",⁸¹

as happens so often in the field of theological thinking.

NOTESTHE DOCTRINE OF LOVE

1. Cuenot, "Teilhard de Chardin", p. 13.
2. Ibid., p. 13.
3. Ibid., p. 292.
4. R.M. Wildiers, "An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin", p. 122.
5. Cuenot, "Teilhard de Chardin", p. 13.
6. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", pp. 187-8.
7. Teilhard de Chardin, "Contingence de l'univers et gout humain de survivre".
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 54.
11. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 263.
12. Ibid., p. 262-3.
13. Ibid., p. 263n.
14. Ibid., p. 263n.
15. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 54.
16. Rideau, "Teilhard de Chardin", p. 153.
17. Teilhard de Chardin, "Christologie et Évolution", 1933.
18. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 263.
19. Ibid., p. 263n.
20. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 308.
21. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Énergie humaine", p. 88.
22. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Making of a Mind", p. 268.
23. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 290.
24. Ibid., p. 290.
25. Teilhard de Chardin, "Comment je vois".
26. Ibid.

27. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 46.
28. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 51.
29. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Activation de l'énergie", p. 96.
30. Teilhard de Chardin, "Milieu Divin", p. 79.
31. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 291.
32. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 70.
33. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 48.
34. Ibid., p. 48.
35. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 171.
36. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Énergie Humaine", p. 91.
37. Teilhard de Chardin, "Écrits du temps de la guerre", p. 253.
38. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Énergie humaine", p. 90.
39. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 54.
40. Ibid., p. 55.
41. Ibid., p. 55.
42. Ibid., p. 92.
43. Ibid., p. 92.
44. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Activation de l'énergie", p. 96.
45. Ibid., p. 227.
46. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Apparition de l'homme", p. 269.
47. Teilhard de Chardin.
48. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 50.
49. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 191.
50. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 52.
51. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 288.
52. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 52.
53. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 198. In giving the title "L'Union Créatrice" to his essay on evolution [1917], Teilhard had in mind Henri Bergson's "Creative Evolution" and he indicates that this work is helpful in understanding his own theory.

54. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Union Créative", "Comment je Vois".
55. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 195.
56. Teilhard de Chardin, "Comment je Vois", p, 18.
57. Teilhard de Chardin, "Vision of the Past", p. 131n.
58. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 200.
59. Nicolas Corte, "Pierre Teilhard de Chardin", p, 100.
60. Ibid., p. 93.
61. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 262.
62. Ibid., p. 262.
63. Ibid., p. 262.
64. Ibid., p. 263.
65. N.W. Wildiers, "An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin", p. 132.
66. Ibid., p. 134.
67. Eph, 1-10.
68. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 264.
69. Ibid., p. 264.
70. Émile Rideau, "Teilhard de Chardin, A guide to his thought", p. 171.
71. Ibid., p. 549.
72. "Le Christ Evaluteur", p. 548, quoted Émile Rideau.
73. Nicolas Corte, "Teilhard de Chardin", p, 101.
74. Teilhard de Chardin, "Milieu Divin", p, 101.
75. Ibid., p. 102.
76. Ibid., p. 102
77. Ibid., p. 102f.
78. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Énergie Humaine", p. 65.
79. Nicolas Corte, "Teilhard de Chardin", p. 93f.

80. Louis Cognet, "Pere Teilhard de Chardin and Contemporary Thought", p. 129.
81. Henri Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 194.

Omega

The full meaning and significance of the concept of Omega in Teilhard emerges only as his evolutionary theory reaches its final development. Henri de Lubac is making this point in saying that when Teilhard writes of Omega,¹ he does not always mean the same thing, and this is to say that the reality which the term indicates is understood only by degrees. For example, an early definition of Omega speaks of it as the meeting place of the successive layers of space and time, which, because they are necessarily convergent,

"must somewhere ahead become involuted to a point which we might call Omega",²

which both integrates these two aspects of existence and fuses them into itself. This is a preliminary description of the nature and function of a centre of convergence, a point which it is said, is only "provisionally called Omega",³ at a particular stage in the development of Teilhard's theory of convergent evolution. In the philosophical sense, Omega is the "one true essence of all things",⁴ but later the more profound meaning begins to emerge when Teilhard defines this point as "a Divine centre of convergence"⁵ which lies at the heart of the universe prolonged along the axis of complexity.

The descriptions which Teilhard uses are progressive in terms of evolution, and lead to an understanding of Omega as the ultimate completion of the various strands of the evolutionary movement. Omega marks the final

achievement of the co-related activity of complexity/ consciousness operating on the level of Reflection, producing the highest possible cosmic complexity of centres of consciousness, which in turn means that it is the realisation of an absolute unity in cosmic centricity, the final accomplishment of creative synthesis, and therefore the maximum power of convergence. Through this process, Teilhard envisages a relationship between centres of consciousness which is intimate to the point of transparency, but the cohesion of conscious particles, however complete, is not spiritualisation, and is only the necessary yet still insufficient condition of this finality. The self must be known before it is fulfilled, and the only means of reaching self-realisation in its fullness is through a correspondingly complete unification of Mankind in the emergence of "a common soul of humanity".⁶

The totalisation of the human race, of which Teilhard so often speaks, is related in his thought to what he calls "the sense of the Whole",⁷ and this in turn is of essential importance to the discovery of self-identity, by which Teilhard means the awareness in each individual of what is most incommunicable and unique in his own inner being. Since this kind of knowledge is attained only gradually and in accordance with unification, it follows that it is complete when maximum unification is arrived at, at which point the individual particle may finally converge as a self-aware element within the synthetic Whole. Teilhard's use of the term "sens" is important to an understanding of the process of self-

knowledge. M. Barthélemy-Madaule points out that he uses the word with great precision, meaning neither "sensation" nor "perception", since it

"surpasses the subjectivity of the first by a particular element of transcendence, and cannot be particularised within the subjectivity of the second",⁸

and this seems to mean that "sens" as used by Teilhard should be understood as indicating an intuitive or spiritual quality. To some extent this fills a gap in Teilhard's work in which the faculty of intuition is not developed in relation to a spiritualised consciousness, as it so clearly is in other systems which also propose a spiritual evolution.⁹

"The Way of Synthesis"¹⁰ [the new road of the West] is described by Teilhard as "the right road and the true road"¹¹ and it is the method on which he constructs his evolutionary theory. Love is the power which motivates evolution, and a continuous synthetic build-up is the means by which it progresses. "In the light of pure reason," Teilhard writes, "nothing in the universe is intelligible, living, and consistent, except through an element of synthesis . . .".¹²

This confirms the basic fact necessary to Teilhard, that Matter as the first element in existence is already a synthesis, produced by the union of the radically dispersed Multiple with the Spirit, the very inception of "The natural complexity of the stuff of the universe".¹³ In positing the dialectic of unity and multiplicity which

allows the synthesis of Matter, Teilhard seems to be establishing two factors of importance to his evolutionary theory, since it is this unity in complexity which [a] constitutes the condition for the actuality of existence for Matter;

[b] permits its extension in terms of further synthesis.

The significance of these two points is, that it is by token of the first that Teilhard can propose that Being = Union, thus establishing the causal principle of Creative Union; the second is the starting point of the succession of qualitatively higher syntheses which will achieve closer union and therefore higher consciousness, in association 'with enhanced powers of centration. It is within this context that Teilhard speaks of "The law of centration by synthesis",¹⁴ and viewed in its fullest extent, this means that all the particles in existence are essentially related to each other, or as Teilhard says,

"are dependant upon one another ontologically in the ascending order of their true being",¹⁵

and therefore everything in the cosmos forms one complete whole. Further, because Teilhard is speaking of synthesis and not merely of a composition of parts, the synthetic entity must be of a higher quality than the associated elements and he quite rightly says that

"everything is something more than the elements of which it is composed".¹⁶

The true significance of this statement is discovered on the level of mankind totalised into the Ultra-human. Just as the additional factor is the limited property of every temporary whole in the ascent of evolution, so it is the

unlimited property of the Ultimate Whole, by participation in which man becomes himself and is created.

Claude Cuenot describes Teilhard's use of the evolutionary build-up by synthesis; he says,

"evolution shows us that the real progresses through a series of syntheses, in the course of which the many appears in continually more complex and highly organised forms, passing through successive stages of consciousness; a new plurality coming into being to allow a higher synthesis"¹⁷

and it is only when Teilhard's method of progression is appreciated that the essence of his theory as a movement from quantity into quality is fully understood. Teilhard seems to be aware of this, for speaking of "The Phenomenon of Man", he says,

"For a correct understanding of what is said and what is not said . . . it should be noted that the book represents only the beginnings of a pendulum-like dialectic. . .",¹⁸

and he seems to be making the further point that the true meaning of his work cannot be found in the "Phenomenon" alone.

Development by synthesis in Teilhard is not only the creative evolution of unity and therefore of consciousness and so of centricity, for this also means an associated progress in freedom. Increasing complexity is inevitably an increase in the measure of freedom for as Henri de Lubac says,

"The mechanism of synthesis is continually charged . . . with freedom".¹⁹

For Teilhard, the process moves from the synthesis of molecules which "permit elementary freedoms",²⁰ through an on-going build-up of "freedoms" from the qualitative

viewpoint, into a final ascent which is the "triumph of freedom"²¹ in the ultimate reconciliation which is the synthesis of determinism and freedom in Omega.

At the point of the evolutionary creation or "maturing"²² of man by "unanimity in a common spirit",²³ the various strands of Teilhard's thought merge into faith, for here the

" . . . Pauline Christ [the great Christ of the mystics] coincides with the universal term Omega, adumbrated by our philosophy"²⁴

and this means that "Omnia in Omnibus Christus"²⁵ is finally seen to be the "very definition of Omega".²⁶ The "vague centre of convergence of evolution"²⁷ is replaced by, an understanding of the ultimate end of the process as culminating in "the personal and defined reality of the Word Incarnate"²⁸ in which everything acquires its own identity and has its place.

There are many points on which Teilhard's use of the term "Omega" is ambiguous. In the first place, it is immanent and active in the arrangement of the cosmic elements of Matter, and yet it is transcendent, since to be Omega, "it must escape from the time and space which it gathers together".²⁹

Secondly, it must be "supremely present"³⁰ and yet it is discovered to us at the "end of the whole process"³¹ since it is itself the culmination of the movement of synthesis. This means that Omega is partially actual and at the same time "partially transcendent",³² a duality which is evident in Teilhard's description of the four attributes which he lists as - autonomy, actuality,

irreversibility, and transcendence, giving the impression of something which is active in the world which it claims to transcend. Émile Rideau says that

"Omega Point belongs to something that is beyond representation and can only be expressed in the dialectical couple, Finite - infinite,"³³

which means that Teilhard's Omega is "at once God and not God".³⁴

The idea of a partial transcendence in the form of temporary transcendence is not in itself ruled out, as experienced for example in the phenomenon of intuition which transcends sensory dependence and yet occurs within the finite. What makes the difference in considering Teilhard's view is the fact that he proposes a Whole which, in the first place because of identification as essence, and secondly because of his own definition, is both indivisible and irreversible. To apply both categories of finite and infinite therefore, is to introduce the possibility of divisibility and reversibility, and the certainty of incompleteness in some sense, and this seems to establish a fundamental contradiction.

Because of this, Omega as the end of synthesis appears to be an unacceptable proposition within the given terms, since such an end implies the freedom from contradiction which a finite/infinite, actual/transcendent Omega fails to achieve.

Even if this objection could be overcome through some unexplored possibility, a major problem still remains, and is summed up in Teilhard's statement that,

"To satisfy the ultimate requirements of our

action, Omega must be independent of the collapse of the forces with which evolution is woven",³⁵

and this leads to the question of how the finite dimension escapes the inexorable law of dissipation which applies to everything in space and time.

The Destiny of Matter

In the "Phenomenon of Man" Teilhard gives a tentative answer to the problem of the degradation of Matter, and again it is one which combines the universality of science and the particularity of faith. The radial nucleus, Teilhard says,

"... finds its ... consistency in gravitating against the tide of probability towards a divine focus of mind which draws it onward"³⁶

and therefore "something in the cosmos escapes from entropy".³⁷ This can only mean that he sees tangential energy alone as accounting for the dissipation of the world, and it paves the way for a more detailed solution which involves the final break-up of the co-operation between the two energies, and so the end of the relationship of complexity/consciousness. As psychic energy becomes less dependent on organisation, due to increased curvature, as reflexion of energy becomes more dynamic and concentrated in increasing convergence, the force of arrangement becomes less necessary and is finally dispensable. Here a reversal of equilibrium occurs which Teilhard likens to that of "a body which crosses the gravitational field between two planets,"³⁸ for the grains of thought have become the indestructible atoms of

the universe and continue to build it in the inverse direction of Matter which vanishes.

This means that to the extent to which it is personalised, the particle of consciousness is progressively released from the need of material complexity, and the complex structure falls back towards the multiple. Only then does the reflective element, fully unified upon itself, meet "the ultimate Pole of all convergence".³⁹ So far Teilhard's answer to the problem of inevitable destruction is one which would appear to satisfy the scientist, for he is saying that evolution into Omega escapes this universal law because it is an entity which emerges following the total dissipation of Matter. In speaking of Omega as the end of an evolutionary series, Teilhard is not proposing a suspension of physical laws to accommodate his theory, for he has taken them into account. Psychic or radial energy resists destruction by becoming subject to a different influence which both sustains and attracts it ever further from the threat of corruptibility; tangential energy ceases to operate as a force of arrangement. The final dissolution of what was earlier regarded as a causal relationship between the two energies is recognised by Teilhard as an inevitable element in his theory, for he says that,

"We can draw but one conclusion from the evolutionary conflict between the without [which is limited] and the within [which knows no limit] of the noosphere; that we must see an internal break between the two aspects of the phenomenon. We are forced to conceive that beyond a certain critical value, centration can in some way or other continue independently of the physio-chemical

synthesis that was necessary in a first phase, for its initiation; the centre throwing off its cell of complication".⁴⁰

This has several important consequences for Teilhard's theory.

[i] In the first place, however completely it may solve the problem of the finite in its relation to entropy, it seems to contradict the earlier proposition of complexity/consciousness as an infinite activity. It now seems that as evolution approaches Omega this combination appears to have served a purpose, after which the relationship ceases as a process. Teilhard, it is true to say, is not proposing an end to complexity itself, or its relation to consciousness, but is simply saying that this continues without the help of any arrangement, and only by attraction. Nevertheless, the third infinity of Teilhard's theory, like the two which precede it, is rooted in scientific observation of Matter, but then moves towards a metaphysical concept which Henri de Lubac says is "too conjectural".⁴¹

[ii] There seems to be a hidden contradiction in proposing the collapse of tangential energy in view of Teilhard's statement that there is "a single energy operating in the world",⁴² that all energy is psychic in nature, and finally, that psychic, or radial energy escapes from entropy. This seems to be cancelled out by the theory that tangential energy, [which is presumably also psychic], is nevertheless completely expended.⁴³ From this it may seem that Teilhard wanted to keep within the laws of physics which as a scientist he accepted, and therefore

he could not propose the final transformation of Matter into the altered state which would allow its endurance. As Beatrice Bruteau says, Teilhard

"was obliged in the end to abandon that portion of the cosmos which he had sought to save",⁴⁴

and so he allows for a final and radical dispersal of Matter.

The power of reflection maintains centricity and the increase in consciousness continues, but with the dissipation of Matter a shift in equilibrium occurs, and "evolution will cross a new threshold of being".⁴⁵ By this Teilhard means that because of the altered state a new law will come into effect, and to the existing physical laws of conservation and degradation there will be added the "law of reflexion of energy",⁴⁶ by which he seems to say that the energy involved in evolution is not spent but is preserved by the reflexion of humanity upon itself.

[iii] A further consequence of the disintegration of Matter as evolution approaches Omega is the proposition that the free state, or consciousness unrelated to material organisation leads to what Emile Rideau describes as "a thinking without a brain"⁴⁷. Rideau discusses the possibility of such a state. Two factors seem to be relevant here;

[a] in Teilhard's theory evolution does not explain the

beginning of consciousness, for it is absolutely

primary and precedes any sort of material formation;

[b] the idea of consciousness existing without material

form is already developed in evolutionary philosophy.⁴⁸

As against this it could be said that the level of

reflection at which Matter disintegrates involves thought, and is therefore different in quality from the first tentative sympathy on the lowest levels. What is in question is the survival of the power of self-reflection, but this must be weighed against the often repeated emphasis in Teilhard that even Reflection is only the evolutionary disclosure of the infinite capability of a power which is one in essence, and once gained is irreversible.

Despite all possible explanations, however, Teilhard appears to have been uneasy with the idea of the break up of complexity/consciousness and the fall of Matter, for he asks the question - "Can it break away like this?"⁴⁹ In answer to his own question, Teilhard says that it can on one condition,

"that we presuppose at the extreme limit of the axis of synthesis and of time, the existence of a centre of the second species - not emerging and moved - but a centre already emerged and actively moving, of universal convergence. As soon as we recognise such a centre, which I shall call Omega, it becomes reasonable to conclude that the grains of consciousness produced evolutively by noogenesis . . . fall into a new field of attraction".⁵⁰

In this new field, attraction operates not simply on the complex structures as it did on the lower levels, but on the basic foundation of the grains, that is, on their centres regardless of structure. This is the universe beginning to be inverted upon itself, the apex of the cone in which

"an intangible physics of centres succeeds the tangible physics of centration",⁵¹

and because there is a complete turning back of the Spirit

upon an interior pole of "consistence and total unification"⁵² a condition of Hyper-centration follows centration. This Teilhard describes as "escape in depth . . . or ecstasis".⁵³

To the question therefore, of what is the final destiny of Matter as evolution approaches Omega, it should be said that the utmost limit of complexity and centration will be marked by a loss in equilibrium, which means that a different field of attraction will come into effect, "detaching the Spirit fulfilled at last from its material matrix"⁵⁴ to rest in God-Omega. Much earlier, in a letter of 1917, Teilhard had written that

"the liberation of Matter is an extra-transformist phenomenon [concept] which belongs more to idealist philosophy than to a scientific examination of things",⁵⁵

but nevertheless, taken to its final conclusion, his evolutionary theory describes the gradual release of Spirit from the confines of Matter, the appropriate end of which is liberation rather than divinisation.

Complexity/Consciousness in Retrospect

The relationship of complexity/consciousness should now be viewed from the retrospective point of the final end of Matter. Earlier it was suggested that, unlike other systems which also propose an infinity of complexity and consciousness, a causal relationship seems to be inescapable in Teilhard's theory, and this appears to have the support of Émile Rideau, and the reluctant acceptance of Norbert Wildiers. Thomas Aykara, however,

says that "we have to be careful not to infer any causal connection",⁵⁶ and he proposes a "parallelism"⁵⁷ as the proper position.

It would be difficult to relate this view to Teilhard's theory of the final dissipation of Matter as coinciding with the passing of consciousness into the free state, for without an inter-relatedness such a cataclysmic event and the simultaneous transformation which it represents, would seem to be no more than accidental. Any meaningful influence of material complexity on quality of consciousness appears to be ruled out by a mere parallelism, and despite the question of causal arrangement, Teilhard confirms an 'undoubted but indefinable co-operation between the inner and the outer. ["They are constantly associated and in some way pass into each other".]⁵⁸

Even although a causal situation is not clearly stated in the early stages of Teilhard's system, the end of Matter as occurring at a point at which a particular purpose seems to have been served, the fullness of evolution attained through "the dissociation of Matter",⁵⁹ the simultaneous nature of release and dissipation, all tend to confirm that a causal link has always existed between inner intensification and outer complexity. To say otherwise would seem to say that entropy triumphs, and that therefore there can be no meaningful purpose or logical end for Matter, and this would be unacceptable since Spirit is a co-definition of Matter.

Conversely, if evolution is seen as the gradual release of the Spirit by means of the progressive ascent

of Matter, then the fall of Matter is already built in to Teilhard's theory of Creative Union. This proposes that only what is unified can exist, and the release of the Spirit means that Matter has lost the principle of unity and falls into non-existence. Because this is an inevitability inherent in the creative act, it is not altered however the relationship of complexity and consciousness is understood. Teilhard's theory of the dissolution of Matter can be accounted for either by a metaphysics of union, or by the scientific principle of entropy.

Thomas Aykara sees the break-up of complexity/consciousness earlier in the evolutionary process, for he says,

"The law of complexity/consciousness is transformed into the law of growing amorisation".⁶⁰

This perhaps leaves out the fact that in the phase of amorisation, complexity takes on a different form. In the initial stages, evolution worked on elements of Matter; with Reflection on grains of Thought; with amorisation on individual centres, as a process which

"brings individuals together, not superficially and tangentially, but centre to centre".⁶¹

As Teilhard indicates here, with the "breakthrough"⁶² into amorisation, tangential energy which corresponds to the physical law of arrangement operative on the material level, is becoming less necessary, and will finally be discarded at the point of "total amorisation".⁶³ This point Teilhard describes as "the conjunction of Christ with Omega",⁶⁴ the stage at which "the Whole itself has

become person". It is an absolute in synthesis therefore, and appears to be the true end of the complexity/consciousness partnership.

Brief mention should be made of undeveloped comments which are to be found in Teilhard concerning the end of Matter. For instance, in "Le Milieu Divin" he speaks of "the whole divinisable substance of Matter"⁶⁵ as passing into "the souls of men", and this may relate to that element in patristic theology which proclaims the redemption of the earth itself through Man, who, through the act of his creation carries it within him. Later in "The Phenomenon of Man" he speaks of consciousness becoming "co-extensive with the universe"⁶⁶ and resting in "equilibrium, in the form of thought, on a supreme pole of consistency".⁶⁷ Here, as Émile Rideau says, it all depends on whether "universe" and "Matter" are synonymous terms, and since this cannot be discovered, the notion remains apart from the main development of Teilhard's theory of the end of Matter.

A Scientific Comment

In "Energy in Evolution", John O'Manique examines Teilhard's theory, and comments on his description of the end of Matter. In the first place, he says that if it is correct to propose that there is an inverse ratio between the increasing concentration of psychic energy and the necessity of energy of arrangement, then an ultimate complete independence of psychic energy on energy of arrangement could be forecast,⁶⁸ and this is

what Teilhard is saying.

Secondly he says that there is experimental evidence to indicate that complexity is becoming less and less necessary as a condition for psychic energy, and this would support Teilhard's theory of the complete and final independence of radial energy from material complexity. It means also, that there is justification for Teilhard's claim that radial energy is not expended but is conserved in the reflexion which has not to do with thought, but with the turning in of the species upon itself in which energy is concentrated and intensified. The concept of a "within", O'Manique says, is not contradicted by any findings of modern science, and finally, he says that it is because Teilhard accepted the law of entropy,

"as a valid physical law which must be constantly kept in mind while looking into the future",⁶⁹

that he saw the need for a future transformation which would free the radial from tangential energy, and in Teilhard's theory this automatically means the break-up of complexity/consciousness, and therefore the final dissolution of Matter.

Thomas Aykara says that

"Teilhard's doctrine of energy expressed in terms of a field of energy rather than energies inside bodies would have helped him better explain the Omnipresence".⁷⁰

To this it should be said that according to the scientific commentary put forward by John O'Manique, Teilhard is speaking in the legitimate terms of a field of energy. A brief look at what he says will illustrate the point. The physicist, O'Manique says, defines a "field" as "an

area of influence, or the space throughout which a force operates",⁷¹ and this he goes on to say, is compatible with Teilhard's theory of psychic energy. This confirms the view which O'Manique had earlier developed, namely, that because Teilhard proposed in his examination of evolution in the particles of Matter, a certain "awareness"⁷² by an electron of its own environment and of the proton, then "this Teilhardian concept corresponds to the physicist's concept of "field".⁷³ It seems possible, therefore, to claim an "Omnipresence" in terms of an all-pervasive field of energy in Teilhard. Again, this has support from a scientist's point of view, for John O'Manique in describing the movement of energy to matter and back through transformation, says that

"this process is regulated by a law which, it is suggested, could be identified with God".⁷⁴

In the end, however, omnipresence for Teilhard is in the theology of St. Paul, "the God of all, over all, through all and within all",⁷⁵ or again the Christ who "is everything and in everything",⁷⁶ confirming the spiritual potential which calls for "a true philosophy of the whole, but of a convergent Whole",⁷⁷ as Christ assimilates to Himself "the total psychisms of the earth".⁷⁸ This is what Teilhard means by the "Christic-phylum",⁷⁹ by which Christ develops His total personality within the world.

Confirmation of an all-inclusive field of energy, apparently proclaimed by science, and carefully allowed for in Teilhard's theory where it is identified as Spirit, seems to answer another problem in Thomas Aykara, that

"It is not Christ, but the Holy Spirit, Whose very existence itself is relationship, unity, and action that should be responsible for the ever growing convergence of which Teilhard speaks",⁸⁰

which seems to present no problem, for it is this spiritual energy which brings matter into existence by union, which "arranges" it by complexification, which by this token continually "centres" it, and which completes that convergence in "Christ-Omega".⁸¹ Teilhard's creation by evolution is marked by a trinitarian aspect, for, total unification accomplished by the Spirit through process,

"Christ will consummate the universal unification by delivering Himself, in His entire and adult body, with a capacity for union that is at length perfected, to the embrace of the Deity".⁸²

It is this double aspect of fulfilment in St. Paul which accounts for the duality in Teilhard's concept of Omega, as the one in which the human particles are gathered in the form of one Person, and the "God-Omega"⁸³ in which they eternally rest.

It is against this background that Thomas Aykara's statement that "The Holy Spirit - the bridge between essential and existential Man"⁸⁴ is to be viewed.

Teilhard's theory is founded on a process in history, the event of Incarnation from which the creative movement radiates. Because in Scriptural terms Incarnation implies an identity-in-essence between the Godhead and the historical figure of Christ, it is the appearance on earth of what Teilhard describes as "the already one".⁸⁵ This is implied in various statements throughout Teilhard's work, for example, in speaking of Christ as raising up the

psychisms of the world into "The Divine focus which He has never left".⁸⁶ The description of Christ as "Person" marks the difference between Christ and man, and is the gap which is overcome by the process of evolution in Teilhard, who constantly stresses the Personal as the ultimate peak in human attainment.

Support for the unity of distinction and identity may be discovered in the critical text, ". . . like to us in all except sin"⁸⁷ which establishes likeness, but equally it confirms difference, providing the condition of identity-in-difference which is the essential element in Christian soteriology. To consider the statement in modern theology that, "in respect of His humanity Christ is not completely one with us",⁸⁸ is eventually to arrive at Thomas Aykara's problem, and to see the distinction as resting on the single instance in history in which essential Man became existentially present. The two aspects of being, the essential and the existential need no bridge. They are not separate, but are integrated in the one historic Person who is capable of identification by either term, but is the indivisible reality of both. "In virtue of His Incarnation",⁸⁹ that is, because of His earthly existence, the "Person Christ",⁹⁰ takes "physical control of the cosmic totality"⁹¹ and so effects not only the spiritual, but the natural evolution of human life. "Person" in Teilhard may be defined as the eternal union of Divine and human, and because the unity of the human race is still incomplete, the Personal Omega at the end of the series, is the not-yet of terrestrial evolution.

The Complex God and Divine Self-Sufficiency

Brief mention may be made of other difficulties associated with Teilhard's concept of Omega, and one of these is the question of how a "complex" God is overcome, if there is a necessary and inevitable incorporation of all that is into Omega. While Teilhard speaks of transcendence which is to be preserved, he also says that

"No Spirit, [not even God] exists, or by constructional necessity can exist without a multiple associated with it,"⁹²

a statement which seems to effect the related qualities of transcendence and self-sufficiency. Further, in expanding the idea of the evolved persons involved in the supreme Person, Teilhard says

"It is in this complexity that the perfection of His unity lies - the only logical culmination that can be attributed to the developments of Spirit-Matter",⁹³

the basic premise of Being defined as Union taken to its fullest extent. The complexity of God is a factor which is not confined to Teilhard's evolutionary work, for example in "Le Milieu Divin" he asks the question,

"Under what form and with what end or view has the Creator given us and still preserves in us, the gift of participated being? Under the form of an essential aspiration towards Him - and with a view to the un hoped for cleaving which is to make us one and the same complex thing with Him".⁹⁴

Given complexity, there is again the question of Divine self-sufficiency in Teilhard's Omega of evolution. This apparent flaw persists throughout Teilhard's work, because it stems from the basic premise of creative union. It is summed up in the contradictory statement -

"God is entirely self-sufficient; nevertheless the universe brings Him something that is vitally necessary",⁹⁵

and although Teilhard seems to have recognised the problem, and wants to overcome the implications of necessity by saying, for example, that "God is complete in Himself while for us He is constantly becoming",⁹⁶ this tends only to confirm the duality of Omega. In the long run, all Teilhard's efforts to preserve self-sufficiency must be weighed against the mutual "impression" on each other of the terms involved in the initial act of creative union.

Summary

The concept of Omega in Teilhard is ambiguous for although it is described as the end of the series and of all synthesis, it is nevertheless both finite and infinite, immanent and transcendent, and therefore contains an inescapable contradiction.

This duality seems to have its roots in the texts of St. Paul, which speak of Christ as the One Who gathers all things to Himself in assimilation into the Godhead, which implies a double movement as evolution converges on Omega. This also corresponds to Teilhard's many references to the Omega at the end of the evolutionary series, and so the not-yet, and the one true Omega which is already present.

Since it contains the finite elements, the question arises as to how the finite Omega escapes the natural law of entropy, and this is explained by Teilhard in two

possible ways;

[a] by transformation of the elements, following the event of convergence into a new field of attraction. This Teilhard likens to the movement of planets into a different field of influence, and this would correspond to the intensification of the attraction of Omega on the Totalised human mass, pulling it away from the field of destruction.

[b] apart from this, the completion of the finite Omega is described as taking place after the event of entropy.

