

Human Consciousness

and Truth

Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo

Rod Hemsell

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Surya Deva – Lord of Truth and Light

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Preface

This is a book of contemplations, reflections, meditations, on some of the works of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo that I hope will create an awareness of the depths and heights of knowledge that they explored and recorded in their writings.

Academic studies usually do not enter the depths or heights reached by these authors. These regions tend to be explored, and eventually known, only by the most persistent and devoted students of such authors and seers. Philosophy is not for everyone. In its original meaning and intention it is “wisdom.”

The effort made here is the result of many years of such dedicated study, with the intention of attaining wisdom. It is not academic. In fact, I have been immersed in this literature for several decades, and have experienced through its guidance what I consider to be the utmost limits of my mental and spiritual capacity.

It is therefore a study that is for me of immense intellectual and spiritual value. The record of the pursuit that is presented here can only be a token of that value. At best, I hope it will ignite something like the spark of interest needed to pursue and discover the riches that it has enabled me to find.

I first read some fragments of Heidegger's work as a student some 60 years ago, about the same time that I first heard of Sri Aurobindo. I went to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in India a few years later, in 1968, with the intention of making a life-study of Sri Aurobindo's work. In 1976, I gave a lecture on Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo at the Max Mueller Bhavan in Bangalore, which is a concrete indication of my interest at that time in the conjunction of

their work. But it was only much later that I was able to devote several years to a more intensive research of this sort in courses that I presented in Auroville between 2007 and 2017. On the basis of those courses a few books were written and published that foreshadowed the direction taken here.

Then, a few years ago, as a result of many conversations about the works of Heidegger with a friend and native German speaker, Edith Stadig, who is the publisher of this study and who is also a serious student of Sri Aurobindo, I was inspired to re-read most of the works of Heidegger that have been translated into English. Among them was a work published only in 1989, of which I first became aware in 2015, but which I had not read, titled *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Heidegger had passed away in 1976, and this book, which he chose not to publish in his lifetime, took a relatively long time to become available to Heidegger scholars. Therefore, most of what has been written about his work by even the best of scholars has not included any reference to this volume. It is this work, which is now considered one of the most important, that especially inspired the study I am presenting here. In particular, it confirms the deeply spiritual nature of Heidegger's work, which many serious scholars could sense but which was nevertheless concealed by Heidegger in the intellectually challenging metaphysical and phenomenological nature of most of his writing. It is in this work that his thought resonates most intensely with the spiritual philosophy that is expressed in Sri Aurobindo's work.

I have not gone into the substance of Heidegger's very extensive philosophical writing in this study but have selected examples from various aspects of it with which there is some resonance with the substance of Sri Aurobindo's work. This includes, for example, glimpses into the philosophy of language, which was essential to their work, their metaphysics, their poetics, and their world-views. But most importantly they both developed a philosophy of human nature and human destiny.

It has been one of my foremost intentions to demonstrate the similarities and differences in their projections into the future of human destiny. The key to their philosophies of language, human nature, and destiny, as I have tried to show, lies in a certain background that they shared in the early mystical philosophy of the Greeks. I came to an understanding of this only a few years ago when I discovered the influence that Heidegger's thinking had on many contemporary scholars of Neoplatonism in Europe.

It was after I became aware of Heidegger's important posthumous publication, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, and its influence in this area of scholarship, that I became interested in Neoplatonism and began to study it. It was then that I discovered the relationship between the mysticism of the Neoplatonists and the mysticism of Vedanta and Sri Aurobindo's Yoga philosophy. Although both Sri Aurobindo and Heidegger made cursory references to Neoplatonism in their writings, neither made it a topic of major importance in their published works. Therefore, one would need to be somewhat well-informed about it oneself in order to discover its relationship within and between their philosophies. And yet, both philosophers were Greek scholars, both were mystics, and the work of both had been associated in substantive ways with the philosophy of Hegel, who is known to have been significantly influenced by Neoplatonism. The connection could have been made by a sufficiently astute reader, of course, and it was made by Derrida.

Derrida was exceptional in many ways, being the foremost interpreter of Heidegger in Europe, conversant in German and Greek, and one of the most influential philosophers of the late 20th century. The problem he found in Heidegger, which he identified in a study titled *Of Spirit – Heidegger and the Question* (1987), was that Heidegger consistently attempted to avoid the topic of “spirituality,” as he also avoided theology and mysticism, as a matter of principle. He wished to be guided solely by the question of Being, and by the possibilities and limitations of metaphysical

thinking in the history of Western philosophy. His mission was, no doubt, to find the answer to the question and a way beyond the limitations. And yet, as we shall see, his guidance led him ultimately to mysticism and intuitivism.

I have not dwelt on the academical discourse around this aspect of Heidegger's philosophy in my study, but it is essential to have an awareness of it, in order to understand his philosophy and its relationship with the spiritual philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

As an example, I would like to mention some observations made by Jacques Derrida in his book *Of Spirit*. In *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*, 1927), Heidegger's first major work, a central topic was the question of what the human being is, and to answer it he thought a conventional term to be avoided, along with many other generally accepted terms, was Spirit. The critical analysis, or deconstruction, by Derrida, is rather technical and therefore perhaps difficult to follow, if we are not familiar with his thought and style. But he focuses on Heidegger's treatment of the term *Geist*, which is central to the philosophy of Hegel, which was a major focus of several books of Heidegger, as well as of many essays of Derrida. This term can be translated into English as either Spirit, Mind, or Ghost, each of which has a different meaning.

In his examination of this problem, Derrida refers to an argument in *Being and Time* where Heidegger writes:

“The person is not a thing, not a substance, not an object. ...Essentially the person exists only in *carrying out* intentional acts, and is thus essentially *not* an object. ... the person is given as the agent of intentional acts which are connected by the unity of a meaning (eg. The girl decides to take a bus to the park where she enjoys feeding the ducks. *She: decides, takes, enjoys. My example.*) ...But what is the ontological meaning of “*carrying out*,” how is the kind of being of the person to be defined...? But the critical question cannot stop at this. The question is about the being of the whole

human being, whom one is accustomed to understand as a bodily soul-like spiritual unity. Body, soul, spirit might designate areas of phenomena which are thematically separable for the sake of determinate investigations... But in the question of the being of human beings, this cannot be summarily calculated in terms of the kinds of being of body, soul, and spirit which have yet first to be defined.”¹ This is an argument concerning the being of things as such, and how this being is to be determined, apart from the usual 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' of existential analysis. To answer this “question of being” Heidegger is requiring that the usual reductions to common terminology be avoided. Derrida, in his commentary on this text then recalls some of the steps that Heidegger takes a few pages along in his argument to restore “spirit” in quotation marks, with a new understanding of the being of the person in the world (*Dasein*). Derrida says: “This time it has to do with space and time. ...Heidegger begins by avoiding, purely and simply, the traditional concept of spirit. *Dasein* is not a spiritual interiority, the secondary nature of which would have to be derived from a becoming-spatial. It has its own being-in-space. But this latter is possible only by virtue of being-in-the-world in general. The word “spirit” returns ... something which is not, to be sure, what the old discourse called “spirit,” but in any case, above all, not what it would have considered as the opposite of spirit: the spatial thing, the outside, the body, the inanimate, etc. What is at stake now is to stress that spatiality does not befall a spiritual *Dasein* which would, through the body, fall after the fact into space. To the contrary, it is because *Dasein* is not a *vorhandenes* (extant) thing that it is spatial, but quite differently spatial from what one calls physical and extended things. It is thus because it is “spiritual” (this time in quotation marks of course) that it is spatial and that its spatiality remains original.” And Derrida then quotes Heidegger: “Neither can the spatiality of *Dasein* be interpreted as an imperfection which would be inherent to existence by virtue of the fatal “union of spirit with a body.” *Dasein* can, to the contrary, because it is spiritual (“*geistig*”) and only for that reason,

1 Heidegger, Martin. (ed. 2010). *Being and Time*. p. 48.

be spatial according to a modality which remains essentially impossible for an extended corporeal thing.”² In other words Dasein is spatial in a spiritual and not a physical way.

In what follows I will not be presenting such philosophical arguments for which Heidegger is well-known, especially in his earlier work, and from which Derrida derived his methodology known as “deconstruction.” This is the way by which Heidegger originally undertook to change the orientation of Western metaphysical thinking. What he ultimately chose to do, however, was to move away from that thinking toward another way, one that would enable him to know immediately the truth of Being. I will show that in this intuitive turn, which occupied his later philosophy, he approached the regions of spiritual thought and experience, above the rational mind, which have been vividly characterized by Sri Aurobindo. It is my hope that, by placing together selections from the essential writings of both authors in a coherent progression of ideas, we may glimpse something of those regions, and perhaps acquire a new understanding and experience of Being and Truth, Consciousness and Self, Space and Time.

Rod Hemsell

2 Jacques Derrida. (1987). *Of Spirit – Heidegger and the Question*. p. 24-25.

1

Introduction

The human species, homo sapiens, is characterized by the evolution of a mental consciousness that has knowledge of itself and the world, which it expresses in the forms of language. To understand this unique ability to reflect on its experience, to remember and understand the happenings of its life, to formulate its thoughts symbolically, and to make choices based on its understanding, has been a primary focus of its thought since the beginning of recorded human history. Self-reflection has been a fundamental subject of study for its philosophy and science, religion, poetry, arts and technologies, expressed in its many languages and in every culture and every age. And yet, this most thoroughly explored and deeply contemplated essence of the human being – the phenomenon of its conscious knowledge and will, or “intelligence” – still remains the greatest mystery of its existence.

It's like a lighted torch being carried in a relay race, passing from runner to runner across the continents of the earth, or a great wave that rises from peak to peak carrying the tides of civilization in its wake as it surges toward a destined shore that is never reached. On every plateau won, the runners look back over the ground covered, surveying their gains and losses, or on every paradisaal shore or desert beach reached by destiny's wave a new world of challenges is discovered, as the old fortifications are washed away in the flood. This ever-moving wave counts among its (theoretical) gains the All-Creative-Fire, the Gods of Mt. Olympus, the Idea of the Good, the Kingdom of Heaven, the City of God, *Creatio Continua*, New Atlantis, Electricity, Biological Evolution, Steam Power, Diesel Power, Atomic Power, the Internet, to name only a few of its most influential ideas in the development of Western civilization. We should notice that Francis Bacon's 'New Atlantis' (c. 1650) marks

the mean between what could be termed the historical arcs of mythical thought and scientific thought. In fact there has always been a more materialistic and empirical predilection moving along with the dominant spiritual and idealist thought of the earlier 3000 year period, just as there is a stream of more idealistic thought moving always alongside the dominant materialistic science of the recent 400 years. It is obvious, however, that the focus of its intellectual seeking from the 17th century onward has been diverted away from understanding and explaining its essence, toward applying it to the achievement of practical aims, more or less for the sake of power and progress. From a more idealistic perspective, the application of its intelligence to the achievement of practical aims might be understood as an action for the sake of the greater common good. But this consideration, if true, would still not imply the necessity of any direct correlation between the idea of the good and human consciousness, or between the idea of the good and the practical aims achieved by the material means and actions of humankind. Such actions might in fact be entirely misguided and evil; at any rate totally egoistical. If known, would the truth of the origin and destiny of human consciousness ultimately lead to hope for the future of humanity or to nihilism and despair?

In fact, human consciousness is now aware of the gradual increase of planetary temperature that has resulted from the trajectory of energy production and consumption described by the arc of scientific thinking applied for the sake of power and progress over the recent 200 year period. Is the Idea of the Good, which has been understood theoretically as the force that originates human consciousness, now increasing the pressure of awareness on this species' consciousness to force it to realize that it is necessary to change the direction of its actions, for the sake of its survival, in addition to its passion for power and progress. One of the means proposed for achieving this change by some philosophers of consciousness, as we shall see in this study, is to restore the metaphysical processes of thinking that were previously dominant

during most of humankind's history. This is the primary reason for pursuing here a comparison of the work of Martin Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo, who concentrated the power of such thinking to such an intensity, expressed in tens of thousands of pages of inspired speaking and writing, that it may be able to literally awaken and enlighten the hearer and reader of their words to the consciousness that is necessary to change the perilous direction of human evolution. At this transitional moment in its history, when humankind's continued existence is threatened by a certain critical lack of understanding of its own essential nature, these prophets of the 20th century have defined the steps to be taken in order to prepare for the necessary change. Their message may yet attune the human ear to the inner guidance that it must hear before it is too late to avoid the abyss.

First Principles

The question of the origin and nature of human consciousness has been asked from the beginning of its awakening. For example, in the Kena Upanishad (c. 800 BCE) we hear the question, as translated by Sri Aurobindo:

FIRST PART

1. By whom missioned falls the mind shot to its mark? By whom yoked moves the first life-breath forward on its paths? By whom impelled is this word that men speak? What god set eye and ear to their workings?
2. That which is hearing of our hearing, mind of our mind, speech of our speech, that too is life of our life-breath and sight of our sight. The wise are released beyond and they pass from this world and become immortal.
3. There sight travels not, nor speech, nor the mind. We know It not nor can distinguish how one should teach of It: for It is

other than the known; It is there above the unknown. It is so we have heard from men of old who declared That to our understanding.

4. That which is unexpressed by the word, that by which the word is expressed, know That to be the Brahman and not this which men follow after here.

5. That which thinks not by the mind, that by which the mind is thought, know That to be the Brahman and not this which men follow after here.³

So what is That? I would say, based on conventional experience and understanding of mythological and philosophical ideas, that what's being referred to is what are known as 'universal principles'. Our speech and what we say, and our sight and what we see, are products of the principles of seeing, and of the light which makes the sense of seeing possible. Our communication through what is said and meant, by speech and sound, is the temporal expression of the principle of knowledge and the transmission of knowledge. The principle of sight is necessary for there to be seeing in all the organisms on earth. Sight is a universal fact of life. Every living organism, every phyletic line of evolutionary development, has produced structures for seeing, and they are very different from phylum to phylum, yet all are organs of sight. The principle of sight is something we understand to be above and beyond any of those structures or functions of seeing that we study in a laboratory. The principle of communication through language is something above and beyond the many languages spoken and the vocal structures that have evolved in organisms which make speech possible. The principle of communication is also omnipresent among living organisms. The structures and functions of sight and communication bring to the awareness of organisms knowledge about their

3 Sri Aurobindo. (2001). *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*, Vol 18. Kena and other Upanishads. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust. p. 5-6.

environment, which enables them to function optimally in their niches. So “knowing” is also universal. Some form of knowing is the result of some form of seeing in absolutely every living organism.

The question was asked by the ancient Rishis of the Upanishads, just as it is asked by the philosophers of science today, What is the origin of these principles and phenomena of consciousness? It is the fundamental question of the mind, and it has still not been answered to the satisfaction of our scientific intelligence. And here we may see the difference between that way of thinking and the way of philosophy. The question of the Upanishad is, What is the origin of this principle of consciousness that is manifested in all of these organs of sight, and in all of this information that is perceived and communicated by organisms through expressions which enable them to act intelligently, which sends the mind to its mark? What is the origin of the principle of “intelligence” - of the “*entelecheia*” as defined by Aristotle, which moves the souls of organisms to achieve their aims? According to Aristotle the answer is “*Nous*” or Mind, which he conceived to be an eternal principle, beyond space and time. And in the later Neoplatonic system the Divine Mind is the recipient of the light of the original creative Logos which it transmits to the souls of living things.

For scientific thinking, an adequate answer to the question of consciousness would have to be found on the plane of material phenomena and based on empirical observation. It must somehow be measurable to be understood. The problem is that “consciousness” is not a material phenomenon, and this has been the fundamental problem from the beginning. It is non-material or “spiritual” and, although it is somehow an integral feature of human existence and of all existence, it can't be empirically observed and measured. Is it, therefore, something the origin of which is unknowable, and consequently the question unanswerable? Or shall we be satisfied with the evasions of science, and accept that “consciousness” is simply an epiphenomenon of

matter that has no separate existence in itself? Does consciousness arise spontaneously from atoms, and molecules, and structures that evolve in organisms and species? Or do all of those structures and faculties in organisms evolve because there is a principle of consciousness that they express? How could there be the evolution of consciousness in all of this infinite variety of organisms and structures, which we know to be a universal principle, if that principle itself wasn't their cause?

The seers of the Upanishads, confronted with these enigmas, had this to say:

SECOND PART

1. If thou thinkest that thou knowest It well, little indeed dost thou know the form of the Brahman. That of It which is thou, that of It which is in the gods, this thou hast to think out. I think It known.

2. I think not that I know It well and yet I know that It is not unknown to me. He of us who knows It, knows That; he knows that It is not unknown to him.

3. He by whom It is not thought out, has the thought of It; he by whom It is thought out, knows It not. It is unknown to the discernment of those who discern of It, by those who seek not to discern of It, It is discerned.

4. When It is known by perception that reflects It, then one has the thought of It, for one finds immortality; by the self one finds the force to attain and by the knowledge one finds immortality.⁴

4 Ibid. p. 7.

According to the insights of the ancient seers, as well as of contemporary metaphysical philosophers, we can at least know of that higher origin of mind, if not the Origin itself. But even to know of it requires somewhat of an elevation above the thought of the rational mind which is based on sense experience.

The Upanishad indicates that there is such a plane of being and/or consciousness beyond the inner self of consciousness and above the rational mind, which we can know directly by contemplation and reflection, and which we might associate with the universal principles of things that are known, as it is said that the essence or cause of things is known in their forms. We have identified this in previous essays as a plane of the gods, in accordance with texts from both ancient Greek and Sanskrit traditions.⁵ Beyond this plane of gods is the Unknown of the Upanishad, which we may tentatively presume is what is referred to by Heidegger as *Beyng* and by Sri Aurobindo as Supermind. For Heidegger, the term *Beyng* is used to represent a kind of causal essence or soul of things, and at times as a beyond which includes God, the gods, mind and the material world, in one comprehensive Truth of *Beyng* as a whole. For Sri Aurobindo, Supermind is the term used to indicate the plane of Truth-Consciousness and Truth-Force – *Chit-Shakti* – which constitutes both the essence or soul of things, and the spiritual force that upholds the temporal existence of things. For him, Being and Consciousness are the two ultimate principles of existence. Such metaphysical concepts and the realities they represent will be the subject matter to be explored more fully in the course of the present study. The important point to be made here is that for both Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo, the plane of Being and Truth, which seems to be referred to in the Upanishad as the Unknown, is knowable by a kind of knowing that is beyond the scope of rational mind, and it is the destined future of human consciousness. Beyond the Unknown is that plane of existence referred to in the Upanishad

5 Hemsell, Rod. (June 4, 2023) *On Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo – Three Essays*. Absolutes, Ideas, Essences, and Things. <https://rodhemsell.substack.com/p/on-heidegger-and-sri-aurobindo>.

as the Brahman, which is usually translated as the Absolute, and is generally considered by mystical and metaphysical traditions to be Unknowable.

Exploring in detail a possible approach to this Beyond of consciousness is the theme of Heidegger's major work titled *Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event* (1989, Eng trans 2012), written in 1938 but published only after his death in 1976. Although not previously published, evidence of the contemplations recorded in this work can be seen in all of his subsequent writings throughout the 1940s and 50s. It would perhaps be beneficial at this point to consider a brief excerpt from this seminal work, merely as an indication of the way forward that he proposes toward a solution to the problem of consciousness, and as an example of the manner of thinking that characterizes this work. He writes:

“Beyng” does not simply mean the actuality of the actual, and not simply the possibility of the possible, and in general not simply being [*Sein*] understood on the basis of particular beings; instead, it means beyng out of its original essential occurrence in the full fissure. Nor is “essential occurrence” limited to “presence.”

To be sure, the essential occurrence of beyng itself (and thereby beyng in its most unique uniqueness) does not allow itself to be experienced arbitrarily and straightforwardly, like a being; rather it opens itself only in momentariness of Dasein's leap in advance into the event...

Moreover, no way ever leads immediately from the being of beings to *beyng*, because the view of the being of beings already takes place outside of the momentariness of Dasein. ...

Anyone who asks about beings as beings and thereby, with *this* approach and directionality, asks about the being of beings is standing in the realm of the very question that guided

the beginning of Western philosophy and its history up to its end in Nietzsche. We therefore name *this* question of being (the question of the being of beings) the guiding question. ...

With the question of beyng, on the other hand, the starting point is not beings, i.e., this or that given being, nor is it beings as such and as a whole; what is carried out is a leap into the truth (clearing and concealing) of beyng itself. Experienced and interrogated here at once is what essentially occurs in advance (and also lies hidden in the guiding question), namely, *the openness for essential occurrence* as such, i.e., *truth*. Co-asked here is the pre-question of truth. Inasmuch as beyng is experienced as the ground of beings, the question of the essential occurrence of beyng, asked in *this* way, is the *basic question*. There is never an immediate, straightforward progression from the guiding question to the basic question, a progression that would simply be a new application (to beyng) of the guiding question; instead, there is only a leap, i.e., the necessity of an *other* beginning.⁶

Heidegger refers frequently throughout this work to the two fundamental questions he has defined here: the guiding question and the basic question. They are, respectively: 1. *What is the being of beings?*, the fundamental question of Western metaphysics, which occurs perennially in its attempts to define the relationships of the One and the Many, of essence and substance, of being and beings, of phenomenal appearance and reality; and 2. *What is the truth of being in itself?*, which occurs in such forms as What is Truth?, What is Being?, What is God?, concerns that are more commonly found in mystical literature and especially in Eastern metaphysics. Heidegger would perhaps not appreciate this characterization, who claimed he was not a mystic, but I think this is what positions Heidegger in the domain of philosophical thought where Sri Aurobindo, who claimed he was not a philosopher, is the

6 Heidegger, Martin. (2012) *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Item 34. The event and the question of being. Indiana University Press.

master. There are many indications of proximity and some signs of convergence. A good indication of the proximity of Heidegger to Sri Aurobindo can be seen in another contemplation of Heidegger's that follows closely upon the one already quoted. He writes:

All saying must allow the co-emergence of a capacity to hear it. Both saying and hearing must be of the same origin. Thus all that matters is this one thing: to say the most nobly emerged language in its simplicity and natural force, to say the language of beings as the language of *beyng*. This transformation of language presses into realms which are still closed to us because we do not know the truth of *beyng*. Therefore something is said of the "renunciation of pursuance," of the "clearing of concealment," of the "appropriating event," of "Da-sein"; and this is not a mere plucking of truths out of words but is the opening of the truth of *beyng* in this sort of transformed saying. ...

Bearing silence arises out of the essentially occurring origin of language itself.

Bearing silence and questioning: essential questioning as placing into decision of the essence of truth.

Seeking after *beyng*? The original finding in the original seeking.

Seeking – already holding oneself in the truth, in the open realm of the self-concealing and self-withdrawing.

Seeking (originally) as the basic relation to the hesitant withholding. Seeking as questioning and yet bearing silence.⁷

7 Ibid. Item 36. Language and the inventive thinking of being, Item 38. Bearing silence.

Those who are familiar with the writings of Sri Aurobindo on the Yoga of Knowledge will resonate with the nearness of the words of Heidegger to both Sri Aurobindo's constant advocacy of the principle of *sruti* in Sanskrit and Yoga Philosophy, which means inspired or revelatory speech and hearing, and to the central importance given to the practice of attaining a silent mind in order to elevate consciousness above rational mind to a higher intuitive intelligence. For example, he writes:

In the first place we have seen that intellectual thought is in itself inadequate and is not the highest thinking; the highest is that which comes through the intuitive mind and from the supramental faculty. So long as we are dominated by the intellectual habit and by the lower workings, the intuitive mind can only send its messages to us subconsciously and subject to a distortion more or less entire before it reaches the conscious mind; or if it works consciously, then only with an inadequate rarity and a great imperfection in its functioning. In order to strengthen the higher knowledge-faculty in us we have to effect the same separation between the intuitive and intellectual elements of our thought as we have already effected between the understanding and the sense-mind; and this is no easy task, for not only do our intuitions come to us incrustated in the intellectual action, but there are a great number of mental workings which masquerade and ape the appearances of the higher faculty. The remedy is to train first the intellect to recognize the true intuition, to distinguish it from the false and then to accustom it, when it arrives at an intellectual perception or conclusion, to attach no final value to it, but rather look upward, refer all to the divine principle and wait in as complete a silence as it can command for the light from above. In this way it is possible to transmute a great part of our intellectual thinking into the luminous truth-conscious vision, — the ideal would be a complete transition, — or at least to increase greatly the frequency, purity and conscious force of the ideal knowledge working behind the

intellect. The latter must learn to be subject and passive to the ideal faculty.

But for the knowledge of the Self it is necessary to have the power of a complete intellectual passivity, the power of dismissing all thought, the power of the mind to think not at all which the Gita in one passage enjoins. This is a hard saying for the occidental mind to which thought is the highest thing and which will be apt to mistake the power of the mind not to think, its complete silence for the incapacity of thought. But this power of silence is a capacity and not an incapacity, a power and not a weakness. It is a profound and pregnant stillness. Only when the mind is thus entirely still, like clear, motionless and level water, in a perfect purity and peace of the whole being and the soul transcends thought, can the Self which exceeds and originates all activities and becomings, the Silence from which all words are born, the Absolute of which all relativities are partial reflections manifest itself in the pure essence of our being. In a complete silence only is the Silence heard; in a pure peace only is its Being revealed. Therefore to us the name of That is the Silence and the Peace.⁸

I believe that Heidegger would have responded favorably to this central teaching of Sri Aurobindo. And it is my opinion, to which I have arrived after studying many texts of Heidegger over the years, that the generally untranslatable term *Dasein*, which is central to his entire philosophy, corresponds in certain specific ways to the term Self as used by Sri Aurobindo in the text above. I hope that this will become apparent to readers in the course of this study, along with many points of proximity and convergence in their writings, as well as divergences, which can be perceived. One of the most outstanding and indisputable convergences, which we can already see indications of in the texts that have been quoted, is the

8 Sri Aurobindo. (2001). *The Synthesis of Yoga*. The purified understanding. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust. p. 316.

correspondence between their critical views of the limits of rational mind, and their advocacy of restraint in the use of that faculty, to the point of utter silence, in order to allow the higher faculty of Intuition to emerge.

2

Technology, Poetry and Human Nature

In a public address in his hometown in 1955, commemorating the life and work of a famous musician from the area, Heidegger made a rather bold pronouncement concerning technology, history, and human nature that put his two previous decades of lectures, writings, and meditations in a particularly straightforward and clear perspective. In this talk he emphasized the historical transition, mentioned at the beginning of our current study, away from a traditional idealistic metaphysics toward a positivistic metaphysics, which he maintains in his more systematic studies culminated in the 'end of Western metaphysics' as expressed by Nietzsche's philosophy of the essence of human nature, and all nature, as the 'will to power'. At this less formal speaking occasion, Heidegger said:

“The age that is now beginning has been called of late the atomic age. ...The great industrial corporations have figured out already that atomic energy can develop into a gigantic business. Through this atomic business a new era of happiness is envisioned. Nuclear science too does not stand idly by. It publicly proclaims this era of happiness. Thus in July of this year at Lake Constance, eighteen Nobel Prize winners stated in a proclamation: 'Science (and that is modern natural science) is a road to a happier human life.'”

Heidegger then restated his long-held thesis of the characteristic nature of the scientific and technological mentality that has held sway since the era known as “modernism” began, and indicated its predictable, possibly disastrous, consequence:

“...man today is in *flight from thinking*. This flight-from-thought is the ground of thoughtlessness. But part of this flight is that man will neither see nor admit it. ...

This is due to a revolution in leading concepts which has been going on for the past several centuries, and by which man is placed in a different world. This radical revolution in outlook has come about in modern philosophy. From this arises a completely new relation of man to the world and his place in it. The world now appears as an object open to the attacks of calculative thought, attacks that nothing is believed able any longer to resist. Nature becomes a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry. This relation of man to the world as such, in principal a technical one, developed in the seventeenth century first and only in Europe. It long remained unknown in other continents, and it was altogether alien to former ages and histories. ...

If the taming of atomic energy is successful, and it will be successful, then a totally new era of technical development will begin. What we know now as the technology of film and television, of transportation and especially air transportation, of news reporting, and as medical and nutritional technology, is presumably only a crude start. No one can foresee the radical changes to come. But technological advance will move faster and faster and can never be stopped. In all areas of his existence, man will be encircled ever more tightly by the forces of technology. These forces which, everywhere and every minute claim, enchain, drag along, press and impose upon man under the form of some technical contrivance or other, – these forces, since man has not made them, have moved long since beyond his will and have outgrown his capacity for decision. ...

In this dawning atomic age a far greater danger threatens – precisely when the danger of a third world war has been removed. ...the approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practiced as *the only way* of thinking. ... Then

man would have denied and thrown away his own special nature – that he is a meditative being. Therefore the issue is the saving of man's essential nature. Therefore, the issue is keeping meditative thinking alive.”⁹

These brief remarks on the preponderance of the “calculative thinking” which has dominated the modern age, made way for Heidegger then to take the opportunity to encapsulate the fundamental principles of human nature that had been the central thrust of his philosophy for the previous two decades. A primary focus of that philosophy, especially since the meditations in his *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)* first recorded in 1938, was the concept, and the spiritual methodology, conveyed by the term *Gelassenheit*. He introduced it near the end of the talk with only a slight mention, but this mention has nevertheless had a profound and lasting impact on readers of Heidegger. He said:

“The meaning pervading technology hides itself. But if we explicitly and continuously heed the fact that such hidden meaning touches us everywhere in the world of technology, we stand at once within the realm of that which hides itself from us, and hides itself just in approaching us. That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call the mystery. I call the comportment which enables us to keep open to the meaning hidden in technology, *openness to the mystery*.

