

UNIVERSITY OF HUMAN UNITY

# The Philosophy of Evolution:

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## MIND AND SUPERMIND

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Abstract: Following the first series of lectures in 2008, 'Darwin and Sri Aurobindo', this series of lectures attempts to define mind, the limitations of mind, and the rationale for a theory of evolution beyond mind, based primarily on the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. While in the first series a background in the most important biological thinkers who have contributed to the philosophy of evolution was presented, a background is presented here in the thought of several important philosophical thinkers, such as Aristotle in the classical period, Bergson, Whitehead and Heidegger in the early 20th Century, and finally some of the more current philosophers of evolution, such as Bateson, Sheldrake, Capra, and Dennett, whose thought may be considered essential to an understanding of the philosophy of the evolution of Mind. The present collection of lectures has been selected and edited from the 2009 series and completed by a final series of lectures presented in 2012. The audio files of the complete series in 2009, as well as the previous series in 2008, and the complete text of the 2008 lectures, are also available, along with this collection, on the University of Human Unity website: [www.universityofhumanunity.org](http://www.universityofhumanunity.org).

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## Mind and Supermind – Lecture 1

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In the previous hour's session (The Symbolism of the Vedas), when Vladimir was speaking about the mythological time when the *paravak* was creating – not representing or reflecting but creating its instruments, creating language and meaning, – it occurred to me that in evolutionary biology today there is a common understanding that when the spine became straight and the brain cavity enlarged, somewhere between 1.5 million years ago and 40 thousand years ago, during that transition from the Australopithecine to the Homo sapiens, it is thought that there was a simultaneous development of the jaw shape and vocal cords. The upright spine, enlarged brain cavity, jaw shape and vocal cords all occurred during the same transition from Australopithecine to Cro-Magnon/Homo sapiens.

The process which occurred may have been what Darwin refers to as “co-adaptation of parts”: when one part changes, the other parts change automatically, and not necessarily as an adaptation. There are always changes going on in species that are co-adaptations, which are not originally the process of an adaptation, but when one part changes successfully, because of its genetic linkages with other parts of the body, other parts also change. So, the upright walking of the human being, the new shape of the head, neck and jaw that occurred in early humans, corresponded to the enlarging of the brain cavity and to the development of the vocal apparatus. All of these changes in the structure of the human being seem to be related, and suited the common development of what we know, now, as ‘the human being’.

Language development happened at about that time as well. So we might be able to imagine an early period of human history in which those mythological forces which Vladimir was just speaking about, at a time when language was still closely associated with pure meaning – that the pressure that originated language corresponded to the pressure of the formation of the whole verbal apparatus, which distinguishes us so much, so absolutely, from every other species. That which is uniquely human is in fact this verbal apparatus and this larger brain that create language. So, if at that mythological time there was something really happening that was not just Vedic speech, but was the shift of the whole species towards its present state, - which could have been 150,000 years ago, between the australopithecine and cro-magnon eras - it's conceivable that this process itself could have been the result of a kind of Overmind pressure that helped to bring about all of these changes in the human being, some of which were adaptive on the physical level, and some of which were adaptive on the vital level, and most of which were co-adaptive on the mental level, but originating on a higher spiritual plane of consciousness-force.

So, it just struck me, in that mythological description of how at one time language was a pure transmission of sounds which had generic meanings, which later on became diversified and specified as language, something else could also have been going on at that time, because the big question in the philosophy of evolution, and in the science of evolution also is: How did the major vertical shifts occur? We know a lot about how the cladistic speciation occurs, and most of the science of evolution studies cladistic, or horizontal speciation. But how do these major shifts occur between micro-organisms, and fish, and reptiles, and birds, and mammals; between non-mental and mental beings? How is it that Sri Aurobindo can say that man is characteristically a mental being, as opposed to the lower mammals, although they are our “mental congeners”? In this human species, everything is mental. There is nothing in human evolution that is not predominantly mental: tool making – but tool-making of a very sophisticated sort – and language, and the “ethical” organization of societies.

In the last session of the first series of this course on the philosophy of evolution, we stopped with the evolutionary advent of the mental being. What is it that primarily characterizes the mental being and its ethical group behavior? Ethical group behavior is a product of language. So, Sri Aurobindo says in *The Human Cycle* that vital behavior, the evolution of the vital in nature and in animals, is capable of sensibilities even beyond human sensibilities: feelings and associations that are richer in quality. The relationships that we see among the higher mammals are relationships of integrity and feeling and awareness of a very sophisticated nature, and he says that the vital in us is capable of all of that: association, caring, remembering, anger, and enthusiasm, and many emotional traits which are characteristic of human beings are also present in the animal kingdom. These are levels of mind involved completely in the vital. Within the human being, mind is no longer completely involved in the vital. It emerges as planning, and representing, and theorizing. When the processes of planning and inventing and creating human values emerged, language also emerged in its very particular human form, and no other species has it.

So I was just reflecting on this description of the mythological origin of language, and how whatever it was, whatever influenced the emergence of the human being, might have also influenced the human being's formation on all levels – physical, vital, mental. So, mind emerged fully as the 'human being'. Prior to that emergence, mind was totally involved. As we stressed in our first series, biologists today recognize that cognition is going on at every level of speciation and evolution and behavior. Cognition is a common trait of animals, whether at the level of the one-celled animal, or at the level of the hydra and the gastropod, or at the level of simpler animals and complex animals, it's generally thought today that cognition – information processing – is going on, even at the cellular level, in the organization of the life of all animal species. From the simplest to the most complex, cognition is there, and so the point that was made in the twelve lectures of the first series was that Sri Aurobindo's original concept in the 1920s that mind, life and body comprise a three-fold complex, and that science would come to recognize this, has now been recognized widely. Whether you're reading an ultra-Darwinian like Richard Dawkins today or a more new-age biologist like Rupert Sheldrake, or a philosophical biologist like Konrad Lorenz, all are recognizing cognition as a fundamental feature of animal evolution.

So, these physical, vital, and mental 'levels or principles' are now fully present in scientific thinking. The vital is all the drives to reproduce, and consume, and organize matter. Matter is there as the substratum. Organic chemicals are organized by the vital principle. It's not just carbon and oxygen, it's carbohydrates, and protein molecules, and genes that form the basis of life. However, carbohydrates are created by the organization of life, by the principle of life itself, and they continue to complexify until we have this very complex organism, the animal, with all its structures and functions, who organizes all of its life activities around gathering and consuming and processing energy and reproducing itself, each in its typical pattern, *autopoiesis* (self-replication). That is the prime characteristic of life: its ability to replicate itself, which is genetic no doubt. It is very close to the physical level, but replication is highly-organized physical and vital-level activity. And once the being is replicated, it functions in this most amazingly beautiful and complex manner that so preoccupied Aristotle more than 2000 years ago. It builds its homes, it raises its young, and it transmits its traditions to its young, even at the level of bees and ants. And it perceives its world and organizes its life, with a certain purposefulness – the beginning of mind.

We previously had twelve lectures about evolution in general, and in the twelfth one we finally came to Sri Aurobindo. We did not start with Sri Aurobindo. We finally came to the point of asking this question: On the basis of everything that we can comprehend of what is known about evolution – and we went through many different biologists' and philosophers' works – can process alone account for

evolution? Mechanical or vital or any kind of process? And we discussed, we read, and we saw many descriptions of the process of speciation, for example. And then when we came to the human being and confronted something like language, and culture, and science and so on, we recognized that language as such – the phenomenon of language -- is so NOT biological, it is so Not vital, it is such an extraordinary thing in itself that biological processes cannot explain it. Biological processes can explain the structures of the body that produce language. In this sense, it is tempting to think, mythologically, that at various junctures in the leaps of complexity that characterize different phyla and genera and levels of consciousness in evolution, there has been an intervention, or a descent, of some new principle and power from a higher plane of reality into the evolving manifold, to bring about the gradual emergence of new forms and qualities of manifestation. This is the idea of the *avatars* in Hindu mythology, which at least seems to be a way of symbolizing this most elusive and problematical aspect of the process of evolution.

We find in Konrad Lorenz's work that there are many behaviors that we share with animals, including the transmission of tradition, ritual behaviors, imitation, the ability to categorize, and to distinguish different categories of objects, which he calls the "constancy phenomenon". These are biological functions; they are present almost throughout the animal kingdom. And sight, and sense perception in general, is present in every species. But think about this phenomenon of **sight**, about seeing and organizing your activities around the fact that you see. Bats do that, but they do it with radar. But fish and even one-celled animalcules direct their movements on the basis of their ability to perceive light, heat, spatial relationships. So the perception of spatial relationship and the direction of behavior based upon the perception of spatial relationship, which we refer to as "seeing", is common in the animal kingdom. Sight itself is an essential product of evolution which has evolved independently in forty different phyla. Forty different phyletic processes of descent have all created different organs and processes of sight. So, it's not an especially human, mammalian trait. Sight is omnipresent. And what is sight? It's a phenomenon of perception. And what is perception? It's a phenomenon of cognition. So, as we concluded in the first series, this evolution which we are able to describe so thoroughly at every level – physical, vital and mental – is not just an evolution of structures, as biology normally thinks of it. Most of those structures contribute to the gathering of information and the processing of information, on the basis of which species at every level survive. Most species survive on the basis of the information that their structures of perception collect and process at each instant. This is called cognition.

So, what is actually evolving, as we look at the development of sight, or perception of any kind, from the simplest species of amoeba or worm with its photoreceptor cells, to the most complex eyes, it appears that what is evolving is consciousness. It appears that consciousness is not at all a product of the human brain, but consciousness is there at every level of evolution. At our level it has highly-refined, coordinated sense organs, and language and thought and conceptualization, but we can find the rudiments of all of those functions at all the other levels of animal life. So this is what Konrad Lorenz got the Nobel Prize for. He developed the science of ethology, and showed how all of these animal behaviors are present at all levels of consciousness, and what really characterizes the species is its particular patterns of behavior. And those patterns of behavior are often complex processes of communication, information processing, and purposefulness.

We ended our previous session with these questions: Is Process enough to explain the evolution of consciousness? What is consciousness? What is mind? And then we began to look into Sri Aurobindo, because he has given us the philosophical perspective that shows us the planes of existence, and how they interact, and he says that vital phenomena, in all the many beautiful, wonderful energetic forms

that we know them, are products of the vital plane, and the vital plane has many levels, including gods and goddesses. And the mental plane, with which we are very familiar, is interacting with the vital plane to give it many, but not all, of its qualities. And the vital plane interacts with the physical plane to organize matter. And if mind is going to exceed itself – and we look around at what mind is doing today and, as wonderful as it is for having kept us going for a few hundred thousand years, and having made us the dominant species on the planet – for all its wonders, it is also bringing us to the point of extinction. Mind is not able to solve all of its problems, and so it is beginning to ask itself: Is there something more?

And so, I am going to show you [on the projection screen] some quotes from an essay which you can find also on the internet called Mind and the Philosophy of Evolution. It is Part Three of an on-going exploration of evolution which is there on our website. Part One is called Physics and the Philosophy of Evolution; Part Two is called Darwin and Sri Aurobindo, and Part Three is Philosophy of Mind: a transcription of four lectures from the first session: Lectures 1, 7, 9, 12. This has now been completed by the present collection of lectures, 'Mind and Supermind'. I found while reviewing these four lectures, however, that they are particularly pertinent to what I want us to undertake in this last series: an exploration of the evolution of Mind. So please go to the website and read these essays, and if possible listen to Lecture 12, which is also on the web site. I find it to be a culmination of all the lectures. Everything that we need to think about in order to do this exploration is there.

We have reviewed philosophers of evolution like Daniel Dennett and A. N. Whitehead, and the former says, for example, "A proper application of Darwinian thinking suggests that if we survive our currently self-induced environmental crisis, our capacity to comprehend will continue to grow by increments that are now incomprehensible to us." Daniel Dennett is an ultra-Darwinian analytic philosopher, and yet he says that Darwinian thinking leads to the conclusion that in order to survive, we need to exceed ourselves, and as we exceed ourselves, what we will be able to do will be incomprehensible to us in our current state. This is an ultra-Darwinian conclusion that points beyond.

Well, Lecture 12 has many of those kinds of conclusions. Darwinians today are pretty far out, so I quoted a number of extraordinary things in that last lecture. Whitehead, with whom we began this course last time, says for example, "This nebula in which our sun is placed, may be advancing toward a change in the general character of its spatial relations. Perhaps in the dim future, mankind, if it then exists, will look back to the queer contracted, three-dimensional universe from which the nobler wider existence has emerged." So, there is a nobler wider existence which he foresees possibly emerging from this contracted, spatial, mental being that we are. Not only does he see consciousness evolving, but he sees the spatial universe itself evolving. Spatial relationships are evolving. Space is evolving. It has become, with Einstein, less three-dimensional already. Hardly anyone speaks of less than four dimensions these days, and many speak of eleven.... of those who speak at all about space, that is. Most people just move around in it and try to make use of what they find in it!

We know from studying Jean Gebser<sup>2</sup>, - if we followed our last semester course - on the Integral Paradigm, which intervened between Evolution One and this one - we had a chance to look through Gebser's work in that course, who traced the evolution of human societies from the most primitive archaic up to the most advanced rational, and he predicted the emergence of an integral species of consciousness, based upon the evolution of spatial and temporal consciousness. He was able to show how different types of spatial consciousness and temporal consciousness characterize the different stages of human social evolution. And our current stage transited, as recently as sometime in the last 2000 years, into a kind of temporal consciousness that is extra-spatial. And in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in

particular, it seems that a major shift has occurred in our temporal consciousness. Our perception of time is the subject that was central to Bergson's philosophy, which inspired Whitehead and Gebser and much of 20<sup>th</sup> Century thought, and we will focus more on his work later in order to understand 'mind'. So, we perceive time differently now than people did in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, or in the 2nd Century, or in 5000 B.C.E. Time consciousness has been evolving, as has spatial consciousness. So when Whitehead says that a nobler wider existence may come about as a result of a change in spatial relations, he's touching upon an intuition that actually belongs, probably, to the integral level of consciousness, which has not yet manifested in a general way, but which we are presumably engaged in helping to emerge.

We can now perceive that rational, spatial mind can't solve all of our problems. Life has been working on solving spatial relationships for a good long time, at least since the dinosaurs became extinct and allowed little mammals to flourish - but probably long before that, because the behavior of most animals is characterized by spatial orientation, and the organs of sense perception have evolved to manage such relations. Spatial consciousness has been evolving for a long time. According to Gebser, the most sophisticated level of spatial consciousness was reached when Leonardo discovered perspective. Then, spatial consciousness was really home.

So, we finally arrived around the 15<sup>th</sup> C. to full blown mental/spatial consciousness. Since that time we have been proceeding towards spatio-temporal consciousness, and we will eventually emerge into what Sri Aurobindo worked on yogically, very deliberately, for many years: the ability to see and function in the three times simultaneously. Now, imagine what kind of an energy shift that brings about in you! Imagine entering into a consciousness which does not make a major distinction between the future and the present and the past, and is able to organize the present absolutely in relation to what it perceives coming in the future, whether it's six hours or sixty years from now, and every energy packet that is expended is expended in relationship to that vast future creation, that perpetual novelty. If perpetual novelty becomes your ever-present consciousness, imagine how your energy will be utilized. No more will you be preoccupied with maintaining anything that belongs to the past. It will be useless, a waste of time and energy just to repeat the past every day. You will be functioning on a different metabolic level. This will bring about a shift in structure. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have spoken about this more than anyone else so far, saying that this evolution is inevitable.

Now, that introduces a philosophical question regarding the presumed or hypothesized inevitability of this supra-mental shift. Nobody is talking about that yet. There are some flashes of intuition, like Dennett's and Whitehead's, and Bergson's, indicating that the human being must shift dramatically to survive, and will shift dramatically anyway just as a product of Darwinian processes. But not very many are looking at the nature of that shift. So, when we begin an exploration of Mind and Supermind, in the philosophy of evolution, what we are asking is: What is Mind? How has it evolved? What are its limits? What might Supermind be?

The topics from the first series which I wanted to bring to the screen for you are: No. 1 – The Introduction to the Philosophy of Evolution. That is very important, I think. In that lecture I have stated more or less completely, and have repeated many times, the idea that a philosophy of evolution has the possibility, according to Whitehead and others, of enabling us – Us! -- to **participate** fully in life, as **evolutionary beings**. That's the potential of a philosophy of evolution. As Whitehead explains, every civilization is strongly influenced by its values. Philosophy is the statement of those values, and it is the process of grounding those values in Nature, in the world that we perceive, and how we perceive it. We are able then to base our metaphysical and religious and social values on how we perceive existence. And those values which we have based on how we perceive existence are

formulated best by poets and philosophers. Now, if we begin to perceive Nature as an evolutionary Being with us as its apex,...sort of its forerunner, then perceiving ourselves and nature as evolutionary, and developing a philosophy based upon that perception, should enable us, energize us, position us in nature to understand our role as evolutionary beings, not just mental beings. Bergson and Sri Aurobindo and Whitehead stated this process, and I presented a number of quotes from Bergson, in Lecture 7, that it would be very useful to review.

Bergson was able to say in 1907: “All the living hold together, and all yield to the same tremendous push. The animal takes its stand on the plant and man bestrides animality, and the whole of humanity in space and in time is one immense army galloping beside and before and behind each of us in an over-whelming charge, able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death.” We know that Sri Aurobindo's whole philosophy and Yoga are based upon the conception that the supramental descent and its evolution in the three-fold complex will ultimately make possible the conquest of death. He has actually given us a process for achieving that, which Bergson intuited about seven years before Sri Aurobindo started writing *The Life Divine*. That's a kind of concurrence and synchronicity of consciousness, of awakening.

Then, Lecture 9 focuses on Konrad Lorenz's work in the '70's. First, Whitehead instigates us, sort of, to realize that a philosophy of evolution would identify those values in our civilization which are the highest and most needed for our understanding of things and for our survival. Then, Bergson comes along. Bergson and Whitehead were very close to each other, but Bergson ignited Whitehead and Whitehead refers often to Bergson, who identified the whole movement of life as a movement of consciousness. Then Sri Aurobindo grasped the process of transforming consciousness from the mental, whose limits had been defined by Bergson, into its next potential. The process of transforming it was grasped by him and set in motion. That's what we feel in our atmosphere here from time to time, pumping in another quality of perception, of force. But is that enough? Is it enough for us to know that there is a process of evolution going on in nature and that we're a part of it, that there is a force in the atmosphere that somehow is essentially related to that process? Is that enough?

So now we can confidently go home and drink tea and wait for the supramental being to emerge, right? Or, did Sri Aurobindo spend forty years writing philosophy and poetry about evolution for some reason? Is there something there that is essential, besides just knowing that evolution occurs and there is a new force in the atmosphere? Is that the sole purpose of all that writing? Or, wasn't it perhaps, since it originated with the Rig Veda, wasn't it perhaps a way of channeling that power itself? Isn't *Savitri* about manifesting that power? Isn't that really what *Savitri* is about? It is not an epic poem. It is a yogic power.

And if poetry and philosophy, according to Whitehead, are in fact the very best human means for establishing values and the forms of expression for those values, then isn't it possible that Sri Aurobindo's poetry and philosophy are the beginning of the expression of values that belong to that next evolution? Then it's not at all about mental philosophy and epic poetry, but in fact it's all about supra-mental values and forces and consciousness. Because, as he says, there is a mechanism, and that mechanism requires that the mind be put directly into contact with the higher mind and Overmind energies, and he says that putting the mind in contact with those energies is what makes the descent possible.

I was planning to read a few paragraphs from *The Synthesis of Yoga*, in which Sri Aurobindo addresses this idea that we were just speaking about ...mental concentration. He says, “To use this means for



unification with the divine is the condition. This concentration proceeds by the idea.....” I just gave you lots of ideas about evolution. The ‘Evolution of Consciousness’; that is a Big Idea. ‘Supramental Manifestation’: Big Idea

“...this concentration proceeds by the idea using thought, form and name... ..as keys which yield up to the concentrating mind the Truth that lies concealed behind all thought.” This is a methodology, a practice, a *tantra*.

“For it is through the idea that the mental being rises beyond all expression to that which is expressed, to that of which the idea itself is only the instrument.” So, there is a ‘being’ evolving here. The true human being – forget the supermind for a moment – the true human being is also there behind all of the nonsense. The divine will, otherwise called the psychic being, is there behind all the vital will and the physical will and the mental will. The divine will to be what we are is there behind, and Sri Aurobindo wants us to find it by concentration on the idea. But not the mental idea. “Idea” has a meaning other than the empirical one. This is a course in philosophy, and so we will discuss the difference between the empirical idea of the Idea, and the spiritual idea of the Idea. “For it is through the idea that the mental being (that’s us) rises beyond all expression to that which is expressed, to that of which the idea itself is only the instrument. By concentration upon the idea, the mental existence breaks open the barrier of our mentality.” That is active participation. This is not a passive meditation. Nor merely academic philosophy.

Philosophy and poetry are only a means. A certain self-gathered state of our whole existence lifted into that superconscious truth, the self-aware, self-blissful existence, is the aim and the culmination. The culmination of our practice, the practice of concentrating on the idea, by using systematic thought, form and name – *yoga mantra*. It is a *tantric* practice. It is the core of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga. The divine word. It has many forms; philosophy is one of them; also, the fundamental one, inspired poetic speech, *yoga mantra*.

“To arrive then at this settled divine status must be the object of our concentration. The first step in concentration must be always from a constantly dispersing mind, to a settled, unwavering pursuit of a single course of connected thought.” This is the first step toward no thought, which is a step toward higher thought, which is a step toward no thought again, at another level.

“The first step must be always” – these words are significant – “to accustom the discursive mind” – which you are now using to think with – “to accustom the discursive mind, to a settled, unwavering pursuit of a single course of connected thought.” That is philosophy, and it can be very effective..“And this it must do undisturbed, in the stillness, not distracted.”<sup>3</sup>

## Notes

1. This is an edited transcription of the first lecture in the second series, Philosophy of Evolution (2): Mind and Supermind (2009), available in audio on the University of Human Unity website: <http://universityofhumanunity.org/audioidetail.php?audioid=1993>. This course was delivered in tandem with a course on the mythology and language of the Vedas by Vladimir Yatsenko, to which references have occasionally been made.
2. Jean Gebser, *Ever-Present Origin* (1945/1953), <http://universityofhumanunity.org/audioidetail.php?audioid=1350> (Vladimir, 2009)
3. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, (1940/1970), Part II, Chap 4, ‘Concentration’.

## Mind and Supermind – Lecture 2

### The Sankhya and Yoga View<sup>1</sup>

I have a goal for this course. It is not just to review philosophical ideas. The goal is to pursue an opening to a direct intuitive perception of the truth of evolution. As Sri Aurobindo said to us on our first night here, in this method of *jnanayoga*, the yoga of truth-consciousness, it helps to begin with the idea, and then to follow a path of knowledge that ends up with the direct perception of the thing itself, the thing we want to know. If we believe everything we have heard in these courses about the limited nature of the rational mind (an observation with which Bergson began a hundred years ago), if we believe any of that, then we know that the rational mind is a tool that evolution has manifested in the human in order to progress forward to another level of mind, and eventually farther to supermind.<sup>2</sup>

Sri Aurobindo is going to reiterate this path tonight in the words that we will read. We will be reiterating this path until we get to the end of this path, and that does not mean until we come to the end of hearing about it. I am referring to the doing of it to its end. The end of philosophy. The evolution of Mind. That is what we want; we don't want just to hear about it anymore. So, my goal, in this group, is to try to move in the direction of an evolving mind.<sup>3</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has told us that there is a first step and a necessary condition. We are just going to try to take the first step and fulfill the necessary condition. If it works the way he says it should work, then we can confidently move towards all the rest. We cannot move towards all the rest without taking the first step and fulfilling the first condition. All these human beings running around on earth, ignorantly expecting there to be an apocalypse, are just like they have been for the past many millennia. They are running around in circles and repeating their habitual patterns, most of which came from a lower species to start with, and are waiting for the apocalypse. That is not what I am talking about. I am instigating a movement of consciousness in the direction of the evolution of mind. That is my intention. If it works, we will find ourselves poised for an evolutionary effort that we grasp fully and that causes us to be energized in a way that is not mental. My goal is to bring us to that point of energization that is not mental. I am launching a course here for a practical outcome.

Now, I am going to jump ahead, to get to the end before we take the first step, - here is a part of the end, an anticipation. "The Higher Mind in its aspect of cognition..." Now, why would Sri Aurobindo bother to qualify the higher mind in this way - 'in its aspect of cognition'? It is because there is also the aspect of will in the higher mind. The higher mind is also the higher will, and the *buddhi* is the intelligent-will of the human being. These aspects of mind of which we speak are not just cognitive, even at the animal level - the *manas* (perception and cognition) and *citta* (unconscious sensations and impressions and memory) are not just cognitive. They are all leading to an immediate purpose: action. Mind always qualifies action; it doesn't just be 'mind'. It is involved in all the levels of energy. You cannot think about a liberated mind very easily apart from liberating first the body and the vital, with the mind, in order that the mind can move on without being pulled down by the vital and the physical habits in which it is involved. It has brought along all of these habits. We are going to talk about that tonight, but first - "... there is also the aspect of will, of dynamic effectuation of the truth." Effectuation of the truth. What could that possibly mean? It means how we live, what we do. "Here, we find that this greater, more brilliant mind works always on the rest of the being - the mental will, the heart and its feelings, the life, the body, through the power of thought, through the idea-force." This is the principle of the transformation of consciousness. In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, it works from the top down.

Above the higher mind is the illumined mind and this is where I hope we are headed; I hope that we will not just spin around here in the old rational mind. In *The Life Divine*, we get an idea of the obstacles in each stage of the ascent. The object of the *buddhi* (about which we will hear more later) is this: “In order to allow at all to the higher light an adequate entry and force of working, it is necessary to acquire a power for quietude of the nature; to compose, tranquilize, impress a controlled passivity or even an entire silence on mind and heart, life and body.” This imposition, without which there can be no penetration of a higher power of consciousness, is effectuated by the mind only. The reason we need to liberate the mind by knowing the mind is so that it can control the life and the body.

Regarding thought and language, because we were entering into that discussion a bit earlier, I would suggest that in the later chapters of *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo specifies the nature of Higher Mind and Illumined Mind and Intuitive Mind and Overmind (see Book Two, Ch. 26). He specifies their natures just like we have been specifying the nature of rational mind (*buddhi*) and pragmatic mind (*manas*) and vital mind (*citta*), and so we will have the entire stairway. And he qualifies the limits of ordinary mental language.

What we really want to do now is to begin to focus on ourselves, our lives and our world around us, and learn to identify – immediately and spontaneously – every movement in nature: our nature and others' natures and the nature around us, every movement that indicates to us some aspect of mind, so that we come into a full direct immediate grasp of evolutionary mind in its present condition with all of its qualifications, all of its habitual formations, all of its patterns of working, so that we are no longer at all thinking about mind as an abstract category of understanding, but we are engaged fully in the direct perception of mind itself. That is a step that we need to take and it is very preliminary.

“The illumined mind,” he says, “does not work primarily by thought but by vision. Thought is here only a subordinate movement expressive of sight. The human mind, which relies mainly on thought, conceives that to be the highest or the main process of knowledge. But in the spiritual order thought is a secondary and not indispensable process.”<sup>4</sup> Thought is dispensable; it is not necessary. “In its form of verbal thought, it can almost be described as a concession made by knowledge to the Ignorance, because that Ignorance is incapable of making truth wholly lucid and intelligible to itself in all its extent and manifold implications except through the clarifying precision of significant sounds.” I want us to realize that the aim of philosophy, and especially a philosophy of the evolution of mind, is first of all, before it has any ideas or says any words, to perceive what is – spatially. What is there in front of you; how far away is it; how efficiently can you grasp it and eat it, or absorb it? How sure are you that that person just cheated you? You're damned sure if you saw it happen. You don't need a complex psychology of morality to perceive that. So, first, we should perceive things that are.

We get so involved in our complex analysis of ‘how’ or ‘why’ things are, that we forget that they are what they are. It is also the same with Mind. Mind is something that we can perceive directly in all of its levels of activity and can know directly for what it is. We don't have to speculate about what it is, and that is also true of Higher Mind and Intuitive Mind and Overmind. When Sri Aurobindo writes Truth with a capital T, he means 'the thing itself'. He doesn't mean what we know or think about it, or how we systematize our understanding of it. What Sri Aurobindo means by 'Truth' is 'the thing itself'. This is something which, if known by the illumined mind, is a sight; it is a seeing of the totality of the thing itself, not thinking about it or analyzing it. No thought involved. To see the thing itself requires a lot of energy, but a much more refined energy than the ordinary mental energy we use to define things. It doesn't mean just seeing with the physical eye. It means seeing with the integral vision, the truth of the thing itself. When we start doing that, then we are evolving. As long as we are not doing

that, chances are that we are not evolving, we are just repeating the patterns that have already evolved, to which we are very attached and from which we get all kinds of joy and sorrow by repeating.

Sri Aurobindo gives Ignorance a capital “I” because that is how he defines human evolution at this point. It is an evolution which partially knows things, which is predominantly false in its knowledge, which believes and values things which are not in themselves valuable and are not true. That is how we live. “It cannot do...” – he is speaking of the ordinary mind of ignorance – “It cannot do without this device (language, speech) to give to ideas an exact outline and an expressive body”; i.e. to give to ideas, which are mental impressions, an exact outline and an expressive body for representing and communicating what is known, in a second-hand, mediated form. That is the ordinary mental perception of manifestation, of what we ‘understand’. “But, it is evident that this is a device, a machinery. Thought in itself, in its origin on the higher levels of consciousness, is a perception, a cognitive seizing of the object or of some truth of things which is a powerful but still a minor and secondary result of spiritual vision, a comparatively external and superficial regard of the self upon the self.”<sup>5</sup>

I am suggesting that Sri Aurobindo is indicating that above the mind, which depends a lot on language, there is Higher Mind which depends on thought independent of language. Above that higher Thought-Mind is a Vision-Mind which grasps directly the thing itself in its a-temporal dimensions; in other words, it grasps the totality of the thing itself – past, present and future, potential and actual, good and bad, evolving and evolved – the thing itself. Such things as Evolution, Divine Love, Integral Yoga are grasped, not in their concept, not in their description, but in their totality of being, their energy. It is an energy field which has innumerable spatio-temporal formations and somehow it is possible to grasp in those spatio-temporal formations a vision of the thing itself which is not just a vision or idea of the thing itself but which is ‘the thing itself’. That is not physical vision; he is referring to a comprehensive conscious grasp of the whole Truth of the thing itself.