The point of unification marks the break-up of the complexity/consciousness partnership, for evolution reaches the stage at which increase in consciousness and movement of centration can continue without the support of outer arrangement. Here the Spirit is released from Matter at the threshold of Omega, and since Spirit is the principle of unity in Matter, and since nothing exists which is not unified, Matter is literally non-existent at this point. Tangential energy, or energy of arrangement no longer operates, and centration is maintained by radial energy. This does not decrease in accordance with physical laws, for, owing to the intensity of centration of the unified mass, and following the law of Reflection, this energy actually increases through the proximity of psychic energy in centres of consciousness.

From this Teilhard develops a new law, and to the existing principles of conservation and degradation, he adds "the law of Reflexion of energy", which apparently has some support in the scientific field.

There are other difficulties associated with the concept of Omega, and the more important seem to include, [a] the problem of avoiding a "complex" God since the finite 'Omega' is a synthesis; [b] the related problem which has already been noted in Teilhard, that of preserving Divine self-sufficiency. Teilhard seems to have been aware of the ambiguous elements in his concept of Omega.

NOTESOMEGA

1. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 173.
2. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 285.
3. Christopher Mooney, "T. de C. and the Mystery of Christ", p. 65.
4. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 123.
5. Ibid., p. 122.
6. Teilhard de Chardin, "Human Energy", p. 362.
7. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 20.
8. M. Barthélemy-Madaule, "Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin", p. 23.
9. In Bergson, for example, intuition is developed scientifically in relation to consciousness and duration.
10. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 184.
11. Ibid., p. 184.
12. Ibid., p. 56-7.
13. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 70.
14. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 69.
15. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 57.
16. Ibid.
17. Claude Cuénot, "Teilhard de Chardin", p. 380.
18. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 149.
19. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 113 and "The Future of Man", p. 187.
20. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 20.
21. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 183.
22. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 122.
23. Ibid., p. 119.
24. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 56.

25. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", [Col. 3.11], p. 54.
26. Ibid., p. 54
27. Ibid.,
28. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 34.
29. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 297.
30. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 296.
31. Ibid., p. 297.
32. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 122.
33. Émile Rideau, "Teilhard de Chardin; A Guide to his Thought", p. 150.
34. Ibid., p. 150.
35. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 296-7.
36. Ibid., p. 298.
37. Ibid., p. 298.
38. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 122.
39. Ibid.,
40. Ibid., p. 45.
41. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 176.
42. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 69.
43. Teilhard's theory is based on "the physicist's concept of energy" and the word "expended" does not mean "destroyed" but "converted", - O'Manique, p. 89.
44. Beatrice Bruteau, "Evolution towards Divinity", p. 250.
45. Ibid.
46. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Activation de L'Énergie", p, 353.
47. Émile Rideau, "Teilhard de Chardin; A Guide to His Thought", p. 186.
48. Bergson, for example, speaks of the possibility of the "élan vital, running across matter not yet solidified", "Creative Evolution", p. 233.

49. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", pp. 46F.
50. Ibid., pp. 46F.
51. Ibid., pp. 46F.
52. Ibid., pp. 46F.
53. Ibid., pp. 46F.
54. Teilhard, "The Phenomenon of Man", pp. 287F.
55. Teilhard, "The Making of a Mind" [Letter - 1917], p. 165.
56. Thomas A. Aykara, "Cosmic Consciousness", p. 90.
57. Ibid., p. 90.
58. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 69.
59. Ibid., p. 237.
60. Thomas A. Aykara, "Cosmic Consciousness", p. 141.
A comparative study of the "Spiritual materialism" in
Teilhard de Chardin, and Aurobindo.
61. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 235.
62. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 60.
63. Ibid., p. 50.
64. Ibid., p. 50.
65. Teilhard de Chardin, "Le Milieu Divin", p. 60.
66. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man".
67. Ibid., p. 309.
68. John O'Manique, "Energy in Evolution - Teilhard's
Physics of the Future", p. 88.
69. Ibid., p. 93.
70. Thomas Aykara, "Cosmic Consciousness", p. 158.
71. John O'Manique, "Energie in Evolution", p. 92.
72. Ibid., p. 59.
73. Ibid., p. 92.
74. Ibid., p. 87.
75. Eph. 4.6

76. Col. 3. pp. 234F.
77. Teilhard de Chardin, "Oeuvres", VII.
78. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man" [1 Cor. 15.28], p. 322.
79. Ibid. ^{Cf. Cuénou, p. 367.} LETTER OF THE 14TH MARCH 1954.
80. Thomas Aykara, "Cosmic Consciousness", p. 147.
81. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 167.
82. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man" [1 Cor. 15.24] p. 308.
83. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 316.
84. Thomas Aykara, "Cosmic Consciousness", p. 147.
85. Teilhard de Chardin, "Comment je Vois", n. 24, viz. the unity of essential and existential man.
86. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 322.
87. Heb. 4.15.
88. John McIntyre, "A Christian Doctrine of History", p. 45F.
89. Ibid.
90. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 166.
91. Ibid., p. 166.
92. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Énergie Humaine", p. 74.
93. Ibid., p. 85.

PART 4

CHAPTER 16

THEORIES OF EVOLUTION COMPARED

Introduction

That there is some affinity of thought between Aurobindo and Teilhard is well known and several writers have commented on this remarkable coincidence. Perhaps it is true to say that this has sometimes tended to obscure an equally remarkable dissimilarity, with the result that the distinctiveness of each writer either receives less emphasis or may even be overlooked. Some kind of composite theory which may be attributed to either or both, the sacrifice of fundamental difference in the interests of agreement, becomes a possibility. In the comparison which follows it is hoped that a balanced view may be maintained of both differences and similarities, thus preserving the quality of uniqueness in each writer. The distinctive terminology used by both Aurobindo and Teilhard is in itself an indication of divergence of opinion on the evolutionary process, and this provides the element of comparison on the very basic level. The crux of both theories is the evolution of Consciousness which appears to be related to altered states of Matter, and although there is the common element of progressive ascent, this too can be over-simplified in a way which conceals an underlying difference.

The possible reasons for both similarities and divergence become relevant when the different standpoints of Aurobindo and Teilhard are taken into account, and some tentative suggestions may be made as to likely explanations.

The whole purpose and end of evolution according to both is the irreversible fulfilment of human life, and it is a comparison of how this ultimate event is envisaged in each theory which is the main concern of the next part of this work.

THE FOUNDATION OF CONVERGENT EVOLUTION

Aurobindo develops his theory of evolutionary convergence towards unification from the basic premise that Matter in all its aspects is essentially Real. This claim of Reality for the concrete is a necessary conclusion arising from his idea of the relationship of Matter and Spirit, which in turn depends upon the primary principle of involution.

Involuntary descent - evolutionary ascent, is the co-ordinated movement which forms the true foundation of Aurobindo's theory of evolution, for it provides the movement on which he develops the inevitability of the future fulfilment of humanity in union with the Divine life. Involution in this case does not mean a prior existence of Matter into which the Spirit subsequently descends. It means the simultaneous manifestation of Matter as Spirit in the world of material formation. But even this is an inadequate expression of the meaning of involution, for it fails to clarify the profound principle which Aurobindo wants to establish, of the most literal identification of Matter as Spirit. As evolution progresses, Aurobindo says,

"Matter reveals itself to the realising thought and to the subtilised senses as the figure and body of Spirit, - Spirit in its self-formative extension. Spirit reveals itself through the same consenting agents as the soul, the truth,

the essence of Matter. Both admit and confess each other as divine, real and essentially one".¹

Involution is therefore the movement from unmanifest to manifest, the extension of the One into the Multiple, non-existence expressed in phenomenal terms, and this establishes the relationship between existent and non-existent as that of expression and source, in which there can therefore be no essential division. In relating the discovery of Matter as Spirit to the continuing realisation of thought and the subtilisation of the human senses, Aurobindo is establishing the essential connection which he will later develop, between the altered experience of Matter and the evolutionary expansion of consciousness. This explains the saying that essential Matter, like the Pradhana of the Sankhyas, is not available to the senses. Aurobindo is not saying that there is a change in the status of Matter itself, since it is by definition essential. He is referring to the state of Matter experienced by a consciousness which has passed beyond a dependency on sensory knowledge, and which therefore can recognise the essentiality of Matter as the Spirit in empirical form. This is a clear indication that it is not Matter itself which evolves, but the consciousness of it, and also by reference to the Pradhana, that Aurobindo's theory of Matter cannot be completely divorced from the movement of extension and recession in Sankhya philosophy.

"Descent" describes the movement of the Spirit through the various levels of consciousness to the solid state of Matter, which is the Spirit's concession to the

unevolved consciousness. The "return" of which Aurobindo so often speaks, is the rise of consciousness through human agency into the experience of Matter as pure spiritual substance, and into Divine union. Because of the omnipresence of Spirit, this is not a move from mere existence to Reality, but,

"After reconciling Spirit and Matter in the cosmic consciousness, we perceive the reconciliation in the transcendental consciousness, of the final assertion of all and its negation. We discover that all affirmations are assertions of status or activity in the Unknowable; all the corresponding negations are assertions of Its freedom both from and in that status or activity. The Unknowable is Something to us supreme, wonderful and ineffable which continually formulates Itself to our consciousness and continually escapes from the formulation It has made,²

and thus the evolutionary move is seen to be "from reality to ever profounder and vaster reality",³ and Aurobindo is confirming the freedom of the Absolute to be manifest or unmanifest without disruption or distortion in essence. This is justification for his theory of the unity of existent and non-existent, in which the first is the phenomenal form of the second.

At first glance there seems to be no real difference between Teilhard's view of Matter and the identification of Matter and Spirit in Aurobindo, but a closer look will perhaps disclose a fundamental difference.

[i] In the first place, a return to the meaning of "involution" may emphasise the value of Matter in Aurobindo. By this concept he does not mean the descent of the Spirit into pre-existent material form, but the event by which Spirit comes into existence as Matter. This is not in

doubt since Aurobindo is quoting the Upanishad, that "Matter is Brahman",⁴ which means that it is pure "Being cast into form, Being manifest as substance"⁵ and it is therefore synonymous with pure existence and with infinite consciousness in its extension. Aurobindo is not saying that at the present stage in evolution Matter is experienced as Spirit, for what he means is that

"our present knowledge, idea and experience of Matter is not its truth",⁶

and that the unfolding of this truth is the meaning of evolution. The concept of involution in Aurobindo means the establishment of Matter and Spirit as synonymous terms.

Despite the use of "Spirit-Matter"⁷ by Teilhard, his position with regard to the relationship of Matter and Spirit is considerably weaker. Here the hyphenated term does not establish identity, but is the beginning of the Law of recurrence which operates as creative union.

Even if any other interpretation of the meaning of Matter in Teilhard is arrived at, it is at once overruled by the primary concept of creative union which by definition, establishes the nature of Matter as a synthesis. This rules out the possibility of complete identity, since Spirit is itself the principle of unity, a term in the synthesis which, together with another element constitutes the phenomenon of Matter. The relationship is that of union and not of identity. Henri de Lubac speaks of "the victory of Spirit over Matter"⁸ as a description of Teilhard's theory, and Teilhard himself says that the two are to be seen as

"simple related variables, of which it behoves us to determine, not the secret essence, but the curve in function of space and time".⁹

He goes on to speak of Spirit, to which Matter "serves as a support",¹⁰ the true function which only becomes evident in the final stages of Teilhard's evolutionary theory, with the dissolution of Matter, and the release of the Spirit.

There is then a definite difference between the Spirit-Matter of Teilhard and this relationship in Aurobindo. The distinction is that of "union" as opposed to "identity", and it can be discovered in the similar yet distinct theories developed by both.

[ii] Involution in Teilhard indicates a different process. Whereas in Aurobindo this describes the gradual extension of Being and a co-ordinated evolutionary "return", in Teilhard it indicates the process of curvature which is an essential element in his theory. It is the movement of Matter which "coils up round itself in a closed volume",¹¹ and this is extended into the double meaning, a "double related involution",¹² for the turning in of the molecule upon itself is associated with the "coiling up of the planet"¹³ upon itself. Since even in the pre-living particles "some sort of curvature must be assumed",¹⁴ involution marks the beginning and subsequent expansion of the movement of centricity which creates the condition from which the Noosphere can develop. Involution can then be seen as part of the process through which Teilhard can be said to relate the full potential of man's intellectual, inventive, and artistic capabilities to the phenomenon of

Matter.

The Noosphere once established, involution continues the process of curvature within the dimension of the species, for

"the human social phenomenon is simply the higher form assumed on Earth by the involution of the cosmic stuff upon itself",¹⁵

and because of this, Teilhard speaks of the increasing probability of a "critical point of maturity"¹⁶ at which man collectively will reach the extreme limit of the world.

Involution is to centration what synthesis is to complexification. Both terms describe a method by which a desired end is attained.

The Transformation of Matter; Divergence of thought on the meaning of "involution", is an indication of a more profound difference between the respective evolutionary theories of Aurobindo and Teilhard. For Aurobindo, the purpose of

"that status of evolution which the Darwinian theory first made plain to human knowledge",¹⁷

was the emergence of self-consciousness; the new status, in which the impulse is not towards survival alone, but towards possession and perfection, "possession of the self",¹⁸ and that "greater and greater perfection"¹⁹ which holds the assurance of permanence and lasting survival. Strictly speaking, there is no further evolution of Matter in Aurobindo's theory: What he describes is an evolutionary expansion of reflective consciousness, which is in real terms a contraction or convergence of conscious

fragmenta towards a primordial unity. This is also an evolution of experience in contact with Matter which becomes more subtle in direct proportion to the ascending stages of consciousness. To the ordinary consciousness, or what Bergson calls the "distinct consciousness",²⁰ which is the natural operation of the intellect, Matter is experienced in the solid state through sensory contact, but such experience does not reveal its true reality. To the fully evolved consciousness, Matter will be known in its truth as Spirit beyond sensory knowledge. This explains the paradox in which Aurobindo, having proposed the reality of Matter in the literal identification of Matter and Spirit, can later say that "in a certain sense, Matter is unreal and non-existent".²¹ It is essentially real because it is the "involution of the Spirit in Form",²² and yet it is unreal because the form is not truth but

"merely a phenomenon of particular relation between our senses and the all-existence in which we move".²³

Just as non-being may in a sense indicate the highest Being, so real/unreal represent different stages in conscious awareness, and are never polar opposites. These stages in human awareness correspond to a transformation, or gradual refinement of Matter in the process of return to its own essential Identity, as Spirit. There is a true fulfilment of Matter in Aurobindo; in Teilhard, Matter is fulfilled to the extent of purpose achieved. This follows the main stream of Teilhard's evolutionary thought, but as already seen, there is an end envisaged in terms of faith which would allow for the fulfilment of the earth itself. As against this, however, Teilhard is not speaking

only of the world but of the cosmos. He seems to have universal fulfilment in mind when he writes,

"we need not rack our brains to find out how the material immensity of the universe can ever vanish; all that is needed is for the Spirit to reverse, to move into a different zone, and the form of the World is immediately changed".²⁴

This saying includes both theory and faith, since it describes a condition which inevitably follows from creative union, and also, as Henri de Lubac points out, is a commentary on the Pauline expression "the form of this world"²⁵ which he says will thus "attain its definitive fulfilment".²⁶ Nevertheless, from the point of view of Teilhard's evolutionary theory, there is no fulfilment of Matter in terms of endurance, and the direct contrast with Aurobindo remains.

The source of this contrast rests on the fundamental difference in the relationship of Matter and Spirit in the respective systems. Because of the element of identification in Aurobindo's basic premise, Matter is necessarily fulfilled since it endures infinitely as Spirit. If the evolutionary movement in Teilhard is understood as the release of the Spirit from the necessity of material formation then Matter is moving out of existence in accordance with the terms of creative union.

NOTESTHE FOUNDATION OF CONVERGENT EVOLUTION

1. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 40-41.
2. Ibid., p. 46.
3. Ibid., p. 47.
4. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, "Taittiriya Upanishad".
5. Ibid., p. 366.
6. Ibid., p. 359.
7. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Énergie Humaine", p. 74.
8. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 108.
9. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 308.
10. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 205.
11. Teilhard de Chardin, "Phenomenon of Man", p. 78.
12. Ibid., p. 80.
13. Ibid., p. 80.
14. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 125.
15. Teilhard de Chardin, "Comment je Vois", par 19.
16. Ibid., par 19.
17. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine, Vol. 1", p. 303.
18. Ibid., p. 304.
19. Ibid., p. 304.
20. Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution", p. 250.
21. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 358.
22. Ibid., p. 246.
23. Ibid., p. 358.
24. Teilhard de Chardin, "L'Atomisme de L'Esprit", p. 26.
25. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 136.
26. Ibid., p. 136.

CHAPTER 17

FROM DURABILITY OF FORM TOWARDS ETERNITY OF ESSENCE
 - THE EVOLUTION OF MATTER

The difference which is observed in the foundation of the evolutionary process based on the relationship of Matter and Spirit is continued into, and accounts for, the contrasting form of this movement in Aurobindo and Teilhard. Both clearly demonstrate that the way of progress is not by destruction and rejection, but by transformation and assimilation of all that has gone before into a final and irreversible union. Thus Teilhard says

"the past has revealed to me how the future is built",¹

and Aurobindo speaks of

"the release of all that is characteristic of the lower into the Higher",²

leading to the eventual

"conscious possession of the living symbol by the living Real,³ [in an] unimaginable completeness".⁴

It is true to say that both Aurobindo and Teilhard set out to show that certain aspects of their respective religions may confirm the findings of modern science, particularly in relation to evolution and the discovery of the inter-relatedness of unity and process. For both, this means a re-appraisal of certain doctrines, and the expansion of an exclusive interpretation to include the universal, and finally the cosmic. To achieve this,

Teilhard re-examines the teaching of St. John and St. Paul, as well as the theology of the early Fathers, sets out a more profound understanding of the doctrine of Incarnation, and above all, urges the development of an evolutionary Christology.

Aurobindo goes beyond the developed schools of the Vedanta to the unsystematised Veda and formulates therefore an authentic Hinduism which can break through the monism of the Advaita, as well as the anicca-anatta doctrine of Buddhism, and accommodate the theory of Darwin and the ideas of Bergson, which, as Zaehner says, he had come to accept.⁵ An unmistakably world-affirming basis in religion is the first requirement, and Teilhard therefore extends 'participation' into a cosmic dimension, and stresses the more profound implications of Incarnation which he seems to find in Pauline teaching. Similarly Aurobindo rejects the Upanishadic "Tat tvam asi"⁶ in the exclusive interpretation which Sankara developed, and redresses what he sees as an imbalance by emphasising "Sarvam Khalwidam Brahma", "All is Brahman", of the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad II.4.14. This does not mean that Aurobindo denies the Tat in its relation to the Atman, but that he rejects this relationship as the sole Reality. Beginning from certain doctrines which lie at the heart of Hinduism and Christianity respectively, and applying these to modern thinking, Aurobindo and Teilhard develop similar theories of fulfilment as final convergence within an essential whole.

Aurobindo's Integral Ascent

Aurobindo maintains that individualised consciousness came into existence as the result of a "Fall"⁷ from a primordial totality, the "Fruit"⁸ of which is the limitation and distortion in human life, the birth of the opposites. This is what is typified in the "poetic parable"⁹ in Genesis. "Redemption" is the re-discovery of the "universal in the individual" and of the "spiritual term in physical consciousness".¹⁰ This allows Aurobindo to speak in terms of "reversal", the "radical reversal of consciousness"¹¹ to primal integrity, and also of "recovery", the "knowledge which we are now recovering"¹² aided by the findings of modern science. More importantly, this theory makes of existence itself a kind of forgetting, and the level of intuition the repository of that primordial experience which is presupposed in consciousness. For this reason, Aurobindo speaks of the operation of the intuition as a remembering, the experience of a "luminous remembering",¹³ something which is rare on the present level, but which will become the norm in the progressive ascent of consciousness through evolution.

The Upanishadic formula of the sheaths of being provide Aurobindo with a ready-made structure on which to base his theory of descent, and evolutionary ascent of Consciousness towards the essential state of pure subjectivity. This follows a seven-fold series which is divided into the lower and higher hemispheres, the parardha and aparardha, a separation which is "acute in practice" but "unreal in essence".¹⁴ The higher is the

level of Being, Consciousness and Bliss, the Hindu ultimate of Sachidananda, the eternal reign of the Spirit, and although the lower principles of Matter, Life, Mind are equally the domain of the Spirit, here It is "shrouded in name and form".¹⁵ The two triads are connected by Supermind which is not a mental but an intuitive state, providing in ascent the first glimpse of that unity which is the recovery of primal consciousness. Kees Bolle describes Supermind as the

"outgoing consciousness of the Supreme, the creative power of Sachidananda",¹⁶

unknown to the ordinary consciousness. Supermind is a classic example of Aurobindo's "plastic application" by which he means licence to apply his own interpretation to the ancient Hindu terms. In this instance, he adopts the notion of Supermind and applies it to the turiyam svid or the "turiyam dhama",¹⁷ the "Fourth Name"¹⁸ or Fourth poise of being in the Mandukya Upanishad. The Upanishad speaks of an intermediate state of being between the two hemispheres and it is this "certain Fourth"¹⁹ which Aurobindo identifies as Supermind, and it is therefore "fourth to That in Its descent, fourth to us in our ascension".²⁰ In the Upanishad the "Fourth" is said to be indefinable. By a kind of via negativa it is to be understood not as "subjective experience", and yet it is not a negative condition. Further, it is not "knowledge by the senses, nor relative knowledge",²¹ and because it is beyond sensory knowledge, the concept of the "Fourth" ideally fits the notion which Aurobindo

wants to convey of that stage in the evolutionary return of consciousness which has passed the point of material dependence. As the Fourth, Supermind has a foot in both camps, as it were, having the power of projection as well as of retrospection, viewing both the upper and the lower triads, proceeding therefore by a "double faculty of comprehensive and apprehensive knowledge".²²

It is the experience of a consciousness which is the ordinary exercise of the mind, and yet the fleeting awareness of a higher level, which has given rise to the most enduring of dualities, that which persists within Man himself. For this reason, Aurobindo urges a return to the ancient Vedantic point of view in which Man can see himself not as a "dual being"²³ but as one conscious existence which has a "double phase of consciousness",²⁴ one of which relates to Mind, and the other to a level beyond Mind, one of which has merely a "knowledge situated in Time",²⁵ the other which is essentially "Timeless", the realm of knowledge by identity. The Mind can know itself only in "time experience"²⁶ but yet can be open to that same quality of consciousness which knows its own "Timeless Self".²⁷ Again returning to the Upanishads Aurobindo says that this is what is meant when it is said there that Brahman is both the Knowledge and the Ignorance, for the "Knowledge" is Consciousness which is "a self-aware eternal Transcendence",²⁸ knowing both temporally eternal successions of the Universe, while the Ignorance is conscious being within the "successions of Time",²⁹ divided because of

its "dwelling in the moment".³⁰ This relates to Aurobindo's often repeated theory, a key-factor in his work, that a return to the Vedas and the early Vedanta will reveal a unity of thought and a world-affirming attitude which became obscured in later interpretations.

Consciousness as a completely unified and essentially indivisible whole both in essence and in existence, is to be seen against the fact that it is not a mental force, but Infinite Being which is becoming in the world, the One accepting the veil of Matter in exercising the liberty of self-formation. Consciousness and Being are not different from each other, Aurobindo says, and their operation in the world is that of a Conscious-Force, the motivating principle of evolution, which he identifies with the Divine Power, or Adya Shakti of Hinduism. The idea of a creative consciousness as the active agent in a creative evolution was already a fundamental premise in Henri Bergson, and again it may seem that Aurobindo is invoking the "plastic application" in applying the Hindu term to a Western theory. Certainly, Aurobindo extends the concept of creative consciousness to the limit of intuition in Divine Union, apparently justifying his claim that

"The Indian terms are more satisfactory . . . for they grew from a root of Intuition and while they have a comprehensive preciseness . . . the plastic application avoids both vagueness in the use and the rigid snare of a too limiting intellectual concept".³¹

It has recently been said that Aurobindo

"has incorporated Western categories of creative evolution into his integral philosophy, so that it is no longer 'purely Indian'".³²

In other words, the Western theory is recognisable despite the Indian terms for although from time to time he will identify Consciousness as the creative Isvara of Indian tradition, it appears to be no less the evolutionary and creative consciousness of Bergson's theory.

The Upanishadic seven-fold chord of being provides the necessary hierarchial foundation upon which Aurobindo can construct his theory of evolution as a movement from quantity to quality, always to be understood in reference to an enhanced category of consciousness. This is more clearly seen from the perspective of the primary movement of descent, which has first followed this same path in reverse, for,

"The Divine descends from pure existence through the play of Consciousness - Force . . . into cosmic being; we ascend from Matter through a developing Life, soul and Mind towards Divine being".³³

Descent is to be understood as a movement of Spirit through increasingly solid forms of Matter, which, it is important to note, are instances of Its own self-formation; ascent is then a process of progressive subtilisation of material form in its return to the essentiality of pure substance. This is the essential Matter which Aurobindo likens to the Pradhana of the Sankhya, which is beyond the perception of the senses.

In considering what is most representative of the materiality of Matter in human experience, Aurobindo describes it as

"its aspects of solidity, tangibility,

increasing resistance, firm response to the Sense of touch".³⁴

This means that

"Substance is more truly material and real in proportion as it presents to us a solid resistance and by virtue of that resistance a durability of sensible form on which our consciousness can dwell; in proportion as it is more subtle, less densely resistant and enduringly seizable by the sense, it appears to us less material".³⁵

This explains the existence of Matter as a response to the need of human consciousness in its present development, to relate to solid form which gives the assurance of some degree of permanence. Aurobindo says that this need was recognised in the Veda, which gave the formula "Earth" as the symbol of the material principle, relating to the primary sense of touch. It is still the fundamental contact in Yoga practice.

Although it has been said that Aurobindo's thought "begins and ends with a vision that is to be followed, experienced, realised",³⁶ and that therefore Bolle goes on to say, it is not surprising that "the scheme follows by and large the pattern of Sankhya, yoga, and Tantric expositions", or again as in a recent critique, "it is almost certain that he derived his view from Hindu sources",³⁷ there seems to be some reluctance clearly to develop an affinity between Aurobindo and the Sankhya. This is most probably because of the fundamental principles in the Sankhya which are in direct opposition to Aurobindo's philosophy, and even represent elements inherent in Hinduism which it was his purpose to reverse. To avoid confusion, it should

be said that Aurobindo completely rejects,

(a) the atheism of the Sankhya;

(b) the radical dualism in the system;

(c) the separation of consciousness and Matter (or Prakriti);

(d) the passivity of the Purushas.

(e) the eternal and seemingly purposeless sequence of dissolution (pralaya) and evolution (sarga),

and the consequences which follow from these principles.