Releasement toward things (*Gelassenheit*) and openness to the mystery belong together. They grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way. They promise us a new ground and foundation upon which we can stand and endure in the world of technology without being imperiled by it.

9 Heidegger, Martin. (1966). *Discourse on Thinking*. Harper & Row Publishers, New York.

Releasement toward things and openness to the mystery give us a vision of a new autochthony (rootedness) which someday even might be fit to recapture the old and now rapidly disappearing autochthony in a changed form.”¹⁰

In this truly mysterious saying, it seems that for Heidegger, at this point in his career, “technology” had become a synonym or simulacrum of Being. For Being had been typically characterized by Heidegger always as “the realm of that which hides itself from us,” the “concealed in unconcealment,” the “mystery,” the realm of Being itself, beyond beings. It is a kind of nothingness, therefore, or a region beyond things, of essential ideas and forces, the realm of principles perhaps, of the Invisible, which requires a negative approach, a kind of *via negativa*, and an eventual leap of *Da-sein*, away from beings and the objects of rational consciousness, if we are to know the truth of things. But all of the familiar terms used by Heidegger throughout his work are also embedded in this brief commentary on technology, such as: openness, dwelling, ground, comportment, withdrawing, uncanny, decision, as we shall see. And above all, the absence in that which is present, in this case in the thinking of technology, and especially cybernetic technology, which we must seek through negation. This way of looking beyond generally casts a negative aura around such things as calculative thinking and its technical instruments, and the work they do everywhere. This absence, or withdrawal of the god, which may be the source of the things and processes we know, requires a higher form of seeing and saying to grasp its truth. All this we will see as we explore Heidegger's thought in greater depth. But already we can discover here a close relation between his idea of *Gelassenheit*, which is attributed to the influence of the Christian mystic and theologian, Meister Eckhart, on his thought, and Sri Aurobindo's teaching on the necessity of detachment and equality in order to realize the Self in all things. In the words of Eckhart, we hear the resonance of this German term for detachment

10 Ibid.

with the turn away from the world and toward God which would be the more common mystical sense of the idea of “releasement toward things.” As Eckhart put it:

“Now you may ask what detachment is since it is in itself so excellent. Here you should know that true detachment is nothing else than for the spirit to stand as immovable against whatever may chance to it of joy and sorrow, honour, shame and disgrace, as a mountain of lead stands before a little breath of wind. This immovable detachment brings a person into the greatest equality with God, because God has it from immovable detachment that he is God and it is from his detachment that he has his purity and his simplicity and unchangeability.”¹¹

In Sri Aurobindo's highly elevated form of didactic speech, clearly intended to inspire and instruct the individual committed to a Yoga of Transformation in order to master his mind, we may catch a glimpse of that “new ground and foundation on which a transformed humanity might stand,” referred to more obliquely at times by Heidegger. And there can be no doubt that Sri Aurobindo's Yoga philosophy is also a theology: the mastery of the mind through Yoga is a pathway to union with the Divine Consciousness. There are many indications in Heidegger's philosophy of his affinity with the teachings of Meister Eckhart, and his contemporary Thomas Aquinas, who were both philosophers and theologians, as were Leibnitz and Spinoza after them, and the Neoplatonists before them. These earlier thinkers were all both philosophers and theologians – the two terms were virtually synonymous – and highly important figures in the tradition to which Heidegger belongs. There may ultimately be little doubt that

11 Eckhart, M. (1981). *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*. (Transl. and introd. by Colledge, E. and McGinn, B.). New York: Paulist Press. p. 288.

Heidegger's phenomenology and fundamental ontology* will therefore also be recognized as a fundamental theology. He in fact spoke of it as an "ontotheology." And this would explain many of the associations and dissociations that we discover between Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo.

In his description of the necessity, in the practice of Yoga, of the "releasement toward things," which is generally known as *samata* in Sanskrit, and is often translated by Sri Aurobindo as equality, as well as detachment, transparency, and rejection, we may find a more comprehensive and explicit elaboration of the concept to which Heidegger refers. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, he writes:

"The equality of the thinking mind will be a part and a very important part of the perfection of the instruments in the nature (of the human being). Our present attractive self-justifying attachment to our intellectual preferences, our judgments, opinions, imaginations, limiting associations of the memory which makes the basis of our mentality, to the current repetitions of our habitual mind, to the insistences of our pragmatic mind, to the limitations even of our intellectual truth-mind, must go the way of other attachments and yield to the impartiality of an equal vision. The equal thought-mind will look on knowledge and ignorance and on truth and error, those dualities created by our limited nature of consciousness and the partiality of our intellect and its little stock of reasonings and intuitions, accept them both without being bound to either twine of the skein and await a luminous

* Note on phenomenology and ontology: For the sake of simplicity and in order to be grounded in the idiom of philosophy that we are exploring, let us say that phenomenology is the study of appearances and ontology is the study of what is real in itself. Ontology may cover a larger framework of potentials, actuals, and possibles, while phenomenology implies what is apparent in the moment. This difference implies that Time may be viewed in two ways and is most commonly associated with what is apparent in the "now" and from moment to moment. Heidegger is best known for his early essay titled *Being and Time*. A larger view of Time is revealed in Heidegger's philosophy and Sri Aurobindo's poetry.

transcendence. In ignorance it will see a knowledge which is imprisoned and seeks or waits for delivery, in error a truth at work which has lost itself or got thrown by the groping mind into misleading forms. ...This perfect equality of the thinking mind is indispensable because the objective of this progress is the greater light which belongs to a higher plane of spiritual cognizance. This equality is the most delicate and difficult of all, the least practised by the human mind; its perfection is impossible so long as the supramental light does not fall fully on the upward looking mentality. ...But, finally, all this equalisation of the nature is a preparation for the highest spiritual equality to take possession of the whole being and make a pervading atmosphere in which the light, power and joy of the Divine can manifest itself in man amid an increasing fullness.”¹²

Is this attitude of equality and detachment toward the functions of the pragmatic intellectual mind, its habits and judgments, its truth and error, not what Heidegger meant by “releasement toward things and openness to the mystery,” in his remarks about the dangers of calculative thinking? And is he not suggesting that the calculating mind of technology is merely a kind of veil that separates us from the truth of Being, merely to be parted or lifted so that the truth can be seen? Is that truth actually concealed within the machinations of the calculating mind and its objects, waiting to be revealed there too by the light of a higher spiritual cognizance? Let us take this clue from Sri Aurobindo on equality toward mental judgments, and examine in its light another more detailed exposition by Heidegger that he delivered ten years earlier to an academic audience, in order to understand better his seemingly enigmatic remarks. In this lecture, from 1945, commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the death of the poet Rilke, Heidegger presented a much more detailed and substantive commentary on the nature of calculative

12 Sri Aurobindo. (2001). *The Synthesis of Yoga*. The Perfection of Equality. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust. p. 707.

thinking, as a context for introducing the higher potentialities of human thought expressed in poetry and philosophy. Contrasting the two, he says of poetic thought:

“The more venturesome are the poets, but poets whose song turns our unprotected being into the Open. Because they turn the parting against the Open, and inwardly recall its unwholesomeness, into a sound whole, the poets sing the healing whole in the midst of the unholy.” And of calculating thought, he says: “Modern man, however, is called the one who wills. ...The Open becomes an object and is thus twisted around toward the human being. ...The more venturesome *will* more strongly in that they will in a different way from the purposeful self-assertion of the objectifying world. Their willing (*ie. the poets*) wills nothing of this kind. If willing remains mere self-assertion, they will nothing.” It appears, in this glimpse into the writing of poetry that we will now explore more fully, that Heidegger is primarily defining two different ways of being and willing in the world, one that separates and one that makes whole, which would imply that the truth of Being, as far as human beings are concerned, is fundamentally *fissured*, a term that Heidegger in fact uses frequently. The “plight” of humanity, also referred to frequently by Heidegger, would therefore consist in our failure to recognize this fissure.

In his lecture on Rilke's poetry, which is published in English as 'What Are Poets For?' in the volume titled *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1971), the problems of calculative thinking and technology have been formulated in a variety of ways by Heidegger, as follows:¹³

13 Heidegger, M. Albert Hofstadter trans. (1971) *Poetry, Language, Thought. What Are Poets For?* Harper and Row Publishers. p. 110-117. Note: These comments of Heidegger consist largely of reflections on a short poem of Rilke's that was written in 1924, the year before he died, published posthumously in 1935. Heidegger uses the themes and imagery of the poem to develop an interpretation that puts the issues of our technological age in the metaphysical perspective of a human destiny that he believes poets and philosophers, capable

“Man places before himself the world as the whole of everything objective, and he places himself before the world. Man sets up the world toward himself, and delivers Nature over to himself. We must think of this placing-here, this producing, in its broad and multifarious nature. ... By multifarious producing, the world is brought to stand and in position. The Open becomes an object, and is thus twisted around toward the human being. Over against the world as the object, man stations himself and sets himself up as the one who deliberately pushes through all this producing. ...

In place of all the world-content of things that was formerly perceived and used to grant freely of itself, the object-character of technological dominion spreads itself over the earth ever more quickly, ruthlessly, and completely. Not only does it establish all things as producible in the process of production; it also delivers the products of production by means of the market. In self-assertive production, the humanness of man and the thingness of things dissolve into the calculated market value of a market which not only spans the whole earth as a world market, but also as the will to will, takes in the nature of Being and thus subjects all beings to the

of “saying the word of being,” are called to reveal. The poem, on which we have shared only a small portion of Heidegger's commentary, is reproduced here:

As Nature gives the other creatures over
to the venture of their dim delight
and in soil and branchwork grants none special cover,
so too our being's pristine ground settles our plight;
we are no dearer to it; it ventures us.
Except that we, more eager than plant or beast,
go with this venture, will it, adventurous
more sometimes than Life itself is, more daring
by a breath (and not in the least
from selfishness) There, outside all caring,
this creates for us a safety – just there,
where the pure forces' gravity rules; in the end,
it is our unshieldedness on which we depend,
and that, when we saw it threaten, we turned it
so into the Open that, in widest orbit somewhere,
where the Law touches us, we may affirm it.

trade of a calculation that dominates most tenaciously in those areas where there is no need of numbers.

Rilke's poem thinks of man as the being who is ventured into a willing, the being who, without yet experiencing it, is willed in the will to will. Willing in this way, man can go with the venture in such a way as to set himself up as the end and goal of everything.

By building the world up technologically as an object, man deliberately and completely blocks his path, already obstructed, into the Open. Self-assertive man, whether or not he knows and wills it as an individual, is the functionary of technology. Not only does he face the Open from outside it; he even turns his back upon the "pure draft" by objectifying the world. Man sets himself apart from the pure draft. The man of the age of technology, by this parting, opposes himself to the Open. This parting is not a parting *from*, it is a parting *against*.

The essence of technology comes to the light of day only slowly. This day is the world's night, rearranged into merely technological day. This day is the shortest day. It threatens a single endless winter. Not only does protection now withhold itself from man, but the integralness of the whole of what is remains now in darkness. The wholesome and sound withdraws. The world becomes, without healing, unholy. Not only does the holy, as the track to the godhead, thereby remain concealed; even the track to the holy, the hale and whole, seems to be effaced. That is, unless there are still some mortals capable of seeing the threat of the unhealable, the unholy, as such. They would have to discern the danger that is assailing man. The danger consists in the threat that assaults man's nature in his relation to Being itself, and not in accidental perils. This danger is the danger. It conceals itself in the abyss that underlies all beings. To see this danger and point it out, there must be mortals who reach sooner into the abyss."

In these comments from the lecture on selected lines from Rilke's poetry, we find both a substantial recapitulation of his views on the crisis of humanity, to which his brief lecture on *Gelassenheit* referred, and also a passionate examination of the crucial role that he saw for poetry and philosophy in the unfolding of human destiny, upon which many of his lectures and writings were focused during this period. He wrote his four-volume work on Nietzsche at this time, as well as several books on the poetry of Hölderlin, and on the mystical philosophy of the early Greeks. We should perhaps note again, as well, that the time frame is 1945; World War II is just coming to an end, the United Nations is being created, the bombing of Hiroshima has occurred, it is a time of both darkness and light in the history of humanity. Heidegger's meditations on the truth of *Beyng*, the leap of *Da-sein*, and the idea of the Open, a realm of consciousness into which an imperiled humanity might rise and find a new beginning, had been developed and expounded just a few years before, in 1938. And all of these ideas of a new realization of the higher truth of the human being, as well as the *truth of Beyng*, had begun to feature prominently in his many books and lectures that followed in the 40s and 50s. Rilke's poetry had already had a significant impact on his thinking by that time, therefore, along with the poetry of Hölderlin. Many of his subsequent works deal with the language of an inspired and revelatory poetry and philosophy that he believed could be the harbingers and exemplars of the prophesied new beginning, as well as expressions of the profound suffering of creative genius.

Coincidentally, Sri Aurobindo had revised *The Life Divine* in 1939-40 and added many new chapters to this major philosophical work on the evolution of consciousness and the future manifestation in humanity of the Mind of Light. In the 1940s he also concluded his 700 page poem of spiritual transformation, to which he had dedicated his life, titled *Savitri – A Legend and a Symbol*. It is an epic of the evolution of consciousness in nature from the beginning of time to the present, and of an individual's effort to overcome all of the limitations of the body, life, and mind of a

mortal human. It is also a kind of autobiographical portrait of the Yogi himself, who has taken on this destiny. In the last year of his life (1950), according to the Archives of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram which published his complete works, Sri Aurobindo also revised the book titled *The Future Poetry*, which had been written in the 1920s, – a fact that highlights for us his deep and enduring dedication to the potential of poetry that he envisioned could uplift and help to transform human consciousness. His valuation of poetry seems to align closely with what Heidegger's intuitive “attunement” indicated its value and role to be, and yet to pass far beyond it into the highest range of human possibility. In his book on poetry and poetics, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“Now that we have seen minutely what is the material reality of the world in which we live and have some knowledge of the vital reality of the Force from which we spring, we are at last beginning to seek again for the spiritual reality of that which we and all things secretly are. Our minds are once more trying to envisage the self, the spirit of Man and the spirit of the universe, intellectually, no doubt, at first, but from that to the old effort at sight, at realisation within ourselves and in all is not a very far step. And with this effort there must rise too on the human mind the conception of the godheads in whom this Spirit, this marvelous Self and Reality which broods over the world, takes shape in the liberated soul and life of the human being, his godheads of Truth and Freedom and Unity, his godheads of a greater more highly visioned Will and Power, his godheads of Love and universal Delight, his godheads of universal and eternal Beauty, his godheads of a supreme Light and Harmony and Good. The new ideals of the race seem already to be affected by some first bright shadow of these things, and even though it be only a tinge, a flush colouring the duller atmosphere of our recent mentality, there is every sign that this tinge will deepen and grow, in the heavens to which we look up if not at once in the earth of our actual life. ...

A greater era of man's living seems to be in promise, whatever nearer and earthier powers may be striving to lead him on a side path away to a less exalted ideal, and with that advent there must come a new great age of his creation different from the past epochs which he counts as his glories and superior to them in its vision and motive. But first there must intervene a poetry which will lead him towards it from the present faint beginnings. It will be aided by new views in philosophy, a changed and extended spirit in science and new revelations in the other arts, in music, painting, architecture, sculpture, as well as high new ideals in life and new powers of a reviving but no longer limited or obscurantist religious mind. A glint of this change is already visible. ...

Only a wider spreading of the thought and mentality in which that idea can live and the growth of an accomplished art of poetry in which it can take body, are still needed to give the force of permanence to what is now only an incipient and just emerging power. Mankind satiated with the levels is turning its face once more towards the heights, and the poetic voices that will lead us thither with song will be among the high seer voices. For the great poet interprets to man his present or reinterprets for him his past, but can also point him to his future and in all three reveal to him the face of the Eternal.”¹⁴

14 Sri Aurobindo. (1997). *The Future Poetry*. The Ideal Spirit of Poetry. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust. p. 219-222.

3

Philosophy, Poetry, and Human Nature

Heidegger began his lecture dedicated to Rilke at a commemorative gathering in 1945, published in English translation under the title 'What Are Poets For?' with a reference to a poem of Hölderlin:

“...and what are poets for in a destitute time?” asks Hölderlin's elegy 'Bread and Wine.' We hardly understand the question today. How, then, shall we grasp the answer that Hölderlin gives? ...The word “time” here means the era to which we ourselves still belong.”¹⁵

We should recall the reference made by Heidegger to Rilke's posthumous poem, quoted earlier, and Heidegger's comment. The poem of Rilke says:

As Nature gives the other creatures over
to the venture of their dim delight
and in soil and branchwork grants none special cover,
so too our being's pristine ground settles our plight;
we are no dearer to it; it ventures us.
Except that we, more eager than plant or beast,
go with this venture, will it, adventurous
more sometimes than Life itself is, more daring
by a breath (and not in the least
from selfishness) There, outside all caring,
this creates for us a safety – just there,
where the pure forces' gravity rules; in the end,
it is our unshieldedness on which we depend,
and that, when we saw it threaten, we turned it

15 Heidegger, Martin. (1971). *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper and Row. p. 89.

so into the Open that, in widest orbit somewhere,
where the Law touches us, we may affirm it.

The image of “unshieldedness” is used by Rilke to convey the idea that Nature has ventured us into its ground with a will to mastery of the ground, yet without protection from the forces that we encounter. Therefore our 'willing' is a will to overcome the threats to which we are exposed and to prevail over or transcend “nature” itself. The result may be either the production of artificial barriers against the forces of nature or a “turning” toward a 'widest orbit somewhere'. According to Heidegger's interpretation, the more venturesome will of poets is to attempt the latter. Some of the relevant comments made by Heidegger, as we have seen, were:

“The more venturesome are the poets, but poets whose song turns our unprotected being into the Open. Because they turn the parting against the Open, and inwardly recall its unwholesomeness into a sound whole, the poets sing the healing whole in the midst of the unholy.”

“Modern man, however, is called the one who wills. ...The Open becomes an object and is thus twisted around toward the human being. ...The more venturesome will more strongly in that they will in a different way from the purposeful self-assertion of the objectifying world. Their willing (ie. the poets) wills nothing of this kind. If willing remains mere self-assertion, they will nothing.”

Heidegger's earlier commentary in the *Parmenides* lectures of 1942, referring to both Hölderlin and Rilke, is extensive, covering many aspects of Greek philosophy and language and of his own philosophy of Being and Truth, as well as poetry. A term that is central in this work, and the one we will focus on, which occurs frequently in Heidegger's discourse, is “the Open.” It is also a term used in the poem by the 19th century poet Hölderlin referred to above. In 'Bread and Wine' we read:

By day and night divine fire drives us on,
Cracks us open. So come! To gaze at the Open,
To seek what is ours, remote as it may be.

The term in German, *das Offene*, 'the Open,' is the realm of the gods for Hölderlin, who 'sees' and 'hears': "Out of clear skies, thundering to us above our eyes...Signs handed down from elders, creating and striking down/ From above. As the heavenly enter, deeply shaking/ So their day travels out from shadows and down to man."¹⁶

Such visions were perhaps more widely held by the poets of the Romantic period whose destitution, according to Heidegger, we still share. But those realms of visionary experience and philosophical idealism expressed by Hölderlin and his circle of German Idealists, held a strong appeal for both Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo, and I would maintain that it is precisely their godheads of Hellenic and Vedic times that draw together these two visionary philosophers of the post-modern period into a common spiritual endeavor. The "pure draft" that draws their visionary thrust upward toward another beginning and a consciousness of the "Truth of Beyng," is an ideal force toward whose realization and imminent descent their intuitive intelligence hopes to prepare a way. In his book titled *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo developed a very expansive and elaborate theory of the type of poetry that might have the power, not only to visualize such a descent, but to facilitate it. As he put it, for example:

"An intuitive revealing poetry of the kind which we have in view would voice a supreme harmony of five eternal powers, Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and the Spirit. ...The poetry of the future, if it fulfils in amplitude the promise now only there in rich hint, will kindle these five lamps of our being, but raise them up more on high and light with them a broader

16 Hölderlin, Friedrich, Trans. Maxine Chernoff and Paul Hoover. (2008). *Selected Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin*, Omnidawn Publishing.

country, many countries indeed now hidden from our view, will make them not any longer lamps in some limited temple of beauty, but suns in the heavens of our highest mind and illuminative of our widest as well as our inmost life. It will be a poetry of a new largest vision of himself and Nature and God and all things which is offering itself to man and of its possible realisation in a nobler and more divine manhood; and it will not sing of them only with the power of the imaginative intelligence, the exalted and ecstatic sense or the moved joy and passion of life, but will rise to look at them from an intenser light and embody them in a more revealing force of the word. It will be first and most a poetry of the intuitive reason, the intuitive senses, the intuitive delight-soul in us, getting from this enhanced source of inspiration a more sovereign poetic enthusiasm and ecstasy, and then, it may even be, rise towards a still greater power of revelation nearer to the direct vision and word of the Overmind from which all creative inspiration comes.”¹⁷

But do we know what these godheads of Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life, and Spirit are? We do not, because, as Heidegger says, we do not know the truth of Being. Therefore, it is the poet of the Overmind, – according to Sri Aurobindo's spiritual psychology and cosmology this is the plane of the gods, from which all inspiration comes – whose intuitive intelligence is informed and inspired by its Light, who can say their names and convey their meaning in the rhythmic forms that reveal their essential being. This saying and hearing (*sruti*) entails a certain intensity of consciousness which Sri Aurobindo identifies with the Greek word *enthousiasmos* and the Sanskrit word *chandas*. In *The Future Poetry*, we read:

“What we mean by inspiration is that the impetus to poetic creation and utterance comes to us from a superconscient source above the ordinary mentality, so that what is written

17 Sri Aurobindo. (1997). *The Future Poetry*. The Ideal Spirit of Poetry. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department. p. 222.

seems not to be the fabrication of the brain-mind, but something more sovereign breathed or poured in from above. That is the possession by the divine *enthousiasmos* of which Plato has spoken.”¹⁸

“...the subtler rhythmic uplift of the poetic enthusiasm which is given to minds... by the inspiring cadence and the ordered measures of the poetic spirit, *chandas*...”¹⁹

“There is perhaps a truth in the Vedic idea that the Spirit of creation framed all the movements of the world by *chandas*, in certain fixed rhythms of the formative Word, and it is because they are faithful to the cosmic metres that the basic world-movements unchangingly endure. A balanced harmony maintained by a system of subtle recurrences is the foundation of immortality in created things, and metrical movement is nothing else than creative sound grown conscious of this secret of its own powers.”²⁰

“The poet is then something more than a maker of beautiful word and phrase, a favoured child of the fancy and imagination, a careful fashioner of idea and utterance or an effective poetic thinker, moralist, dramatist or storyteller; he becomes a spokesman of the eternal spirit of beauty and delight and shares that highest creative and self-expressive rapture which is close to the original ecstasy that made existence, the divine Ananda. This rapture, the Platonic divine possession and enthusiasm, is born not of mental, but of soul experience, and the more the surface mind gets into the way, the more this divine passion is weakened and diluted by a less potent spirit. The surface mind powerfully attracted by the stir of the outward passion and excitement, the stress of immediate thought, life and action, hastens to embody it in speech or in

18 Ibid. p. 183.

19 Ibid. p. 169.

20 Ibid. p. 21.

deed and has no leisure to transmute life into those greater abiding values of which the soul in its depths is alone capable. But the higher faculties are given us as keys to a deeper experience; the seer, the poet, the artist, the children of the spirit's light and intuition are only true to themselves when they live in the depths of the soul, refuse to be hurried away by the surface call of mind and life and wait rather for their own greater voices. The poetry which insists on an external effectiveness, on immediate thought and life and experience, may seize very powerfully the ear of the moment, but is singularly frail in its affectation of power and even if it has strength of body, is hollow and null inside; it fails because it is concerned with immediately vital things perhaps, but not with that which is immortal."²¹

To turn away from objects and their representations toward the nearness of things themselves enables in us the possibility to know by the soul and to have an intuitive grasp of the essence and truth of things, rather than knowing only by sense impressions, emotions, and the rational mind. And this nearness, this dispositional comportment to things, is what characterizes a certain type of philosophical thinking, as well as of poetizing, that 'ventures into the Open'. This faculty of an intuitive attunement to soul-values seems to me to be the basis of Heidegger's understanding of Hölderlin's poetry, and of his effort to show how philosophy and poetry in a certain range of seeing and hearing share a common understanding, if on somewhat different levels of inspiration. Several of his courses and writings are attempts to elucidate this view of the 'proximity' of philosophical thinking and poetizing.

In the work titled *Parmenides* he had explored the idea of 'the Open' in Rilke's poetry, three years prior to the commentary we have already considered. In this text, however, the idea of 'the Open' is seen in much greater depth and in the context of a detailed

21 Ibid. p. 260.

unfolding of the idea of Truth in early Greek philosophy. The entire book is devoted to the idea that was expressed and embodied by the Greek goddess Aletheia, known by Parmenides (5th century BCE) as the 'goddess of Truth' whose name consequently became the term used by all subsequent Greek thinkers from Plato to Proclus (5th century CE), for a thousand years of philosophical thought and poetry. But since that time the original meaning of the term has become obscured and we may find it difficult to recover the original Greek idea. For us, the meaning of the word "truth" as an accurate representation of fact is quite removed from the way in which the ancient Greeks thought of it, which is at least part of the reason why Heidegger has undertaken such an elaborate recovery of the original meaning. But more importantly, it is because its recovery is essential if we wish to know the true nature of things and of ourselves. Heidegger begins his study with an introduction to the ancient text and to the problem of translation:

"The thinker Parmenides tells of a goddess, Ἀλήθεια, who greets him as he arrives at her home in the course of his travels. To the greeting, whose proper essence the goddess herself clarifies, she adds an announcement of the revelations she has in store for the thinker as he goes his way.

22 The goddess received me with sympathy; she took my right hand in her hand; then she spoke the word and addressed me in this way; "O man, companion of immortal charioteers,

23 arriving at our home with the steeds that convey you. Blessing be bestowed on you! For it is not an evil fate which has sent you ahead to travel on this way – and truly this way is apart from men, outside their trodden path – but rather, rule and order. There is, however, a need that you experience everything, both the stable heart of well-enclosing unconcealment,

30 as well as the appearing in its appearance to mortals, where there is no relying on the unconcealed. Also this, however, you will learn to experience: how the appearing

32 (in the need) remains called upon to be apparent, while it shines through everything and (hence) in that way brings everything to perfection. ...

“What the Greeks name ἀλήθεια we ordinarily “translate” with the word “truth.” If we translate the Greek word “literally,” however, then it says “unconcealedness.” ... It could be that the specially formed word “dis-closure” comes closer to the essence of the Greek ἀλήθεια than the expression “unconcealedness,” which nevertheless, for several reasons, is at first appropriate to serve as the guiding word for a meditation on the essence of ἀλήθεια. It should be kept in mind that in the following we will be speaking of “unconcealedness” and “concealment” but that the obvious expression “unconcealment” is avoided, although it is the “most literal” translation. ... The Greeks experience genuinely and express in word only unconcealedness. Nevertheless, the directive toward concealedness and concealing provides us now with a clearer realm of experience. In some way or other we surely do know the likes of concealing and concealedness. We know it as veiling, masking, and as covering, but also in the forms of conserving, preserving, holding back, entrusting and appropriating. We also know concealedness in the multiple forms of closing off and closedness. From these modes of concealedness and concealing, “unconcealedness” immediately gains clearer features. The realm of the “concealed-unconcealed” is, if we do not deceive ourselves, more immediately familiar and accessible than what is expressed in the banal titles *veritas* and “truth.” ... The translating word “*un*-concealedness” directs us to the striking fact that the Greeks think in the essence of truth something like the taking away, cancellation, or annihilation of

concealment. Corresponding to this negation of concealment, truth for the Greeks is, as it were, something “negative.” ... What we can see clearly here is only this: the essence of truth as unconcealedness stands in some sort of opposition to concealment. Indeed it appears unconcealedness is involved with concealedness in a “conflict,” the essence of which itself remains in dispute.”²²

I have extracted these statements from Heidegger's introduction to illustrate the methodical style whereby he develops his theme on the basis of a meticulous reflection on language. This method of reflection is focused primarily on the idioms of Greek and German philosophy, and it provides the tools needed to guide the reader's thinking in a very deliberate manner toward an understanding that includes, but also exceeds, the limits of the systems of understanding within which the philosophical ideas common to the age of modernism and materialism have generally been confined. The fundamental phenomenological idea of *epoche* developed by Heidegger in his earliest works has been elevated to the level of transformative spiritual practice.²³ His aim now, therefore, is not primarily a critical analysis of conventional modes of understanding, but the creation of a new idiom and a new mode of understanding, based on an immediate grasp of the truth, which is what Heidegger means by “meditative thinking.” It is the mode of thinking to which we are called, or ventured, by the truth of Being itself, and by the goddess Ἀλήθεια.

22 Heidegger, Martin. (1992). *Parmenides*. Indiana University Press. p. 9-22.

23 Note: The term *epoche* means to suspend judgment, and it is taken from the Greek philosopher Pyrrho who lived in Athens at about the same time as Plato. He professed a skeptical view of the possibility of “truth” in opposition to the view of Plato's Academy, and this view was taken up in the 2nd century CE by Sextus Empiricus and the school known as Skepticism. The term was adopted by the phenomenologists of the 20th century, such as Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, not in opposition to Platonism but as a method for achieving a kind of liberation from conventions of thinking and “appearances” in order to achieve a more original understanding of the world.