Tonight we are going to follow a precise verbal description of *citta*, *manas* and *buddhi*, from *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Part Four, Ch. 5), and we are also going to be told by Sri Aurobindo why it is important for us to understand these things mentally in order for us to be able to move in the direction, spiritually, of those higher levels of consciousness, which at the moment we normally do not have access to. We don't grasp, we don't live by, those other levels of consciousness. Sometimes we get glimpses of them but, according to the idea of integral yoga, it is possible to do more than get occasional glimpses of them; it is possible to enter into them and to allow their energy to penetrate all of the levels of our life. If you are living in the energetic grasp of the truth of evolution and the higher mind, that is going to change the way you live. If you are seeing the past and the present and the future as one continuum, which is known in Yoga as *trikaladrishti*, that, as I mentioned before, is going to change the way you metabolize. It is going to change the way you make decisions about what you do. You are going to be relating always to the real potential and not just to some partial manifestation of something. This is the state of genius in which some human beings have the privilege of living, sometimes. To make that way of living an evolutionary generality is Sri Aurobindo's goal. He is going to tell us what we need to do in order to make that possible. If we think it can be done without doing what we need to do, then we are deluded.

As Sri Aurobindo has stated the goal, “It is essential for him (the witness Purusha or Self) to grow out of separative individuality, to universalize himself, to make himself one with the universe. This unification can be done only through the soul by making our soul of mind one with the universal Mind, our soul of life one with the universal Life-soul, our soul of body one with the universal soul of

physical Nature. When this can be done, in proportion to the power, intensity, depth, completeness, permanence with which it can be done, great effects are produced upon the natural action. Especially there grows an immediate and profound sympathy and immixture of mind with mind, life with life, a lessening of the body's insistence on separateness, a power of direct mental and other intercommunication and effective mutual action...."<sup>6</sup>

Let us try to take this opportunity to move in a certain direction of consciousness. I am going to go to the part of *The Synthesis of Yoga* which I requested you to read (Part Four, Chs. 3,4,5), and pick out some passages so we can begin to conceptualize the different levels of consciousness that have evolved in us up to now, that are dominant in us, because we are the mental being and we know intimately all of these things which he describes. We don't bother to focus on them very much; we take them for granted, and we automatically allow them to do their work in us like they have been doing for probably a million years. There have been only slight changes that we can perceive in the way they function. If we don't know this functioning very well, then how can we expect to find another way of functioning? Sri Aurobindo doesn't pretend to be the only one who knows these things. We will see in these chapters of the 'Yoga of Self Perfection' that it is very important to analyze how our minds function in order to allow the higher *buddhi* to impose a higher will on those functions. That is the thing we are trying to learn here. And it is a knowledge, a wisdom that is common to Vedic tradition.

"Chitta, the basic mental consciousness, is largely sub-conscious." *Citta* is a term for something that is the basic structure and movement of "consciousness". What is consciousness? Here is an answer: "... basic consciousness (*citta*) has... two kinds of action, one passive or receptive, the other active or reactive and formative. As a passive power it receives all impacts, even those of which the mind is unaware or to which it is inattentive and it stores them in an immense reserve of passive, subconscious memory on which the mind as an active memory can draw." It is a nervous substance that has evolved over billions of years. It is present in every form of life and it receives the impacts of the world around it passively, and actively reacts to those stimuli. This is what Konrad Lorenz talks about throughout all of his work – cognition, at the subconscious, molecular, cellular, organismic level, which is constantly going on. Every impulse in the environment right now is being registered by our *citta*, which knows very well how to cope with it because it has sat in many classrooms since it was six years old. "But ordinarily the mind draws only what it had observed and understood at the time – more easily, what it had observed well and understood carefully, less easily, what it had observed carelessly or ill-understood; at the same time, there is a power in consciousness to send up to the active mind for use what that mind had not at all observed or attended to or even consciously experienced. ...This action of memory is so fundamental to the entire mental action that it is sometimes said, memory is the man. Even in the submental action of the body and life, which is full of this subconscious Chitta, though not under the control of the conscious mind, there is a vital and physical memory. The vital and physical habits are largely formed by this submental memory. ...Even, the whole constitution of our life and body may be described as a bundle of habits formed by the past evolution in Nature and held together by the persistent memory of this secret consciousness."<sup>7</sup> We are loaded with impressions in the *citta* which it unconsciously stores, and which we use constantly.

Here is the essential thing to know: "Even the whole constitution of our life and body may be described as a bundle of habits formed by the past evolution in nature." Sri Aurobindo got this idea from the Sankhya psychology, and had it confirmed in part by William James. William James wrote a magnificent book in 1890 titled *The Principles of Psychology*, where he goes into detail in explaining a theory of evolution based upon the formation of habits. This was widely read and communicated during the period of time that Sri Aurobindo was reading James and Bergson and everybody else, and

he wrote a letter in which he said he had read that book, and that he got many useful suggestions from it. Some of the useful suggestions that he obviously got from it, you can find in passages that are almost identical in that book to passages in *The Life Divine*. The Mother also uses this idea frequently in her writings: the idea that all of our organs, all of our systems, our whole cellular evolution is based upon the formation of habit. The organism, in its evolution, develops habits that allow it to survive. It passes on this structural organic information to its offspring. The structural organic information. There is no difference between the way an organ functions, or an organism functions, or a species functions – there is no difference between that and its stored information. It reacts and responds to its environment habitually, automatically, subconsciously because it has evolved an understanding, a knowledge, a *cittavriti* that knows how to live in its environment. We are the result of all the species' evolution that has taken place prior to us, and so, we don't think at all about most of what we do. We just are that understanding called the human being. We make all kinds of decisions and judgments subconsciously because we don't have to think about most of the things that we do. We don't think about how to make our heart beat, but it knows very well how to do that. 'Even the entire constitution of our life and body may be described as a bundle of habits formed by the past evolution in nature.' Even before there were hearts and brains, there were habits that were formed that made it possible for hearts and brains to form, "held together by the persistent memory of this secret consciousness".

"For *citta*, the primary stuff of consciousness,": ...the primary stuff of consciousness. Consciousness has a substratum. There is this *hylomorphe* or hylomorphism (from the Greek); there is the form and there is the substance under it, and the substance makes or supports the form, but the form determines the substance. Hylomorphism is the fundamental concept of the Aristotelian philosophy of nature. "In fact, all action of the mind or inner instrument arises out of this *citta* ...when it is struck by the world's impact from outside or urged by the reflective powers of the subjective inner being, it throws up certain habitual activities." That is exactly what happened awhile ago when our class member said I could execute a certain computer strategy. She was receiving impressions, her mind picked up a subconscious memory about how something could be done, and she made that suggestion. She was not aware of all of those subconscious impressions, but they were all activated in her by the circumstances. She was not aware of the activation of the *citta* in her nervous system which brought together to her mind those impressions and allowed her to immediately formulate an idea and make a suggestion. So this is how consciousness works: partly below the surface and partly above in the "conscious" mind.

Now we will move on to *manas*. I strongly suggest that you read all this section of *The Synthesis of Yoga* (The Perfection of the Mental Being, The Instruments of the Spirit, etc.). "Manas, the sense-mind, depends in our ordinary consciousness on the physical organs of receptive sense for knowledge and on the organs of the body for action directed towards the objects of sense." The sense mind is the consciousness which all of this *citta* has evolved in us – sight, hearing, touch, taste and a kind of subtle unified sense of what the thing in front of us is, a combination of two or more senses normally, sometimes all five, sometimes no sense data at all, but an impression that comes to us purely, as a perception of something. "Manas is the activity, emerging from the basic consciousness, which makes up the whole essentiality of what we call sense. Sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch are really properties of the mind, not of the body; but the physical mind which we ordinarily use, limits itself to a translation into sense of so much of the outer impacts as it receives through the nervous system and the physical organs. But the inner Manas has also a subtle sight, hearing, power of contact of its own which is not dependent on the physical organs. And it has, moreover, a power not only of direct communication of mind with object, - leading even at a high pitch of action to a sense of the contents of an object within or beyond the physical range, - but direct communication also of mind with mind."<sup>8</sup>

The “properties of the mind, not of the body” means that the body has evolved these properties of mind (e.g. sensation/perception), but the body is still what is doing it. It is not doing it for the sake of being a body, it is for the sake of being a mind, but they are totally integrated, so there is no mind without body...so far. We perceive something and then we move towards it. The moving towards it is the body; the perceiving it and awareness of it is the mind in the body; the will to move towards it, to grasp and use and know the object, comes from the processing of the information, and then what moves towards it is the habitual response, not just of the mind by itself; it takes the body along with it.

I don't want to spend a lot of time on *manas* or practical sense-mind tonight, because I want to get to the *buddhi* or rational mind. But this aspect of mind gives us most of what we know through experience; it translates the impressions stored in memory and the immediate sense data into most of our common knowledge and action in the world. Consciousness is totally integrated in the body; there is no consciousness without the body. We must come to terms with the fact that all of the sense impressions, all of the vital and physical activities in which we are involved and are doing all the time are “consciousness”. They are not other than consciousness....physical, vital, mental, embodied consciousness. That is consciousness, and nothing else, although a large part of it, both its structures and functions, are not present to our mental awareness. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo makes this crucial distinction: “Ordinarily we mean by it, (consciousness), our first obvious idea of a mental waking consciousness such as is possessed by the human being when he is not asleep, stunned or otherwise deprived of his physical and superficial methods of sensation. ...But this vulgar and shallow idea of the nature of consciousness...must now definitely disappear out of philosophical thinking. ...Not only so, but we may now be sure that the old thinkers were right when they declared that even in our waking state what we call then our consciousness is only a small selection from our entire conscious being.”<sup>9</sup>

Buddhi is another level of consciousness, with which we are perhaps more familiar. This is all found and stressed in Buddhism, by the way. Everything we read in the next few pages of *The Synthesis of Yoga* is also the fundamental text of Buddhism. “Buddhi is a construction of conscious being which quite exceeds its beginnings in the basic Chitta; it is the intelligence with its power of knowledge and will. Buddhi takes up and deals with all the rest of the action of the mind and life and body. It is, in its nature, thought power and will power of the spirit turned into the lower form of a mental activity.” ‘Turned into the lower form of a mental activity’ – that means the rational intelligence descends to the level of practical mind and sensation, while the *citta* and *manas* are raised by the slightly-higher vibration of thought and will. Sri Aurobindo here specifies levels of this rational mind. “We may distinguish three successive gradations of the action of this intelligence. (First) There is first an inferior perceptive understanding which simply takes up, records, understands and responds to the communications of the sense-mind, memory, heart, and sensational mentality. It is the thought mind involved in the vital and physical being. It feels things, it likes or dislikes things, it wants or rejects things. That is the involved sensational mentality. Then the *buddhi* takes all of those feelings and “creates by their means an elementary thinking mind which does not go beyond their data, but subjects itself to their mold and... runs round and round in the habitual circle of thought and will suggested by them or follows with an obedient subservience of the reason to the suggestions of life any fresh determinations which may be offered to its perception and conception.”<sup>10</sup> These items are on sale this week. Save money; buy more. That is the level on which the universal *buddhi* functions in the world today. That is its field of perception and action and understanding: I know I am going to go and buy that dress (or car or computer or book) because it is on sale and I have been looking at it for weeks and now I am going to go and satisfy that impulse in a most appropriate and reasonable manner.

But, there is good news. “Beyond this elementary understanding, which we all use to an enormous

extent, there is (Second) a power of arranging or selecting reason and will-force of the intelligence which has for its action and aim an attempt to arrive at a plausible sufficient settled ordering of knowledge and will for the use of an intellectual conception of life. ...It is this reason which gives to our normal intellectual being our set aesthetic and ethical standards, our structures of opinion and our established norms of idea and purpose. ...But beyond it, (Third), there is a reason, a highest action of the Buddhi which concerns itself disinterestedly with a pursuit of pure truth and right knowledge; it seeks to discover the real truth behind life and things and our apparent selves... Buddhi is really an intermediary between a much higher Truth-mind not now in our active possession (but the aim of Buddhist and Hindu yogic discipline), which is the direct instrument of the spirit, and the physical life of the human mind evolved in body.”<sup>11</sup>

This Buddhi, this higher intelligence, is just below that possibility which Sri Aurobindo spoke about earlier in *The Life Divine* as higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind, which he said in that passage are the lower ranges of Supermind. Those levels of consciousness are a different way of being and knowing, a different cognition and a different will, power, force, energy. The Buddhi is the direct connection to that, and it is in the body. It is not different from the body, and it is able to contact those higher ranges of consciousness which can also be in the body, but not until it makes the contact.

“Buddhi centers its mental action round the ego-idea... But when the highest reason and idea develop, we can turn towards that which these outward things mean to the higher spiritual consciousness. The “I” can then be seen as a mental reflection of the Self, the Spirit, the Divine, the one existence, transcendent, universal, individual in its multiplicity...”<sup>12</sup>

Let me reinforce what we just said, and we will close with this. I want to cross over into the next chapters of the Synthesis, ‘Purification of the Lower Mentality’ (*manas*) and ‘Purification of the Intelligent Will’ (*buddhi*), and here is the bridge. We had a question tonight about all the rest of the being. Which instrument can bring about the perfection of all the rest most effectively? This is the fundamental idea of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. “Since we are the spirit enveloped in mind (which we now know means *citta*, *manas*, *buddhi*), a soul evolved here as a mental being in a living physical body, it must naturally be in the mind, the *antakarana*, that we must look for this desideratum. And in the mind it is evidently by the Buddhi, the intelligence and the will of the intelligence, that the human being is intended to do whatever work is not done for him by the physical or nervous nature as in the plant and the animal. ...Once our intelligence and will are well purified of all that limits them and gives them a wrong action or wrong direction, they can easily be perfected, can be made to respond to the suggestions of the Truth, understand themselves and the rest of the being, see clearly and with a fine and scrupulous accuracy what they are doing and follow out the right way to do it without any hesitating or eager error or stumbling deviation. Eventually their response can be opened up to the perfect discernings, intuitions, inspirations, revelations of the supermind and proceed by a more and more luminous and even infallible action”<sup>13</sup> This we should notice is basically what the Tibetan Buddhists call *bodhichitta*, and this is the teaching also known as Buddhadharma. Sri Aurobindo is not prescribing an established religious formula, however. He is telling us very directly what that established religious formula is meant to do.

What I want us to do now is to observe closely all these different patterns of typical mental behavior that we have been reading about, in ourselves and in others, and recognize directly, perceptively, Mind in its evolved embodiment in life, in us and around us. From that concrete direct perception, we will begin to focus on other powers of mind that can be invited into these domains. He tells us, very specifically, that we cannot invite those higher powers of mind into all of these other levels until we



know them intimately, know their patterns, know those habits of functioning, grasp completely all of these movements of mind that we embody, and reflect upon them dispassionately, and dissociate ourselves from them all and allow another dynamic to interpenetrate the vehicle that is already formed by those patterns. To use the will of the *buddhi* to dissociate itself from all of the evolved patterns of mind is what he says is the key, the essential movement of Yoga.

To use the *buddhi* to dissociate from all those patterns which are already well-evolved, ...and at that moment it becomes possible to have a larger, more universal thought-perception of reality. Until we do that, our thought-perception of reality is predetermined by all of the already-evolved, existing patterns of mind. But, the *buddhi*, the intelligent will in us, has the power to detach itself, and to observe them dispassionately, to dissociate itself and allow another energy, thought, understanding to invade, and it can hold in abeyance all of the already evolved patterns. That is its job, in the Integral Yoga, to purify and liberate itself from its preoccupations with and attachments to the patterns, preferences, dynamic engagements and associations of the *manas* and *citta*, instead of doing all the jobs it's been doing all of the last thousands of years.

The *buddhi* is not separate from the body, so this doesn't mean abandoning the body and life. It is a logocentric habit of the rational mind to think that Buddhism does this, but not that, or Hinduism does this, but not that, or the physical must be there, not abandoned by the mind, or the mind is something evil and we need to get rid of it and just do the yoga in the body, etc. All of these mental formations are there in us, in our mind-field, all around us. They are all fine; they all do their job, but there's another job that the *buddhi* can do, which is to dissociate itself from all of these 'It should', 'It shouldn't' formations, and hold that integral space without sanctioning any of its already evolved patterns, so that a higher energetic, a direct, consciousness-force can rearrange the field. But it's the same field; you don't leave it; you can't leave it. There is no other field.

The big surprise is that the ordinary things just keep going on. Nothing collapses. However, the *buddhi* stands there and suddenly becomes a representative of the inner *purusha* (Self) and aspires for that other vaster energy to come in. That is not just cognitive; it is also an energetic consciousness, because all consciousness is not just consciousness, it is also energy. Then there starts to take place an energy shift. You don't feel attached to all of those formations, but you perceive them directly for what they are and know them and honor them and allow them to go on doing what they do, but without a sanction. Because Nature is there, and Nature is not going to stop rolling along in her established tracks.

This movement to detach the Self and yet remain active in the world is supported by the psychology and philosophy of Sankhya and Yoga on which Sri Aurobindo's teaching is based, and from which the hierarchic concept of Mind embodied in Matter as *citta*, *manas*, *buddhi*, *vijnana* is taken. For example, he writes: "When the regarding soul, the witness Purusha stands back from his action of nature and observes it, he sees that it proceeds of its own impulsion by the power of its mechanism, by force of continuity of movement, continuity of mentality, continuity of life impulse, continuity of an involuntary physical mechanism. At first the whole thing seems to be the recurrent action of an automatic machinery, although the sum of that action mounts constantly into a creation, development, evolution. ...Knowledge in the mentality is enlightened by his consciousness; he is the mental knower; but he finds that this is not a real knowledge, but only a partial seeking and partial finding, a derivative uncertain reflection and narrow utilization for action from a greater light beyond which is the real knowledge. This light is the self-awareness and all-awareness of spirit. ...But for participation in an effective all-awareness with this essential self-awareness as the soul of its action he must rise to

supermind.”<sup>14</sup>

The individual human being can create an opening for another energy to enter... another conscious force – a stillness, a vast, a universality - which Sri Aurobindo describes as Higher Mind, Intuitive Mind, Illumined Mind. That functioning can begin to become familiar. It is there. You only have to give it a chance. You can't give it a chance until you universalize the mind. I am suggesting a formula for universalizing the Mind. You begin to observe Mind at all of its levels all of the time and it's no longer “my mind”, “your mind”, “lower mind”, “higher mind”, and all of those things. It is just Mind, universal. It is going on all of the time and it's not going to stop, so you can afford to allow yourself to spread out into Mind Universal and all of its levels, even Supermind, if you can manage to expand your bubble into that domain also. Just allow that liberated *buddhi* to be detached, to give us a new focus, and something wonderful will start to happen.

As soon as it starts to happen, cognize it. Become cognizant that there is some kind of perception going on that is not the rational mind, not the pragmatic- nor vital- nor sense-mind. It is another kind of vibration that also knows things and does things but it is coming from this universalized mind-self which is *purusha*, pure Self. It is just there, behind all of those automatic functionings, and you are in it now. You are liberated. That is a transition which can be made intentionally by a process of reflection and purification and self-control and active will. It is not terribly difficult to become more conscious. I am suggesting that we practice a little bit of Yoga – simple basic stuff. We are not calling it *vipassana*, but it is a kind of *vipassana*, and *samata* and *samadhi* and all of those traditional things. In this way a bridge is created between Mind and Supermind.

#### Notes

1. This is an edited and revised transcript of the third lecture, presented on Oct.7, 2009, in the University of Human Unity lecture series, ‘The Philosophy of Evolution (2)’.
2. It may seem presumptuous to the reader to assert such a goal, which, as we know, is the goal of the Yoga of transformation; it will seem less so to the listener of the audio lecture, which is one of the advantages of speech over writing. But the advantage of writing is that explanations like this can be made on reflection.
3. The aim of philosophy has always been the perfection of the mind and life, at least in the schools of Plato and Vedanta, from which we draw our inspiration, and if this is not the case then philosophy has little value.
4. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (1970 ed.), p. 944.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 945.
6. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1970 ed.), p. 614-615.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 620-621.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 623.
9. *Op. cit.*, (LD), p.85.
10. *Op. cit.*, (SY) p. 624.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 625.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 625.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 628.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 610-12.

## Mind and Supermind - Lecture 3

### Part 1- Aristotle's theory of soul

In a philosophy of evolution course which focuses on the evolution of mind, we need to have some conception of what mind is. Philosophy has been occupied generally with this question since its beginning. I like to say that philosophy is actually the contemplation of what mind is.

The mind contemplating what it is, is the meaning of philosophy. I didn't discover that until I had studied philosophy for about thirty or forty years. I thought philosophy was supposed to discover what truth is. But I found out that it's just a study of what the mind is. And I found this to be a very interesting discovery. Whether you're reading Aristotle two-thousand years back, or Kant and Hegel two-hundred years back, or some today who consider themselves analytical philosophers, a Carnap or Dennett, what they are always discussing is what the mind is, how it works, what it's limits are, what it can know, what it cannot know, how it can know what it knows. That is what philosophy has always done.

The two fundamental questions that mind asks itself are, 'what does it know?' and 'how does it know it?' That's been going on since mind became predominant in the human species. In early Greece, philosophy became formalized at about the same time that in India the *darshanas* were written, between two-hundred and eight-hundred BCE, and the approach that they both took at that time was quite similar. There are texts from India during that period on logic and how the mind knows what it knows, and what it knows as a result of how it knows, as well as on metaphysics and psychology, and so on. That was how the philosophic period began. And in China there are many texts from that period of the Confucian and neo-Confucian tradition which are similar expositions of how the mind works.

It's not bad to start with Aristotle. He describes pretty accurately the way we think, and you can recognize it quite easily, I believe. Aristotle described matter and form as the potential and actual, respectively, of 'what is', and how 'what is' gets to be what it is; how the matter of something becomes the form that we know. He describes this process of nature, and he says that nature never does anything without a purpose.

The form is the purpose, or the final actualization of something, and that's what we know. The material substratum is 'potentially' what the thing is. We will see some examples of that. The acorn becomes the tree, and we don't worry about understanding the difference of the tree from the acorn, we understand the acorn is going to become something quite different, and that's going to be the thing; the essence of the thing is the tree. We know essences, according to Aristotle. That's what we know. We don't know the matter of something; we know its form, or essence.

He described the three levels of the soul, and said that everything (ie., every living thing) which has a form has a soul, which helps it become that form. He describes three different levels of soul: the nutritive, which is the growing aspect, how the physical living thing becomes what it's meant to become, and it does that through nutrition and growth and reproduction, and so on. In other words, this is the vital soul. Then, he described the senses, sense-perception, soul-perception, which all animals have, and that distinguishes animals from plants. And then he described the intellectual soul, the soul that thinks. For him, soul is the nature of something which enables it to become what it is. Soul is there in the matter, and it brings the form into its actual state from the potential material state.

Now we are focusing on the third level of soul, which is the intellectual soul or mind. I just want us to become familiar with some basic concepts, as articulated by Aristotle. These concepts can be tools that we use to better understand what mind is; that is all. Aristotle can't tell us what mind is, but he can give us some tools that we can use to figure out for ourselves what mind is, just like Sri Aurobindo gave us those Vedantic tools, like *citta*, *manas*, and *buddhi*. Similarly, Aristotle is going to give us some tools.

He says, "Turning now to the part of the soul with which it knows and thinks, whether this is separable from the others, that is to say from the sensational and nutritional part of the soul, whether it can be separated from those in definition only or spatially as well; whether the mind can be separated from the body only by definition, or whether it can actually be materially separated from the body, we have to enquire, in order to know this." Number one, what differentiates this part, 'mind', from the others? And two, how can thinking take place? How is it possible for mind to know something? "If thinking is something like perceiving, it must be either a process in which the soul is acted upon by what is capable of being thought, or a process different from but analogous to that. The thinking part of the soul must therefore be, while impassive, capable of receiving the form of an object. That is, it must be potentially identical in character to its object without being the object."

In his text known as *De Anima*<sup>1</sup>, Aristotle went systematically through a description of what perception is, and he said that sense-perception, hearing for example, is identical with its object. Sense-perception is nothing until it hears sound, and when it hears the sound it is that sound that it is hearing. Somehow, the sound and the perception of the sound are identical. Somehow when we see or hear something, what we register is that thing. You are not seeing or hearing an image of that when you are perceiving it; you are seeing that. That, somehow, is perceived by sight and sound; this sound you are hearing coming from me, you are resonating with at the moment I am speaking, and your hearing faculty is somehow possessing this sound you are hearing. Your mind is also somehow understanding what it is that is being said. When I say 'that writing on the board', you know I'm indicating this whiteboard with those images on it.

Mind, he says, works somehow in a similar way to the way that sense-perception works. The form of objects, what they mean, what they are, - you are looking at me, so who I am, what I am, my presence here is somehow understood by you, - just like the sight, it is a faculty that enables you to see and know this object. You have an understanding of me as the person who is making this presentation to you and you understand that perfectly well, because I am actually the person making this presentation to you. So, you understand what is in front of you with your mind, just like you understand what is in front of you with your eyes. There is apparently no mediation taking place. You are simply seeing, hearing, and knowing what is.

Aristotle is asking the question, 'How is it that mind knows these objects, these forms, but it doesn't consume them like eating food; it doesn't possess their matter, but it somehow possess their essence.' You know me here making this presentation as me making this presentation to you. I don't become somehow an image in your being in order for you to know me, but still you know me. Mind is able to know the form that presents itself to the mind. So, he asks the question, 'how?' How does that happen? If thinking is like perceiving, he says, it must be a process by which the soul is acted upon by what is capable of being thought, which is the essence of the objects, because we are able to think about objects without eating them, and what we think about them is what they are. The mind is acted on somehow by what is. It must be capable of receiving the form of an object, if it is analogous to sense perception. Now that is a big 'if'.

This is an Aristotelian point of view. Mind, knowing, is analogous to sense perception. “Therefore, since everything is a possible object of thought, everything that exists, being a possible object of thought, mind, in order as Anaxagoras says to dominate, to know, to master, must be pure from all admixture. It must not be affected by temperature, and by pleasant sensations, by grossness, and subtlety; it must be pure, without admixture, for the co-presence of what is alien to its nature is a hindrance and a block.”

This sounds almost yogic. Mind has to become pure and detached in order to know really what is. Otherwise, it gets mixed up with vital impulses and opinions, and so on. “It follows that it too like the sensitive part can have no nature of its own other than that of having a certain capacity.” In other words, mind is potentially knowing whatever is. “Thus, that in the soul which is called mind, by mind I mean, that whereby the soul thinks and judges, is before it thinks not actually any real thing.”

Just like sight and hearing, he says, are in themselves not anything except potentially seeing and hearing, only when they are activated by light or sound do they come into being, - the senses. The senses are passive, they receive objects. Mind, he also believes, is passive. It simply receives objects, not the objects themselves but the essence of the objects. “For this reason it cannot reasonably be regarded as blended with the body.” Now this idea has dominated western science and philosophy ever since Aristotle said these words. The mind must be separate, must not be mixed up with the body. It may use sensations and emotions to build, to reflect on and build upon, but in itself, it is separate.

There is Descartes for you, right there. Descartes was a major Aristotelian, as were all of the medieval philosophers. “It cannot be regarded as blended with the body. If so, it would acquire some quality, e.g. warmth or cold, or even have an organ like the sensitive faculty, an eye, the eye of the mind. As it is it has none. It was a good idea to call soul the place of forms though this description holds only of the intellective soul.” The nutritive soul is not the place of forms. The nutritive soul is a place for food, and it’s completely combined with the body. The soul and the body as far as the nutritive faculty goes are blended. The soul and the body as far as perception goes are blended. But the soul and mind as far as mind goes are not blended. Too, even this is the forms only potentially not actually.” So, the soul is the place of forms potentially. It is not actually the place of forms, the forms are where they are. The mind has no qualities. Buddhism came up at about this time, and in Buddhism, if you contemplate pure mind it is emptiness, and it is the essence of everything. In itself, its pure nature is emptiness.

Aristotle says, then, “Since in every class of things, as in nature as a whole, we find two factors involved, a matter, which is potentially all the particulars included in the class.” We know classes of things, right? We don’t know things themselves, we know classes. We know people, we know lions and giraffes, we know politics, societies, we know classes and we know the particulars that belong to those classes, as such. But those particulars of those classes are still what we call concepts, they are abstractions. They are what Konrad Lorenz called constancy phenomena. We recognize societies as such. But we are not looking at all of the cells and organs and motions and behaviors of the society. When we think of the society of Athens in 350 BC,<sup>2</sup> we have a whole bunch of things we combine in that concept, but what we mainly know is that the society of Athens in 350 BC was not the society of Bodhgaya in 350 BC, and it was not the society of Ur in 2800 BC. It was it, it was what it was. That is what we know. We don’t know all the nitty gritty details, but we know the essence of it. That, according to Aristotle, is the way the mind works, and he is absolutely right. And that is why we have to evolve beyond it.

Last night I read a very trenchant deconstruction of this Aristotelian conception of mind by Henri

Bergson. He completely destroyed this conception of mind in his evolutionary philosophy. But, why did he do that? We will see. It has limits. It has very serious limits.

“Every class of things is made up of a matter which is potentially all the particulars included in the class, and a cause which is productive in the sense that it makes them all. These distinct elements must likewise be found within the soul.” A cause that is productive in the sense that it makes them all; the cause of something makes it out of all of the material. Any form that we know has both the matter in it, and a cause or soul that makes it be what it is. “Mind as we have described it, is what it is, by virtue of becoming all things. While there is another which is what it is by virtue of making all things. This is a sort of positive state like light, for in a sense light makes potential colors into actual colors. Mind in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity, for always the active is superior to the passive factor, the originating force to the matter which it forms.”

Mind becomes everything. Mind can become everything. Mind can cause everything to be what it is. “Actual knowledge is identical with its object.” So the mind becomes that object, that collection of words which have meaning. That collection of molecules that have form and function and quality. Our minds become that, while we are considering those words or these concepts which I’m communicating and you are witnessing. Mind becomes those.

Mind in itself, before it becomes those, is potentially all of these forms that we are communicating, actually none of them, but potentially all of them. So mind is like a field that potentially knows everything that exists. As such, Aristotle conceives of it as also being the cause, the final cause of everything that exists. So mind in the individual is potentially whatever exists in its conceptions. But mind in its universal aspect is the cause of everything which exists. So the soul in each individual is what makes that individual become what it is, and the reason the soul is able to do that is because it has this intellectual aspect, or this mind aspect, which is ultimately the cause of everything, and it also has the animus, the energy to grow and sense and perceive. (Therefore we may presume that it is also Force. Ultimately Aristotle will call it the “unmoved mover”. The two aspects of Mind described here seem to correspond to the concepts of *jivatma* and *paramatma* in Vedanta. Or in Platonism, the small participates in the large.) Therefore, our mind is able to know what is, because it is the causal essence of what is, already. It is already the essence of everything that is, and when it comes into contact with something that is, then it becomes that, which it already was potentially, because it was already from the beginning potentially everything. And like light, actively present in the universe, it is creating everything that is.

“Actual knowledge is identical with its object in the individual. Potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge.” So, potentially you know everything that I am telling you, but you only get to know it actually as a result of me telling it to you. So, the potential was there in time prior to me telling you all of these things. Now I have told you all of these things, so you actually know them. “But in the universe as a whole knowledge is not prior even in time.” Potential knowledge is not prior even in time on the universal plane. In other words, all knowledge is actual already in the Mind of the universe. It is potential only in the individual souls, and in matter, until it becomes actual. But in the universe as a whole knowledge is always actual, because mind is like light illuminating form, and not just visible form, but the whole organic process of becoming is being caused by actual Mind which holds everything on the plane of knowledge - but not on the plane of matter. It’s pure mind; not mixed.