Despite such fundamental opposition, it may still be said that Aurobindo uses the stratified analysis which describes the movement of Matter in the Sankhya, and which he adapts to suit his own purpose. This takes into account the 'fact that Prakriti is not the exact equivalent of Matter, and this in itself is one of Aurobindo's adaptations. Discussing the distinction in the Sankhya, Aurobindo says that the system

"does not in any way show the highest truth either of Purusha or Prakriti, still it is a valid and indispensable practical knowledge in the lower hemisphere of existence".³⁸

Similarly, the influence of the Gunas, the imbalance of which give rise to extension in the Sankhya account of evolution, is not necessary to Aurobindo's system, in which a dynamic Reality is a present and motivating force on every level of evolution. Despite the fundamental opposition to the Sankhya in Aurobindo, it may still be said that in the theory of the ascending/descending series of substance he follows the movement set out in that system. Although the Gunas, or the three qualitative modes of existence, Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas,

are not related to material evolution as they are in the Sankhya, as inseparable from the self-perfection of the individual, they are involved in the evolutionary movement of being into the new humanity, and they are also central to Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. This element in the Sankhya system, Aurobindo says,

"is generally adopted by all schools of philosophic thought and of Yoga in India".³⁹

The relationship between Aurobindo and the Sankhya is worthy of a deeper study, for in a certain sense it could be said that Aurobindo adds to and completes this philosophy. Radhakrishnan sees the importance of the Sankhya as that of providing the foundation for a "more adequate philosophy",⁴⁰ and for him this would include the discovery of the unifying principle of a universal Spirit, the presupposition of all experience, which would end the opposition of Purusha and Prakriti. This is the philosophy which Aurobindo seems to supply. Since the Sankhya admits of no Absolute, the climax of the ascending series of substance which it describes, is simply the state of pralaya, or equilibrium, the Pradhana of Prakriti which persists until the balance of the gunas is once again disturbed, causing the sequence to start again. It is with the Sankhya in mind, therefore, that Aurobindo asks,

"Where we reach the highest term of the series, the most supra-ethereal subtlety of material substance, . . . what lies beyond?"⁴¹

Not a Nihil nor a Void, he says, for there is no such thing as absolute void or real nullity; neither can it be

true that there is nothing beyond, for this would mean that Matter is the starting point of existence, whereas it is the last word in the descent of pure Substance. It is here that Aurobindo supplies what is missing in the Sankhya, by applying the seven-fold series of being in the Upanishad to the series of substance, thus illustrating the end of Matter as the final return of the Spirit into the non-existent poise of Sachidananda. He acknowledges the importance of Sankhya philosophy in Indian thought, for he says, this

"carried the idea of a mechanical and unconscious Force as far as was possible to a seriously reflective Indian mind",

and

"whatever its defects the main idea was indisputable".⁴²

The idea of an evolutionary system which is probably as old as the later Upanishads is perhaps sometimes pushed too far. For example, Beatrice Bruteau describes the Sankhya as perhaps "the world's oldest theory of evolution"⁴³ and she sees evolutionary movement as a fundamental part of the Hindu tradition. It is true to say that the Sankhya is not the only Hindu system in which some sort of pulsating rhythm goes on between existence and non-existence, for this also appears in the Maitri Upanishad under the imagery of "day" and "night". But it is not correct, strictly speaking, to describe such movements as "evolution". In the Sankhya, for example, there is no "evolution" since the system does not allow for development and change, and therefore

nothing new can come into existence. This is the meaning of the sat-karya-vada associated with Sankhya philosophy. In mundane language "evolution" in the Sankhya is rather like the unrolling of a huge cosmic carpet upon which the "things" of existence are already set out. What is so often described as "involution" has no resemblance to the meaning of the term in Aurobindo, for here it is simply the re-rolling of the carpet of existence on which nothing has changed. Mircea Eliade warns against the equating of the two notions of evolution, for he says,

"to compare evolution in the Indian sense with Western evolution, is to be guilty of a great confusion".⁴⁴

There is no suggestion, therefore, that Aurobindo's evolutionary thinking depends on Sankhya philosophy, for this contains no truly evolutionary theory on which to depend. The analysis of substance which the older system presents is a different matter, for, together with the seven-fold chord of being in the Upanishad, it forms an ideal structure for the ascending/descending evolutionary theory. In the end, however, Aurobindo's Hinduism is not an up-dating of any school which went before, but is a re-statement of the Veda and the early Upanishads according to his own modern convictions, and this is new in Hinduism. As it is said

"his own unique life history enables him to build up his own unique philosophy",⁴⁵

and P.T. Raju is making a similar point when he says that Aurobindo's idea of evolution from the absolute to matter is not new to Indian thought, and here it is not the Sankhya

or any other Hindu system which he has in mind, but the philosophy of Plotinus. Nevertheless, he goes on to say, Aurobindo's theory

"has added significance through his comparing it with western doctrines".⁴⁶

Between the various stages identified in the seven-fold chord of being, as the lower of Matter, Life, Mind, and the upper of Being, Consciousness, Bliss, divided by the concept of Supermind, there are a number of intermediate gradations. For example, between Mind and Supermind Aurobindo describes the finer levels of "illuminated Mind", "Higher Mind" and "Overmind", which R.C. Zaehner says creates unnecessary confusion,⁴⁷ but by which it seems, Aurobindo wants to convey the immensity of the distance in evolutionary terms, which separates the mental consciousness of everyday life, from the Supermind level which is the intuitional state become the norm. The descent of the Spirit through the categories and the intermediate stages of the series, is also the movement from unity to multiplicity, and it reaches its final extension in the diversity of the solid state in which "the first word shall be not spirit but form".⁴⁸ It is form in its fullest development as the culminating point of distinction, separation, and division, or in other words, it is the final condition of "accomplished divisibility".⁴⁹ Ascent is therefore a movement away from the dominance and solidity of form towards ever more subtle expressions of the Spirit, which is the same as to say from multiplicity towards unification in essential indivisibility. It is .

the move from durable form to eternal essence, for the basic formula of ascent is that,

"Drawing away from durability of form, we draw towards eternity of essence; drawing away from our poise in the persistent separation and resistance of physical Matter, we draw near to the highest Divine poise in the infinity, unity and indivisibility of Spirit".⁵⁰

This, it is suggested, describes the ascending series of substance in the Sankhya, to which Aurobindo has added the necessary elements of unity and the involvement of the Spirit. On this basis purpose is also inevitably included, thus providing all the missing factors which, as most scholars seem to agree, point to the incompleteness of Sankhya philosophy. Between the two extremes of gross matter and pure Spirit, there is "the possibility of an infinite gradation",⁵¹ Aurobindo says, and if instead of Spirit the Pradhana is substituted as the resting place at the end of evolution, then this too is no different from the Sankhya. For example, he goes on to say that while

"adhering to the system on which we have based ourselves . . . all who have sounded these abysses agree and bear witness to this fact that there are a series of subtler and subtler formulations of substance which escape from and go beyond the formula of the material universe. Without going deeply into matters which are too occult and difficult for our present inquiry, we may say . . . that these gradations of substance, in one important aspect of their formulation in series, can be seen to correspond to the ascending series of Matter, Life, Mind, Supermind . . . we find that substance in its ascension bases itself upon each of these principles and makes itself successively a characteristic vehicle for the self-expression of each in their ascending series".⁵²

The pattern which seems to emerge from Aurobindo's long

and detailed description of material evolution, is that the basic movement of Matter follows the Sankhya; since consciousness is essentially related to Matter in his theory, Aurobindo appears to be justified in saying that the ascent of consciousness in the western theories, is compatible with the subtilisation of matter, and this is particularly applicable to the theory of consciousness having the capacity to reach a norm in intuition, in which it is free from dependency on material organisation. There seems to be no reason why the Upanishadic seven-fold series should not be legitimate, and so the credible synthesis which Aurobindo claims for his own work.

When this ascending series between them is denied, Aurobindo's basic proposition of the essential identity of Matter and Spirit is obscured. In his theory, the unity of Matter and Spirit does not consist simply of an enveloping of the Spirit within Matter, but a descent and therefore recognition of an ascending series is indispensable. In other words, the relationship of Matter and Spirit appears to be unique in Aurobindo, for it is not a simple union but is a complex process. This is why it is said that without an appreciation of the profound meaning which he attaches to involution, Aurobindo's philosophy can hardly be understood. Again it should be said that, in suggesting an influence of the Sankhya, this is not to deny the basic contradictions, particularly perhaps the eternal separation of Purusha and Prakriti in that system. Aurobindo seems to have this problem in mind when he says that "The Purusha has

to become not only the witness" which it is in the Sankhya, "but also the knower and the source".⁵³

Aurobindo's philosophy then, is a complex synthesis of widely different strands of thought. It includes elements from the Veda, particularly the symbolism of solid Earth and "Earth-Power",⁵⁴ in which physical contact is a basic principle. The importance of the solid state is continued in Indian thought, for "Earth is His footing"⁵⁵ says the Upanishad of the Self imaged in the universe, and in the Yoga system, the lowest of the six Chakras, the Muladhara has the Mantra "lam" which has connotations of earth. Without this relationship to the "World-Energy",⁵⁶ Aurobindo says, the Yoga method is something abnormal and is simply the development of exceptional powers which misses the purpose of self-fulfilment. Kees Bolle points to the many instances of a Tantric element in Aurobindo, as for example in his urge for a "beyond the beyond",⁵⁷ and the incessant reaching out which he says, "cannot be easily separated from the Tantric teachings".⁵⁸ To this is added the seven-fold series of being already in the Upanishad, and his thought incorporates the further addition of the analysis of substance in Sankhya philosophy. But the background to Aurobindo's work is not all Indian, for as has been said a "Western influence was part of his make-up whether he liked it or not".⁵⁹ He lacked the scientific training of Teilhard, and therefore his description of the nature of Matter, the emergence of life, the qualitative rise of consciousness, and perhaps

above all, his theory of the phenomenon of Intuition, all point unmistakably, it would seem, to a lasting influence of Bergson. The ascent of consciousness had already been mapped out by Bergson, who also saw this movement as a continuity, "just as the infra-red is continuous with the ultra-violet",⁶⁰ and he too projected an evolution beyond the intellect and into intuition, a faculty which he saw as somehow the norm or the native element of human consciousness. The introduction of the Supermind concept seems neither to add to nor to simplify this system. For Aurobindo it appears to serve a two-fold purpose. In the first place, by identifying the intuitive Supermind with the turiyam svid, he is indicating a Upanishadic source for the faculty of intuition which Bergson developed in a scientific way. Secondly, this connection furthers his declared intention of presenting a valid synthesis of European and Indian thought.

That Aurobindo saw the roots of modern scientific thinking in the early Hindu writings cannot be doubted, and his words on the subject are worth noting; he says,

"Nothing can be more remarkable and suggestive than the extent to which modern Science confirms in the domain of Matter the conceptions and even the very formulae of language which were arrived at, by a very different method, in the Vedanta - the original Vedanta, not the schools of metaphysical philosophy, but of the Upanishads. And these, on the other hand, often reveal their full significance, their richer contents only when they are viewed in the new light shed by the discoveries of modern Science - for instance, that Vedantic expression which describes things in the Cosmos as one seed arranged by the universal Energy in multitudinous Forms".⁶¹

Not only then does Aurobindo see a direct connection

between the Upanishads and scientific developments, he also attributes a kind of prophetic quality to the early writings, in fulfilment of which their true meaning is discovered. An influence of Bergson on both Aurobindo and Teilhard seems to have some support in the recent statement that,

"The basic unity of their ideas is striking and cannot be accounted for unless we accept the fact that they have taken the Western concept of creative evolution and applied it to their different cultures".⁶²

At this stage in his work, Aurobindo probably can claim a credible synthesis of Indian and Western thought.

Aurobindo's position in relation to the Advaita Vedanta

Controversy surrounds this question for on the one hand it is said that the "Vedanta of Sri Aurobindo is largely that of Sankara",⁶³ and on the other that the philosophy of Aurobindo, while claiming to be original Vedanta,⁶⁴ ". . . stands in strong opposition to the Advaita Vedanta of Sankara on basic issues".⁶⁵ A brief look at what exactly Aurobindo is saying may provide some sort of solution to this contradiction, and at the same time clarify the evolutionary philosophy with which Teilhard's theory is later to be compared.

Because it describes the world and all things in it as evolving or emanating from Brahman, Aurobindo's system would be classified in Hindu terms as Brahma-parinama-vada, confirming that existence is not merely appearance but is another state of Brahman. It necessarily follows that material existence in Aurobindo's theory escapes the

inevitable element of degradation which applies in earlier emanationist philosophy, because here Matter is the extension of the Real to the uttermost limit of durable form, and therefore Reality is present at every point, even on the level of the most primitive atom. This could be taken still further for, like the élan of Bergson, Brahman can be said to be present even in unformed Matter, as for instance in pure substance or the essential state which Aurobindo equates with the Pradhana, and therefore with the not yet existent.

In contrast to the parinama of Aurobindo's system the Advaita Vedanta, since it maintains that the Absolute underlies the phenomenal to which it has no real relationship, may be classified as Brahma-vivarta-vada, the doctrine of appearance in distinction from the Real. Brahman and the world always relate as Appearance to Reality for Sankara. A common misunderstanding of the Advaita is the belief that Sankara denies the existence of the world and concrete phenomena. Radhakrishnan corrects this error very simply when he says that it is useless to try to refute Sankara's system by saying that physical facts "stare us in the face", for he says, "he does not deny it".⁶⁶ While acknowledging that Sankara's vast philosophical system cannot be reduced to a few principles, a brief look at the fundamentals may clarify Aurobindo's position by contrast.

Basically it could be said that Sankara's attitude to the concrete world is that to be experienced is to exist, although this is categorically different from what

it is "to be". In a certain sense, Sankara is the great fore-runner of the present day philosophers of Being. The world exists but Brahman is. This is the difference between the Lower Knowledge, aparavidya, and paravidya, the Higher Knowledge, the ultimate of which is the realisation of the Atman as Brahman, "Aham Brahma asmi". For Sankara, the world comes within the anirvacaniya-vada, for it is inexplicable in the positive sense, and again it is approached only by a form of via negativa through the so-called four-cornered negation which means that it is "neither Being nor Non-Being, nor both nor neither".⁶⁷ This form of negation was taken over by the Advaitins from the Madhymika it is said, but since the method of reasoning is already in the Dialogues it pre-dates the Madhyamika-karika of Nagarjuna by a few centuries. The state indicated by this negation in the Advaita, is the limbo of non-description or Mithya which applies to the world and everything in it except only the Atman, in Advaitan philosophy. When the Advaitan speaks of Brahman/Atman as "the One without a second" it means precisely that, for nothing else is.

At first glance this theory seems to be at the opposite pole from Aurobindo's system which proclaims the reality of all that is by virtue of "extension", and therefore that C.A. Moore's view of the radical opposition of the philosophies is the correct position. This would leave the Indian scholar A.L. Basham's statement unexplained, and the question unanswered as to why, if the two theories are so distinct, such an

assessment could have come about in the first place. This calls for a much deeper insight into Aurobindo's philosophy especially as it relates to the meaning of existence.

Aurobindo is no less anxious to refute the exclusiveness of Sankara's Advaita than are any of the other founders of the great schools of the Vedanta. It is true to say that the initial reaction to Sankara's philosophy concerned the fundamental issue of theism, which, rather than a philosophy, represented the need of the masses. As Radhakrishnan says,⁶⁸ the monotonous repetition of the formula "I am Brahman" is a poor substitute for intelligent devotion, and so the rise of the theistic cults and the more important development of Visistadvaita by the Vaisnavite philosopher Ramanuja. The question of theism affects the status of existence in these systems. Aurobindo's position is clear on both issues. He maintains an unassailable theistic Absolute from which existence derives the status of Sat.

Perhaps because of the uniqueness of his premise of the extension of the Real, and the need to maintain this while preserving the unimpaired integrity of the Transcendent, the dominant theme in Aurobindo seems to centre on the nature of Reality itself, so that the relationship of this Reality to the experiencing subject has a lesser impact. Yet it may be here that A.L. Basham's meaning is to be found and it seems to involve Aurobindo's ascent of 'knowledge'. It is not possible fully to examine Aurobindo's lengthy discussion of the

concept of knowledge, essential not only to his evolutionary theory but also to his Integral Yoga. For the present it is important to note that he defines 'knowledge' in terms of "realisation - in the full sense of the word",⁶⁹ by which he means

"the making real to ourselves and in ourselves of the Self, the transcendent and universal Divine, and it is the subsequent impossibility of viewing the modes of being except in the light of that Self and in their true aspect as its flux of becoming under the psychological and physical conditions of our world-existence".⁷⁰

"Realisation" is then the arrival at knowledge by identity,

"for it is the self that we see and experience, and therefore vision and experience are incomplete unless they culminate in identity".⁷¹

But since modern man finds it difficult to have more than an intellectual conception of God, Aurobindo says he "may borrow some shadow of this vision" and "acquire some distant idea of what 'realisation' is"⁷² from the poems in which Wordsworth expresses his realisation of Nature. Such realisation exalted to a more profound level than physical Nature, is for Aurobindo the true starting point of knowledge by identity.

On the ordinary level of life, Aurobindo describes two forms of knowledge, the direct and the indirect, pratyasa and paroksa, the one acquired by the senses, the other by intuition. This dual aspect of the "Higher and the Lower knowledge"⁷³ in Aurobindo's theory is not radically different from the division of knowledge in Sankara. For example, Aurobindo says

"There are two kinds of knowledge, that which seeks to understand the apparent phenomenon of existence externally . . . through the intellect

- this is the lower knowledge; secondly the knowledge which seeks to know the truth of existence . . . from within in its source and reality, through spiritual realisation".⁷⁴

These two kinds of knowledge Aurobindo identifies as a lower and a higher Maya, the First being the present or mental Maya, the source of division, limitation and the ills of existence, while the second is

"that other Maya which is God's play of the infinities of existence, the splendours of knowledge, the glories of force mastered and the ecstasies of love illimitable".⁷⁵

In applying these two categories to the evolutionary movement itself, it may be seen that on the question of the value of Matter, Sankara and Aurobindo are directly opposed. For the First, the world is neither Being nor Non-Being, but is Mithya; for the second, the world is Being or Sat, for

"Matter also is Brahman and it is nothing other than or different from Brahman".⁷⁶

No further exploration of the two systems it seems could alter this fundamental distinction. The awareness of the consciousness associated with the stages in the so-called evolution of Matter in Aurobindo, is an altogether different issue. It is this changing state of awareness which actually accounts for the altered solidity or subtlety of Matter, and it is in this effect of the inner on the outer that an element of vivarta in Aurobindo is proposed, although it is as yet quite far from the position which A.L. Basham's statement demands. Such a proposal may not be immediately acceptable, but it can be reasoned on the grounds that the Reality of the world depends on

consciousness, for "the world is real", Aurobindo says, "precisely because it exists only in consciousness",⁷⁷ and to claim the existence of material form in its own right would be "a contradiction of the truth of things . . . an impossible falsehood".⁷⁸ In addition to this dependency of material form on human consciousness, there is the further important factor that Aurobindo equates consciousness with being, for

"we perceive that consciousness and being are not different from each other",⁷⁹

and this is to say that the two are not "related" nor do they "correspond" as in other systems, for it means that in Aurobindo the one is the phenomenal expression of the other. Thus, for example, the solid state is the being of the mentalised consciousness which is the present stage of evolution, and the two are inseparable. A true understanding of Aurobindo's evolutionary thought as it applies to matter depends on an acceptance of the identification of consciousness and being. It is this which allows the theory of an ascent of consciousness which is inevitably and simultaneously the transformation of Matter. This does not mean a change in Matter itself, as for example, occurred on the lower level of evolution, prior to the emergence of self-consciousness, because, Aurobindo says,

"All manifestation depends . . . upon consciousness and its power or degree; as is the status of consciousness, so will be the status of being".⁸⁰

Consciousness changes as it ascends, and as a necessary consequence there is an altered experience of Matter.

This is what Aurobindo is indicating when he speaks of

the other states of Matter, which is the same as to say that there are other Forms of the essentially Formless in its relation to altered states of consciousness. The being of a more evolved consciousness is a more refined and subtle Form of Matter, until the point of evolution is reached at which even the most subtilised matter is no longer necessary, and it is then as Aurobindo says, non-existent. This simply means that the being of consciousness evolved into pure subjectivity, is pure substance which is not experienced by the senses.

To summarise Aurobindo's position; he is saying that gross Matter is the utmost expression of the Spirit in solid form. It is the Spirit's relation in tangible manifestation to the present mental stage of human consciousness. Since consciousness is evolutionary, the state of Matter must inevitably change, and this can only mean that however long material form may endure, it is nevertheless inescapably temporary. Because matter relates to the senses, it is the 'lower knowledge' of Aurobindo's theory, and because it is a changing 'form' it may justly be described as 'appearance'. It is on this basis that an element of vivarta is suggested in Aurobindo. Setting this in contrast to Advaita Vedanta it would again have to be emphasised, that it is the form the "mutable robe"⁸¹ which changes and not the status of existence, since the form assumed is always the expression of Reality. As a phenomenon of essence, the world is Real. It is not an 'overlay' on Brahman, as Sankara says, it is Brahman. Sankara's position is clear-cut, for the

Absolute and the world are always in a relationship of Reality to appearance. Ninian Smart speaks of "the appearance theory which is peculiar to Sankara's school",⁸² and goes with his doctrine of the illusory nature of phenomenal reality. Although Aurobindo claims the total reality implied in "All is Brahman", he describes the relationship of the Absolute and material form as "Truth hidden by a Truth",⁸³ and it is this hiddenness in form which, it is suggested, identifies the element of vivarta-vada in Aurobindo's theory.

It may not be possible to go all the way with A.L. Basham's assessment that Aurobindo's Vedanta is largely that of Sankara, but some measure of affinity seems to be justified. Similarly, C.A. Moore's statement may perhaps have to be qualified, since it seems that Aurobindo and Sankara are not opposed on every issue, as for example, on the degrees of knowledge, and the irrelevance of material form to the Higher knowledge or paravidya.

NOTESTHE EVOLUTION OF MATTER

1. Teilhard de Chardin, A letter dated 8th September, 1935.
2. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 486.
3. Ibid., p. 486.
4. Ibid., p. 485.
5. R.C. Zaehner, "Evolution in Religion", p. 10.
6. Chandogya Upanishad. VI.8.6..
7. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 77.
8. Ibid., p. 77.
9. Ibid., p. 77.
10. Ibid., p. 77.
11. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 24.
12. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 265.
13. Ibid., p. 265.
14. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 446.
15. Ibid., p. 446.
16. Kees Bolle, "The Persistence of Religion", p. 89.
17. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 408.
18. Mandukya Upanishad ["The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 408].
19. Sri Aurobindo "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 408.
20. Ibid, p. 408.
21. Mandukya Upanishad.
22. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 401.
23. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 321.
24. Ibid., p. 321.
25. Ibid., p. 321.
26. Ibid., p. 321.

27. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 322.
28. Ibid., p. 322.
29. Ibid., p. 322.
30. Ibid., p. 322.
31. Ibid., p. 44.
32. F. Whaling, an article in "Journal of Religious Studies", Vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 66-103.
33. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 404.
34. Ibid., pp. 385-386.
35. Ibid.
36. Kees Bolle, "The Persistence of Religion", p. 88.
37. F. Whaling, an article in "Journal of Religious Studies", Vol. VII, No. 2, p. 66.
38. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 91.
39. Ibid., p. 656.
40. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 334.
41. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 389.
42. Ibid., p. 123f.
43. Beatrice Bruteau, "Evolution towards Divinity", p. 311.
44. Mircea Eliade, "Yoga, Immortality and Freedom", p. 22.
45. F. Whaling, an article in "Journal of Religious Studies", Vol. VII, No. 2, p. 66.
46. P.T. Raju, "Philosophical Traditions of India", p. 229.
47. R.C. Zaehner, "Evolution in Religion", p. 11.
48. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 386.
49. Ibid., p. 387.
50. Ibid., p. 387.
51. Ibid., p. 390.
52. Ibid., p. 16.
53. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 2.

54. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 2.
55. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine".
56. Ibid.
57. Kees Bolle, "The Persistence of Religion", p. 92.
58. Ibid., p. 93.
59. F. Whaling, an article in "Journal of Religious Studies", Vol. VII, No 2, p. 56.
60. Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution", p. 380.
61. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", pp. 20-21.
62. In this comparison Dr. Whaling includes Muhammed Iqbal.
63. A.L. Basham, in "The Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths" by R.C. Zaehner.
64. C.A. Moore, "A Source Book of Indian Philosophy". p. 575.
65. Ibid., p. 575.
66. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. 2, p. 329.
67. P. T. Raju, "Philosophical Traditions of India", p. 229.
68. Ibid.
69. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 290.
70. Ibid., p. 290.
71. Ibid., p. 291.
72. Ibid., p. 490.
73. Ibid., p. 292.
74. Ibid., p. 292.
75. Ibid., p. 491.
76. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1 p. 175.
77. Ibid., p. 370.
78. Ibid., p. 33.
79. Ibid., p. 33.

80. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 279.
81. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 8.
82. Ninian Stark, "Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy", p. 113.
83. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 394.

CHAPTER 18

TEILHARD; PROGRESS BY UNITING

The very basic and indisputable affinity between the evolutionary theories developed by Aurobindo and Teilhard lies in the common proposition that evolution is a movement towards the final creation and spiritual fulfilment of Man in union with the Divine. Despite the agreement on ultimate purpose, however, there is profound difference on how this is to be achieved, as a look at the key areas in their respective systems may show.

[a] Although Teilhard's theory of movement is in direct contrast to the descending/ascending activity in Aurobindo, the element of descent in Christian doctrine is of vital importance. In urging the Church to continue the move towards a deeper understanding of Incarnation by making clear the actuality of the Presence of Christ in the world, Teilhard draws attention to the text of St. Paul, "He descended and He ascended, that He might fill all things".¹ The words, he says, may have had little effect on the Ephesians,

"but for us, fascinated by the newly discovered magnitude of the universe, it expresses exactly that aspect of God which is needed to satisfy our capacity for worship".²

Descent through the Incarnation provides the motivating principle, the capacity for union and the irresistible Power of Love for Teilhard, no less than does the descent of the Spirit into Form for Aurobindo. It is the method

by which the end is achieved which varies.

In the evolutionary movement itself, a contrast can be seen between Aurobindo's theory of descending/ascending Reality, and Teilhard's system of creative union, a concept which is of major importance in the process of comparison. Creative union is not simply an expression which describes the initial creative act, but is a movement which follows a "Law of Recurrence",³ thus establishing the principle of a continuous creation by union. In some important respects, the evolutionary movement in Teilhard reverses Aurobindo's theory, for it takes the form of a synthetic build-up of elements in increasing complexity, which, because it is an additive process, may be seen as an increase both of quantity and quality in the solidity of Matter. For Teilhard, infinity of consciousness is realised only through an infinity of material complexity, whereas for Aurobindo the reverse is true, since the experience of an infinite consciousness is reached only in conjunction with a final stage in the subtilisation of Matter. Despite this difference, both Aurobindo and Teilhard anticipate an evolutionary point at which consciousness will endure without the support of material form, a possibility which rests on the basic premise common to both, that consciousness itself is primary and precedes all material formation. Both theories recognise that in all its aspects Matter is not self-subsistent, but depends on relationship to a conscious presence. This is the criterion of existence in Teilhard's theory of creation as an act of union, and is equally so in

Aurobindo's idea of creation as the effect of "extension".

(b) A continuous movement of creation by uniting is the infinite framework of Teilhard's theory of convergence, and the principle applies not only to material elements, but also to conscious centres. Henri de Lubac is making this point when he says that

"the term 'creative union' holds good both for each new individual that appears in the unfolding of the world, and for the unfolding itself",⁴

which is to say that "creative union" describes not only the process but also the complex temporary whole which is its result. This is the essential meaning of the key-concept in Teilhard's evolutionary theory. The fundamental importance of the dual aspect of "creative union", which combines both the movement itself and the product of it, is related to the particular method of progress which Teilhard proposes. Evolution advances by means of dialectic and synthesis in which each new synthetic whole contributes to the achievement of a higher result. In other words, the lesser wholes are the products of the process but subsequently become the process itself, by providing the possibility of further complexity and so a more clearly defined element of curvature. It is this pagoda-like structure, combined with a centric motion, which marks Teilhard's theory as distinct in comparison with other theories of spiritual evolution. The description of a progressive build-up by means of an ever greater unification applies not only to the world but is to be seen as having a cosmic dimension, the true meaning of his theory of "cosmogenesis".

Henri de Lubac is again making a relevant point when he says that Teilhard had Bergson's "Creative Evolution" in mind in developing his theory of 'creative union', and that the latter is properly understood only in relation to this earlier work.⁵ There is a touch of paradox in this, for despite the influence of "Creative Evolution", the impact of which Teilhard himself describes,⁶ his own theory, insofar as the evolutionary movement itself is concerned, is the complete reversal of what Bergson proposes, and both differ radically from the 'shape' of evolution in Aurobindo. Teilhard's evolutionary system is often symbolised in the cone, a common philosophical illustration of the rise of the Many towards unification in the One. In Teilhard, it means much more than this for it also indicates that "everything holds together from above",⁷ and more significantly, it illustrates the ultimate point of converging complexity at the peak of the cone where unification reaches its most intense state. The symbol of the cone therefore represents a beginning and an end, but cannot indicate the movement itself. The course of this in Teilhard is a progression of cosmic existence from an infinitely distanced periphery, influenced by a power of attraction analogous to that of the magnetic field, towards a cosmic centre. It is a theory of total convergence, in contrast to Bergson's idea of infinite divergence from a centre of pure activity. In considering the 'shape' of Aurobindo's system as that of a continuous and increasing descent which is cause of a corresponding ascent, it seems true to say that

Aurobindo and Teilhard differ from each other, and also from what may be regarded as a common source in "Creative Evolution". The reason for the difference between theories which in other respects are so remarkably similar, is that both Aurobindo and Teilhard develop their systems from the standpoint of their particular religious commitment. Both set out to illustrate that the evolutionary theory which they have accepted is not only compatible with, but is in a sense the meaning of, certain elements in their respective religious doctrines. In this sense there is an affinity of intention between the two writers, for, as it has been said,

"What Aurobindo was doing for the Hindu world,
Teilhard was doing for the Christian world".⁸

Aurobindo does not amend or re-interpret the systematic Hindu schools, but goes back to the sacred writings where he finds an already prepared structure, and even, he claims, the beginnings of modern evolutionary thought. This accounts for his view of evolution as following a descending/ascending movement; a common pattern in the Veda and the Upanishads. Teilhard's concept is necessarily circular because its activating power radiates from a point in history, towards which all that is is converging, a proposition which he justifies by a practical application of the texts of St. Paul which speak of a physical 'forming' of the Body of Christ. Evolution is a continuing process, Teilhard says, because "Christ has not yet completed His own forming",⁹ and therefore that moment of universal unification of which St. Paul speaks is the

not-yet of earthly existence. Speaking in similar terms, Aurobindo says that

"The time for that marvellous hour of the evolving Time-Spirit is not yet come",¹⁰

and all that Man can do at present is to

"receive something of its power into his soul in greater or less degree, by a diminishing transmission through an inferior consciousness; but even that gives him a sense of an ecstasy and an unsurpassable beatitude".¹¹

It was earlier seen that Teilhard sees the Spirit as awaiting Its release from Matter at the point which marks the climax of the process of amorisation. This will be an event of planetary significance, for it is the breakthrough into a unitary consciousness fused by the power of Love. Aurobindo describes the fully evolved soul as having the power of one-ness of consciousness with all beings, and he will

"approach and enter this one-ness by the gate of universal Love".¹²

Teilhard and the Sankhya System

Generally speaking it is probably true to say that Teilhard takes a dismissive attitude towards Indian religious thought, which he somehow lumps together under an "illusionist" heading. But as R.C. Zaehner says,

"What Teilhard is attacking is Sankara's illusionism and the world-denying austerity of Theravada Buddhism",¹³

both of which Aurobindo also firmly rejects, and which in any case accounts for less than half of the religious tradition of India. It may also be worth noting that despite the disapproval, Teilhard still sees the Vedanta

together with Marxism as the only possible alternative to a renewed and evolutionary Christianity. While admitting what Zaehner describes as Teilhard's "uniformly unsympathetic"¹⁴ approach to other religions, Beatrice Bruteau says that

"the ancient involution/evolution theories of the Sankhya show some surprising agreement"¹⁵

with him. She appears to base this affinity on Teilhard's law of Complexity/Consciousness, which, she says

"includes a set of thresholds at which the different strata of being appear, each time revealing a higher degree of the consciousness which was somehow dimly present even from the beginning",¹⁶

and therefore she proposes a similarity with the Sankhya theory which

"is also a matter of producing more and more integrated wholes".¹⁷

Beatrice Bruteau recognises the impossibility of suggesting a true affinity between the two as they stand, because of the eternal separation of Prakriti (the complex principle) and consciousness, for she admits the "basic disagreement"¹⁸ between the Sankhya doctrine and Teilhard. What she is suggesting is that this difficulty can be overcome by

"looking more closely at Prakriti to see how consciousness is contained in it".¹⁹