Toward the end of Part One of this work we ultimately learn that her counter essence is *λήθη*, which means oblivion or forgetfulness. In Greek mythology, Λήθη (Lethe) is a river of the underworld in which the memory of the dead is erased. The alpha-privative form, as Heidegger points out, is *α-λήθη* or *un-concealedness*. Heidegger undertakes an elaborate demonstration of the many ways in which various concepts which might appear to be the opposites of truth, conceived of as unconcealedness, such as falsehood, forgetfulness, wrong, imperfection, absence, past and future time, etc., may in fact be revealed to the intuitive understanding as truths of Being, hidden perhaps, or only partially revealed, behind or within the presence and appearance to us of actual beings. The truth therefore is what is known by the more holistic view of a mind that is illumined by the full light of Truth, in the fullness of Being, in which both the concealed and the unconcealed are seen as One. In a significant passage concerning this mystery, he writes:

“Only where a humanity is entrusted with the essence, 'to have the word,' *λόγον ἔχειν*, only there does it remain assigned to the preservation of the unconcealedness of beings. Only where this assignment holds sway and where unconcealedness appears in advance as Being itself, only there does concealment also prevail in a way that can never be the mere contrary and crude opposite to disclosure, i.e., in the modes of dissemblance, distortion, misguidance, deception, and falsification. ...Forgetting is not a “subjective lived experience,” not a “subjective state” in the sense of a “lapse of memory,” etc. The concealment here does not touch only what is past but also what is present and, above all, what, in thinking ahead, is approaching man and what befits his comportment by providing an assigned direction.”²⁴

It is the faculty of meditative thinking that Heidegger believes is capable of grasping Being as a whole and, as such, constitutes the

24 Op. cit. *Parmenides*. p. 78,83.

essence and true nature of the human being. It is the ability of the “Da-sein” to release itself from its objectifying intelligence and leap into that region of higher seeing and Light, which is the destiny to which we are called by Being itself. There are passages in Part Two of the work on Parmenides that seem to be vibrant with an intimation of that illumined grasp of Truth. For example, in writing of “the Open,” which he now identifies with Ἀλήθεια, he says:

“Just as the eye without the ability to see is nothing, so the ability to see, for its part, remains an “inability” if it does not come into play in an already established relation of man to visible beings. And how could beings be supposed to appear to man, if man did not already relate in his essence to beings as beings. And how could such a relation of man to beings as such hold sway if man did not stand in a relation to Being? If man did not already have Being in view, then he could not even think the nothing, let alone experience beings. And how is man supposed to stand in this relation to Being if Being itself does not address man and claim his essence for the relation to Being? But what else is this relation of Being to the essence of man than the clearing and the open which has lighted itself for the unconcealed. ...Since the primordial essence of truth is “unconcealedness” (ἀ-λήθεια), and since ἀλήθεια is already in the concealed the open and self-luminous, therefore the clearing and its transparency can altogether appear in the form of the lighting of brightness and of its transparency.”²⁵

There is a great deal in this text, which is presented here in very brief selections, that brings to mind Sri Aurobindo's description in *The Life Divine* of the ascent of a higher spiritual consciousness accessible to the liberated mind and will, from Rational Mind, to Higher Mind, to Illumined Mind, and eventually Intuitive Mind

25 Ibid. p. 146.

open to the light of Supermind. It is in this context that Heidegger's understanding may, perhaps, acquire its greatest clarity. For example, Sri Aurobindo writes of the higher tuition:

“It is when the consciousness of the subject meets with the consciousness in the object, penetrates it and sees, feels or vibrates with the truth of what it contacts, that the intuition leaps out like a spark or lightning-flash from the shock of the meeting; or when the consciousness, even without any such meeting, looks into itself and feels directly and intimately the truth or the truths that are there or so contacts the hidden forces behind appearances, then also there is the outbreak of an intuitive light; or, again, when the consciousness meets the Supreme Reality or the spiritual reality of things and beings and has a contactual union with it, then the spark, the flash or the blaze of intimate truth-perception is lit in its depths. This close perception is more than sight, more than conception: it is the result of a penetrating and revealing touch which carries in it sight and conception as part of itself or as its natural consequence. A concealed or slumbering identity, not yet recovering itself, still remembers or conveys by the intuition its own contents and the intimacy of its self-feeling and self-vision of things, its light of truth, its overwhelming and automatic certitude.”²⁶

It is after clarifying many of the terms and concepts of both ancient and modern philosophy concerning truth and falsehood, the concealed and unconcealed, mythos and logos, etc., near the end of his *Parmenides*, that Heidegger turns to the poetry of Rilke, and we may glean from what he says here some insight into the use he made of the fragment he considered from Rilke's posthumous verse in defining the nature of calculative thinking and the objectification of nature. The remarks made by Heidegger in the *Parmenides* text were based on the Eighth Elegy of the *Duino Elegies*, which was

26 Sri Aurobindo. (2006). *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press. p. 981.

published a few years earlier than the poem fragment we have heard in 'What Are Poets For?,' but its themes and images are very similar. For example, in the Eighth Elegy we read:

The eyes of the creature are keenly aware
in the open – But our eyes are as though turned
inward and seem to surround everything
with pitfalls, wholly encircling our free outlook.
That which is outside we know only
from the faces of animals, for we force
even the young child to turn and look backward
at conformation, not to observe with that openness so deep
in the animal's face. Free from the thought of death. ...²⁷

Heidegger devotes about twelve pages of his text to a detailed analysis of these lines of Rilke, similar to the more substantial analysis in the essay titled 'What are Poets For?' where he was concerned to put in philosophical perspective the self-assertive nature of man and the dominion of calculative thinking and technology, within the context of Rilke's poem. But here we find a more penetrating gaze into the essence of Rilke's poetic venture. Our intention at this point, however, is only to gain a broader perspective on 'the Open.' A view of Heidegger's comments in this regard can be glimpsed in the following extracts from a few revealing paragraphs:

“This is how Rilke, in the eighth Duino elegy, understands “the open.” The “open” is for him the constant progression by beings themselves, from beings to beings within beings. The open as the unlimited progression of beings remains bound to this and so is chained to the ground. The open of the unrestrained progression of beings never arrives at the free of Being, and it is precisely this free that the “creature” never sees; for the capacity to see it constitutes what is essentially

27 Rilke, Rainer Maria. (2020). *Sonnets To Orpheus and Duino Elegies*. Dover Publications. p. 85.

distinct about man and consequently forms the unsurmountable essential boundary between animal and man. ...

“The priority of the unconscious over consciousness corresponds to the priority of the free animal over the imprisoned essence of man. ...Although Nietzsche's metaphysics with regard to the doctrine of the will to power remains outside the compass of Rilke's poetry, there still holds sway the one decisive common element: the essence of man as conceived on the basis of the animal. Here it is poetized, there thought. From a purely metaphysical viewpoint, i.e., with regard to the interpretation of beings as rational or irrational, the domain of Rilke's basic poetic experience is not at all distinct from the basic position of Nietzsche's thinking. Both are as remote as possible from the essence of truth as ἀλήθεια...

“There is, of course, a gaping abyss between what Rilke names the open and “the open” in the sense of the unconcealedness of beings. The “open” that dwells in ἀλήθεια first lets beings emerge and come to presence as beings. Man alone sees this open.

“The animal, on the contrary, does not glimpse or see into, and certainly does not behold, the open in the sense of unconcealedness of the unconcealed. Therefore neither can an animal relate to the closed as such, no more than it can comport itself to the concealed. The animal is excluded from the essential domain of the strife between unconcealedness and concealedness. The sign of this essential exclusion is that no animal or plant “has the word.”²⁸

Although Heidegger's interpretation of this poetry of Rilke is largely, as he says, “from a purely metaphysical viewpoint,” his

28 Op.cit. *Parmenides*. p. 159.

perspective seems to have a resonance with the view expressed by Sri Aurobindo above with regard to trends that he perceived in the poetry of the period, such as: “The poetry which insists on an external effectiveness, on immediate thought and life and experience... (is) concerned with immediately vital things perhaps, but not with that which is immortal.” The criticism that he expressed of modern poetry in *The Future Poetry* was, in fact, contemporaneous with Rilke's writing. And Sri Aurobindo clearly acknowledged the strong influence on poetry at the time from the scientific intellectualism that was dominant in the culture of the 1920s. Nevertheless, the emphasis of his criticism was also based on his vision of the possible emergence of an inspired spiritual poetry characterized by what he termed a “breath of greater life.” And Heidegger's criticism, based primarily on his philosophical concerns rather than on poetics, was clearly driven by an aspiration toward the unfolding of a higher spiritual potential in humanity that he was envisioning at about the same time.

The mystical and theological European philosopher and the mystical and theological Indian poet were both possessed by a certain supra-rational *enthousiasmos* derived from the visionary Greek thinkers of the *Logos* – the original creative power of thought and word. One wonders how Heidegger would have felt hearing these words and rhythmic phrases from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*.

The eternal Goddess moved in her cosmic house
 Sporting with God as a Mother with her child:
 To him the universe was her bosom of love,
 His toys were the immortal verities.
 All here self-lost had there its divine place.
 The Powers that here betray our hearts and err,
 Were there sovereign in truth, perfect in joy,
 Masters in a creation without flaw,
 Possessors of their own infinitude.
 There Mind, a splendid sun of vision's rays,
 Shaped substance by the glory of its thoughts

And moved amidst the grandeur of its dreams.
Imagination's great ensorcelling rod
Summoned the unknown and gave to it a home,
Outspread luxuriantly in golden air
Truth's iris-coloured wings of fantasy,
Or sang to the intuitive heart of joy
Wonder's dream-notes that bring the Real close.
Its power that makes the unknowable near and true,
In the temple of the ideal shrined the One:
It peopled thought and mind and happy sense
Filled with bright aspects of the might of God
And living persons of the one Supreme,
The speech that voices the ineffable,
The ray revealing unseen Presences,
The virgin forms through which the Formless shines,
The Word that ushers divine experience
And the Ideas that crowd the Infinite.²⁹

29 Sri Aurobindo. (1950/1993). *Savitri – A Legend and a Symbol*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press. p. 327.

4

The Metaphysical Foundations (1)

It should be clear to readers of the previous installments of this study, in which I have attempted to gather samples from the writings of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo that express, in particular, their shared appreciation of poetry as a vehicle for the revelation of truth, that they also shared a certain visionary power to gaze into the higher regions of human consciousness. Their primary interest was in the philosophical pursuit of truth, however, and their extraordinary powers of thought and linguistic expression were dedicated throughout their lives to their belief in the capacity of human consciousness to know the truth of itself and the world. Both thinkers were also convinced that such knowledge could potentially lead to the liberation and perfection of the human being. In my view, it is an extraordinary coincidence that their lives and literary creativity, as well as the ideas that preoccupied them, followed an almost identical historical trajectory.

The ideas expressed throughout their decades of literary creativity from 1920 to 1950 cross at many points. Heidegger uses the terms “neighboring,” “nearness,” “nighing” to express what he perceived to be a region of seeing and knowing shared by poets and philosophers at a certain level of creativity, and these terms might be used, as well, to express what I have termed the proximity of the thought of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo. This is not to say that they knew or said the same things, but there are certainly enough proximities and convergences/divergences in their thinking to justify a comparison that can potentially help to clarify our understanding of both. Without such a comparison – and I do not know of very many readers of philosophy who have read both – there may be many things, seen and known in that neighborhood, which might remain hidden and obscure. My hope, therefore, is that a comparison of their thoughts and expressions will be

mutually clarifying and revealing. This study may be viewed as a reading of Heidegger in the context of Sri Aurobindo, and vice-versa; and as a mutual contextualizing of their philosophies, for the sake of unconcealing the truth of both.

One of the clearest indications of the possible fruitfulness of such a thought-journey is the discovery that the origin of much that is similar in their thought appears to originate in ancient Greek philosophy, and in Platonism in particular. In the two supplements that I have included, in installments 5 and 6, respectively titled 'The Creative Word,' and 'Evolutionary Thinking,' it has been my intention to provide an introduction to the prevalence of this Platonic influence on the “philosophers of intuition” in the 20th century in general. At this point, however, it may be appropriate to take a deeper dive into those metaphysical foundations of the thought of both Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo.

The philosophical and theological texts of various ancient Greek authors were a primary resource for Heidegger, especially Heraclitus and Parmenides, to which he returned constantly throughout his career. And the ancient texts of Sanskrit philosophy served Sri Aurobindo's thinking in a similar way. But Sri Aurobindo was also intimately familiar with the classical Greek literature and made frequent references to various authors, such as Homer, Heraclitus, Plato, and Sophocles. As I have mentioned elsewhere, it is obvious to me that his interpretation of the Vedantic texts, which were his primary resources, was greatly influenced by his understanding of the Greeks. I can easily imagine him as a student of Greek at Cambridge, which he was, retreating to the library to read the classics and subsequently retaining and recalling with great interest all that he had read, in the context of his copious translations and commentaries on Sanskrit texts. Sri Aurobindo and Heidegger were both highly gifted interpreters of the ancient languages to which they were enthusiastically devoted, and there can be no doubt that this was a factor that set them apart from most others in their field and contributed profoundly to their writing skills as well as their philosophical vision.

To begin this exploration, I will introduce readers, who might not be aware of the profound extent of Sri Aurobindo's interest in Greek sources, to a somewhat detailed sketch of those influences, and from that perspective we may gain a greater insight into the work of Heidegger as well. To begin with a rather esoteric but uniquely interesting biographical context, in the year 1918 to 1919 Sri Aurobindo was bringing to a close his major work titled *The Life Divine*, which he had been publishing serially since 1914. He was concurrently keeping a diary of his *sadhana*, (spiritual practice), in which we see how many of the ideas about which he was writing in his serialized books were playing a direct role in his daily life. Some selections from his diary, which was published posthumously under the title *Record of Yoga*, presented here in a summary form, will convey something of this thinker's life at the time of this philosophical writing, as well as revealing important and relevant insights into the psychology of his spiritual practice. We should note that the path of his Yoga entailed a transformation of consciousness through the mind, especially the elevation of thought toward cosmic consciousness, which was also a fundamental principle and aim of the Neoplatonic and “gnostic” philosophies of the Greek mystics.

From the Record of Yoga:

1918 - Feb 22. The intelligence is being pushed aside as the judge and recipient; it still persists, but is being dominated. It is the intuitive mind that is taking its place, while in the thought etc it is mostly the ideality itself that is the judge and recipient.

Mar 11. The revelatory has suddenly today substituted itself for the inspirational ideality, but it is at present the intuitional revelatory. It is taking up all the action of the ideality and enlightening and transforming the relics of the intelligential mentality.

April 22. What is now coming, is an automatic fidelity to truth, a fidelity not of the telepathic stress in the intuitive intelligence, but of the intuitively revelatory judgment in the ideality. This is as yet very imperfect in its action and still involved in the intellectual telepathies.

May 7. The defect that has to be got rid of throughout the ideality, is the descent of the *vijnana* (gnosis) into mind. This makes the intellect the receptive agency which creates a sort of receptive intellectual judgment, assent and denial, a cause of error and uncertainty. ...The removal of this defect begins today. It is prolonged by the *rhathumia* (*Greek term for rhythm*), the leaving things to take care of themselves instead of insisting by the ideal *tapas* (Sanskrit term for will-force) upon perfection. It gives an undue force to the etheric resistance in the physicality and prevents the full liberation of the ideality to act largely and perfectly.

1919 - July 22. The higher hermetic gnosis is now showing itself in the revelatory logistis (Grk. higher reason) not only in the *lipi* (Skt. inspired vision), but in thought-speech and perception; ...The incidence of the relapse into the intuitive intellectuality has been very obstinate and severe, a great confusion created, almost all the old incidents of relapse suggested, even something like the old hardly idealised intellectual intuitivity revived in fragments and in the mental atmosphere. The orderly and powerful development of the gnosis has undergone momentarily a strong interruption.

July 26. There is now a struggle between two kinds of ideality, the old ideality which depends upon the existent actuality, illumines it, goes a little beyond it but from it, returns to it, acquiesces temporarily in its decisions, and a new greater pragmatic ideality which takes the present actuality as a passing circumstance, claims to go altogether beyond it, to create with a certain large freedom according to

the Will and looks even beyond to the omnipotence of the Self and its will, [to] determine as well as see the future. It is over the relapse to the mentalised intuitive ideality that the question is being fought out, for it is the mental intuitivity and the intuitive ideality which illumines it into a lower gnosis which either temporarily support or resignedly acquiesce in the relapse as a part of the still existent law of the rhythm of the sadhana. The greater ideality aims at eliminating the rhythm of rapid progression and sudden relapse. It proposes to do everything from above, by the ideality, in the ideality, the gnosis working out itself.

Aug 1. Action of ideality in thought to perceive the right action. The full revelatory ideality, not the inspired or intuitive revelation, the truth seeing not the pragmatic or resistant mechanical seeing, not the alternation of these two opposite powers, nor even their simultaneous perception, but their unity and exceeding in the revelatory truth, must be the agent of the perfect siddhi (Skt. realization). That therefore must be insisted on always, even in the midst of the persistence of the lower movements. This thing done means a sure rapidity.

Aug 8–9. These two days have been marked by the immensely rapid progress of the gnosis (Grk. Highest Intuition). For the most part there was an increase of the inspired pragmatic or dynamic gnosis at this level of intensity, with an undertone of intuitive present or actual gnosis, corresponding to the old mechanical intellectuality. This took full shape and power on Saturday. ... The lower state of the system was at first transformed to the full ideality of all kinds, but chiefly highest ideality of the third intensity, then all to the highest gnosis either full of or penetrated or overshadowed by the influence of the hermetic and seer gnosis.³⁰

30 Sri Aurobindo. (2001). *Record of Yoga*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust. pp. 1021-1147.

Sri Aurobindo is narrating a process of ascent and transformation of consciousness, which he has described at length in *The Life Divine*, from the reasoning mind to the higher mind, intuitive mind, and gnosis, referring to the latter variously here as 'higher hermetic gnosis,' 'hermetic ideality,' 'hermesis,' 'gnostic ideality,' etc. The psychology of transformation through his practice of Yoga is the basic subject matter of both *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Life Divine*, which were written simultaneously during the same period, along with approximately eight other books, all of which were completed in 1922. In addition to the terms taken from Greek philosophy, as expressed by Neoplatonism in particular, such as gnosis and hermetic ideation, three other Greek terms that occur frequently in his major work are *logos*, *dynamis* and *processus*, the Greek forms of which are λόγος, δύναμις, and προόδος. The latter, pronounced *prohodos*, is sometimes translated as progression, sometimes procession, but Sri Aurobindo uses the Latin form, *processus*, because it is not a term for which there is a good English equivalent. The same is true of the term *dynamis*, about which he has actually written a detailed explanation, as follows:

“*Dynamis* is a Greek word, not current, so far as I know, in English; but the verb *dunamai*, I can, am able, from which it derives, has given a number of verbs to the English language including dynamise, dynamics, dyne (a unit of force), so that the word can be at once understood by all English readers. It means power, especially energetic power for energetic action. It is equivalent to the Sanskrit word Shakti. Philosophically it can stand as the opposite word to status, Divine Status, Divine Dynamis.”³¹

The challenge here is certainly not merely one of translation. The 'Divine Dynamis' which is a fundamental notion of both the Greek and Sanskrit metaphysical traditions is not synonymous with what we normally think of as energetic action at all. In fact it means

31 Sri Aurobindo. (1976). *Birth Centenary Library Glossary and Index*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust. p. 369.

something like “the Force of Stillness” which has been mentioned in some statements quoted earlier of Heidegger, Meister Eckhart, and Sri Aurobindo. The Greek term *prohodos*, as used in Neoplatonism, refers to a metaphysical process of descent from the One through the transcendent planes of gods, ideas, intellects, souls, angels, etc, in a systematically ordered manner that can only be truly understood by a higher mystical intuition. It is what Sri Aurobindo refers to with the term Involution – a concept that we become familiar with in the context of his philosophy, as he uses it, and in the context of Neoplatonism, as elaborated there especially by Proclus. This is precisely where a careful reading of Heidegger's interpretations of the language of the Greek philosophers and mystics can help us to adjust our “seeing and hearing” to a range of meanings that do not correspond to our conventional associations.

An example of Sri Aurobindo's use of the terms *dynamis* and *processus* in *The Life Divine* will perhaps serve to further elucidate the issue:

“We have seen that as the divided mortal Mind, parent of limitation and ignorance and the dualities, is only a dark figure of the supermind, of the self-luminous divine Consciousness in its first dealings with the apparent negation of itself from which our cosmos commences, so also Life as it emerges in our material universe, an energy of the dividing Mind, subconscious, submerged, imprisoned in Matter, Life as the parent of death, hunger and incapacity, is only a dark figure of the divine superconscient Force whose highest terms are immortality, satisfied delight and omnipotence. This relation fixes the nature of that great cosmic processus of which we are a part; it determines the first, the middle and the ultimate terms of our evolution.”³²

32 Sri Aurobindo. (1940/2006). *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust. p. 211.

“It is perfectly rational to suppose that the eternal status of being of the Reality contains in it an eternal force of being, and this dynamis must necessarily carry in itself a power of action and movement, a kinesis; both status of being and movement of being can be real. There is no reason either why they should not be simultaneous; on the contrary, simultaneity is demanded, — for all energy, all kinetic action has to support itself on status or by status if it is to be effective or creative; otherwise there will be no solidity of anything created, only a constant whirl without any formation: status of being, form of being are necessary to kinesis of being.”³³

Proclus (“called **Proclus the Successor** (Greek: Πρόκλος ὁ Διάδοχος, *Próklos ho Diádokhos*), was a Greek Neoplatonist philosopher, one of the last major classical philosophers of late antiquity. He set forth one of the most elaborate and fully developed systems of Neoplatonism and, through later interpreters and translators, exerted an influence on Byzantine philosophy, Early Islamic philosophy, Scholastic philosophy, and German Idealism, especially G.W.F. Hegel, who called Proclus's *Platonic Theology* “the true turning point or transition from ancient to modern times, from ancient philosophy to Christianity.”)³⁴ wrote commentaries on many of the texts of Plato, such as *Parmenides* and *Timaeus*, which have had a lasting influence on Christianity and consequently on Western philosophy, as is evident from this wikipedia post. His work titled *Elements of Theology* is devoted to a thorough explanation of the process of involution (*prohodos*) from absolute spirit to material generation, and the return (*epistrophe*) to spirit through the higher intellect and intuitive gnosis. It is a work that was known and referenced by the thinkers of the scholastic tradition, such as Meister Eckhart and Thomas Aquinas, both of whose works were of special interest to Heidegger in his earliest theological writings. According to recent historical studies, the works of Proclus, and Neoplatonism in general, have

33 Ibid., p. 475.

34 See: Proclus. Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proclus>.

had a major resurgence in academic theology since the publication of Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy: of the Event* (1989). It is an intriguing dilemma to consider that neither Heidegger nor Sri Aurobindo has referenced the writings of Proclus in their works. And yet, it is hardly conceivable that they were not well-aware of them. As I have mentioned, both philosophers were steeped in the writings of the early Greeks, which they read in the original, and in the ideas of Plato, which form the basis of Neoplatonism. Meister Eckhart often refers to a text titled *The Book of Causes*, which was subsequently identified by Thomas Aquinas as being drawn originally from Proclus's *Elements of Theology*, and both texts were of interest to Hegel and the German Idealists. As for Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of the evolution of consciousness in *The Life Divine*, we shall decide for ourselves whether these works were likely to have been a significant influence on his thinking.

Before moving to the work of Proclus, which is relevant to the issue of origins and comparisons as well as to a deeper understanding of the writings of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo, let us look at an excerpt from 'The Book of Causes'³⁵ (*Liber de causis*), because it is a somewhat simpler and more accessible adaptation of principles from the *Elements of Theology*, and it is translated from the Latin, which was extant at the time of Meister Eckhart and Aquinas. In my view, this exploration will introduce us to the essential and central doctrine of the *processus*, or procession, elaborated eventually by Sri Aurobindo in his theory of involution and evolution. In Section I of 'Causes,' we read:

16. The effect of the second cause holds only through the power of the prime cause.

17. This is because, when the second cause produces a thing, the prime cause that is above the second cause overflows of

35 Dennis Brand. (Trans. 1984). *The Book of Causes*. Marquette University Press. pp. 20-21.

its own power upon that thing and, consequently, adheres to it with an intense adherence and conserves it.

The footnote to these articles reads: “*influx* = overflows, flows over into. In view of the theistic doctrine of creation professed by the *Liber* “emanates” is perhaps too misleading a translation. On *fluere*, *influre*, and *flux* see Leo Sweeney, S.J., *Esse Primum Creatum in Albert the Great's Liber de causis et processus universitatis*.” I have underlined the term which was used by Albert the Great. And we may infer that the “second cause” corresponds to the term Shakti and the first cause to the term Ishwara in Sri Aurobindo's system.

In Section II, we read;

19. Every higher being is either above eternity and before it, or is coexistent with eternity, or is after eternity and beyond time.

20. Indeed, the being that is before eternity is the First Cause, because it is the cause of eternity.

21. And indeed, the being that is coexistent with eternity is Intelligence, because it is the second being.

22. Indeed, the being that is after eternity and beyond time is Soul, because it is on the horizon of eternity and from below and beyond time.

We can already gather clues from these first principles regarding the structure of the philosophy of Heidegger as well, whose guiding question always delineates the terms 'Being' and 'Time' and the fact that he distinguishes these terms from the 'Truth of Being' itself. In Sri Aurobindo's psychological and cosmological hierarchy there is always the Supreme Trinity with *Satchidananda* above, its manifesting power in the middle, Supermind, or *Vijnana*, and the

evolutionary nature of Mind-Life-Body below, with the Soul as its inner support – *Purusa* (inner being or soul). And *Prakriti* in this Vedantic system is nature or energy of manifestation. Purusha is beyond time, prakriti is the manifestation in time of that eternal being.

Proclus's *Elements of Theology* is considerably more detailed and substantive regarding the terms and principles of the metaphysical system of the Greeks, as is the whole eloquent explanation of existence that he presents, for which he is so well-known. His primary objective in this work is to solve the problem of Origin and Motion. How does the absolute, infinite, Unmanifest One impart its inherent principles of Power, Beauty, Truth to the Infinite Mover, Demiurge, Logos, or Supermind, and how does that supreme divine knowledge-force of the One impart the energies of motion, form, and quality to the time-space world of generation? He does this in the form of 211 (two-hundred, eleven) concise, anecdotal, and axiomatic arguments. This entire system is drawn from the texts of Plato, and from Aristotle's applications and interpretations of them, which had been carried forward by the school known as Neoplatonism for a thousand years. Proclus writes, for example:

Proposition 20. The essence of soul is beyond all bodies, the intellectual nature is beyond all souls, and the one is beyond all intellectual hypostases.

For every body is moveable by something else, but is not naturally adapted to move itself, but by the presence of soul is moved of itself, lives on account of soul, and when soul is present, is in a certain respect self-moveable, but when it is absent is alter-moveable, as deriving this nature from the soul which is allotted a self-moveable essence. It is, however, by a much greater priority, that which it imparts by its very being. Hence, it is beyond bodies, which become self-moveable by participation as being essentially self-moveable. ...

Moreover, the one is prior to intellect, for intellect though it is immoveable, yet is not the one; for it intellectually perceives itself, and energizes about itself. And of the one indeed, all beings in whatever way they may exist, participate, but all beings do not participate of intellect. For those beings to whom intellect is present by participation, necessarily participate of knowledge; because intellectual knowledge is the principle and first cause of the gnostic energy. The one, therefore, is beyond intellect, and there is no longer any thing else beyond the one.

Proposition 25. Every thing perfect proceeds to the generation of those things which it is able to produce, imitating the one principle of all.

Proposition 26. Every cause which is productive of other things, itself abiding in itself, produces the natures posterior to itself, and such as are successive.

For it imitates the one, but that immovably gives subsistence to things posterior to itself, (such that) every thing which produces will possess in a similar manner the cause of productive energy. But the one gives subsistence to things immovably. For if through motion, the motion will be in it, and being moved, it will no longer be the one, in consequence of being changed from the one.

Proposition 36. Of all things which are multiplied according to progression (prohodos), the first are more perfect than the second, the second than those posterior to them, and after the same manner successively.

Proposition 49. Every thing self-subsistent is perpetual.

Proposition 50. Every thing which is measured by time, either according to essence, or according to energy, is generation, so far as it is measured by time.

Proposition 54. Every eternity is the measure of eternal natures, and every time is the measure of things in time, and these are the only two measures of life and motion in beings.

Proposition 64. Every monad which ranks as a principle, gives subsistence to a two-fold number; one indeed of self-perfect hypostases, but the other of illuminations which posses their hypostases in other things.

For if progression (*prohodos*) is according to diminution, through things appropriate to producing causes, perfect natures will proceed from the all-perfect, and through these as media, imperfect natures will proceed in a well-ordered progression, so that some will be self-perfect hypostases, but others will be imperfect. And these latter will become the forms of participants. For being imperfect they will be indigent of subjects in their very nature.

Proposition 123. Every thing divine is itself indeed, on account of its super-essential union, ineffable and unknown to all secondary natures, but it is comprehended and known by its participants. Hence, that which is first, is alone perfectly unknown, as being imparticipable.

Proposition 125. Every God, from that order from which he began to unfold himself into light, proceeds through all secondary natures, always indeed multiplying and dividing the communications of himself, but preserving the peculiarity of his own hypostasis. ... Each of the Gods, therefore, is unfolded into light appropriately, in the orders in which he makes his evolution. But he proceeds from thence, as far as to the last of things, through the generative powers of first

natures. He is always, however, multiplied according to a progression from unity into multitude.

Proposition 144. All beings, and all the distributions of beings, extend as far in their progressions, as the orders of the Gods.

For the Gods produce beings in conjunction with themselves, nor is any thing able to subsist, and to receive measure and order, external to the Gods. For all things are perfected through their power, and are arranged and measured by the Gods.

Proposition 169. Every intellect has its essence, power and energy in eternity.