“Mind is not at one time knowing and another not. When mind is set free from its present conditions it appears as just what it is and nothing more. This alone is immortal and eternal, and without it nothing

thinks.”

Mind is a universal presence, capable of knowledge in the individual soul, but possessing all knowledge in itself, on its universal plane. Let's think about this cosmologically in relation to Sri Aurobindo. There is matter, there is life, and there is mind. Aristotle just defined them. There is the matter which is potentially what the form is, there is the nutritive soul which brings it into its living form, and there is the mind which gives it its purpose, which is what we know when we know something. We know its essence, its purpose, its meaning.

“Let us summarize the results about soul, and repeat that the soul is in a way all existing things, for existing things are either sensible or thinkable, and knowledge is in a way what is knowable, and sensation is in a way what is sensible. In what way, we must enquire. Knowledge and sensation are divided, to correspond with the realities - potential knowledge and sensation answering to potentialities, actual knowledge and sensation to actualities.” Before we smell the smell it's potential and after we smell it, it is actual. If it was there we would smell it, and when it's not there we don't smell it.

“Within the soul the faculties of knowledge and sensation are potentially these objects, the one what is knowable the other what is sensible. They must be either the things themselves or their forms. The former alternative is of course impossible because the mind can't be the thing that it knows, it just simply knows the essence of it.” The smell can't be the incense smoke, it just smells the scent which comes through the air.

“It is not the stone which is present in the soul but its form. It follows that the soul is analogous to the hand for as the hand is tool of tools, the mind is a form of forms and sense the form of sensible things.”

We shouldn't forget what we have heard already about the four causes – material, efficient, formal, and final, – that the form of sensible things is the final cause also of the sensible thing. The form is the essence. The incense produces fragrant smoke because that is its purpose. The animal produces offspring and builds houses and habitats for its offspring because that is its purpose. So what we sense and what we know is what is finally. That is what Aristotle says. Sense and knowledge are what is. Here is another interesting thing he says, ‘mind is always right, but appetite and imagination may be either right or wrong’.

When it's pure mind, what it knows is what is. It can be clouded by imagination and sensations, opinions, appetites, what drives the person to do what it does or the animal to do what it does. The appetite, he says finally, is a cause of motion, and mind is also a cause of motion. Appetite is a cause of temporal motion which has to do with growth and the achievement of external objects, but mind causes motion in the sense of the final cause. Without moving itself, without becoming something, it is able to move things.

So, for example, the inclination to select a passage here and give it to you is something my hand does because my mind decided that that was important. This presentation is possible because mind itself can move the human being to do things without itself being moved by some other cause. This goes back to his philosophy of physics, which says that there must be a first cause which itself is not caused. And that is why he concludes that it is Mind. At that stage of philosophy, the farthest that the greatest mind was able to go was here: to conclude that there is something that knows, and that something itself knows what is, and therefore it is also the cause of what is, without itself being caused by any other

thing.

Now we get into metaphysics. In the philosophy of evolution we ask the question, Are all of the forms and processes that we now understand, from all of the scientific and philosophical sources that we have explored, are those forms and processes enough in themselves to explain the phenomenon known as evolution? Natural selection, adaptation, variation as a result of changes in the environment, inheritance, – inheritance on the genetic level, on the epigenetic level, on the behavioral level, and on the symbolic level, – all the processes that lead to the formation of habits, the maintenance of those habits until it is no longer possible for the species to survive. And then it begins to acquire other habits, and then through behavior, and through mutation, new species are formed. We can describe this whole process today, especially since the 1960's when plate tectonics were discovered, and when physicists discovered that the universe itself evolves, and biologists mapped the genome. So we now know that none of these forms are themselves permanent, but we are able to know them abstractly to a very great extent, and we are able to describe all of the processes that underlie evolution to quite a great extent. Knowing what we know, is anything else required to satisfy us that we understand the process, and that the process itself is what it is? Have we been able to understand it sufficiently? Are we satisfied that we know what it is, how it works; are all of our questions answered?

What question is not answered? We know that the universe evolves, that there is a force that comes from the big bang or whatever, from changes in temperature or magnetic fields, and that this force has evolved simple life forms which have all their five or six senses, at least some senses, and finally, we have human beings who are conscious. It seems, as Aristotle says, for each thing to become what it is, nature was able to select and to vary and to create all the different things that are, and to create a web of life, and the biosphere. And the human being is now there in that biosphere as a result of all that, and the human being is conscious.

We can explain to a large extent the whole process in terms of the evolution of consciousness. If the perception of light was there from the first microscopic animalcule, and perception enabled there to be learning, and this kept on evolving, until we now have on earth all kinds of animals with five senses, and the human being not only with five senses but an active mind conscious of all of these things, it seems that in order to understand the evolution of consciousness, we know everything that we need to know.

What is it that we don't know? We know the reason and we know the result, the end. Where am I going with this question? All of the biologists, from Darwin up until the present time, say that each living thing is maintained, maintains itself by habit. Even Darwin said that nature is just habit. Everything maintains itself in its niche by habit. And Lorenz says that all these habits, everything from the cell to the society have evolved through energy exchanges that constitute information processing systems. Things are able to adapt because they get information from their environment. They create habits in relation to their environment. They reproduce their types from cell division and the dance of mating, by habit, and the Mother even agrees that we all maintain ourselves by habit. And so, if we take everything that we've learned, then we come to the conclusion that everything is maintained by habit. According to the principles of self-reproduction and cognition, cognitive interchanges between the organism and the environment that reinforce the habits, if everything is what it is as a result of eons of habits being maintained for as long as it is possible to maintain them, and then changing into other habits, known perhaps as other species, what is it that enables habit itself to constitute an adequate process for maintaining a species in its niche? Does habit explain cognition, or vice-versa? And does this duality (form and matter) constitute mind, or consciousness?



If cognition is what is happening in the exchange of energy between the organism and its niche, and that cognition enables it to establish a habit because it knows where to go and where not to go, and what tastes good and what doesn't taste good, and who's warm and who's cold (*citta* and *manas*), so it finds a habitual niche, a pattern of life and death that it maintains by habit as a result of cognition, then one question that can still be asked is, how is it that habit and cognition, conscious interaction with the environment, happen to exist as mechanisms for evolutionary existence? How is it that sight happens to be a sensation that serves consciousness? How is it that habit conserves consciousness?

In other words, if consciousness is the whole purpose of evolution how does consciousness itself happen to be in existence, a fundamental principle of existence? Why isn't the whole universe and life on earth just automatic? Why does it happen to end up as mental consciousness, which obviously has evolved all the way through the whole life process so that we are now conscious?

The first animal soul was conscious on its level, at least of heat and light. How is it that consciousness is somehow the core phenomenon of all phenomena? It's there behind perception, it's there behind habit, it's there behind cognition, cognition is a form of consciousness, habit is a form of consciousness, perception is a form of consciousness, so consciousness seems to be a basic principle in the whole process of evolution.

How is it that consciousness happens to be the principle in the whole process of evolution that seems to have also a driving force in it because, as Aristotle says, you have potential matter, but the matter somehow becomes a form with a purpose, so there is a soul there, a cause, something that enables the thing to become what it is, instead of to become something else other than what it is.

This consciousness that is evolving in matter and life and mind seems to be a cause; it seems to be not only present in forms and structures but it seems to be driving those forms and structures to higher and higher levels of organization, and we call it Nature. So we go back to Darwin, How is it that nature happens to be selective, and that nature happens to be cognitive? From whence comes the ability of matter to become progressively more conscious? Whence comes joy? Is it a product of nature?

## Part 2 - Sheldrake's theory of morphic resonance<sup>3</sup>

Sheldrake says that this whole Aristotelian idea of soul and form has now been assumed by theorists of formative causation. Formative causation is another name for morpho-genesis. Morphe is form, genesis is causation. Morphogenesis means formative causation. So he says that physics and biology can observe that there are structures that underlie evolution, DNA underlies evolution. Behavioral patterns underlie evolution. Natural selection is a process that underlies evolution. Then the question that is the essential metaphysical question for Sheldrake is, how is it that habit, the repetition of habits, constitutes cognition. How is it that we learn through repeating things? How is it that leaning, memory, cognition, take place just as a result of repeating things? It is apparent that learning takes place through repetition and it becomes a preferred pattern, a joyous experience, and so something called cognition takes place through repetition. Something called DNA takes place through repetition. The repetition of cell division and replication from the lowest level to the highest level somehow has happened in a consistent purposeful way. Repetition at the genetic level yields more and more conscious structures. Behavior yields more and more varieties of species. Species repeat themselves until they become other species that are more, or differently, conscious.

Habit somehow yields cognition, and at the human level we know this through learning. Sheldrake says, “OK, we can observe that learning takes place through repetition and the birds learn how to take the caps off of the milk bottles and they pass that information on to each other, and the monkeys stack up the boxes to get the banana because first of all they wanted the banana but couldn’t get it because it was too high, and they played with boxes and somehow figured out that they can stack the boxes, and then they put together the two things, wanting the banana and stacking the boxes, and pretty soon they were standing on top of the boxes getting the bananas.

Human beings work the same way. Learning takes place through observation, repetition and combinations of trial and error, and once the learning takes place it gets passed on to others. This is conscious behavior. Sheldrake says we can observe such conscious behavior going on throughout the animal kingdom all the time, and at the human level it is almost all that is going on, everything else is secondary to that.

So, Sheldrake asks, Can we have a theory that explains how cognition works at the cellular level, at the behavioral level, at the mental cognitive level, and how it is that consciousness occurs at all of those levels, and that it’s not just automatic mechanical stuff? At every level there is some form of consciousness happening. Can we explain how it happens? How does consciousness happen at every level, memory, learning, habit, selection for good and rejection of bad, and so on. He asks that question from the point of view of a biologist who is very familiar with physics as well as metaphysics. He says that evolution occurs at all levels of organization from atoms to galaxies. The organized systems, – insulin molecules, fruit flies, instinctive patterns, nest building behavior, flocks of birds migrating, tribal societies, governments, scientific theories, all these are fields, morphic fields, or forms, as Aristotle would say.

We know the forms of all of these things, and we know that there are forms within forms, molecules, organs, organisms, societies of organisms, species, planets, galaxies, forms within forms within forms. Sheldrake’s hypothesis of formative causation inevitably implies that the evolutionary process is closely connected with the evolution of morphic fields. There are four major consequences of this view. First, the appearance of new patterns of organization may have an explanation. How does that happen? There is one of those patterns we have described, for example, which shows that the shrew became the hippopotamus, and the deer, and the dolphin, and eventually from hippopotimus and dolphin there came primates that were related to the hippopotimus and the dolphin genetically and behaviorally. We can now observe that genetically, but at each level new forms have appeared. Those new forms were not just repetitions of the old forms; they were really novel creations, like new kinds of crystals, new species and classes of organisms, new scientific theories.

This appearance of new patterns of cognition is associated with the appearance of new morphic fields. What are the possible creative sources of new fields? These fields are wholes, and precisely because of their irreducible integrity they have to appear suddenly. This is a great idea. The new form that appears is different from the old form because they are holistic fields which don’t occur little by little, the whole new thing occurs at once. You don’t have gradual change between the shrew and the tarsier, which is a kind of low level primate, you don’t have an infinite series, you have the shrew and the tarsier. Somehow there is an evolutionary mutation that takes place, there is a gap, and biologists are never able to find out what goes in the gap. This is because of the holistic nature of evolution: when there is a change in the genetic pattern it affects the whole organism. Sheldrake proposes that the morphic fields, the nature of such fields, helps to explain these leaps between forms in evolution. Of course new morphic fields, or new species, involve continuity with what went before as well as

discontinuity. All new fields embrace lower level morphic units that existed prior to their appearance. These subtle fields somehow retain in themselves all of their patterns of continuity and transformation.

The cell, the molecule, the organs, this is a whole morphic field, forms within forms, and when the DNA changes radically it changes the whole morphic field, so you get a new species. Second, morphic fields are subject to natural selection. The fields of new patterns of organization that are not viable will not be stabilized by morphic resonance. Morphic resonance means that this field continues to be what it is because it resonates with what it was yesterday. What it was yesterday resonates with what it was the day before, and the year before, and the millennium before that. For him, morphic fields maintain themselves through resonance, over generations and millennia. So, the first bird learned to take off the bottle cap, then another bird learns to take off the cap, and then whole bunches of birds are learning to take off the caps of the milk bottles, and that constitutes a behavioral field which maintains itself easily because there are lots of these birds that now do that, instead of just one that does that. Before, there was one that did it, and before that none who did it. So there was no such field. Once that field came into existence then it constituted a behavior field, and once the first protein molecule came into existence and became DNA, other molecules could copy that molecule.

And so, my question is this: If morphic fields underlie and are basically identical to the actual physical, vital, and mental forms, except that they don't exist in time and space but they correspond exactly to what does exist in time and space... And so, all of the moments that we know now, all that past, and also all that future that doesn't exist right now, except in a kind of non-material way, because all of time exists in a non-material way as fields that correspond exactly to what did or does or will exist at any particular time, and so there is a resonance on the non-material level – my question is, how can you have resonance on a non-material level? And also, since all of these forms actually exist, and they actually learn, and they actually evolve, why do we need morphic fields that are identical to them to explain them?

This seems to be a physicists obsession to create a world of subtle forms that is somehow supposed to explain a world of existing material forms because its mechanisms can't otherwise be explained adequately. But you can't prove that the subtle forms are there. It is a hypothesis to prove what is there with something that is not there. And there was a very clever medieval philosopher named William of Occam who was studying Platonic ideas and said, Why do you need to have an idea of a giraffe in order for there to be a giraffe?

Aristotle was more clever perhaps; he said you need to have a cause of things which you know, because things are what they are, and so the form must have a cause, and that's its soul. And because you know it, and you don't have it in you, you know its essence, so there must be Mind which is able to know something which is in things but which is not those things themselves. It's their essence. He concluded that mind is a part of soul which causes things to be on the essential level, while life causes things to be on the vital level, and matter causes things to be on the material level. He was trying to explain everything in terms of cause but based upon Plato. He modified Plato; he didn't say that the forms existed out there in the invisible ideal world, but he said the forms exist in the things as a subtle cause, and so mind is a principle that goes along with the actual world. It is in fact the actual of all the potential world of matter and life.

Now we get Platonic/Aristotelian thought transferred by Sheldrake, who is a Catholic philosopher and who is a twentieth century biologist. He writes a lot about Plato, Aristotle, and Teilhard Chardin, and he lived for ten years in an ashram in India, and has tried to synthesize the idea of Chitta, Manas, and

Buddhi with the Aristotelian cosmology of forms, and he has come up with morphic fields, that are fields of intelligence, subtle patterns which in Aristotle's word is *entelechy*, something which is the essence of something, and which causes it to be what it is. That is its entelechy, or its intelligent soul.

So for Sheldrake now, all intelligent souls in everything are reduced to a field theory, a systems theory, and he says that there are these subtle morphic fields which stay in existence forever, and they get stronger and stronger the more they are repeated, and this is what enables a species to exist for millennia until it no longer can exist. Then, it jumps into another field. But then he says at the end, how it jumps isn't explained by morphic resonance; only how it maintains itself is explained by morphic resonance. So the question still remains of 'creativity', even after going through all the trouble of creating another world that corresponds to the real world to explain the real world. This is the problem that I wanted to bring to you.

One of the major questions of evolution that has not been answered is the question of novelty, of new creations, which maintain a kind of homeostatic continuity with the past forms but at the same time constitute holistic leaps into new forms. This is a problem with the theory of gradualism that Darwin also recognized. And it is a symptom of the deeper problem that the "mechanisms" of cognition have not been explained; only its forms are known. How existence, by which we mean the world, happens to be conscious and how it creates novel forms, are questions that are not answered by the theory of evolution as it now stands.

If we give Aristotle an Aurbindonian interpretation, and we conclude that what Aristotle really meant by universal mind was Supermind, and what he meant by the mind in the soul, the intellective soul, was intuitive mind; if he was having an intuition of Supermind as the eternal radiance of the actuality of everything that is potential, then we can reach the conclusion that consciousness had to evolve because supreme consciousness was there as the radiant source from the beginning.

What is the difference in saying that Supermind created mind, life, and body as an evolutionary complex, with the innate structures and functions of *citta*, *manas*, and *buddhi*, and saying that Supermind created morphic fields to create minds, lives, and bodies, to provide an evolutionary structure. You don't need, as Occam said, you don't need for Supermind to create an extra set of systems or forms in order to have a system of forms, if Supermind or Consciousness is involved in matter to begin with. It means that matter is essentially a form of consciousness, and all of its processes are forms of consciousness. It seems to me that Sri Aurobindo is saying, when he describes Chitta, that Chitta is mind in matter, it has memory, it can pull essence out of matter because it was always there in the evolution of matter, it evolves with the material form, it evolves with the vital form, and in us it always remembers everything subconsciously because it is the principle of mind at the most material level. And it becomes Manas at the higher level of evolution where the senses are evolved. The structures of sense-perception have evolved through the function of the Chitta in matter, and Chitta in life, and Chitta in mind, which has produced sensory apparatuses and those sensory apparatuses, Manas, have been evolving from the beginning to give information, to collect information. That is the principle of Manas, it collects information. Why do you have to have another principle to explain Manas, when Manas itself explains the phenomenon. Then, you have Buddhi, which is rational mind, a higher form of Chitta, and Manas, that processes information abstractly. Why do you need another principle to explain that principle, which itself is what it is. It is that.

In the end Sri Aurobindo seems to say that science is able to ask all of these questions and to probe deeper and deeper and measure more and more, until it must finally come to the point that even if there

are eleven dimensions of space instead of three, or four, or thirteen - that is a physical description of the universe. It still doesn't explain, as even Rodger Penrose says, it still doesn't explain consciousness. So, the fact is, says Sri Aurobindo, that the universe is essentially Consciousness-Force; and it is made up of planes: there is a material plane, a vital plane, and a mental plane, and many planes of Supermind. And that's what it is.

If you do the Buddhistic reduction, and detach yourself from this analyzing mentality, and the sense mind, and the Chitta with all of its habits and memories, and you just pull back into Purusha itself, pure mind, then you can find the Will to Be, back there in the very beginning behind everything in you, and that Will to Be becomes the will to be physical, and the will to be vital, and the will to be mental, and ultimately the will to be divine. That psychic being or inner self, or Purusha, has been there from the beginning, from the first descent of Consciousness-Force into the material universe, and it has evolved its organs of Chitta, Manas, and Buddhi, until finally it is able to step back into its pure self, and then to receive the vibration that is its ultimate Self, and then to begin to evolve a yet higher level of structure, corresponding to that ultimate Self. While at every level it has evolved a system of structures at each level which expressed the Self on that level, so that it was expressed on the physical level and enabled the physical level to create molecules of DNA, and then the vital will or energy or force could use the DNA to create all the forms of life, and then the mental will could use all the forms of life to create mental structures and relations and patterns, so that now mental structure becomes conscious enough to reconnect with the Self in everything consciously. That explains what everything is. It is a Self emanation of its potential in infinite varieties on all the planes. So by becoming conscious of Self one answers all the questions of how habit, and how cognition, and how nutrition, and how ethical decision, and how novelty, and eventually a supramental manifestation could and have evolved.

My point was to explore what the mind is able to do with respect to understanding and describing cause and effect, and being and time, and form and substance in terms of the theory of evolution. And this is where, with Aristotle and Sheldrake, we get to a kind of scientific metaphysics, but neither science nor scientific metaphysics answers the ultimate questions. Philosophy is able to show us the limitations of mind in both the scientific and metaphysical domains of knowledge, and then we come to the necessity to put into play a force of consciousness that is able to know from the Self the whole, because the whole is nothing other than that Self. It cannot know it any other way. The next level of the evolution of consciousness, according to Sri Aurobindo, will entail the emergence of such a gnostic way of knowing both process and reality, the how and the what, by Identity.

If you look at the principle of stability, which Sheldrake wants to explain with morphic fields, you will see that from the Vedantic point of view it corresponds to Sat, being itself; the principle of stability is established in matter, then the principle of stability is established in the genome, and the principle of stability is established in the phenome, and then it's established in societies, and then the next level of establishing the principle of stability needs to have gnostic beings, whose consciousness is one with the being and force of everything. That is the logic of Sri Aurobindo's view of evolution. And all of the infinite movement of change in this process is accounted for by the complementary principle of Consciousness-Force or Chit-Shakti.

There is a mental Purusha, a vital Purusha, a physical Purusha, and a psychic Purusha. One is a doorway into the other. It is the witness Self. The witness Self is essentially the psychic being, the Will to Be, and it becomes the Self of body, life, and mind, and then it comes back to its original Self, and it rises above to its Overmind Self and its Supramental Self. This is the process of liberation from each of its levels of involvement, which is at the root of all yoga systems and leads to liberation and the

elevation of consciousness to Universality. It is the process we have referred to as the Buddhist reduction. On the rational level of consciousness, we categorize; that is the problem with the Aristotelian mind and philosophy. We try to latch on to categories which are supposed to correspond to actualities. The mind can become everything, so it becomes all of these forms, and then it's stuck to its definitions and if those definitions don't correspond exactly to what mind is or what life or soul are, then there must be something wrong with those definitions and we are into this whole mental idiocy of thinking we know something because we have formulated a definition. We don't know anything when we form a definition; we can call it anything we want and it doesn't mean we know anything but a concept and a name or a category or description that we have formulated. This is where Bergson destroys the Aristotelian system. He says, only by an intuitive identity with the being of the thing itself can we know something, and everything else is just our mental constructions. He agrees that this is useful; the practical mind has created many useful things, and the rational mind many wonderful systems of understanding. But we don't really understand very much and we are at a dead end.

Bergson's deconstruction of Aristotelianism begins with the deconstruction of religion. For him, the whole intellectual development has grown out of social, religious cultures, but he recognizes that periodically throughout history there have been true mystics, just as there has been in the 20th Century, and he says those are the people who break through all of those conventional forms and bring in the power of love and transcendence. They are bound to both use those structures, and also to negate and transcend them. I strongly suggest that you read Bergson's, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1935/1954). It is not just about morality and religion; it's about evolution and parallels Sri Aurobindo's work astonishingly.<sup>4</sup>

#### Notes

1. The quotation from Aristotle's *De Anima* (On the soul) used in this course are from Books II and III, translated by J. A. Smith, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.html>
2. In the original lecture and audio recording, I made the mistake of saying 2350 BC instead of 2,350 years ago. The correction has been made here to read 350 BC.
3. The references to Sheldrake's theory of morphic resonance in this lecture are based on the book by Rupert Sheldrake (1988/1995), *The Presence of the Past, Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature*.
4. This lecture is an edited and revised transcript of Lecture 9 of the University of Human Unity series *Philosophy of Evolution* (2) presented on Nov. 17, 2009. Bergson's last book, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, along with seminal works of Teilhard de Chardin and Jean Gebser were explored in a subsequent series of six lectures which have not been transcribed.

## Mind and Supermind - Lecture 4

### Part 1 - Aristotle and Sheldrake Again

We have reviewed some Aristotle and some Sheldrake, because they are closely related. The combination of Sheldrake and Aristotle in the pursuit of a philosophy of evolution has a purpose. It is not that either one of those thinkers, one from two thousand years ago, and one alive and well today, are in themselves necessary for us to know thoroughly. But that line of thinking that goes from Aristotle to the Middle Ages and which became strongly revitalized in the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries in Europe, provided the foundation for scientific thinking. When we speak about the theories of Darwin and the neo-Darwinians, like Mayr, Dennett, and Dawkins, and the genome project, and genetic manipulation, and the possible future of humanity based upon science, this is all a product of Aristotelian logic.

We could see in Aristotle's *De Anima* the fundamental distinction made by Aristotle between mind and the life-body complex. Mind is something which he said is not influenced by heat, or by physical phenomena. Mind is capable of knowing what is. Mind grasps the essence of things because it is of the same nature as the essence of things. According to Aristotle, the essence of things is their form, and the form is the soul, which is somehow a projection or instrumentation of Mind. The form of something is what it becomes in its full development. That is the physical, vital, and mental aspect of the thing, when it is fully what it is. Then, what we know is the person, the form, the pattern, the meaning of the object. We perceive the form of the person, and the form of the animal, or the ecosystem, or the culture, and we think that we grasp what it is.

Aristotle says that this is because mind is able to extract the species, the essence. Then he asks the question, How does that happen? And that started the whole thing, the scientific project to define the processes of being and knowing. If mind can know what is; if mind can extract the essence of things through perception, and by some magical extraction of the species; if the essential nature can imprint itself on mind because mind is of the same substance as the essence of something, its soul, its meaning, then all those invisible holons that build up a society, those layers that become that thing can be known by us as a whole because what made that thing be what it is, is its essence or form or soul. And it is separable by mind. Somehow when mind knows the soul of something it knows that thing itself. It is not just an impression that it makes on mind, or a piecing together of fragments, as we believe in psychology today, or an idea or a concept. It is the thing itself that is known by mind. Before mind knows something it is totally impassive, totally neutral, a blank slate. When it comes into contact with something through perception, with an entity, that entity doesn't enter into the mind, mind knows that entity as such.

There is a picture of Sri Aurobindo on the screen. It is not that I have an image in my head of that picture or anything else. My mind knows that thing there. Mind is somehow able, according to Aristotle, to extract from something its essence. If it was Sri Aurobindo sitting there himself, radiating supramental force, we would experience that physically, vitally, mentally, and we would also know it. The pre-Aristotelian, pre-Socratic thinkers had this phrase, Parmenides used this phrase that Heidegger quotes all the time, 'being and knowing are the same'. This is an ancient Greek notion which we don't believe at all, normally. We believe that we really can't know anything truthfully in itself, and everything we do know is interpreted and mediated. We have spoken about mediated understanding, which is normally what we think the mind does. First it makes concepts, and it knows things as a result of putting together a lot of sense experiences and concepts. According to our constructivist theory, we

know that it is a photograph of Sri Aurobindo because we know what photographs are; we know that they can be projected on screens; we are familiar with the photograph of this person named Sri Aurobindo and as a result of all of these exposures in our lives we come to have a concept of the photograph of Sri Aurobindo, and know it's not Sri Aurobindo, it's just a photograph of him, and so on, and we forget that what is actually happening here is that mind is knowing what that is.

From this Aristotelian Greek philosophy of knowledge and the nature of mind, a lot of processes of thought and perception, and theories of knowledge, have developed which are a result of that view. So much of our thinking is determined by Aristotelian concepts, as well as the structures of science, of democracy, of religion, that are all fundamentally based on Greek concepts. For modern Western society, this all started in the 12th Century with the rediscovering of the works of Aristotle, and it was going strong up till the 18th Century. When we read a philosopher like Kant or Locke or Hegel, if you look deeply into what they are saying, they are often paraphrasing Aristotle, or they are paraphrasing Anselm, or Aquinas, who commented on Aristotle. Our culture is deeply Aristotelian because of this history. And we should note that this is the spark that ignited the scientific and technological age, from maps to GIS systems, from muskets to guided missiles, from the printing press to digital information systems.

This fundamental idea or concept of mind is that mind is not life; and that the soul has three parts: it has the mind, the life-force, and perception in the middle. Living things are characterized by 1) vital activities, growth and nutrition, reproduction, 2) perception and the senses, and 3) intellect. There are three souls, or three levels of soul, in all living things. Plants are primarily of the nutritive sort, animals are primarily nutritive and perceptive, and human beings are primarily a combination of nutritive, perceptive, and ideative or intellectual. The soul which is the cause of all that, is the entelechy, that which is and knows the whole purpose of the thing. The whole purpose of the thing includes the nutritive functions, the perceptions, and the characteristic behavior and purpose of the thing.

We have been focusing here on behavior, and how behavior is an evolutionary function. The way things behave in relation to their environment is a major aspect of evolution. Genes, and the genetic passing on of genes through reproduction, only happens as a result of successful behavioral interaction between the organism and the environment. If that is working, the genes get passed on. If it's not working then they don't. The phenotype is largely responsible for the genotype.

The question raised by Aristotle, and that has been raised ever since, is how, if mind is the final cause of everything, but is itself impassive, – it is the unmoved mover which somehow is the being of the thing that attracts it into its full nature and compels it to its purpose, – how does it do it? Science then becomes totally preoccupied with focusing this rational mind on the physics, the biology, and the behavior of things in order to try to find out how this final cause works through the other causes. We should remember that Aristotle identified four causes: the material cause, and the efficient cause (these are the ones we usually are concerned with), and the final cause, which is the total soul-nature of the thing, and the form, the formal cause goes before the final cause, as the thing that is named, the definition.

According to Aristotle these are all the causes of what is: the material stuff, the efficient (external) force, the form, and the ultimate mind-being in the universe, which is the permanent cause of everything. The Greeks were very interested in trying to find out the cause of everything, and since then, all the way up to Newton and Hegel and Darwin this has been the big question. What is the reason for anything to be what it is and to happen the way it does?



The answer has been pretty much boiled down by science to some kind of quantifiable, empirically observable efficient cause. When we think about evolution, as a result of Darwinian thought, what we think about is the efficient causes, like the environment and adaptation, and the availability of food, and the climate, the conditions of survival, within the context of the restraints of the material atoms and chemicals and organs, and so on. We don't think very much anymore about formal and final causes.

What we can see then, in Sheldrake, is the re-emergence of this idea of the formal cause of things, and the 'soul' of things determining everything, which gets co-opted by biological thinking and physics into the idea of morphic fields. Those like Sheldrake, and Capra, who try to pin down some theory of resonance, morpho-genesis, or cognition, to explain learning behavior, and the phenomena of habit, and biologists like Lorenz, observe that habit is very much responsible for what everything is and what everything does. But we have asked, Why is it necessary to have another theory like morpho-genesis - that's formative causation - to explain that in evolution, from the embryo to the full grown organism, when the genes and molecules and organs start to form, the direction in which they form is determined by the direction in which they had previously been formed? Is it because species at every level have forms, which are the result of adaptation and genetic division and reproduction, and once those processes start they result in predictable forms? The more they happen, the more that form gets established as a successful pattern or habit. And in that view, then, the whole process of evolution has been constrained not only by matter, environment, purpose, genetic variation and adaptation; it has also been constrained by morphic resonance.

Morphic resonance is supposed to explain how one species' behavior gets transferred to another species, providing continuity in the process of speciation. The theory of morpho- genesis is based on patterns of resonance that are hypothesized to explain what is already observable. Memory is there, in matter and in life. How? Sheldrake says by morphic resonance. He is adding a theory of invisible forms to explain a theory of behavior. And he says it is very much based upon the laws of physics. We may say also that it is the nature of the Chitta according to Sri Aurobindo and Vedanta.