If such a principle could be established, then some measure of agreement between the systems on the point at issue, would be well worth exploring. The possibility of agreement seems to be developed by Bruteau on the basis of the power of the gunas, the elements which apply to all existence whether inanimate or animate, conscious or

unconscious. They are, as Radhakrishnan says, "the necessary conditions of all existence".²⁰ The gunas correspond loosely to the fine, coarse, and active, or sattvic, tamasic, and rajasic aspects, which, combining in various ways and in varying degrees of dominance, determine the character of things and of men. As given in the Sankhya system, Aurobindo says, these three principles "enter into all things . . . they conflict and combine together in all creation".²¹ Applied to human life, Aurobindo describes the character in which the Tamas is dominant as identified by a "lack of inspiration", a "shut soul . . . insensibility to beauty", all the elements which describe what is coarse in human nature. The Rajasic is characterised by restlessness, man "driven by passion and desire". The Sattvic produces a truth-seeking open intelligence, the will "guided by an ethical spirit, vitality governed by a mastering intelligence".²² Each of the gunas is manifold in itself, and their varied mingling accounts for the infinite variety in human life, and in Nature. Their role in the attainment of self-perfection is an essential part of Aurobindo's integral Yoga. Nevertheless, although the gunas are central to the Sankhya system, since it is the imbalance of the gunas due to the proximity of the Purusas, which ends the state of pralaya and so motivates the evolutionary movement or sarga, it seems nowhere to be suggested that these constitute a conscious principle in Prakriti. Radhakrishnan says that

"Prakriti is non-consciousness (acetanam)

while Purusa is consciousness (sacetanam)"²³
that

"Prakriti and its products possess the gunas
and so are unconscious".²⁴

and in reference to the gunas Raju says "There is no
consciousness in them".²⁵

It seems to be unanimous among Indian scholars that
the movement in the Sankhya is mechanical and devoid of
consciousness, for again in reference to evolution
Radhakrishnan says,

"The Sankhya is clear that the activity of
Prakriti is not due to conscious reflection"²⁶

and Hiriyanna agrees with this. It is precisely because
of this lack of consciousness that Prakriti is said to be
in a state of perpetual motion, since otherwise the system
would come up against Newton's First Law, and would not
be seriously considered, for if action ceased there is no
external principle which could re-introduce movement.
Therefore, Hiriyanna says, the whole system is built on
the principle of the indestructibility of Matter and the
persistence of force. It is doubtful then, whether a
parallel to Teilhard's theory of Complexity/Consciousness
can be found in the Sankhya. Certainly, to try to
establish through the properties of the gunas in Prakriti,
a conscious process in the Sankhya similar to the evolution
of consciousness in Teilhard, appears to be a hopeless
task. The consciousness of the Purushas is no help since
they have no part in the movement of Matter. Paralleled
in Teilhard, the passivity of the Purushas would mean
that Man is simply an observer in the process which for

Teilhard constitutes human fulfilment. It would mean the replacing of "we are evolution"²⁷ with the image of the Sankhya Purusas which, as Radhakrishnan says, remain forever "undisturbed by earthly cares".²⁸ Continuing her comparison of Teilhard with the Sankhya, Beatrice Bruteau wants to claim some kind of affinity between creative union and the "involution/evolution theories in the Sankhya".²⁹ But again, involution means something completely different in Sankhya philosophy from what it does in Teilhard's system. In the latter, as noted above, it has to do with curvature, with the progress of centricity, which has in turn to do with unity, and therefore with a qualitative rise in consciousness. In the former, it means the latent state of Prakriti, in which the dissolution or pralaya of the material world occurs. This indicates the passing of phenomenal existence into the implicit form which is known as the Pradhana. As already seen, by the terms of the theory, the sequence must be understood as eternally recurrent and without recognisable purpose. At first glance the question of purpose appears to be controversial, for Radhakrishnan says that

"... unintelligent Prakriti cannot serve any purpose",³⁰ while Hiriyanna says that

"We may characterise it as quasi-teleological, however hard it may be to understand that term",³¹

but in the end he too is saying that it has no purpose which is "consciously pursued".³² But even this does not seem to deal satisfactorily with the point, since it is evolution which provides the conditions which allow the

release of the Purusas from the bondage of Prakriti. This would seem to suggest some element of purpose. Unfortunately again the matter cannot be left here, for it leaves the discussion open to the question of how Purusha as the essence of conscious being can be in bondage in the first place. Without going into a long exposition of the system, but to avoid needless contradiction, it is accepted that the Purushas are "eternally free",³³ and that the terms "release" and "bondage" refer to the reflected ego or the empirical self. Sankara objected to the Sankhya system because of the ambiguity of purpose, and Radhakrishnan says that this, as well as the indefinable relationship between Purusha and Prakriti must remain the mystery of Sankhya. However that may be, even if the system is teleological, it is undoubtedly so in reference to the individual alone, and so is of no help in the search for a meaningful connection with Teilhard's system to which an overwhelming Sense of the Species is central. It is doubtful if any true affinity could be established between Teilhard and the Sankhya on any of the points so far discussed. The idea need not be completely dismissed, however, as a brief look at certain other aspects of the two philosophies may show. The first of these is

(i) Causation

The necessary cause of material existence according to Teilhard, is the unifying power of the Spirit. As already noted, nothing can exist which is not unified, and therefore, everything comes into existence through the influence of the Spirit.

In discussing causation in the Sankhya, Thomas Aykara³⁴ speaks of the sat-karya-vada as cause, and rightly so since this means that the effect subsists in the cause in latent form. But the sat-karya-vada is only material cause. The first and final cause of concrete existence in the Sankhya is the influence of the Purusha on the gunas, initiating that loss of stability without which extension into existence is impossible. Radhakrishnan likens this motivating power of the remote and passive Purusha to the God of Aristotle,³⁵ the unmoved mover, although the analogy of the magnet which excites and moves particles of metal while remaining itself unmoved, seems perfectly to describe the pattern of causation in the Sankhya theory. This would seem to offer some measure of affinity between Teilhard and the Sankhya, since in both theories it is the impetus of a spiritual power which brings Matter into existence. Paradoxically, the parallel could not be applied so easily to Aurobindo's theory because of the element of identity, and in a sense Teilhard is nearer to traditional Hinduism than is Aurobindo on this particular point.

[ii] The Concept of the Tanmatras

Beatrice Bruteau's notion of a parallel between the relationship of Prakriti and Purusha and that of Omega to "the evolving world-stuff"³⁶ is attractive, but the difficulties contained in such a comparison may be insurmountable. For example, Omega is real because it is a point in history; the concept of Purusha/Prakriti is purely a hypothesis; Omega is not simply a detached

influence in Teilhard, but attracts towards itself; the movement towards Omega is irreversible as against the eternal recurrence of the Sankhya theory; this is to mention only a few elements which would seem to rule out a meaningful parallel.

The system of the tanmatras contained in Sankhya philosophy may be a different matter. Briefly put, these are the essences as it were, of the elements which compose existence and they build up in a way which to some extent resembles the additive process in Teilhard. For example; from the Sankhya principle of ahamkara, which Radhakrishnan describes as the "self-sense", there arises the basic quality of sound, the sabda-tanmatra, which in turn combines with the sparsa-tanmatra producing air which has the property of both sound and touch, to which again is added the rupa-tanmatra of fire which has the combined qualities of sound, touch and colour, and so on until earth comes into being having all the tanmatras and so all the elements. The important point is that in the tanmatra-sarga, the elements become more complex and increasingly concrete and this relates to the central theme of the changing states of Matter in terms of subtlety and solidity in Sankhya philosophy. It is this principle which, as earlier suggested, Aurobindo has taken up into his own theory. But it is not in Aurobindo but in Teilhard that Beatrice Bruteau sees a connection, although it does not seem to be clearly developed. Nevertheless, it is possibly true to say that there is some degree of affinity between the tanmatra-sarga and Teilhard's theory

of complexification which makes evolution an additive process. This seems also to apply to the recession of Matter which in the Sankhya is the reverse process in which Matter becomes more subtle as it moves towards the latent state. There is a similarity but not a true parallel, it would seem, in Teilhard's description of a physical change in the body as the soul becomes more spiritualised, "the more spiritual the soul," he says, "the more fragile the body",³⁷ in accordance with the "Law of compensation"³⁸ which it seems, has not had enough attention from philosophers.

[iii] Release

Possibly the only element of true affinity between Teilhard and the Sankhya is that in both systems, the aim of concrete existence is release into the freedom of the Spirit. This end having been achieved, Matter according to the Sankhya, recedes into pralaya or the essential state of non-existence, and similarly in Teilhard Matter also passes into non-existence in compliance with the physical laws. Beatrice Bruteau says that the Sankhya "serves the ends of the spiritual life",³⁹ but this in no sense means spiritual ecstasy or union with God, since the system is atheistic, and any parallel with Teilhard cannot be pushed thus far. Although Beatrice Bruteau develops the element of theism on the grounds of Isvara-pranidhana which came into the Yoga system of Patanjali based on Sankhya philosophy, most scholars see this as a late addition. In agreeing with the atheistic aspect, Radhakrishnan says it is not that the system establishes

that there is no God, but simply shows that there is no reason for supposing that there is one, and Hiriyanna says that "theism is contrary to the spirit of classical Sankhya."⁴⁰ R.C. Zaehner sees the Isvara-pranidhana in Sankhya-yoga as simply a device which is "a preparation for more purely contemplative exercises".⁴¹

Summing up the extent of agreement between Teilhard and the Sankhya, it may be said that this is confined to

- [i] the common theory of a spiritual cause of existence;
- [ii] the fall of Matter into non-existence following the release of the Spirit;
- [iii] to some degree complexity in Teilhard paralleled in the tanmatra-sarga;
- [iv] the element of subtilisation which Teilhard describes as the material body approaches the final stage of evolution.

Before leaving Beatrice Bruteau's analysis of the relationship between the two systems, perhaps brief reference may be made to the statement that

"When Teilhard proposed in the West that 'consciousness' was present in all beings down to the inanimate stone and the least sub-atomic particle, the idea was not well received. There was no mode of thought about the world which had prepared the way for this suggestion",⁴²

and she goes on to say that it would not have seemed so strange against the Sankhya system. This calls irresistably for two comments; in the first place, there is no reason to suppose that a knowledge of Sankhya philosophy would have made any difference since this does not propose consciousness in Matter. On the contrary,

the terms of the system keep the two eternally apart. There is no evolution of Matter per se, a possibility which is ruled out by the sat-karya-vada associated with the theory, and so there can be no possibility of an altered status for material phenomena.

Secondly, a theory which is almost identical to Teilhard's system as far as it concerns consciousness and material evolution had already been published, and in France, several years before. Teilhard acknowledges the influence of Bergson's "Creative Evolution" [1910] on his "L'Union Créatrice" [1917], as both Émile Rideau and Henri de Lubac point out. Teilhard himself speaks of the ideas which were set in motion by a reading of Bergson's work.

It does not detract from the value of Teilhard's work to say that some of the fundamental principles had already been set out. Consciousness in Matter, its evolutionary nature, its priority and infinity, as well as its relationship to a complexity which is infinite, had previously been discussed in "Creative Evolution". It is not here that the originality of Teilhard's thought is to be found, but in the application of this evolutionary movement to history, to individual human life, and to the dimension of Christian Revelation. If it is wrong to say, for example, that the methodology which Marx applied to human society is less effective because it was already familiar in theory, then it is equally wrong to say that Teilhard's evolutionary system applied to Christianity is less effective because of Bergson.

NOTESTEILHARD; PROGRESS BY UNITING

1. Ephesians, 4.9-10.
2. Teilhard de Chardin, "Toward the Future", pp. 98f.
3. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 46.
4. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 198.
5. Ibid., p. 198.
6. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 25.
7. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 50.
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9. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 305.
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CHAPTER 19

OMNIPRESENCE

In Aurobindo's theory, the world is the Spirit's consent to its own manifestation in the guise of the phenomenal, to accommodate that form of consciousness which is the human mentality, in its need to relate to objective gross substance. The validity of such an identification rests on the Upanishadic statement, "All is Brahman"¹ [Sarvam Khalwidam Brahma], which Aurobindo says, was obscured by the over emphasis on the "Tat tvam asi" [That thou art], the foundation of the Brahman/Atman doctrine developed by Sankara in the Advaita Vedanta. This maintains that the identity of Brahman-Atman is the sole One apart from which nothing else is, and so the phenomenal is reduced to the mithya of a lesser reality. Against this, Aurobindo claims that

"If it be true that the Self alone exists, it must be also true that all is the Self"²

and on this basis he can say that "An omnipresent reality is the Brahman",³ thus establishing the Self-extension which is the root foundation of his non-dualism.

The Upanishadic "All is Brahman" serves a dual purpose in Aurobindo's theory, for in the first place it relates the modern idea of living matter to an ancient source in Hindu texts, thus contributing to his declared intention of illustrating the fact that Hinduism already contains up-to-date theories. Secondly the statement has

the same Upanishadic validity as the Advaitan Brahman/Atman, and can therefore counteract this philosophy which, as it stands, is in opposition to his own theory. "All is Brahman" is a necessary and fundamental element in Aurobindo's theory of total integration.

The descent of an immutable Reality into a world of evolutionary change is not contradictory, because it is the evolution of something which does not change in essence but only in manifestation. Because of this, evolution in Aurobindo has rightly been described as "a re-discovery of itself by the original term",⁵ for it indicates the restoration of Matter to the fullness of its essentiality as Spirit. Aurobindo therefore applies the term Sat, or Being to Matter, for

"Pure Being is the affirmation by the Unknowable of Itself as the free base of all cosmic existence"

and Non-Being is

"the contrary affirmation of Its freedom from all cosmic existence",⁶

the integration of manifest and unmanifest which he emphasises throughout his work.

Given such a theory, the question may arise as to what exactly Aurobindo means by the term "Matter". From the unity of its reality as "substance of the one conscious-being,"⁷ material substance is fragmented by the operation of a thought-mind which can know it, not in its unity or totality, but only by the principle of division. In other words, the multiplicity of material forms is the result of the natural action of the mind which inevitably divides and constructs within the phenomenal.

For this reason Aurobindo says that even in subdividing the

"visible aggregate or the formal atom into essential atoms . . . down to the most infinitesimal dust of being, we shall still, because of the mind that formed them, arrive at some utmost atomic existence."⁸

In defining Matter, he is saying that to the higher intuitive level of Supermind, it is pure substance,

"Unatomic extension of substance, extension which is not an aggregation, co-existence otherwise than by-distribution in space, the realities of pure existence",⁹

but through the descent into mind, the conceptive self-extension of being is represented in atomic division and aggregation, "as the thing we call Matter".¹⁰ There is no doubt therefore, that by Matter Aurobindo means the concrete reality of everyday life which is the original but not the only field of human experience. Matter is the Spirit's "last word in descent,"¹¹ but it is also the "first in ascent"¹² and this is emphasised by Aurobindo in his description of "the other states of Matter"¹³ experienced by a consciousness which has passed beyond the intellect. And how can seeming contraries pass into each other; Aurobindo puts the question and answers it; because they are not in essence contraries, but manifestations of the one Reality, identical in substance. This is the true meaning of his saying that all evolution, and this includes Matter, is simply the heightening of the force of consciousness.

For Aurobindo, evolution is the process in which the self-extension of Being is revealed, and the basic premise from which his theory of total integration is

developed, is an omnipresent Reality in the world, which he maintains is,

" . . . the truth of all life and existence, whether absolute or relative, whether corporeal or incorporeal, whether animate or inanimate, whether intelligent or unintelligent",

and the unmistakable sign which confirms its presence is the otherwise inexplicable discovery of a progressive consciousness. A fundamental proposition in Aurobindo's theory, is that

"the evolution of consciousness and knowledge cannot be accounted for unless there is already a concealed consciousness in things with its inherent and native powers emerging little by little".¹⁴

The theory of primacy and the creative nature of consciousness is set out in great detail, and it appears to follow the earlier development in Bergson.¹⁵ It is no exaggeration to say that Aurobindo's evolutionary thought depends upon the acceptability of this basic proposition. The importance for the present work lies in the conclusion that within this concealed consciousness there is an underlying Knowledge. It is this which accounts for the unerring instinct in the animal, which does not possess this form of consciousness, but which is possessed and moved by it in a way which ensures its survival. In the evolution into human self-consciousness, this same element of certainty passes into the intuition, which, because it is direct and unmediated, cannot err. This movement is interrupted by the "evolving mind"¹⁶ which constantly "trails error as its shadow",¹⁷ whereas if in evolution

"... the surface consciousness were always open to intuition, the intervention of error would not be possible".¹⁸

Aurobindo's conclusion is closely allied to Bergson's theory that the natural movement of consciousness was from instinct to intuition, although it followed the path of intelligence, and "from intelligence to intuition we shall never pass".¹⁹ Nevertheless, Aurobindo's view modifies this, by saying that the way to intuition is through the full evolution of the intellect which is then taken up and assimilated into intuition.

Omnipresence is affirmed in Teilhard, as may be expected, in ways which satisfy both science and faith. Again, consciousness is both primary and creative. If it is defined as "something with no vestige of consciousness",²⁰ Teilhard says, Matter does not exist, which means that even in pre-living particles there are signs of a "within". This basic premise is as necessary to Teilhard's idea of the additive nature of evolution as it is to Aurobindo's theory of descent/ascent. It allows Teilhard to speak of the primacy of the Spirit as "the primacy of the Future",²¹ and in Aurobindo it establishes that "first involutionary foundation in which originates all that is to evolve".²²

Omnipresence is illustrated by Teilhard, [a] by the union of Spirit with the infinite multiplicity of non-being, which, as Henri de Lubac says, preserves the doctrine ex nihilo in Teilhard because of the identification of radical dispersion with nothingness. Omnipresence both guarantees the existence of Matter in

the first place, and sustains it through the evolutionary movement, since creative union follows the law of recurrence and progression to the Centre of Omega.

(b) Teilhard provides for the scientific element by following the accepted principles of physics in allowing for a field of Energy which, because it is preserved and even increased by the intensity of a Totalised human consciousness completely centred, is psychic and therefore indestructible. From a scientist's point of view, John D'Manique confirms the valid possibility of such a theory.

(c) Omnipresence is unambiguously confirmed in the dimension of Faith. Teilhard writes that

"No-one understands so fully as the man who is absorbed in the study of Matter, to what a degree Christ, through His Incarnation, is interior to the world, rooted in the world even in the heart of the tiniest atom"²³

and Aurobindo quoting the Gita also says "The Lord abides in the heart of all things".

In relation to what has been said, it has to be mentioned once again that the union of Matter and Spirit means something different in Teilhard as compared to Aurobindo's theory. This fundamental difference in the basic premise is of the utmost importance. In the latter, as an essential identity the relationship of Matter and Spirit cannot be reversed. In Teilhard, Spirit creates the synthesis of Matter. It is the union of something which necessarily endures, with something which in scientific terms, must eventually disintegrate and cease to be. The means by which this law could be avoided, for instance by transformation, [in this case probably into spirit], was not taken up by

Teilhard and so the destruction of Matter inevitably follows. However long it endures, this marks the union of Matter and Spirit in Teilhard as temporary, in contrast to the theory of "extension" in Aurobindo, which makes such a union indissoluble and infinite.

In "The Phenomenon of Man" Teilhard speaks as a scientist. "Let us keep the discoveries . . . of physics",²⁴ he says, and therefore he retains the universal principle of entropy. Elsewhere, particularly in "Le Milieu Divin" and "Mass on the World" Teilhard reconciles his theory of evolution with the dogmatic truth of Transubstantiation. The transition of the species from the lower to the highest point of evolution anticipates the transfiguration of the universe in the Body of Christ, for "The sacramental species are formed by the totality of the world",²⁵ Teilhard says, a statement which is properly understood only in conjunction with Total Matter. Incarnation and Eucharist form a continuum not only in the spiritual but also in the creative sense and Transubstantiation is not an alternative to evolutionary creation but is the model of this substantial change.

The Meaning of Consciousness

Because of its central importance as the evolutionary principle, the question may be asked as to what is to be understood in the term "consciousness". In its first appearance, Aurobindo says,

"consciousness has the semblance of a miracle, a power alien to Matter that manifests unaccountably in a world of inconscient Nature . . .",²⁶

from which it emerges slowly and with difficulty. Evolved into consciousness of human life, it is usually understood as the familiar day to day experience of the mental

consciousness when sensation is not diminished by sleep or otherwise impaired. Such an understanding means that it is something which is not always possessed by the individual, and this makes it the exception rather than the rule in the material universe. It is a "vulgar and shallow idea of the nature of consciousness"²⁷ which must disappear from philosophical thinking, for the consciousness of the waking state is only a small part of the entire conscious being. Behind it, Aurobindo says, there is

"a subliminal or subconscient mind which is the greater part of ourselves and contains heights and profundities which no man has yet measured or fathomed",²⁸

and it is this unmeasured depths which Aurobindo wants to convey in defining the term "consciousness". This is the knowledge, he says, which

"delivers us definitely from circumscription by the material and from the illusion of the obvious".²⁹

It naturally follows that he clearly separates cerebral organisation from the experience of consciousness.

The physical organisation

"no more causes or explains thought and consciousness that the construction of an engine causes or explains the motive-power of steam or electricity".³⁰

There is no problem concerning the relationship of the inner and outer in Aurobindo, for again he makes this very clear; "The brain," he says, "has not produced nor does it use consciousness,"³¹ but on the contrary, consciousness uses the brain which its own upward striving has produced. The question of relationship, causal or not, and the associated problem of the possibility of the control of outer over inner which is present in Teilhard, does not arise in Aurobindo's system.

It is this developed definition of consciousness which allows Aurobindo to consider the possibility of "a universal

subconscient mind"³² as present even in material objects, and whether the material state is an "emptiness" or simply a "sleep"³³ of consciousness which lacks only the means of communication. He asks,

"Is there not a conscious Soul, a Purusha who wakes for ever even in all that sleeps?"

and so

"we must suppose in the plant and metal a force to which we can give the name of consciousness",³⁶

although it is not the mentality which has so far monopolised that term.

It is on the basis of an abyss of subconscience from which human consciousness has evolved, that Aurobindo develops his theory of a similar extension into the future. As consciousness has transformed everything in its material path, so now it will fulfil humanity in the conscious discovery of its own Identity. On the level of humanity a reversal takes place, for here human consciousness effects its own evolution and will organise whatever mutations are necessary for its progress. This is what Aurobindo is describing in saying that

"we stand now between these two terms, an outer world of Life and Matter that has made us and a remaking of the world by ourselves in the sense of the evolving Spirit".³⁷

Teilhard also uses "consciousness" in the broadest possible sense. In the early part of the "Phenomenon of Man", he draws attention to the term which he says, is meant to

"indicate every kind of psychism, from the most rudimentary forms of interior perception imaginable to the human phenomenon of reflective thought".³⁸

Aurobindo is careful to emphasise that by consciousness in material form he means a conscious force, and not any form of mentality.

Henri de Lubac makes the same point in discussing

Teilhard's use of the term "consciousness". He says that

Teilhard does what

"a number of by no means incautious philosophers
have done before him"³⁹

in extending consciousness to include every sort of psychism,
but that what is meant is a germ of consciousness, an
interiority which as yet lacks subjectivity. It only
becomes consciousness in the full meaning of the word, de
Lubac says,

"when complexity, which makes itself increasingly felt
as a counter-current to entropy, is carried to
extremely high values",⁴⁰

a direct reference to Teilhard's own distinction, which
confirms the close affinity between his concept of conscious-
ness and that developed by Aurobindo.

For both, consciousness is primary. Aurobindo describes
it as the Brahman, "indivisible in all things",⁴¹ and Teilhard
speaks of the "first corner-stone of my interior life - the
primacy of Consciousness".⁴²

Consciousness is also equated with being, since Teilhard
says that "complete being is conscious being"⁴³ and this is
paralleled in Aurobindo's saying that, "as is the status of
consciousness, so will be the status of being".⁴⁴ Conscious-
ness is creative. Not only is this an essential factor in
Teilhard's theory of "creative union" seen as an initial act,
it is also the principle of a continuing creation by union,
since "union increases only through an increase in conscious-
ness".⁴⁵ Throughout his work Aurobindo stresses the creative
aspect of consciousness. Absolute consciousness is in its
nature absolute power"⁴⁶ he says, and it is this power of
conscious being dwelling upon itself, "bringing out all its
truths and potentialities, ... which has created the universe".⁴⁷

Finally, consciousness is omnipresent. Aurobindo says,

"We start with the conception of an omnipresent Reality of which neither the Non-Being at the one end, nor the universe at the other are negations that annul; they are rather different states of the Reality, obverse and reverse affirmations".⁴⁸

This is what he means when he says that

"Form and Matter are in their nature an act of divine consciousness, and in their aim the representation of a status of Spirit".⁴⁹

Similarly, Teilhard writes that

"each grain of thought, taken to the extreme limit of its individual consciousness, will simply be the incommunicable partial expression of a total consciousness which is common to the whole earth."⁵⁰

But towards the end of "The Phenomenon of Man", Teilhard again explains omnipresence in terms of faith. As early as St. John and St. Paul, he says,

"we read that to create, to fulfil and to purify the world is, for God, to unify it by uniting it organically with himself. How does he unify it? By partially immersing himself in things, by becoming 'element', and from this vantage point in the heart of matter, assuming the control of what we now call evolution".⁵¹

Despite the temporary use of neutral language, Teilhard maintains the traditional position of faith, for finally God is the Centre of centres, and "in that final vision the Christian dogma culminates".⁵²

In terms of deference to the orthodoxy of their own faith, Aurobindo's thought represents the reverse position. His theory of the identification of Matter and Spirit, which claims in a literal sense that matter is the self-extension of the Real into existence, seems not to be exactly paralleled in any developed Hindu system. As

Bolle says, "it means a refusal of the old dichotomies",⁵³ which are the familiar characteristics of Hinduism. He attributes this divergence in Aurobindo to

"the widening horizons, geographically and in terms of modern philosophical trends which entered India from outside",⁵⁴

and this assessment would be in agreement with Aurobindo's declared intention of forming a credible synthesis of Eastern and Western thought. This would not be a "new Hinduism", but the re-discovery of what Aurobindo sees as the original teaching of the Vedas and the earlier Upanishads.

Three major schools of Indian thought are contradicted in Aurobindo's theory of Matter and the related idea of omnipresence. In the first place, this modifies the division in Sankhya philosophy which holds the view that Prakriti, which may loosely be equated with Matter, contains no trace of consciousness. This is the sole property of the Purushas, or conscious being which would correspond to Man, and these two principles of existence do not directly effect each other. By contrast, Aurobindo posits the primordial and absolute Consciousness as inherent in and actively directing its progress from the moment of creation through the stages of evolution to the point of its return to itself in the fulfilment of pure substance. "If we concentrate on Purusha/Prakriti alone", Aurobindo says, "we see only the dichotomy of Soul and Nature, of Spirit and Matter, and miss their unity",⁵⁵ and therefore this unity which is lacking in the Sankhya, becomes the foundation of his theory of "integral non-

dualism".⁵⁶

Secondly, Aurobindo rejects the Advaitan theory of the Real as opposed to an illusory existence. Such a distinction is necessarily overcome in his concept of Matter. A caveat must be mentioned at this point however. It would be too easy simply to say that Aurobindo's idea of Matter and Omnipresence totally eliminate every trace of Sankara's philosophy, as a deeper look at his theory of Matter will show. Sankara speaks of two kinds of knowledge, the Lower, that of sense perception, and the Higher, which is the realisation of Brahman/Atman. In a certain sense, Aurobindo also maintains a stratified theory of knowledge, since Matter in the solid state is the reality which corresponds to the particularised consciousness, while for the higher and more unified levels it becomes less substantial, which is to say nearer to its own essential truth. Aurobindo is illustrating this in saying that

"Ignorance is the non-perceiving principle in our consciousness as opposed to the truth-perceiving vision and knowledge"⁵⁷

the distinction between knowledge which is based on the division of undivided being, and true Knowledge "which tends towards unification . . . and seizes the oneness, the essence of existence".⁵⁸

The third dichotomy which Bolle sees as refused in Aurobindo's theory of the spirituality of Matter, is nirvana and samsara, the Buddhist theory of the bondage of existence and the means of release. The samsara of a purposeless round of life cannot apply if the evolutionary

movement is invincible and has an inevitable end, and nirvana has no place since Aurobindo envisages fulfilment in the world. "We can perceive", he says, "the possibility of a divine life for man in the world"⁵⁹ as the living sense and intelligible aim of cosmic and terrestrial evolution. Teilhard is saying something similar, in that "God is arrived at not in negation but in an extension of the world",⁶⁰ and this world affirming theory common to both confirms that fulfilment is the completion of a universal Divine union through the process of cosmic convergence. Such an ultimate end in the infinity of human consciousness is not only possible but "is part of the eventual necessity of things".⁶¹

NOTESOMNIPRESENCE

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3. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1 p. 47.
4. Ibid., p. 47.
5. Ursual King, "Towards a New Mysticism", p. 185.
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7. Ibid., p. 361.
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12. Ibid., p. 384.
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18. Ibid., p. 489.
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21. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 27.
22. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 624.
23. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 36.
24. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 47.
25. Teilhard de Chardin, "Le Milieu Divin", p. 126.
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27. Sri Aurobindo "The Life Divine" Vol. 1, p. 128f.
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30. Ibid., p. 130.
31. Ibid., p. 130.
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33. Ibid., p. 130.
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40. Ibid., p. 167.
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42. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 40.
43. Ibid., p. 40.
44. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 279.
45. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 35.
46. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 420.
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48. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 55.
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50. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 40.
51. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 322.
52. Ibid., p. 322.
53. Kees W. Bolle, "The Persistence of Religion", p. 88.
54. Ibid., p. 88.

55. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 56.
56. Haridas Chaudhuri & Frederic Spiegelberg, "The Integral Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo".
57. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 297.
58. Ibid., p. 297.
59. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 40.
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61. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 1231.

CHAPTER 20

PANTHEISM

Pantheism and Spiritual Matter; Given Aurobindo's statement that

"Brahman is in all things, all things are in Brahman, all things are Brahman",¹

and Teilhard's theory of the

"appearance of God from and in the Heart of Matter",²

the question arises as to whether or in what way, their respective systems surpass a mere pantheism. The possibility of a pantheistic foundation arises because in both theories the creative act involves the closest possible union of Matter and Spirit. In a long and detailed discussion on the alternatives, Aurobindo first sets out his own theory in which the genesis of Matter is explained in terms of the Spirit's consent to Its own limitation in deference to the limited scope of the particularised human consciousness. Pure substance is the descent of Spirit into Overmind; Matter is the descent of the Spirit into the mentalised layer of cosmic mind; material formation is the descent of the Spirit in Its relation to the human mind and its need for the experience of solid form. It is this necessary application of Reality to every conceivable level of existence which marks it as essentially different from the classical theories of emanationist philosophy.