Proposition 172. Every intellect is proximately the producing cause of beings perpetual and immutable according to essence. For every thing which is produced by an immoveable cause, is immutable according to essence. But immoveable intellect being all things eternally, and abiding in eternity, produces by its very being that which it produces.

Proposition 176. All intellectual forms are in each other, and each is at the same time separate and distinct from the rest.

Proposition 177. Every intellect being a plenitude of forms, one indeed, is comprehensive of more total, but another of more partial forms. And the superior intellects contain in a more total manner, such things as those posterior to them contain more partially. ... For the superior intellects employ greater powers, having more the form of the one than secondary intellects. ... Hence it happens that the natures which are generated from superior intellects according to one form, are produced according to many ideas.

Proposition 185. All souls are indeed Gods psychically. But all those that participate of an intellectual intellect, are the

perpetual attendants of the Gods. And all those that are recipients of mutation, are sometimes only the attendants of the Gods.

Proposition 187. Every soul is indestructible, and incorruptible.

Proposition 190. Every soul is a medium between impartible natures, and the natures which are divisible about bodies.

Proposition 192. Every participable soul ranks among the number of truly existing beings, and is the first of generated natures.

Proposition 193. Every soul subsists proximately from intellect.

Proposition 194. Every soul contains all the forms which intellect primarily possesses.

Proposition 197. Every soul is an essence vital and gnostic, and a life essential and gnostic, and is knowledge, essence, and life. All things likewise subsist in it at once, the essential, the vital, and the gnostic; and all things are in all, and each is separate from the rest.³⁶

I have listed a substantial number of Proclus's propositions from the *Elements of Theology* because I think it is important to grasp and understand, at least to some extent, the essential metaphysical principles that influenced Western, and in particular Continental and Christian philosophy, for ten centuries after Plato, who produced the original template, and for another 800 years after Proclus, down to Hegel, and that are again resurfacing in our post-modern era. According to some authors of Christian theology and

36 Thomas Taylor. (Trans. 1816/2917). *Proclus' Elements of Theology*. Kshetra Books. pp. 13-105.

history there has been more research on Neoplatonism in recent decades than ever before in history. But it is also important because this metaphysical system corresponds closely to the one that Sri Aurobindo has derived and developed from the similarly ancient and enduring Vedic and Vedantic texts which form the basis of *The Life Divine*. Moreover, I believe that many aspects of the philosophies of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo can be derived from Proclus's "theology," whether or not they were consciously aware of his influence, though of course I believe that they were.

In fact, I suggest that this work of Proclus, along with some of his other writings, may be seen as constitutive of the underlying structure, or metaphysical foundation, of both Heidegger's phenomenological and ontological philosophy and Sri Aurobindo's psychological and spiritual philosophy. As such it provides important keys for entering into a more intimate relationship with their work, as well as for understanding the ways in which they are related. In the next installments I will attempt to show how their systems are built upon and embody these theological and metaphysical principles.

5

The Creative Word – Supplement (1)

In the current neurological science that studies the brain, speech, and thought, much of which is based on observations of the human brain under different conditions of stimulation, it has been determined that the right hemisphere is primarily responsible for initial impressions and a more holistic grasp of things, while the left hemisphere is primarily responsible for enacting goal-oriented decisions based on data supplied by the right hemisphere. Its relationship to the world of experience is more analytical and linear, while its counterpart on the right takes a more peripheral and inclusive position. We commonly characterize the former as rational and the latter as intuitive; the latter has an aesthetic response to the ceramic pot, the former calculates its volume and cost. Their modes of appreciation and expression would be similarly defined in terms of thought and speech, respectively, as creative and artistic on one hand, practical and pragmatic on the other.

I think it is useful to take these scientific observations into account when we try to understand the thought and speech of philosophy and poetry, which are often also differentiated in a similar manner, the former being more abstract and theoretical, while the latter is more sensual and musical. Sri Aurobindo's discussions of poetic style in *The Future Poetry* express a similar paradigm, and he insists that the highest forms of poetic expression are produced by the intuitive mind, while philosophical expression is the product of the rigorous analysis and argumentation of the rational mind. It appears therefore, with regard to poetry and philosophy, that there are two distinctly different forms of language corresponding to equally different and distinct forms of thought, which, according to brain science, correspond to certain distinct, localizable functions of the brain. And, although they generally

operate together in a closely interactive relationship, one or the other may be more or less dominant according to the activity being performed.

Both activities involve thought and speech in ways that may be considered among the highest expressions of which humankind is capable. Thought and speech are the most distinguishing attributes of *homo sapiens* and make this species the arbiter of life on earth and author of its destiny. Recognizing, perhaps, the nature of its authority, and being awed by its preeminent status, while at the same time terrified, perhaps, of its implications, the primordial thinkers of the species have, from its earliest expressions in poetry and philosophy, transferred all its rights and responsibilities to that most holy and arcane master: the Word

We may all be familiar with the exalted first line of the Gospel of John:

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος

En arche ain ho logos, kai ho logos ain pros ton theon, kai theos ain ho logos

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The Word was thought by John, as it had been from the beginning of self-conscious thought and speech, to be God. This mysticism and philosophy of the Word, expressed by the apostle John in Greek, began in Greece 500 years earlier with the word of Heraclitus, and continued to be expressed in Greek by the Neoplatonic philosophers for another 500 years. It was therefore not a Christian idea; it was a universally held idea of philosophical thought. It was understood by the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of John, in this way, according to the historian of philosophy, Copleston:

Philo's conception of the Logos is directly related to the Middle Platonic view of God as unmoved and utterly transcendent, therefore intermediary beings were necessary to bridge the enormous gap between God and the material world. The Logos was the highest of these intermediary beings, and was called by Philo "the first-born of God."³⁷

Sri Aurobindo made reference to the saying of Philo in his essay on Heraclitus, pointing out his interpretation of the term **logos spermatikos** (λόγος σπερματικός: the generative principle of the Universe which creates and takes back all things). The Neoplatonic cosmology which is reflected in the writing of Philo, and which of course came from Plato, follows the trinitarian structure of cosmos also employed by Sri Aurobindo: The Transcendent Supreme (the Good), the Universal Supermind (Logos), and the Gods (*logoi*, emanations or principles of manifestation in the worlds of form and matter, such as Beauty, Harmony, Justice). It is worthwhile to refresh our understanding of this conception in the words of Sri Aurobindo, in order to gain an appreciation of the hierarchical system that we see reflected not only in the Greek language of philosophical thought for a thousand years, but also in Vedic thought during the same time span. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo writes:

“All things are a manifestation of the infinite spirit out of its own being, out of its own consciousness and by the self-realising, self-determining, self-fulfilling power of that consciousness. The Infinite, we may say, organises by the power of its self-knowledge the law of its own manifestation of being in the universe, not only the material universe present to our senses, but whatever lies behind it on whatever planes of existence. All is organised by it not under any inconscient compulsion, not according to a mental fantasy or caprice, but in its own infinite spiritual freedom according to

37 Frederick Copleston. (2003). *A History of Philosophy*, Volume 1. Continuum. pp. 458–462.

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. The Intelligence — to give it an inadequate name — the Logos that thus organises its own manifestation is evidently something infinitely greater, more extended in knowledge, compelling in self-power, large both in 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 realised degree and expression of consciousness. It is to this intelligence infinite in itself but freely organising 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.”³⁸

The word Logos is translated from Greek texts in a variety of ways depending on the context, as presented in the Greek-English lexicon: “**logos** λόγος: reason, explanation, word, argument. Also, the ordering principle in the **kosmos**.” The most common translation used by interpreters of the Neoplatonist philosophers is the word “Intellect,” which can refer to the highest intelligence of the creative Divine Mind or to the intelligence of the rational mind of human beings, as Sri Aurobindo's commentary also indicates. With our privileged 21st century view of all the texts available to humanity that we might wish to consult, we may conclude that the comprehensive term “Consciousness” would cover all the levels of the Logos: Idea, Word, Reason, Intelligence, Mind, Thought, and Speech (i.e., symbolic language).

This interpretation is reflected in the system of Tantra which also constitutes one of the primary sources of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. From a text on the metaphysics of that system, we read, for example:

38 Sri Aurobindo. (1970). *The Synthesis of Yoga*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press. p. 757.

“In the tantra system the purva mimamsaka’s theory of the eternality of shabda (sound) and artha (meaning) is accepted. They go a little further to assert that shabda and artha are the embodiment of Shiva and Shakti as the universe itself. They name their original source as shabdartha-brahman instead of a mere shabda-brahman. For, that is the source of both the objects and their descriptions. Words and their meanings – what they denote in the objective world – are the variety of manifestations of shakti.

Just as a sankalpa – a pure thought – has to pass through several stages before it actually manifests as concrete creative force, the sound of a particular mantra also has to pass through several stages before it is fully experienced by the listener in perfection. These stages are termed as para, pashyanti, madhyama and vaikhari (*in the descent from spiritual origin to physical manifestation, we should note*).

These four levels of sound correspond to four states of consciousness. Para represents the transcendental consciousness. Pashyanti represents the intellectual consciousness. Madhyama represents the mental consciousness. And Vaikhari represents the physical consciousness.

Shabda-brahman in its absolute nature is called para. In manifestation the subtle is always the source of the gross, and thus from para-vak manifests the other three forms of sound.”³⁹

Here we see a complete equivalence between the Infinite (original divine thought/speech), the divine supermind (logos, gnosis), and what the word means (essence, soul of beings), which culminate in the world of material forms that our consciousness perceives and

39 Jahnava Nitai Das. (2005). *The Vedic Conception of Sound in Four Features*. Bhaktivedanta Ashram. <https://www.bvashram.org/the-vedic-conception-of-sound-in-four-features/>

our language names (*nama/rupa*). If we concentrate with a silent mind on the world we perceive, without imposing any of our conditioned responses and preconceptions, there spontaneously arises in the emptiness of the *purusha*, thought and word. Thought and word appear in our consciousness with their objects. First there is the immediate intuitive grasp of the things themselves as they appear (lower intuition), and in the transparency of that apprehension there arises the essence or truth of whatever appears, if our consciousness is sufficiently transparent to the reality before it. There may then be revealed a perfect identity of thought, word, and thing (higher intuition). If the level of intelligence we have attained through Yoga provides an opening for us to see/hear the essence of what appears (*pashyanti-vak*), we may be able to produce philosophical statements or poetic inspirations that convey that essence. If we can achieve the highest gnostic identity of our consciousness with its object, aided perhaps by *mantra*, we may also hear the original creative thought/word (*para-vak*).

In the penultimate chapter of *The Future Poetry*, titled The Word and the Spirit, Sri Aurobindo describes such a reverse movement of thought from our normal status of mind back toward the highest, original form of the Word, as a theory of both language and poetic inspiration:

“The words which we use in our speech seem to be, if we look only at their external formation, mere physical sounds which a device of the mind has made to represent certain objects and ideas and perceptions, – a machinery nervous perhaps in origin, but developed for a constantly finer and more intricate use by the growing intelligence; but if we look at them in their inmost psychological and not solely at their more external aspect, we shall see that what constitutes speech and gives it its life and appeal and significance is a subtle conscious force which informs and is the soul of the body of sound: it is a superconscient Nature-Force raising its material out of our subconsciousness but growingly conscious in its operations in

the human mind that develops itself in one fundamental way and yet variously in language. It is this Force, this Shakti to which the old Vedic thinkers gave the name of Vak, the goddess of creative Speech, and the Tantric psychists supposed that this Power acts in us through different subtle nervous centres on higher and higher levels of its force and that thus the word has a graduation of its expressive powers of truth and vision. One may accept as a clue of great utility this idea of different degrees of the force of speech, each separately characteristic and distinguishable, and recognise one of the grades of the Tantric classification, Pashyanti, the seeing word, as the description of that degree of power to which the poetic mind is called to elevate itself and which is original and native to its manner of expression.”⁴⁰

In a passage on *mantra* in an early chapter of the book, Sri Aurobindo indicates the top down process of the inspired word that the mantric poet receives, as if from the same Supreme Origin that creates the universe, an idea that is expressed repeatedly throughout the book:

“There is perhaps a truth in the Vedic idea that the Spirit of creation framed all the movements of the world by *chandās*, in certain fixed rhythms of the formative Word, and it is because they are faithful to the cosmic metres that the basic world-movements unchangingly endure. A balanced harmony maintained by a system of subtle recurrences is the foundation of immortality in created things, and metrical movement is nothing else than creative sound grown conscious of this secret of its own powers.”⁴¹

In *Savitri*, we hear those rhythms and feel that here Sri Aurobindo has expressed his firm commitment to that most ancient truth of thought and speech, the mystical idea of the All-creative Word:

40 Sri Aurobindo. (1997). *The Future Poetry*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press. p. 289.

41 Ibid. p. 21.

All here where each thing seems its lonely self
 Are figures of the sole transcendent One:
 Only by him they are, his breath is their life;
 An unseen Presence moulds the oblivious clay.
 A playmate in the mighty Mother's game,
 One came upon the dubious whirling globe
 To hide from her pursuit in force and form.
 A secret spirit in the Inconscient's sleep,
 A shapeless Energy, a voiceless Word,
 He was here before the elements could emerge,
 Before there was light of mind or life could breathe.
 Accomplice of her cosmic huge pretence,
 His semblances he turns to real shapes
 And makes the symbol equal with the truth:
 He gives to his timeless thoughts a form in Time.⁴²

The observation I have made on the right-brain, left-brain theory of neuroscience is based on the work of Iain McGilchrist, whose best-known book is titled *The Master and His Emissary* (2009), surely one of the most fascinating and informative books written on the subject – he was a professor of literature at Oxford before becoming a physician and neuroscientist. In the book he shares this observation on the origins of language:

“Prose was at first known as *pezos logos*, literally 'pedestrian or walking logos', as opposed to the usual dancing *logos* of poetry. In fact, early poetry was sung: so the evolution of literary skill progresses, if that is the correct word, from right-hemisphere music (words that are sung), to right-hemisphere language (the metaphorical language of poetry), to left-hemisphere language (the referential language of prose).

Music is likely to be the ancestor of language and it arose largely in the right-hemisphere, where one would expect a

42 Sri Aurobindo. (1993). *Savitri – A Legend and a Symbol*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press. p. 60-61.

means of communication with others, promoting social cohesion, to arise.”⁴³

This theory definitely corroborates Sri Aurobindo's attribution of the Vedic seers' *mantric* power to its essential qualities of music and rhythm, as well as vision. If its ability to inspire and illumine consciousness was an expression of the earliest and purest intuitive awareness of the truths of existence, before language became an instrument of the calculating, control oriented mind, then its reawakening, to which Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and poetry are dedicated, may indeed be the key to restoring balance to this world that has become so distorted by the left-brain's dominance.

43 Iain McGilchrist. (2009). *The Master and His Emissary – The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. Yale University Press. p.105.

6

Evolutionary Thinking – Supplement (2)

Abstract -These two concluding lectures in my 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 the 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.

1.

Mind and Supermind⁴⁴**The Philosophy of Evolution (3.5)****The Platonism of Whitehead and Sri Aurobindo**

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

44 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 entire course is available in book form: *The Philosophy of Evolution – Darwin and Sri Aurobindo*, Auro-ebooks.com, 2014, <https://auro-ebooks.com/philosophy-of-evolution/>.

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.”⁴⁵

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 friend 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

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

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 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 20 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 possible, 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 1926 – 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'."⁴⁶ 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

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

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.⁴⁷ 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,

47 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.

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."⁴⁸ 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

48 Op. cit., p. 21.

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."⁴⁹

49 Ibid., p. 22.

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."⁵⁰ 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.

50 Ibid., p. 346.

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’.”⁵¹ 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.”⁵²

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

51 Ibid., p. 347.

52 Ibid., p. 21.

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.” He continues, “...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...”⁵³ 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 Vedic 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

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

everywhere, therefore Nature can afford this luxury of infinite differentiation...”⁵⁴ “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...”⁵⁵ 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, the 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...”⁵⁶

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.

54 Ibid., p. 340.

55 Ibid., p. 334.

56 Ibid.

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 intellectual 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.”⁵⁷

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

2.

Mind and Supermind

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

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 335.

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 modern 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.”⁵⁸

Darwin expressed an intuitive grasp of the vast potential of creative expression in the evolution of life, and the sense that nature is a continuum that moves toward an end or Final Cause – an ultimate perfection, overseen or driven, one must suppose, by 'the Good'. 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 the continuum of 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 Vedic 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

58 Charles Darwin. (6th ed., 1872). *The Origin of Species*. p. 314.

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."⁵⁹ And then Sri Aurobindo

59 Sri Aurobindo. (1970 ed.). *The Life Divine*. p. 336.

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.”⁶⁰

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.

60 Ibid., p. 336.

“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...”⁶¹

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.

61 Ibid., p. 337.

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.”⁶²

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

62 Sri Aurobindo. (1970 ed.). *The Synthesis of Yoga*. p. 347/348.

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)⁶³, 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,

63 Martin Heidegger. (1988/2002). *The Essence of Truth*. 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."

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 iteration 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.”⁶⁴

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

64 Gregory Bateson. (1979). *Mind and Nature*. p. 29.

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, generally, *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..."⁶⁵

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

65 Daniel Dennett. (2003). *Freedom Evolves*. p. 93.

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."⁶⁶

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

66 Ibid., p. 165.

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.

7

The Metaphysical Foundations (2)

In a previous installment of this study, 'The Metaphysical Foundations (1),' reference was made to entries in his personal diary by Sri Aurobindo in 1918-1919 for two reasons: 1) to illustrate the correspondence between his spiritual experience at the time and the chapters of the books he was writing serially in his journal *Arya*, especially concerning certain concepts and terms from the ancient Greek language of the Neoplatonists; and 2) to pursue in somewhat greater detail the parallel development that can be observed between the careers of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo from the perspective we now have as we look back on their writings from our viewpoint a hundred years later in history. Although it is certainly of secondary importance in relation to the substance of their philosophical ideas, it is nevertheless significant and important to acknowledge the parallel development and convergence of their ideas and concerns in the context of the many extraordinary intellectual achievements of that unique period in history, in order to better comprehend the direction that their paths were to follow for several decades, and its relevance to our future destiny.

As we learn from the profiles of four prominent Continental philosophers of that period provided by Wolfram Eilenberger in his fascinating and informative book *Time of the Magicians* (2018), the year 1919 marked a major turning point in the development of Heidegger's thought and his career as a philosopher. As Eilenberger writes:

“...In 1919, Heidegger was in the midst of an eruption of creativity. “The visions, the problem horizons – real steps toward fruitful solutions – new ways of seeing in principle, possibilities of the most surprising formulations and character, simultaneous firing off of genuine combinations –

it is all so brimming, simply overflowing, that one is, purely in terms of time, all but incapable of catching, capturing, and systematically processing the flow,” he wrote to his wife in Freiburg on September 9, from a farmhouse near Konstanz, where he had withdrawn for a few weeks to write.”⁶⁷

Eilenberger reports that Heidegger had received an appointment as a lecturer and assistant to Edmund Husserl, with the latter's enthusiastic support, in January that year. And Eilenberger points out in this context, that Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, had declared himself entirely scientifically oriented and highly suspicious of thinkers with strong religious associations. He suggests that it was under these circumstances that Heidegger had written to a friend that: “insights from epistemological theory ... had rendered the system of Catholicism problematic and disagreeable to him.”⁶⁸

While it appears from this account that this may have been a well-timed renunciation of the system of Catholicism, it was clearly more than a calculated career choice. For the author goes on to emphasize the visionary nature of Heidegger's first lecture at the University of Freiburg, writing that:

“Heidegger announced to an auditorium traumatized by the horrors of war the possibility of 'another world – the world and life-form of genuinely philosophical enquiry'. ... the 'trans-temporal task' that Heidegger already saw outlined ahead of him – the art of 'new seeing in principle' and pushing forward into a new 'problem horizon' – consisted in nothing other than ridding his country, his culture, indeed his entire tradition of the mad modern-day magic of subjective philosophy and epistemology, of its purely calculating rationality

67 Eilenberger, Wolfram. (2018). *Time of the Magicians – Wittgenstein, Benjamin, Cassirer, Heidegger, and the Decade that Reinvented Philosophy*. Penguin Books. p. 78.

68 Ibid., p. 46.

and fixation on the natural sciences. Overall he saw his fellow Westerners as trapped by an understanding of themselves and an approach to the world that were fundamentally false. ... And that autumn Heidegger experienced himself as being fully awake: he began to philosophize independently, that is, outside the structures of the subject and knowledge as expounded by Descartes.”⁶⁹

While still under the tutelage of Husserl, so to speak, in the department of philosophy at Freiburg, after a period of seclusion in a cabin built by him and his wife in the Black Forest where he had retired to write in October, 1922, Eilenberger tells us that “Under pressure to submit the findings of his latest research for a professorship that had arisen in Marburg ... up in his new cabin Heidegger experienced a further philosophical breakthrough. ... Husserl's wife quickly typed up a clean copy of the manuscript titled 'Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle – Indication of the Hermeneutic Situation.' ... Heidegger opted for the existential tactic of a return to supposed fundamentals. He countered the seemingly inevitable fragmentation that was the spirit of his age with a concentration on the roots and origins of all Dasein.”⁷⁰ And in June, 1923, he finally received a letter of acceptance from the University of Marburg, where he would soon become a popular and highly recognized author and professor of philosophy, and where he spent the next years of his career. Between 1923 and 1928 at Marburg he wrote at least four major works, for which he became best known, on the essence of human nature and the truth of Being: *History of the Concept of Time* (1925), *Being and Time* (1926), *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1927), *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929) and several lesser works primarily analyzing and commenting on various texts of Plato and Aristotle, all of which were first presented as lecture courses. He subsequently returned to Freiburg where he assumed the Chair of his mentor Husserl and where he spent the rest of his university career.

69 Ibid., pp. 80-81.

70 Ibid., pp. 120-125.

It is not my intention in this study to delve into the development of Heidegger's thought during this period, from phenomenology to fundamental ontology, onto-theology, and the Event, other than to indicate the general direction that it took and the heights to which it reached, along a curve that intersects with the work of Sri Aurobindo. In 1922, Sri Aurobindo had concluded the prodigious writing with which he had been engaged for the past seven years, and for the next four years proceeded to stabilize the spiritual realization and transformation of consciousness with which he had simultaneously been engaged and which constituted the substance of his philosophy. There were many other momentous and significant intellectual achievements during this same period of time that should perhaps also be mentioned; for example, the famous debate between Bergson and Einstein on the nature of Time, and the publication by Heisenberg of his theory of quantum mechanics and indeterminism, both of which occurred in 1922. In short, a wave of inspired thought had entered the domain of human consciousness, on the crest of which many of the most inspired minds of the age were being carried to extraordinary heights.

For my purposes at this point, however, it is appropriate to resume the study of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo by turning to a chapter of *The Life Divine*, published by Sri Aurobindo in April, 1919, titled 'The Order of the Worlds,' in which he wrote extensively about the procession of the non-material planes of Being into this world of temporal manifestation. This procession had been similarly described by Proclus in 500 CE, as we have seen, in order to explain the relationship between the eternal principles, or Ideas, emanating from the One, that are the cause of this material world and its evolutionary ascent, or reversion, through the human soul back toward its origins, – the concepts of *prohodos* and *epistrophe*, procession and return, involution and evolution. In Sri Aurobindo's version of this cosmological process:

“...we find these higher worlds in our vision and experience of them to be in no way based upon the material universe, in

no way its results, but rather greater terms of being, larger and freer ranges of consciousness, and all the action of the material plane rather the result and not the origin of these greater terms, derivatory from them, and dependent on them. Immense ranges of powers, influences, phenomena descend upon us from the supramental, the mental, the vital worlds and of these only a part, a selection, as it were, can stage and realise themselves in the order of the physical world, the rest awaiting their time and proper circumstance for revelation in physical term and form, for their part in the terrestrial evolution.

This discovery defeats all our attempts to give the premier importance to our own plane of being and to our own part in the mundane manifestation. We do not create God as a myth of our consciousness, but are instruments for his progressive manifestation of the Divine in the material being. We do not create the gods, his powers, but rather such divinity as we manifest is the partial reflection and the shaping here of eternal godheads. We do not create the higher planes, but are intermediaries by which they reveal their light, power, beauty in the form and scope given to them by Nature-force on the material plane. It is the pressure of the life-world which enables life to evolve and develop here in the forms we know and to aspire in us to a greater revelation of itself which will deliver the mortal from his subjection to his present physicality. It is the pressure of the mind-world which evolves and develops mind here and in us to find a leverage for self-uplifting and expansion, so that we may hope to enlarge continually and even to escape from the prison of our physical mentality. It is the pressure of the supramental and spiritual worlds which is preparing to develop here the manifest power of the spirit and by it open the being on the physical plane, *ihaiva*, to the freedom and infinity of the superconscient Divine and liberate from the apparent Inconscience, which was our starting-point, the all-conscient

Godhead concealed in us. In this order of things our human consciousness is the instrument, the intermediary, the point in the development of light and power out of the Inconscience at which liberation becomes possible.

We see then that the primary movement must have been a devolution, a gradation downward with the inconscient for its term of arrival, and that this gradation maintains itself as a series of planes and of worlds of beings and powers which becomes again a means for reascent, for an upward gradation. In the descent the Soul carries with it into the inconscience of material Nature all the powers which have created the higher worlds and are their principle of active being; therefore once arrived, once the principle of material existence has been posed and organized on the basis of the Nescience, it cannot rest there, but must necessarily develop that which is within it; whence the principle of evolution, the evolution of life in the material universe, of mind in the material universe, of supermind and spirit in the material universe.⁷¹

The distinctions made here by Sri Aurobindo between God and the gods, between the higher immaterial planes, the life-world, the mind-world, and the supramental and spiritual worlds above, and the mortal, material and mundane worlds of our common experience in the spatio-temporal field of earth below, are indicative of the metaphysical structure that characterizes the Platonic and Neoplatonic systems of philosophy. Sri Aurobindo has emphasized the idea, in conformity with this general structure, that the higher immaterial planes are the cause of the beings and processes that unfold on the earth plane, and he has indicated that the human soul has a direct relationship with the higher planes from which it has descended that makes it possible to experience liberation through

71 Sri Aurobindo. (1917-1918). *Arya – A Philosophical Review*. Vol. IV. Modern Press. pp. 518-519. Note: the paragraphs quoted here were modified only slightly in the final version published in 1940.

mental self-uplifting and the expansion of intelligence. The process of a descent from the higher eternal principles and planes into the lower material worlds, and a return by reversion to the higher principles from which souls have descended back to their origin, as defined by Proclus in his *Elements of Theology*, has been described in a similar way by Sri Aurobindo, though with considerably less specificity than is common in the work of Proclus, and it is the essential structure of mystical theology known as “gnosticism”. In this passage from *The Life Divine*, there is, however, also not a specific statement of the problem of the immovable cause of motion that is paramount in the writing of Proclus, as we have read, although this problem is very prominent in the form of the “One Unmoving Brahman” that is a common theme of the Upanishads and one to which Sri Aurobindo often refers elsewhere. Each of these aspects of the Platonic structure can also be identified in the philosophy of Heidegger, especially in his direct commentaries on various original Greek texts, and in a more veiled way in his original contemplations on the truth of Being. The feature that is unique in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, which stands out in this selection and which we find elaborated throughout his writing, – in contrast to that of both the Neoplatonists and Heidegger, where we do not find it – is the idea of an evolutionary transformation of human life that is to be facilitated by the descent of the highest Intellect (Supermind) into the mortal sphere.

In order to establish these connections between Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics and the Neoplatonist philosophy more explicitly, and to create a ground for comparisons with the philosophy of Heidegger, I would like to focus on another passage from a work of Proclus titled *Platonic Theology*, which makes the structure of the planes of reality, as his tradition and his vision conceived them, especially clear. In Book I, section 3, of that work, subtitled 'The Nature of Theology,' he writes:

“All those, then, who have ever occupied themselves with theology... call “gods” the most primal and self-sufficient

principles of reality, and “theology” the science concerned with these. Only the divinely-inspired philosophy of Plato... asserts, as has been said, that Intellect is the father and causal principle of both bodies and souls, and that everything that exercises its life in conditions of progression and unfolding (*prohodos*) possesses its being and its actualization in dependence of Intellect. (*We should note here that the Greek word for Intellect is Nous, which is the term employed especially by Aristotle, on whose writing Proclus was dependent for his interpretations of Plato. For Aristotle, Nous is the principle of Mind, which was considered by him to be the eternal “second cause” responsible for the procession of all subsequent planes of existence.*) But, then, it advances to another first principle, completely transcending Intellect, yet more incorporeal and ineffable than it, from which all – even if you include the lowest order of things – must derive their existence. (*This, we should note, would be what Sri Aurobindo's tradition calls Sat-Chit-Ananda, and what Plato calls the Good or the One.*)

This principle that is absolutely first in the universe and superior to Intellect, Plato, divinely inspired as he was, discovered hidden in secret recesses, and, as a consequence, has presented as being superior to the corporeal realm these three causal principles or monads – namely Soul, the primal Intellect, and that Unity that is above Intellect – and he has drawn out from these the numbers of existents proper to them: that proper to the One, that proper to Intellect, and that proper to Soul (for in every case a monad is at the head of a multiplicity coordinate with it) – and even as he attaches bodies to souls, so, it would seem, he attaches souls to the Forms in Intellect, and these in turn to the henads of beings, and finally relates all things to the single imparticipable Henad (that is the One).

And when Platonic philosophy has ascended to this point, it considers that it has attained the highest limit of theoretical consideration of the universe and that this is the truth about the gods, which concerns itself with the henads of beings and details their processions and their properties, the kinds of linkage that beings have with them, and the orders of Forms that are dependent on these unitary existents. As for the area of study concerned with Intellect and the genera and species it contains, this it considers to be secondary to the science that is concerned with the gods themselves, and it considers that this seeks to attain the knowledge of Forms that are still intelligible and capable of being grasped by the soul through a direct intuition, while the science that is superior to it goes in pursuit of ineffable and unutterable realities, both so far as concern their distinction from one another and their emergence from a single cause.