Sheldrake's theory goes back to the theory of a person named Waddington. Waddington created a design that you might have seen; it looks like waves and troughs, and at the top of the troughs is a ball. When that ball starts to roll it goes into those troughs. His theory was that when the embryo is developing there is this force of development which tends to go in certain directions, or pathways, that have already been taken by members of that species previously. If you go back to the previous species, from which that species diversified or descended, there is a retention of many of those troughs, but there are new troughs that have also come into being. These are conventionally known as creodes, or developmental pathways. And then they ask the question why, Why are there developmental pathways (or how do they maintain themselves over multiple generations and speciations)? The answer: Because of morphic resonance. Once those pathways get established, then they are maintained in a subtle, invisible, non-spatio-temporal world where all the forms are collected forever. That is supposed to explain learning, and habit, and memory.

Most of the progressive biological theories of evolution today are heavily determined by physics, and this one, obviously, is heavily determined by physics. The whole question of evolution is very much a preoccupation of physics these days, and of course chemistry and biology. Ilya Prigogine has a quite good theory that is commonly accepted, which says the way species maintain themselves is through the dissipation of energy. There are energy fields, that we are; we consume energy; and that energy dissipating through us enables us to maintain ourselves consistently as who we are, and what we are,

and how we are. We will explore this theory in more detail later.

The dissipation of energy is a factor of life. This is a physical theory, and it supports learning. Learning is another phenomenon of behavior that is manifested by all species. So dissipation of energy alone doesn't explain life; there is also learning behavior that is going on, insight behavior among lower animal species. Cognitive behavior, perception, is going on even in single celled organisms. Biophysicists such as Capra then add another dimension to the dissipation of energy to account for learning and habit: cognition. So mind is also going on even at the lowest level of life. In between dissipation of energy and mind, there is autopoiesis, self-reproduction, the stability and continuity of the individual form. The individual as well as the species is constantly reproducing itself, not only through cell division and sexual reproduction, but the cells are constantly remaking themselves in the body of the organism. We are making ourselves all the time – 'autopoiesis'.

This theory of a combination of these three levels that are integrated: cognitive, autopoietic, and dissipative, (mental/vital/physical) to explain the processes of life, is apparently widely accepted in biology today (Capra, 1996). But this still does not explain the process of evolution. How does variation along a pathway, adaptation along a pathway, and speciation along a pathway actually take place? We have seen in the book of Jablonka and Lamb (*Evolution in Four Dimensions*, 2005) how there are these four strong factors in variation: genetic variation and epigenetic variation going on through chemical processes, behavioral variation going on through cooperation of organisms in the environment, and symbolic variation, or communication, which is going on within species, especially in human beings, and in inter-species communication between humans and domesticated animals, for example, but also most notably among whales, elephants, primates, bees, etc., and some symbolic communication is going on at the lower levels of life, for example in ant societies.

The big question that remains, however, for Sheldrake, for the Darwinists, and for everyone, is 'What determines how the thing will be, which isn't yet existing, the new thing, - and the new patterns that have been emerging forever. Some of them have taken billions of years, and others only a generation. But new patterns emerge in life, and they are generally better adapted and more successful than the previous patterns of life. What determines the pathway of success for the novel creation? Prigogine speaks about bifurcation in energy systems at the point of disequilibrium, where the new and unpredictable emerges.

Where does that cause come from?, which is very similar to the question, Where does the first cause come from, especially for something like morphogenesis, if everything is dependent upon forms that are already resonant with other forms. Then where does the first form come from? And how does the novelty of the new form come from that, as a major variation on the pre-existing forms? We ended with that question last time.

What is the question that is left, after we acknowledge that consciousness is evolving? It is there in matter, as evidenced by perception at every level of life. Mind is there in matter. Life is there in matter, it's the strongest force. Life, mind, and matter are different principles that govern the behavior of living forms. They are all there. Everyone knows that now. Sri Aurobindo predicted that this would be recognized by science in 1920, and now you can't read a book about evolution which doesn't recognize that all three principles are active at every level throughout history, in the field of evolutionary life. Is that enough for us to know, then? Does that explain everything? Do we need to know anything else in order to understand evolution?

Before we try to finally answer that question, I want to give another example of...

The Logos – the idea that creation is intelligent. It is easy for a physicist to say today that this world and this evolving universe are intelligent. Sheldrake begins his book with a theory that I'm going to get into next time, called the 'Anthropic Principle'. In the middle of Dawkins' most recent book there is a chapter on the Anthropic Principle, and Paul Davies, who wrote *God and the New Physics* (1983), and *Superforce* (1984), and admits that there must be much more going on in the universe than what we can empirically evaluate, has a more recent book about the Anthropic Principle. The best known physicist to write on the subject was probably David Bohm (1980).

The Anthropic Principle is related to the ancient philosophical idea of the Logos. Basically it says simply that the universe has existed long enough, and the four known primary force fields, have existed in the relationship that they exist in long enough, according to universal mathematical constants, such that carbon-based life had to emerge on earth during the last three billion years. And this is knowable by mind at this time because that's the way the universe is made. According to the Anthropic Principle - anthropos or the human being is at the center of this principle - the whole evolution of the universe isn't caused by the necessity of consciousness evolving in the human being, but is in itself composed in such a way that time and space and all the mathematical systems that explain the physical universe are necessary for the emergence of human consciousness at this time.

This is the way physicists are now looking at what was previously known as the Logos, the intelligence of the material universe. It doesn't imply any deity or any divinity or anything else. It is just that the mathematical constants of the universe themselves are necessary for the emergence of mind; therefore mind is somehow inherent in time and space.

This is a very popular way of thinking today, and there is one fantastic book titled *The Cosmological Anthropic Principle* by a couple of physicists named Barrow and Tipler (1986), which is a very hard-nosed work of mathematical physics, but in it there are a few chapters written for the biologist and for the layman. So we can get to know a little more about this theory from it. It's a widely recognized theory today; but it has become so especially in the last ten to twenty years. Sheldrake points out in his book, *The Presence of the Past*, that it has only been since the sixties that physicists and cosmologists have known for sure that the universe itself is evolving. When Einstein was around, that wasn't known, and Einstein believed that the cosmos was invariable. These are indications that consciousness is evolving, along with the many indications provided by technological innovation between 1500 CE and the present.

Evolution is a fundamental principle of existence, in the understanding of science today. Is this important? One of the questions we asked in the first class of the first series last year was, 'How does our understanding of nature and of the principle of evolution give meaning, value, - enhance the value - of our existence?' Can we base a philosophy of existence, including our value system, what we live for, what is meaningful to us, on this understanding of nature?

Whitehead says that evolutionary theory has been so predominant for the last hundred years that it necessarily constitutes a very integral part of our beliefs and values. And understanding it helps us to live our lives. This was a question for the philosophy of evolution. In what way does knowledge of evolution influence our values and the way we live our lives? And if it does at all, then that's a very important part of a philosophy of evolution; not just the science of evolution, but the philosophy of evolution. It is central to some people's lives and the way they understand existence. It may even be essential to the survival of our species. If so, Whitehead's theory is totally correct. That is why we are

doing this course. We think that it may be important for us to understand thoroughly the philosophy of evolution, if it results in helping us become evolutionary beings. Otherwise it is just an academic exercise.

## Part 2 - Sheldrake and Sri Aurobindo

I want to go back now to something I talked about in the early part of the first series last year – the hox gene. Here is something well known to biology, like the behavioral theory of Lorenz and other theories that are very well known, and this one operates on a very fundamental genetic molecular level: it determines the body plan, whether an organism is a starfish or an octopus, or an insect, or a four-legged animal. In the process of embryonic development, the body plan, and the construction of specialized organs such as the eye, are under the control of such regulatory genes.

Most notable among these are the hox genes, which produce proteins that bind with other genes and thus determine their expression at exactly the right moment, so that the unfolding of the organic complex at a certain moment in the development of the embryo is or is not a stomach or an arm. This hox gene complex has been evolving since the origin of life and is a fundamental mechanism in every creature and in every species, throughout evolutionary life. The hox genes in us have been evolving for three billion years, and they have gradually complexified so that the human being has thirty-eight hox genes in each cell. Primates have thirty-eight, and simpler organisms may have three, ten, sixteen, or whatever, but hox genes are always there and they perform that function. My question, or my observation, is that since hox genes are known to perform that function, and since they have been doing it ever since the beginning of life, and they do it the way it needs to be done almost every time - they obviously contain some kind of memory of what they are supposed to do when they are exposed to the chemical environment that stimulates their function, the epigenetic chemical stimulus, temperature, and everything that has to be just right to trigger a shift from the eye development to the reproductive organ development, in the right sequence of the unfolding of the organism. They know when to trigger each of those things. It is part of their function, it's in their matter.

So, why does there need to be a morphogenetic, or in other words a formative cause in addition to that material organic process itself? How does it help us to know the physics of attractors, this idea of Waddington who goes on to say that the morphogenetic fields are complexes of subtle organizing factors which cause the originally indefinite course of the individual parts of the germ to become definite and specific. Formative fields cause the previously indefinite genetic material to become what it becomes. It is a self-organizing principle which is not in the gene, it's in the morphic field of the gene. That vibrational field causes the originally indefinite course of the individual parts of the germ to become definite and specific, and furthermore it causes this to occur in compliance with a typical pattern. Waddington's concept of creodes canalizing development towards particular goals strongly resembles the idea of the pulling or attracting pathways of development towards ends already given by the theory of entelechy, the soul of the form.

The mind wants to explain how this hox gene enables the organism to develop systematically in the embryo. Aristotle tried with the idea of soul: it's the form of the thing itself which is attracting and compelling all the levels of the organism to grow, up until the time the organism is a full grown mature thing. There is this subtle cause, this final cause which is the soul of the thing itself. Now instead of the soul of the thing itself being the cause of all that, or instead of the hox gene being the organic material cause of all that, there is this idea that there are troughs and attractors and basins of morphogenetic

fields that attract and push and compel the organic process into its pathways.

This is an intensely fascinating idea because something is compelling these organic systems into their pathways, and they are following those pathways out of habit, which has been reproduced an infinite number of times in the species. So it is going on, this is what we know for sure; development is going on. But how is it going on? This is the thing science is trying to explain, with all of these theories from the hox gene to the morphogenetic field to the soul theory of Aristotle, and innumerable theories that try to understand how what happens, happens. But we know what happens. Why can't it just be explained by the drive of nature which itself acquires the information through evolution, stores it in its material memory (*chitta*), and remembers as much as it has acquired up till now when it is needed.

But, as much as this physical consciousness has acquired, it also knows when it doesn't know enough to solve all of its problems. There is at times a pressure to go beyond the limits of the already evolved mental-vital structures, in relation to the inner and outer needs and demands of the being. There is a drive to evolve beyond where we are now. Why couldn't that always have been there at every level of speciation, so the combination between the drive of the life force itself and the information that is being acquired every second by every cell, organ, and organism - the combination of the drive and the learning process, the consciousness, the cognition, - why isn't that enough in itself to determine the leap? Why should there be a cause other than the drive of the organism itself? The drive itself, the life force, can be infinite and eternal, and the space-time world is temporal and finite, and the combination of that unlimited force and the limitations of the cosmos, that combination of freedom and restraint, might be enough in itself for evolution to go through all of its pathways and create new ones.

Sri Aurobindo, however, has made it clear that the next bifurcation leading to the supramental evolution has to take place from top down, not from the bottom up, which means from a higher mentality opening to a supra mentality and bringing that dynamic down into life. The human being already is able to take a leap in evolution, before there can be the manifestation of a supramental being or species, which will have completely different cells, organs, and everything else. That he foresaw, long ago, down the road. First, there has to take place an evolution of supramental consciousness in the phenome of the human being, before there is any question of genetic change and speciation.

The possibility of a supramental evolution, not just a transformation of consciousness but a genetically transformed supramental being, in relation to the history of evolution as we know it, could take place within a few hundred or a few thousand years, instead of a few million years. But first there has to be the development of the supra-mentalized mental being, which could take place in a few lifetimes. That's Sri Aurobindo's project. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have manifested an energy which is supposed to help us transcend the mental being.

Now why is it necessary to do that? This is something that has been implied by the survey of Aristotelian thinking we have been doing. Aristotelian thinking is what we normally know of as mind, the behavior of the mental being; it's our pattern of empirical, rational understanding, ethical behavior, everything about the mental being which was known and defined by Aristotle two thousand years ago. What scientists are doing with the theory of evolution is just a spin on that same mental behavior that's been developing, not evolving, but developing for a few thousand years. It is an understanding of the processes of nature as observed and understood by the mental being. And, as we have seen, there are aspects of its complexity that this mind cannot grasp. The process is more intelligent than the mind. But the final form of mind is attracting us toward something else than this limited form of rational mind that we know.

What we are learning, what Bergson tells us for example, is that a non-Aristotelian branch of knowledge has to evolve. Bergson, and many psychologists in the 20th Century, and Sri Aurobindo, tell us is that it's possible to take another, more intuitive track of knowledge, and to come to know things directly in themselves, rather than to have only a mediated understanding of things. We need to have an energetic integral identification with things themselves, and to know differently than the mind knows, in order to know more than the essence or form of things, in order to know actively how things actually function, because there is such an underlying intuitional cognition in nature itself, and it is an integral part of the body-life-mind-soul complex. In order for that larger understanding to emerge into consciousness, Yoga is very helpful, because it teaches us to step back from our habits of mental thinking, and our habits of vital interaction, and our habitual unconscious behavior patterns, and even our physical dependencies, and to allow this freer and more dynamic intuitive force of consciousness to radiate itself in us, through us, and bring to us - through knowledge by identity - an intuitive and creative direct knowledge of things. That would be a non-Aristotelian diversification of human thinking and of human being, on the basis of potentialities that already exist in us.<sup>1</sup>

#### Notes

1.This is an edited and revised transcript of Lecture 10 in the University of Human Unity series Philosophy of Evolution (2), presented on Nov. 24, 2009.

## Mind and Supermind - Lecture 5

### Sri Aurobindo's View

The question we ended with last time, and have ended with a few times over the last twenty-five sessions or whatever it has been, is 'Do we need some understanding, some theory other than the theories that the philosophy and science of evolution have given us so far?' We have reviewed many such theories, and I think we've learned a lot. We can probably visualize what evolution means as far as human beings understand it. We should be able to visualize it pretty easily.

We have surveyed repeatedly what could be called structural evolution, and that's mainly what Darwinian evolutionary theory is about. And we know so much about the evolution of functions: mobility, food gathering, perception, orientation, survival, child rearing, habitation building, associating with others for the sake of enjoyment, the habitual nature of the behavior of living things. And also, if we go to the next level of structure, function, and purpose, we know for what end they work the way they do. And we can measure very precisely - and biologists do this all the time these days - how efficient animal behavior is, and insect behavior, and how precisely the animal brain interprets visual imagery and other stimuli. And we know that all of these structures and functions, as Aristotle said 2,350 hundred years ago, are for a purpose.

It seems that nothing that has evolved has been literally by chance. Everything is determined by the constraints of what has already evolved, the constraints of the environment, and the pressures that bring about the necessity for a particular change along a particular pathway. That is with regard to the speciation of creatures, but even internally, when the embryo develops it develops under genetic, epigenetic, and behavioral pressures for its purposes, according to the body plan and the potentiality of the species.

So when Aristotle says that we know the forms of things, we know the essence of things, he means that the mind is able to focus on structures and forms, and patterns of behavior, and derive exactly what they are, why they are, and for what purpose. So he can say that in nature, the definition of nature is that, nothing happens without a purpose. Nature is that entity, that process of life, that happens for a purpose.

The purposes for which life happens are also well known - mostly generation, self replication, growth, stability, enjoyment, survival, and at the highest level - truth, harmony, beauty, freedom, etc. And when we survey all the examples that we have - paleontological and biological, zoological, and ethological, Lorenz's study of the behaviors of animals, and how they pass on traits to each other through behavior and not just genetics, we see that the behavior of animals is quite parallel to our behavior in almost every way. We just add a kind of veneer of value to the things that we do. We ritualize everything the way animals do and we mostly do what animals do until we get to the point of abstracting, and planning, and designing, and all of the things that we understand to be the higher functions of the mind. And when we see that more creative mind emerging on the long pathway of the evolution of life, when we see mind really emerging as the dominant evolutionary force in humanity, then we see those things that we identify more precisely with mind, such as ethical behavior. The human being is more social than any other species, and its fundamental trait is that it is capable of delaying gratification for the well being of the group.

Once we recognize the emergence of that pattern, whether it's at the tribal archaic level, or at a

magical, or mythical, or religious, or rational level, we just see increasing sophistication and complexity of what is characteristically human, which is basically rational behavior. There are undoubtedly all kinds of irrational things mixed in, but the fundamental patterns we observe are predominantly rational in human societies, even killing each other. It's a highly rational behavior.

One of the reasons for that behavior is that we are not free ranging animals. We require a stable habitat, and because we require a stable habitat over a long period of generations in order to be successful, we must secure those habitats against others who would encroach upon them. Even at this point, when the human species is capable of global cooperation, we still have a kind of vestigial interest in securing habitat. So, the Bush Doctrine which was published in 2001 or so, said something like "We will protect any country in the world that allows us to use its resources, but any country in the world which doesn't allow that, we have the unilateral right to conquer". This is written in a document that is called the National Security Strategy of the United States.

Our habitat now, by definition, is the globe. That's good, because if you look at what President Obama has been doing in China and India, it's getting friendlier. For the most part it's cooperative now. India depends upon this kind, this brand, or this species of ethical behavior that is manifested by Americans, although it may be a very different species of ethical behavior than the one practiced historically by Indians. But they recognize in each other qualities that both need. The idea of Auroville is that all of the more sophisticated cultures of the world would come together and learn to appreciate each other's uniqueness. And only by being exposed to complex differential patterns is it possible to perceive unity; otherwise it's uniformity that you perceive, or that you want, but if you really see that all the different subspecies of humanity, whose behaviors are so different, are manifesting principles that are the same across the board, they just have their own cultural and traditional way of manifesting those principles, then suddenly you understand the meaning of unity. It doesn't mean that everyone has to do it the same way. It means that the more differently people do it, the more 'one' it can be. And the more likely evolution will happen, at this point.

It wasn't always that way. It was previously more necessary for cultures to combat each other in order for certain traits to have an opportunity to survive and so on, but now we are at a different stage of evolution. When we look at this schemata of evolutionary patterns and processes, we recognize that the fundamental characteristics of all living behavior and of all of these evolutionary stages from the amoeba to mammals, when we reduce them to fundamental principles on a physical level, to processes of energy transfer, and of the dissipation of energy in order to maintain the stability of a form, we also see that all life is interested in replicating itself, in autopoiesis. And even in the individual, we are constantly replicating ourselves. Our cells are doing that all the time. We are autopoietic, - self making. And all species make themselves in relation to other species and the environment. And then, we notice that this whole process of energy transfer – the organization of energy for the sake of maintaining and reproducing - constitutes cognition, cognitive processes. Every transfer of energy constitutes a bit of information. So every movement of every living thing is at the same time evaluating its relationship with its environment, spatially for example, and evaluating its own level of energy, and how much it needs to acquire, and where it's going to acquire it, in order to grasp an immediate or longer term objective. And so, what we call logical rational behavior is on another level an energy transfer through the neurons, giving us information about our inner/outer environment. And that flow of neurons is a process of the dissipation of energy that is highly organized, focused, conservative, and intelligent.

So, when we look at this picture in the human context, we notice that today we have problems of survival: that in the last hundred years the population, which never got larger than 1 billion up until



1850, became two billion in 1920, and between 1920 and 2010 it became seven billion. Everyone can look at an exponential population graph that shows humanity going like this, a straight line, for a million years and then suddenly in a hundred years it shoots up six times higher than it was before. Mathematically as well as socio-politically, if we look at the 20th Century, we can see that the rational mind, which has characterized the whole evolution of the human species, and which is capable of absolutely incredible things, – how incredibly the spirit of knowledge has manifested in the human being in just the last hundred years. It has made available information and technology that would never have been dreamed by any human being prior to the 20th Century. In spite of that, and because we can see this continuum of evolution for three billion years, (and if we look at it genetically the continuum is absolutely unquestionable), we come to the conclusion that something else needs to be possible. Another stage needs to be reached in consciousness because the rational mind cannot figure it out at this point. It is using too much energy to reproduce itself, and its information is not enabling it to balance itself with the environment and with the other species on earth. Something new needs to emerge. Because of this metaphor of evolutionary development for millennia, that we have been studying, we know that it must emerge.

In the last thirty years, twenty-five percent of vertebrate species have become extinct. In just the last thirty years. Vertebrate species - those are our cousins. So we are in the midst of what is known as a mass extinction event. And there have been about six or eight of these in known history, six major ones plus a bunch of other minor ones, but six major ones in the history of life for the last three billion years. So just with the information that's available to us, even without visionaries like Henri Bergson and Sri Aurobindo, we come to the conclusion that the rational ethical mind can't solve all of its problems. So either we evolve, or we head toward extinction. There is no longer any question about that. It is not something that people think about everyday, but it's very easy for anybody to think about because there is an enormous amount of information that is available, and it's constantly being updated.

There are people who are not worried about this at all. They maintain their own habitat and environment and that is exactly the principle that has enabled societies to exist for thousands of years. This is a well-established principle. It's been viable for a very long time. And you have other behavior patterns that are reversions, to revert to the mythical, and the religious, and to jack up revelation and the end of the world scenarios, where we meet judgment day and pass into the next sphere, and the USA is full of that one. And the radical Islamic version, that we may as well go to the other side because it's better than this one, and if we can take a few with us why not. And on down the line there are people who revert back to nature, - we are going to minimize our footprint and get ready a stock pile of goods, and find a nice safe place to live off the grid and maybe we will be the flag bearers of the new species, if we can just figure out a safe way to survive Armageddon.

There are all kinds of strange ways that people have of trying to come to terms with something that science and philosophy understand very well and very rationally, and so there are plenty of people working on solutions, - solar energy and global cooperation, climate change reduction and population control, and all of these good ideas that are being understood and implemented on a large or a small scale. We have the Copenhagen Conference coming up for exactly that purpose; it started in 1992 with the Rio Summit. The primary idea was the possibility for nations to cooperate to preserve the biosphere. But, population continues to grow full speed ahead, pollution full speed ahead, extinction rates continue to rise full speed ahead, and even though the rational mind understands all of these things, somehow it is not able to really make a difference. In fact, if it reflects a little bit it finds out that it's the problem.

Then, philosophically, we've been exploring this at length. Bergson's critique of Aristotle dovetails with Sri Aurobindo's ideas completely. He says that the problem is, yes, as Aristotle said, the mind knows forms, but it can't know the matter of things, it can only know the essences and definitions of things, and then it tries to know and define everything, and it uses all of that information to create its technology and make itself more comfortable and powerful. That's what the mind does. Bergson says, 'But actually, what the mind knows is not the reality of things or the truth of things; it's just a mental representation of things that it uses for its own purposes, and we don't really know what evolution is and what's driving evolution.'

And if we think about things that have evolved, in a modular sense, like sight, vision, - that we can see everything perfectly, - that's amazing. It's not the structure of the eyeball that sees things. We have sight, everything has sight, and we have language. There is no way to explain language as such. You can find structural patterns that make you think you've understood something about language, but in fact language is a human ability that enables us to share ideas which exist nowhere, the invisible spiritual realm of understanding is conveyed through language in a way that we all understand, and we haven't the vaguest idea of how that works. You can't explain it in terms of structure or function, or purpose, although it has structure and it has function and it has purpose. But it's language, the symbolic communication of meaning.

So the mystical inclination in human beings is to realize that what actually exists, what is, is itself quite extraordinary. This subject of evolution, if we look at it over three billion years, and at this extraordinary phenomenon of nature, and the fact that there is purpose, the fact that there is function, that things function for a purpose; the fact that there are structures that systematically serve functions and purposes, is amazing. The fact that life on this globe is made of consciousness, is itself an amazing fact that is not explained by any of those structures, functions, behaviors, and so on.

Sri Aurobindo, then, makes this inference. He says that this amazing phenomenon of consciousness that is evolving, from the one celled organism that is cognitive of its environment to the most aesthetically refined human being, this evolution of consciousness couldn't be a product of quanta of energy, it couldn't be a product of life force, it couldn't be a product of the rational intelligence, because the rational intelligence can hardly understand anything, even though it is very practical and clever. This whole phenomenon of consciousness is so vast and incredibly intricate and incomprehensible, when you get right down to it, that there must be another principle of consciousness greater than mind, life, and physical structure/matter, that was there from the beginning and makes it possible that there will be a next stage. That that original consciousness-force is the secret source of all of these patterns and functions and behaviors, and that it will emerge in itself, at its own level of quality which, he said, is as different from the human rational mind as the human rational mind is different from the ordinary mind of the beast in the forest. This principle of consciousness is prior to the evolution of material and organic and symbolic structures, - this theory is an inversion of the Anthropic Principle.

If we take the fact that in the last hundred and fifty years the science of evolution itself has evolved - that none of these things were known before that time, and in fact the genetic continuity of the species wasn't known until the 1960s - the idea of Mendelian inheritance wasn't integrated into evolutionary theory until the forties. But the continuum of the biomolecular genome wasn't known even in the forties. It has required highly sophisticated instruments to observe it and only since the eighties has it been securely known, so that we can look at any species, any bone marrow, and find out where that entity fits into the entire structure of evolution.

If we put together Bergson's and Sri Aurobindo's consciousness in 1910, their totally synthetic highly mystically inspired consciousness full of everything that was known at that time about evolution, we can put one and one together and we can see how Bergson and Sri Aurobindo were able to combine this worldview of evolution and the spiritual view of transcendence, and integrate them completely, and then say that the real driving force in evolution is the higher consciousness. And it has been moving everything along - the will of the spirit is the essential thing behind every movement, and it itself will emerge at some point in a form that is its full embodiment. Everything else along the way is temporary, partial, and eventually the supramental consciousness will have a form of its own, as a result of structural evolution, but also as its cause.

I'm going to skim through some of Sri Aurobindo's statements about this. I recommend that you read this chapter titled 'The Nature of the Supermind', in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. This is what I just said, but I was trying to put it in our context. So, he says, "It will then be evident that though the supermind is supra-rational to our intelligence and its workings occult to our apprehension, it is nothing irrationally mystic but rather its existence and emergence is a logical necessity of the nature of existence, always provided we grant that not matter or mind alone but spirit is the fundamental reality and everywhere a universal presence."... because mind cannot emerge from inconscient matter; it has to have been there before. Inconscient matter can't emerge from nothing. So spirit had to be there before matter. Provided we grant that not matter nor mind alone but spirit is the fundamental reality..., "All things are a manifestation of the infinite spirit out of its own being, out of its own consciousness and by the self-realizing, self-determining, self-fulfilling power of that consciousness."<sup>1</sup>

The infinite cannot possibly be embodied, cannot be seen, cannot be known; it's infinite. We may say that it "organizes by the power of its self-knowledge", and that doesn't mean our kind of self-knowledge. It means knowledge by the Self, inherent knowing by the power of its self, knowing itself as itself, by that law of its own manifestation of being in the universe, from which everything emerges, and "not only the material universe present to our senses but whatever lies behind it on whatever planes of existence. All is organized by it not under any inconscient compulsion, not according to a mental fantasy or caprice, but in its own infinite, spiritual freedom according to the self-truth of its being, its infinite potentialities, and its will of self-creation out of those potentialities, and the law of this self-truth is the necessity that compels created things to act and evolve each according to its own nature."<sup>2</sup>

"The Intelligence - to give it an inadequate name, - the Logos," (the supermind that thus organizes its own manifestation in time and space and under all the contingencies of time and space, under the contingencies of imperfection because time and space imply imperfection, because you cannot have change if you don't have imperfection. So, that organizes its own manifestation, not the manifestation of itself as such but its own manifestation of what is, everything that is potentially, which is not itself but of itself), "is evidently something infinitely greater, more extended in knowledge, more compelling in self-power, larger in both the delight of its self-existence and the delight of its active being and works than the mental intelligence which is to us the highest realized degree and expression of consciousness."<sup>3</sup> Our sense-mind, our rational mind, that is what we think of as consciousness, but to Sri Aurobindo this universe, and this planet, and this extraordinary phenomenon of conscious evolution is so infinitely more complex in its power and knowledge that we cannot possibly even begin to conceive of how everything really works.

"It is to this intelligence, infinite in itself but freely organizing and self-determiningly organic in its self-creation and its works, that we may give for our present purpose the name of the divine supermind

or gnosis.”<sup>4</sup>

Now the transformation of consciousness that Sri Aurobindo is suggesting as the next stage of evolution is That. Then, for our purposes, we need to know how. We only need to know ‘How?’ A thousand years ago, we needed to know how to think logically, and a thousand years before that we needed to know how to respect kings. And a thousand years before that we needed to know how to conduct magical rites. The evolution of the eye and the stomach did not require thinking about how to help them evolve, because of the inner compulsion of the self-nature of existence. Now we are rising out of that, and into What?, is the pressing question.

Bergson and Sri Aurobindo have made it absolutely crystal clear, the difference between mental understanding and Supramental understanding, is that mental understanding knows things ‘outside’ that it ‘represents’ to itself and analyzes. Supramental understanding knows everything from inside, in its energy of being. Everything outside is inside, but we don’t realize that; but that is the idea, and only when we stop looking outside and depending on sight and sound, and logical inference, and surrender in a particular way to a descending power of consciousness-force, can we begin to learn to know from inside the thing which is outside. And this knowing is not representational or analytical; it is an immediate and total identity. Then, the identity of things is no longer in relation to our personality. Our personality is gone.

Listen to this, “The Yoga of perfection necessary to this change has, so far as we have been considering it,”...this change is not going to come about by itself, so far as we have understood it,... “has consisted in a preparatory purification of the mental, vital and physical nature,” ...a purification of our habits of thinking and needing... “a liberation from the knots of the lower Prakriti”... and we have seen several chapters in *The Synthesis of Yoga* about the nature of mind and what’s necessary in order to transition ourselves out of our normal mentality to this other type of knowing, ... the movements in us that are so established by evolution that we cannot function without them, or so we think, ...to liberate ourselves from those patterns of habitual behavior - after purifying the existing patterns of habitual behavior, then liberating ourselves from them, - with “a consequent replacement of the egoistic state always subject to the ignorant and troubled action of the desire soul, by a large and luminous static equality which quiets the reason, the emotional mind, the life mind and the physical nature, and brings into us the peace and freedom of the spirit, and a dynamical substitution of the action of the supreme and universal divine Shakti...”<sup>5</sup> The force in the plants, in the gods, and in all the intermediate levels of being are replaced by that. And from that consciousness-force, all form emerges.

Under the control of the will, the essential will of being itself, - not something outside in another world, the essential will of being itself in us and in everything, under the control of the divine consciousness-force, chit-shakti, - and that has the power to do what our mind does, better than our mind could ever do it, to do what our life does, better than our life could ever do it, and even to transform our physical body into something very close to immortality, an action, a dynamical action of the divine shakti through us, - when all of those other layers are removed and replaced by a static equality, with no reaction to anything, no impulse to anything, but everything in us, and the will that makes everything be what it is in us, is surrendered to that, - that can move us; an action whose complete operation must be preceded by the perfection (purification and liberation) of the natural instruments, - mind, life, and body.