The crux of Aurobindo's theory of creation by the

descent of the Spirit is that

"substance seems more truly material and real in proportion as it presents to us a solid resistance and by virtue of that resistance a durability of sensible form on which our consciousness can dwell; in proportion as it is more subtle, less densely resistant and enduringly seizable by the sense, it appears to us less material".³

It is for this reason, therefore, that

"substance passes into the material status in order that it may present to the consciousness which has to deal with it durable firmly seizable images on which the mind can rest and base its operations . . .".⁴

The only alternative which Aurobindo sees, is that of the "extra-cosmic" Creator"⁵ detached from the world, and undiscoverable by human experience. This leads to the arbitrary creation which both Aurobindo and Teilhard so definitely reject. The former speaks of the incomprehensibility of such a creation, of

"the crude meaninglessness of its law of unnecessary ignorance, strife and suffering"⁶

and he dismisses the possibility of "so many undivine elements"⁷ in the work of One who must be supposed to be divine. This is the problem, Aurobindo says, which is found in all theistic attempts to explain existence by reference to an extra-cosmic Deity, and the only possible solution is in the acceptance of a creator who, while exceeding creation, is immanent in it. Teilhard also asks why

"a God could have committed himself . . . to such a flood of sufferings and vicissitudes"⁸

and he too sees the only answer in an understanding of the creative act as a "work of almost absolute involvement".⁹

This explains the need recognised by both Aurobindo

and Teilhard for a meaningful and active Presence in a world which is continuously being created through the evolutionary process.

Aurobindo seems to anticipate the charge of pantheism in his theory, and denies such an element. He says,

"The world and the Divine are not one and the same thing as a certain kind of pantheistic thinking would like to believe. The world is an emanation; it depends upon something that manifests in it but is not limited by it, the Divine is not here alone; there is a Beyond, an eternal Transcendence".¹⁰

The "All" in Aurobindo does not imply the "All is God" of pantheism. It does not mean that the totality of existence constitutes God, but expresses the freedom of an Infinite and non-existent Reality to become manifest in existence without separation in essence. It is possible, Aurobindo says, for the mind to select and explain away all that does not fit in with a theory, but here he is not dealing with the mind alone, for he maintains that

"An absolute eternal and infinite Self-existence . . . that secretly supports the universe even while it is also beyond it, is the first truth of spiritual experience".¹¹

Henri de Lubac has said that Teilhard "varied between using and rejecting the word"¹² pantheism but that he "would have liked to retain it, subject to the necessary explanations".¹³ He goes on to say that just as Teilhard's "Hymn to Matter" is addressed to a matter which means the opposite of what it implies in the materialist systems, so the definition of "Christian pantheism" is "the exact opposite of what is ordinarily

meant by pantheism".¹⁴ Teilhard seems to have given long consideration to the problem. In 1918 he writes of his "naturally pantheist soul",¹⁵ and speaks of the pantheist tendency which is

"so universal and so persistent that it must have it it a soul of naturally Christian truth",¹⁶ and as late as 1950 he explains the difference between pantheist theology and the specifically Personal nature of Christian mystical union as resting on union which necessarily implies distinction as opposed to identity which Teilhard seems to think does not.

Teilhard discusses the question in relation to what he sees as the "road of the East" and the "road of the West", both of which rest on a form of pantheism, and therefore represent a dual approach to the unity of the Spirit. Teilhard's opposition to Eastern mysticism is so well known that it needs no long discussion. Briefly put, his claim is that the way of the East leads to a unity which is attained "through the direct suppression of the Multiple",¹⁷ and this Teilhard describes as "the pantheism of identification, the Spirit of release of tension".¹⁸ To say that spiritual union in Eastern thought is brought about by return to a 'Divine' basis underlying the concrete may be a hasty conclusion. It is perhaps not possible to standardise Indian thought in this way. While it would be true to say, for example, that for the Advaitan, Reality is overlaid with the appearance of the world, the idea of 'return' would be out of place, since no disruption of Reality is admitted in the first place. The further claim that the reality underlying phenomena is more

real than they are also runs into problems for the reason that in such a school of Indian thought there is no degree of reality, since there is only Appearance and Reality.

The same problem is continued into Teilhard's idea that in Eastern thought mystical union is gained through suppression of the Multiple, in other words by cessation of the cosmic movement towards differentiation. Again, phenomena are only "appearance" on the existential scene, veiling [avarana] the face of the Real. They do not belong within the category of non-being [Asat], but having a presence for the moment, as it were, have a place in reality. The point which Teilhard is discussing is usually associated with Sankara's system, but it should be noted that even here there is not a complete denial of the experience of the Multiple. The position is Berkeleyan insofar as to be perceived means to exist. For example, in Sankara's famous analogy of the rope and the snake for which it is momentarily mistaken, the prerequisite is the existence of the rope. As P.T. Raju says

"if we do not accept the rope as real, we have no right to call the snake false".

The distinction is between existence and Being, between Sat and Asat, the two necessary to each other. This is the foundation of Sankara's Higher and Lower Knowledge, the para-vidya and apara-vidya which is resolved in the realisation of Brahman/Atman.

If Teilhard is referring to the equally influential

school of Visistadvaita, then his theory fares no better, since

- [a] reality is here attributed to the phenomenal, and so there can be no underlying 'divine';
- [b] where all is real there can be nothing which is 'more real';
- [c] arising from the status of reality, individuality endures in union.

Beatrice Bruteau says that Teilhard often

"lumps all the Eastern religions together in their distinction from Christianity and calls them for convenience, 'Buddhism'".¹⁹

This is again no help in considering Teilhard's position since according to Buddhist philosophy there is no enduring element in the phenomenal and therefore no 'overlay'. In the doctrine of anicca, all is flux and flow. This is not to deny the affinity between Teilhard and Mahayana Buddhism and other areas of Indian thought, within another context.

In turning to the question of how Teilhard's pantheism of the East would stand in relation to Aurobindo's philosophy, the point to be made here is that Aurobindo is not speaking of a divine basis which underlies the concrete world, but a Divine essence which inheres within it. Teilhard seems to be in agreement with this particular Hindu theory, for

"If the Universe rises up progressively towards unity", he writes, "this is due to the transcendent which is immanent in it",²⁰

and in this, he says, "we have the lesson of Revelation".²¹

The distinction between the pantheisms of

'identification' and 'union' was made in the first place because although Teilhard recognised that

"mystics of all religions and of all times are in complete agreement about this general orientation, [namely the effort to escape spiritually, through universalisation into the inexpressible], of the interior life in search of perfection",

nevertheless he has

"always been convinced that this superficial unanimity disguises a serious opposition . . .".²²

Against the road of the East, therefore, the pantheism of identification, Teilhard illustrates the road of the West, or the pantheism of union. In place of what he sees as a common-basis philosophy of the East, he posits a Western central focus, a concept characteristic of Teilhard's thought, which he will later identify as Omega. This is reached by the extension of the countless forces of the Universe towards this point at which they meet in a differentiated union. In this pantheism of union, "and so of Love", the Spirit of tension replaces the Spirit of "release of tension" which for Teilhard represents the pantheism of identification.

To sum up the distinction between the Eastern and Western as Teilhard sees it therefore, it is briefly that between a divine presence which is veiled by the appearance of the phenomenal, and which then calls for a renunciation of the world by the human spirit in its longing for union, and on the other hand God conceived of as active centre of the world, a God

"of cosmic synthesis in Whom we can be conscious of joining by spiritual transformation".²³

Put more simply, it is the difference of spiritual union seen as the merging of the soul into the Divine as a drop in the great ocean, a loss of individuality in identification with the "All", and the Christian concept of spiritual union, in which individual identity is retained and even enhanced. Unfortunately, the former is commonly and erroneously regarded as the only form of Eastern mysticism. Aurobindo takes the opposite and in Teilhard's assessment, the Western view, that union, properly to be defined as such, means differentiation. Unknowingly, Teilhard describes a Christian concept of union which is also a valid Hinduism. Unfortunately he goes on to assert that the two opposite pantheisms account for the confusion

"which runs together or identifies the Ineffable of the Vedanta with that of such mystics as St. John of the Cross, and so not only allows countless numbers of excellent souls to become helpless victims of the most pernicious illusions that are produced in the East, but, which is more serious, delays a task that is daily becoming more urgent - the individualization and the full flowering of a worthy and powerful modern Mysticism".²⁴

In the final assessment, a pantheism of identification and a pantheism of union do not represent a true comparison in terms of an alternative, for the key-phrase, union differentiates, is as fundamental to the Hinduism of Aurobindo as it is to the Christianity of Teilhard. For Aurobindo, each individual instance of self-consciousness is essential to, that is, is of the essence of, the ineffable, and for Teilhard, in exactly the same way, each individual is an element of "the Pleroma, the

genesis of the total Christ, 'in quo omnia constant'.²⁵

The secret of Teilhard's pantheism is to be found in a literal understanding of the relevant texts of St. Paul, and none is more appropriate than that coming event

"when Christ has assimilated all things, unto Himself, then he will Himself also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all".²⁶

For Teilhard, this is the spiritual potential of Christianity which calls for a philosophy of "the Whole", and is the inevitable and irreversible consequence of the "phylum of religious thought"²⁷ which appeared in history within the human mass with the advent of Christ. This is what Teilhard means by

"a very real pantheism - for in the last resort the reflective centres of the world are effectively one with God; this state is obtained not by identification, [God becoming all], but by the differentiating and communicating action of Love, [God all in everyone] and that is essentially orthodox and Christian".²⁸

But although it is Christian it is not exclusive to Christianity, for Aurobindo also says that

". . . the One is the eternal unity of the Many, differentiating itself in the cosmos. Therefore all is in each and each is in all and all is in God and God in all; and when the soul comes into union with this Transcendence, it has this self-experience of itself and cosmos which is translated psychologically into a mutual inclusion and a persistent existence of both in a Divine union which is at once a oneness and a fusion and an embrace".²⁹

Teilhard describes the human urge "to come together with God through the world",³⁰ and Aurobindo emphasises this same identity in difference, for, he says,

"not only am I in the world and the world in me, but God is in me and I am in God; it is

not meant that God depends for His existence on man, but that He manifests Himself in that which He manifests within Himself; . . . Further, I am one with God in my being and yet I can have relations with Him in my experience. I . . . can enjoy the Divine in His transcendence, unified with Him, and enjoy at the same time, the Divine in other individuals and in His cosmic being".³¹

For Aurobindo this is the experience of a higher consciousness which recognises a unity which is more than a unity, although to the mind it appears as nothing more than intellectual contradiction.

Much of the language which Teilhard uses can be understood only within the context of his work.

"Pantheism" is such a term, for it is used in a way which is peculiar to a particular theory. A true understanding of what Teilhard indicates requires an acceptance of evolution, and also of faith in Christ Who assimilates to Himself all the fragments of the world into which He has first inserted the spiritual power of Incarnation. This is what Teilhard describes as the "new and superior pantheism without adulteration of annihilation".³² It is irrevocably associated with the sense of the Whole, and again the use of the word "sense"³³ in Teilhard has to be taken into account. Significantly, it is on this point that he finally pays tribute to Indian mysticism in admitting that

"never perhaps has the sense of the Whole, which is the life-blood of all mysticism, flowered more exuberantly than in the plains of India",³⁴

an Eastern influence of which he was aware and to which he says he was peculiarly sensitive. This has to be weighed against all the less positive comments which

Teilhard makes concerning Indian spirituality.

Claude Cuenot makes what may be the final comment on Teilhard's tendency towards pantheism in saying that he achieves

"... the synthesis between the cosmic and the Christian, and so by a stroke of genius, what might have been pantheistic becomes a pan-Christicism - God in all of us that preserves human personality while drawing all to converge upon a 'Universal Person' - Christ-Omega".³⁵

The basis of Aurobindo's form of pantheism is the theory of existence as the cosmic self-extension of Brahman, which preserves always

"Its two terms of liberty within and of formation without, of expression and of freedom from the expression",³⁶

and it is this essential freedom of the Transcendent within the complementary terms of unity and multiplicity which saves Aurobindo's theory from the superficial identification of God and Nature.

Science and 'Living Matter'; Both Aurobindo and

Teilhard examine the role of science within the context of the evolutionary movement towards fulfilment.

Aurobindo speaks of the "long struggle between Religion and science"³⁷ and Teilhard sees a need for "nothing less than a "conversion" of science". Henri de Lubac says that Teilhard

"constructs a new science of evolution which is summed up in the law of growth in the human trajectory",³⁸

and it is just such a new form of science which

Aurobindo seems to have in mind when he writes that

"physical science has overpassed itself and must before long be overtaken by a flood of psychological and psychic knowledge which cannot fail to . . . open a new vista before mankind".³⁹

Fritiof Capra provides a scientist's view, and he says that some modern scientists are beginning to agree with the theory of a hidden power in the phenomenal world, a force which appears to act in the manner of a "discriminating intellect".⁴⁰ He goes on to describe how physics has tended to move away from the view of the universe as a collection of objects and towards the idea of "inter-action" and "inter-relatedness"⁴¹ of things and events, the end of which lies in the consciousness of the human observer. Furthermore, Capra says, some scientists tend no longer to speak of "observer" but of "participator"⁴² in the universal, and to this extent it may be correct to say that in the physical aspects of concrete existence, participation has taken the place of mere observation. This would seem to give some tentative support to the theory of the involvement of human consciousness in the evolutionary movement.

Being and Non-Being; The theory of essential Matter reconciles the fundamental opposites of Being and Non-Being, but it is not enough simply to claim a reconciliation. In the absence of a common understanding of the terms, this would be no more than a verbal compromise. Even in the Upanishads, Aurobindo points out, there is no common meaning, since one speaks of the emergence of Being from Non-Being, [the Taittiriya], while another

rejects this as an impossibility, [the Chandogya], maintaining that from Being alone can Being be born. If the premise of the Taittiriya is accepted, it rules out any possibility of a real universe on which Aurobindo's theory rests. Non-Being is the obvious and inescapable end. If out of Non-Being, Being appeared, then "into Non-Being it must surely sink again",⁴³ and so the futility of claiming reality for the concrete world, or human life. The only alternative Aurobindo says, is the Buddhist Nihil, and

"in such a negation of experience, how shall we find the solution that explains all experience"?⁴⁴

But what does Non-Being really mean? According to Aurobindo, it is "only a word".⁴⁵ In examining the fact which it represents, the word is seen to be a positive indication of something which cannot positively be stated. Non-Being, Nihil, Nothing, all point to something

"... beyond the last term to which we can reduce our purest conception and our most abstract or subtle experience of actual being as we know or conceive it while in the universe".⁴⁶

On the other hand, if the Upanishadic statement that Being appeared out of Non-Being is accepted in a literal sense, then Aurobindo asks,

"... what was that portentous date in the history of eternal Nothing on which Being was born out of it, and when will come that other date equally formidable on which an un-real all will relapse into the perpetual void?"⁴⁷

The impasse created by a theory of the emergence of Being out of Non-Being is overcome when Non-Being is

regarded not as a Nihil but, ". . . as an X which exceeds our idea or experience of existence",⁴⁸ a possible solution which could apply to the Absolute Brahman of the Advaita, as well as to the Void of the Buddhists, since That

"may very well be the source of being, whether by a conceptual or formative Maya, or as manifestation, or creation out of Itself".⁴⁹

The point which Aurobindo is making is that both terms are to be understood not in relation to each other, for both are subsumed into an indefinable Infinite beyond expression but not beyond experience, as indicated in the concept of the Self-Existent. This means that Non-Being is complementary to Being, constituting, as it were, the wholeness of essential or pre-existent Being. Reality does not deny the terms of existence as a Real Self-expression, but simply denies the possibility of limitation by any actual expression, whatever form this may assume.

The relationship of Being and Non-Being is an important element in Aurobindo's theory, and it is only in an understanding of these two terms as synonymous that the concept of essential Matter becomes acceptable. The conflict of Sat and Asat is overcome if Real/Unreal are simply different stages in conscious awareness. The two, Aurobindo says, are to be understood "as if they obtained simultaneously",⁵⁰ and if "we must speak in terms of Time, then both are Eternal",⁵¹ the one representing what is perpetually expressed, and the other what is forever unexpressed. It is on this basis that Aurobindo is

justified in claiming Asat as the ultimate and primary Reality. Distinction is due to the limitation of human conceptive powers. Bolle has said that in Aurobindo the transition of the unmanifest to the manifest is "crucial"⁵² and the most important point is that there is no conflict in claiming an Absolute which is, by definition, eternally unmanifest and yet involved in the temporality of existence. The two are not separate for even if the world is only a phenomenal Reality, it is nevertheless a phenomenon of Brahman and thus phenomenon and manifestation are synonymous. The extension of unsevered essence is Aurobindo's claim on this point.

In turning to the question of what Teilhard's position might be in relation to Aurobindo's theory of the status of spiritual Matter, again it has to be emphasised that although the two theories of Matter and Spirit appear to have complete affinity, there is in fact a fundamental difference. As earlier noted this distinction which is that which exists between the terms "identity" and "union" effects the "shape" of both theories from the creative act itself, through divergence in the evolutionary movement, and into the vision of the final end of Matter. For Teilhard, the value of being is inevitably related to the analogically participating being of scholasticism, the traditional form of which he rejects. Instead of the description of existence as being-by-analogy, Teilhard posits a true Reality of Being to be understood in the most literal sense. He bases this strong concept of Being on the fact that,

"Since God cannot be conceived except as monopolising in himself the totality of being - then either the world is no more than appearance - or else it is in itself a part, an aspect, or phase of God".⁵³

It is this dilemma, Teilhard says, which Christian theology escapes by the development of participated being, a lower form of being, or as he says, "sub-being".⁵⁴ Such an inferior concept cannot provide for the "interrelation between Matter, soul and Christ"⁵⁵ which Teilhard sees in Pauline teaching taken as far as possible in literal interpretation. Reality in existence is no less necessary to Teilhard's theory than it is to Aurobindo, both in its relation to material evolution and to the fulfilment of Man himself. "Does the idea of being . . . imply any kind of survival?" Teilhard asks, and "does not the word signify [identically and in every case], to be forever and to emerge completely."⁵⁶ This is the affirmation of being which Teilhard believes that science will eventually be able to establish objectively. Again Teilhard's theory involves the question of Divine self-sufficiency, for his analysis of being relates in the first place to his claim of the 'Divine' power of cosmic evolution, and secondly to his belief in the impossibility of being "of service to God" in the world, "without God adding something to himself".⁵⁷ Because of his insistence on Reality in existence, not only as a Presence but as a dynamic power, Henri de Lubac says that some day we shall be able to say

"that Teilhard's work has been one of the most effective factors in bringing our age back to an understanding of being".⁵⁸

Insofar as Being is seen as an essential and active presence in existence, there is no real difference between Aurobindo and Teilhard's position. On the nature of Non-Being, there is a radical distinction. Aurobindo equates Non-Being with Transcendent Being or 'the Hindu concept of Sat'. The term simply indicates the freedom of Being from cosmic existence, and so from form which can be conceptualised by a relative consciousness. Being is the affirmation by the Unknowable of Itself as the free base of all existence, and

"we give the name of Non-Being to the contrary affirmation of Its freedom from all existence".⁵⁹

To claim an 'essential distinction between the two is something into which "we are misled by words".⁶⁰ Aurobindo recognises and avoids the dichotomy between being and existence in modern philosophy and theology,⁶¹ and he does this by speaking of 'Being' in distinction from 'Being in the Becoming', a difference which relates to form and not to essence, thus maintaining the fundamental integrity of his theory.

Non-Being in Teilhard has an entirely different connotation. As earlier noted, it indicates the extremely dispersed Multiple, which, by reason of this alone, cannot exist. It is the Non-existent 'Nothingness' which precedes all creation. But because it has potential existence it is not total negation, and therefore the concept of Non-Being in Teilhard has a positive element, although it is far removed from the transcendent Non-Being in Aurobindo.

NOTESPANTHEISM

1. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 211.
2. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 77.
3. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, pp. 385-6.
4. Ibid., p. 386.
5. Ibid., p. 12.
6. Ibid., p. 13.
7. Ibid., p. 13.
8. Teilhard de Chardin, "Christianisme et Evolution".
9. Teilhard de Chardin, "Ecrits du temps de la guerre", pp. 184.
10. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 241.
11. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 46.
12. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", pp. 157f.
13. Ibid., p. 158.
14. Ibid., p. 158.
15. Teilhard de Chardin, "Mon Univers", "Activation of Energy", p. 25.
16. Teilhard de Chardin, "Mon Univers", "The Heart of Matter", p. 207.
17. Teilhard de Chardin, "Comment je Vois", para 33.
18. Ibid., para 33.
19. Beatrice Bruteau "Evolution toward Divinity", p. 85.
20. Teilhard de Chardin, "Oeuvres V11", pp 154f.
21. Ibid., pp. 154f.
22. Teilhard de Chardin, "Comment je Vois", para 33.
23. Teilhard de Chardin, "Human Energy", p. 109.
24. Teilhard de Chardin, "Comment je Vois", para 33.
25. Teilhard de Chardin, "Writings in Time of War", p. 206.

26. 1 Cor. 15.28.
27. Teilhard de Chardin "Oeuvres V11", p. 154.
28. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", pp. 309F.
29. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 121.
30. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 66.
31. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 121.
32. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 322.
33. M. Barthélemy Madaule, "Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin".
34. Teilhard de Chardin, "Christianity and Evolution", p. 122.
35. Claude Guénot, "Teilhard de Chardin", p. 377.
36. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, pp. 40F.
37. Sri Aurobindo, "The Human Cycle", p. 69.
38. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 166.
39. Sri Aurobindo, "The Human Cycle", p. 18.
40. Fritz J. Capra, "The Tao of Physics".
41. Ibid., p. 134.
42. Ibid., pp. 141F.
43. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 42.
44. Ibid., p. 44.
45. Ibid., p. 42.
46. Ibid., p. 42.
47. Ibid., p. 43.
48. Ibid., p. 43.
49. Ibid., p. 43.
50. Ibid., p. 43.
51. Ibid., p. 43.
52. Kees Bolle, "The Persistence of Religion",
53. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 180.

54. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 180.
55. Ibid., p. 181.
56. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Appearance of Man", p. 263.
57. Teilhard de Chardin, "Science and Christ", p. 181.
58. Henri de Lubac, "The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin", p. 172.
59. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine".
60. Ibid.
61. E.g. in Martin Heidegger and Paul Tillich both systems posit the priority of existence, which Sri Aurobindo reverses.

PART 5

CHAPTER 21

THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

MENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Because intelligence seems to control and explain all human activities, it is presumed that if there is a consciousness at all in the universe, it must necessarily be a mental consciousness. Yet intelligence is only the present manifestation of a consciousness which has had a long evolution out of a pre-human state, and which by this token, both Aurobindo and Teilhard maintain, will evolve into a superior state, for as Aurobindo says,

" . . . as there has been established on earth a mental consciousness and Power which shapes a race of mental beings, . . . so now there will be established a Gnostic Consciousness and Power which will shape a race of gnostic spiritual beings".¹

The very crux of Aurobindo's system of the evolution of consciousness which is the evolution of being, lies in the recognition of an unerring progression from the mental or ordinary level, to the supra-mental or extraordinary level, from the Inconscience of Matter, to the Intuitive, which marks a climax in intensity of the correlated descent/ascent movement. This climax is the manifestation of the fullness of Being expressed in terms of an infinite conscious force. The mental is a sufficient instrument for the comprehension of things, not only in the concrete world, but of the abstract ideas which it creates as an extension of the observable, and also of the spiritual, which it attempts to rationalise, that is,

to define in abstract outline which is the limit of its capability, in accordance with its own demands.

Yet the evolution described by Aurobindo involves a movement into a different category of cognition in which comprehension as a mental activity is surpassed, and gives way to knowledge by experience, the beginning of the gnostic existence which is the end and purpose of the evolutionary process. But how can the supra-mental be expressed in mental concepts? Once consciousness has passed conceptive capability how is comprehension possible in any meaningful sense? It is here that the second part of Aurobindo's theory of an eternal yet 'becoming' unity begins, for it is the point which marks the threshold of a radically new era of evolutionary consciousness in which cognition is neither an objective, nor yet a subjective activity, but is a matter of participation, and so is neither yet both. It will readily be recognised from the earlier part of Aurobindo's theory, that this new element of participation involves a movement beyond the purely mental level which is incurably and inevitably divisive, to that which has the possibility of an ultimate cohesion, and so of an immediate participation, in other words, a movement from the finite to the Infinite for it introduces a "new commerce with the ever-changeless and ever-changing Infinite".²

The present level of mental nature is based on a consciousness of the finite, whereas

"supra-mental nature is in its very grain, a consciousness and power of the Infinite".³

Thus the basic realisation or discovery of Consciousness as it emerges from Inconscience is this consciousness of the finite and it marks the boundary of the mental state for it cannot escape from the division which is its fundamental characteristic. The first point, which has to be underlined as relevant to his theory of Mind, is the constant emphasis which Aurobindo places on the fact that every activity of the human mentality displays and continuously extends this fragmentation, an inescapable condition which is pre-supposed in every context in which the mental is discussed. At the same time, it has to be noted that this is not to say that the mental is superfluous or irrelevant, for it has in fact a truth relating to its own plane, which it nevertheless cannot transcend. But if the mental is an area of radical separateness, how, it may be asked, does the intellect ever discern the reality of one-ness? The answer to this would rest on consideration of the fact that the intellect oscillates between opposites and contradictions, and from the basis of division constructs unity, just as from realisation of its own limitation it conceives of the limitless, from its own finiteness the Infinite, and so the awareness of infinity which itself affirms human consciousness as infinite and indivisible.

In contrast to the individuation and multiplicity which is the source of the intellect, the Supra-mental 'power of the infinite', has its starting point in an irreversible one-ness, the diverse one-ness which makes a unity of even the most pronounced diversity, epitomised

in the polarised opposites.

The idea of a quite-other-power as a co-relative of the higher consciousness is of vital importance to an understanding of Aurobindo's vision of a Super-Consciousness which is in fact Super-Being, and therefore Super-Power.

This explains

- (a) the progressive capability of man for ever higher levels of consciousness;
- (b) the possibility of spiritual fulfilment through an ever deepening awareness of spiritual essence;
- (c) the importance of descent as a prior movement which corresponds in intensity to the level of ascent, so that both reach the fullness of their power simultaneously.

Man does not achieve his final destiny unaided, nor yet is he the passive instrument of something beyond himself, but is an incomplete conscious existent within which inheres the potential of completeness, a force which will be released in accordance with the level of response to the transforming power of his own essence.

The basic premise of Aurobindo in his treatment of evolutionary consciousness may be noted in brief, namely, that the ordinary consciousness, that of the mental activity is related in some respect to the organisation which makes intellection possible, and therefore has its source in what is constructed, whereas the Super-consciousness is direct or immediate, the disclosure and expansion of an intuitive faculty. But an important and fundamental difference between Aurobindo's view of

the emergence and development of consciousness and that of Teilhard as well as the divergence of both from Bergson, will be easily recognised.

Teilhard relates the rise and progression of consciousness to the on-going process of complexification of Matter, and therefore an infinite consciousness to an infinite degree of complexity; from the first moment of Reflection, self-conscious being is already equipped materially to ascend through the lower stages to the level of the Noosphere and beyond. This is the climax of the material arrangement associated with the potentiality of consciousness inherent in creative union. In this sense it is an end, but it is also a beginning, for the emergence of Reflection, Teilhard says, reveals "a world that is being born rather than a world that is".⁴ By this he means the new and higher phase in evolution, in which grains of Thought replace the elements of Matter, but in Teilhard, there is no defined state of consciousness which would correspond to the development of the intuition in Aurobindo. The latter speaks of a recognisable evolutionary development in the form of "The development of another instrumentation" which will "become the normal nature of a new type of being,"⁵ a reference to the evolution of consciousness into the faculty of intuition which he sometimes refers to as the "psychic entity".⁶ "Christification" would seem to be the term which applies to this level of experience in Teilhard, for he speaks of the human power which can be "supernaturalised" which is to say "Christified", by the "Christic energy . . . in the

subtle depths of human consciousness".⁷ When Teilhard speaks of a "collective memory"⁸ it has no resemblance to the 'remembering' by which Aurobindo describes the intuitive knowledge which emerges out of the primal unity of conscious identity. For Teilhard, the collective means the accumulation of learning and culture which is handed on in an additive way through human experience.

The lack of the development of intuition and the associated element of duration in Teilhard marks an important difference between his theory and the progression of consciousness in Aurobindo. It also seems to mark a significant limitation to any similarity with Bergson. Reflection in the double sense of the turning in of thought upon itself, and the curvature of the race towards a centre, is the evolutionary principle at this stage in Teilhard's theory. Consciousness is not categorised according to a rise in quality, but increases by the power of Reflection which complexifies, and by that token unifies, thereby achieving the greater centricity, necessary for the breakthrough into amorisation.

Aurobindo's theory of grades of consciousness, although it follows a previous development, in western philosophy, is applied as already noted, to the ascending grades of material substance in the Sankhya. This means that consciousness inevitably changes in category as matter is transformed, a necessity built into his basic proposition of Matter as a form of the Spirit.

Expressed in religious terms, the supra-mental plane described by Aurobindo, is that on which the inherent

and essential integrity of the Divine Life predominates. Therefore, although he stresses the impossibility of predicting what precise form will emerge in existence through the radical transition into the supra-mental, nevertheless the intellect can grasp that it will be a change involving the distinction between the formation of ideas, the possible but uncertain, and that of experience, the real and irrefutable, the move from reasoned deduction to spiritual vision. Truth is reached not by the operation of a speculative intellect, but by a progressive infusion, or involution of the spirit, reaching not a height of intellectual possibility, but a depth of spiritual reality. The difference may be seen as that between comprehension, a capability, even though a progressive capability of the mental process, and that of experience, the one relating to intellect, the other effecting being, the one ever changing and fluctuating, the other changeless in essence.