From this it follows that it is the strictly intellectual function of the soul that is capable of grasping the Forms in Intellect and the distinctions between them, while it is the summit of the intellect, and, as they say, its “flower” and its mode of existence, which unites itself to the henads of beings and, by means of these, to the hidden Unity behind all the divine henads; for of the many cognitive faculties within us, this is the only one that permits us to enter naturally into relation with the divine and to participate in it. For the divine is not graspable by sense-perception, seeing as it completely transcends all body; nor yet by the faculties of opinion or discursive reasoning, for these make distinction of parts and are suited to the apprehension of multiform entities; nor yet by “thinking involving an account,” since this type of knowledge relates to the realm of true beings, whereas the essence of the gods “rides above” true beings and is defined as the very unity behind all things.”⁷²

72 Dillon, John and Gerson, Lloyd P. (2004). *Neoplatonic Philosophy*. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. pp. 288-290.

In the philosophical mythology of Plato, from which Proclus's cosmology is derived, there are a number of dualities or polarities that are unities, primordial emanations, and principles of the One, such as excess and lack (*poros* and *penia*), potential and actual, visible and invisible, life and death, big and small, stillness and motion, etc., which we may envision as gods, symbolized in some cultures perhaps as various two-headed beings like the Roman Janus, or by the image of Shiva, a cosmic dancer with a double gendered face and torso, or the *purusa-prakriti*, *Ishwara-Shakti*, two-in-one of Sankhya and Vedanta philosophy. Each of these two-fold or “biune” principles is necessary to the other, opposite pole, and at the same time present in the other. As such they are called henads, or unique multiples. And each of these henads is also in all the other henads, and necessary to all the others, like a society of unique individuals capable of expressing their perfect unity. A simple tree is a perfect embodiment of the unity of the eternal divine henads of the One, seen symbolically on the earth plane.

In Sri Aurobindo's *Record of Yoga*, he frequently narrates experiences that he has of the 'four-fold devibhava', the four supreme personalities of the Divine Mother – Truth, Power, Beauty, Harmony – as they approach, withdraw, abide, and eventually reside within the realm of his yogic awareness, separately and as one supreme Divine Mind or Supermind, which enables the lower intelligence to rise towards its full capacity for 'gnostic ideation'. And in his commentaries on the Vedas and Upanishads he writes at length about the plane of gods, or Overmind, which is the home of Surya, the Sun of Truth, Indra, the God of Illumined Mind, Vayu, the God of Life-Force, Agni, the God of Energy or Fire which is here the Soul of all material things. Mind, Life, and Matter are considered in this mythological view to be primordial emanations, immortal and universal principles, worlds and godheads of the One, above this three-fold manifestation. As such they are 'unities' or 'monads' that are like eternal rays emanating from the heart of the One to become the essence and ground of everything that transpires in space and time, creating the Forms of beings. Even our sense

faculties are called Indriyas, which is to say gods of the godhead Indra, universal deities or principles that pervade the conscious world and form the structures and functions in us known as the organs of sense. In certain commentaries he writes of these gods in much the same way as does Proclus. For example, in his commentary on the Kena Upanishad, a spiritual teaching in which we read about the gods while at the same time learning the principles of yogic transformation, Sri Aurobindo writes:

“...we have seen that there are two fundamental entities, the gods and the self, and the self in us is greater than the cosmic Powers, its God-ward destination more vital to our perfection and self-fulfilment than any transfiguration of these lesser deities. Therefore not only must the gods find their one Godhead and resolve themselves into it; that is to say, not only must the cosmic principles working in us resolve themselves into the working of the One, the Principle of all principles, so that they shall become only a unified existence and single action of That in spite of all play of differentiation, but also and with a more fundamental necessity the self in us (*also called soul or purusa in Vedic philosophy*) which supports the action of the gods must find and enter into the one Self of all individual existences, the indivisible Spirit to whom all souls are no more than dark or luminous centres of its consciousness.

This the self of man, since it is the essentiality of a mental being, will do through the mind. In the gods the transfiguration is effected by the Superconscient itself visiting their substance and opening their vision with its flashes until it has transformed them; but the mind is capable of another action which is only apparently movement of mind, but really the movement of the self towards its own reality. The mind seems to go to That, to attain to it; it is lifted out of itself into something beyond and, although it falls back, still by the mind the will of knowledge in the mental thought continually

and at last continuously remembers that into which it has entered. On this the Self through the mind seizes and repeatedly dwells and so doing it is finally caught up into it and at last able to dwell securely in that transcendence. It transcends the mind, it transcends its own mental individualisation of the being, that which it now knows as itself; it ascends and takes foundation in the Self of all and in the status of self-joyous infinity which is the supreme manifestation of the Self. This is the transcendent immortality, this is the spiritual existence which the Upanishads declare to be the goal of man and by which we pass out of the mortal state into the heaven of the Spirit.”⁷³

We may observe here the striking similarity between Sri Aurobindo's description of the reunion of the Self with its divine Origin, at the top of its evolutionary ascent, and the description of Proclus of the “flower of the intellect” which rises above the levels of intellect to reunite with the divine henads and through them to their divine Origin.

In 1937-38, it seems to me that Heidegger looked back over his foundational writings of the 20s, gathered the insights gained during the intervening years, and reformulated everything that he had understood from the point of view of the history of philosophy and his own experience, in 400 pages of profound contemplations on the nature of the human being and Truth. Similarly, in 1939-40, Sri Aurobindo seems to have gathered the essential insights and inspirations of his foundational writings and reformulated them in 12 new chapters, approximately 500 pages, of revelatory and prophetic text added to *The Life Divine*. I will end this installment with selections from each of these writings that I hope will convey both the poignant concern for humanity that motivated these two extraordinary thinkers, as well as the intuitional vision of radical change and future possibility that they seemed to share at this

73 Sri Aurobindo. (2001). *Kena and Other Upanishads*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press. pp. 87-88.

moment in the arc of their development, consisting in the realization of a higher principle of consciousness.

In Section IV, titled 'The Leap,' in his book *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, Heidegger writes:

“123. Beyng

Let us venture the immediate utterance:

Beyng is the trembling of divinization (the trembling of the resonance that announces the decision of the gods about their god).

This trembling expands the temporal-spatial playing field in which the trembling itself comes into the open as refusal. In this way beyng “is” the appropriating event of the ap-pro-priation of the “there” of that open realm in which it itself trembles.

Beyng must be thought out to this extremity. It thereby illuminates itself as the most finite and richest, the *most abyssal* of its own intimacy. For beyng is never a determination of the god as god; rather, beyng is that which the divinization of the god needs so as to remain nevertheless completely distinct from it. Neither is beyng (as is the beingness of metaphysics) the highest and purest determination of the θεῖον and *Deus* and of the “absolute,” nor is it (as pertains to this interpretation) the most general and most vacuous roof covering everything of which it is not the case that it “is” not.

Yet, as refusal, beyng is not mere withholding and seclusion; on the contrary, refusal is the intimacy of an allocation. What is allocated in the trembling is the clearing of the abyssal “there.” The “there” is allocated as something to be grounded, as Da-sein. (*We might add that this is another indication*

that Da-sein is in fact the open of the Self, as witness, or Purusa.)

Thus through the truth of beyng (for that is what this allocated clearing is) the human being is claimed originally and otherwise. Through this claim of beyng itself, the human being is appointed as the steward of the truth of beyng (being human as “care,” grounded in Da-sein).

Refusal is the most intimate compelling of the most originary and ever-inceptual plight, a compelling into the necessity of defense against the plight. (*For Heidegger, our plight lies in our lack of awareness or ignorance of our abandonment by the truth of beyng.*)

The essential defense is not supposed to ward off the plight so as to get rid of it. In resisting it, the defense must instead precisely preserve the plight and extend it into its being carried out in accord with the diffusion of the trembling.

Therefore, beyng as the allocating refusal is the ap-propriation of Da-sein.

Yet this ap-propriation tends toward what is proper to itself through a trembling of divinization, and this divinization needs the temporal-spatial playing field for its own decision.

The stewardship of the human being, however, is the ground of another history. For this stewardship is not carried out merely by keeping one's eye on objectively present things. It is instead a stewardship that grounds. It must institute and shelter the truth of beyng in “beings” themselves, which thereby once more – by entering into beyng and its strangeness – develop the captivating simplicity of their essence, pass over all machination, and withdraw from lived experience so as to

establish another dominance, i.e., domain, which the last god has self-appropriated.

Only through great breakdowns and upheavals of beings do the beings which have been constrained into machination and lived experience and have already congealed into nonbeings come to give way before beyng and thereby enter its truth.

Every weak mediation and vindication traps beings still more in the abandonment by being and turns the forgottenness of being into the one and only form of truth, namely, the form of the untruth of beyng.

How is even the smallest space supposed to be acquired here for the presentiment that *refusal is the first and highest gift of beyng, indeed its primordially essential occurrence itself?* Refusal eventuates as the withdrawal that incorporates into the stillness in which truth, in accord with its essence, comes anew to the decision as to whether it can be grounded as the clearing for self-concealment. This self-concealment is the unconcealment of the refusal; it is the allowance to belong in the strangeness of another beginning.”⁷⁴

As I have said before, to read Heidegger in the light of Sri Aurobindo, and vice-versa, may be to allow what would otherwise perhaps go unseen in both to become clear. In his last revision and expansion of *The Life Divine*, in the chapter titled 'Towards the Sevenfold Knowledge', which was written at about the same time as the previous passage quoted from Heidegger, we read:

“...To reach an integral self-knowledge, an entire consciousness and power of being, there is necessary an ascent beyond the plane of our normal mind. Such an ascent is at present possible in an absorbed superconscience; but that

74 Heidegger, Martin. (1989/2012). *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*. Indiana University Press. pp. 188-190.

could lead only to an entry into the higher levels in a state of immobile or ecstatic trance. If the control of that highest spiritual being is to be brought into our waking life, there must be a conscious heightening and widening into immense ranges of new being, new consciousness, new potentialities of action, a taking up – as integral as possible – of our present being, consciousness, activities and a transmutation of them into divine values which would effect a transfiguration of our human existence. For wherever a radical transition has to be made, there is always this triple movement – ascent, widening of field and base, integration – in Nature's method of self-transcendence.

Any such evolutionary change must necessarily be associated with a rejection of our present narrowing temporal ignorance. For not only do we now live from moment to moment of time, but our whole view is limited to our life in the present body between a single birth and death. As our regard does not go farther back in the past, so it does not extend farther out into the future; thus we are limited by our physical memory and awareness of the present life in a transient corporeal formation. But this limitation of our temporal consciousness is intimately dependent upon the preoccupation of our mentality with the material plane and life in which it is at present acting; the limitation is not a law of the spirit but a temporary provision for an intended first working of our manifested nature. If the preoccupation is relaxed or put aside, an extension of the mind effected, an opening into the subliminal and superconscious, into the inner and higher being created, it is possible to realise our persistent existence in time as well as our eternal existence beyond it. This is essential if we are to get our self-knowledge into the right focus; for at present our whole consciousness and action are vitiated by an error of spiritual perspective which prevents us from seeing in right proportion and relation the nature, purpose and conditions of our being. A belief in immortality

is made so vital a point in most religions because it is a self-evident necessity if we are to rise above the identity with the body and its preoccupation with the material level. But a belief is not sufficient to alter radically this mistake of perspective: the true self-knowledge of our being in time can come to us only when we live in the consciousness of our immortality; we have to awaken to a concrete sense of our perpetual being in Time and of our timeless existence.

For immortality in its fundamental sense does not mean merely some kind of personal survival of the bodily death; we are immortal by the eternity of our self-existence without beginning or end, beyond the whole succession of physical births and deaths through which we pass, beyond the alternations of our existence in this and other worlds: the spirit's timeless existence is the true immortality. There is, no doubt, a secondary meaning of the word which has its truth; for, corollary to this true immortality, there exists a perpetual continuity of our temporal existence and experience from life to life, from world to world after the dissolution of the physical body: but this is a natural consequence of our timelessness which expresses itself here as a perpetuity in eternal Time. The realisation of timeless immortality comes by the knowledge of self in the Non-birth and Non-becoming and of the changeless spirit within us: the realisation of time-immortality comes by the knowledge of self in the Birth and Becoming and is translated into a sense of the persistent identity of the soul through all changes of mind and life and body; this too is not a mere survival, it is timelessness translated into the Time manifestation. By the first realisation we become free from obscuring subjection to the chain of birth and death, that supreme object of so many Indian disciplines; by the second realisation added to the first we are able to possess freely, with right knowledge, without ignorance, without bondage by the chain of our actions, the experiences of the spirit in its successions of time-eternity. A realisation

of timeless existence by itself might not include the truth of that experience of persistent self in eternal Time; a realisation of survival of death by itself might still give room for a beginning or end to our existence. But, in either realisation truly envisaged as side and other side of one truth, to exist consciously in eternity and not in the bondage of the hour and the succession of the moments is the substance of the change: so to exist is a first condition of the divine consciousness and the divine life. To possess and govern from that inner eternity of being the course and process of the becoming is the second, the dynamic condition with, as its practical outcome, a spiritual self-possession and self-mastery. These changes are possible only by a withdrawal from our absorbing material preoccupation, – that does not necessitate a rejection or neglect of the life in the body, – and a constant living on the inner and higher planes of the mind and the spirit. For the heightening of our consciousness into its spiritual principle is effectuated by an ascent and a stepping back inward – both these movements are essential – out of our transient life from moment to moment into the eternal life of our immortal consciousness; but with it there comes also a widening of our range of consciousness and field of action in time and a taking up and a higher use of our mental, our vital, our corporeal existence. There arises a knowledge of our being, no longer as a consciousness dependent on the body, but as an eternal spirit which uses all the worlds and all lives for various self-experience; we see it to be a spiritual entity possessed of a continuous soul-life perpetually developing its activities through successive physical existences, a being determining its own becoming. In that knowledge, not ideative but felt in our very substance, it becomes possible to live, not as slaves of a blind Karmic impulsion, but as masters – subject only to the Divine within us – of our being and nature.

At the same time we get rid of the egoistic ignorance; for so long as we are at any point bound by that, the divine life must

either be unattainable or imperfect in its self-expression. For the ego is a falsification of our true individuality by a limiting self-identification of it with this life, this mind, this body: it is a separation from other souls which shuts us up in our own individual experience and prevents us from living as the universal individual: it is a separation from God, our highest Self, who is the one Self in all existences and the divine Inhabitant within us.”⁷⁵

In future installments I propose to look into Heidegger's subsequent and very substantial writings, such as those on Hölderlin and Nietzsche, 1940-1950, and his last writings on 'The End of Philosophy' and 'On Time and Being,' and to review Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, major portions of which were composed by him during the same time frame. In each of the sources of their philosophical visions we will discover the over-riding preoccupation with time and its transcendence.

75 Sri Aurobindo. (2006). *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press. pp. 765-768.

8

The Metaphysical Foundations (3) – Heidegger’s Platonism

It will undoubtedly be apparent to anyone reading this comparative study of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo that both authors were visionaries whose understanding of human existence was radically different from the way most of us normally see and think about things. The two sections of their writings that were quoted at the end of the previous installment may therefore have seemed virtually incomprehensible to anyone who has not read these authors carefully, and read as well other texts of a similarly esoteric nature, in order to have developed a framework that prepares the mind to think about such things as “divinization of the gods” and “consciousness of our immortality.” In the text of Heidegger quoted above, a recurrent theme was a state of mind that he referred to as “refusal,” which seems to correspond to what Sri Aurobindo described in his text quoted above, as “a rejection of our present narrowing temporal ignorance.” I presume that those who have prepared themselves through reading and contemplating philosophical ideas expressed in texts such as these will make the same associations that I have made, and will have inferred the parallel meanings, while others may perhaps be quite mystified at this point. It is my hope, however, that both categories of reader will be motivated by these texts, and the comparative proximity in which they are presented here, to question – for what these authors were presenting at the point in their careers when these texts were written is certainly beyond the scope of most people’s typical concerns and understanding and must be questioned with depth and persistence if one is to grasp their meaning. Moreover, this subject matter is precisely about the need, perceived and expressed by these authors, to exceed such common concerns, and the need for a high level of discipline and determination in order to accomplish such an “excess” of awareness, if I may use the term in this way. In fact, the exceeding of our normal range of awareness and intention,

through the practice of “refusal” or “rejection” with respect to our ordinary ways of conceiving and valuing our lives, and the elevation of our consciousness entirely above and beyond our ordinary perceptions of time and space, cause and effect, which normally condition our thoughts and actions, into a kind of eternity and immortality, is precisely what these authors have in mind that we should do. And to understand them fully, we must be prepared at least to question – not only the ideas expressed in these texts, but their meaning to us and for our lives.

In fact, Heidegger has gone to great lengths to define and explain his rather cryptic meditations in the *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, and the choice he made not to publish the book during his lifetime may be an indication of the challenge he knew would be faced by anyone who endeavors to understand them. Therefore, he subsequently proceeded to offer a large compendium of courses and writings in which these foundational insights and ideas were “concealed” in a manner that perhaps made them less baffling. I would, therefore, like to delve somewhat more deeply into the latter aspect of his work in order to reveal what I have called the 'fundamental metaphysical structure' which I believe is common to the philosophy of both Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo, and then to pursue it in its more veiled form in Heidegger's meditations.

Among the courses and texts that followed immediately upon the contemplations expounded in the 'Contributions...' were several studies of the poet Hölderlin, whose otherworldly poetry brought echoes of the Greek gods down from the mystic peaks in streams of inspired speech, symbolized by the rivers Ister and Rhine, which became the voices of revelation heard and conveyed by the poet. This poetic speech, heard in turn by the philosopher Heidegger, perhaps provided the grounding he needed to express the more profound sense of “plight,” “homelessness,” and “refusal,” that lead into the open region of intuition and a new beginning, above the metaphysical mind of which he and Hölderlin were both natural

exponents. A few of the lines from commentaries on these poems indicate the connection that Hölderlin felt with the gods above, and also the desperate need for releasement toward things, which became the focus of Heidegger's later writing. From Heidegger's commentary on 'The Ister' (1942)⁷⁶ we read these lines of Hölderlin:

Because never rules He (the Father) alone
 And does not know all
 Always something stands
 Between humans and him
 And staircase-like climbs
 The Heavenly One down (from 'The One')

And then the lines that convey the “refusal” that calls the heavenly down:

Yet of their own
 Immortality the gods have enough, and if one thing
 The heavenly require,
 Then it is heroes and humans
 And mortals otherwise. For since
 The most blessed feel nothing themselves,
 There must possibly, if to say such
 Is allowed, in the names of the gods
 Another be who feels with empathy,
 Him they need, yet their ordinance
 Is that he must his own house
 Shatter and his most beloved
 Chide like the enemy and father and child
 Bury beneath the ruins,
 He who wants to be like them and,
 Like a dreamer, not tolerate the unequal. (from 'The Rhine')

76 Martin Heidegger. 1942. *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, Indiana University Press, 1996.

In this commentary, Heidegger then pursues the theme of the first line of the long poem titled “The Ister” – “Now come, Fire!” as follows:

“This German poet must learn to say “fire” in order then to experience what the word of his poetry must be. ... Hölderlin names it “the holy”. The poetic naming of what is originally to be poetized, and is therefore the poetic, properly occurs in Hölderlin's hymnal poetry. This is why the essence of poetizing is simultaneously poetized in this poetry. ... this hymnal poetry is in an essential respect river poetry. The spirit of the river is the poetic spirit that experiences the journeying of being “unhomely” and “thinks of” the locality of becoming homely. As river, that is, as the journeying, the river can never forget the source, because in flowing, that is, in issuing from the source, it itself constantly is the source and remains the locality of its own essence. What is to be said in this hymnal poetry is the holy, which, beyond the gods, determines the gods themselves and simultaneously, as the “poetic” that is to be poetized, brings the dwelling of historical human beings into its essence” (*Section 23 and 25*).

As I mentioned above, the gnostic structure is more apparent in Heidegger's commentaries on Platonic and other Greek texts than it is in his more personal meditations. I would therefore like to begin this more philosophical exploration with the book titled *The Essence of Truth* (original lecture transcript 1931-32),⁷⁷ the main ideas and themes of which were closely followed up in his *Contributions* (1938), and it was published posthumously at about the same time, 1988 and 1989 respectively. In this more rigorously systematic earlier work, Heidegger presents translations and commentaries on two dialogues of Plato, *Politeia* (*The Republic*), and *Theaetetus*.

In the former, Heidegger analyzes Plato's famous “Allegory of the Cave” as a background for examining Plato's philosophy of ‘the Good,’

77 Martin Heidegger. 2002. *The Essence of Truth*. Continuum Books.

which became the basic foundation of most subsequent Western philosophy and metaphysics. In the allegory, Plato describes a situation in which a collection of human beings has been confined in a cave and shackled for their entire lives in such a way that they can only look in one direction, and all they can see there is a play of shadows on the wall of the cave in front of them, cast by the light of a fire that burns behind the shackled viewers and behind the puppets whose movements create shadows on the wall. Since the shadows are the only things the viewers can see, they believe them to be real things. Plato clearly wants us to associate this image with our own tendency to take for reality the illusions in which we commonly believe. One of the prisoners manages to get free and discovers that the shadows are illusory. Moreover, he discovers that there is a brighter light at the top of the tunnel leading out of the cave. After suffering considerable bewilderment, and making serious attempts to overcome his disbelief and fear caused by the new vision, he finally manages, with great effort (*mogis horasthai: my transliteration of the Greek term for 'great effort' into English script, which I will do throughout*) to move upward toward the cave's entrance, and ultimately he breaks out into the blinding sunlight, having realized gradually and with great difficulty how deluded he and his fellow prisoners had been. When his vision has adjusted to the sunlight and he has come to terms with the reality of the situation, he feels compelled to descend back into the darkness of the cave to inform his fellow prisoners about the unreality of the shadows they see, to liberate them from their shackles, and to lead them up into the light of day and knowledge of the truth.

Early in his translation of the allegory, Heidegger comments that Plato himself has explained it:

“The cave, he says, is the earth under the heavenly dome... The fire in the cave is the sun, the light of the fire is the sunlight. The shadows are beings, the things we see under the sky and with which we commonly have dealings. We, the

prisoners, are bound to self-evidence, and to people who are guided by this. What is outside the cave, over and above this, is the place of the ideas, a *hyperouranios topos* over the vault of the heavens (above the vault of the cave). And the sun that shines outside the cave symbolizes the highest idea, the *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* (idea tou agathou), which one hardly dares to view directly: *μόγισ ὀράσθαι* (mogis horasthai).⁷⁸

After a lengthy discussion of some of the main, and truly important, ideas, such as the relationship of seeing to light, and of truth to freedom, from the four sections into which he has divided the allegory, Heidegger launches his discussion of truth as *aletheia*, or unhiddenness (about which we have already learned a great deal from his *Parmenides* in the second installment), in relation to Plato's 'Idea of the Good', which is the central theme of this book. Heidegger begins the second chapter, titled 'The Idea of the Good and Unhiddenness,' with the question:

“How did we encounter anything like ideas? It was by asking how Plato wants us to understand the region outside and above the cave.” We might remember from reading Proclus, who also commented at length on Plato's dialogues, what he had to say about the “region of ideas” into which the “flower of the intellect” might rise on its way to the highest Good. In this rendering by Heidegger we will perhaps gather a truer sense of the meaning of such an ascent. He continues; “Plato speaks of a *τόπος νοητός* (*topos noetos*). *Νοῦς* is the faculty of non-sensory seeing and perceiving, of understanding things as *what they are*, their essence (what-being), the *being* of things. *τά νοητά* (*ta noeta*), the perceivable in *νοεῖν* (*noein*), the perceived in non-sensory seeing, the look, the given-as... are, as we know, the *ἰδέαι* (ideas). Plato says: 'In the region of that which is genuinely and truly knowledge, what is ultimately seen is the idea of the good, but it can be seen only with great difficulty, under great exertion.'⁷⁹

78 Ibid. p. 33.

79 Ibid. p. 69.

Again, recalling Proclus and the general understanding that our civilization has imparted to us through its system of education, (which we will understand better if we have read Aristotle), what we know about things that we perceive is assigned a conventional name, like 'butterfly,' for example, which is the name of a type, or general category, of insect, which is a category of animal. Our faculties of perception and ideation tell us how and in what way one butterfly is the same as or different from another butterfly, and how a butterfly is the same as or different from a bee. We see and recognize in these differences and similarities types or categories, the "species," of things, which are non-sensory perceptions. These categories are known in ancient Greek philosophy as *κοινά* (koina) or what things have in common. We might call them genera, or categories, or types, but in any case we also group similar types into higher *unities*, such as 'kingdoms' in biology, 'galaxies' in astronomy, the heads of religion or state, President, King, Pope or Dalai Lama in theocracies, and even higher and more universal abstractions such as time and space, memory and consciousness, based on our sensory perceptions and understanding of things. How it is that we naturally distinguish these various hierarchies and levels of existence by our faculties of perception and discriminative judgment is a common question asked in the practice of "philosophy." The point that Heidegger, and Plato, are making, in order to remind us of the reality, is that we are able to do this, first, because these similarities and differences actually exist, and they present themselves to our senses and judgments. We know them because such *ideas* are realities; they are *there*, as Heidegger will say, again and again. Proclus and the Neoplatonists went further and said that the highest unities are also *causes* of the lower ranks of their hierarchies; they are universal principles, or gods, which create a proliferation of forms that can ultimately reveal their origins to a sufficiently aware mind. The fundamental questions toward which Heidegger always moves in his detailed exploration of the history of metaphysics, therefore, are How does the human mind with its limited physical senses and its intellect actually perceive, or know, these hierarchies and unities?, and How have

different schools of philosophy at various times and places answered this question? We would call this the question of “consciousness.”

For Plato, the highest idea, the Idea of the Good, is the cause of both the being of things in general and the mind's ability to know things as such. Heidegger says in his commentary on Plato's 'idea of the good' in *The Essence of Truth*: “Plato says that a being is only accessible as such when it stands in *ἀλήθεια* (aletheia). In a way that is self-evident for a Greek, he quite unambiguously understands *ἀλήθεια* 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, 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 (the good as the highest idea).' It is clear, therefore, that the good is *δύναμις* (dunamis, power, ability) and thus still has the character of idea (of enablement, empowerment), indeed has this in the highest degree: being and unhiddenness are under its empowering power. But in this empowering the good surpasses both, namely in so far as beings are *seen*, i.e. known, and also in so far as they are *beings*. ... The good, the *ἀγαθόν* (agathon), is therefore the enablement of being as such and of unhiddenness as such. Or better, what Plato calls the good is that which empowers being and unhiddenness to their own essence, i.e., what is prior to everything else, that upon which everything *depends*. The *ἀγαθόν* can only be understood in this sense. *Empowerment* of being, not an existing 'good' (a value), but what is *prior to* and *for* all being and every truth.”⁸⁰

Perhaps we can infer from these clarifications and interpretations based on the original text of Plato, how it was possible for Proclus to derive the hierarchic system of immaterial and eternal causes that proceed in a systematic manner, or *procession*, from the One down through the planes of ideas, intellects, forms, souls to even-

80 Ibid. p. 78-79.

tually energize the spatio-temporal world of body, life, and mind. It is the sameness-difference of things and the ideas they embody that constitute the principle of 'ontological difference' for which Heidegger's earlier phenomenology is best known. Ideas are the essences of things, present in an invisible way in the things that we experience. As such, they are also thought to be the causes of those things, because they are unchanging while things themselves are constantly in flux. And we may also remember the definitions and applications of the specific Greek terms *dunamis* and *processus* used by Sri Aurobindo in the same way in *The Life Divine* as they were used by Plato.

A further direct association that can be made between Heidegger's and Proclus's interpretations of Plato can be found in the second part of *The Essence of Truth*, which is dedicated to Plato's dialogue titled *Theaetetus*. This dialogue is concerned specifically with the nature of the soul and its role in the perception of truth. The soul, as defined by Plato, is the medium through which the One imparts being and truth, or knowability, to things, and it is the basis of the relationship between knowing and the known. Heidegger writes: "Perception of the excess (*this term refers to the fact that we perceive more than what is given to our senses*) is treated in the context of being, non-being, being-different, difference. These have already received the character of κοινά. In what way are they common? E.g., being: we perceive colour and sound as existing. We perceive *their* being, i.e., in perceiving being we perceive something that is common to both (i.e., being present). This singularity, being, which they have in common does not contain anything of colour and sound, neither anything of smell. Being different is likewise a κοινόν. To be sure, difference separates one from the other (colour from sound)! It is therefore definitely not something they have in common! So it appears. Colour and sound are different only in so far as they can be distinguished. They can be distinguished from each other only in so far as they are held up together and compared. They come together in comparison, albeit only to emerge as different: this means that *each* is different, that difference pertains

to both, that they agree in being-different: a singularity, and indeed such that 'both are extended therein', and must be so extended, in order that they can be different. So we see that this κοινά, this totality belonging to the excess (of perception), shows us what is perceived in this one region of perceivability, into which colour, sound, etc. show themselves in their diversity. Therefore the κοινά (common features) have precisely the character referred to earlier, namely that it is the soul which relates to them: a singularity, an extending of one to the other. ...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 τὰ κοινά. Plato says: αὐτὴ δὲ αὐτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ (aute di autēs he psuche), the soul perceives everything of this kind through itself."⁸¹

Thus the first part of Heidegger's exploration of *The Essence of Truth* is a careful reading of Plato's explanation of the causes of knowledge. Things that are perceived through the senses have the qualities that they have and that distinguish them from other things, such as colour, sound, mass, shape, activity, vitality, strength or weakness, youth or age, by virtue of the Good (also known to the early Greeks as the One) which bestows on things, or causes, their natures, which makes them what they are. The faculty which perceives this excess of sameness and difference, being and not-being, presence and absence, which are beyond what the senses can perceive physically, and yet which are common characteristics of things that exist, is the soul. From the philosophy of Plato, and from the philosophy of Neoplatonism which carried these ideas forward and passed them on to Christianity and eventually to modern philosophy, the invisible essence of things known as ideas became ideas known by the mind as representations of objects. But for Plato they were the higher cause of the nature of things known, just as the sun is the cause of living things; they are truths revealed and seen in the light of the sun of truth, or the idea of the Good, just as

81 Ibid. p. 141-142.

the colors and shapes of things are generated ultimately by the energy and light of the sun on earth.