This is the dialectic of transformation, between the ordinary functioning of the instruments, the static equality, and the transformation of the instruments by that other force that is available if we would but

let it act. This is Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical yogic integration of the philosophy of evolution and the possibility of spiritual transformation. According to him, this is the key to the human predicament, and all of that other stuff, all of that patching up of things that is just a temporary patching up of things by the rational mind... it is not going to be enough. The silencing and purifying of the mind and the life-force, and the surrendering of the self to a higher consciousness-force – as he said also in *The Life Divine*, is the essential first step for us to be able to do that: to put ourselves in direct contact with the Divine Reality. That means the Mother's Force, the Divine Shakti. If one doesn't find a way to do that, then all of this is just out of the question, basically.

He asks, Can this be done by the mind? "Is it to be always through the mind only, on the mind plane, or in some greater supramental formulation that is more proper to a divine action and which will take up and replace the mental function? If the mind is to be always the instrument, then although we shall be conscious of a diviner Power initiating and conducting all our inner and outer human action, yet it will have to formulate its knowledge, will, Ananda and all things else in the mental figure, and that means to translate them into an inferior kind of functioning other than the supreme workings native to the divine consciousness and its Shakti."<sup>6</sup>

We spend a lot of time trying to understand and receive and visualize, and transmit, this potential Divine Shakti mentally, and that gets us a certain way up the ladder, but that's not it. As he says in *The Life Divine*, even if we transcend the rational mind completely into illumined mind and into intuitive mind, it still isn't going to change anything. It is just a higher mind, a more luminous vision, but the world keeps on happening, life keeps on happening, the way it happens.

The opening of the higher levels of mind is a necessary process, but then he says, even that illumined intuitive mind has to abdicate to the supermind and that supermind has to build in us an instrument for action and energy and knowledge, which is superior to the highest spiritualized mind. It is another way of being. And he says that we cannot know it by any level of mind. And although we have to go up that ladder of universalizing and de-personalizing and illumining this mental instrument, still that's not it. Then, to make this clear, he says with a certain finality, "The mind spiritualized, purified, liberated, perfected, within its own limits may come as near as possible to a faithful mental translation, but we shall find that this is after all a relative fidelity and an imperfect perfection. The mind by its very nature cannot render with an entirely right rightness or act in the unified completeness of the divine knowledge, will and Ananda because it is an instrument of dealing with the division of the finite on the basis of division. A secondary instrument therefore, it isn't capable of the dynamic unity of the all in us and us in the all because it puts up this dividing screen and represents its knowledge."<sup>7</sup> It is an instrument that has evolved, but its work doesn't have much of a future. Would it recognize the more evolved? Yes, because the higher mind, and the illumined mind have truth vision.

My experience with the power of the Mother (Mirra Alfassa) was that it was possible to see in her that the luminosity and rapidity, and accuracy and delight, that she was manifesting, wasn't ordinary, but it was not possible to understand what it was. For me personally, I witnessed it a number of times, and I could never even recall its quality from one time till the next. It was so 'other' than my experience, but it was what it was, and that in itself is something indicative of what is being spoken about. I'm sure many people had the same experience with Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo says, if you are secure in the higher mind then you have achieved what is the goal of most spiritual traditions. So you can recognize in a Zen master that universality of knowledge and balance and sympathy and compassion and you know that that person is stabilized in that higher mind.

And that's a wonderful thing. That constitutes liberation. Sri Aurobindo is saying that this liberation is just a step along the way, and what really has to happen in terms of evolution is that the supreme, all-nature of things, the supermind has itself to descend into the mental, vital, physical instrument and begin to build there its instrumentation.

The previous chapter (in *The Synthesis of Yoga*) to this one that I have been referring to on Intuitive Mind is called Faith and Shakti. When you are in touch with that force, not just mentally, but when you are in touch really with its potentiality and your mind begins to dissolve in a universal appreciation of, for example, force manifesting in all of these civilizations and beings, and consciousness manifesting in all of these individuals and groups, and you are seeing things and knowing things in terms of consciousness and force, and you are feeling that as being a universal infinite potentiality, then you must have faith that it can build its instrument in you, because you see it. But, if you are not that much in touch with it, if you don't fulfill that first requirement which Sri Aurobindo says is necessary - to put yourself in touch with that reality itself, if you haven't found a way to do that either through the Mother, or *Savitri*, or your own inner contact, then your faith is not going to be active and dynamic.

But there is a point when you become so conscious of that infinite potential in all of its little imperfect manifestations that you give up judging, and you have faith that it can work more directly through you and your relationships, and in all of these temporal imperfections, and you surrender to it. But that is a 'come and go' thing for a long time, because we keep getting pulled back into our sense of right and wrong, and our preferences, and our limited 'understanding of things', and how it is, and how it's supposed to be, and what "she said", and so on...

For the human being, for quite a few thousand years now, evolution's primary instrument has been speech. And we only know these things because Sri Aurobindo took the trouble to formulate them in a particularly powerful and dynamic way in speech (especially *Savitri*), while at the same time he was cultivating receptivity to them. And so, those who are able to hear, let them hear, and those who are able to see, let them see, because that's how human culture evolves.

Bergson (in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*) is very brilliant with his survey of history and how great mystics who have achieved liberation, from time to time throughout history, have brought that force itself into the current status of social development and norms of understanding and given them an impetus that has carried things forward for another period of history. According to him, all along the way of human evolution there have been these descents, these Avatars that haven't come from a tradition, they have brought into the tradition a whole new energy and possibility. And Bergson says that now, and this is in the 1930's, he says now, in this age of science and technology, when that mystical union and manifestation occurs it will bring a force of consciousness into the current level of human development that will enable the human being to transcend itself, - 1937. *The Life Divine* was published in 1940.

Can we become evolutionary beings? Can our beings be enhanced by our effort of understanding in this way? Or, is this just a mental game we play? It is possible that evolution takes place gradually over a long period of time without human effort. Sri Aurobindo said very clearly that it could take a millennium. This new force is going to manifest, but it can take a millennium, or it can go very quickly in relation to this process of Yoga. The supramental force is working, but will the human being enhance it and amplify it and deliberately raise it to its full capacity, or will it just gradually improve the mental nature. Sri Aurobindo says that's also a possibility - that it can come to a point where mind itself is illumined and human civilization becomes a semi-transformed type of society, type of being,

the superman. Or will the supramental evolve its own instrumentation through human sacrifice, human self-giving, human transformation, to the point wherein Death becomes the bridge to reincarnation on a quantum level of difference from the normal pattern.

In the Buddhist system the goal of reincarnation is to come back with compassion for the realization and liberation of others. Sri Aurobindo says that's not enough. That is fine; it is going to keep going on, but it doesn't change anything. The idea of *Savitri*<sup>7</sup> is that that force enters into the mortal and prepares the mortal before death for every experience that normally happens after death. Then, when death occurs, it is a direct synthesis and rebirth on a level that is a quantum difference from the human. That is what *Savitri* is about. As such, it is the opening of an evolutionary pathway.<sup>8</sup>

#### Notes

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1970 ed.), p. 757
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Ibid,
5. Ibid, p. 755
6. Ibid
7. *Savitri* is a long *mantric* poem in which Sri Aurobindo transmits the Shakti spoken about in these pages of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, as well as being a narrative of the transformation of death.
8. This is an edited transcription of Lecture 11, *Philosophy of Evolution* (2), 2009.

## Mind and Supermind - Lecture 6

### Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Supermind

This course which is called 'The Philosophy of Evolution – Mind and Supermind' is an attempt to understand what Mind is, what its limits are, and what an evolution beyond it implies and entails. We have now come to the point at which it is possible to define that next evolutionary emergence, with respect both to how and why it is possible. As Sri Aurobindo says, 'It is here necessary in a matter so remote from the ordinary lines of our thoughts and experience to state first what is the universal gnosis or divine supermind.'

The evolution beyond mind implies a potentiality inherent in life that is not mind but is greater than it, that is to say other than it, and superior to it in its function and structure. The implication is that that potential exists. We heard an elaborate argument last time that Sri Aurobindo gives in the chapter of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, titled The Nature of Supermind,<sup>1</sup> about the necessity of its existence. Not only is it hopeful and a spiritual ideal, but from the point of view of this philosophy it is a necessity and inevitability. The inherent potentiality of something greater than mind, towards which mind is evolving, is a necessity of existence. That is not a theory accepted by scientists normally, although some do accept it, but it is a theory that is accepted by a significant segment of philosophers. Those who take it on themselves to understand - as well as humanly possible - the meaning of human existence, those people are called philosophers. And there aren't really many great ones; but throughout history there has been quite a substantial number of them, if we survey the field sort of century by century.

We have surveyed the ideas of people like Aristotle and Henri Bergson, and Alfred North Whitehead, and Sri Aurobindo and a few others who would agree. John Locke would agree, that something greater than mind is a necessity of existence, in order for there to be something that exists.

That which is greater than mind is generally called Spirit. But Sri Aurobindo has introduced the idea that between mind and Spirit itself, there are other planes and gradations of consciousness. Mind is a subsidiary of the lower range of those planes above and the top of an evolutionary scale – mind/life/body – which exists in time and space, visibly, tangibly, perceptibly, know-ably. Mind is knowable, tangible, perceptible, as are life and body. But, he said, because of the extraordinary purposive nature of consciousness in all of its infinite diversity of manifestations in matter, and life, and mind, throughout a history of three billion years of evolution, because of that amazing diversity and purposefulness it is necessary to conclude that "there is an Intelligence, with a capital 'I', to give it an inadequate name, a 'Logos' that organizes its own manifestation in all of these planes throughout time and space". The term he borrowed from the Veda is a Vast, a Truth-consciousness, and Truth-force, that is the secret of all that exists, Satyam-Ritam-Brhat.

Mind can't and couldn't accomplish that vast, truth-conscious existence. We know mind well enough to know that it cannot conceive of this mechanism, which it itself secretly is. It merely acknowledges that it is what it really is, in some essential way.

I didn't mention Heidegger in that list awhile ago, but he is also one of those extraordinary philosophers who, in the last twenty years of his life or so, after forty years of perhaps the most rigorous philosophical effort made in the 20th Century, entered into a state of, let's say a consciousness of the radiance of being, and could at the same time reflect critically on our current general state of



mind. He labored quite successfully to establish the possibilities and limitations of mind. In his later career he wrote some books about what technology, the technology of the rational mind, is doing to the human being and to language, and how it is doing it, and why it is doing it, and what this could mean either positively or negatively to our future. His commentary on the question of technology in the fifties and sixties is extraordinary. He has influenced thinking about the nature of existence, thought, and the being of man in ways that perhaps we can't conceive. In his philosophy, Heidegger announced that Being, the Being of all of these beings, is the real nature of human consciousness. Knowing that 'being of things' is the true way of knowing; not knowing the details in the rational way that the mind prefers, but knowing Being itself as the radiant essence of everything. After decades of rigorous philosophical thought he came to this understanding, and realized, like Sri Aurobindo and Whitehead, that poetic language is as yet the best vehicle for the expression of that consciousness.

What Bergson, Heidegger, Whitehead, and Sri Aurobindo were saying often overlaps in very interesting ways. Although Heidegger perhaps did not have the concept of the evolution of consciousness, as did Whitehead and Bergson, and especially Bergson, the important thing that is implied by this concept of evolution beyond mind is the necessity of this essential nature of reality which is other than mind, but which works similarly to mind in that it knows and does everything spontaneously from itself, because it is the being of things. It is the essential nature of things, which the 'Things' themselves will never be - the Being of things. Things are the temporal expressions of their essential being. This (hiddenness of Being) is necessary for evolution in time and space, and yet it (Being) is also destined to emerge in the process of consciousness.

There is a lot of philosophy in the 20th Century that grew out of Heidegger's thinking; people like Marcuse and critical theory, Fromm's psychology of being, and all of the phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, Ricoeur and so on, who understood that what we know is a temporal, partial expression of what we are or what something is. We are more than what we are manifesting right now in this room and in the whole arc of our life; what we have to realize and manifest can't be measured in terms of time and space and tangible things. We are much more than any of the moments that we can gather together as an impression of who we are, even knowing everything that we are, and much more than those moments that we can gather in memory - certainly much more than I can gather from any number of moments of your life and mine that I have experienced.

If we put all of that together and we think about life in general on the earth and how some things have actually become other things through evolution, and how some potentialities were not fulfilled by the species in which they manifested at some point, and were later more fulfilled by another species that grew out of that species, we may get the idea of an infinite potential that is manifesting over great periods of time and through infinite varieties of form. We can look horizontally at many species that seem to be working out or expressing similar principles in very different but similar ways. And we can know them genetically as being very closely related, and know them phenotypically as being extraordinarily different, and yet we can know that the principles that their lives manifest are the same.

Now that sameness that we notice in things, between things, among things, actually is not in the things; 'sameness' like 'difference' is only in the mind. But where then is mind? The sameness between differences is not a tangible, measurable thing; it is a mental thing. So if we observe and compare the way the behavior of one species - let's take a bat and a sparrow for example: if we notice the similar behaviors of bats and sparrows, and we can also add another in there, squirrels; we notice that they are all animals that fly. All three are animals. One is a four legged earth bound animal, one is a mammal that flies, and the other is an animal that flies but is not a mammal. We call it ovarian because it lays

eggs. The sparrow is not a mammal, the bat is a mammal, and the squirrel is a mammal, and so there are these samenesses and differences that we can observe, such as in their nest building habits, their feeding patterns, their mobility patterns.

So we see in these three species that, in general, they all move about in a certain way, - that is the first animal characteristic noted by Aristotle, mobility. Then, they all have perception. They also have growth and nutrition, that's also a kind of mobility. They have perception, they see, and hear, and feel, and they have the ability to organize their environments for the sake of their survival. They learn about seasonal changes, when to build their nests, when to hibernate. They have many behavior patterns that are similar, which we know about but they don't. Those similarities or samenesses of behavior don't exist outside of the mind, we may say. And yet they are not merely abstract generalizations of our minds; they exist in the patterns of the things as well. The pattern of behavior called flying exists in each of these species; that's how our mind knows about it. These patterns of mobility and the structures that support them, known as "flying", have been engineered by nature. So mind then, we might conclude, along with Aristotle, is a universal principle in existence, like life and body. It is manifested in these species in an observable way with respect to the way they organize their lives and move themselves through space; and some of them have elaborate communication systems as well, and so on.

But mind, as we know it, isn't manifested (as such) in any of those species. Mind itself is manifested in our species as the ability to perceive and know abstractly the patterns in nature that are characterized by the efficiency of design and logic of purpose. As Aristotle put it, like knows like, mind knows the mental species of things, or the general patterns. In our species it knows these patterns, and it knows how they work; it recognizes them, it can use them, it can modify the behaviors scientifically and technologically. It designs its own habitats, not instinctively but intellectually, consciously as we say, and it reproduces itself, mobilizes itself for the purpose of getting food. It protects its environments with deliberation. This life-mind-body complex of ours does everything that other animals do, including flying, but much more technologically and intellectually; mind has emerged to perform in our species, consciously, many of things that animals do 'instinctually'.

Because we do all the things that they do, but we do them intellectually and on a large communal scale, - we don't just do them for ourselves but we sell them to our neighbors for a profit - we may say that we are engaged in the elaboration of a mental species of life form. The most prominent characteristic of this species is perhaps its ability to generalize abstractly about the patterns that it sees and embodies in nature. It 'mentalizes' or 'conceptualizes' and 'judges' everything; but this certainly doesn't mean that the objects of its knowledge aren't there, embedded in the world of nature. It knows them, although it may not judge them accurately, because they are there in the forms it observes. (Let us add also that 'there', where they inhere in things, the general patterns we observe are infinite.)

What's beyond this, if anything? Sri Aurobindo suggested that because all of this is the way it is, and as we have seen through the scientific point of view, cognition is present even in the cell, therefore this mind principle is omni-present. The nervous system is producing cognition independent of us in the material stuff. We are not running that show; it is running our show. Our bodies are providing this conscious base for us all the time. The *citta* is there remembering everything, deciding everything. It sometimes also pops into our conscious minds as a logically good idea to do what it is telling us to do. We reflect most of the time on what we are already doing; we don't think ahead very much.

This cognition is obviously a potential of matter. Sri Aurobindo comes to this point and says that if cognition or consciousness is a principle of matter and if it is doing all of this in all of these infinite

varieties of ways, and even in the least conscious organisms it is somehow able to anticipate and take steps beyond to what it can become, even when what it can become is not apparent even to us as we look back through species... e.g., what the shrew could become is apparent to us only with hind-sight, but it did become the hippo and the primate... If there is this inherent drive of life on the one hand, and there is this mental intelligence, “to use an inadequate expression”, - if there is this universal intelligence or Logos or supermind that’s able to do all of these things that we mental beings can’t really understand... we still don’t know how bats fly, we don’t really understand the dynamics of bat flight... then, he says, there must be a greater intelligence than intellectual mind working in things, unconsciously, that can evolve itself more fully. It can emerge in another species, just as mind has emerged in our species, with its full absolute inherent power of knowing and doing in the universe, and we are just an indication of that possibility. That higher intelligence, he says, or supermind, is so far beyond us and what we are that we can’t even imagine what it is. But, he says, it’s there. It’s inevitable that it’s there, and it’s inevitable that it emerges at some point in a form, and that some living beings, a new species, will have that degree of consciousness in them, naturally and spontaneously. Then, the next question is, What is indicated with respect to the evolutionary transition that has to be taken between this mental species and that next supramental species? What is implied, and what is indicated, as an evolutionary process for human beings to get beyond mind?

Sri Aurobindo is unique in the history of philosophy in that he not only saw the nature of existence philosophically and spiritually, but he also recommended a procedure for evolving beyond mind; and he practiced it. This is described in a couple of places that I would recommend that you read in addition to chapters 3-7 in the last part of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, which are all about mind. There are two other particularly relevant chapters, 19 and 20 in that book. One is called ‘The Nature of Supermind’, and the other one is called, ‘The Intuitive Mind’.

Sri Aurobindo states very explicitly here what the nature of Supermind is and what the intermediate possibility of the human is. The intermediate possibility of the human he calls the Intuitive Mind. I wanted to talk about this now, before going on to the Anthropic Principle, because if we can understand a little bit what this intuitive mind is, and how we can access it, then perhaps this Anthropic Principle will look very different to us than if we just hear about it rationally. I can tell you all about the Anthropic Principle from the rational scientific standpoint, but if we have the possibility of knowing things from within instead of assembling them from without, maybe we can know what this Anthropic Principle is really all about from within. If we make an effort to not know about it rationally, but to really approach it intuitively, if we can shift away from our logical, rational, perceptual mode of being humans, that thing we are so good at being and bad at being at the same time...

Think about the possibility of knowing the Anthropic Principle “itself”, when we get to it. First of all, let’s try to know something about this transition from mind to supermind through the intuitive mind. There is no doubt that Sri Aurobindo has written those two chapters in order for us to contemplate exactly what the transition point is. There is no doubt about it: what it is, how it happens, and what are its limits, what are its potentials, what is its being, what is its nature, what the intuitive mind is. We are told explicitly. Then make a note of this, twenty years later he wrote two new, huge chapters elaborating exactly this in *The Life Divine*: ‘The Triple Transformation’ and the ‘Ascent Towards Supermind’.<sup>2</sup>

What is the fundamental nature of this Supermind? The definition says, ‘It is to this intelligence infinite in itself but freely organizing and self-determiningly organic in its self-creation and its works that we may give for our present purpose the name of the divine supermind or gnosis.’ That Intelligence,

capital 'I', that Logos which is in everything, driving everything from within is not out there somewhere. It is in here. It is nowhere else. It is not something to be discovered, or created, or whatever; it's not some heavenly being, it's the innermost nature of everything. "The fundamental nature of this supermind is that all its knowledge is originally a knowledge by identity and oneness, and even when it makes numberless apparent divisions and discriminating modifications in itself, still all the knowledge that operates in its workings, even in these divisions, is founded upon and sustained and lit and guided by this perfect knowledge by identity and oneness. The spirit is one everywhere and it knows all things as itself and in itself."<sup>3</sup> Spirit in us and in everything doesn't know what it knows as something other than itself which it observes and understands. Its kind of knowing is from within because it is that. This is knowledge by identity: to know what you are, not objectively but subjectively because it is you.

The idea is that this supramental gnosis, which is not knowing in the sense that we think of knowledge, is knowledge and energy of expression of the Self in forms, which doesn't cease to be the Self in its forms. It continues to be the self of everything. "The spirit is one everywhere and it knows all things as itself and in itself, it sees them always and therefore knows them, intimately, completely, in their reality as well as their appearance, in their truth, their law, the entire spirit and sense and figure of their nature and their workings. When it sees anything as an object of knowledge it yet sees it as itself and in itself and not as a thing other than or divided from it about which therefore it would be at first ignorant of the nature, constitution, and workings and have to learn about them as the mind is at first ignorant of its object and has to learn about it because the mind is separated from its object, and regards and senses and meets it as something other than itself and external to its own being."<sup>4</sup>

"The mental awareness we have of our own subjective existence and its movements, our 'I', though it may point to, is not the same thing as this identity and self-knowledge because what it sees are mental figures of our being, our own mind sees mental figures of our own being and not the inmost or the whole, and it is only a partial, derivative and superficial action of our self that appears to us while the largest and most secretly determining parts of our own existence are occult to our mentality."<sup>5</sup> We don't know all of the things that the Chitta holds in it that determines our action when we get angry because something triggers a whole long line of associations in us. We are not aware of how all of that happens. We just know that suddenly we feel offended and that is what we call our self. But supermind, he says, is much more than that kind of knowing. It knows the whole history, depth, and place in our evolution of that behavior. Why that behavior is what it is at that time in relation to what we have to become through our own evolution. The whole being, not just the momentary temporal expression, and it knows it not objectively, but it is that movement of the Chitta, and it's also the movement of all the other Chitta and their combination. (In psychological terms we might say that the "unconscious" mind is conscious in the supermind.)

When the groups meet together in the assembly tomorrow and make a decision (whether it is the Residents' Assembly, a corporation, a Parliament, the UN or whatever), it (the supermind gnosis) will therefore know why that decision is what it is, even though it is wrong. This is a powerful idea of a possibility of knowledge that is absolute and impersonal. It is not making judgments about the way things are. It is the way things are. It can only go where it goes for the reasons that it goes there. And those becomings are far beyond any measureable, spatial, temporal expression, because the purpose of the evolution of this consciousness is consciousness itself, not the structures and momentary formations. Its own infinitude of potentiality is its essence, and that infinitude of potentiality cannot be manifested. But it can be expressed and known in everything. If one is perceiving that, and perceiving each thing temporally in relation to that infinite potential, then personal interest and judgment dissolve

completely. One is merely identified with, and energized by, and loving of, what is.

“This is the second character of the supreme supermind that its knowledge is a real because a total knowledge.” The implication of that statement is that what is not total is not real, it’s illusory. “It has in the first place a transcendental vision and sees the universe not only in the universal terms, but in its right relation to the supreme and eternal reality.” (That is to say, perhaps, in relation to that ‘actual’ Mind of Aristotle that is like an eternal light.) Everything that is, is in relationship to the absolute. But we don’t see that. We think that the absolute, like Spencer said in the beginning of the philosophy of evolution, the absolute cannot be known by the human being. We just know that it must be there and because it’s there force circulates through matter and creates form and sustains form and there’s the dissipation of energy ad infinitum because the absolute is there, or otherwise it couldn’t be what it is, but we don’t know what that is.

Sri Aurobindo turns that idea completely upside down and says not only is it there but we can know it completely because it is here. So there is this long interlude in philosophy where knowledge is thought of as some kind of abstract construction of the mind. The idea that knowledge is a construction of the mind is an epistemological argument.<sup>6</sup> The idea that what is known is what is by identity, is an ontological argument. This is the big shift that took place in philosophy in the 20th Century. Thanks to phenomenology, we became more interested in ontology than epistemology. The more intuitive and inspired philosophers gave up the question, ‘how do we know what we know’ and asked the question ‘what is’, period: more interesting than how do we know it, because we don’t know how we know it. We can’t know how we know it because how we know it is by a faculty of intuition which is not conscious in us. We are going to come to that point.

“It knows the spirit and truth and whole sense of the universal expression because it knows all the essentiality and all the infinite reality and all the consequent constant potentiality of that which in part it expresses.” So, for example, it expresses the will to the realization of a harmonious and efficient human unity through tomorrow night’s assembly. That is a partial expression of an infinite potentiality. It knows both the infinite potentiality and the partial expression. So it can put its full knowledge into the partial expression and not be bothered by the fact that it goes completely haywire along the way. It may have a better possibility of becoming something more lasting but even then we are only human beings at the beginning of a possibility which has eons ahead of it. And our failures, as he says again and again, are our successes. So don’t worry about it, but be it. It knows rightly the relative. What we experience from moment to moment is the relative, and at tomorrow night’s meeting we will know something relative to two years ago when we approved the membership of that new L’Avenir (the Auroville planning group), with all the nonsense it took to do that, and then had that approval blocked for a whole year by the stupid working committee (the Auroville admin group). Now we have another stupid working committee that’s trying to undo what that working committee finally decided to do a year late. This is the partial relative nature. “It knows rightly the relative because it knows the absolute and all its absolutes to which the relatives refer back and of which they are the partial or modified, or suppressed figures.”

Nothing exists which is not relative in time and space. The absolute is not relative. It is absolute. But it is knowable, outside of time and space. In the second place it, the divine supermind, which is as absolute as mind gets because it knows the absolute intimately and it knows the relative intimately and it stands between the two hemispheres, the divine Supermind is a universal emanation of the supreme, sometimes known as the Mahashakti.

“It is in the second place universal, in everything.” Vibrant in the atom, in the life-force, in the self-reflection, and in the will of everything. In normal philosophical terms it is omnipresent. “It is universal and sees all that is individual in the terms of the universal.”

Let’s think about universals for a minute. You could see everything as a process of cognition, so everything is constantly changing energy, but also learning at the same time. Then that would be a kind of universal energy plus meaning. We have talked about the spirit of healing which is active everywhere that therapies are practiced.

What is in everything, your neighbor, your routine, everything you do while you are at home, and what you are doing right now, participating in this process, - is there some principle that you can be aware of in all of those moments? Space, time, change, existence, - space means existence, how about emptiness, is space empty or full? Buddhists say you can see emptiness in everything and that is the universal reality of everything, and wisdom means seeing everything as emptiness, as space. They also say that you can see everything as compassion, that there is a spirit of compassion that brings everything into existence and that is all forgiving, all loving, and all liberating, and that the universal nature of existence is emptiness and compassion.

I like learning. I like the idea that everything is participating in a process of exchange of information that helps it survive or helps it realize itself or gives it joy. There is a pressure in things to be conscious, to be more conscious, to act more consciously. If you can elevate your perception to that level, you can perceive everything as an expression of joy. Every particle of energy is a particle of joy. Empedocles said that love is the essential force of existence, like compassion. Or you can see everything as an expression of the Mahashakti: Mahalakshmi, Mahakali, Mahasaraswati, Maheshwari, universal divine love, power, beauty and truth.

Everything is a sacrifice. Agni, the Vedic fire. All energy transformations are sacrifices. One bit of energy serves the being of another through its own dissipation. Existence is a universal sacrifice. The supreme sacrifice has the intention to bring out of nothingness the divine. The supreme sacrifice is the entry of the absolute divine into the absolute nihil for the purpose of the evolution back, through the eons of suffering, through sacrifice, to the ultimate sacrifice of bowing at the feet of the divine herself in an act of complete self-immolation. Emptiness and compassion. That’s the spiritual aspect of knowing things universally. It’s a function of the higher mind which it is our task to enter, as a bridge to supermind.<sup>7</sup>

## Notes

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part IV, Chapter 19, <http://www.sriurobindoashram.org/ashram/sriuro/writings.php>
2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book 2, Part 2, Ch. 25, <http://www.sriurobindoashram.org/ashram/sriuro/writings.php>
3. Op. cit., (1970 ed.) p. 756
4. Ibid., p. 757
5. Ibid., p. 758
6. We will explore the epistemology/ontology question more thoroughly in the lecture on Gregory Bateson’s view.
7. This is a transcribed and edited version of Lecture 12 in the University of Human Unity series, the Philosophy of Evolution (2), 2009.

## Mind and Supermind – Lecture 7

### Entropy and Time

Tonight I want to introduce a notion of physics, the anthropic principle. There are several good references in our library if anyone is interested in pursuing the concept further, one of which I will be referring to, which is called *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (1986) by Barrow and Tipler. Another reference we will look at tonight is called *Order Out of Chaos* (1984) by Ilya Prigine. Sheldrake's *The Presence of the Past*, which we have considered in some detail, was published in 1985, so it seems that the 'Eighties' was a good decade for an interface between science and cosmology. Cosmology means the study of the cosmos, which normally means time and space and everything that happens therein – which is a very broad concept.

This is an area where physics, biology and metaphysics overlap. Physicists are trying to understand evolution. Prigogine is a physicist and a biochemist, and he makes references to Bergson, Whitehead and Heidegger, and he is very close in his thinking to us. He is widely respected in the world today as a scientist and philosopher and has a Nobel Prize.

I will read a definition of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, to start with, and perhaps we will be able to understand what 'entropy' means, following Prigogine. Both the supramental idea of power and the cosmological concept of time and energy are extremely abstract and difficult to grasp, and to have a mind to engage them directly is not a simple proposition. We are approaching the theory of evolution from both the scientific and metaphysical points of view in this course, and the cosmological anthropic principle is a concept that physicists, biologists, and philosophers have been toying with. The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that "the measure of the disorder of a system is a quantity called entropy." This law was first developed in the context of mechanics, corresponding to the conservation of energy; the First Law states that matter can be neither created nor destroyed, it simply changes its form. But when the energy flow in systems began to be studied by a physicist named Boltzman in the 1890s, he realized that this law doesn't explain everything that happens in the transfer of energy. It only explains energy dynamics in engines. But it doesn't explain the transfer of energy in living systems. So the Second Law is an attempt to come to terms with living systems.

It says, "At a temperature of absolute zero, all movement of atoms and molecules ceases. At that point there is no loss of energy and no entropy to measure." The idea is that things tend toward a state of equilibrium, especially mechanical things. Living systems, however, are open systems, energy flows in and out all the time, and they therefore do not tend toward equilibrium, except in very controlled circumstances. If we think about organisms, cells, societies, species in evolution, there is always energy being taken in and expended. It is unusual for living systems to reach a state of equilibrium. But in the body during sleep, when energy is not being taken in or expended, the measure of entropy approaches equilibrium. The general life style of an organism or species reaches a kind of equilibrium between the organism and the environment, the amount of energy taken in and expended is relatively balanced but it is not a static state. If the temperature is reduced to absolute zero it will be a static state. It is relatively balanced, but just simple temperature changes will affect the heat transfer of the organism, and the body's metabolism is always being maintained within an optimal range.

