

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUMAN UNITY

# Mind and Supermind

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Lectures in the Philosophy of Evolution

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These two concluding lectures in the philosophy of evolution course focus primarily on the intuitional philosophies of Bergson, Whitehead, Heidegger, and Sri Aurobindo. The influence of Platonic and Aristotelian thought on the philosophy of evolution in general is an important thesis and unifying theme of these lectures. The evolution of a higher intuitive mind and a new conception of time is shown to be the necessary direction for a further evolution of consciousness, beyond rational mind. Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary spirituality combines the principles of classical Greek metaphysics and Vedic psychology to create a pathway for this next evolutionary advance.

**Mind and Supermind**  
**by Rod Hemsell**  
**The Philosophy of Evolution (3.5)**

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 (3.5, 3.6).<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 Physis, 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 practical 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 of the third series of the University of Human Unity lectures on the philosophy of evolution 2012, which brings the total to 36 in all since 2008. The first twenty-five are available as audio files on the website <[www.universityofhumanunity.org](http://www.universityofhumanunity.org)>.
2. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (6<sup>th</sup> ed., 1872) p. 126
3. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (1929/1978), p. 21
4. Jaques 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

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**by Rod Hemsell**  
**The Philosophy of Evolution (3.6)**

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 dynamism 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 Prakriti, 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