In the second part of *The Essence of Truth*, Heidegger explores another foundational metaphysical idea based on a close reading of Plato's text, which seems to have been a major influence on his thought, and which was also an important central idea in Neoplatonism: the idea of *έρως* (eros). In the Neoplatonic mythos, the One bestows on all things their essential nature through the procession of love down through the planes by its divine providence, and the god Eros is providentially missioned by the goddess Aphrodite onto the plane of mortals to guide the human soul in its reversion back towards its divine origin, inspired by the love of truth. Toward the end of his commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*, Heidegger draws out this reference to *έρως* (eros), "love," in Plato's description and explanation of how human beings obtain knowledge, which he refers to now as 'the soul's striving for being.' (I think we might want to think of this "striving" as reaching toward or aspiring for knowledge and understanding of reality.) Heidegger writes: "Whatever we imagine, perceive, think, posit, already has the character of a being. ...This curious, comprehensive intrusion of being, over and into all regions of the given and perceivable, distinguishes it precisely as what belongs to the perceivable 'first of all' (*πρώτον*, *proton*), as there, present, as what presences whenever beings show themselves (not just when we *apprehend* them!) ...The question must now be answered as to whether being is perceived through a bodily organ or through an organ-free comportment, immediately by the soul itself. *Theaetetus* answers: 'In my view, οὐσία (being) belongs to what the soul, through and by itself, strives for.' We thus have a fundamental characteristic of the soul's relationship to being. ...After our earlier considerations, the thesis must run as follows: striving for being co-constitutes the relationship of perceiving to what is perceived."⁸²

82 Ibid. p. 146-147.

There follows an interesting and substantive discussion of the difference between striving for “being” and striving for “having.” I will not follow this argument in detail. But readers of those German philosophers who had been students of Heidegger, and who were later of the Frankfurt School and the New School of Social Research, such as Herbert Marcuse, Hannah Arendt, Hans Jonas, and Erich Fromm, will recognize this theme. One aspect of the discussion that should be mentioned, however, is the distinction that brings into focus the familiar Heideggerian term “authenticity.” Inauthentic striving, he says, is such “as we meet in every kind of greed that takes hold of us... Such striving is all the more ensnaring for its appearance of activity, vitality, and diversity. ...On the contrary, one can think of a striving wherein the object is held fast as such, but also held fast to oneself so that one finds oneself in this holding fast to the object ...in the sense of the soul's essence, which is essentially a relationship.” And he goes on, “Plato says nothing else but that being belongs to that which stands in authentic striving. ...The understanding of being as striving for being, *έρως* (eros), is not only the most authentic striving by which the Dasein of man is carried, but, as this latter, it is simultaneously authentic having. ...Thereby, i.e., in such authentic striving, man *holds himself* as an existing being in the midst of beings; man *has* the beings, and in these beings has himself, in the way he as man *can* have anything at all.”⁸³

The next, and perhaps most important, aspect of Plato's theory of knowledge to be examined by Heidegger is the soul's primordial attunement to the being of beings. He begins the section with questions asked by Socrates and the responses from Theaetetus:

“Socrates: Aren't being-similar and being-dissimilar, being-the same and being-different contained in authentic striving? Theaetetus: Yes. Socrates: And what about being-beautiful and being-ugly, being-good and being-bad? Theaetetus: The soul also

83 Ibid. p. 154-155.

appears to view the being of these, especially in their relations to one another, reckoning, within and for itself, upon the past and present in relation to the future.” And Heidegger comments, “Everything we encounter shows itself to us in these characters of being: everything whatsoever, whether coloured or audible, heavy or light, round or square, late or early, whether a natural thing or an historical event, whether living or dead, natural or artificial, whether man or god. ...To be something is to be the same as itself. As the same as itself, it is being different to every other self-same thing, likewise being-similar, being-dissimilar, and being-countable. To be sure, these characters of being pertain to all beings, whether possible or actual, but they still do not exhaust what beings are to us, i.e., what is brought together under the usual headings of God, world, and man. ...Something can strike us as delightful only in so far as our *Dasein* (essential nature) is already attuned to the delightfulness/non-delightfulness of what is present. Delightfulness and non-delightfulness, taken in the broad sense, thus belong to the region of perceivability that surrounds us, i.e., in the sphere of our striving, just like sameness, difference, etc. What the Greeks call *agathon* and *kakon*, good and bad, belong in this same region, provided that these words are understood in the broadest sense.”⁸⁴

Thus, he comes to an answer, regarding the question asked at the beginning, as to the relationship between the soul and the excess that it perceives in beings. Without going into the details of this extensive discussion, the solution to the problem is based on the perception of the qualities, beings, and ideas that lie entirely beyond the realm of the senses, such as the idea of the good, and the idea of the beautiful, about which we have just heard. Heidegger arrives at this result, through his analysis of Plato's dialogue: “It consists in the revision of the relationship between what is perceived through the senses and what we initially grasped as the 'excess'. We can perceive specific things as coloured, audible, etc., only on the basis of the striving for being. Only because the soul

84 Ibid. p. 158-159.

strives is it able, in the light of what is striven for, to have this or that before itself as given, i.e., to perceive it, to take it as true. All having-before-oneself and having in general, is grounded in a striving for being. ...Being in the unity of all its features is thus quite inadequately characterized if, as hitherto, we grasp it simply as the 'excess' over and above what is sensed and perceived. Why does Socrates describe this as excess? We encounter being, being different, etc., only if we *begin* our enquiry with colour, sound, etc., and *then* establish that therein something more is perceived. Thus, in the order of the enquiry, we can say that this excess is an addition to what is sensed. However, what we subsequently find here is in its nature and essence not 'more' in the sense of *addition*, but on the contrary it is the *pregiven* (however not apprehended and interrogated as such). More precisely, in so far as it is not given in the looking, it is held up in advance (*a priori*) for us in striving perceiving, as what must already be understood in order that something sensory can be perceived as a being, indeed as nothing else but that which co-constitutes the region of possible perceivability."⁸⁵ It is this Platonic idea of a kind of unified field of being and knowing that has constituted the basis of Heidegger's concept of the human being's 'comportment' toward things, from the beginning of his philosophical journey in *Being and Time*.

I have taken us through this very lengthy pursuit of Plato's theory of knowledge in Heidegger's book, very briefly, so that we have a possibility of thinking about, and perhaps seriously questioning, the processes of our consciousness that we take for granted, and which have been explained to us, if at all, in terms of behavioral conditioning and constructivism – the 'scientific' theories of how our minds have been taught, through exposure to experience and language, that everything we know is as it has been explained in our textbooks. It is against this background of the preconceived conventional understanding of today that Heidegger will undertake a thorough critique of the decline of the pre-Socratic and Platonic

85 Ibid. p. 155-156.

thought of the Greeks, during the past 2,500 years of Western civilization, in his book titled *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*. Instead of recognizing and recapitulating the remarkable event of Platonism, and its transmission through the hypercosmic theories of divine procession in Neoplatonism, he seems to have used the model of procession to map the descent of the 'highest Idea' through the human mind from Christianity and rationalism, to the modernism of Descartes, Kant, and Hegel, to Nietzsche and Positivism. In this work, and thereafter, he has concentrated on two specific narratives: he has persistently reiterated a theory of the descent and decline of the Idea, through many levels of metaphysical thought, down to its present atomization in the forms of scientific materialism, technology, and consumerism; and he has defined the necessity of a process of reversion and ascent, through decision and refusal, back to the original Idea of the Good, and beyond it, to the discovery of the true identity of the human Da-sein in the 'open' of the truth of Being.

9

The Metaphysical Foundations (4) – Sri Aurobindo's Platonism

The theory of knowledge stated by Heidegger, based on his translation and interpretation of Plato's writings, provides clear and explicit evidence of the basic metaphysical structure that we find underlying the philosophy of both Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo. As we have seen in the previous installment of this study (*Human Consciousness and Truth* (8) – Heidegger's Platonism), the knowledge of general truths that our consciousness perceives, such as the sameness and difference that characterize members of the same species of plant or animal, and the sameness and difference that characterize the relationship of one species to another, is not knowledge that is given in sense perception. It is known by processes of cognition and ideation that yet seem to somehow extract such characteristics from the things that are perceived by the senses. Moreover, in addition to characteristics perceived in things immediately by the senses, we perceive the presence or absence of intangible characteristics such as beauty and goodness, and relationships such as proportionality and mutuality, which are not qualities perceived by our five physical senses and yet are vividly present to our awareness of things. We think of such characteristics as products of the activity of our mind's cognition, which are known as “ideas” according to the definitions of psychology and philosophy, especially since the 18th century, but dating back to the ancient Greeks and to Plato in particular. They are products of a seeing, Greek *idein*, of things that are not actually visible but are known to exist in things in an essential way. They are not simply products of a mental process, any more than size and shape are products of a visual process. They are actual realities. Plato identified such aspects of the knowable nature of things as “ideas,” such as the idea of the good, *idea tou agathou*, which empowers things to be what they are, and also to be knowable as such. In Neoplatonism

and Vedanta they may also be named gods or principles. These essential realities, manifested in things, are known because they are the innate truths of consciousness and being.

As we have seen in Heidegger's rendering of the theory, in the texts and commentaries we have reviewed here, but also present in a pervasive way in Heidegger's philosophy as a whole, the Being of things is what they are, and the Truth of things is what we know when our consciousness is sufficiently attuned to that "region of perceivability" which is also the region of Truth; it is this unity of Being as a whole which is the underlying truth of existence. The meeting point in the philosophy of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo can be seen in the efforts of both to define what Sri Aurobindo terms Truth-Consciousness and what Heidegger terms *Being*. Knowledge is possible because the being of things is pre-given, or innate, in the soul of the human being. In the metaphysical writings of Sri Aurobindo, especially from the period that is highlighted in this study, ca. 1940, at the time when he added several hundred pages to his major work titled *The Life Divine*, we find an elaborate reformulation of this Platonic theory of knowledge, and of innate ideas, not with reference to any school of philosophy but as a revelation of his own comprehensive understanding of the nature of Being and Consciousness. For example, in a chapter titled 'Knowledge by Identity and Separative Knowledge,' when speaking of an intuitive, subtle or subliminal cognition, he writes:

"Its main character is a knowledge by the direct contact of consciousness with its object or of consciousness with other consciousness; but in the end we discover that this power is an outcome of a secret knowledge by identity, a translation of it into a separative awareness of things. For as in the indirect contact proper to our normal consciousness and surface cognition it is the meeting or friction of the living being with the existence outside it that awakens the spark of conscious knowledge, so here it is some contact that sets in action a pre-existent secret knowledge and brings it to the surface. For

consciousness is one in the subject and the object, and in the contact of existence with existence this identity brings to light or awakens in the self the dormant knowledge of this other self outside it. But while this pre-existent knowledge comes up in the surface mind as a knowledge acquired, it arises in the subliminal as a thing seen, caught from within, remembered as it were, or, when it is fully intuitive, self-evident to the inner awareness; or it is taken in from the object contacted but with an immediate response as to something intimately recognisable.”⁸⁶

In his further elaboration of this structure of knowledge, Sri Aurobindo contrasts the principle of an original inner identity of the knower and the known with the outer mechanism of sensation, perception, and ideation in a way that is very similar to that in which the process has been described by Heidegger, based on the writing of Plato. Sri Aurobindo continues the paragraph quoted above with this:

“In the surface consciousness knowledge represents itself as a truth seen from outside, thrown on us from the object, or as a response to its touch on the sense, a perceptive reproduction of its objective actuality. Our surface mind is obliged to give to itself this account of its knowledge, because the wall between itself and the outside world is pierced by the gates of sense and it can catch through these gates the surface of outward objects though not what is within them, but there is no such ready-made opening between itself and its own inner being: since it is unable to see what is within its deeper self or observe the process of the knowledge coming from within, it has no choice but to accept what it does see, the external object, as the cause of its knowledge. Thus all our mental knowing of things represents itself to us as objective, a truth

86 Sri Aurobindo. 1940/2020. *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust. p. 560.

imposed on us from outside; our knowledge is a reflection or responsive construction reproducing in us a figure or picture or a mental scheme of something that is not in our own being. In fact, it is a hidden deeper response to the contact, a response coming from within that throws up from there an inner knowledge of the object, the object being itself part of our larger self; but owing to the double veil, the veil between our inner self and our ignorant surface self and the veil between that surface self and the object contacted, it is only an imperfect figure or representation of the inner knowledge that is formed on the surface.”⁸⁷

What follows from this reflection on the “process” and “structure” of human consciousness in its pursuit of knowledge is a description of the descent/ascent, or involution/evolution of consciousness, and ultimately of a transcendence that seems to us to be a close parallel to Heidegger's description of the leap into the “open” of *Beyng*. And this in turn leads into an elaborate reiteration by Sri Aurobindo of his metaphysical philosophy of the evolution of consciousness for which he has been known since his major work first appeared in the West, and which this study wishes to bring into prominent focus: the integration and synthesis of the Indian philosophy of Vedanta, and the European philosophy of Platonism. Before summarizing a substantial description of the latter, let us read the passage that points to Heidegger's “leap”:

“This affiliation, this concealed method of our knowledge, obscure and non-evident to our present mentality, becomes clear and evident when the subliminal inner being breaks its boundaries of individuality and, carrying our surface mind with it, enters into the cosmic consciousness. The subliminal is separated from the cosmic through a limitation by the subtler sheaths of our being, its mental, vital, subtle-physical sheaths, just as the surface nature is separated from universal

87 Ibid. p. 561.

Nature by the gross physical sheath, the body; but the circumscribing wall around it is more transparent, is indeed less a wall than a fence. The subliminal has besides a formation of consciousness which projects itself beyond all these sheaths and forms a circumconscient, an enviroing part of itself, through which it receives the contacts of the world and can become aware of them and deal with them before they enter. The subliminal is able to widen indefinitely this circumconscient envelope and more and more enlarge its self-projection into the cosmic existence around it. A point comes where it can break through the separation altogether, unite, identify itself with cosmic being, feel itself universal, one with all existence. In this freedom of entry into cosmic self and cosmic nature there is a great liberation of the individual being; it puts on a cosmic consciousness, becomes the universal individual.”⁸⁸

The metaphysical structure of being and consciousness which makes such an identification and transcendence possible follows the pattern of involution and evolution with which we have previously become acquainted in the philosophy of Proclus and Neoplatonism. It can be summarized from Sri Aurobindo's text which systematically expresses this vision, in a series of levels in the descending order of Being from the highest level of Spirit and Truth to the lowest level of Matter and Inconscience. I will attempt to condense ten pages of his visionary eloquence to a few tenets of what may be considered his metaphysical system. And in this, it is important to note with particular emphasis, we find here two major points of divergence between the thought of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo: 1) Sri Aurobindo has defined Being and Consciousness in a systematic manner, and 2) He has framed the idea of the descent of Truth, and its emergence in manifestation through the ascent of the soul from Darkness to Light, in terms of an evolutionary process, both physical and spiritual in nature. Heidegger has eschewed

88 Ibid.

both the systematization of a cosmological vision, if indeed he has one, and the idea of “evolution” either in a spiritual or a material sense. The idea of an evolutionary process does not enter into Heidegger's metaphysics. And he ultimately rejected even Hegel's system of Absolute Spirit, which he had referred to in 1938 as a consummate form of Neoplatonism. Heidegger's sole preoccupation was with the identification, exploration, and realization of the interface and unity of Being and Knowing, or with what might be termed the essential phenomenology of human consciousness, beyond metaphysical philosophy. Nor was he interested in pursuing a mystical cosmology of the Neoplatonic type. He apparently considered these theological and speculative products of the intellect, as well as its more recent manifestations in materialism and technology, to be signs of the uncanny descent of human consciousness from the truth of Being, its abandonment by the gods, and its destiny of return to that interface, and the openness of Being beyond – which seems to follow the pattern of thought commonly known as “gnosticism”. In terms of the philosophy of consciousness, Heidegger often describes the process as one of a progressive objectification resulting in the separation of subject and object, accompanied by a sense of homelessness and alienation. Here again, we find signs of a convergence in the fundamental perception and judgment of the two thinkers with regard to the basic problem of the illusory separation of subjective and objective knowledge.

Regarding the Platonic 'Idea' of Being and Truth, we may discover here yet another sign of convergence regarding the soul's knowledge of beauty, truth and delight. Sri Aurobindo says, in a chapter of *The Life Divine* titled 'The Origin of Falsehood and Evil,' from the same period:

“It is the soul in us which turns always towards Truth, Good and Beauty, because it is by these things that it itself grows in stature; the rest, their opposites, are a necessary part of experience, but have to be outgrown in the spiritual increase

of the being. The fundamental psychic entity in us has the delight of life and all experience as part of the progressive manifestation of the spirit, but the very principle of its delight of life is to gather out of all contacts and happenings their secret divine sense and essence, a divine use and purpose so that by experience our mind and life may grow out of the Inconscience towards a supreme consciousness, out of the divisions of the Ignorance towards an integralising consciousness and knowledge. It is there for that and it pursues from life to life its ever-increasing upward tendency and insistence; the growth of the soul is a growth out of darkness into light, out of falsehood into truth, out of suffering into its own supreme and universal Ananda.”⁸⁹

How the division and separation comes about, and how it explains the emergence of human consciousness, with its basic defects or limitations, and its destined spiritual reversion back to the original Being and Truth from which it has descended, was described by Sri Aurobindo in terms of the stages or planes of descent, in an elaborate mystical vision of its procession similar to that of Proclus, which has been extracted here in some detail, directly from his text:

“The cosmic consciousness of things is founded upon knowledge by identity; for the universal Spirit knows itself as the Self of all, knows all as itself and in itself.

The cosmic spirit inhabits each and all, but is more than all; there is therefore in its self-view and world-view a separative power which prevents the cosmic consciousness from being imprisoned in the objects and beings in which it dwells.

Here then is a large universal identity containing smaller identities; for whatever separative cognition exists in or enters into the cosmic consciousness must stand on this double identity and does not contradict it.

89 Ibid. p. 633.

This is on the side of consciousness; on the side of action, of the cosmic energies, it is seen that they move in masses, waves, currents constantly constituting and reconstituting beings and objects, movements and happenings, entering into them, passing through them, forming themselves in them, throwing themselves out from them on other beings and objects.

Each natural individual is a receptacle of these cosmic forces and a dynamo for their propagation; there passes from each to each a constant stream of mental and vital energies, and these run too in cosmic waves and currents no less than the forces of physical Nature.

On the level of mind and life, even with the loss of the sense of a separate self-existence, the energisms must be in their very nature a selection through individualisation; the action is that of the cosmic Energy, but the individual formation of it in the living dynamo remains the method of its working.

The Being, the Self-existent sees all existences in its one existence; it contains them all and knows them as being of its being, consciousness of its consciousness, power of its power, bliss of its bliss ... without the need of any act, regard, or operation of knowledge; for knowledge here is not an act, but a state pure, perpetual, and inherent.

But in this fundamental self-experience a regard of consciousness can manifest which ... belongs to or brings in another status of the supreme spiritual consciousness, a status in which knowledge as we know it begins; ...the Spirit regards itself, it becomes the knower and the known, in a way the subject and the object – or rather the subject-object in one – of its own self-knowledge.

But when the subject draws a little back from itself as object, then certain tertiary powers of spiritual knowledge, of know-

ledge by identity, take their first origin, which are the sources of our own normal modes of knowledge.

There is a power of spiritual perception of the object and all that it contains or is, perceived in an enveloping and pervading identity, the identity itself constituting the perception.

There is a joy of intimate separateness in identity, of relations of love joined with love in a supreme unity, a delight of the many powers, truths, beings, of the eternal oneness, of the forms of the Formless.

A separative knowledge arises when the sense of differentiation overpowers the sense of identity; the self still cognises its identity with the object but pushes to its extreme the play of intimate separateness.

Finally, identity disappears behind the veil and there is the play of being with other beings, consciousness with other consciousness; an underlying identity is still there, but it is not experienced.

There is still a direct sense, a consciousness-sight, consciousness-feeling which can see and feel what is within the object as well as its outside and surface. There is still a mutual penetration and interchange between being and being, between consciousness and consciousness, waves of thought, of feeling, of energy of all kinds which may be a movement of sympathy and union or of opposition and struggle. This is the origin of knowledge of direct contact of consciousness with its object, which is normal to our inner being but foreign or only imperfectly known to our surface nature.

The complete intrinsic awareness of identity and the act of knowledge by identity belong to the higher hemisphere of existence; this knowledge by direct contact is the main

character of the highest supraphysical mental planes of consciousness to which our surface being is closed in by a wall of ignorance.

Nature then creates indirect means, a contact by physical organs of sense, a penetration of outside impacts through the nerve currents, a reaction of mind and its co-ordinations acting as an aid and supplement to the activity of the physical organs – all of them methods of an indirect knowledge.

To these means is added a reason, intelligence and intuition which seize on the communications thus indirectly brought to them, put all in order and utilise their data to get as much knowledge and mastery of the not-self or as much partial unity with it as the original division allows to the separated being.

The Inconscience is an inverse reproduction of the supreme superconscience; it has the same absoluteness of being and automatic action, but in a vast involved trance; it is being lost in itself, plunged in its own abyss of infinity.

Yet is this involved consciousness still a concealed knowledge by identity; it carries within it the awareness of all the truths of existence, hidden in its dark infinite.

In all material things reside a mute and involved Real-Idea, a substantial and self-effective intuition, an eyeless exact perception, an automatic intelligence working out its unexpressed and unthought conceptions, a blindly seeing sureness of sight...

We can, in this knowledge, understand more clearly the stages of the emergence of consciousness from involution to its evolved appearance...

If, as has been affirmed, a material object receives and retains the impression of the contacts of things around it and energies emanate from it, so that an occult knowledge can become aware of its past, can make us conscious of these emanating influences, the intrinsic unorganised Awareness pervading the form but not yet enlightening it must be the cause of this receptivity and these capacities.

These powers and influences are attributes of Being, not of mere indeterminate substance, they are forces of the Spirit emerging by Energy from its self-absorbed Inconscience.

We see then all the powers inherent in the original self-existent spiritual Awareness slowly brought out and manifested in this growing separative consciousness.

Only when the subliminal is able to force upon the frontal mind and sense some of its secret activities pure and untranslated into the ordinary forms of mental intelligence, does a rudimentary action of the deeper methods lift itself to the surface.

It is only by our awakening to our inmost soul or super-conscious self that there can be a beginning of the spiritual knowledge with identity as its basis, its constant power, its intrinsic substance.’⁹⁰

As we can see in the passages quoted here, the description of the origin and structure of human consciousness that is presented is not accompanied by philosophical definitions, argumentation, or conventional scholarly references, but appears rather to be the description of a continuous coherent spiritual reality that is 'seen' rather than logically constructed. And this is, in fact, the nature of all of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical texts. We know from comments he

90 Ibid. p. 562-572.

has made about his writing method and his inspiration, that he was in fact expressing a 'higher mind' or 'overmind' intuition, and that the vision of that reality was seen by him "as a whole" before actually putting the words on paper. Knowing this, we may have a sense of what it meant to compose five hundred pages of dense spiritual philosophy in a single year, or to have written some ten books simultaneously month by month in a period of seven years. It is the expression of a mystical vision in a style that might be termed prophetic, poetic, or revelatory. Moreover, it is the product of what Sri Aurobindo termed a Yogic discipline and realization.

Martin Heidegger, on the other hand, was a professor of philosophy in a major German university, from about 1919 onward, from the writing of *Being and Time* (1927) to the writings of the 30s, 40s, and 50s that I have been considering in this study. Most of his books were based on lecture courses delivered to students of philosophy, and although many were published posthumously, many were published during his lifetime and had a significant impact on European philosophical thought throughout the 20th century. Although his writings were deeply rooted in the mystical and theological traditions of Europe, from Hegel and Hölderlin in the 19th century, to Meister Eckhardt and Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, to Plato, Aristotle, and the pre-Socratic philosophers of ancient Greece, his thinking was always rationalistic and philosophical, rather than mystical or poetic. We might presume that this was a necessity of his profession, and yet he seems to have had the poise of the psychic Purusha or Self, to use the language of Yoga, and to have aspired toward a consciousness of universality and unity, above the customary limits of the intellectual reason. It is this intuition mind which enabled him to identify deeply with Hölderlin's poetry and which, along with the influence of the mystical Greek thinkers on both Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo, guides us to recognize the affinities in their thought. Both aspired for a humanity that surpasses the limits of the rational mind, and they both tirelessly pursued their futuristic visions of a greater destiny for human consciousness. These qualities make a com-

parison of their work significant, especially at this moment in the history of our species, when it seems that the survival of our mind, thought, speech, essence may be at stake. Both were contemplatives and creative thinkers who were focused one-pointedly on finding and defining the ultimate Truth of human consciousness, amidst the perils of our materialistic age. Both looked upon the heavens and the abysses of the human spirit, contemplated deeply the recorded origins of their respective cultures, and discovered paths forward, toward the possible fulfillment of human destiny.

10

Time and Transcendence – Heidegger

Human consciousness is a knowing of beings: the things that we perceive and the thoughts that are generated by our minds are things we know. As such we are conscious also of the “being of beings.” That is to say, we know that the things we perceive are what they are; things have come to be what they are through processes that are, for the most part, well understood, though invisible. This process of becoming that characterizes natural phenomena has been expressed by classical Greek and Latin thinkers throughout the early history of Western philosophy as a movement of energy in things from a state of potential to a state of actual existence. Therefore, we know that these things exist and are what they are, i.e., the potential and actual existence of beings. Of course it is possible to imagine that this knowing, and the existence of the things that are known, are all an illusion. But the entire history of Western thought has been an endeavor to establish the veracity of the knowledge that we have of things, and their existence. The Greek word for the agreement between things we know and things that exist outside us is *homoiosis*. In later philosophy, the relationship was expressed in Latin as *adequatio*. There is a direct correlation between being and knowing, which was something known by the earliest Greek philosophers; the pre-Socratic Parmenides said, in a phrase often quoted by Heidegger, “being and knowing: the same.” Proceeding from that earliest age of philosophical thought, it has especially been the province of scientific thinking to demonstrate what the things are that we perceive, and how they come to be what they are. While philosophical thought is a history of the being of things, identified as the metaphysical history of being by Heidegger, science is a history of the becoming of things, a “natural history,” of the things known. And yet, the mystery of mysteries remains, the region where the being of things and the

being of consciousness meet, that pre-cognitive region identified by Heidegger as the clearing of Being is invisible to us.

It is such “thinking” of this history of our knowledge of the being and becoming of things, or of their “existence,” that was the subject of Heidegger's philosophical career. As he said in an interview that he gave to the magazine *Der Spiegel* in 1966, though at his request published only after his death in 1976: “My entire work over the past 30 years was, in the main, only an interpretation of Western philosophy.”⁹¹ Asked about the role and possibility of that philosophy today, he responded with this perplexing statement: “...the manner of thinking of traditional metaphysics that reached its term with Nietzsche offers no further possibility of explaining in thought the fundamental thrust of the age of technicity that is just beginning. ...it seems to me that the thinking that I attempt might be able to awaken, clarify, and confirm a readiness for the appearance of a god..., philosophy will be unable to effect any immediate change in the current state of the world. This is true not only of philosophy but of all purely human reflection and endeavor. Only a god can save us. The only possibility available to us is that by thinking and poetizing we prepare a readiness for the appearance of a god, or for the absence of a god in our decline...” Asked further about what has replaced philosophical thinking, he answered “Cybernetics.” In one of his last essays, titled ‘The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,’ written at about the same time as this interview, he elaborated the point: “No prophecy is necessary to recognize that the sciences now establishing themselves will soon be determined and regulated by the new fundamental science that is called cybernetics. This science corresponds to the determination of man as an acting social being. For it is the theory of the regulation of the possible planning and arrangement of human

91 Martin Heidegger. 1966. *Only a God Can Save Us*, The Spiegel Interview. https://ia903204.us.archive.org/20/items/MartinHeidegger-DerSpiegelInterviewenglishTranslationonlyAGodCan/Heidegger-derSpiegelInterview1966_text.pdf

labor. Cybernetics transforms language into an exchange of news. The arts become regulated-regulating instruments of information.”⁹²

We will recall from the first installments of this study, Heidegger's preoccupation with the topic of calculative thinking that he maintained has dominated the modern age since the 17th century, and that continues its gradual disruption of the ability of human consciousness to think about Being. His call was for a restoration of the capacity for the “meditative” thinking that had prevailed in an earlier age, and for a recognition of the necessity of asking the question 'What is Being?' if we are to recover the essence of our destiny as human beings. He apparently foresaw the coming of what we now know as the age of AI with its dehumanizing potential. Although still in its beginnings, the rising influence of techno-fascism in the political, as well as the technical, sphere is undeniable. And in this context, the endeavor to know the essence of our existence is certainly no less relevant, nor less crucial, than it has ever been.