The definition says, "All substances above absolute zero will have a positive entropy value, or a certain amount of disorder." For example, in the house we are always trying to maintain order, but dirty dishes and laundry pile up. So, "all substances above absolute zero will have a positive entropy value that

increases with temperature.” If we put a pot of water on the stove it evaporates slowly, but if we turn on the flame it starts to evaporate quickly. The amount of disorder in that system is visible, the molecules are popping into the air at a rapid rate. If we don’t do anything, the pot will burn, smell bad, and disintegrate. Positive entropy will continue to increase as long as heat is added.

The sun is really puffing out entropy value at a very high level, and we use a lot of that chaotic energy in maintaining our life-systems’ complexity. Here is the wonderful thing about entropy. Without it there would be no life. “When a hot body cools down, the thermal energy it loses passes into the surrounding air, which heats up.” The energy has to go somewhere. It is being absorbed and transformed. Another way of saying it is that the entropy of the cooling body decreases and the entropy of the surrounding air increases; its molecules move faster and other things touched by it are also affected. “For all processes of chemical change, which is basically all processes of life in the biosphere, and throughout the universe, energy is conserved and entropy increases.” This is why Time can’t move backwards. Every transformation of energy in living systems is irreversible. In machinery this is not the case, it cools down to its original state. But in the universe, it never goes back to its original state. All the stars are expending energy and the universe is expanding. There is no reversibility in life processes. Life doesn’t grow backwards, and the cosmos doesn’t shrink. “Every process that a thermodynamic system may undergo can go in one direction only. And the opposite process, in which both the system and its surroundings would be returned to their original state is impossible.” This is a universal law.

Now I will read a commentary of Ilya Prigine on this second law. “It is no longer a question of irreversible transformations, considered as approximate to reversible transformations as in machinery. Increasing entropy corresponds to the spontaneous evolution of the system.”<sup>1</sup> So, entropy is a proof of evolution. All systems evolve. The universe evolves. This was discovered in the Sixties. The universe is an evolutionary system; it is not a machine. Therefore we often hear the proverbial statement that Newtonian physics doesn’t explain the universe and many things in it. It doesn’t explain relativity and thermodynamics. It only explains certain closed systems. “Entropy thus becomes an indicator of evolution, or an arrow of Time.” Physics can therefore explain the forward irreversible movement of both time and evolutionary life in terms of physical principles.

Evolutionary life can’t go backwards even if it wants to. The dinosaurs, the age of the lizards, became the age of the mammals, as a result of pure physical laws, in addition to other things, of course. There are also life principles involved. But from the point of view of pure physical laws, the transformation from the age of the lizards to the age of the mammals is a natural, inevitable, irreversible physical process.

When we were growing up, one of the popular ideas in physics was that there would be a heat death of the solar system and everything would go back to zero entropy. That is no longer a belief in physics. The universe is expanding. Penrose and Hawking proved that there is an origin point from which entropy can be measured and it can’t go back to that point. Then they figured out the rate that the universe is expanding, and there is no end to it. It is an arrow of time; the law of entropy indicates that time moves in only one direction. “For all isolated systems, the future is the direction of increasing entropy.”<sup>2</sup> The future means basically increasing disorder. All systems move in the direction of increasing disorder. But disorder is relative. People get offended by the idea of “deconstruction” in philosophy, but it is not destructive. It just means that you look at everything from different possible angles, and you don’t assume that there are fundamental constants with regard to ideas. Prigogine says, “Increasing entropy is no longer synonymous with loss. But it now refers to the natural processes within the system. These are the processes that lead the system to thermodynamic equilibrium



corresponding to the state of maximum entropy.”<sup>3</sup> Maximum disorder means stasis; the system disintegrates and dies. This is also referred to, interestingly, as the loss of memory of the initial state. Our bodies tend to recover, whenever they are sick or tired or overextended, they recover. They remember their initial state. Not the embryonic state, but psychologically we know that they try to. There is a tendency to go back to the womb state of comfort and unconsciousness. Freud discovered, correctly, that there is a death instinct. There is a tendency toward disequilibrium.

But Prigogine points out that the state of equilibrium is the state of highest probability. For example, if energy is passing between two containers of oxygen and hydrogen, and temperature causes the movement, there is a state where there is an equal amount of hydrogen and oxygen in both compartments. That is the state of highest probability with respect to where the molecules are located. There is a high probability that there will be fifty percent in each side, because as they cool down the movement reduces and the two containers tend to equalize temperature loss and gain. The state of equilibrium is the state of highest probability in a system. But if we are under stress and pressure, and we are losing energy faster than we can get it back, and we get as far as possible from equilibrium, then our behavior is the least predictable. So there is the lowest level of probability with respect to the behavior of a system at its farthest point from equilibrium. The farther the system from equilibrium, the less predictable is its behavior, and the more creative it can be.

Isn't this interesting; physics applied to society and psychology. There is an easy metaphorical transfer that makes sense. If we take the population of humanity, which is the largest it has ever been, it is probably close to its farthest possible point from equilibrium, so what it will do is highly unpredictable. Wolfram is a well-known systems theorist today, who has shown through his system of probability mathematics that the future of a system is unpredictable beyond what has already happened to it under known circumstances. Living systems are unpredictable beyond the pathways or conditions that have already been traversed. We like to be within regular boundaries so that we can predict our behavior and the behavior around us, our future, and so on. That makes us feel good and stable.

“Irreversible processes have an immense constructive importance; life would not be possible without them.”<sup>4</sup> Life is an irreversible, dynamic, open system. It takes in and expends energy. And it only approaches equilibrium. It never reaches it. When it is farthest from equilibrium, Prigogine says, there is a phenomenon that he calls bifurcation. Development of the form or energy can go either one way or another. For example, in the development of the embryo there are stages where a certain development is achieved and another has to be triggered; the molecules have to decide which way to go. They know from habit or genetics or the environment, or whatever, which way they should go, beyond that bifurcation point, and then another organ develops. Life keeps on going like this. As we grow and develop we reach points of disequilibrium where we have to decide which way to go, and then when we make the decision we adapt and adjust ourselves to a new level of energy interchange with our environment, and we recognize that energy is information. Every cell in every organism is dealing with energy transfers that tell it what it needs and doesn't need, and it knows somehow what to assimilate or reject. This process of thermodynamics evolves into a process of consciousness. Cognition at the level of cellular life is thermodynamic. Matter and consciousness obey the same laws.

This is a breakthrough in consciousness itself. As Roger Penrose says in his last book, there must be something going on at the quantum level that corresponds to what is going on at the macrocosmic conscious level. We don't know what it is, but there must be a correspondence between the microscopic level and the quantum level. This is another way of saying that the laws of thermodynamics become conscious in us because they are phenomena of mind to start with. Sri

Aurobindo says, in the chapters of *The Life Divine* that I have referred to, the dynamics of matter defined by science are the processes of mind. It is mind which is doing that at the atomic level. Mind is dividing and synthesizing matter at the atomic level. It is the operation of supermind on the material plane.

In evolutionary terms, mind has reached the intellectual level in our processes of life. But long before life evolved these organisms, when there was only a cosmic soup, that was mind at that level of evolution. There is absolutely no difference between mind and atomic structure. The division of energy, the physical processes that we measure, are the processes of mind. We are conscious of so little; but Sri Aurobindo says that consciousness can evolve to the level that we do not any longer distinguish between ourselves and other selves; we no longer make a distinction between spiritual and material energy. It is all consciousness, but we don't realize it.

### The Anthropic Principle

Now I will define the weak and strong anthropic principles from the amazing book I have referred to by Barrow and Tipler. "The weak anthropic principle tries to tie a precise statement to the notion that any cosmological observations made by astronomers are biased by an all-embracing selection effect: our own existence."<sup>5</sup> Everything we observe is biased by our experience, relative understanding, exposure, point of view, and so on. Everything we observe, we observe as humans. "This approach to evaluating unusual features of our universe first emerged in a paper in 1955, by Whitrow, who asked: Why does space have three dimensions? This three dimensional feature of the world is not unrelated to our own existence as observers of it. When formulated in three dimensions, mathematical physics possesses many unique properties that are necessary for rational information processing."<sup>6</sup> (We should recall here Carnap's association of the process of logic with the spatial features of the world of empirical experience.)

If we are going to have a rational understanding of things, there must be at least three dimensions. Otherwise there are not spatial relationships. Movement from here to there, subject and object, relationship in general imply three dimensions. "Whitrow pointed out that the expansion of the universe creates an unbreakable link between its overall size and age, and the density of material within it. This connection reveals that only a very large universe is a possible habitat for life."<sup>7</sup> There is a certain density of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorous, zinc, etc. which had to be forged by suns, and for these elements to come into existence the universe had to be as large as it is and to have taken the amount of time that it has to expand, in order for there to be carbon-based life. Here is the weak anthropic principle in a nutshell. "The observed values of all physical and cosmological quantities are not equally probable, but take on values restricted by the requirement that there exist sites where carbon based life can evolve and by the requirement for the universe to be old enough for it to have already evolved."<sup>8</sup> All of the values we give to the universe, the table of atomic weights, speed of light, universal constants, and so on, presuppose a living world, a world where life exists. If life didn't exist these things would not have any value, but as a matter of fact the values they have are the ones that make life possible.

Carbon has the highest memory capacity of any substance. It is higher than silicon, which doesn't have the capacity to form the basis of life, for reasons related to weight, atomic bonding, and so on. Carbon is the only substance, because of its weight, and its bondability, that is capable of forming the basis of life. It forms a complex geometric structure that keeps on building and building and remembering its previous forms so that even when it is broken down it keeps the same structure. Carbon is pure mind.

As these authors observe, “The cosmological anthropic principle leads to synthesizing insights that deepen our appreciation of the unity of nature.”<sup>9</sup> Awareness of this principle deepens our appreciation of the unity of nature. As we said in the beginning of our course, the idea of evolution can form the basis of our value system. And that value system can be more important to the survival of human beings than any other value system. It may be the value system that determines the survival of the human species.

Let us consider some facts in relation to the conditions necessary of our existence that are dependent upon the constants of physics. “Let us consider relating the size of the universe to the period of time necessary to generate conscious observers: the requirement that enough time pass for cosmic expansion to cool off sufficiently after the big bang to allow for the existence of carbon.”<sup>10</sup> We know that the big bang generated  $10^{th}$  power of energy, and it has taken 13 billion years for the universe to cool down sufficiently for there to be at least one planet in a billion galaxies with a billion suns, that is able to support life. Because the boundary of the universe expands at the speed of light, the nuclei of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen of which we are made are cooked by stellar interiors, but our sun isn’t hot enough to produce all of the necessary elements. They have been produced by other older suns. The cosmic dust has brought together these other elements into our sun’s field; when star systems burst they distribute elements through space. Based on gravitational constants, the speed of light, the mass of protons, – known as the constants of physics – we can do a calculation which shows that the universe must be as old as it is to be as large as it is. No one should be surprised by this because we could not exist now if the universe were any smaller or had taken any less time to evolve.

There is an interesting section in the book on the size of carbon and hydrogen, and why they can’t be any bigger or smaller. This is a universe of mind, and the job of mind in this universe is to create all of these mathematical relationships so that life can be known and shown to emerge in its thermodynamic systems and mind to emerge as an intellectual rational entity, both of which can now evolve supermind. Mind is only an emanation of supermind in the material cosmos. But supermind can change these elements into another form of substance that is capable of universal conscious being and power. This is not a capacity of mind. Mind can align itself cosmically with a vibration that allows it to evolve another degree of substance.

The strong anthropic principle says that the universe must have those properties which allow life to develop in it at some stage of its history. If we want to add a further requirement according to Sri Aurobindo, we could add that the universe must have those properties which allow mind to develop at some stage in its history rational intelligence, higher mind, intuitive mind, and supermind.

Listen to this: “The discovery of the expanding universe in the 20th Century changed the picture of the heat-death concept. It used to be thought that all the matter of the universe would collect into one rather dense ball at a uniform temperature. But the doctrine of the spherical space and expansion of the universe has changed that. It is now widely thought that matter slowly changes into radiation. If so, it would seem that the universe would ultimately become a ball of radiation growing ever larger, the radiation becoming thinner and passing into longer and longer wavelengths.”<sup>11</sup> In his classic work of speculative cosmology, the physicist Bernal suggested that “finally consciousness itself may end in a humanity that has become completely etherealized, losing the close-knit organism, becoming masses of atoms in space communicating by radiation, and ultimately perhaps resolving itself entirely into light. These beings nuclearly resident, so to speak, in a relatively small set of mental units, each utilizing the bare minimum of energy, connected together by a complex of ethereal intercommunications, and

spreading themselves over immense areas and periods of time, by means of inert sense organs which like the field of their active operations, would be in general at a great distance from themselves. As the scene of life would be more the cold emptiness of space than the warm dense atmosphere of planets the advantage of containing no organic material at all, so as to be independent of both of these conditions, would be increasingly felt.”<sup>12</sup>

Now we know something about the anthropic principle, and that because of it the cosmos is therefore necessarily intelligent. Richard Dawkins has some very colorful descriptions of the anthropic principle. He likes it because there is no god implied in it and yet existence is perfectly explainable in terms of physics and natural selection. He is a Darwinian materialist, and such people are also trying to envision the integral meaning of existence. There is so much information available on matter, life, and mind, at all levels now, that materialists too are beginning to see the interconnectedness and coherence of everything, and the mutual necessity and meaning of everything to everything else, and at some point they too must start radiating an empathy with all that they know. Then the materialist and the spiritualist will shake hands. And everyone will realize, as Sri Aurobindo said, that there absolutely is no god outside somewhere, designing all of this. Supermind is here and now in all of this. Everything is what it is because of That. There is no need whatsoever for any theology of external divine intervention. Existence can only be explained as its own evolutionary adventure of consciousness.<sup>13</sup>

#### Notes

1. Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers (1984), *Order Out Of Chaos*, p. 119.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid, p. 125
5. John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler (1986), *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, p. 15.
6. Ibid, p. 15-16.
7. Ibid, p. 16.
8. Ibid, p. 16.
9. Ibid, p. 16-17.
10. Ibid, p. 18.
11. Ibid, p. 618.
12. Ibid, p. 619.
13. This is a transcribed and edited version of Lecture 13, in the University of Human Unity series the *Philosophy of Evolution* (2), 2009.

## Mind and Supermind - Lecture 8<sup>1</sup>

### Bergson's philosophy of intuition

Bergson pointed out, toward the end of his career, that the modern disciplines of anthropology, phenomenology, and psychology were strongly influenced by his work, and he had time to see this and remark on it in his lifetime. We can only appreciate his influence if we are somewhat familiar with his work, which is one of the reasons why I want to focus on it here, and also because it has an important bearing on the evolution of mind. Bergson was an experimenter on this path of evolution and attempted to set down some guidelines, as did Sri Aurobindo.

I have previously attempted to address Sheldrake's philosophy of morphic resonance, which I would also like to review briefly here. His philosophy of evolution is based fundamentally on Aristotle's philosophy, as is mine. But there has been a tendency in the 20th Century to reduce everything to "physics", and Sheldrake's system is definitely an example of this tendency, even though he is interested in psychic phenomena and cosmology. But it seems to me that to create a system of subtle forms to explain a system of concrete forms is to commit the fallacy demonstrated by Occam in the 13th Century. It doesn't make much sense to create something abstract to explain something concrete, especially something so abstract that it can't be seen. The idea of morphic resonance is an attempt to explain memory and learning, and the phenomenon of homeostasis which enables the form to persist, generation after generation, even though there is constant change and variation going on, until finally there is an accumulation of incremental changes that allows a new form to appear, which even then retains the basic structures and principles that had evolved in the previous form. This is a law of evolution, something which happens naturally and consistently in the process of evolution, which Darwin simply calls Nature. The attempt to explain the phenomenon of memory inherent in matter by the theory of morphic resonance isn't necessary if we accept that memory is a fundamental principle of the material universe, as represented by the idea of *citta* in Sankhya philosophy.

We have reviewed Sri Aurobindo's Sankhya philosophy, presented most fully in Chapters 3,4,5 of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, in which the phenomena of memory, perception, and reason are shown to be fundamental aspects of mind rooted in the organic manifold, and we pointed out that matter itself has these three potentials of consciousness in it. We have a living manifold here, - in the human form - which carries on the activities of memory, perception, cognition and telepathy, so why do we need a system of subtle energies to explain what is happening, rather than to admit that what is happening contains the principles in itself? When we arrived at the idea of the "supramental knowledge" at the end of the previous lectures (2009), we found that the way species maintain their consistency, and vary, and the way speciation takes place, and the way all of life unfolds, can only be explained ultimately by the intuition of the fact that it does it; the Self brings forth from itself, creatively, its potentials. The fact that a member of a species goes through all the same developmental stages that all of the other members of its species go through, and fills the niche in the biosphere that it has evolved to fill, indicates that the continuous reproduction of a species in association with other species is an expression of a potential, in a finite form, that fits homestatically and homeotelically with itself and all the other species, to maintain the evolutionary field "in and of itself". The field manifests its forms.

Here we come to the fundamental principles of Indian psychology and cosmology: that there is Self and Nature. Nature is the expression of the Self which becomes conscious of itself at some point, but which is in any case "Consciousness" itself. In its infinite potentiality it is evolving on the physical, vital, and mental levels of existence, because it is 'what is'. To add a principle of morphic resonance as a subtle

causal pattern inside things to explain what they are outside is simply unnecessary. And yes, this is a reduction to physics, or to principles that appear to be physical, which is a pattern in scientific thinking that has been going on for several centuries. We see something similar in the anthropic cosmological principle, which is being referred to popularly today in order to account for the emergence of consciousness and life within the context of a physical universe bounded by and defined by certain universal mathematical constants. It is a convenient causal explanation in order to avoid dealing with the idea of god or of metaphysics, which wants to explain something essentially spiritual by something essentially material. This is what is meant by “reductionism”. Everything is reduced to a plane of materiality and at the same time everything is explained by that principle.

What we will hear from Bergson and Sri Aurobindo is that Consciousness is prior, and these materialistic arguments have it all backwards. Bergson begins his thinking, and pursues it consistently for many decades, with the idea that there are basically two streams of thinking that the human being has evolved. There is the scientific, rational stream, and there is the intuitive, creative stream. Each has its own laws, and products, and importance. But our tendency is to rely almost exclusively on the materialistic rational stream because it enables us to organize and use material life. It is the practical mind, known in Sankhya philosophy as *manas*.

When we come to Darwin and post-Darwinian thinking, we find more and more frequently a recognition of the principle of creativity, and it is something other than the practical, rational intelligence. The problem is that all structures and functions on the horizontal plane can be described and explained rationally in terms of homeostasis, variation, adaptation, and selection, and Nature seems to have used these principles to produce all of the structures and functions of organisms. But there are vertical changes that are more than that; for example there is the emergence of the mammalian generation after the reptilian, the age of the dinosaurs. That is a vertical development, a leap in quality and complexity. The mammalian generation is a manifestation of “mind”. In the first series of lectures we often referred to the work of Konrad Lorenz who has shown innumerable examples of how all the higher animals behave similarly and are capable of generalization. This is the fundamental feature of mind; we categorize and generalize based on a certain constancy of experience from which we eliminate the contingencies and stick on the constancies, which we know as forms, things, principles, generalities. What we “know” are generalities. We know what a chair is. We don’t need to enumerate the vast variety of chairs we have seen in order to know this. We know the structure and functions of restaurants and museums and skeletal structures, etc. We focus on the generalities and abstractions which we call “knowledge”.

In Sankhya philosophy this is a step above *manas*, which is sense perception and intelligence that all animals have; it is the *buddhi* which is the function of mind that makes rational choices, and theories, and systems. It is the higher mind, higher reason, which does the same thing as *manas* and *citta* but on a more abstract level. Animals know things in terms of categories based on repeated experiences from which they learn, but they don’t have symbolic systems that help them remember and compare and analyze their experience. They just accumulate knowledge and act accordingly. They behave in predictable ways in the presence of known stimuli, but if the stimuli change the behavior will not be predictable. They do not transfer from one situation to another as quickly as we do, but have to relearn in the context of new stimuli. They are more present-bound than we are, and sensation and response bound, which is the principle of *manas*. We not only remember and transfer, but the *buddhi* is also rational. In the study of logic, Carnap has demonstrated that logic is largely based on spatial experience. It relates this point to that point and refers back to this point and reaches its conclusions based on logical, spatial relationships.

When we discuss the possibility of evolution beyond mind, we must have enormous respect for Nature having evolved that animal mind on the basis of the general disorder of matter. We are not rejecting that, but we are recognizing a dynamic in Nature that needs to move beyond the limits of rational mind. It has been fully developed and explored and it has brought us to this point. But we are beginning to feel the need to evolve beyond it because there are problems that it cannot solve. And we have an intuition of a realm of imaginable beauty and power and bliss that could be expressed in energy fields that currently don't have common forms of expression, although they sometimes break through. Those acts of genius that we can perceive are indications of a realm of consciousness and expression that is generally out of reach but that can become normal. And how do we explain the existence of that realm? This is the subject of Supermind. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is a philosophy of Consciousness involved in matter, life, and mind, having emerged in those levels of evolutionary expression, but in its origin and function it is much more complex than anything we can now perceive or imagine, and it can achieve things that we cannot do, or understand, and does it with an amazing persistence and efficacy, which is beyond the power of mind as we know it.

We have to admit that there are many things in Nature that we just do not understand, like evolution for example. We can pinpoint stages of it and relate them to each other, which Bergson will tell us is the spatialization of mind; we are interpreting movement in time in terms of movement in space and missing an important feature of reality called Time. Time, as he defines it, is the intensity and duration necessary for something to be what it is. In order to put consciousness in direct touch with the duration and intensity of the being of the thing that is known requires something other than this fragmentary spatialization and analysis that the rational mind does habitually. Bergson is right to advocate an effort to achieve a direct perception of the creative flow of what is, rather than being preoccupied with what we think about what was, which would entail a shift from the normal function of rational intelligence in the direction of intuitive mind. To understand something about what Bergson calls intuition, let us have a look at his text. (This text is from a lecture in 1920 that Bergson included in a collection published in 1934, titled in the English version, originally published in 1946, *The Creative Mind*.) There is value in referring to text, because with people like Bergson and Sri Aurobindo the text is more than text: it is the process of the mind discovering 'what is'. If we follow him a bit, we may have our consciousness entrained to this track of thinking that he calls intuition.

"I should like to come back to a subject on which I have already spoken, the continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty which seems to be going on in the universe. As far as I am concerned, I feel I am experiencing it constantly."

Now... unforeseeable novelty. We are usually stuck on what we have experienced and on what we know to be consistent with our experience and understanding, and what we are usually not doing is experiencing the on-going novelty that is being created right now. This thing that is happening now is something new. This energy that I am generating to bring these ideas into focus is something that I have been working on since 2009 and for me it is a continuum. I am able to say what I am saying and to create a kind of framework of understanding because of something that Bergson started in 1920 that goes back to Aristotle. When I read something from Aristotle in a moment, it will be a novel creation of something that began 2350 years ago and we will see that it hasn't died. It has continued to evolve and diversify. And, as I have said many times, the whole of modern civilization is based on Aristotelian thinking. This view of the moment, as we will see in text from Sri Aurobindo in a moment, is a view of possibility, actuality, and eventuality, all together. In order to have that view it is necessary to not pin things down to spatial moments that have already ceased to exist.

“No matter how I try to imagine in detail what is going to happen to me, still how inadequate, how abstract and stilted is the thing I have imagined in comparison to what actually happens! The realization brings along with it an unforeseeable nothing which changes everything. For example, I am to be present at a gathering, I know what people I shall find there, around what table, in what order, to discuss what problem. But let them come, be seated and chat as I expected, let them say what I was sure they would say: the whole gives me an impression at once novel and unique, as if it were but now designed at one original stroke by the hand of an artist. Gone is the image I had conceived of it, a mere pre-arrangeable juxtaposition of things already known! I agree that the picture has not the artistic value of a Rembrandt or a Velasquez; yet it is just as unexpected and, in this sense, quite as original. It will be alleged that I did not know the circumstances in detail, that I could not control the persons in question, their gestures, their attitudes, and that if the thing as a whole provided me with something new it was because they produced additional factors. But I have the same impression of novelty before the unrolling of my inner life. I feel it more vividly than ever, before the action I willed and of which I was sole master. If I deliberate before acting, the moments of deliberation present themselves to my consciousness like the successive sketches a painter makes of his picture, each one unique of its kind; and no matter whether the act itself in its accomplishment realizes something willed and consequently foreseen, it has none the less its own particular form in all its originality. Granted, someone will say; there is perhaps something original in a state of soul; but matter is repetition; the external world yields to mathematical laws; a superhuman intelligence which would know the position, the direction, and the speed of all the atoms and electrons of the material universe at a given moment could calculate any future state of this universe as we do in the case of an eclipse of the sun or the moon. I admit all this for the sake of argument, if it concerns only the inert world and at least with regard to elementary phenomena, although this is beginning to be a much debated question. But this “inert” world is only an abstraction. Concrete reality comprises those living, conscious beings enframed in inorganic matter. I say living and conscious, for I believe that the living is conscious by right; it becomes unconscious in fact where consciousness falls asleep, but even in the regions where consciousness is in a state of somnolence, in the vegetable kingdom for example, there is regulated evolution, definite progress, aging; in fact, all the external signs of the duration which characterizes consciousness. And why must we speak of an inert matter into which life and consciousness would be inserted as in a frame? The ancients had imagined a World Soul supposed to assure the continuity of existence of the material universe. Stripping this conception of its mythical element, I should say that the inorganic world is a series of infinitely rapid repetitions or quasi-repetitions which, when totaled, constitute visible and previsible changes. I should compare them to the swinging of the pendulum of a clock: the swingings of the pendulum are coupled with to the continuous unwinding of a spring linking them together and whose unwinding they mark: the repetitions of the inorganic world constitute rhythm in the life of conscious beings and measure their duration. Thus the living being essentially has duration; it has duration precisely because it is continually elaborating what is new and because there is no elaboration without searching, no searching without groping. Time is this very hesitation, or it is nothing. Suppress the conscious and the living (and you can do this only through an artificial effort of abstraction, for the material world once again implies perhaps the necessary presence of consciousness and of life), you obtain in fact a universe whose successive states are in theory calculable in advance, like the images placed side by side along the cinematographic film, prior to its unrolling. Why, then, the unrolling? Why does reality unfurl? Why is it not spread out? What good is time? (I refer to real, concrete time, and not to that abstract time which is only a fourth dimension of space.) This, in days gone by, was the starting-point of my reflections. Some fifty years ago I was very much attached to the philosophy of Spencer. I perceived one fine day that, in it, time served no purpose, did nothing. Nevertheless, I said to myself, time is something. Therefore it acts. What can it be doing? Plain common sense answered:



time is what hinders everything from being given at once. It retards, or rather it is retardation. It must therefore be elaboration. Would it not then be a vehicle of creation and of choice? Would not the existence of time prove that there is indetermination in things? Would not time be that indetermination itself?"<sup>2</sup>

The point of the argument is that existence is creative; this universe is creative. And it is creative of itself; it is its nature to be creative. Now, can we know how and why specific limits occur in the process of creation, and how and why those limits get exceeded? Think about your own limitations. Can you know how and why you have the limitations that you perceive that you have, and how and why it might be possible to exceed them?

Well the answer is "yes, you can" and it requires a certain amount of analysis and contemplation and focusing yourself on your actual inner life. You can similarly focus your consciousness on the inner life of things around you, and you can start to perceive the nature of things as they are in themselves, without imposing on them judgments and preconceptions. The mind you already have is capable of this kind of identity and expanding beyond the confines of your cranium and your mortal experience. Your consciousness has this ability because it is also in those things; you don't own it. It isn't trapped in your cranium. Consciousness is a field, and the idea of Supermind is that mind and life and matter are fields, sometimes called planes, and we are in them and they are in us. The whole basis of Sankhya and Yoga philosophy is the idea that when we think that all of that is limited to this ego and its experience, this is an illusion. We have the illusion of the mental ego, the *anatakarana*, which bases everything on its own perceptions and limited experience, and it is practical to do that. This intelligence that pins things down in terms of spatial time is practical and it is social; it enables us to function successfully in society. As Bergson tells us, this practical intelligence which enables us to function in society is a product of social evolution.

It is a convenient rationalization to believe that what we see and feel and know is the truth, and that it is better than any other truth that can be imagined. It is a useful illusion. It enables us to justify, for example, going to war for the sake of territory or petroleum. But our bright new evolving consciousness tells us spontaneously that this illusion is not sustainable. We have filled every niche on the planet, which no other species has done before us. Other species have become extinct before that happened and have been replaced by new species that fit into a relative niche. But the human species has discovered how to innovate and adapt endlessly to every possible habitat.

When we come to Sri Aurobindo, we will encounter the possibility that the principle of Mind is not only a principle in the abstract sense, but it is something that explains everything else. He recommends that we begin to perceive things in terms of universal principles. We should make an effort of consciousness to not see things in terms of momentary particulars on the basis of which we make judgments, but that we teach ourselves to view even ordinary experience through the lens of universal principles. For example, right now in millions of classrooms there are people speaking to other people to bring about a common focus on values that they believe to be important. This is a widespread phenomenon of human culture, which is very essential. It is called teaching and learning: education. It is the human version of what is going on in every organism when they sense heat and cold and move in this or that direction; it is information processing, the utilization of energy for the purpose of survival. It goes on in every cell of life and it goes on at a very sophisticated level in graduate medical institutions where people are learning to perform brain surgery, for example. We are engaged in a phenomenon which is the product of certain universal principles such as propagation of values, goal oriented behavior, seeking understanding and harmony, and at the highest level we could call it

Mahasaraswati, the principle or god of radiating universal beauty and knowledge throughout the products of culture and art and learning, in all of their diverse forms of expression. It is an actual energy of creativity, a divine Shakti, which we can celebrate and recognize in many forms – for example, in the form of the biosphere which is resonant with Mahalakshmi creating her wealth of energy and beauty and diversity throughout nature. We shouldn't reduce our experience of life to the most mundane and meaningless sensations and perceptions. We should expand consciousness into the realm of universal energy fields that have meaning and purpose.