Because the progress of Matter towards consciousness is seen to be evolutionary, a theory which is seemingly not unacceptable to present day science, it may be suggested on this basis that something can be said of future expectation. As has already been noted, for Aurobindo the acceptance of an evolutionary theory rests on the premise of a prior involution. In other words, the descent of an immutable reality into a world of evolutionary change is acceptable because evolution is the progressive unveiling of something which does not change in essence, but only in form. The forms of existence

are differentiated, are subject to mutation and change, yet they are unified in a real sense by virtue of the unchanging inherent reality which is their essential truth, and which all existence is labouring to manifest in its wholeness and perfection. Progressive manifestation is therefore not different from progressive revelation, and evolution is the self-disclosure of the Divine within existence, through the agency of human consciousness. Thus evolution for Aurobindo is precisely evolution of consciousness, which is to say the 'becoming' manifestation of Being,

"from matter into life, from life into mind, from mind into spirit. It is this that must be the method of our growth from a mental into a spiritual and supramental manifestation, out of a still half-animal humanity into a divine being and a divine living."⁹

Because it is, and has been discovered to be progressive, therefore, a certain degree of extension may be applied to the further stages, which, notwithstanding a radical step from Overmind to Supermind, might indicate the direction and give even a vague idea of Supra-mental existence. As noted earlier, the premise on which Aurobindo establishes his theory of an absolute, all-embracing Unity, is that Matter is the materialisation of the Spirit, the manifestation of which is consciousness, the form of which is being. The prolonged but inevitable movement of mutation and change which has taken place on the material level, and particularly the complex and unerring tendency towards organisation, had for its end and purpose the emergence of consciousness which is being.

But again, there are no grounds for supposing that the same gradualness will mark the higher stages of evolution, as was characteristic of this same process in the area of material organisation, for the evolutionary movement has entered into a different category of development. Two new and significant factors intervene on this higher level;

1. The unpredictable nature of the relative self-consciousness which is now introduced into the process, giving a certain degree of self-direction.
2. Equally important, and not unrelated, is the additional factor, the intervention of the deliberation and activity of the human will, invincible from the point of view of external pressure, and always unpredictable in its operation.

These radically new elements prohibit any simplistic idea of a continuum in the process, although the principle of inevitability remains in the actuality of the "occult" or intuitive experience of mankind.

The importance of the phenomenon of the intuitive faculty within human consciousness cannot be over-emphasised, for this is the indication that man possesses the power, though as yet in embryo as it were, of viewing reality without the limitations imposed by the intellect. Self-consciousness is the mark of the potentially human, intuition is the mark of the potentially divine. Even when 'intuition' appears to be identified with the 'occult' in Aurobindo's work, again it is stressed, that this has nothing of the supernatural or mysterious about it, nor is it to be understood as the sole possession of a few

gifted people who enjoy another dimension of experience, for it is, like consciousness itself, a universal fact, a universal potentiality identical with being.

Here again on this new level in the evolutionary process, descent will be the primary movement, descent of supra-mental being into existential being which has progressed to the corresponding stage of ascent, at which it is capable of being assumed into Supra-mental gnosis.

Descent is not a once-for-all event occurring prior to the emergence of self-conscious life, a task, therefore, which is completed with this achieved purpose. On the contrary, there is a continuous descent which is related to the particular stage of a corresponding ascent of consciousness, each stage or plane receiving the descending spirit in accordance with its expanding capability of ascent, in a co-ordinated process. Thus even the gnostic level is not a finality in itself, although it may be so described in the sense that it is the last stage of expansion in which fulfilment of life will be reached in the experience of irreversible one-ness.

Just as in the earlier stages of evolution, there was a latent mental consciousness and a directing Power in Matter which organised it in preparation for the emergence of reflective being, so in the higher stage there will be a gnostic Consciousness and Power, now self-conscious, which will prepare this same being for the emergence of a race of gnostic spiritual beings. Unlike the earlier evolution, this will not be a concealed process, or one which is partly veiled, but will be the

instantaneous movement revealing in a total manifestation, the unbroken unity of the Transcendent and Immanent Consciousness, the end of the Ignorance. The process in Aurobindo's view, will be rather in the nature of an explosive release of the power of latent consciousness, fusing with the final descent of the Supramental gnosis. This is the beginning of true progressive revelation, the point which marks the superceding of the half-truths of the mental state, whose imperfections "distort the truth of which they are in labour".¹⁰ This event proclaims the emergence of supra-mental being, the beginning of the gnostic race towards which all levels of consciousness have been leading, and into which each level is taken up. Because of this it can be said, that even those individuals who have not yet progressed to the point at which they can absorb the full descent, are nevertheless on the scale of ascent. But the whole of evolutionary nature must feel the force, and manifest the consequence of this final breakthrough, the now unconcealed dominance of the Power which has always been latent, discernible only gradually through its effects of self-revelation, but now known in itself, in its true brilliance and force.

Aurobindo uses the analogy of light borrowed from the Vedas, to illustrate the levels of consciousness, and from this point he sees evolution not as the prolonged process of the emergence of light from darkness, but the graded revelation of the most intense brilliance from diffused light.¹¹ This new Power, therefore, combining simultaneously the full impact of descent and the total

exertion of ascent, a process which is within being, is the possibility of an already elevated consciousness, marking the true individual as the embryo of the new gnostic race, and evolution is now the "spread" of this new being, as Aurobindo maintains, by transmission from one enlightened centre to another, ending in a complete transmutation of everything in existence.

Because the change in human nature comes about through the individual element, there will be a time in which there is a "mixed" life, in which gnostic beings mingle with those as yet in the Ignorance, merging the new life with the old. But it has to be remembered that beings who have attained a new consciousness will also be possessed of a new Power, a new inspiration and illumination, for they will form a new type, a new category of humanity, and not simply a new level within the same class of being. Once established within the terrestrial order the new race would be invincible against aggression and extinction just as is "the present organised life of Man against attack from the lower species".¹²

Aurobindo's vision of the new humanity, the gnostic race, does not imply the emergence of a species which will be the sum of individual beings evolved into a fixed type, a stereotyped race, for this could not be properly described as a unity at all. Whenever Aurobindo uses the word 'unity', the term indicates an ultimate and irreversible cohesion, the law of the Supermind, the multiple one-ness of "unity fulfilled in diversity", the end which is also the beginning. To the limited mental

comprehension, the only idea of one-ness which can be grasped is that of a movement towards conformity in which only a vague and ill-defined notion of differentiation occurs. Thus the profound significance and fullness of diversity, which is the essence of unity, is missed and a devised structure of unity is substituted, the result of adjustment of contraries rather than the discovery of their identical nature in a common source. On the human level, the effect is that of a contrived and incomplete understanding of the other by each separate element of individual being, a precarious compromise, which, because it is mistakenly accepted as a genuine movement towards cohesion, is static, and can only impede that true and final unification, the "return" which does not depend upon the deliberation of the human intellect or the determination of the human will. This is the spontaneous union which is based on the experience of spiritual one-ness, radically different from a determined unity based upon compatibility and dependent upon externals. Such compatibility is simply a vague indication in the existential of a prior and complete essential Whole. Nevertheless, it is an indication, and it is for this reason that any association within human society based upon ideals and mutual experience is not dismissed as unimportant by Aurobindo, since all tendencies towards union derive an importance from the fact that they are co-relative to a final transcendent unity. This is linked to what has always been the secret aspiration of human being and which is apparent on all levels from

physical desire and intellectual pleasure, to the vision of unity associated with spiritual ecstasy.

The subtle difference which underlies the apparent broad similarity in the thought of Aurobindo and Teilhard becomes more distinct on the level of mind. For Teilhard, no event in evolution can compare with the emergence of thought. It marks a critical point not only for the individual or even the species, for Teilhard sees the "awakening of thought"¹³ as a transformation which affects "the state of the entire planet".¹⁴ It is a revelation in which everything that is "precious, active and progressive" once hidden in the original fragment from which the world emerged, now converges on the "crowning"¹⁵ Noosphere, and the earth is enveloped in an all but visible "phosphorescence of thought".¹⁶ This is the effect which Teilhard describes, of that marvellous event

"When for the first time in a living creature
instinct perceived itself in its own mirror and
the whole world took a pace forward".¹⁷

According to Teilhard, the power of thought is virtually unlimited, and even God is in

"the process of 'changing' as a result of the
coincidence of his magnetic power and our own
Thought".¹⁸

Teilhard's insistence on the immensity of the event which marked the birth of the Noosphere is to some extent explained by his own conviction that

"Thought has never been studied in the same way
as the immensities of matter, as a reality of
cosmic and evolutionary nature",

and therefore, he says, "let us take the step".¹⁹

The status of the mind described by Teilhard appears

to present precisely that evaluation which Aurobindo sets out to deny. If mind is

"the index of the nature of our being, we can never be anything more than an Ignorance Fleeting through Time",²⁰

and Aurobindo frequently returns to this dominant theme which emphasises the mental layer as simply the condensation of a more extensive power. Unlike Teilhard, Aurobindo does not dwell on the magnificence of human thought, but rather on the danger of overestimating its significance in the on-going process of evolution. Man may become dazzled by his own intelligence, thus making of this power a stopping-place rather than a transition. He therefore insists that whatever the achievements of human thought, this capacity is only a "preparatory form of consciousness",²¹ not a "culmination"²² but a "passage"²³ to another category of consciousness, an "instrument"²⁴ for ascent towards the omniscience of an infinite Consciousness. Mind is the third term of ascent in the Upanishadic seven-fold series of being. On the scale of descent, it marks the end of that unity of Non-existent being, a state which Aurobindo maintains the human soul dimly 'remembers' and to which evolution is the process of return. Because it is a significant stage in the ascending movement, the emergence of Mind

"brings an immense increase in the range and capacity of the evolution of consciousness-force",²⁵

but because it is also the point which marks loss of unity in descent, it likewise

"brings an immense increase in the range and capacity of error".²⁶

This midway poise of human mentality explains Aurobindo's statement that

"Mind is Maya, Sat-Asat, false and true, existent and non-existent; for there is a field of embrace of the true and the false, the existent and non-existent and it is in that ambiguous field that Mind seems to reign. But even in its own reign it is in truth a diminished consciousness, it is not a part of the original and originating power of the Eternal".²⁷

The difference which exists between Aurobindo and Teilhard on the status of human mentality could hardly be more distinct. It is not on this level that a true comparison of their respective theories should be made. The breakthrough which Teilhard describes as the 'step of Reflection' is comparable only to that stage in Aurobindo's theory which brings the intellect to the very edge of the void, that crisis point which precedes the irreversible movement into Spirit. For Aurobindo, this is accomplished not so much by a 'leap' but by a dramatically changed state of consciousness which he describes as the "Gnostic change",²⁸ by which he means the transition from a category of consciousness which is the operation of the intellect, into the certainty of intuition which he sees as the norm of human consciousness. To this new phase, which is not so much new as a return to an original state, Aurobindo attaches the same overwhelming importance which Teilhard associates with the 'step of Reflection'. The difference rests on the distinction in progress between the two systems. Aurobindo uses stages such as Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, and so on, to give some idea of the vastness of

evolutionary space which he envisages as lying between the intellect and that Spiritual knowledge which is attained through the immediacy of intuition. Teilhard's theory has no place for the analysis of consciousness into the faculty of intuition, understandably so since he wants to say not that knowledge of the Spirit is immediate, but that it is mediated through the all-pervasive influence of Incarnation, as is every aspect of evolution. But Incarnation or intuition is not a true alternative, and although Teilhard could not have known it, Aurobindo also recognises the importance of this event, and maintains that Christianity has so far failed to appreciate its full implications.

Finally, Aurobindo wants to say that the hope of an evolution beyond mind rests on the fact that human mentality comes to the realisation of its limitation by its own activity. Because the intellect cannot conceive of the Whole, which is to it an alien environment, the main function of the mind is to "de-pierce",²⁹ to construct smaller wholes, to reduce matter to atoms, to primal atoms and so on, eventually arriving at the concept of nothingness. This marks the limit of dissolution, for to reach mental nothingness is to arrive at the threshold of infinite existence, and so consciousness by whatever direction whether towards dissolution or greater aggregation, returns again to its own source in infinite being. Thus even the "limiting Avidya"³⁰ arrives at the truth of mind from what is beyond mind, and may become that "silent luminous channel"³¹ of the supramental truth which is re-cognition of Identity.

NOTESMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine" Vol. 2, p. 1028.
2. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 101.
3. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, pp. 1024F.
4. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 88.
5. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 910.
6. Ibid., p. 911.
7. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 266.
8. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 32.
9. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, pp. 668F.
10. Ibid., p. 1027.
11. Ibid., p. 1117.
12. Ibid., p. 1176.
13. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 201.
14. Ibid., p. 201.
15. Ibid., p. 203.
16. Ibid., p. 203.
17. Ibid., p. 201.
18. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Heart of Matter", p. 53.
19. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Vision of the Past", p. 181.
20. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 320.
21. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 192.
22. Ibid., p. 193.
23. Ibid., p. 193.
24. Ibid., p. 314.
25. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 488.
26. Ibid., p. 488.
27. Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 248.

28. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 1024.
29. Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 252.
30. Ibid., p. 254.
31. Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 447.

CHAPTER 22

ASCENT TOWARDS SUPERMIND

Overmind is a recognisable stage in the progress towards the final experience of undifferentiated being in which individual consciousness can no longer say either manifest nor yet unmanifest. Aurobindo describes the evolutionary rise of consciousness as a "stair of ascent"¹ in which there are many steps, "For it is an incessant gradation and there are no gaps anywhere".² These gradations form a series of sublimations of consciousness, and he identifies four recognisable stages or points of transition, beginning from the intellectual level or Manas. Manas; as the sense-mind, Manas is self-explanatory. It relates to the ordinary consciousness and depends on the physical organs for knowledge, and on the body for actions directed towards sense objects.

Aurobindo defines Manas as

"the activity emerging from the basic consciousness which makes up the whole essentiality of what we call sense."³

The first significant step out of the limitations of an intellectual consciousness, is the move towards the level which Aurobindo describes as Higher Mind.

Higher Mind has as its major characteristic a "spontaneous inherent knowledge"⁴ which has the capacity of formation of a "multitude of aspects of knowledge, ways of action, forms and significances of becoming".⁵ Because it has a unitarian sense of being, it is said to be a power of

Overmind, and because it seems to mark the very edge of the boundary between intellectual and spiritual knowledge, in descent the last kind of cognition before the movement into a separative knowledge, Aurobindo defines it as "a mind of spirit-born conceptual knowledge".⁶ In this definition he distinguishes the essential nature of Higher Mind as a spirit-informed consciousness, from the purely intellectual or sense-informed level. It is this factor which elevates the concept above the ordinary experience of the conceptive mental consciousness, of which it is "the spiritual parent".⁷ In terms of evolution, Higher Mind marks that first touch of conscious assent to the influence of the Spirit, which, according to Aurobindo, will eventually evolve into the fullness of the spiritual life in human existence. Nevertheless, the inherent principle of change in Aurobindo's theory has to be taken into account. In the descent/ascent of Matter, for example, there was seen to occur a dramatic change of substance in which the higher effected the lower and vice versa. This principle applies also to the movement of consciousness. This means that the descent into mental consciousness modifies and diminishes the full effect of Higher Mind, and therefore evolution awaits the subsequent descent of a more powerful Force of Consciousness. It leads to the second of Aurobindo's four major steps, and he calls it Illumined Mind.

Illumined Mind operates not by thought but by vision, and therefore has a greater capacity for knowledge than a consciousness which proceeds by the mental process. In

the ordinary mind there is a surface response to the perception of an object followed by the formulation of a corresponding concept. Because it proceeds by imagery, the first is more powerful in the communication of impressions, but it is not indispensable for the receiving or possession of knowledge. This marks the beginning of experience which is beyond transmission by means of concept and language. Whenever Aurobindo speaks of a consciousness which proceeds by sight, he is implying an element of revelation. "Pasyati", - "he sees", says the Upanishad,⁸ rather than 'he thought', in speaking of that spiritual vision or drsti, to which thought is no longer required as a means of knowledge.

Illumined Mind is a "transforming light"⁹ which breaks through the limitations of the mind, providing a luminosity which effects even the physical body. In the Higher Mind, Aurobindo says,

"the spiritual sage and thinker would find his total and dynamic fulfilment; in the Illumined Mind there would be a similar fulfilment for the seer and mystic, those in whom the soul lives in vision and in a direct experience; for it is from these higher sources that they receive their light"¹⁰

to ascend to and live in which would be "their ascension to their native empire".¹¹

Nevertheless, these two significant stages in the ascent of Consciousness derive their power from an even higher level which operates by the full force of Intuition.

Intuition has a central importance in Aurobindo's theory which could hardly be exaggerated. He defines it as the state in which

"the consciousness of the subject meets with the consciousness in the object, penetrates it and sees, feels or vibrates with the truth of what it contacts".¹²

Eventually it is that point, so often described by Aurobindo, when "consciousness meets Supreme Reality"¹³ and enters into a "contactual union with it",¹⁴ so that a "blaze of intimate truth-perception is lit in its depths".¹⁵ The element of "remembering" is inseparable from the intuitive faculty, for it relates to the aspect of inevitability which in turn is associated with the striving of individual consciousness to "return" to that primal unity which is pre-supposed in intuition. Because the intuitive level is nearer to "the original knowledge by identity", it remembers and is still recovering that intimacy of self-vision in which human consciousness re-discovers its original and immediate certitude.

Again, as with all the higher levels of consciousness, Aurobindo emphasises that consciousness is power, and so he anticipates a transformation of the physical aspects of human life. Intuition will therefore radiate not only through the lower levels of consciousness and intellect, but will also affect the will, emotions, feelings and actions, integrating them into a single impulse motivated by a higher power of truth. But this stage is not the fullness of intuition, for this is a power which unfolds in the course of evolution, and as consciousness moves out of the Illumined Mind it is recognised as a fringe which indicates a superior Force of which it is the descent. This brings the process of

ascent to a further and significant level which Aurobindo calls Overmind.

Overmind is therefore not an extension of mind, but is a new faculty which relates to a new quality of cognition. It is a state beyond even universal mind, for it gives a first direct cognition of cosmic truth, the first point at which it becomes self-evident that both individual being and cosmic existence come from a transcendent Reality which takes form in them. This fact, that of a self-expression of Being, however partial or veiled the expression, is the true and only significance of individual conscious being. It is vital to the possibility of fulfilment that the individual will express, in accordance with the conscious development of inward recognition and response as outward expression, the formulation of his participation in this Reality. The "law of participation and the law of surrender are imperative",¹⁷ Aurobindo says, for each step in the transition into the supramental must have the assent of conscious being to the "rule of conscious obedience to the higher truth of the Spirit".¹⁸ This marks the realisation by man that what relative human consciousness seems to be capable of, is in no way a standard of its absolute capacity, that its conceptions cannot be applied to absolute self-awareness.

It would seem to be incorrect, however, completely to identify the Overmind consciousness with the full intuitional potential, since this is the status of Supermind, the middle term between the higher and the lower triads of being. Rather it appears that this concept

in Aurobindo provides a faculty for the use of intuitional powers. This would justify the introduction of a term which is vague in comparison with the more definite classification in the evolutionary development of consciousness. Such an understanding, in practical terms, of Overmind may be based on the fact that although intuition is a "secret potentiality which has to be discovered"¹⁹ it is a possibility ". . . for which there are no organs in man's present physical or mental system", and this implies further evolution or transformation. Indian thought in the past stressed the importance of laying aside the intellect, but Aurobindo says that "the actual 'experience of Yoga'"²⁰ manifests a different method which demands that the intellect too must reach its full potential. It is here that the level of Overmind may be identified, for to develop the intellect,

". . . to heighten its capacity, light, intensity
 . . . until it borders on the thing that transcends it and can easily be taken up into that higher conscious action",²¹

would seem to mark the fringe of Intuition which precedes Supermind. . It operates as a competent medium between the two hemispheres of Knowledge-Ignorance, and Truth-Consciousness, the Vedic parardha and aparardha,²² opening on the one hand the floodgates of infinite possibilities, while yet veiling the truth of Final Reality. Overmind is then the first emergence of a final manifestation of that Power always latent in Matter, and here not differing essentially but in intensity of activity, which both connects and divides Supreme

Knowledge and cosmic Ignorance; connects because it marks a spiritual horizon beyond the range of mind in which there is awareness of an attainable unity; divides because despite the spiritual cognition of one-ness, in the transmission from the higher to the lower there occurs a transitional change beyond which point in descent the immutable and irreversible unity of Supermind is lost. Aurobindo describes Overmind as a "protective double" -

" . . . a screen of dissimilar similarity through which Supermind can act indirectly on an Ignorance whose darkness could not bear or receive the direct impact of a supreme Light".²³

This point is important to an understanding of the precise meaning of Overmind. It means that while the mark of Supermind is integrity which retains always "the essential truth of things",²⁴ in Overmind this integrality is no longer there. This is because, although Overmind presents a separateness which "is still founded on the basis of an implicit underlying unity",²⁵ its operation and movement are not determined by it.

In this sense, Overmind is the diffusion of the brilliance of Supermind unbearable to the ordinary consciousness, and the inter-play of descent/ascent is again accentuated in the fact that it is this brilliance of Supermind diffused to reach the Ignorance, which in turn casts the contrary shadow which quenches all light and makes the Inconscience possible. Thus can be understood not only the primacy of Consciousness over Matter, but their relationship as Cause and Effect, and although through habit of language it may be said that there is

'inherence' within the multiplicity of material phenomena, it is more correctly said that Matter subsists in Consciousness, or, in Aurobindo's description, by virtue of "the Witness",²⁶ the Spirit, whose extension into form alone brings the phenomenal into existence, and sustains it.

It is in Overmind that Aurobindo discovers the source of the cleavage between Prakriti and Purusha as it came to be developed in the Sankhya, and this is important because of the suggestion which has been made that Aurobindo uses and in a real sense completes Sankhya philosophy. Overmind, Aurobindo says, takes ". . . each Aspect or power and gives to it an independent action" in which it acquires a full separate importance, and is able to work out, we may say, its own world of creation. Purusha and Prakriti, Conscious Soul and executive Force of Nature, are in the supramental harmony a two-aspected single truth, being and dynamic of the Reality; there can be no dis-equilibrium or predominance of one over the other. In Overmind we have the origin of

"the . . . trenchant distinction made by the philosophy of the Sankhyas in which they appear as two independent entities, Prakriti able to dominate Purusha and cloud its Freedom and power, reducing it to a witness and recipient of her forms and actions, Purusha able to return to its separate existence and abide in a free self-sovereignty by rejection of her original overclouding material principle".²⁷

This dichotomy is repeated in every aspect and power of Reality, the One and the Many, Divine Personality and Impersonality and so on, for although each is only an aspect or power of the one Reality,

"... each is empowered to act as an independent entity in the whole, arrive at the fullness of the possibilities of its separate expression and develop the dynamic consequences of that separateness".²⁸

While giving a full account of the effects of the operation of Overmind, Aurobindo at the same time clearly indicates the implications of the perpetual duality of the Sankhya. It is this opposition which his own philosophy overcomes in the closest possible relationship of Matter and Spirit in mutual identity.

It is clear, then, that Overmind, while bathed in the Light which illumines the essential truth of things, and reflects its totality, is not yet over-powered and determined by the integrity and self-determination which is the property of Supermind. Similarly, with the creative force of Consciousness, which, though essentially One, determines the nature of the phenomenal world according to the self-formulation in which it expresses itself, and similarly too, in individual being, his interpretation and explanation to himself of the phenomenal world will depend upon the particular formation which the One Consciousness has adopted within him.

Such a situation arises from the imperfection of Overmind, which, although it receives the realities from Supermind, it does so in a way so dimmed that while glimpsing Truth, it does not escape from Ignorance into integrity. In other words, Overmind is like a prism which receives the one pure light, but cannot avoid its fragmentation into separate colours, each colour necessary to the whole, in which it has an essential place, and of which

it expresses a particular realisation. To Supermind, therefore, Truth is known as a Whole with many possible formulations, and Overmind, though it partakes of Truth, formulates it according to its own nature, which is tinged with error. Yet for the reason that it does partake of Truth, it is possible for the individual to be satisfied with the occasional experience of ecstatic exaltation, a "touch of the Absolute"²⁹ but this is no more than a preliminary stage in true spiritual evolution. It misses the consciousness of an immortality, which is not merely survival but which man is, as derived from his source in the timeless existence of Spirit, timelessness translated into manifestation. This is an evolution without fulfilment. Thus the attainment of the purity of spiritual experience is very far from what Aurobindo regards as fulfilment, for here consciousness acts as a limitation, a momentary individual satisfaction which hinders the fullest manifestation of the Divine in existential being. It would be easy to interpret Aurobindo's philosophy, particularly from the point of view of his integral Yoga, as urging a means to individual consolation through spiritual union. This would be a distortion which altogether misses his theory of evolutionary fulfilment. In his own words it would be to follow a curve back into the Ignorance, for,

"The intermediary, the supra-terrestrial aspiration cuts short the fulfilment of the being above, by not proceeding to the highest realisation of oneness, and diminishes it below by not allowing a proper amplitude of sense to its presence in the material universe and its acceptance of life in an earthly body".³⁰

Aurobindo often returns to the problem of a static state in which either the intellect dwells on what it accepts as a satisfactory concept of God, or the solace which comes from a fleeting realisation of the Divine Presence. His work is not concerned with the momentary experience of individual ecstasy, but with the evolutionary progression of the human race into this level, which will then become the normal quality and condition of earthly life. In the ascent of consciousness, Overmind is the first sign that the attainment of such a unity is a universal possibility, the Divine possibility of fulfilment for humanity which Aurobindo sees as indicated in the beginning of cosmic existence. Since Overmind lacks this full capability, there must be a further quality of consciousness from which spiritual transformation will follow as a necessary consequence. The evolution of consciousness in Aurobindo is sometimes depicted as if it followed a simple and clear-cut series. The true picture is different, for it shows that the higher consciousness in its descent is modified by the lower in an intricate activity. The higher alters the lower, but is modified and dominated by it, and as the lower ascends it is sublimated, but at the same time "qualifies the sublimating substance and power".³¹ This means that while Matter, for example, ascended to support life, it was itself changed in the process. Similarly, Life produced Mind but again there was transformation, and this phenomenon of change applies throughout the evolution of Consciousness even in the higher stages. At the summit of the gradations of self

transmutations is the all-important level of Supermind, which Aurobindo defines as the cognition of a "Supra-mental Truth-Consciousness" which is at once the

"self-awareness of the Infinite and Eternal and a power of self-determination inherent in that self-awareness".³²

Whatever an existent and timeless self-awareness sees in itself as truth of being, of conscious power, is manifest in time. Therefore the nature of the supreme reality of Being cannot be the contemplation of its own-eternity, a vacuum of pure existence, nor its sole activity the eternal delight of its own self-existence. If Infinity of Being is also Infinity of Power, then It cannot rest in pure inactivity and since It can express only Itself, the necessary activity must take the form of the ordered diffusion of Its own Infinite possibilities in a "dynamic spiritual all-containing self-extension".³³ This in itself can be grasped by the intellect as a formula but the more profound truth of this "infinite mobility" which has as its basis, even as its "essence" an "eternal immobility"³⁴ is beyond the scope of mental conception. This basically is the insight of Overmind. The mental level of human consciousness can deal only with actuals, it cannot penetrate to the totality of the process in which is secreted the imperative through which possibilities become actualities. Thus the veil of Ignorance becomes less dense to Overmind, and becomes almost transparent to Supermind.

Aurobindo illustrates this more clearly in pointing out the error of the separation of Nirguna and Saguna

Brahman, the immobility of the Ineffable and Unknowable, from the One who is the Many, the Person who is source of all Personality, which to Supermind are not two sides of the one coin, which is still a sundering, but the eternal One-Existence. Yet as is clearly emphasised, the accentuation of aspects or stages in the development of Consciousness, For example, materialism and atheism, etc., though negative if taken to their final conclusion are none the less useful to human progress, and are not to be rashly condemned or thrown away before "perceptions and powers"³⁵ emerge to occupy their place. Therefore, Aurobindo can say that

"we shall observe with respect . . . the work that atheism has done for the Divine, and the services which agnosticism has rendered . . . the illimitable increase of knowledge".³⁶

The emphasis on Nirguna or Saguna is then not complete error, but is separate cognition of aspects of truth, and so is valid in the progress of spiritual experience corresponding to the developing powers of awareness. Understandably, a clear-cut distinction between the Nirguna and the Saguna Brahman is as unacceptable to Aurobindo's theory of unity as the paravidya and aparavidya of the Advaita which he so firmly rejects. To the mental reason these are contraries; to an Overmind intelligence they are complementaries. According to Aurobindo, if

"we pursue the Nirguna into a farthest possible self-experience, we arrive at a supreme Absolute devoid of all relations and determinations, the Ineffable first and last word of existence. If we enter through the Saguna into some ultimate possibility of experience, we arrive at a Divine Absolute, a Personal, supreme and omnipresent Godhead, transcendent as well as

universal The Overmind consciousness maintains equally these two truths of the eternal which face the mind as mutually exclusive alternatives; it admits both as supreme aspects of one Reality."³⁷

This illustrates that,

"a purely Impersonal existence and consciousness is true and possible, but also an entirely Personal consciousness and existence; the Impersonal Divine, Nirguna Brahman and the Personal Divine, Saguna Brahman are here equal and co-existent aspects of the Eternal".³⁸

This represents an important theory of integration for, as Aurobindo goes on to say,

"Impersonality can manifest with Person subordinated to it as a mode of expression; but equally Person can be the Reality with Impersonality as a mode of its nature".³⁹

Support for Aurobindo's denial of the distinction of the Nirguna and Saguna is found in Hiriyanna's "Outlines of Indian Philosophy" where he warns that

". . . one should be careful in understanding what exactly is meant when the Upanishads describe Brahman as nirguna and therefore as indefinable and unknowable."