In an earlier self-reflection, titled *Letter on Humanism*⁹³, published in 1947, Heidegger presented perhaps his most significant summary and explanation of his own thought. There he succinctly stated the essential tenets, propositions, and arguments of his philosophy, developed and expressed through lectures and books over a period of more than 30 years, including a critical reflection on the early work for which he is best known, *Being and Time*. It should be possible to approach a more comprehensive view of Heidegger's philosophy by considering in some detail his own summary of it in this *Letter on Humanism*, which will entail a circling back to some of the earlier texts that we have reviewed but will also enable us to avoid a more detailed survey of his later major works, such as his four-volume treatise on the philosophy of *Nietzsche*, followed by *The Principle of Reason*, which focuses on Leibnitz's Monadology,

92 Martin Heidegger. 1977. *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell. p. 434.

93 Ibid., p. 217-265.

What is Called Thinking, a detailed analysis of the Greek terms and concepts that underpin his entire work, and *Identity and Difference*, examining the fundamental limits of knowledge itself, all of which were presented as lecture courses and subsequently published as books from 1945 to 1955. For example, in his explanation of the essence of human existence in the *Letter* he says:

“Metaphysics closes itself to the simple essential fact that man essentially occurs only in his essence, where he is claimed by Being. Only from that claim has he found that wherein his essence dwells. Only from this dwelling does he have language as the home that preserves the ecstatic for his essence. (*The editor's footnote here says: In Being and Time “ecstatic” (from the Greek ekstasis) means the way Dasein “stands out in the various moments of temporality of care, being “thrown” out of a past and “projecting” itself toward the future by way of the present.*) Such standing in the clearing of Being I call the ek-sistence of man. This way of Being is proper only to man. Ek-sistence, so understood is not only the ground of the possibility of reason, ratio, but is also that in which the essence of man preserves the source that determines him.

What man is – or, as it is called in the traditional language of metaphysics, the “essence” of man – lies in his ek-sistence. But ek-sistence thought in this way is not identical with the traditional concept of *existentia*, which means actuality in contrast to the meaning of *essentia* as possibility. ...The “Being” of the Da, and only it, has the fundamental character of ek-sistence, that is, of an ecstatic inherence in the truth of Being. ...The ecstatic essence of man consists in ek-sistence, which is different from the metaphysically conceived *existentia*. (*The footnote says: Heidegger introduces now to capture the unique sense of man's Being – ek-sistence. This too means the way man “stands out” into the truth of Being and so is exceptional among beings that are at hand only as*

things of nature or human production.) Medieval philosophy conceives the latter as *actualitas*. Kant represents *existentia* as actuality in the sense of the objectivity of experience. Hegel defines *existentia* as the self-knowing Idea of absolute subjectivity. Nietzsche grasps *existentia* as the eternal recurrence of the same.

If we understand what *Being and Time* calls “projection” as a representational positing, we take it to be an achievement of subjectivity and do not think it in the only way the “understanding of Being” in the context of the “existential analysis” of “being-in-the-world” can be thought – namely as the ecstatic relation to the clearing of Being. ...As ek-sisting, man sustains Da-sein in that he takes the Da, the clearing of Being, into “care.” But Da-sein itself occurs essentially as “thrown.” It unfolds essentially in the throw of Being as the fateful sending.”

On the basis of the attunement that I hope has been made possible by reading many selections from his writing in the course of this study, we may be able to derive several essential and important aspects of Heidegger's thought from this selection of statements taken from a few paragraphs of the *Letter on Humanism*. Although the language he uses here is typical of his cryptic style, what is actually being said is self-explanatory, and is a condensation of hundreds of pages of arguments that he has presented in a similar but more elaborate and densely formulated manner in the texts mentioned above.

To summarize, it should be clear from the first paragraph that the unique and essential nature of the human being is its immediate and intimate relationship with beings in the world, such that it knows the being of things, prior to reflecting on and analyzing things as existing (or not), or as belonging to a definitive type or category (or not). The history of metaphysical philosophy has been the attempt to understand things that exist in terms of their possibility (essence)

and actuality (existence), and to understand the nature of this knowing itself in terms of its relative subjectivity (self) and objectivity (other). The fundamental characteristic of metaphysical thinking, according to Heidegger, is that from its beginning with Plato and Aristotle, in its endeavor to know and state the meaning of Being, in terms of the perceived nature and process of the becoming of beings, it has progressively lost contact with its origin, in a sort of descent from that ground of knowing that makes truth possible. This loss has been characterized by Heidegger in these remarks as a condition of “thrownness” and elsewhere as “fallenness,” both of which were terms used to characterize the human condition by the early Greek mystical and metaphysical belief system known as “gnosticism.” One result of this condition is the various framing of knowledge according to the experiences and values that have been predominant from age to age, and that we experience from moment to moment. Another is the human being’s need to reunite with its origin in the region of truth, a need that has paradoxically been given, or bestowed upon man, by that origin itself. And what is that origin, what is Being? In this context, Heidegger says:

“It is It itself. The thinking that is to come must learn to experience that and to say it. ...Being itself is the relation to the extent that It, as the location of the truth of Being amid beings, gathers to itself and embraces ek-sistence in its existential, that is, ecstatic essence. Because man, as the one who ek-sists comes to stand in this relation that Being destines for itself, in that he ecstatically sustains it, that is, in care takes it upon himself, he at first fails to recognize the nearest and attaches himself to the next nearest. He even thinks that this is the nearest. But nearer than the nearest and at the same time for ordinary thinking farther than the farthest is nearness itself: the truth of Being.”

Also in this context, Heidegger makes a general statement regarding his major work, *Being and Time*, which puts this attempt of

self-reflection and all of his subsequent thought in a new perspective. He says:

“The adequate execution and completion of this other thinking that abandons subjectivity is surely made more difficult by the fact that in the publication of *Being and Time* the third division of the first part, “Time and Being,” was held back. Here everything is reversed. The division in question was held back because thinking failed in the adequate saying of this turning (Kehre) and did not succeed with the help of metaphysics. ...This turning (from “Being and Time” to “Time and Being”) is not a change of standpoint from *Being and Time*, but in it the thinking that was sought first arrives at the location of that dimension out of which *Being and Time* is experienced, that is to say, from the fundamental experience of the oblivion of Being.”

We might infer from this revealing analysis that Heidegger's philosophy was itself subject to the limitations inherent in our thrownness into the fragmentary nature of temporal experience and consequently of all metaphysical attempts to reconstitute an awareness, perception, and expression of the essential oneness of Being and Knowing. His subsequent thinking in the works mentioned above – *The Principle of Reason, What is Called Thinking, Identity and Difference* – were attempts to address precisely this inherent problem of the temporal experience of human consciousness which experiences reality in a fragmentary way and strives through thought and language to capture and preserve the meaning of things. We know Being as this fragmentation of experience in time and not as the atemporal unity and origin of existence, and of existents, as a whole. And yet it is this very fragmentary nature of our experience of existence that, for Heidegger, is somehow the necessary condition and source of thought and language into which we are thrown by Being. He continues with this commentary in the *Letter*:

“We usually think of language as corresponding to the essence of man represented as animal rationale, that is, as the unity of body-soul-mind. But just as ek-sistence – and through it the relation of the truth of Being to man – remains veiled in the *humanitas* of *homo animalis*, so does the meta-physical-animal explanation of language cover up the essence of language in the history of Being. According to this essence, language is the house of Being, which is appropriated by Being and pervaded by Being. And so it is proper to think the essence of language from its correspondence to Being and indeed as this correspondence, that is, as the house of man's essence. ...So the point is that in the determination of the humanity of man as ek-sistence what is essential is not man but Being – as the dimension of the *ecstasis* of ek-sistence. However, the dimension is not something spatial in the familiar sense. Rather, everything spatial and all space-time occur essentially in the dimensionality that Being itself is.”

The terms “location,” “dimensionality,” “region” used by Heidegger with reference to the “clearing of Being” is what may be understood in the language of Sri Aurobindo as a “plane of consciousness” and, as such, is not something above or outside the human being but is a higher region of consciousness itself, or of the “higher Self.” Heidegger recalls from *Being and Time* the statement “Being is the *transcendens* pure and simple.” And he goes on to say:

“But whether the definition of Being as the *transcendens* pure and simple really does express the simple essence of the truth of Being – this and this alone is the primary question for a thinking that attempts to think the truth of Being. That is why we also say that how Being is is to be understood chiefly from its “meaning,” that is, from the truth of Being. Being is illumined for man in the ecstatic projection. But this projection does not create Being. ...Moreover, the projection is essentially a thrown projection. What throws is not man but Being itself, which sends man into the ek-sistence of Da-sein

that is his essence. This destiny propriates as the clearing of Being – which it is. The clearing grants nearness to Being. In this nearness, in the clearing of the Da, man dwells as the ek-sisting one without yet being able to experience and take over this dwelling. ...In such nearness, if at all, a decision may be made as to whether and how God and the gods withhold their presence and the night remains, whether and how the day of the holy dawns, whether and how in the upsurge of the holy an epiphany of God and the gods can begin anew. But the holy, which alone is the essential sphere of divinity, which in turn alone affords a dimension for the gods and for God, comes to radiate only when Being itself beforehand and after extensive preparation has been illuminated and is experienced in its truth. Only thus does the overcoming of homelessness begin from Being, a homelessness in which not only man but the essence of man stumbles aimlessly about. ...Homelessness so understood consists in the abandonment of Being by beings. Homelessness is the symptom of oblivion of Being. Because of it the truth of Being remains unthought. ...In the face of the essential homelessness of man, man's approaching destiny reveals itself to thought on the history of Being in this, that man find his way into the truth of Being and set out on this find."

In 1962, at Freiburg, Heidegger finally delivered the promised lecture *On Time and Being*, nearly twenty years after the *Letter on Humanism* and a few years before his *Der Spiegel* interview. As we might suppose, it has here become possible for him to express the new way of thinking that is called for when we decide to leap beyond the limitations of rational thought into the truth of Being. This "saying" is intimately related to the perception and understanding of time, which makes it possible, in Heidegger's case at least, to make explicit statements regarding the destiny that Being gives when the human spirit stands in the clearing of Truth. Heidegger says:

“To think Being itself explicitly requires disregarding Being to the extent that it is only grounded and interpreted in terms of beings and for beings as their ground, as in all metaphysics. To think Being explicitly requires us to relinquish Being as the ground of beings in favor of the giving which prevails concealed in unconcealment, that is, in favor of the It gives. As the gift of this It gives, Being belongs to giving. As a gift, Being is not expelled from giving. Being, presencing is transmuted. As allowing-to-presence, it belongs to unconcealing; as the gift of unconcealing it is retained in the giving. Being is not. There is, It gives Being as the unconcealing of presencing. ...An attempt to think upon the abundance of Being's transformations secures its first foothold – which also shows the way – when we think Being in the sense of presencing. ...But we do not by any means perceive Being as presencing exclusively, primarily in the remembrance of the early presentation of the unconcealment of Being accomplished by the Greeks. We perceive presencing in every simple, sufficiently unprejudiced reflection on things of nature (*Vorhandenheit*) and artifacts (*Zuhandenheit*). Things of nature and artifacts are both modes of presencing. The vast reach of presencing shows itself most oppressively when we consider that absence, too, indeed absence most particularly, remains determined by a presenting which at times reaches uncanny proportions. ...However, we can also note historically the abundance of transformations of presencing by pointing out that presencing shows itself as the *hen*, the unifying unique One, as the *logos*, the gathering that preserves the All, as *idea*, *ousia*, *energeia*, *substantia*, *actualitas*, *perceptio*, *monad*, as objectivity, as the being posited of self-positing in the sense of the will of reason, of love, of the spirit, of power, as the will to will in the eternal recurrence of the same. Whatever can be noted historically can be found within history. The development of the abundance of transformations of Being looks at first like a history of Being. But Being does not have a history in the way in which a city or a

people have their history. What is history-like in the history of Being is obviously determined by the way in which Being takes place and by this alone. After what has just been explained, this means the way in which It gives Being.”⁹⁴

What follows in this definitive text of Heidegger's pursuit of the truth of Being is an elaboration of Time as the appropriation of Being. We might say that here he presents a thorough unconcealment of the concealed essence of human consciousness when it is called by Being to realize the truth of itself. The awakening to or seeing of this truth of Time and Being is given the term *Ereignis*, or the Event, by Heidegger, the event in which human consciousness stands in the open clearing of Being. A few excerpts from the treatise should be sufficient to convey a sense of this ultimate revelation in the writing of Heidegger.

“Presence determines Being in a unified way as presencing and allowing-to-presence, that is, as un-concealing. What matter are we thinking when we say presencing? To presence means to last. But we are too quickly content to conceive lasting as mere duration, and to conceive duration in terms of the customary representation of time as a span of time from one now to a subsequent now. To talk of presencing, however, requires that we perceive biding and abiding in lasting as lasting in present being. What is present concerns us, the present, that is: what, lasting, comes toward us, us human beings. ...

Presence means: the constant abiding that approaches man, reaches him, is extended to him. But what is the source of this extending reach to which the present belongs as presencing, insofar as there is presence? True, man always remains approached by the presencing of something actually present without explicitly heeding presencing itself. But we have to

94 Martin Heidegger. 1972. *On Time and Being*. trans. Joan Stambaugh. p. 6-8.

do with absence just as often, that is, constantly. For one thing, there is much that is no longer present in the way we know presencing in the sense of the present. And yet, even that which is no longer present presences immediately in its absence - in the manner of what has been, and still concerns us. What has been does not just vanish from the previous now as does that which is merely past. Rather, what has been presences, but in its own way. In what has been, presencing is extended. ...

Insofar as there is manifest in Being as presence such a thing as time, the supposition mentioned earlier grows stronger that true time, the fourfold extending of the open, could be discovered as the "It" that gives Being, i.e., gives presence. The supposition appears to be fully confirmed when we note that absence, too, manifests itself as a mode of presence. What has been which, by refusing the present, lets that become present which is no longer and the coming toward us of what is to come which, by withholding the present, lets that be present which is not yet present – both made manifest the manner of an extending opening up which gives all presencing into the open. ...Time is not. There is, It gives time. The giving that gives time is determined by denying and withholding nearness. It grants the openness of time-space and preserves what remains denied in what has been, what is withheld in approach. We call the giving which gives true time an extending which opens and conceals. As extending is itself a giving, the giving of a giving is concealed in true time.

In the sending of the destiny of Being, in the extending of time, there becomes manifest a dedication, a delivering over into what is their own, namely of Being as presence and of time as the realm of the open. What determines both, time and Being, in their own, that is, in their belonging together, we shall call: *Ereignis*, the event of Appropriation. One should bear in mind, however, that "event" is not simply an

occurrence, but that which makes any occurrence possible. What this word names can be thought now only in the light of what becomes manifest in our looking ahead toward Being and toward time as destiny and as extending, to which time and Being belong. We have called both – Being and time – "matters." The "and" between them left their relation to each other indeterminate. We now see: What lets the two matters belong together, what brings the two into their own and, even more, maintains and holds them in their belonging together – the way the two matters stand, the matter at stake – is Appropriation. The matter at stake is not a relation retroactively superimposed on Being and time. The matter at stake first appropriates Being and time into their own in virtue of their relation, and does so by the appropriating that is concealed in destiny and in the gift of opening out. Accordingly, the It that gives in "It gives Being," "It gives time," proves to be Appropriation."⁹⁵

The essence of human consciousness, concealed in its destiny, is revealed in the open of Beyng: Da-sein. As always, we are helped to grasp the meaning of Heidegger's often perplexing expressions, and his intuitions of human consciousness and a possible higher self-realization, by referring to the Yoga philosophy and psychology of Sri Aurobindo. For example, in *The Synthesis of Yoga* we read: "A last and greatest intuition is an inner awareness of something which he more essentially is, something as high above mind as it is above the physical life and body. This inner awareness is his intuition of his supramental and spiritual being. ...His (intuitive/supramental) view is not limited to the standpoint of the present but can see in the continuities of time or from above time in the indivisibilities of the Spirit. He sees truth in its proper order, first in the essence, secondly in the potentialities that derive from it and only last in the actualities. ...Its time consciousness therefore will be different from that of the mental being, not swept helplessly on

95 Ibid., p. 16-19

the stream of the moments...but founded first on its eternal identity beyond the changes of time, secondly on a simultaneous eternity of Time in which past, present and future exist together forever..., thirdly, in a total view of the three times as one movement singly and indivisibly seen even in their succession of stages – in the step-by-step evolution of the moments.”⁹⁶

Being intimately familiar with the spiritual philosophy and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, one can appreciate the thrust of Heidegger's futuristic vision and intuition of a higher plane of consciousness above the rational mind where the 'Being of the whole' is known, and from which Time is seen as the unfolding of Being, one with the essence of the human Da-sein. For Sri Aurobindo, the coming of a god to illuminate, uplift, and transform human consciousness is not only a necessity or a destiny; it is already a tangible reality. And Sri Aurobindo's inspired and revelatory poetry, enhanced by a highly developed evolutionary philosophy and yogic discipline, provide the intuitive vision with a quality of concreteness and accessibility that the metaphysical and phenomenological basis of Heidegger's intuitive vision, however inspired and prophetic, could not achieve. There is an obvious convergence and proximity, as this comparative study should make clear, in their understanding of the limitations of human nature and consciousness, dominated as they are by the rational intellect as well as the lower animal nature with which humanity continues to be burdened. And both have seen the necessity of a radical change – one which requires a divine intervention. It was the preoccupation with the limitations of human consciousness, and with the history of the endeavor of philosophical thought to exceed them, that is the most characteristic feature of Heidegger's work. It is remarkable that he was able to use the background in critical thought that his academic profession provided as a lever to elevate his own consciousness, and through the practice of 'refusal' and 'stillness' that he derived from it, which he advocated with clarity and force, to achieve the vision and realization of

96 Sri Aurobindo. 1955 ed. *The Synthesis of Yoga*. p. 608, 854.

that “transcendence pure and simple,” which is a goal and characteristic of many schools of Yoga. In spite of his apparent rejection of the spiritual and cosmological supports that even the Western mystical and spiritual traditions have preserved, not to mention his apparent lack of awareness of the spiritual knowledge and practices of the East, Jnana Yoga traditions in particular, which became abundantly available to the West in the 20th century, Heidegger seems to have discovered a path of transcendence that opened to him a vision, or at least a glimpse of what Sri Aurobindo has described as the Overmind.

As the next chapter of this study will show, however, this is the point of divergence in the work of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo. For this “region” is precisely where Sri Aurobindo's unique spiritual achievement begins to take shape, and his revelatory and transformational journey unfolds in a manner which appears to embody a Reality that is very similar to what Heidegger termed an 'event of Appropriation' – where the Unity of Being and Knowing becomes a conscious realization and expression of the Self in Time. It is here and beyond, where Sri Aurobindo's prophetic vision enters that plane of the original divine *logos* and *dunamis*, where the Word and its creative Force are invoked to descend, that the “open” of the manifestation of the supramental Truth-Consciousness begins.

11

Time and Transcendence – Sri Aurobindo

I believe that Heidegger's philosophy of Being, concealed by Time yet unconcealed in everything that presents itself to consciousness in Time, – the mystery and driving force that impels our destiny to leap into the Truth of Being – is expressed most completely in the lines of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, as I think a few selections from that work will show. But what we should now clearly recognize in the fundamental vision and truth of human nature and its destiny, which underlies and unites these two philosophies, is that it consistently points to the idea of a universal source of that truth, a Being that is knowable by us at a certain level of Consciousness, with which we are one. And that Self, *Da-sein*, *Purusha*, which unites us with it and with all things, is known and revealed through language. As Heidegger put it, “language is the house of Being, which is appropriated by Being and pervaded by Being. And so it is proper to think the essence of language from its correspondence to Being and indeed as this correspondence, that is, as the house of man's essence.” In the ancient traditions that provide the background and basis of both philosophies, and in the writings that have been developed and sustained by Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo over several decades expressive of this basic idea, it is the Word, *Logos*, *Paravak*, that has been seen, heard, and known by them to be the creative emanation of that source, which is the Truth of Being that becomes present to Consciousness in Time. As expressed by the poetic word of Sri Aurobindo:

In the enigma of the darkened Vasts,
In the passion and self-loss of the Infinite
When all was plunged in the negating Void,
Non-Being's night could never have been saved
If Being had not plunged into the dark
Carrying with it its triple mystic cross.

Invoking in world-time the timeless truth,
 Bliss changed to sorrow, knowledge made ignorant,
 God's force turned into a child's helplessness
 Can bring down heaven by their sacrifice.
 A contradiction founds the base of life:
 The eternal, the divine Reality
 Has faced itself with its own contraries;
 Being became the Void and Conscious-Force
 Nescience and walk of a blind Energy
 And Ecstasy took the figure of world-pain.
 In a mysterious dispensation's law
 A Wisdom that prepares its far-off ends
 Planned so to start her slow aeonic game.
 A blindfold search and wrestle and fumbling clasp
 Of a half-seen Nature and a hidden Soul,
 A game of hide-and-seek in twilit rooms,
 A play of love and hate and fear and hope
 Continues in the nursery of mind
 Its hard and heavy romp of self-born twins.
 At last the struggling Energy can emerge
 And meet the voiceless Being in wider fields;
 Then can they see and speak and, breast to breast,
 In a larger consciousness, a clearer light,
 The Two embrace and strive and each know each
 Regarding closer now the playmate's face.
 Even in these formless coilings he could feel
 Matter's response to an infant stir of soul.
 In Nature he saw the mighty Spirit concealed,
 Watched the weak birth of a tremendous Force,
 Pursued the riddle of Godhead's tentative pace,
 Heard the faint rhythms of a great unborn Muse.⁹⁷

Heidegger's understanding/intuition of Time in its three-fold unfolding as past, present, and future, which is the concealed-uncon-

97 Sri Aurobindo. 1950/1993 ed. *Savitri – A Legend and a Symbol*. p. 140-141.

cealed presence, or appearance, of Being, is expressed repeatedly throughout the poem *Savitri* by Sri Aurobindo. As seen in the illumined Overmind consciousness that is the source of his poetic inspiration, Savitri, the goddess, is in fact a direct manifestation of that Word which calls the seer-poet to this inspired vision of Time. For example:

There Knowledge called him to her mystic peaks
Where thought is held in a vast internal sense
And feeling swims across a sea of peace
And vision climbs beyond the reach of Time.
An equal of the first creator seers,
Accompanied by an all-revealing light
He moved through regions of transcendent Truth
Inward, immense, innumerably one.
There distance was his own huge spirit's extent;
Delivered from the fictions of the mind
Time's triple dividing step baffled no more;
Its inevitable and continuous stream,
The long flow of its manifesting course,
Was held in spirit's single wide regard.
A universal beauty showed its face:
The invisible deep-fraught significances,
Here sheltered behind form's insensible screen,
Uncovered to him their deathless harmony
And the key to the wonder-book of common things.
In their uniting law stood up revealed
The multiple measures of the upbuilding force,
The lines of the World-Geometer's technique,
The enchantments that uphold the cosmic web
And the magic underlying simple shapes.
On peaks where Silence listens with still heart
To the rhythmic metres of the rolling worlds,
He served the sessions of the triple Fire.
On the rim of two continents of slumber and trance
He heard the ever unspoken Reality's voice

Awaken revelation's mystic cry,
 The birthplace found of the sudden infallible Word
 And lived in the rays of an intuitive Sun.⁹⁸

The lines of these two selections from *Savitri* occur within the first 300 pages of this 700 page poem in which Sri Aurobindo has revealed in intimate and exhaustive detail the gradual unfolding and revelation of the atemporal, cosmic vision of reality that becomes possible to the “thinker” and “seer” who enters that realm of knowledge. *Savitri* is the revelation of that manifestation itself, as it unfolds stage by stage in evolutionary time. In philosophical terms, an infinite spiritual being, by definition, could not manifest in a form or within the limitations of finite space and time; it could only become present and knowable as an object to a subject, in increments, moments, forms, processes, beings. This spiritual vision, or knowledge of the nature of Reality, has apparently been seen and known by human consciousness from its earliest recorded histories, as expressed in the mythical poetry of many cultures and languages. Two of the most prominent expressions of it are to be found in the mystical and mythical literature of ancient Greece, and in the mystical and mythical literature of ancient India. One can easily see, therefore, a kind of subtle visionary energy percolating behind the thought and writing of both Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo, who could feel the call and hear the Word of that ancient *mythos* as it was expressed in the inspired voices of their respective cultures.

Heidegger was the thinker of European origin in the 20th century who had the gift of language necessary to capture and reformulate the ancient seer-wisdom in the cultural idiom of the West, and Sri Aurobindo was the thinker of India who had the necessary gift to do the same in the cultural idiom of the East. (It should be noted of course that the terms “West” and “East” are generalizations that may represent a wide range of categories and cultural identities that have changed considerably over the time period that we are considering with respect to their mystical, philosophical, and theo-

98 Ibid., p. 299.

logical literatures, as well as to their social, political, and economic circumstances. One of the interpretations of this representational symbolism that seems to have been most common historically is the differentiation of cultures and societies with respect to materialistic and individualistic values as opposed to moralistic and universalist values. But in fact, as Heidegger has frequently pointed out, the differentiation that is really pertinent today is more vertical than horizontal. This distinction pertains more to “higher” and “lower” interests and motives, such as the preoccupations of humanity with its attachments to the production and consumption of things, as opposed to the appreciation of abstract goods such as freedom, beauty, and truth, a distinction which has in fact been the basis of most traditional, or religious, value systems everywhere in the world. And this fundamental distinction is not only still applicable to humanity everywhere in the world today, but perhaps more critical than it has ever been.)

At any rate, it is a matter of established historical and literary fact that the mystical and philosophical tradition of the Greeks was expressed most thoroughly and continuously for more than a thousand years in the form of an analytically discursive prose, similar to the texts of Plato and Aristotle in both style and content, while the mystical and philosophical tradition of India was more commonly and powerfully expressed in the inspired poetic form exemplified by the Vedas and Upanishads. It is perhaps inevitable, from both a cultural and a karmic perspective, therefore, that Heidegger's thinking and writing would conform more to the former, and Sri Aurobindo's more to the latter, forms of expression. The vision of an Infinite source of Being and Knowing descending into the material universe and ascending back in the form of ideas and processes expressive of the innate principles and powers of that Origin itself was, however, natural to the seers and thinkers of an inspired visionary level of consciousness in both cultural traditions and in all epochs of cultural manifestation. This vision has been consistently expressed in the form of what I have referred to as the “gnostic structure.” We may recall, for example, the idea of the god

Eros taken from the writing of Plato by Heidegger, as a representation of the striving of the human psyche for knowledge, being, truth, and the Good. A similar god is to be found in the Vedic theogony, named Agni, who has played a central role in the most ancient mythologies of Hinduism and Buddhism, and is still alive and well today in the mystical philosophy of Sri Aurobindo where it represents the spiritual fire that is immortal in mortals. Agni, the god, is the psychic being in us that aspires to reunite with its source in the higher Self, and who represents the sacrifice that is necessary for the Immortal to manifest in Time.

In Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Rig Veda, Agni descends from the highest source of Spiritual Truth and Light, known as Surya, into the abyss of Inconscience, and emerges as energy in matter. Agni then brings to birth and knows "all things born" as the self or soul of things. It is identified by Sri Aurobindo as a symbol of the "will" in things, which leads everything to fulfill its potential. This idea of the will in things is directly related to the ideas of *logos*, *dunamis*, *physis*, *energeia*, *hyle* and *morphe* in the ancient Greek philosophy: Idea, Force, Nature, Energy, Matter and Form. This vision of nature as a temporal embodiment of an infinite spiritual Being or Intelligence was "developed" from its pre-Socratic origins in the writings of Heraclitus and Parmenides, in a systematic procession, or descent, to Plato and Aristotle, and down through the Neoplatonic mystics, the Christian theologians, and the rational philosophies of Leibnitz, Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel, to the phenomenologies of Husserl and Heidegger. And this was a procession of language and thought with which Sri Aurobindo was intimately familiar.