Sri Aurobindo recommends that first of all we analyze very carefully how our minds work. And within that field, we should be aware of how our will works to enact the things that our mind tells us, and then we should create some space within that field of perception of our own manifold, in which we can discover the Purusha or soul, and perceive in that soul-space, which is silent and empty, everything which is there, without any response or reaction. Then we can actually know 'what is there', the being of things can be known, directly and intensely, in us and beyond, and at the same time we do not think, make judgments, react... we perceive in the self what is there. The self is that. It is a mistake to think that the self is this time-bound, space-bound, experience-bound, personality-bound entity that has our name and birthdate and photograph on the passport. This is the first step that Sri Aurobindo recommends in the transition of Mind to Supermind. Let me prove it with a quote:

“The witness Purusha in the mind observes that the inadequacy of his effort, all the inadequacy of fact in man's life and nature, arises from the separation and consequent struggle, want of knowledge, want of harmony, want of oneness. It is essential for him to grow out of separative individuality, to universalize himself, to make himself one with the universe. This unification can be done only through the soul by making our soul of mind one with the universal mind, our soul of life one with the universal life-soul, our soul of body one with the universal soul of physical nature. When this can be done, in proportion to the power, intensity, depth, completeness, permanence with which it can be done, great effects are produced upon the natural action. Especially there grows an immediate and profound sympathy and immixture of mind with mind, life with life, a lessening of the body's insistence on separateness, a power of direct mental and other intercommunication and effective mutual action, which helps out the now inadequate and indirect communication and action that was till now the greater part of the conscious means used by the embodied mind.”<sup>3</sup>

Sri Aurobindo will explain that this is the entry into the intuitive mind, the direct perceiving of the universal truths of things on all the planes on which we reside. And Bergson says that this is a perception of the duration and intensity of the creative becoming of things. We begin to perceive things in terms of the intensities and durations of what they are, instead of our prescreened conceptual understanding of things. There is another way of knowing that needs to gain some foothold and be entrained and habituated so that when we act in the world it is on the basis of that becoming and novelty and creativity instead of on the basis of something that has already happened and its past usefulness and understanding.

But before going further into Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of Supermind, I wanted to review a bit of Aristotle. For the sake of winding up the subject of 'what mind is', I wanted to go back about 2000 years. We have heard Sri Aurobindo on the principles of *citta*, *manas* and *buddhi* from Sankhya philosophy, which can be understood as the patterns of unconscious memory and response on the physical level (*citta*), the sensations and perceptions of the practical mind (*manas*), and the rational faculty of abstraction and ethical judgment (*buddhi*) which emerges on the basis of the *citta* and *manas*, with the possibility that it can gain a leverage that enables it to bring down the higher consciousness-

force into the lower levels of mind. Then we are on the path of understanding what mind is, in order to know what the transition to Supermind might mean. Now, it has become legitimate to ask how and when this transition can be made? And we have heard from Sri Aurobindo that the universalization of consciousness is a first step. Now what is the basis in the reality of nature and consciousness that makes this transition possible?

In an earlier lecture, I quoted from a book of Aristotle titled *De Anima*, *On the Soul*, from which we learn that there is a perspective, or way of understanding things, that was prevalent over 2000 years ago and that continues to hold our attention. It has recurred in the 13th Century, and the 15th Century, and the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 20th Century; we have just heard it again in the passage we read from Bergson, and it seems in fact not to just belong to the past at all. Aristotle said, "Every class of things is made up of a matter which is potentially all the particulars included in the class." This says that carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen are included in all members of the class of quadrupeds. That material base potentially can become what all living things are. "It is a cause which is productive in the sense that it makes them all. These distinct elements must likewise be found within the soul. Mind, as we have described it, is what it is by virtue of becoming all things. While there is another which is what it is by virtue of making all things. This is a sort of positive state like light. For in a sense light makes potential colors into actual colors. Mind in this sense of it is separable, impassable, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity. For always the active is superior to the passive factor, the originating force to the matter which it forms. Actual knowledge is identical with its object."

So the originating force is mind, and it is matter that is formed into the elements and higher life forms. This is a fundamental belief of the ontological, intuitional stream in philosophy, and it is fundamentally opposite to the belief that is prevalent in analytical, scientific philosophy. I have heard it said many times that the mind cannot know what is going on in another mind, it can only construct from observed behavior an idea or impression of what is going on there, and then it preoccupies itself with the construct. The intuitive point of view says that mind is identical with the object that it knows. This is because, as Aristotle says, mind can become everything and mind causes everything to be what it is. So there are two poles of mind. One is the actual energy and active pole of everything, and the other is the principle at work in things to get knowledge and grow and develop into what they potentially are. This is the passive pole of mind, and the other is the active, unmixed, pure, radiant principle of mind.

Then Aristotle says, "Actual knowledge is identical with its object in the individual. Potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge in the individual. But in the universe as a whole, (potential) knowledge is not prior even in time. Mind is not at one time knowing and at another not knowing. When mind is set free from its present conditions it appears as just what it is and nothing more. This alone is immortal and eternal and without it nothing thinks." Then he will say that soul is the entelechy that drives the material form and vital form to have sensations and grow and reproduce, and soul is in mind on the mental level knowing the objects it perceives and thinks about. The evolving mind is thought of as the soul or essential entity in the physical and vital and mental being performing or becoming at each level the essential nature of what is seen outwardly as form. When the form is known, it is known by the level of soul we call mind, and it is knowable because it is the product of Mind. Each thing is what it is because of this essential nature of it, which is knowable. What is not knowable is the matter as such. The matter of stone is not taken into the mind, which is a pure spiritual entity, but it knows the stone in terms of its type, quality, structure, which is "stone".

This is obviously very similar to the idea of Purusha and Prakriti; that Self and Nature are not separate but they are separable. We can draw back the soul from its involvement in matter and life and mental

behavior and experience it as a pure being. This is the meaning of liberation in Sankhya and Yoga. And when that is done, this Purusha is capable of ascending into the level of Param Purusha which sees itself in all things, and it is in all things. Then it has a choice. It can involve itself in Prakriti, the forms and processes of Nature, or it can be dissociated from and liberated from Prakriti. If the former, it thinks of itself as the form, behavior, sensation, and loses sight of itself as such; if the latter, it withdraws and experiences itself as pure Self. Then, says Sri Aurobindo, in an important modification of the traditional Yoga teachings of Patanjali, the Param Purusha can re-enter mind, life, and body without losing its sense of pure Self and can transform these instrumental levels into the pure, inspired, luminous energy of a transformed Prakriti. Then it can be said that Purusha and Prakriti become one on all the levels of being.

Aristotle apparently didn't see this possibility, (nor did Patanjali, although it seems to have been seen at various moments in the Hindu tradition), but he did seem to have an idea of the identity of the soul that forms the matter and the soul that is intelligent in the creature with the higher universal Mind that is manifesting through the soul on all its levels, and which enables mind to experience a gnostic identity with the objects known. Then Sri Aurobindo tells us that the term *vijnana buddhi* in Sanskrit means gnostic consciousness, and this is a term that comes from Plato and Aristotle. This *gnosis* is the identity between the knowing and known. We gather that the Greeks were seeing something like the idea of the Supermind, or *vijnana*, although the idea of its descent and the transformation of the lower levels of the soul and nature had not occurred in the original formulations of either tradition.

In the development of my thinking about the philosophy of evolution, this metaphysical or spiritual level of understanding isn't necessarily prior to our knowing what evolution is about, but it does follow from a certain understanding of evolution, and eventually we come to the higher metaphysical understanding, as I think we can see in Bergson and Whitehead for example, who were not aware of the philosophy of Supermind. However, the idea of evolution being driven by an eternal energy or light, *nous*, in Plato and Aristotle, is not much different from the idea of Supermind; there is quite a perfect blend of these systems of thought in Sri Aurobindo.

#### Notes

1. This is an edited transcription of the third and fourth lectures in the third series on the Philosophy of Evolution, 2012.
2. Henri Bergson (1946/2007), *The Creative Mind*, (p. 73-75).
3. Sri Aurobindo, (1948/1970), *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 614-615.

## Mind and Supermind – Lecture 9

### The Platonism of Whitehead and Sri Aurobindo

I have noticed a pattern in the continuum of these lectures on the philosophy of evolution, of which there have been thirty-five: there has been a tendency to repeat a particular theme twice, in two consecutive lectures, and that will be the case in these last two lectures.<sup>1</sup> That hasn't been a deliberate thing, but it is a pattern that I can see now in looking back. And part of the reason is that there has been a lot of material to present, as there is today, and a limited allotment of time.

The purpose of presenting this material is to help us think in terms of evolution, and to participate, in some way, in evolutionary thinking. There have been a few thinkers in the 20th Century who have really devoted themselves to evolutionary thinking. They have had the idea that the evolution of mind, and beyond mind, is what is happening in the human being, and the mind is somehow a key to that movement. What I would like to point out today, definitively, is that this movement of evolutionary thinking originates with Plato and Aristotle. I could not have said this so definitively before today, so for me this process has been very fruitful. I have approached this project on the philosophy of evolution with the purpose of discovering something, and I have come to the conclusion that Aristotle's thinking is not something that belongs to the past. It is something which has experienced many rebirths in the last 2400 years, and in the work of the philosophers we are considering, Sri Aurobindo, Heidegger, Whitehead, and others, Aristotelian thinking is still very much alive.

For example, we may look at something that Darwin said, which goes back to a lecture at the very beginning: "It may be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinizing throughout the world the slightest variations, rejecting those that are bad, preserving and adding up all that are good, silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life. We see nothing of these slow changes in progress until the hand of time has marked the lapse of ages, and then so imperfect is our view into long past geological ages, we see only that the forms of life are now different from what they formerly were."<sup>2</sup>

As I have pointed out many times, Darwin did not have at his disposal anything like the geological fossil record that we now have. Geological time had just been discovered by his cousin Lyle. Since that time we have also discovered the genome record and we know about the continuous and unbroken development of life from species to species. And we know today that 99.9% of species that have ever lived are now extinct. So we know a lot of things that Darwin did not know. But that statement that he made is a very Aristotelian statement. There is an intuition that philosophers and philosophical scientists have had periodically throughout these past 2000 years that somehow matter and life embody a higher knowledge; that everything that happens in time and space is an evidence of the Logos. In Greek thinking the *Logos* and *Phusis*, the relation between reason and nature-force-energy, was a problem to be understood and solved. It was an intuition that Plato had in a very brilliant way and that Aristotle attempted to apply to the study of nature itself. (It has been pointed out that in the history of Western thought there has been a schism in the interpretation of Platonic and Aristotelian thought, but in my opinion that is a schism in interpretation, and not a schism in the thought of Plato and Aristotle.)

What I have discovered in my study of Plato and Aristotle and various 20th Century as well as medieval interpreters is that there is an essential intuition of the relationship between spirit and matter that runs throughout this tradition. And there has been a compulsion to define the necessity of that

relationship in terms of the manifestation of forms in time and space. How are we to understand the fact that the movement of energy in time and space has the form that it has, and that organs made of molecules and cells produce an awareness of what is there in reality? This has been a preoccupation of philosophy throughout these centuries, and it is a truly perplexing problem. How is it that consciousness happens to pervade this material/vital/mental frame of existence, and that nature is apparently intelligent and purposeful? We can't perceive directly how this field of sensations and perceptions that we and all animals have access to gives us information about itself which we are able to use to execute plans successfully, in the context of nature, without any difficulty. To explain adequately how consciousness has emerged in this material field, and how it knows that field quite accurately and can use it successfully to achieve whatever aims it can conceive, is the challenge for philosophy. It isn't enough for a philosopher to just take all that for granted. And it presents an almost intractable problem. You will find plenty of books on the shelves today that are trying to explain consciousness. And massive amounts of research, time, and energy are being invested in trying to understand this phenomenon. So it hasn't gone away; it has persisted throughout these centuries.

What we will see today is a close parallel between the Sankhya philosophy and classical Greek philosophy in the thought of Sri Aurobindo and Whitehead. In the idea of Purusha and Prakriti, that there is a Self that is the infinite and eternal reality of things, and those things are the products of Nature, and that there is an identity between these opposite principles, the knowing Self and the expressions of form in Nature, we can recognize, and there is in this structure of thinking something that is quite identical to the ideas of Plato and Aristotle with respect to Spirit and Matter. This way of thinking predominated that period of time, perhaps because people didn't have so many distractions, and scientific technological thinking hadn't created such a massive alternative reality. So now we are, as Bergson pointed out, we are completely taken in by our frame of understanding of things and our frame of the manipulation of things derived from our frame of understanding. And that frame has become the reality that occupies human consciousness; its own interpretations and applications of abstract thought now occupy the mind almost exclusively. But in those days it was still possible to have a continuous intuitive grasp of all the levels of being itself: the being of nature, the being of society, the being of mind. These realities were much more accessible two thousand years ago than they are today. Today we understand those things in terms of what the media tells us about those things.

You undoubtedly thought about coming here this morning sometime during the week, I thought about coming here this morning for most of the day yesterday; a process of prevision has been going on about this event. We were able to conceive ahead of time of this happening, this event which is now occurring here in this space-time framework. And as I pointed out last week, for me this process of thinking ahead and then experiencing a unique event as a result of that thinking ahead, in this context, has been going on for several years. So we are engaged in a creative time-energy continuum that, as Bergson says, is quite other than our conception of linear time with respect to what we did then and what we are doing now and how we measure the difference and make judgments and decisions about what we accept and reject, etc. We could have made choices other than the ones we made, and in fact there are innumerable possibilities. But, aside from those considerations, we are actually present here, and it is a unique event. As Sri Aurobindo says, we are able to conceive of the potential, the actual, and the eventual, quite naturally. We live in this extended time continuum and we don't even think about it. It is natural. And yet there is a dynamic, creative aspect of this flow that we tend to reduce to fragments associated with spatial boundaries. This is Bergson's fundamental insight, and it is very important to an understanding of the possibility of an evolution of consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo happens to have undertaken a Yoga *sadhana*, which he documented incrementally for

many years, in which he attempted to establish a permanent *trikaladrishti* – seeing in the three times – and *trikalatapas* - using energy to determine precisely the eventuality on the basis of the actuality and the potential. This apparently became his primary preoccupation for those years of *sadhana* between about 1910 and 1925 – to master the siddhi of *trikaladrishti* – which was something he felt to be the key to the transformation of consciousness, this evolutionary spirituality that he taught. It is an evolutionary spirituality, and there are parameters that have been defined very precisely for enacting and realizing this aim.

What unites these thinkers from Aristotle to Bergson and the others, can be called intuitionism. And what I have tried to define and point out in these lectures is the difference between rational, analytical thinking and intuitional thinking. Intuition, as defined by Bergson and subsequently by Sri Aurobindo, is a potential of mind that is engaged creatively in the actual duration and intensity of the creative unfolding of existence, whereas the analytical mind is engaged in tying down segments of that unfolding in a kind of spatial relationship in order to measure changes and define changes and apply that understanding to other practical arrangements. And that way of thinking has contributed substantially to the product of human society that we find today, which is so advanced and technologically efficient. However, all along the process of the development of the human being for the past few thousand years, the intuitional mind has also been developing and creating and having inspirations about the knowledge that has later been measured, so they work together. But the idea of evolving beyond mind often amounts to evolving beyond the limitations of the rational mind. And the way it is done is by putting the intuitional mind in front, and by allowing it to become dominant, which hasn't happened in an appreciable way on a level of normative behavior. For the intuitive mind to be maximized and to become dominant in the life of the human being is the pathway defined by Bergson and Sri Aurobindo towards supermind. Intuitive mind is an intermediate between rational mind and supermind and this has been defined very specifically by Sri Aurobindo. All of the techniques of Yoga he has taught are about accessing that pathway.

I would like to proceed with Whitehead in order to give us a sense of what it means to allow this intuitive mind to grasp reality in a very conscious and deliberate way, and to see what the product is. I believe this is a very early experimental stage in this evolution and yet Whitehead had achieved so much from the point of view of the rational mind, that for him to move in this intuitive direction meant that he was bringing to it equipment that was already quite extraordinarily developed, as did Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo, no doubt. So how does it look for this highly developed rational mind to launch fully and completely into the intuitive stream of mind, and how does it look for it to try to grasp, in terms that we can more or less understand, reality from that perspective. I think we can get some indications of that. But we have to be willing to admit that the rational mind can make this transition and that it is not a matter of this or that, it is really a transition that we are asked to make. It is not possible – I will commit to this point of view – it is not possible for the rational mind to leap into the supermind without a transitional stage of development. If it were possible, we would have already done that.

These ideas of Whitehead are examples of the fundamental Platonic/Aristotelian way of thinking and we will recognize it because it is the way we think; it is the way the mind works. I'll just read a few segments from Whitehead and we will reflect on what he is saying. "Creativity, Many, One, are the ultimate notions involved in the meaning of the synonymous terms 'thing', 'being', 'entity'."<sup>3</sup> Last week we spoke about identity and difference. We know things by their identity with themselves and their difference from everything else. That is how the mind works. But it is not only how the mind works; it is also how nature works. Everything is identical with itself and different from every other

thing.

And then there are categories to which we assign certain identities, and within the species we are different from everyone else, and we are all different with respect to another species. That is not just a way of thinking: that is how nature works. Whitehead begins by pointing this out. “The term ‘many’ presupposes the term ‘one’ and the term ‘one’ presupposes the term ‘many’. The term ‘many’ conveys the notion of disjunctive diversity; this notion is an essential element in the concept of ‘being’. There are many ‘beings’ in disjunctive diversity.” Thanks to our logic class we now know the meaning of disjunction. Disjunctive diversity means either this or that; if this then not that, and if that then not this. This allows everything to be what it is. But a ‘something else’ can be with it on the basis of difference. This and that.

In the philosophy of difference – Derrida and Deleuze, and company – there has been a vast amount of thinking along these lines, which has the aim of training the mind to understand every incremental difference in being and thinking on the basis of oneness, or the Same.<sup>4</sup> To do that means to move into what Sri Aurobindo calls the universalization of consciousness. He says it is absolutely essential for Yoga for the mind to universalize itself and stop thinking in terms of me and mine, because we are all that, and we have the same feelings and relations, and throughout the world the human species is engaged in manifesting universals: teaching and learning, healing, enjoying, structuring, evaluating, reproducing, protecting, securing – all the behaviors of the human being are universal. Therefore we can dissociate ourselves from a limited time frame and ego frame by making the Self transparent to being as such, and being as such is all of that diversity that manifests those universals. And only then, says Sri Aurobindo as we shall see, is it possible to undertake the Yoga of transformation.

Whitehead then says, “Creativity is the universal of universals...” Every moment is new, it is novel. This moment, in this context, however much we might have planned it beforehand, is nevertheless not what we have planned; it is now something unique. We are often so stuck in the value we give to our plans and their realization, in spite of every obstacle, that we can fail to appreciate the moment which is nonetheless unique. Individuals who come together at this point because of Auroville, because of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, because of this attempt to understand the philosophy of evolution, this whole flow of reality comes constantly to new expressions of a vast energy of truth that is manifesting in a false framework of time and space. We want to understand the relationship between that luminous true energy and this false, temporary confused conglomerate of lives. So we have a purpose, and Aristotle says nature does nothing without a purpose. But we have these confused ideas that we’ve learned from science about how everything happens by chance, nothing happens for a purpose, it is all random. It is like science tells us that we receive all of these stimuli and convert them into images in our mind, and then all we know are the images in our mind. But we know that isn’t true. We know what is there in front of us. We know it directly and it is what it is. All of these energies go through our manifold organic apparatus of consciousness that has been structured by evolution so that we can know what is there in front of us, not what we are constructing in the mind. We are talking here about a long history of philosophy called intuitionism that has known this, but it has been significantly overridden by another kind of philosophy that wants to negate that reality and concern itself only with the interpretations of the rational mind.

So Whitehead says, “An actual occasion is a novel entity diverse from any entity in the ‘many’ which it unifies. Thus ‘creativity’ introduces novelty into the content of the many, which are the universe disjunctively. The ‘creative advance’ is the application of this ultimate principle of creativity to each novel situation which it originates.”<sup>5</sup> So it is this or that, it is you or her, it is me now or me then, those



are all disjunctions of things that are, but actually right now it is you and me and her and this moment, and the disjunctive diversity has become a conjunctive unity. This creative advance is going on in your cells and molecules and life and relationships with others all the time. So there are these actualities that are the product of many other actualities that continually become novel entities.

“The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction. The novel entity is at once the togetherness of the ‘many’ which it finds, and also it is one among the disjunctive many which it leaves; it is a novel entity, disjunctively among the many entities which it synthesizes. The many become one, and are increased by one. In their natures, entities are disjunctively many in process of passage into conjunctive unity.” Whitehead calls this the vector character of reality. We were able to see some value in coming here this morning, intuitively, and so we moved throughout the week toward this unity, and toward other unities. This is creativity. We are something new and other than the many that we are; every actual entity is more than the many which make it up, and that movement is going on continuously; there hasn’t been a break in three billion years. But there are lapses leaps, and speciation occurs. Societies and cultures come and go. Aristotle was looking at the ideal Greek society of Athens and two hundred years later there was nothing left of it. And there have been moments of rebirth and synthesis that have produced especially divine products. The 15th Century was like that, after Aristotle was rediscovered in the 13th, and the cathedrals became universities and gave birth to the age of science.

There is something about that process that is fundamental, which Whitehead has stated here in terms of axioms that he calls Categories of Explanation. “1. That the actual world is a process, and that the process is the becoming of actual entities. Thus actual entities are creatures; they are also termed ‘actual occasions’. 2. That in the becoming of an actual entity, the potential unity of many entities in disjunctive diversity acquires the real unity of the one actual entity; so that the actual entity is the real concrescence of many potentials.” Concrescence means to be concrete and real. We can think about this in terms of the life and health of the body, or the economy of the society. It was a good idea to have a course in the philosophy of evolution, but that was only a potential; this is the actual, concrete, vibrant entity, a creature. Concrescence is the coming together of potentials in an actual unity. “3. That an eternal object can be described only in terms of its potentiality for ingression into the becoming of actual entities. 4. That the fundamental types of entities are actual entities and eternal objects; and that the other types of entities only express how all entities of the two fundamental types are in community with each other, in the actual world.”<sup>6</sup>

Each of these actual entities embodies a quality: a quality of beauty, a quality of truth, or their opposites, a quality of power, of meaning, of heat or cold. None of these actual entities, which we are, is just a conglomerate of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen. Each one is the accumulation of meaning and purpose that is our life, and this gathering is a concrescence of the meaning and purpose of human unity in Auroville, to explore the philosophy of evolution. “An eternal object”, by which he means a “universal” – because the idea of ‘one’ and ‘many’, is just an idea. Right? There is no ‘one’, there is no ‘many’, as such. These are just concepts. There is no beauty, apart from the essence of beauty. Truth and goodness and meaning and purpose are only concepts, apart from their manifestation in a group of actual entities. They only exist by virtue of the process of becoming in time and space. But there they exist in partial temporary forms. We understand that great manifestations of truth and art and poetry and beauty occur throughout the ages, they are eternal objects, but they are not known apart from the manifestations in which they occur. This is the fundamental Platonic/Aristotelian concept. There is an ingression, an entry into matter, life, and mind, of a principle like truth and beauty and consciousness and meaning and caring and creativity that participate in matter, life and mind, that

otherwise are just conglomerates of molecules and drives and mechanical energies that we are processing on the material level. This is all the result of an ingression of meaning and purpose, of form, that derives from a plane of eternal objects, truths, known in Greek as the *ideai*, ideas. Sri Aurobindo calls them Real Ideas.

Before going into Sri Aurobindo, I would like to jump from Whitehead's axiomatic view to some things he says that are more discursive and of a more cosmological nature. While Whitehead's philosophy is far too complex to explore in detail here, we may get a glimpse of the effort that he makes to grasp intuitively, and as a whole, the creative movement of time, and thereby to synthesize the opposites and dualities that are implied. And this seems to be one of the major characteristics of the transition in consciousness that is being proposed by these philosophers of evolution. He says, for example, "The universe includes a threefold creative act, composed of (i) the one infinite conceptual realization (which Aristotle has characterized as a Mind that is "a sort of positive state like light", that is the origin of all things, and without which "nothing thinks"), (ii) the multiple solidarity of free physical realizations in the temporal world (which we may understand to be the evolutionary world of continuous change), (iii) and the ultimate unity of the multiplicity of actual fact with the primordial conceptual fact (which seems to be the synthesis of permanence and change and to constitute the meaning, quality, value of everything that exists). If we conceive the first term and the last term in their unity, over against the intermediate multiple freedom of physical realizations in the temporal world, we conceive of the patience of God, tenderly saving the turmoil of the intermediate world by the completion of his own nature. ...he is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness."<sup>7</sup> Infinite potential exists in the universe between the absolute, or primordial conceptual fact, and the concrescent combination or synthesis of the opposite poles, which gives it the actual, meaningful forms and processes in time. Each concrescence is a conjunction between the supermind and matter. In every individual soul there is such a concrescence, in every actual entity which is a society of many there is a concrescence of the infinite and eternal. That infinite and eternal is not apart from this process. This process embodies it to some extent at each moment, otherwise it would have no shape, or limit, or quality. "The sheer force of things lies in the intermediate physical process", says Whitehead. But these two poles give that energy direction. So there is homeostatic development with constraints, always maintaining continuity, in the field of constant novelty. This is pure evolutionary thinking in Aristotelian terms stated by a 20th Century mathematician.

Sri Aurobindo also moves constantly between these levels in his philosophy of evolution. There is the plane of the Absolute, which contains all powers and all delights and all truths eternally. And then there is the physical, vital, mental field of becoming, the plane of cause and effect relations, pain and pleasure, creation and destruction, infinite potential. And in this hierarchy, the "between" is the planes of spiritual mind, with the Mahashakti at the top, who knows the truth, beauty and goodness in the eternal forms and consciously mediates their embodiments in the becoming. She saves all by her boundless grace. In both of these cosmological conceptions, there is a power of vision, an intuitive direct grasp of the totality and dynamism of the interaction of these three levels of being and consciousness, and it is this that seems to be the source of the inspiration for an evolutionary progression beyond the lower planes of mind. And for each of these philosophers of a higher intuition, the key seems to be a certain transcendent grasp of time. Both Whitehead and Sri Aurobindo have attempted to frame this intuition in a variety of similar ways, as we shall see.

For example, to conclude this brief review of Whitehead, and perhaps to try to grasp more firmly this dimension of the problem, let us read this argument that comes near the end of his book:

“The vicious separation of the flux from the permanence leads to the concept of an entirely static God, with eminent reality, in relation to an entirely fluent world, with deficient reality. But if the opposites, static and fluent, have once been so explained as separately to characterize diverse actualities, the interplay between the thing which is static and the things which are fluent involves contradiction at every step in its explanation. ...intuition has always, though obscurely grasped the problem as double and not as single. There is not the mere problem of fluency and permanence. There is the double problem : actuality with permanence, requiring fluency as its completion, and actuality with fluency, requiring permanence as its completion. ...The problems of the fluency of God and of the everlastingness of passing experience are solved by the same factor in the universe. This factor is the temporal world perfected by its reception and its reformation, as a fulfillment of the primordial appetite (will-force) which is the basis of all order. In this way, God is completed by the individual, fluent satisfaction of finite fact, and the temporal occasions are completed by their everlasting union with their transformed selves, purged into conformation with the eternal order which is the final absolute ‘wisdom’.”<sup>8</sup> Well, as he said early-on in his treatise, “These ultimate notions of ‘production of novelty’ and of ‘concrete togetherness’ are inexplicable in terms of higher universals or in terms of components participating in the concrescence. The analysis of the components abstracts from the concrescence. The sole appeal is to intuition.”<sup>9</sup>

In this evolving physical, vital, mental field, forms have evolved from the micro-organism to the biosphere, to the fully creative human soul, which now feels the constraints of the biosphere quite acutely, and asks itself whether a further ingression can take place between this evolutionary status and that infinite potential which can give us a leverage in the biosphere to manifest a quality of consciousness that is more caring, more transparent, more universal, more effective, for – not only survival – but a further manifestation of that potential which is eternal. The human being asks this question. And in order to ask this question it has to have a fundamental intuitive perception of the relationship between the infinite potential and the absolute essence. Otherwise it would never ask this question. (Perhaps that infinite patience of God would be an answer?)

So, to pursue a more direct access to this intuitive and evolutionary understanding, we may follow-up with the thinking of Sri Aurobindo. In *The Life Divine*, he says, “There is a constant mental, vital, subtle physical interchange going on between all who meet or live together of which they themselves are unaware except in so far as its impacts and interpenetrations touch them as sensible results of speech and action and other contact. For the most part it is subtly and invisibly that this interchange takes place, for it acts indirectly touching the subliminal parts and through them the outer nature.” By subliminal parts he means “the mixed capacity of the inner mental and vital nature”, and “deeper behind it a psychic entity which supports our individual life and body. ...There is indeed a soul personality representative of this entity. ...when we get into our subliminal consciousness, we find it extending itself to be commensurate with its world; when we get into our superconscient Self, we find that the world is only its manifestation and that all in it is the One...”<sup>10</sup> So the subliminal being is the psychic purusha and the higher spiritual Self; the *caitya purusha* and the *caitanya purusha*, this all-knowing self in the human can connect with that all-knowing Self of the cosmos, and experience all of these planes in their interconnections. But in order to do that, this psychic being has to step back from its involvement in momentary impressions and conceptions and allow itself to identify with the totality.

Now, what Sri Aurobindo does to put this Hindu conception into the context of Platonic/Aristotelian metaphysical thinking is this. He says,

“Oneness or sameness is everywhere, differentiation is everywhere; the indwelling Reality has built the universe on the principle of the development of one seed into a million different fashions. But this again is the logic of the Infinite; because the essence of the Reality is immutably the same, it can assume securely these innumerable differences of form and character and movement, for even if they were multiplied a trillionfold, that would not affect the underlying immutability of the eternal Identical. Because the Self and Spirit in things and beings is one everywhere, therefore Nature can afford this luxury of infinite differentiation...”<sup>11</sup> “In our experience of it we become aware of an Infinite essentially free from all limitation by qualities, properties, features; on the other hand, we are aware of an Infinite teeming with innumerable qualities, properties, features...”<sup>12</sup> These are what Whitehead refers to as eternal objects. Qualities, properties, and features exist in innumerable forms of expression, but in themselves they are eternal in the Reality which is infinite and always the same, but that sameness contains every possible quality. It is the Absolute, Infinite, and the Real, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, and all of its temporal formations are it also. He says, “A quality is the character of a power of conscious being; or we may say that the consciousness of being expressing what is in it makes the power it brings out recognisable by a native stamp on it which we call quality or character. Courage as a quality is such a power of being, it is a certain character of my consciousness expressing a formulated force of my being, bringing out or creating a definite kind of force of my nature in action. So too the power of a drug to cure is its property, a special force of being, native to the herb or mineral from which it is produced, and this speciality is determined by the Real-Idea concealed in the involved consciousness which dwells in the plant or mineral; the idea brings out in it what was there at the root of its manifestation and has now come out thus empowered as the force of its being. All qualities, properties, features are such powers of conscious being thus put forth from itself by the Absolute...”<sup>13</sup>

I call this “extreme subjectivism”. Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of intuition is a form of extreme subjectivism in which everything that exists objectively is an expression of the self for the self, it is an identity of the self which it can experience as itself among its infinite other expressions of itself. This is the dynamic creative power of the infinite and eternal Self in time and space.