This "no doubt rules out all discursive thought as inapplicable to Reality";⁴⁰ but it does not represent it as extra-empirical - as something wholly outside the world of experience. The Nirguna Brahman is not the negation or the antithesis of the Saguna, but is its very truth and is immanent in everything that goes to constitute it.

Separation of the nirguna and saguna then, is a defect of a particular level of consciousness which lacks the power of discerning unity, which as yet lacks the experience of "All is Brahman" the only way of apprehending a Reality which cannot be grasped as an

object of knowledge, so nirguna and saguna are simply terms which belong to the evolutionary movement.

It is in the final stages of their respective evolutionary theories that the thought of Aurobindo and Teilhard seems to merge and to leave behind the distinction which persists from the fundamental premise of Matter and Spirit. The affinity becomes clear at that point in the rise of consciousness which Aurobindo has called Overmind, and it is first recognised in the importance of the power of "seeing" common to both. At the beginning of "The Phenomenon of Man", Teilhard explains that the work is all about "seeing",⁴¹ for "we might say that the whole of life lies in that verb".⁴² Since fuller being is closer union, and as union increases only through an increase in consciousness, which is to say "in vision", Teilhard can say that "To see or to perish"⁴³ is the very condition of existence.

The point at which consciousness reaches the limit of the intellect is also the threshold of intuition in Aurobindo's analysis, and it marks the lowest level of the faculty of seeing, or spiritual vision. Teilhard's description is not so precise, but nevertheless this same stage in his theory of the evolution of consciousness is still recognisable. Because it is the move, however tentative, out of thought and into vision, and because it is therefore, the beginning of a conscious unity of individualised centres, Overmind would correspond to that stage in Teilhard's theory which immediately precedes the breakthrough from unified grains of thought into the

superior level of unification of conscious centres which is the starting point of amorisation. Aurobindo speaks of the greater luminosity which floods the intellect as it reaches the fringe of intuition, and Teilhard also describes "the luminous thought that grows in intensity on the earth's surface,"⁴⁴ and the culmination in Christogenesis in which

"every element and event in the universe is bathed in light and warmth, and everything becomes animate⁴⁵ . . . a fit object of love and worship".

The "new vision" of which Teilhard speaks is not solely concerned with evolution although that is part of it.

He also states that becoming conscious of

"our condition as atoms patient of synthesis is not merely to have attained a new vision of the general relationship which links matter to thought, and thought to God. It is in addition, and by that very fact, to redefine the line followed by the immutable axis of holiness".⁴⁶

By following the same line of evolving awareness, Aurobindo comes to the realisation of "the principle of a Divine life in terrestrial Nature".⁴⁷ In both cases such an awakening is the prelude to a new kind of Love which Teilhard describes in the development of 'amorisation', and which Aurobindo sees as the "gnostic experience"⁴⁸ of mankind.

It is probably on the theory of Love that the two systems become so similar as to be almost indistinguishable, and this may be seen in a comparison of "Gnosis" and "amorisation".

NOTESASCENT TOWARDS SUPERMIND

1. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 983.
2. Ibid., p. 983.
3. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 623.
4. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 985.
5. Ibid., p. 985.
6. Ibid., p. 986.
7. Ibid., p. 986.
8. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.
9. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 996.
10. Ibid., p. 996.
11. Ibid., p. 996.
12. Ibid., p. 997.
13. Ibid., p. 997.
14. Ibid., p. 997.
15. Ibid., p. 997.
16. Ibid., p. 996.
17. Ibid., p. 969.
18. Ibid., p. 969.
19. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 772.
20. Ibid., p. 772.
21. Ibid., p. 776.
22. Ibid., p. 446.
23. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, pp. 424-5.
24. Ibid., p. 426.
25. Ibid., p. 426.
26. Ibid., p. 29.

27. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 426.
28. Ibid., p. 426.
29. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 587.
30. Ibid., pp. 586-7.
31. Ibid., p. 1010.
32. Ibid., p. 28.
33. Ibid., p. 63.
34. Ibid., p. 63.
35. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 17.
36. Ibid., p. 17.
37. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 25.
38. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 429.
39. Ibid., p. 429.
40. Hiriyanna, "Outlines of Indian Philosophy", pp. 375F.
41. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 35.
42. Ibid., p. 35.
43. Ibid., p. 35.
44. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", p. 247.
45. Teilhard de Chardin, "Towards the Future", p. 204.
46. Teilhard de Chardin, "Activation of Energy", pp. 56F.
47. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 1022.
48. Ibid., p. 1045.

CHAPTER 23GNOSIS - THE EFFECTIVE PRINCIPLE OF THE SPIRIT

At the point at which the evolution of Consciousness progresses beyond the mental level, a crisis occurs which Aurobindo describes as a "psycho-spiritual change"¹ into what is to be understood not merely as an enhanced quality of consciousness, but as an altered state of being. It is a "momentous transition"² into that final phase of evolution which will culminate in the fulfilment of mankind in the emergence of a new humanity. An understanding then, of what he means by "Gnosis" is indispensable to an appreciation of the full extent of Aurobindo's evolutionary theory.

There is no "knowledge" in the common understanding of the word on this level. Knowledge on the mental level, which is properly knowledge of, as existing between subject and object, gives way to knowledge which is experience, and finally to gnosis, knowledge by identity, in which existential being enjoys the Spirit and Power of the Divine. The element of identity is the essential characteristic of gnostic life, for in this the human being is possessed, transformed, embraced by the Eternal in a true identity; therefore freedom the mark of the Spirit, and Power, the operation of the Divine, constitutes the quality of gnosis. There can be said to be a supra-mental knowledge, a phrase which constantly recurs in Aurobindo's writing, which is not primarily or essentially

a thought knowledge, for it is not intellectualised into concepts but is the first tentative move

"beyond the abstractions of thought to the beginning of direct experience".³

Immediacy, the overcoming of the distinction between knower and known is the mark of gnostic "knowledge". In other words, this is not knowledge which is presented by the senses and defined by the intellect, but is the re-call from latency of a pre-existent total consciousness. When Aurobindo speaks of supra-mental knowledge, what is indicated is a supersensory cognition, human consciousness in essence.

It is for this reason that "Return" is an all-important element in Aurobindo's theory, always connected with the equation that consciousness is being. While consciousness is, and has always been one, it will be realised as one, but in Infinite diversity of manifestation, underlining the distinction between Consciousness, the very essence of being, and consciousness of, which is a status of the mind. This is the gulf which exists, separating knowledge by identity, the truth of things, from intellectual knowledge which is the practical truth of things, the outcome of sense data filtered through impermanence and change.

The clear emphasis in Aurobindo's thought, one which is necessary to his theory, is that it is only on the basis of diversity that the notion of formation in existence is acceptable, and further, only on this basis can the truth of One Existence be realised,

"... the One who eternally becomes the Many, the Many who in their apparent divisions are still eternally one".⁴

To speak in terms of fulfilment as a re-unification of consciousness, which is the same as saying a return to an original totality of Being, since the two are synonymous in Aurobindo, raises the question of the true role and significance of individual conscious being.

Fulfilment of Being would involve the merging of what is termed the "true individual" by which he may be taken to mean the existent "self", associated with the "I" which precedes existential experience, [the given-ness in man], with the universal and transcendent Self, not in a loss of identity as "the drop in the vast ocean", but as the return to integrity of a fully evolved essential element in universal Being.

This is in fact the recovery of identity, for it is the emergence of infinite consciousness in the individual which is "his recovery of the truth of himself by self-knowledge and self-realisation".⁵ It is the re-call of diverse particles to the unity of the non-existent One Reality from which essentially they have never been separate, but which they have manifested in space and time within an existential process. There is no suggestion here of maintaining a division between essence and existence as in modern existential thinking. Such a conclusion is ruled out on the very basic grounds that the former posits a continuum, the latter a dichotomy; the first theory rests on the priority of essence, the second on the priority of existence. Neither is there any

distinction between being and existence which is the radical division in Sankara, since Aurobindo's system depends on the proposition of the one Existence extended in existence. Further, terms such as "return" and "re-call" do not indicate a 'place' such as a Brahmaloka in Hinduism, for they refer to a mode of being which both pre-existed and is the end of the evolutionary movement. The emergence of a different order of being will be the sign that the evolutionary fulfilment of self-conscious life is reaching its climax. Here the individual's

"whole way of being, thinking, living, acting, would be governed by the power of a vast universal spirituality",⁶

the unmistakable quality of the new race.

Nevertheless, the psycho-spiritual change is not immediate for there are gradations even within this ultimate category. In the experience of identity, the gnostic individual will know a transcendent freedom, a complete sense of unity in which all beings would be self, for such a one is true individual, is universalised individuality which escapes the error of diverse individualism, for he is the emergent divine who ". . . individualises the Divine Transcendence".⁷

This distinction has to be noted when Aurobindo speaks of the "perfected and complete individual" who is fulfilled ". . . in the satisfaction of his growth and self-expression",⁸ for at first glance this would seem to be a contradiction, as if the part could be perfected and fulfilled. Confusion is possible unless it is seen that individual is not synonymous with ego, for what is implied

is the "true individual" capable of, and destined for, unity with a transcendent Whole without loss of identity, in other words, the unity which is ultimate by virtue of its infinite diversity. In this sense, therefore, to speak of a fulfilled individual is not to admit a separate fulfilment, but is to affirm an accomplished integrity. This is made clear by the way in which Aurobindo maintains that the "three mysteries of existence"⁹ form a harmony in the life of the gnostic individual. This refers to the complete individual, for,

" . . . the complete individual is the cosmic individual, since only when we have taken the universe into ourselves . . . and transcended it . . . can our individuality be complete."¹⁰

In effect this defines the universal individual elevated into gnosis, synonymous with the gnostic being, each a totality, because each is a self-expression in infinite diversity, of the One Being.

As in Teilhard, so in Aurobindo the word "individual" is to be understood within the particular context of its use, for its meaning moves from indicating a separate part, to illustrating universality, the concentration of total expression in each point, the macrocosm totally expressed through the microcosm, each within the other. The evolutionary progress towards fulfilment in the infinity of consciousness can be traced in the changing quality of "individual".

But even in the Ignorance the importance of the individual cannot be overlooked, for he

"is indeed the key to the evolutionary movement; for it is the individual who finds himself, who

becomes conscious of the Reality",¹¹
 who therefore establishes himself as Self. It is the individual instance of being who reaches the level of Identity, and experiences himself as a Reality which is other than spatial/temporal in Existence which is the Reality of all existence. Nevertheless, although Aurobindo says that everywhere "we see the stamp of inevitability" this does not mean that the individual as he is, is assured of fulfilment.¹² As he is, the individual is an illusion of the mentality, which will be overcome in the Gnostic realisation of each as a cosmic existent, an "individualised centration", and by extension, "the one who carries the universe and all beings within him".¹³ Further extended in the evolution of Gnosis, this becomes a "oneness of heart, of sense, of concrete physical consciousness",¹⁴ and for this reason Aurobindo says that

"The self-fulfilment of others is as much our own concern, we might almost say - our divine self-interest - as our own liberation".¹⁵

To pursue a heavenly bliss which

"unites God and ourselves and the blest, but enables us to look with a remote indifference on the unblest and their sufferings is not possible to the perfect soul; for these also are its selves".¹⁶

There is a remarkable affinity between Aurobindo and Teilhard on the understanding of 'individual' as a transient phenomenon belonging to a phase of evolution. Teilhard also sees fulfilment of the true self as possible only in the collective. In the "Milieu Divin" he says,
 "those will be saved who boldly shift the centre

of their being outside themselves and have the courage to love another more than self, who in some way become that Other",¹⁷

the identification of the self as the other, and conversely, the other as the self in "the rise of the Other who could be more I than I am myself".¹⁸ This prerequisite of fulfilment in Teilhard explains Henri de Lubac's saying that the individual is not automatically fulfilled, for

"the culmination of the universe is one thing, the salvation of the individual is quite another".¹⁹

It depends on decision, for Teilhard says there comes "a point of choice" at which a "new spiritual species breaks away"²⁰ and this is a matter for each individual. Choice is unavoidable since "refusal to decide is a decision in itself",²¹ nor is it possible to stand still, for "refusal to go further is equivalent to turning back",²² and Aurobindo is making a similar point in speaking of the inescapability of action since even to think is in a sense to act.

Since gnostic consciousness is experience and therefore cannot properly be anticipated, it may be asked, can the characteristics of gnostic being be indicated in a meaningful way? The answer to this would be that anticipation can reach only to the extent of necessary qualities, those which would fulfil what is observably incomplete or merely tentative on the present level. Thus it would follow the trinitarian aspect of Sachidananda, and relate to the "trinities" within the Oneness of the Spirit, of which knowledge perfectly embodied in will, and will perfectly embodied in action, is the spontaneous expression in worldly existence. It could

then be said, or rather, it would have to be said, that gnostic being would be possessed of a self-knowledge inseparable from self-mastery, leading inevitably to the power of perfect self-expression, which outlines a harmony replacing the dis-harmony, and imperfect expression of the lower levels of being. This is not the description of a life lived in the pursuit of perfection according to rules however rigidly applied and observed, or principles however elevated, for it is life of a different order, life which necessarily itself expresses its own perfection. Aurobindo describes it as life in which

" . . . Knowledge and Will become one, and cannot be in conflict; Truth of Spirit and life become one and cannot be at variance".²³

The gnostic being is therefore to be recognised as the habitation of the totality of Being, total Will directing a correspondingly co-ordinated action, replacing the capricious will of the un-evolved human life which is dependent on the ever fluctuating and conflicting motivation of partial knowledge. These conflicts of the lower level pass, for they arose through the limitation of the separative ego, which cannot grasp the truth of its inclusion in the universal, and therefore is in conflict with it. For the gnostic being, the ego does not exist, for it is recognised as the primary limitation which is now overcome in an all-embracing self-awareness. Discovery of this truth of the ego marks the beginning of the spiritual life. Until this point, man imagines that the ego is in control, but in fact it is carried along on a wave of thoughts which "occur" and impulses which

"arise", an inherent impetus and activity which he mistakenly attributes to the ego, only later recognising that this inner momentum is evolutionary, the embryonic stirring of evolving Being.

The Inner and the Outer

The co-ordination between these two aspects of being is as much a problem for Aurobindo as it was seen to be for Teilhard, and again it marks a point in which the two theories seem to merge. In Teilhard there appeared to be a question of the inner having to await the development of the outer before consciousness could progress. Aurobindo also describes the more rapid advance of the inner, and the possibility of this being retarded by the influence of the outer. He is not speaking of the complexification of the outer in relation to the increase in Consciousness, a theory which he rejects, but the lack of simultaneity is a difficulty which Aurobindo recognises. It arises "Because the inner more readily receives higher influences", and so there is a stage in which

"the inner is transformed while the outer is still experiencing the difficulty of change, for the outside world still remains a field of imperfection which invades the consciousness".²⁴

The coming together of the inner and outer, the final integration of these two aspects of human existence, is a pre-requisite for the realisation of that power which Aurobindo terms gnostic consciousness, which has for its essential capability and function, the radical transformation

of consciousness as it is presently known. Outgoing action, he observes, takes up by far the greater part of human life, and only the exceptional individual can live more within himself and so mould himself in accordance with inner awareness rather than surface act. But it is a harmony, an integrity, of both these aspects, a co-ordination in which inner and outer are transformed and become other than simply this co-operation, which constitutes perfection of life.

The Spiritual Value of Human Action

An evolving integrity between the inner and the outer emphasises the importance which Aurobindo places on human activity, an emphasis which is essential to his conviction that fulfilment is in existence, of all existence through human agency. It is related to his affirmation of a Divine presence in the world, a presence which is not to be understood simply in a traditional spiritual sense, but as a recognisable force, as energy, above all as Power. What is described is life in which the Divine is not only permissive will, though that too, for ". . . by that permitting Will alone is our action possible",²⁵ but which, through the realisation of the full potential of consciousness, becomes the dominant active Agent. To reach this essential possibility in life, rather than beyond life, is the "true victory", the key to the riddle of terrestrial existence.

Uncompromising affirmation of Presence in the world makes Divine work in the world through human

agency, not only possible, but essential. It contradicts not only illusionist theories embedded in Indian thought, but also denies the "illusion of works" which maintains a relevance of works without at the same time affirming Divine presence, so claiming a purpose which is not dependent on the Divine.

Aurobindo's whole theory, therefore, rests on the belief that the attainment of the fullness of being, which is the infinity of consciousness in this life, is not only an existential possibility, but is an essential purpose. It is for this reason that detachment is the necessary attitude, not only in regard to the action but to its fruits, for activity which has for its motive and impetus, the satisfaction of the individual actually retards the process of spiritual fulfilment, for it arises from the recognised motives of

"necessity, instinct, impulse or desire, . . .
the three inferior motives".²⁶

Aurobindo stresses the important point that action cannot be avoided, since mere thinking is in itself an act, and a "cause of many effects".²⁷ If all work is to be regarded as contributing to the evolution of the fullness of being in the world, then even the enlightened are not relieved of the obligation to work towards this end. Again Aurobindo departs from the traditional Indian view that there is no activity in the world appropriate to the enlightened soul, that "the rest is quiescence", the opposite of action. This theory is based on the traditional Indian belief that action is simply a

purifying force which prepares the seeker in the beginning of his search, but which has to be discarded before the spiritual goal can be reached. This is incompatible with Aurobindo's thinking, since it creates a division between the active agent and what he phenomenally is, and separates concrete existence from what he is becoming, which is another way of expressing the distinction between the Nirguna and the Saguna. As against this, Aurobindo wants to stress the integrity of his system, that

"All existence in the world is work, force, potency, and has a dynamic effect on the whole by its mere presence, even the inertia of the clod, even the silence of the immobile Buddha on the verge of Nirvana",²⁸

and the only question is the manner of the work and the spirit of the worker, on the awareness of his action as a means of furthering the Divine intention in the world. This is what Aurobindo calls

"self-consecration . . . not only in thought and heart, but in all the complexities of being",²⁹

and it seems to be what Teilhard describes in "The Milieu Divin" as the "divinisation of our activities".³⁰ Whatever our role may be, Teilhard says,

"whether we are artists, working men, or scholars, we can, if we are Christians, speed towards the object of our work as though towards the supreme fulfilment of our being".³¹

Thus in some way, Teilhard goes on to say,

"God is in the tip of my pen, of my pick, of my brush, of my needle, - in my heart and in my mind",³²

and this scarcely differs even in language, from the

description of self-surrender in works demanded by Aurobindo's Yoga of Divine Work, a stage in his Integral Yoga.

It is not too difficult Aurobindo says, for the human mind to envisage the transformation of love from a mixed human emotion to a supreme and all-embracing divine passion, but he sees a certain perplexity entering in when it comes to an understanding of the works of Love. Some overcome the problem by saying that the spirit of an advanced spiritual love is incompatible with activity in the world and therefore they avoid it. Others turn their efforts solely to expressions of love for the Divine such as prayer and other symbolic acts of worship. The solution most favoured by the religious mind is to express the love of the Divine in acts of service to others; in philanthropy or benevolence, which seems to constitute the action which is appropriate to a life founded on divine love. This compartmentalising of aspects of day to day living is not enough for Aurobindo, for whom "All Life is Yoga", by which he means that every active moment must be a conscious evolution towards the complete union of earthly life itself and the Divine. The process is non-selective. It includes

"our acts of knowledge, our acts of power and production and creation, our acts of joy and beauty and the soul's pleasure, our acts of will and endeavour and not only our acts of love and beneficent service",³⁴

and this brings all human activities into adoration and worship in a spirit of divine love.

"He who gives to me with a heart of adoration

a leaf, a flower, or a cup of water, I take that offering of his devotion",³⁵

says Aurobindo in quoting the Gita, and adds that it is not only the dedicated external gift that is to be offered with love and devotion for

"all our thoughts, all our feelings, all our outward activities and their forms and objects"³⁶

can equally be such gifts to the Divine.

Teilhard also notes the difference in quality of activity, distinguishing between work which is "intolerable vanity"³⁷ and what he calls "true action" by which he means "action into which one has put something of one's own life",³⁸ the collaboration of the individual atom "in the definitive construction of a World",³⁹ which he sees as in some way an extension of the Divine creative act. But while there seems to be complete agreement between Aurobindo and Teilhard on the obligation of human activity, there is also agreement on the equal obligation of detachment, the passive and the active which is seen as the true compliance with the Divine Will and the indispensable condition of total integrity.

Gnosis and Amorisation

Gnosis, like amorisation, is a breakthrough in which the evolution of Consciousness crosses a threshold into a different dimension. It is an ascent from the level of intellectual seeking which is inevitably marked by error, into the certainty of spiritual vision. Evolutionary progress in this new phase can be seen as an

ever deepening capacity for unification, and there seems to be complete affinity between Aurobindo and Teilhard at this stage in their theories. Aurobindo describes the Gnostic change as movement inwards, for the individual will no longer have a merely external association with others, but will be "inwardly in contact with the inner self of others",⁴⁰ and will meet consciously "their inner as well as their outer reactions".⁴¹ This is the same radical change which Teilhard describes in the movement from the cohesion of the "terrestrial grains of Thought"⁴² into the categorically different relationship of "centre to centre" in amorisation. In both theories there is a significant increase in unification, and just as Teilhard sees an eventual transparency of consciousness, so Aurobindo says that in the Gnostic state each will be aware of

"that within others, and act upon all with an inner comprehension . . . and a perfect sympathy".⁴³

All action will be motivated by the power of the Spirit, and communication will be by "the secret unspoken word"⁴⁴ and the "power of the heart"⁴⁵ based on the sense of oneness.

Aurobindo wants to emphasise that by Gnostic consciousness he means an entirely different power which will have the capacity to re-form the material world in relation to itself. Teilhard diverges on this point, for he does not propose a transformation of Matter in the ultimate sense, and again the difference is endemic in their basic theories of Matter and Spirit.

Reluctance to accept the idea of the supremacy of consciousness over Matter is accounted for by the persistent belief that consciousness is secondary to, and proceeds from material organisation. Because of this Aurobindo re-emphasises the theory of consciousness which is being, which is universal in its scope, which is unified in its experience, which is invincible in its power, and which pre-exists any material form. Man is man by virtue of Consciousness as the essential constituent, but

"Before our thinking, reasoning, reflecting mind there was a consciousness unthinking but living and sentient, and before that there was the subconscious; in our yet unevolved selves there is likely to be waiting a greater consciousness, self-luminous, not dependent on constructive thought".⁴⁶

Gnosis is the emergence of such a consciousness, and is the first indication that conscious human life can be fulfilled in the attainment of that absolute self-awareness which is the supreme characteristic of an essential Consciousness.

Teilhard also bases the future of consciousness on its primacy in saying that,

"An underlying doubt as to the primacy of consciousness might at a pinch be conceivable in a mind emerging suddenly from nothing; it seems contradictory in an evolved being whose origins attest to this primacy"⁴⁷

and he goes on to speak of the idea of "human ecstasy sundered from material things"⁴⁸ something he says which is not a contradiction but which

"fits in very well with the final demands of a world of evolutionary structure".⁴⁹

Gnostic Knowledge

Gnosis is the effective principle of the Spirit, and a "knowledge by identity"⁵⁰ which uses the power of integrated being is the principle of gnostic life. In general terms, knowledge by identity can be taken as akin to the experience of mystical union, but unlike the traditional Indian view of the merging of self identity in the Self or Brahman, Aurobindo maintains the secondary aspect of "supramental vision",⁵¹ which precludes the idea of an indissoluble identification of the knower with the Absolute. Nevertheless, there is

". . . an enveloping luminous contact of spiritual consciousness with its object"⁵²

as empirical knowledge gives way to spiritual perception, the Upanishadic darsana which is a prelude to prajna, or knowledge which has been absorbed into individual experience and is an awakening to identity. This is not knowledge as it is usually understood, but is rather a power which has the capacity to effect a change in category of being and it is therefore radically different from sense-knowledge, or the "science of appearances"⁵³ which can only add to intellectual data. But because gnostic knowledge is a process of the completion of the self in approaching the truth of its own identity, it is exactly equivalent to Teilhard's theory of the self becoming more itself as it approaches Omega.

"To be", to live in the essential is to inhabit the realm of knowledge by identity or total experience, since only experience which owes nothing to the senses

or the intellect can be total, for here self-conscious individuality is totally taken up and contained within what is experienced, in an immediacy which is independent of the time sequence. Because gnosis is not yet

"the supreme plane of our consciousness, but a middle or link plane"⁵⁴

it corresponds to the operation of the intuitive Super-mind, the appropriate environment of which is duration, that brilliant and fluid corona which Bergson describes as surrounding the solidified core of the intellect. This marks an important distinction between Aurobindo and Teilhard. The former maintains the concept of duration which the latter, for understandable reasons, does not. As was seen earlier, Teilhard compensates for this lack in category by proposing an evolutionary curvature of time itself in keeping with the process of centration, and, following the principles endemic in his own theory, this maintains a relationship between altered states of consciousness and experience in time. This again highlights a difference between Aurobindo and Teilhard, for the latter develops a theory of evolution in time which is to say in history, since its power and motivation radiates from the Incarnation.

Gnostic knowledge is the movement from the condition of apparent subject/object into the reality of all-subject, in the integration of knower, knowledge and the known, the merging of jnata, jnanam, jneyam, for

"In reality, I am the knower, am the consciousness which knows; the knowledge is that consciousness, myself operating; the known is also myself"⁵⁹

in the unitary Consciousness of one Existence.

The ". . . last and most difficult conquest"⁵⁶ which gnostic knowledge achieves is the trikaladrsti, or "knowledge of the three times"⁵⁷ which replaces knowledge in the "stream of moments". This is gnosis evolved to the state in which the norm of being is simultaneous eternity of past present and future existing together in the self-knowledge of the Eternal.

Freedom in Gnosis

An essential freedom is the further distinguishing mark of Gnosis. Adaptation to the terms of existence can be understood as compatible with freedom only in a relative sense, as indicating the capacity, even though this may be regarded as an infinite capacity as in Teilhard, for adjustment in accordance with the changing circumstances of material existence. In Gnosis, infinite freedom replaces the so-called freedom of existential contingency which is no more than a pattern formed by recurring action - re-action, and which is therefore un-freedom, because it is a condition which lacks spontaneity, the essential mark of action which is truly free. Spontaneity is a term which has profound significance for Aurobindo since it indicates activity which arises from a categorically different kind of consciousness. Such a freedom is not related to the free-will, which, because it arises out of a given situation as well as a given inclination, always has the element of un-freedom. By 'gnostic freedom' Aurobindo does not mean

an infinitely extended choice, but the absence of the necessity for choice, for here individual being taps that "total Force"⁵⁸ which has determined its choice, and so transcends the given inclinations and preferences which determine human actions. The "only true freedom possible to man"⁵⁹ is to surrender

"our conscious will and allow it to be made one with the will of the Eternal".⁶⁰

Aurobindo regards the arrival at freedom from choice as the beginning of gnostic consciousness. It seems that he is sometimes misunderstood when he speaks of this state as freedom from law, "including the moral law",⁶¹ but this describes the individual will in unison with the Divine Will, "the only free Will in the world".⁶² What Aurobindo seems to be describing in gnostic freedom is the "will to will", a power which is beyond the ordinary level of consciousness.

Although Teilhard's theory maintains a progressive freedom, the concept is not comprehensively examined as it is in Aurobindo. As M. Barthélemy-Madaule points out, Teilhard criticised Bergson for seemingly diminishing the aspect of choice in his concept of the intuition related to duration, a criticism which Teilhard would also have been obliged to make of Aurobindo had he known his theory. Teilhard deals with freedom in a way which suggests that there is a certain limit beyond which he is reluctant to pass in his theory of creative evolution, despite the many innovations. In the end it is the event of Incarnation which he wants to stress, and therefore he

does not develop the idea of direct awareness and freedom associated with the evolution of consciousness into intuition. Emile Rideau seems to be touching on this point when he says that although Teilhard is justified in the belief in a world super-naturalised by Christ and moved from the beginning by the Spirit,

"he failed to perfect the formulas that would accurately express the transcendence of the Divine freedom and the gratuitous character of its historical intervention into finite and fallen nature",⁶³

but against this it would have to be remembered that Teilhard is not setting out a theology but is examining a phenomenon. Beatrice Bruteau suggests that the Hindu conceptions of freedom may have been of much value to Teilhard had he studied them, but there is no reason to suppose that a lack of information on Hinduism accounts for Teilhard's restraint.

While there is a recognisable gap between Aurobindo and Teilhard on the development of freedom in the end there is no distinction whatsoever, for both see the fullness of freedom as occurring only at the end of the evolutionary process in union with a supreme and personalising Person. Gnosis is a significant stage but it is still within the evolutionary movement towards this final integration, which is "the joy of absolute identity in diverse oneness".⁶⁴

Gnosis and Love

The affinity between Aurobindo and Teilhard on the concept of Love is such that it is probably true to say

that whatever has been said by the one could equally have been said by the other. In both theories, Love is an evolutionary process which begins in the primal dust of existence, for all that is to evolve is already present though latent in the atom. According to Aurobindo

"... in the very atom there is something that becomes in us a will and a desire",⁶⁵

and because this essence of will and desire are present in every atom they are necessarily present in everything which is formed by the aggregation of these atoms. They are associated with and are the expression of an

"inconscient or involved sense and intelligence which are equally pervasive",⁶⁶

are present in the atom because they are already present in the Force which constitutes the atom. Aurobindo traces the development of this essence through the lower orders of evolution to the emergence of Man, in whom through association, it emerges as the force of Love.