So, if you are a risk taker, and you really do it, this is an expression of the infinite in you. We have the capacity to express what it means to really be somebody. If we don’t take risks in this world, we are hardly human. The Real Idea is a force of eternal being that expresses itself in these momentary evolutionary forms. Nothing is not that. Nothing is just matter or just life. Everything in nature has a purpose because of the plane of the Real Idea which is the plane in which all of this comes and goes. If we are that Absolute then we must be able to know it and to express it, and that is what the evolution of supermind is about. That is its principle. It is basic Sankhya philosophy and it is basic Platonism. As Aristotle said in *De Anima*, the locomotive soul, the nutritive soul, the intellective soul are forms of the supreme Mind, the unmoved mover, which is an eternal light that holds in it, actually, everything that can be known in the temporal world. It is only possible for something to be known in the temporal world because of that which is not in the temporal world. And that Mind is also the essence of the things themselves. Otherwise there would be no knowing, he said. If that supermind were not in this soul, then everything would just be matter and mechanical force. But it is a world of quality and consciousness; cognition is omnipresent, because there is a self in it that is One.

“We see that the Absolute, the Self, the Divine, the Spirit, the Being is One; the Transcendental is one, the Cosmic is one: but we see also that beings are many and each has a self, a spirit, a like yet different nature. And since the spirit and essence of things is one, we are obliged to admit that all these many must be that One, and it follows that the One is or has become many; but how can the limited or relative be the Absolute and how can man or beast or bird be the Divine Being? But in erecting

this apparent contradiction the mind makes a double error. It is thinking in the terms of the mathematical finite unit which is sole in limitation, the one which is less than two and can become two only by division and fragmentation or by addition and multiplication; but this is an infinite Oneness, it is the essential and infinite Oneness which can contain the hundred and the thousand and the million and billion and trillion.”<sup>14</sup>

Well this is what Bergson said, as well, but not in such a dynamic, mantric form. When we think in terms of spatial differences, and the contradiction that is implied between the One and the Many, the Infinite and the finite, we are thinking analytically, within mathematical limits, and not grasping things totally in the stream of creativity. But no contradiction is implied except in this way of thinking. It, the Self, the One, can contain and express all of this and still be only Itself. Some Neo-Platonists call this experience the radiance of Being, which is a potential of human consciousness.

I will do the second version of this theme next week, with references to Plato, Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo.

## Notes

1. These are the concluding lectures (9 and 10), of the University of Human Unity lectures on the Philosophy of Evolution, which brings the total to 36 in all since 2008. The first seven are from the second series in 2009 and the last three are from the third series in 2012. An intermediate series of five lectures on Bergson, Teilhard, and Gebser, in 2010, has not been included.

<[www.universityofhumanunity.org](http://www.universityofhumanunity.org)>

2. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (6th ed., 1872) p. 126

3. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (1929/1978), p. 21

4. Jacques Derrida has followed Heidegger and Gilles Deleuze has followed Bergson, and they have carried this thinking of ‘being’ forward in amazingly creative and diverse ways in the second half of the 20th Century.

5. Op. cit., p. 21

6. Ibid., p. 22

7. Ibid., p. 346

8. Ibid., p. 347

9. Ibid., p. 21

10. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (1970 ed.) p. 563

11. Ibid., p. 340

12. Ibid., p. 334

13. Ibid

14. Ibid., p. 335

## Mind and Supermind – Lecture 10

### Platonic/Aristotelian thinking in the philosophy of evolution

Today I am going to refer to some text of Sri Aurobindo that follows up from last week. And then I am going to refer to some text from three philosophers: Bateson, Dennett, and Heidegger, in order to conclude this course on Mind and Supermind. But first I want to share with you a general conclusion that I have reached, which is a kind of revelation for me. From time to time throughout this study, first in the series 'Darwin and Sri Aurobindo' (2008), and then in the first series on 'Mind and Supermind' (2009), and finally in this six-week series of lectures on 'Mind and Supermind' (2012), a pattern can be seen that I have just become aware of. It was not an intention from the beginning. When I began the course I did not have this in mind at all, and I have proceeded more or less inductively, until finally this realization has presented itself very strikingly.

As I pointed out last week, in the context of our review of the philosophy of Whitehead, Platonic and Aristotelian thought seems to be a characteristic of many of the philosophers we have considered, and especially of the intuitive stream, represented by Bergson, Whitehead, Heidegger, and Sri Aurobindo. Whitehead's restatement of this way of thinking in *Process and Reality* (1929/1978), is perhaps the most perfect expression of it to have been written in the history of philosophy. But even if we go back to Darwin, we can see the pattern of thinking that I am speaking about. For example, in the last pages of *The Origin of Species*, he wrote:

“When I view all things not as special creations, but as the lineal descendants of some few beings which lived long before the first bed of the Cambrian system was deposited, they seem to me to be ennobled. Judging from the past, we may safely infer that not one living species will transmit its unaltered likeness to a distant futurity. And of the species now living very few will transmit progeny of any kind to a far distant futurity; for the manner in which organic beings are grouped shows that the greater number of species in each genus, and all the species in many genera, have left no descendants, but have become utterly extinct. We can so far take a prophetic glance into futurity as to foretell that it will be the common and widely-spread species, belonging to the larger and dominant groups within each class, which will ultimately prevail and procreate new and dominant species. As all the living forms of life are the lineal descendants of those which lived long before the Cambrian epoch, we may feel certain that the ordinary succession by generation has never once been broken, and that no cataclysm has desolated the whole world. Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of great length. And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress toward perfection.”<sup>1</sup>

Darwin's intuition was that nature is a continuum and that it moves toward an end or Final Cause – the good of all beings. That is what I am calling the fundamental characteristic of Aristotelian thought. And for philosophy, this implies a direct connection between Spirit and Matter, an intercession of Spirit, or Mind, or Form, into the material plane as the cause of this continuity of structures and forms which exist for a purpose. For, as Aristotle said, everything in Nature is for a purpose; that is in fact his definition of Nature. And it therefore becomes necessary for philosophy to explain this connection: how is it that Spirit intervenes in Matter to produce life? This intuition, and this question, have inspired philosophy for more than 2000 years, - it is an exciting discovery! And we find it also in the Vedic conception of Purusha and Prakriti. It is a Necessary Connection, not only for philosophy, but for the existence of evolutionary Life, and for the emergence of Mind. This was also Locke's fundamental

argument in 1690 – that life and mind could not have emerged from unconscious matter, and Sri Aurobindo restated this argument almost verbatim in *The Life Divine*. And he had the knowledge and capacity to bring the classical Western and Indic conceptions together on precisely this point. It is this fundamental intuition of Spirit in Matter, of a kind of indeterminate origin of all Being which is, at the same time, an unlimited potential of all Becoming, which resides in the physical world and has to be explained. It has not only inspired philosophers for millennia, but evolutionary thought in the modern period from Spenser and Darwin to Bergson and Whitehead, and it is creative; it is a thought process that links itself with creativity, and with the impulse of evolution itself. How else could Sri Aurobindo have been inspired to write so many pages, or Heidegger, or Bergson, to give so many lectures, over a period of fifty years, which became the books of philosophy that have been perhaps more influential than any others in the 20th Century?

So, let us look now at a specific formulation of this essential Platonic/Aristotelian way of thinking as expressed by Sri Aurobindo. As we heard last time, according to Sri Aurobindo all qualities are the expression of Real-Ideas. But he then goes on to say something that is specifically relevant to the evolutionary transition from Mind to Supermind, and it is especially important for us to know. He said, “All qualities, properties, features are such powers of conscious being put forth from itself by the Absolute, ...”, and then, like Whitehead, he proceeds to describe the relationship between the One and the Many, and how the infinite and absolute Reality is involved in and expresses itself through finite forms and processes, another restatement of the fundamental concepts of classical Greek philosophy, with which Sri Aurobindo was as familiar as he was with Vedic concepts.

“It can be said of it that it would not be the infinite Oneness if it were not capable of an infinite multiplicity; but that does not mean that the One is plural or can be limited or described as the sum of the Many: on the contrary, it can be the infinite Many because it exceeds all limitation or description by multiplicity and exceeds at the same time all limitation by finite conceptual oneness. ...it is the One Soul that dwells as the individual in these many souls and they are eternal in the One and by the one Eternal. This is difficult for the mental reason which makes an opposition between the Infinite and the finite and associates finiteness with plurality and infinity with oneness; but in the logic of the Infinite there is no such opposition and the eternity of the Many in the One is a thing that is perfectly natural and possible.”<sup>2</sup> And then Sri Aurobindo introduces the problem of motion and immobility as states of the Infinite in its expression of qualities, and we begin to understand the relationship between this metaphysical explanation of reality and the psychological process of an evolutionary spirituality.

“Again, we see that there is an infinite pure status and immobile silence of the Spirit; we see too that there is a boundless movement of the Spirit, a power, a dynamic spiritual all-containing self-extension of the Infinite. Our conceptions foist upon this perception, in itself valid and accurate, an opposition between the silence and status and the dynamis and movement, but to the reason and the logic of the Infinite there can be no such opposition. A solely silent and static Infinite, an Infinite without an infinite power and dynamis and energy is inadmissible except as the perception of an aspect; a powerless Absolute, an impotent Spirit is unthinkable: an infinite energy must be the dynamis of the Infinite, an all-power must be the potency of the Absolute, an illimitable force must be the force of the Spirit. But the silence, the status are the basis of the movement, an eternal immobility is the necessary condition, field, essence even, of the infinite mobility, a stable being is the condition and foundation of the vast action of the Force of being. It is when we arrive at something of this silence, stability, immobility that we can base on it a force and energy which in our superficial restless state would be inconceivable. The opposition we make is mental and conceptual; in reality, the silence of the Spirit and the dynamis of the Spirit are complementary truths and inseparable.”<sup>3</sup>

And here we begin to see the basis of the Vedic and Vedantic concepts of Purusha and Prakiti, and the foundation of both Hindu and Buddhist yoga practices for the transformation of consciousness: we have to enter into the silence of the One in order to know the Many as its expression.

“Our conception of the Infinite is formlessness, but everywhere we see form and forms surrounding us and it can be and is affirmed of the Divine Being that he is at once Form and the Formless. ...The formlessness is the character of the spiritual essence, the spirit-substance of the Reality; all finite realities are powers, forms, self-shapings of that substance: the Divine is formless and nameless, but by that very reason capable of manifesting all possible names and shapes of being. Forms are manifestations, not arbitrary inventions out of nothing; for line and colour, mass and design which are the essentials of form carry always in them a significance, are, it might be said, secret values and significances of an unseen reality made visible...”<sup>4</sup>

And it is with this understanding that we find the key to the movement from Mind to Supermind and the possibility of an intuitive, direct grasp of the Identity of each and every difference in the unity of the Self. But in order to experience that Identity, the mind must become silent. This requirement, and the method of achieving it, are made very explicit by Sri Aurobindo in *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

“Obeying the necessity to withdraw successively from the practical egoism of our triple nature and its fundamental ego-sense, we come to the realisation of the spirit, the self, lord of this individual human manifestation, but our knowledge is not integral if we do not make this self in the individual one with the cosmic spirit and find their greater reality above in an inexpressible but not unknowable Transcendence. The Jiva, possessed of himself, must give himself up into the being of the Divine. The self of the man must be made one with the Self of all; the self of the finite individual must pour itself into the boundless finite and that cosmic spirit too must be exceeded in the transcendent Infinite.

“This cannot be done without an uncompromising abolition of the ego-sense at its very basis and source. In the path of Knowledge one attempts this abolition, negatively by a denial of the reality of the ego, positively by a constant fixing of the thought upon the idea of the One and the Infinite in itself or the One and Infinite everywhere. This, if persistently done, changes in the end the mental outlook on oneself and the whole world and there is a kind of mental realisation; but afterwards by degrees or perhaps rapidly and imperatively and almost at the beginning the mental realisation deepens into spiritual experience—a realisation in the very substance of our being. More and more frequent conditions come of something indefinable and illimitable, a peace, a silence, a joy, a bliss beyond expression, a sense of absolute impersonal Power, a pure existence, a pure consciousness, an all-pervading Presence. The ego persists in itself or in its habitual movements, but the place of the one becomes more and more loosened, the others are broken, crushed, more and more rejected, becoming weak in their intensity, limp or mechanical in their action. In the end there is a constant giving up of the whole consciousness into the being of the Supreme. In the beginning when the restless confusion and obscuring impurity of our outward nature is active, when the mental, vital, physical ego-sense are still powerful, this new mental outlook, these experiences may be found difficult in the extreme: but once that triple egoism is discouraged or moribund and the instruments of the Spirit are set right and purified, in an entirely pure, silent, clarified, widened consciousness the purity, infinity, stillness of the One reflects itself like the sky in a limpid lake.”<sup>5</sup>

Now, we should not think for a minute that this can be done easily. It is an evolutionary phenomenon that he is suggesting: to abolish the sense that we are separate, and to live in the sense of our oneness



with every other expression of the infinite, to perceive it. Previously we read something from Sri Aurobindo where he said it is absolutely necessary to universalize the self in the body, the self in the vital, the self in the mind, the self in the spirit; all those levels of the soul must experience themselves as the universal physical, vital, mental and spiritual being, as a constant living perception; not a concept of metaphysics. And the method that is being suggested is no different from the practice of Tibetan Buddhism which requires that we impose on ourselves, through the *buddhi*, the perception of the emptiness of everything, and in that emptiness we can impose a value of compassion. When we have succeeded in the practice we have wisdom, called *bodhichitta*. (Of course the secret of this emptiness is that it is a total, impersonal fullness.)

So much of what Sri Aurobindo says is about this movement which enables the divine force of the infinite to work through the human instrument in a transparent and creative way. And that is the evolutionary movement from rational mind to supermind that Sri Aurobindo prescribes. Unlike Whitehead, Bergson and Heidegger who did not prescribe, Sri Aurobindo states the same philosophy but prescribes a Yoga for achieving a state which those philosophers perhaps achieved in a similar way in their own lives, but they were not Yoga gurus. The perception that Sri Aurobindo began this passage with, is that to perceive in that stillness the essence of things is to perceive the qualities of the infinite. It is not to perceive things through our conditioned mental screen. This is a transformation of consciousness. As he said, “a quality is a character of conscious Being... all qualities are powers of conscious being put forth by the Absolute”. That is a perception, and it is not the one we are accustomed to experiencing by our conditioned analytical minds and preferential vitals and general self interest. We don’t tend to experience things as differences of the One; we usually experience things as just different from each other, and often inapproachably different.

So this transformation of consciousness is something that Plato also spoke about long ago. And I will just read some text of Heidegger to reinforce this idea. He did a very good job in a book titled *The Essence of Truth* (1931)<sup>6</sup>, which is fundamentally a restatement of Plato’s philosophy in *The Republic*, which also contains Heidegger’s translation of the original with an extensive commentary in which it is often difficult to distinguish the difference between Heidegger and Plato. But in dealing with a subject called *idea tou agathou*, the idea of the good, he says “The ability to see and the ability to be seen must both be harnessed together in one yoke.” Now the idea of the good is something we are very familiar with. We are always entertaining our ideas of the good, and labeling some things as participating in that idea, and some other things as not participating in that idea. So this is not an uncommon activity. But what we don’t generally perceive is that the idea of the good is not just our judgment about things. It really is what makes things good, and it really comes from the supreme goodness. Things which don’t measure up are just in a partial evolutionary condition.

At any rate, Plato says, “The ability to see and the ability to be seen must both be harnessed together under one yoke.” Now what is consciousness? It is the seeing of the seen. But what is the relationship between those two. It’s perception. But how is it that perception perceives what it perceives? This is the big mystery for philosophy ever since Plato, but he has dealt with the mystery quite adequately, as have others. “A yoke which gives the *dunamis* to the perceiving as also to the perceivable.” The energy of the perceived and the energy of perceiving are somehow yoked. “And what must pertain to the perceived in order that it should be perceivable? The *aletheia*.” *Aletheia* means the revealing or un-hiding of the truth, the inherent nature of the thing – *swabhava* in Sanskrit. The nature of the thing itself becomes unhidden in the perceiving of it. “Plato says that a being is only accessible as such when it stands in *aletheia*, unhiddenness. In a way, that is self-evident for a Greek. He unambiguously understands *aletheia*, not as a property and determination of seeing, of knowledge, nor as a

characteristic of knowledge in the sense of a human faculty, but as a determination of what is known, of the things themselves, of the beings. This therefore, says Plato, which grants unhiddenness to the knowable beings, and which lends to the knower the power of knowing, this I say is the idea of the good.”

If things were not knowable and known, there would be no consciousness, and there would be no process of learning, which as we have seen is going on at every level of life, throughout evolution, because of this yoking together of the known and the knowing; it is a fundamental phenomenon of conscious perception, called cognition. But how is it so? It is so because of the idea of the good; in Sri Aurobindo it is known as the Supermind, the *chit-shakti*, the force of consciousness that manifests in the thing and in the knowing of the thing: what it is. Not just what we think it is.

“The good, the *agathon*, is therefore the enablement of being as such, and of the unhiddenness of being as such. Or better, what Plato calls the good is that which empowers being and unhiddenness to their own essence.” Knowing has an essence, called mind by Aristotle, and manifesting a quality of being has an essence which may be a physical thing or a dynamic process or a pattern in society; there is an essence which is known. And here we transition from Plato into Aristotle. And we see that the purpose of things, the form of things, is their essence and that is what is known. Mind is the principle of difference. It is a fundamental quality of the being of things, which is their identity and difference. And everything is relational. Mind in things is identity and difference, and mind in knowing is the recognition of the identities and differences in things. This is a fundamental Platonic, Aristotelian, Aurobindonian, Vedic perception. And when you have that perception it is exciting. It makes philosophy something much more than what we usually think philosophy is. It is an iterating of a perception that is itself the embodiment of what things are. So Heidegger says that the preoccupation of philosophy is with what is, not how we know what is. The *noein*, the *gnoston*, the gnostic identity, is really what philosophy is after.

So then Heidegger says, “What is prior to everything else, that upon which everything depends, the *agathon*, can only be understood in this sense: the empowerment of being.” For Aristotle it was Mind. And that is the Good. It enables things to be what they are and also to be known. In Sanskrit this is called *chit-shakti*.

But, in evolutionary thinking we also find another school, the scientific school, and Gregory Bateson, whose father was a famous biologist, and who was a well-known anthropologist and psychologist in the 60s, published a book around 1970, titled *Steps Toward an Ecology of Mind*, and in 1979 another book titled *Mind and Nature*. On the surface of it you might think that this would be about Purusha and Prakriti, but unfortunately it isn't. Bateson was very much preoccupied with that other branch of philosophy known as epistemology. What we have been talking about today is ontology. But Bateson was not an ontologist, he never made that step, as Whitehead did. He remained a hard-nosed epistemologist till the end, and therefore he provides us with a good window on that school of thought. He writes here that, “The argument of this book presupposes that science is a way of perceiving, and making what we call “sense” of our percepts. But perception operates only on difference.”<sup>7</sup>

Well, this is not true. But it is true for scientific thinking, and it is a very profound statement. For throughout his book he is battling with how to make logical statements about our perceptions which are true. And yet he makes the statement, on the next page, “All experience is subjective. Our brains make the images that we think we perceive. It is significant that all conscious perception has image characteristics.” He is saying that all conscious perception is representational. And he gives many

examples. He says, “A pain is localized somewhere, it has a beginning and an end and stands out against a background. There are elementary components of an image. When someone steps on my toe what I experience is not his stepping on my toe but my image of his stepping on my toe reconstructed from neural reports reaching my brain somewhat after his foot has landed on mine.” This is spatial thinking, as explained by Bergson. And for Bateson, even an image has components, and as such is not itself a whole thing or event.

In another book with a similar approach, titled *Consciousness Explained* (1991), the leading analytical philosopher of evolution, Daniel Dennett, has given many examples from innumerable laboratory attempts to define the differences between perceptions and the perceived, between stepping on the toe and perceiving stepping on the toe, in order to try to explain consciousness. He constructed or reported on many experiments in controlled conditions to demonstrate what happens to perceptions under different stimuli, and how to analyze the differences between perceptions under different stimuli, and the judgments to which they lead, which reduces everything to time measurements between a stimulus and a response. In the end, the book is a compilation of artificially created experiences and conditions, which are analyzed. And it is the analysis that becomes the event or focus on the basis of which Dennett hopes to arrive at an understanding and explanation of consciousness. He calls this metaphysical minimalism, and the content of his experiments “fictions”. The hope is that the fictions will tell us something meaningful about reality. But it doesn’t work. Consciousness happens in the context of real events, and it is unanalyzable as an artificial construct in a laboratory. But, moreover, to make that reduction is to invalidate and annul the field of consciousness itself, which as we have heard about from the philosophers of intuitive mind is something directly knowable and irreducible. There is a huge difference between these two kinds of philosophy.

One outstanding example of the difference is found in their respective understanding of subjectivity and objectivity. Bateson says, “Experience of the exterior is always mediated by particular sense organs and neural pathways. To that extent objects are my creation and my experience of them is subjective and not objective.” I have tried to show many times that this is just a way of speaking and behaving that tries to establish the difference between subjectivity and objectivity analytically but it doesn’t succeed. And Heidegger pointed out early on, in his first book – *Being and Time* (1927/1996) – how that doesn’t work, and throughout fifty years of lecturing and writing he pointed this out again and again. Anyone who follows the thinking of Heidegger, Bergson and Sri Aurobindo understands that extreme subjectivity, as we have been considering it, is the ability of this organism to resonate in sympathy with another organism and with the cosmos as a whole, to the point where there is no line between subjectivity and objectivity. And that degree of subjectivity can be demonstrated objectively. It can be shared and understood commonly, *koina* in Greek. Perception comes from this ability of the soul, or the conscious being through its perceptive apparatus, to bring together the external and internal in one perception. And Plato has defined this very explicitly.

I will read Heidegger’s version of that because this is fundamental philosophy. It has been with us throughout the history of philosophy. It is the understanding of how we know what we know. Heidegger says, “We perceive the existing objects of perception.” He doesn’t say we perceive a constructed image of the existing objects of perception. “Color and sound, color is one being, sound is another. Or, to put it another way, the one exists as something different in relation to the other. As beings, both color and sound are different to each other and the same as themselves.” We have said this many times, identity and difference: everything is what it is and different from everything else. This is how the mind perceives, and it is also how things are. “We perceive all this being (being, being one, difference, both, the same, two, one, identity, non-identity) in addition to the color and sound

themselves. So we have an irremovable excess (as we provisionally call it) of perceivables within the region of perception, and it is incumbent on us to soberly re-inact the proof that Plato provides for this. We do not know what this excess is.” We experience an excess of perceptions that are not in the colors and sounds themselves but that are somehow within or behind the perceptions of color and sound, which the mind adds. Plato says “Now in what way do you perceive all this (the indicated excess) attaching to them (color and sound)? For it is impossible, either through hearing or sight to discover or take in what they have in common.” Sight doesn’t perceive what it has in common with color, and it doesn’t perceive what it has in common with sound. Nor do the senses perceive what their objects have in common. But we do.

“It is now said that this is *to koinon*,” says Heidegger, “i.e. what color and sound have in common... color, sound, taste, etc, are all existing, each identical with itself and different from one another. Do we hear this being-different, do we see it with our eyes? Do we hear or see their existing? Of course we do not. Plato says, There is no special organ for this (for this excess, for something’s existing apart from something else) as there are for the others (color, sound, smell), but the soul itself views, through itself, what all things have in common.” Aristotle will say it’s the soul in mind as opposed to the soul in the vital or the physical. It perceives what all things have in common, their existence, their similarities, their differences. “This singularity of being, which they have in common, does not contain anything of color and sound, neither anything of smell. Being-different is likewise a *koinon*. To be sure, difference separates one from the other (color from sound)! It is therefore definitely not something they have in common! Color and sound are different only in so far as they are held up together and compared. ...The connection between the excess of perception and the soul itself is thus understood in a properly positive sense; we understand why it must be the soul, and this alone, which perceives *ta koina*. Plato says, The soul perceives everything of this kind through itself. But what can through mean here, where no bodily organ, indeed no kind of organ whatever, can be meant? Perhaps a ‘soul-organ’ and ‘forces’? Not at all! But does the soul itself possess a passage-way? It does not have this, but rather is this itself, thus holding up the region of a unitary perceivability. Intrinsically and as such it extends over to the other which can be given to it. As that which intrinsically perceives, the soul is itself a being-extended-to, a passage-way, an extending over to.”

The soul is one in all, and yet different in all differences. Something has the power to be perceived, and something has the power to perceive it, and that power of perception and perceivability is the good, the self in all that expresses itself in each of the qualities that have being. The empowerment of being and unhiddenness, that Platonic idea, is the idea of the soul.

No amount of systematic analysis of stimulus and response is going to arrive at anything other than an analysis of certain quanta of stimulus and response. And science is not going to grasp the evolutionary movement, the creativity in nature, by conducting laboratory experiments with drosophila which can be manipulated to express different kinds of wings or with frogs that can be stimulated to express different organs and rates of reproduction. Nor is the measurement of the learning rates of dolphins under different reward schedules going to explain consciousness. Such controlled experiments, preferred by Bateson, and even more so the computer simulations preferred by Dennett, fit perfectly into that category of scientific behavior defined by Bergson as the spatialization of phenomena by the analytic mind, removed entirely from the actual duration of what is, and the on-going movement of consciousness and creative evolution. One orientation, the rational mind, is looking from without downward and backward, the other orientation, the intuitive mind, is looking from within, upward and forward.

But in his more recent book, titled *Freedom Evolves* (2003), which I think is much more interesting, a shift seems to have occurred in Dennett's approach. Here he argues copiously against the idea of physical or genetic determinism in evolution, and in favor of the mind's ability, even in animals, to make choices that are free from strict genetic or even environmental determinism. As he puts it, "To say that if determinism is true your nature is fixed, is to say something false. Our natures aren't fixed because we have evolved to be entities designed to change their natures in response to interactions with the rest of the world. It is confusion between having a fixed nature and having a fixed future that mismotivates the anguish over determinism. ... From the timeless God's-eye perspective nothing ever changes – the whole history of the universe is laid out at once – and even an indeterministic universe is just a static branching tree of trajectories. From the engaged agent's perspective, things change over time, and agents change to meet those changes. But of course not all change is possible for us. There are things we can change and things we can't change..."<sup>8</sup>

This way of thinking is much more intuitive, and Bergsonian, than we might have expected from this strong proponent of the analytical school, but his point of view is also an extension and completion of Bateson's preoccupation with the misapplication of logic in our failures to distinguish between different logical types. The logic of determinism has a field of applicability, and the logic of freedom and choice has another field of applicability, and they should not be confused. It is interesting to note, along these lines, that in this book Dennett recognizes the strong role of intellectual and moral choice at work in human evolution as opposed to the principles of genetic mutation and the struggle for survival on the vital plane that have been the stronger determinants of earlier stages of evolution. And he includes a leading exponent of Neo-Darwinian science in this outlook. He says, "It is culture that provides the fulcrum from which we can leverage ourselves into new territory. Culture provides the vantage point from which we can see how to change the trajectories into the future that have been laid down by the blind exploration of our genes. As Richard Dawkins has said, 'The important point is that there is no general reason for expecting genetic influences to be any more irreversible than environmental ones.' But in order to reverse any such influence, you have to be able to recognize and understand it. It is only we human beings who have the long-range knowledge capable of identifying and then avoiding the pitfalls on the paths projected by our foresightless genes."<sup>9</sup>

In this book Dennett has also given a prominent place to the exploration of the theory of "memes" and the role they play in the cultural transmission of information parallel to the role of genes in transmitting genetic information. At this point in evolution, although they obey the laws of natural selection, they are more important than genes in determining the forms that our relatively sophisticated symbolic life will take in generations to come. We may recognize in this idea a weak form of Aristotelianism. For although Dennett is not advocating the assumption of the role of leadership by the intuitive mind, which is the position that we have taken, he is certainly aware that cultural forms, such as parliaments and prisons, or BMW and Mercedes Benz exercise a relatively strong behavioral determinism on various populations of human society and are likely to continue to do so for some time to come, as will laws, languages, and laptops. These are formal causes, in Aristotelian terms, whose power cannot be denied; it is often greater than material causes such as environmental constraints, and efficient causes such as the limited availability of cash. The more important question is, What final causes will these institutions and artifacts serve to enhance or inhibit? Some of the contenders are obviously health, happiness, and harmony, as well as artificial intelligence, technological dominance, and monotony.

Dennett has arrived at the point where he and Dawkins agree that now evolution takes place in the domain of cultural products. Some of those products constitute attractors that influence humanity to take certain pathways. Evolutionary spirituality and the development of a higher faculty of intuition are

ideas and practices that constitute such attractors. This idea and way of thinking about the relationship of Spirit and Matter, essence and substance, Supermind and Mind, has persisted for two or three thousand years. And in the 20th Century it has come more to the front as the products of rational thinking have become more destructive. At this point the survival of the human species seems to be threatened by the technological products of rational thinking, while the other stream of intuitional thinking seems to hold the promise of a more holistic and energetic treatment of life that could yield forms, now latent in the spirit of the infinite, that are sustainable, positive, luminous, divine. Certain exponents of this way of thinking have identified methodologies for enhancing the intuitive side of mind, over and above the enhancement of the rational, analytical side of mind. In addition to these thinkers, there are actually significant numbers of people all over the globe who are opting for more intuitional energetics in life and rejecting more and more consistently the analytical, technological patterns.

Auroville obviously represents an energy field where these two rub against each other in a particularly tangible manner. And as is true in all of evolution, as in most sports, there is no clear outcome until there is a clear outcome. And this is only a symbolic nexus of this process in the world today. There are many that are much harsher and less easy to sort out. But the significance of the philosophy of evolution is that it actually identifies these pathways and positively asserts the pathway of an intuitive human evolution that lies very concretely before us. And there are forces that are coming into play as a result of that idea. The descent of the divine Shakti is drawn into the emptiness and the stillness, and it works. It brings about that shift that Sri Aurobindo identified. These two poles of this evolutionary movement have been very well defined by Sri Aurobindo. They are poles that are being firmly grounded for this energetic transition between the divine Shakti and the still mind and vital, and the expanded universalized consciousness, that can be creative in the manifestation of those next forms. This philosophical creativity that we are engaged in now is itself part of that pathway. The sitting to bring about the stillness, and the deliberate invocation of the new consciousness, are firmly established techniques and pathways of an evolutionary spirituality which are in fact being energized by humanity today in many different ways.

So ... that is the philosophy of evolution in so far as the Mind and Supermind question can be addressed by me at this point. Thank you.

#### Notes

1. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (6th ed., 1872), p. 314
2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (1970 ed.), p. 336
3. *Ibid.*, p. 336
4. *Ibid.*, p. 337
5. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1970 ed.), p.347/348)
6. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth* (1988/2002), a lecture course given in 1931, first published in German in 1988, English translation by Ted Sadler published in 2002. I have selected passages primarily from Part One, Ch. 2, The Idea of the Good and Unhiddenness, and from Part Two, Ch. 2, Section 24, The Soul as the Relationship that Unifies the Perceivable.
7. Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature* (1979), p. 29
8. Daniel Dennett, *Freedom Evolves* (2003), p. 93
9. *Ibid.*, p. 165