This movement Aurobindo relates to the four-fold status of Life. The first is characterised by the evolved will in atomic existence, "entirely possessed by the universal movement"⁶⁷ in which it arises as the "obscure and unformed seed of individuality".⁶⁸ The second is rooted in desire, eager to possess but limited in its capacity; "the bud of the third is Love"⁶⁹ which seeks both to possess and be possessed, to receive and to give itself;

"the flower of the fourth, its sign of perfection, is the pure and full emergence of the original will, the illumined fulfilment of the intermediate desire, the high and deep satisfaction of the conscious interchange of Love by the unification of the state of the possessor and possessed in the divine

unity of souls which is the foundation of supramental existence".⁷⁰

The evolutionary ascent of Love in Aurobindo, which moves from the hidden essence in Matter to the fully spiritualised Love in Gnosis, is not in any sense different from Teilhard's theory that attraction must be assumed in the elements of primal Matter, to account for the appearance of Love in "hominised form".⁷¹

Aurobindo's theory follows the same course as the evolutionary Love in Teilhard. At first, he says, "Love may be only an extended selfishness . . .",⁷² and even as it evolves initially it "obeys the law of hunger",⁷³ the law of exacting rather than giving, and only later conforms to the law of love which is the impulse

"to realise oneself in others, to be enriched by enriching, to possess and be possessed, for without being possessed one does not possess oneself utterly."⁷⁴

Thus begins through association and through love, the recognition of "the not-self as a greater self",⁷⁵ just as in amorisation Teilhard describes the rise of the other who could be more "I" than the self.

The significance of the evolving Force of Love in Aurobindo can hardly be overestimated. His system of integral Yoga is permeated with the idea of love and its evolutionary movement from the human into the Divine. It has for its aim a climax of love in "God-realisation",⁷⁶ with all that the term "realisation" implies in Aurobindo. Gnostic love is in no sense the extension of something which is already familiar, but is the emergence of a different and inconceivable power which Aurobindo describes

as a "yet unfound law of love".⁷⁷ Similarly, Teilhard speaks of the force which operates in amorisation as "a new kind of love, not yet experienced by man".⁷⁸ It may be said that above all other similarities, it is the common belief in terrestrial evolution as an 'evolution of love which makes the affinity of thought between Aurobindo and Teilhard truly remarkable. This is all the more so because on other points of agreement there may possibly be the bridge of a common influence whereas on the doctrine of love this seems to be improbable. The evolutionary transition of consciousness into the intuitive level of Gnosis could be said to correspond to Bergson's intuition in duration, and it is possibly for this reason that Aurobindo emphasises that Gnosis is more than intuition, a reference to the psychic force of unification, a Power which for him is the essential mark of this level of consciousness, and which is missing in Bergson's theory of radical dispersion.

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CHAPTER 24

THE ABSOLUTE AS PERSONAL

The Personal and the Impersonal

The essential importance which Aurobindo places on the concept of Person becomes clear only as his evolutionary theory approaches its climax. Although in Teilhard the term 'Person' is also of over-riding significance, no examination of this is needed since it is self-evident throughout his work and above all in the identification of the Centre of centres as 'Christ-Omega'.

The Divine Personality

Aurobindo speaks of the "difficult and troubling question of the divine Personality".¹ He sees it as difficult and troubling because of the limitations which have been placed on the concept by both East and West. Most lines of thought in India declare an impersonal existence as the original and eternal truth, a position which rules out the element of devotion and for that reason alone would be rejected by Aurobindo. His search, and it is clear in his Integral Yoga, is for a formula which will express his own conviction of the true unity of knowledge and devotion. The ancient philosophies he says, reduced reality to one timeless fact of being, but Buddhist philosophy went further and declared even this to be merely a transitory representation. The Advaitan in a similar way, allowed only the sole truth of the impersonal Nirguna. The true source of the problem for Aurobindo, is that both of these schools of thought, although they

begin from the intellect, are authenticated by spiritual experience, since they arrive at the divine absolute which is their aim. But the way of the 'heart' by which Aurobindo describes devotion, also arrives at what it is seeking, and so the reconciliation of heart and intellect is "one of the great problems of our psychology".²

In turning to the West, the problem is not solved but simply takes on a different aspect. It seems to be impossible for the Western mind, Aurobindo says, to conceive of God as Person except in the sense of an extension of the human person to which omnipotence and omniscience is added. Thus it is that a different picture of the Deity is devised according to the current needs of heart and mind.

"The fierce and inexorable God of Calvin is a different being from the sweet and loving God of St. Francis"³

and this should make it obvious that these conceptions are only partial and relative as true descriptions of the infinite Creator.

Similarly rejected in Aurobindo's theory is the motive of fear, which he sees as incompatible with

"the Father of all who extends His protection and love over all His creatures",⁴

from which grows

"between the soul and the Divine the relation of Father and child, . . . the Father who responds to the love of the soul that approaches him as a child"

all of which "are admitted elements in the Yoga of devotion".

The reconciliation of the devotional approach which

knows God as personal, and the intellectual which experiences God as Impersonal, is possible only in the intuition, for this arrives at the knowledge that

"The impersonal is a truth, the personal too is a truth; they are the same truth seen from two sides of our psychological activity; neither by itself gives the total account of Reality, and yet by either we can approach it".⁵

The true unification is found in the other dimension beyond the intellect in which "the vision of truth reveals itself" and it is this "which we try to express to ourselves intellectually",⁶ and therefore, Aurobindo is saying, it is not the experience which varies between the intellect and intuition, but the expression of it. Experience is the one truth of all these truths, "for there each is present and justified in all the rest", and

"in that light our spiritual experience becomes united and integralised; no real hair's breadth of real division is left, no shade of superiority and inferiority remains between the seeking of the Impersonal and the adoration of the Divine Personality, between the way of knowledge and the way of devotion".⁷

Whether Reality is expressed in terms of absolute impersonality, absolute existence or absolute non-existence, or even in the various forms of divine personality,

"it is all the time the unexpressed Absolute of this divine Person, this conscious Being who manifests himself through us and through the universe".⁸

It is worth noting that John Hick discusses the personal/impersonal reality in words which may well have been written by Aurobindo, and he reaches the same conclusion. He says,

". . . it is possible that the sense of the

divine as non-personal may indeed reflect an aspect of the same infinite reality that is encountered as personal in theistic religious experience, . . . for the contrast is not as absolute as it may appear at first sight".⁹

He goes on to compare the theology of Paul Tillich, for whom the personal is not the primary aspect of God, with the non-personal Brahman, contrasted again with the personal Isvara and the personal God of the Gita. From this he comes to the conclusion that

"both the experience of ultimate reality as personal and the experience of reality as non-personal are recognised in the larger traditions of both east and west, and the problem of understanding the relation between them stands out as one of the major tasks confronting religious thought when it works in a global context".

The Gnostic Being as Person

The importance of establishing the Impersonal Person as the true nature of the Absolute in Aurobindo, relates to his theory that the gnostic being, who will constitute the new race, is also

"of the nature of the Divine and therefore repeats in himself this natural mystery of existence".¹⁰

This is to say that the supramental gnostic being will not be a personality, but spiritual Person, not limited by the given-ness of fixed qualities which determine character. The true core of what Aurobindo means by gnostic being is hidden in this concept of Person. He discusses this from the familiar point of view that in all men there is a double element,

"the unformed though limited flux of being or Nature out of which personality is fashioned and the personal formation out of that flux".¹¹

The fundamental statement which applies here is "Consciousness is being", and to this may be added, is impersonal in category, is in fact universal essence. Such a view is inseparable from the theory of the primacy of Consciousness, that Consciousness which is being ontologically precedes physical creation, is in fact its foundation and from this there follows the necessary conclusion that being, even in existence, partakes of the uncreated nature of essential being. This means that the essential beginning of human life is not in time, for this marks only the moment of its manifestation.

From this essential source issues personality, the true expression of Reality, for it is the appearance of this essence, the form in which it is expressed in existence. In Aurobindo's view all matter expresses being, for it is the occasion of involution, but since consciousness is being, the most refined manifestation of consciousness occurs in the highest level of being, that is, in self-conscious being which alone can be the channel of spiritualisation. This is the personalised summit of the expression of impersonal universal being in existence. Personality, therefore, is the true multiplicity, the authentic diversity which makes Unity possible, and Aurobindo's rejection of theories which proclaim the total irrelevance, or even a limited significance of human life, takes the form of a dynamic affirmation of concrete existence as essentially related to the final integration which is Reality. This is the "Impersonal and supreme Person" which is all persons, the "Ever Unborn who is

endlessly born"¹² as impersonal and omnipresent Person, expressed within, but not limited by, the terms of concrete existence through the unique personality of each individual human life. This is why it can be said that each human being repeats within himself the mystery of existence, for he is an unrepeatable instance into which is gathered the triple aspect of self-consciousness, the absolute, universal, and individual, the first of the trinities, and therefore is a unique expression of the Divine. This is the fusion of impersonal and personal, the one existing in the other, thus reproducing within existential multiplicity, their original cohesion in undifferentiated essential and primal unity. This is not a case of the paradox of the Impersonal Person overcome, but the discovery that there is no opposition in the first place, that this only seemed to be so from an incomplete consideration of the true nature of Reality, and the habit of the human mind which posits a necessary negative for every positive.

The impersonal and the personal form the one truth which is manifested in each instance of conscious being, for

"besides this flux and this fixity there is a third element, the Person behind of whom the personality is a self-expression".¹³

In each individual, therefore, the infinite Reality is expressed in its completeness, for ". . . we are not only reflection, or part of That, we are That",¹⁴ and because Its infinity cannot be measured in space or time, even endless time and unlimited space, it can be experienced

in a second or within an atom just as completely as within the greatest conceivable extension of space and time.

This is of tremendous importance to an understanding of Aurobindo's thought, for it is this element of the essential concretely expressed which marks his integral Yoga as distinct from the traditional practices. Because of this application of the essential reality at all levels, realisation for Aurobindo does not depend on a physical process as do other systems. This explains the fact that Aurobindo places no great emphasis on the Kundalini Shakti, for in the uniqueness of his theory, the Divine Shakti is all-pervasive and awaits the attainment of it in its fullest extent by human consciousness evolved into essential unity. In turn, this unity means that "individual salvation is not enough" for individual consciousness opens into a cosmic consciousness which

"far exceeds with its breadth and nature the narrower intensity of a limited individual fulfilment - and its call is imperative".¹⁵

But despite the emphasis which is placed on cosmic consciousness in Aurobindo, "cosmic consciousness too is not sufficient"¹⁶ for it is not all of the Divine Reality. It is, Aurobindo says, a kind of hiatus for on the one side there is "the free undynamic Witness"¹⁷ and on the other "a bound Executrix of action"¹⁸ who still lacks all the means of action. Reconciliation is still elusive, but it cannot be merely an escape into an absolute Transcendence which leaves human personality unfulfilled and action in the world inconclusive. There is then, a

"divine secret behind personality"¹⁹ which is yet to be discovered, and waiting in it to be delivered into Time "stands the mystery of the embodiment of the Transcendence".²⁰

The central mystery for Aurobindo is Personality which "makes its apparition as a creation of consciousness in an impersonal world",²¹ and it is this which holds the key to human fulfilment. But what is called personality is only a formation of consciousness, for behind it is the Person who takes on various personalities in existence while remaining one, real and eternal. This is "the last revelation and the greatest of all"²² and Aurobindo is unambiguous in what he means by Person. The supreme is an eternal infinite self-existence, but the

"meaning of self-existence . . . is an infinite Person . . . because his being is the essence and source of all personality"²³

which explains Aurobindo's use of "the Identical" and illustrates that the evolution of individual human life is the move from the given-ness of Personality to the essential freedom of spiritual Person. The human being is a formation of Person and impersonal forces, but the reality of Person is obscured in the identification of person with the experiencing ego and the limitations of personality.

Just as the Personality relates to what is fixed, to what is essential in man, so the ego relates to the developing conscious being. Its true origin is in the mental level of evolution, and therefore in Aurobindo's theory, it will pass with the evolutionary transcendence of the intellect. This is the meaning of Aurobindo's

statement that the "Ego exists by its limits, and perishes by the loss of its limits",²⁴ but although this seems to be a clear-cut principle it could be mis-interpreted in the Hindu context. The later Upanishads claimed the ego as the source of the dualities and also as the essential condition for universal existence. This would mean that by getting rid of the ego there would be a return to the illusory aspect which would be the end of all hope of perfection of human life through evolution. The same difficulty applies if the ego is identified with the self, so that the annihilation of the ego would mean the extinction of the self. To speak of the evolution of spiritualised being in existence would then imply, as Aurobindo says,

" . . . the idea of a void or a blank of pure being from which an action and function of experiencing consciousness would arise, but without a construction of differentiated personality . . . ".²⁵

This sameness in being and nature is clearly unacceptable if multiplicity is the essential nature of unity, and therefore such a view cannot offer a solution to the problem of spiritual individuality which survives the ego and persists in experience. The impasse is overcome if Being itself is recognised as impersonal, but expressed in personality, thus preserving inseparable unity in each instance of being which combines the given and the Formed. To reach beyond the given and tap the essential source of which he is the expression is man's attainment in gnostic consciousness, in which alone he gains both the power and the freedom to express an unlimited transcendence.

In assessing the role of the ego, therefore, Aurobindo is careful to point out that the ego is not annihilated in the true sense of the word, but is taken up into something beyond itself of which it is the representation. This aspect of ascent applies to all levels in the evolutionary process, for Aurobindo maintains, as does Teilhard, that nothing is discarded since everything is elevated and transformed in the process. Thus Aurobindo says that the evolution of human consciousness must proceed through

"the renunciation by the ego of its false standpoints and certainties, through its entry into a right relation with the totalities of which it forms a part and with the transcendencies from which it is a descent".²⁶

He is not speaking about annihilation then, but a "self-opening to a truth and a law which exceeds its own conventions",²⁷ a truth which is its fulfilment and a law which is its deliverance.

Just as all personalities are projections of the one Person, all egos are deformities of the one and sole real "I" in existence. In Him we no longer stand separate but "lose our active ego in the universal movement, even as by the Witness who is without qualities and forever unattached, we lose our static ego in the universal peace".²⁸

To live in the ego is to be ever less than oneself.

The lengthy discussion on the nature of the personal in Aurobindo was necessary for three reasons; in the first place, because of the criticism that the supremacy of the Personal is missing in Aurobindo - the assessment of a responsible critic - which seems difficult to justify; secondly, because Aurobindo's philosophy cannot be truly

understood except in relation to a personal God; as he seems endlessly to point out in his Yoga, devotion is not possible before an intellectual Absolute, and therefore if there is

"a knowledge of that Reality to which thought arrives by insistence on an infinite Impersonal, there is also a knowledge on which Love arrives at by insistence on the infinite Personal";²⁹

thirdly, it is this ultimate point which marks a final cohesion of the philosophies of Aurobindo and Teilhard.

NOTESTHE PERSONAL AND THE IMPERSONAL

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THE GNOSTIC RACE

CHAPTER 25

THE GNOSTIC RACE

It could probably be said that the concept of "Gnosis" is an example of the "plastic application" by Aurobindo of this theory to the durée réelle, and this provides the first indication of the status of the new being in terms of quality of consciousness. Although it is developed from a different standpoint, and has no direct connection with duration, Teilhard's concept of the "ultra-humanity"¹ is almost indistinguishable from Aurobindo's "Gnostic Race".² The latter can come about only through a "psychic change",³ the immensity of which can be measured by Aurobindo's description of the difference between the present consciousness and the Supermind which operates in Gnosis, as comparable to that which separates human reflection from animal instinct. Teilhard also describes a similar change "in what I have called the psychic temperature of the earth",⁴ in which

"we see a human tide bearing us upward with all the force of a contracting star; not a spreading tide as we might suppose, but one that is rising; the ineluctable growth on our horizon of a true state of 'ultra-humanity'".⁵

Compared with this ultimate state, Teilhard says,

"our present condition is still so immature that Mankind in its existing form . . . cannot be scientifically regarded as anything more than an organism which has not yet emerged from the embryonic state".⁶

This new humanity will be the enhancement of human nature, for Teilhard speaks of the "intensification of our powers

of understanding and love",⁷ and although the Force of love is the most significant property of gnostic consciousness, Aurobindo maintains that there will also be an undreamed of perfecting even of the physical capacity.

Transformation of the Physical

The conviction which lies behind Aurobindo's vision of a spiritualised human race, is that whatever be the present form and consciousness of being evolving in material existence, it is only the "physically sensible aspect",⁸ the material starting point of a true existence which awaits it. The one great law which lies behind the "ancient psycho-physical science",⁹ Aurobindo says, is this greater existence of which present humanity is only a transitory stage. He therefore places a clear emphasis on the transformation of the physical body in the process of evolution, which follows naturally from the concept of the ascending grades of substances. As earlier discussed, there is in Aurobindo's theory, a movement of substance from the gross to the ethereal, with a corresponding level of consciousness applicable to each level. This includes human physical substance, which also becomes more subtle and ever less dependent on physical form, as the accompanying level of consciousness becomes more profound. Aurobindo gives added emphasis to this important element in his evolutionary theory.

"The ascent of man from the physical to the supramental [he says] must open out the possibility of a corresponding ascent in the grades of substance to that ideal or causal body which is proper to our

supramental being, and the conquest of the lower principles by supermind . . . must also render possible a conquest of our physical limitations".¹⁰

From this Aurobindo goes on to maintain that the evolution of a nobler physical existence, not limited by the present conditions of

"birth, life and death . . . is a possibility founded on a rational and philosophic truth".¹¹

In the process of this ascent there would be an undreamed of enhancement of physical powers and the extension of human faculties, as already happens in the hypnotic and other psychological states. In describing his theory of the evolution of human powers, Aurobindo cites the commonplace experience of judging the weight of an object simply by holding it in the hand, and he envisages an extension of this ordinary ability to the point at which not only the externals of an object may be so judged, but also the contents. Nor is this extension of faculties confined to sense objects, for the ascending grades of substance combined with the corresponding levels of consciousness will mean that it will become commonplace

"to receive or perceive the thoughts of others, without aid of utterance, gesture or expression",¹²

indeed even "in contradiction of these always partial and often misleading data".¹³

The final power of the evolved human senses will be the cognition of

"appearances and images of things other than those which belong to our material environment".¹⁴

Aurobindo realises that the proposition which he puts forward will be met with hesitation and incredulity by the

present mentality, but nevertheless he maintains that such a progression must be accepted as the logical result of evolution beyond the present level of consciousness into the intuitive state of gnosis. This means that the immortality of man is not only a possibility in Aurobindo, but is included as an element in the inevitability which, like Teilhard, he claims for the whole evolutionary movement. A belief in immortality is a "self-evident necessity if we are to rise above identity with the body"¹⁵ and the preoccupation with material existence. But mere belief is not enough to alter this mistaken conception, for this will come about only when "we live in the consciousness of our immortality",¹⁶ so that it becomes "no longer a belief . . . but a normal self-awareness".¹⁷

This question of the durability of human life raises a problem in Teilhard's theory, since it could be related to the relevance of evolution. The annihilation of man is, in terms of Teilhard's theory, the annihilation of "an irreplaceable portion of the cosmic effort"¹⁸ and it is possible that he would have liked to have proposed human survival, just as he probably would have welcomed the possibility of endurance for Matter. In the latter case, the scientist in him prevailed, and in the former the Christian, for he could not depart from "a transition through death on the model of Christ".¹⁹

Supermind and Omega

As the point at which evolution reaches the condition of "mutual consciousness"²⁰ necessary for the

emergence of the Gnostic race, Supermind bears a marked resemblance to the Omega point in Teilhard. The comparison here is three-fold.

[1] Omega in Teilhard was seen to have a double significance in relation to fulfilment. This reflects the dual aspect of the theology of St. Paul, who speaks of the unification of the human race incorporated into Christ, as for example in Col. 2.10., and the subsequent ascent through Christ into the trinitarian Godhead, 1 Cor. 15.24., the "triune focus of Omega".²¹ Similarly a distinction in Supermind must also be recognised. It is not a final state to be reached for as an end in itself, but is the threshold of fulfilment in Identity. Just as the potential of the physical aspects of human life is that of infinity because of their assimilation into an infinite consciousness, so Supermind is the Truth-Consciousness of Self-Existence, but is not itself this Existence. In Existence, the ". . . only aim of being is to be",²² but Supermind, the Truth-Consciousness of this Existence knows itself as an activity of being which is still a manifold becoming. This describes the subordinate characteristics which mark the difference between Supermind in its own plane, that of Self-Existence, and Supermind as a manifested power in earthly existence, although they do not differ in essence. Supermind is the nature of the Divine, not per se in absolute Self-Existence, the inexpressible beyond conceptualisation, but as expressed in time and space. The evolving being, evolving consciousness, evolving delight, or Sachidananda, is this immutable

unchanging Essence, is Existence, not diminished or limited by the becoming in the world for it is not an evolution of Existence itself, but an evolution which is the unveiling of Identity hidden beneath the layers of Matter. The double aspect of Omega is almost exactly paralleled in Supermind.

(ii) Both concepts are defined as active centres. The power which radiates from Omega is the principle of all evolution for Teilhard, a power which grows more intense as consciousness more nearly approaches this Centre. Not only then does Omega radiate outwards towards the multiple centres, it also operates in the reverse process of attraction, 'towards itself, and because it is eventually an irresistible power, a point of irreversibility is reached. This explains the emphasis in Teilhard that "Man must reach his goal",²³ however improbable this might seem. The dynamic nature of Omega corresponds exactly in principle to Supermind. The difference which is discovered relates to the notion in Teilhard of a fanning out of power from a point in history, whereas for Aurobindo it is a progressive descent of the supramental. Nevertheless, there is complete identity of co-ordinated action from the source, for the power of Supermind increases as consciousness advances towards it, a parallel to the intensification of the attraction of Omega towards the convergent centres. Like Teilhard, Aurobindo also says that man must reach fulfilment, as part of "the eventual necessity of things".²⁴

[iii] For both Aurobindo and Teilhard this final phase of evolution is a personalising process, in which human life reaches its term of fulfilment. Omega,

"by its structure, in its ultimate principle, can only be a distinct Centre . . . in which personalisation . . . of the elements reaches a maximum".²⁵

Similarly, as the Truth-Consciousness of the Self, Super-mind is "the real creative agency of the Existence",²⁶ and "gives us the complete dynamism of that return to ourselves"²⁷ which is to say that "one ceases to be the surface personality and becomes the Person".²⁸ This means that man is no longer the expression, but what is expressed. A marked distinction in theory is seen at this point, in that Teilhard speaks of personality, as

"that which is my real wealth, . . . and in that again consists the supreme portion of my being",²⁹

whereas Aurobindo says that

"we have to lose personality if . . . we are to rise into the Transcendence".³⁰

Personality for Aurobindo is the "role, character, persona"³¹ which the Person puts forward in the "present act of his long drama of manifested existence".³² Teilhard sees the attainment of personality by the human race as it crosses the threshold into union with Omega, as an event of planetary significance, which is at once "a redemption and a genesis".³³ Aurobindo describes the attainment of Identity in the "awareness of a supreme Personal Being"³⁴ through the evolution of gnosis as "a new formula of creation".³⁵ Although both Aurobindo and Teilhard propose the evolution of man from a potential in the atom, the

final creation of Man is the union of a totalised species with a personal Transcendence.

Supermind and Omega operate on the same principle of outgoing power and forward attraction; they fulfil the same function; both have a dual aspect, and both stand at the threshold of ultimate fulfilment. Apart from the distinction between Aurobindo and Teilhard on the status of Personality, the two concepts have a marked resemblance.

The consciousness which operates in Supermind is described by Aurobindo as "Truth-consciousness"; "I take the phrase from the Rig Veda", he says, and it means "the consciousness of essential truth of being",³⁶ but again it may be taken as a "plastic application" of a Vedic term to intuition. This word Aurobindo says, has become familiar and lost the impact which he wants to convey of the psychic layer, the only level on which there can be total integration. Because the true essence of consciousness is awareness of its objects, to be completely aware is its final fulfilment. But as Aurobindo says, the first object is "self" and following that, physical phenomena which are "not-self".³⁷ In a theory of existence which is indivisible, however, such phenomena must in some way also be "self", and so fulfilment is absolute self-awareness, or "superconscience".

This appears to be no different from saying that

" . . . there is no least atom, no furthest star
 . . . to which I do not belong; . . . if anything
 is strange to me, the strangeness is in me and it
 will yield to that larger dimension of belonging".³⁸

This can only be what Aurobindo means when he says that

"A time must come when the personal opens out to the universal; our very individuality, spiritual, mental, physical even, becomes universalised . . . it contains the universe in that ineffable wideness which comes to the individual consciousness when it breaks its bounds and flows upward towards the Transcendent and on every side into the Infinite".³⁹

It seems to be what he means too when he speaks of those who will reach "the summits of unitarian self-realisation in the body"⁴⁰ which he describes as "the last and supreme state of the epiphany of Creation".⁴¹

NOTESGNOSTIC RACE

1. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 276.
2. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 1033.
3. Ibid., p. 941.
4. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Future of Man", p. 276.
5. Ibid., p. 276.
6. Ibid., p. 280.
7. Ibid., p. 276.
8. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 397.
9. Ibid., p. 397.
10. Ibid., p. 398.
11. Ibid., p. 398.
12. Ibid., p. 97.
13. Ibid., p. 97.
14. Ibid., p. 97.
15. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 676.
16. Ibid., p. 946.
17. Ibid., p. 946.
18. Teilhard de Chardin, "La Centrologie", p. 15.
19. Émile Rideau, "Teilhard de Chardin: a Guide to his Thought", p. 222.
20. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 1124.
21. Teilhard de Chardin, "Christianity and Evolution", p. 182.
22. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 1048.
23. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 303.
24. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 1133.
25. Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man", p. 288.
26. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 266.
27. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 1057.

28. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine" Vol. 2, p. 1057.
29. Teilhard de Chardin, "Christianity and Evolution", p. 116.
30. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 88.
31. Ibid., p. 1070.
32. Ibid., p. 1070f.
33. Teilhard de Chardin, "Christianity and Evolution", p.144.
34. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol.2, p. 929.
35. Ibid., p. 1055.
36. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 1, p. 177.
37. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 1104.
38. Noel D O'Donoghue, "Heaven in Ordinarie", p. 197.
39. Sri Aurobindo, "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 246f.
40. Sri Aurobindo, "The Life Divine", Vol. 2, p. 1034.
41. Ibid., p. 1034.

CONCLUSION

The marked affinity which is discovered in the evolutionary thought of Aurobindo and Teilhard has been seen to rest on a fundamental difference in the basic premise from which each system is developed. Similar differences have also been noted at several points in the development of their respective theories. The greatest difference of all, however, can be recognised in the picture which gradually emerges of the two writers themselves, and seen against the background of their thought, it is this which provides the most striking contrast. A brief look will illustrate the point.

It seems true to say that every phase and aspect of Teilhard's life can be known, both from his own writing and from the details made available by intimate biographers such as Claude Cuenot. From the accounts which Teilhard himself has given of his work as a scientist, his experiences as a traveller, the period which he spent as a soldier-priest, it is possible for the reader almost to know Teilhard as a person. No similar intimate insight is offered by Aurobindo, and even a prolonged study of his major works, seems to leave the reader with the feeling that there is something which is still to be understood. The following remarks, therefore, do not express a developed opinion, but simply suggest a possible approach to the enigma of Aurobindo.

In his lengthy work "The Life Divine", Aurobindo sets out a spiritual philosophy which is said to be an

instance of "automatic writing". The "Synthesis of Yoga" develops a system which is the practical application of this philosophy to everyday life, and is more or less the instruction of the Guru to seekers who approach him. In a little short of three thousand pages, there are remarkably few references to other writers of either east or west, and those which do occur have only a fleeting mention. For instance, to those on the Yoga path he points out the example of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, but this is no more than a passing reference. Aurobindo gives no account of his own inner life, or of the experience of the Overmind which seems certain to have occurred in 1926 and which was witnessed at the ashram. In describing the depths of the spiritual life he speaks of "those who have sounded these abysses", rather than of personal experience. Despite the fact that he spent so many years in the ashram, he allowed no disciple to write an account of his life. He himself makes no mention of his childhood and youth in England, or of his contemporaries at Cambridge, and he fills in no details which would help towards a deeper understanding of his work. The reader is left to discover this for himself, and the question then is, where should he begin?

It could probably be said with some accuracy, that the only indication which Aurobindo offers is the statement at the beginning of "The Life Divine", that he intends to use the method of a "plastic application". Perhaps the full significance of this declared intention has not always been realised. It seems to mean that what Aurobindo

wants to convey is not necessarily clear from the language which he uses, and that there is a deeper meaning to be discovered. For example, as already noted, Supermind which is a central concept, is a plastic application on the Upanishadic "Fourth", which Aurobindo himself admits, but on a deeper look it seems also to be a similar application on the faculty of intuition, particularly as it is developed by Bergson. The latter connection is suggested because Supermind is the effective operation of Gnosis, which, also as already noted, appears to be a plastic application to durée réelle. There are a number of other instances in which a possible use of this method may be discovered. Aurobindo explains that he uses certain terms because they are more adaptable, and more plastic, and this in itself seems to say that the meaning lies below the surface. But related to the plastic application used in this sense, there seems to be the further element of integration which it also provides. By this is meant the dual aspect of Aurobindo's language by which, because of the terms, his ideas are expressed for Indian readers, while the underlying connotation is likely to be clear for the western reader. Because of this, it is suggested, that seen in the light of a deeper significance, the plastic application has profound implications in Aurobindo's philosophy. Just as the surface term which is applied may be taken as it stands, or can by longer consideration reveal a different layer of meaning, so it may be suggested that beneath the Hindu terms of Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy, there is an undercurrent which can only be

Christian.

This is not to say that Aurobindo was Christian, but it is to suggest that he was not completely Hindu. His work at the ashram can neither confirm nor deny such a suggestion, for the integral Yoga which is practised there is simply a method for the attainment of the sanctification of every aspect of life. For the Hindu reader Aurobindo's "Synthesis of Yoga" is no doubt familiar Hinduism, but the Christian reader could hardly fail to recognise the Christian undertone. Integral Yoga is a method and not a religion. There is perhaps a parallel with Zen, from the practice of which the Christian is supposed to emerge more deeply Christian, although of course, this lacks the all-pervading Love of God which is the essence of Aurobindo's system. As earlier noted, it is this which marks it as radically different from the Sankhya-Yoga, and in primary aim, different from the Tantra.

The essence of Aurobindo's philosophy is yet to be discovered. As S.H. Nasr points out, despite the similarity of their theories, Aurobindo has not had the same influence even in India as Teilhard has had in the West.

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