Sri Aurobindo, who came to Sanskrit as a young poet with a background in classical Greek from Cambridge, and with knowledge of the principles and structures of language, could see and hear the common roots of these two literatures in their mystical origins. He makes this clear in his treatise titled *The Secret of the Veda*, which was one of the first to be completed during his seven year writing

cycle from 1914 to 1922, in which he explained in detail his technique of translation and interpretation. It will be advantageous for us to review this explanation in some detail here, in order to fully appreciate, and become attuned to, his mystical vision, as well as the theory of language that makes this vision possible. In *The Secret of the Veda*, he writes:

“In the early Vedantic teaching of the Upanishads we come across a conception of the Truth which is often expressed by formulas taken from the hymns of the Veda, such as the expression already quoted, *satyam ritam brihat*, – the truth, the right, the vast. This Truth is spoken of in the Veda as a path leading to felicity, leading to immortality. In the Upanishads also it is by the path of the Truth that the sage or seer, Rishi or Kavi, passes beyond. He passes out of the falsehood, out of the mortal state into an immortal existence. ...This psychological conception is that of a truth which is truth of divine essence, not truth of mortal sensation and appearance. It is *satyam*, truth of being; it is in its action *ritam*, right, – truth of divine being regulating right activity both of mind and body; it is *brihat*, the universal truth proceeding direct and undeformed out of the Infinite. The consciousness that corresponds to it is also infinite, *brihat*, large as opposed to the consciousness of the sense-mind which is founded upon limitation. ...And as for the facts of sensation and appearance which are full of falsehoods (*anritam*, not-truth or wrong application of the *satyam* in mental and bodily activity), we have for instruments the senses, the sense-mind (*manas*) and the intellect working upon their evidence, so for the truth-consciousness there are corresponding faculties, – *dristi*, *sruti*, *viveka*, the direct vision of the truth, the direct hearing of its word, the direct discrimination of the right. Whoever is in possession of this truth-consciousness or open to the action of these faculties, is the Rishi or Kavi, sage or seer.”⁹⁹

99 Sri Aurobindo. 1998 ed. *The Secret of the Veda*. p. 64.

The consciousness that is thus able to hear and see this truth is other than that of the ordinary sense mind and rational intelligence that characterize our normal human functioning. Therefore it requires a preparatory discipline – the sacrifice of our normal conceptions, judgments, and values, and a deliberate opening to the more intuitive range of consciousness above – which has been advocated by both Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo, as we have seen. The achievement of such a state of stillness and openness in which an intuitive seeing-intelligence becomes possible is a common goal of the discipline of Yoga, and the writings of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo provide clear evidence of the creation of such a condition of consciousness, and of a determined dwelling on that plane for decades, by these two minds. The intimate connection between the knowledge of this region of intelligence and the mystical language of the Vedas was explained at length by Sri Aurobindo in his elaboration of the meaning of Agni and the other Vedic gods in *The Secret of the Veda*:

“Agni in the Veda is always presented in the double aspect of force and light. He is the divine power that builds up the worlds, a power which acts always with a perfect knowledge, for ... – it knows all manifestations or phenomena or it possesses all forms and activities of the divine wisdom. Moreover it is repeatedly said that the gods have established Agni as the immortal in mortals, the divine power in man, the energy of fulfilment through which they do their work in him. It is this work which is symbolised by the sacrifice.”¹⁰⁰

Similarly, Sri Aurobindo finds that each of the Vedic gods is the symbol of a principle of consciousness. It is through the repetition of their names and descriptions of the qualities of consciousness that they represent, that the poet of the hymns invokes their presence, bringing about by the intention and power of his inspired language an opening to those regions of consciousness in the mind of the hearer. This is the principle that Sri Aurobindo employed in

100 Ibid., p. 65.

the creation of the poem *Savitri*, which is a deliberate invocation of the new consciousness that he realized will characterize the next stage of human evolution. I believe that a careful reading of Heidegger provides sufficient grounds to assume that his effort to “prepare” a breakthrough into a higher region of “thinking” in the destiny of humanity through his writing and his “dwelling in thought,” was motivated by a similar understanding of his mission and of the essential nature of language. Our brain cells and nerves do not create language but have evolved under the pressure of language this organic system of conscious receptivity which makes intelligence possible. Our physical organs are receptors of the powers of consciousness which exist on higher planes of mind, in which we are empowered to “participate” in much the same way that Plato envisioned that human intelligence participates in the plane of Ideas.

Some of the principles of consciousness symbolized by the Vedic gods and conveyed by Sri Aurobindo in his translations and commentaries on the Rig Veda have been reviewed by me in an earlier collection of essays on symbolism titled *Poetizing Spirit*. There I attempted to demonstrate with numerous examples taken from Sri Aurobindo's work and other sources that symbolism is itself the phenomenon of language that constitutes the interface of Being and Knowing, which Heidegger has determined to be the essence of human nature. Selections on the symbolism of the gods were presented there as follows:

I would like to quote a few passages that I think will illustrate quite fully and dramatically the nature of the symbolic significances that Sri Aurobindo assigns to the various Vedic gods and images, which constitute the basis of his psychological and spiritual interpretation of the Veda. In the next few pages of *The Secret of the Veda*, from which these excerpts were taken, we learn these equivalences, for example:

“In Sanskrit the root *dakṣ* means to hurt, kill and also to be competent, able, the adjective *dakṣa* means clever, skillful,

competent, fit, careful, attentive; *dakṣiṇa* means clever, skillful, right-hand, like *dexios*, and the noun *dakṣa* means, besides strength and also wickedness from the sense of hurting, mental ability or fitness like other words of the family. We may compare also the word *dasā* in the sense of mind, understanding. All this evidence taken together seems to indicate clearly enough that *dakṣa* must have meant at one time discernment, judgment, discriminative thought-power and that its sense of mental capacity is derived from this sense of mental division and not by transference of the idea of physical strength to power of mind. We have therefore three possible senses for *dakṣa* in the Veda, strength generally, mental power or especially the power of judgment, discernment. *Dakṣa* is continually associated with *kratu*; the Rishis aspire to them together, *dakṣāya kratve*, which may mean simply, “capacity and effective power” or “will and discernment” (p. 73).

“Indra in the psychological interpretation of the hymns represents, as we shall see, Mind-Power. The word for the sense-faculties, *indriya*, is derived from his name. His special realm is Swar, a word which means sun or luminous, being akin to *sūra* and *sūrya*, the sun, and is used to indicate the third of the Vedic *vyaḥrtis* and the third of the Vedic worlds corresponding to the principle of the pure or unobscured Mind. Surya represents the illumination of the Ritam rising upon the mind; Swar is that plane of mental consciousness which directly receives the illumination. Vayu on the other hand is always associated with the Prana or Life-Energy which contributes to the system all the ensemble of those nervous activities that in man are the support of the mental energies governed by Indra” (p. 73).

“Indra and Vayu awaken in consciousness (*cetathaḥ*) to the flowings of the Soma-wine; that is to say, the mind-power and life-power working together in human mentality are to

awaken to the inflowings of this Ananda, this Amrita, this delight and immortality from above. They receive them into the full plenitude of the mental and nervous energies, *cetathaḥ sutānām vājinīvasū*. The Ananda thus received constitutes a new action preparing immortal consciousness in the mortal and Indra and Vayu are bidden to come and swiftly perfect these new workings by the participation of the thought. For *dhi* is the thought-power, intellect or understanding. It is intermediate between the normal mentality represented by the combination of Indra and Vayu and the Ritam or truth-consciousness" (p. 74).

"Varuna and Mitra, Powers of the Truth, are invoked "accomplishing a richly luminous thought," *dhiyam ghr̥tācīm sādhanā*. This is the first occurrence in the Veda of the word *ghr̥ta*, in a modified adjectival form, and it is significant that it should occur as an epithet of the Vedic word for the intellect, *dhi*. In other passages also we find it continually in connection with the words *manas*, *manīṣā* or in a context where some activity of thought is indicated. The root *ghr̥* conveys the idea of a strong brightness or heat such as that of fire or the summer sun. It means also to sprinkle or anoint, Greek *chrio*. It is capable of being used to signify any liquid, but especially a bright, thick liquid. It is the ambiguity of these two possible senses of which the Vedic Rishis took advantage to indicate by the word outwardly the clarified butter in the sacrifice, inwardly a rich and bright state or activity of the brain-power, *medhā*, as basis and substance of illuminated thought. By *dhiyam ghr̥tācīm* is meant, therefore, the intellect full of a rich and bright mental activity" (p. 75).

"The word *usra* is always used in the Veda, like *go*, with the double sense of the concrete figure or symbol, the Bull or Cow, and at the same time the psychological indication of the bright or luminous ones, the illumined powers of the Truth in man. It is as such illumined powers that the all-gods have to

come and they come to the Soma-juice, *svasaraṇi*, as if to seats or forms of peace or of bliss; for the root *svas*, like *sas* and many others, means both to rest and to enjoy. They are the powers of Truth entering into the outpourings of the Ananda in man as soon as that movement has been prepared by the vital and mental activity of the Ashwins and the pure mental activity of Indra” (p. 89).

“If we turn to Vedic symbols we see that the Ashwa or Horse is an image of the great dynamic force of Life, of the vital and nervous energy, and is constantly coupled with other images that symbolise the consciousness. *Adri*, the hill or rock, is a symbol of formal existence and especially of the physical nature and it is out of this hill or rock that the herds of the Sun are released and the waters flow. The streams of the *madhu*, the honey, the Soma, are said also to be milked out of this Hill or Rock” (p. 93).

“Saraswati means, “she of the stream, the flowing movement”, and is therefore a natural name both for a river and for the goddess of inspiration. But by what process of thought or association does the general idea of the river of inspiration come to be associated with a particular earthly stream? And in the Veda it is not a question of one river which by its surroundings, natural and legendary, might seem more fitly associated with the idea of sacred inspiration than any other. For here it is a question not of one, but of seven rivers always associated together in the minds of the Rishis and all of them released together by the stroke of the God Indra when he smote the Python who coiled across their fountains and sealed up their outflow. It seems impossible to suppose that one river only in all this sevenfold outflowing acquired a psychological significance while the rest were associated only with the annual coming of the rains in the Punjab. The psychological significance of Saraswati carries with it a psychological significance for the whole symbol of the Vedic waters” (p. 93).

“Saraswati is the goddess of speech, of learning and of poetry and Bharati is one of her names, but in the Veda Bharati and Saraswati are different deities. Bharati is also called Mahi, the Large, Great or Vast. The three, Ila, Mahi or Bharati and Saraswati are associated together in a constant formula in those hymns of invocation in which the gods are called by Agni to the Sacrifice” (p. 94).

“The rays in the Veda are the rays of Surya, the Sun. Are we to suppose that the goddess is a deity of the physical Light or are we to translate “go” by cow and suppose that Mahi is full of cows for the sacrificer? The psychological character of Saraswati comes to our rescue against the last absurd supposition, but it negatives equally the naturalistic interpretation. This characterisation of Mahi, Saraswati’s companion in the sacrifice, the sister of the goddess of inspiration, entirely identified with her in the later mythology, is one proof among a hundred others that light in the Veda is a symbol of knowledge, of spiritual illumination. Surya is the Lord of the supreme Sight, the vast Light, *br̥haj jyotiḥ*, or, as it is sometimes called, the true Light, *ṛtam jyotiḥ*. And the connection between the words *ṛtam* and *br̥hat* is constant in the Veda” (p. 95).

“The gods have this consciousness. Agni, for instance, is termed *ṛtacit*, he who has the truth-consciousness. Mahi is full of the rays of this Surya; she carries in her this illumination. Moreover she is *sūnṛtā*, she is the word of a blissful Truth, even as it has been said of Saraswati that she is the impeller of happy truths, *codayitrī sūnṛtānām*. Finally, she is *virapsī*, large or breaking out into abundance, a word which recalls to us that the Truth is also a Largeness, *ṛtam br̥hat*. ...As Saraswati represents the truth-audition, *śruti*, which gives the inspired word, so Ila represents *dr̥ṣṭi*, the truth-vision. If so, since *dr̥ṣṭi* and *śruti* are the two powers of

the Rishi, the Kavi, the Seer of the Truth, we can understand the close connection of Ila and Saraswati” (p. 96).¹⁰¹

The symbols, names, images, and definitions outlined in this seminal work of Sri Aurobindo give us an idea not only of the nature of the gods in the conception of the Vedas as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo, but more importantly a sense of the extent to which he was steeped in this mythos. He translated more than 150 hymns, with a total of over 2000 verses, on which he wrote approximately 500 pages of elucidating commentary. And it is here that we may establish a definitive divergence in the thought of Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo. As mentioned before, Heidegger had no theogony and, as far as I know, in all of his writing he mentioned only the Greek gods Aletheia, in a prominent way, Apollo and Dionysus/Eros, with reference especially to the philosophy of Nietzsche and to a lesser extent the poetry of Hölderlin, and Zeus in his commentary on Heraclitus. Moreover, Sri Aurobindo developed a psychology of Yoga and a metaphysical cosmology based on this mythos as the basis of his evolutionary spiritual philosophy and transformational practice. Heidegger did not include in his voluminous writings on the essence of human nature and its destiny either a cosmology or a theory of evolution to support his vision of the god to come.

Savitri is the creative Word itself in the Vedic theogony, according to Sri Aurobindo's interpretation, who is paired with the highest divine origin of Consciousness as its creative Force, Surya-Savitri. She is the goddess whose descent into human consciousness on earth at this time is the divine force that Sri Aurobindo invokes to bring down the light of consciousness that is necessary, if we are to exceed our present human limitations. As such, she is described variously in the poem *Savitri*, for example, as:

101 Rod Hemsell. 2021. *Poetizing Spirit*. “On Symbolism in the Teaching of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.” p. 14-17. <https://auro-ebooks.com/poetizing-spirit-by-rod-hemsell/>

A mind of light, a life of rhythmic force...
And from her eyes she cast another look
On all around her than man's ignorant view.
All objects were to her shapes of living selves
And she perceived a message from her kin
In each awakening touch of outward things.
Each was a symbol power, a vivid flash
In the circuit of infinities half known;
Nothing was alien or inanimate,
Nothing without its meaning or its call.
For with a greater Nature she was one.¹⁰²

It is of equal importance to note, in this comparative context, that nowhere in his writing has Heidegger indicated what the life of the human Da-sein would be like as a result of the “leap into the openness of Being,” nor has he had anything to say about the nature of the god to come. Sri Aurobindo wrote thousands of pages of metaphysical philosophy and spiritual psychology revealing an explicit awareness of the foundations of Greek mysticism, idealist metaphysics, and the phenomenological reduction that might help to prepare the way, throughout which he established himself as a thinker of the caliber of Heidegger and his other contemporaries, among the outstanding exponents of intuitionism in the 20th century, such as James, Bergson, and Whitehead. But Sri Aurobindo was a poet of the Overmind plane and a dweller in the light of that Supramental inspiration. His destiny was not only to dwell in the stillness or to rise into the region of truth beyond the mind, but to establish a firm foundation for the descent of the powers of that Truth-Conscious plane into the soul, mind, life, and body of humanity on the earth, and to transmit the Word that uplifts and transforms this material manifestation.

To conclude this comparative study of the two great philosophers of the Word in the 20th century, I would like to recall the reflection

102 Op Cit. *Savitri*. p. 357.

to which I was led in my previous study of *The Secret of the Veda* a few years ago, regarding Sri Aurobindo's achievement.

“Brihaspati coming first to birth out of the great Light in the highest heaven, born in many forms, seven-mouthed, seven-rayed (*saptāśyah saptaraśmih*), by his cry dispelled the darkness; he by his host with the Rik and the Stubh (the hymn of illumination and the rhythm that affirms the gods) broke Vala by his cry.” It cannot be doubted that by this host or troop of Brihaspati (*sustubhā r̥kvatā ganēna*) are meant the Angiras Rishis who by the true mantra help in the great victory” (p. 165-169).

Sri Aurobindo developed this idea of the *satya mantra* in later chapters of this text on the hymns to Brihaspati (“Brihaspati gives the Word of knowledge, the rhythm of expression of the superconscient...”), and to Savitri (The Goddess of Illumined Speech who “by the truth is the Creator... by the pressure of consciousness on its own being...”).

And this master idea was later developed in much greater detail in *The Future Poetry*, as well as in other commentaries on Sanskrit scripture in his various books. But what I hope we can take away from this brief exploration is the implication regarding Sri Aurobindo as the *kavi* who uncovered the power of mantra in the Veda and used it to bring down the supramental consciousness and force. This was the *sadhana* (spiritual practice) of the guru of the Integral Yoga and author of the great mantra of transformation *Savitri*, whose power has yet to be fully revealed.¹⁰³

As he has the Divine Mother say in *Savitri*, and as a result of his decades of *sadhana* which made the transmission of this inspired, prophetic Word possible,

103 Op Cit. “On Symbolism...” p. 19-20.

“One shall descend and break the iron Law,
Change Nature's doom by the lone spirit's power.”

But in the writing of *Savitri* from 1926 to 1950 he also recorded the process of that sadhana itself, which he enacted for the purpose of facilitating the descent of the god – the new principle and power of consciousness that is evolving in humanity. The central process of that sadhana was reiterated many times throughout the poem, in much the same way that the invocation of the Vedic gods is reiterated repeatedly throughout hundreds of Vedic hymns, and it forms the basic method of the Yoga of Transformation. The elements of his method are clearly revealed, for example, in the two segments excerpted here from the end of the second section and the beginning of the next section of Book Three, Canto Four, 'The House of the Spirit and the New Creation' – where we may see and hear the identity of the symbol and the reality. Into the stillness created by the yogi's self-sacrifice the force of illumination descends and the presence of the god is affirmed.

On the cosmic murmur primal loneliness fell,
Annulled was the contact formed with time-born things,
Empty grew Nature's wide community.
All things were brought back to their formless seed,
The world was silent for a cyclic hour.
Although the afflicted Nature he had left
Maintained beneath him her broad numberless fields,
Her enormous act, receding, failed remote
As if a soulless dream at last had ceased.
No voice came down from the high Silences,
None answered from her desolate solitudes.
A stillness of cessation reigned, the wide
Immortal hush before the gods are born;
A universal Force awaited, mute,
The veiled Transcendent's ultimate decree.

Then suddenly there came a downward look.
 As if a sea exploring its own depths,
 A living Oneness widened at its core
 And joined him to unnumbered multitudes.
 A Bliss, a Light, a Power, a flame-white Love
 Caught all into a sole immense embrace;
 Existence found its truth on Oneness' breast
 And each became the self and space of all.
 The great world-rhythms were heart-beats of one Soul,
 To feel was a flame-discovery of God,
 All mind was a single harp of many strings,
 All life a song of many meeting lives;
 For worlds were many, but the Self was one.
 This knowledge now was made a cosmos' seed:
 This seed was cased in the safety of the Light,
 It needed not a sheath of Ignorance.
 Then from the trance of that tremendous clasp
 And from the throbbings of that single Heart
 And from the naked Spirit's victory
 A new and marvellous creation rose.
 Incalculable outflowing infinitudes
 Laughing out an unmeasured happiness
 Lived their innumerable unity;
 Worlds where the being is unbound and wide
 Bodied unthinkably the egoless Self;
 Rapture of beatific energies Joined
 Time to the Timeless, poles of a single joy;
 White vasts were seen where all is wrapped in all.
 There were no contraries, no sundered parts,
 All by spiritual links were joined to all
 And bound indissolubly to the One:
 Each was unique, but took all lives as his own,
 And, following out these tones of the Infinite,
 Recognised in himself the universe.¹⁰⁴

104 Op Cit., *Savitri*, p. 322.



12

An Introduction to Yoga Philosophy – Supplement (3)

*(transcribed and edited, from the introduction to a seminar
presented on Oct. 30, 2022)*

A show of hands indicates to me that most of those who are here today don't know very much about the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, so I'm going to proceed more or less in an introductory way, as though we don't know anything. Of course we know so much about everything, what could we possibly be missing?

Nevertheless, let me say that yoga is a process that we engage in, primarily to discipline our minds. In the earliest *sutra* teachings of yoga, Patanjali said, “*chitta vritti nirodha, itti yogaha*” – stilling (silencing) the mind is yoga. There are many practices that go under the rubric of yoga. For example, asana, and meditation, dhyana, and bhakti, devotion to the divine, and karma yoga, which is the yoga of self-giving to the divine through work.

But in Indian yoga systems, it is always assumed in all of these systems, I think it is safe to say, that the random nature of the mind's running about, and its general uncertainty about things, and its tendency to base its function on preferences and desires and judgments, all of these typical behaviors or functions of the mind are obstacles when it comes to realizing “the divine nature of existence.” The divine nature of existence is, in all yoga systems, held to be something in itself, quite other than what the mind thinks and normally takes to be “reality.”

The teaching of yoga assumes that there is a higher reality of existence in itself, which the individual mind, through its perceptions and impressions and judgements, isn't aware of, isn't conscious of, because that divine nature of existence in itself is too large, too vast, and too intense a reality for our little minds to really process. And so, if we, for some reason, – and there can be a variety

of possible reasons, decide that we would like to know that larger divine truth of existence, then the first challenge that meets us is to discipline the mind so that it is not distracting us with all of its common illusions.

And all those common illusions are what we normally take to be reality. So, although we know everything these days, and much of what we know we are able to apply practically, we might easily assume that the mind is quite adequate in itself. We might be quite satisfied with what our mind is able to know and do. On the other hand, we might be quite confused about many things. And we might realize that people with very good minds still commit very grievous errors. And in the world as a whole, there are so many different beliefs and practices and activities that are dictated by the mind, which do not necessarily lead to anything particularly good, in fact may lead to things that are particularly evil, we might start to question the assumptions that we make about this human faculty, which is the distinguishing characteristic of the human species, called the mind.

We might from time to time question the reliability and veracity of what this mind of ours tells us, particularly the rational mind, that we're very proud of, and we have a right to be because that rational mind, especially in the last few hundred years, has come to understand the processes of nature quite thoroughly and has applied that understanding to the creation of a human society based upon science and technology. And that's pretty much reality as far as we know, normally.

I think it was much easier for human beings a thousand years ago or two thousand years ago to question the reliability and veracity of the mind. They didn't know as much as we do now. And life was considerably more challenging than it is today. There was undoubtedly in ancient times a mind that sought to know the divine truth of existence, ...perhaps because life was more difficult and less predictable.

And so we have these ancient traditions in the West, especially from the Greeks, the Hellenic, Platonic, Neoplatonic, and subsequently Christian, traditions of seeking divine knowledge. And in the East we have the Vedas and Vedanta and Mahayana. All of these ancient systems entail processes of purifying and quieting and transcending the mind, and putting consciousness in touch with that divine reality of things more directly. That consciousness is more of an intuitive mind in relation to the mind that we are more commonly familiar with, which is known as the rational mind.

And in contemporary philosophy, in the philosophy of the last hundred years, you might have heard of philosophers such as Bergson in Europe, and Heidegger, and Whitehead. And if anyone has studied philosophy during our lifetime, you will have become aware that this idea of an intuitive mind that puts itself directly in touch with a larger reality, as opposed to the rational mind that deals with cause and effect relationships and impressions and judgments, is thought to be of considerable value by those philosophers.

(Philosophy in the great classical period of Greece and Rome, and in what's known as the medieval Christian period, when the universities actually took root, was based upon the thought of Plato and Aristotle, as was the modern philosophy of the 17th–18th century.) And so, the thinking that has really moved human beings towards the realization of their potentials in the West, has generally been more from that intuitive mind. Then the rational mind just becomes a kind of instrument for trying to achieve the things that the intuitive mind grasps as a whole. And so these philosophers of our day, who profess this understanding, speak of being as a whole. The object to be known by the intuitive mind is being as a whole, or the being of things as a whole, rather than the parts and relations and functions of things, which is the business of the rational, scientific mind.

This is a fundamental knowledge and assumption of the systems of yoga. Whether you pursue an Indian Vedic system, like Raja

Yoga or Jnana Yoga or Kriya Yoga, or Mahayana Buddhism, or Tantra, all of these Eastern disciplines assume fundamentally that the rational mind and the egoistic mind of preferences and desires and practical realities, needs to be disciplined, and perhaps even severely, rigorously, constantly purified and renounced.

To renounce the activity of the rational mind and the egoistic mind of preferences and opinions, that one that you're most familiar with as being yours, all of those yoga systems say, right from the get-go, has to be renounced. Purified, disciplined, but ultimately renounced. There is another mind, another truth, another way of knowing, another way of being, which is approached through the intuitive mind, and which is higher than the rational mind in vibrational quality. And it brings with it, or proceeds from, a kind of delight, a peacefulness, a sense of oneness. A sense of oneness, a perception of oneness, rather than difference.

Yoga, whether it's the yoga of the body or the yoga of the life energy or the yoga of the mind, all of those systems and practices are aiming towards achieving that degree of self-control and mastery that allows or enables the higher mind to function. One of our aims here, one of my aims here, therefore, is to ask the question which these yogas ask, always, and which we must ask: How can this practice of hatha yoga, this practice of asana or of pranayama and breath control, or of purifying the mind and silencing the mind, how can all of these practices be utilized for the purpose of achieving that direct perception of oneness and that immovable peace that goes with it?

How can these practices not be just immediate activities with an immediate aim, but how can they be instruments for realizing this higher goal of yoga, which is the direct knowledge of the divine reality of existence – not as an abstract thought form, but as the reality of existence itself. It doesn't require any interpretation or complex philosophical exercises or scientific experiments. It is what it is. And it is knowable. And knowing that, they say, all is known.

Because all is of That. And it's just our little minds that break it up into preferential and desirable or undesirable categories.

So, we're happy with our preferred categories and we're happy with our judgments and compartmentalizations of things that we like and don't like, and with dedicating our lives to sorting out those differences. It's very habitual. But that habitual life gets upset with yoga, or yoga upsets that apple cart. Because its aim is to see through this screen of illusions, feel through this system of nerves and habits and habitual preferences, so that we can see and sense the truth of things in themselves.

And here is a point at which Eastern and Western spiritual philosophy cross in a very intimate way. It is with the assumption that the truth of things in themselves means that things in themselves are emanations of that one divine reality. And each and every thing that comes into existence has an essential meaning and purpose and quality in itself. It is the soul of the thing, or the being of the thing. This is a common assumption among all of these different spiritual philosophies in the history of human civilization.

We commonly assume, then, that things can be known, for example, these beautiful white roses, not just as immediate forms that we're familiar with, with colors and scents that we like, and we know something about their biology, but that there is a soul of the rose that manifests in every single rose on earth all the time and it never stops. There is a soul of the human being that is essentially all of its highest potentials, that each and every one of us is attempting to realize in our individual ways. The soul of the human being is *the true nature of the human being*.

And in Platonic philosophy this is called the Good. The Good is a principle of existence from which all souls emanate. And if we know that essence of the soul of the human being, if we know the Good in the individual as a potential, then we can relate to that individual in a way that helps the emergence of that potential, helps

the individual realize its potential, because we are seeing in it, in him, in her, in them, that essential truth that their behavior may be clouding, or it may be demonstrating to some extent, and so then our relationship with others and with objects finds a different ground.

The ground of our relationship with things and beings can become the knowledge of the universal, essential truth of whatever the object is. And then the universal truth becomes the object, actually. And the temporal, partial expression is no longer the object that occupies us so much as the essential truth of the thing.

It may go through various stages, like this wonderful white rose will go through many stages. And we can truly identify with its essential beauty through its present temporal beauty. And it intensifies our relationship with the rose. It's not just something that we see and buy in the market because it's pretty and we know it's going to last for a few days and so we put it on the shelf. But in fact, this is an embodiment of the divine power of love. The divine power of love that manifests throughout nature in an infinite variety of ways is particularly obvious and present in this creature. If we tune into it and realize it, it is a particularly pure and perfect expression of that divine principle, love.

End of pt. 1

I would like to pass around to everyone a chart (see below). At the top of this chart you will see The One. The One is at the top. This chart is a synthesis of the Vedic system and the Neoplatonic system, the Eastern and the Western system of metaphysics. And don't try to figure it out right away. I'll just guide you through it. But just sort of take a distant view of it without particularly reading anything in it. And notice that there are three circles.

What unites the mystical, spiritual philosophy of the West and the East is that there is this divine reality of existence known as the One. That One, Tat, *idea tou agathou*, is 'the idea of the good' in Greek.

And that One which is the All, and more, in excess of even the All, is infinite. But this One is also not 'nothing.' This One is the divine truth of existence. And it is generally understood, and by generally I mean in the Eastern and Western spiritual traditions, it is generally understood as a trinity.

So these circles represent a synthetic view, my synthetic view, of the Trinity, which is known by Sri Aurobindo, throughout his philosophy, as the trinity of the Transcendent, the Universal, and the Individual.

The transcendent aspect is spirit. The universal aspect is mind, or intelligence, or knowledge. And the third aspect is soul, or the individual, the individual manifestation of that universal mind and that transcendent spirit. We have in us an aspect or an element of soul, but what we know mostly about ourselves and the world that we live in, are the outer manifestations of that soul, – the body, the life, and the mind. We live in that outer being, but that being is the expression of an essential truth of ourselves, which is one with that divine truth of existence. And it has the potential to manifest the good, the true, the beautiful, the right, the proportionate, the just. Proportionality and justice and right and good and beauty and truth are thought by these various spiritual philosophies to be the truths of that divine reality of existence.

This inner nature makes it possible for things to have a purpose in themselves. Each and everything has a purpose in itself in relation to all the other things that have purposes in themselves because there is this overriding umbrella world of principles. These principles themselves are emanations of that One and they belong in the center circle. And they are sometimes called ideas or in Greek *ideai*, and *logos* – the light of truth, and also in the center circle, in the Neoplatonic system, the divine mind. And in the Eastern system, it is the Mahashakti, the supermind, the Mother. And that center circle as a whole is the primary creative force of existence that emanates from the One. In the Indian system, that primary

creative force of the one has four aspects: truth, power, beauty, and harmony. Well, it's also that in the Greek system. The *logos*, or the *logoi*, are exactly the same four forces of the One, emanations of the One. The One in that system is called *hen*, in Greek. And *hen panta*, means the One-All. This is the fundamental principle of ancient Greek philosophy. In Sanskrit it is Tat Sat. It is That One Reality of Existence.

All of these spiritual and metaphysical systems tell us that we have an element in us that is also That, and therefore we can know it in its true nature through that part of it, which we also are, our soul.

From that central circle of the divine mind comes the world of principles, the plane of principles. In both the Eastern and the Western systems, these powers or emanations, which are of the One, create a world of Gods. The four Logoi, or in Sanskrit the fourfold Devibhava, the fourfold powers of the Divine Mother, these four primary emanations are actually one. Power and truth and love and beauty are actually one force, at that level of truth.

And if we think about it, the creation of truth and power and beauty and love tend to go together, especially in art and music, in nature, and in relationships of all kinds. But for the purpose of manifestation, if we think about all the individuals and species on earth, and all the planets and suns in the galaxy, and the cosmos, and all of the forces of nature that operate in order to sustain life, those four principles are diversified in an infinite variety of ways.

And so I've illustrated a few of those diverse secondary emanations here, or Gods, in the chart. Mind, Life and Body as we know them on earth, for example, are in themselves infinite. They also have infinite manifestations – in all of life, and all the powers of life, and all the web of life, and all the relationships that make life possible. And what life actually is everywhere is the God of life, Vayu. That God is the transcendent principle from which all forms of life emanate, and which they embody. Every aspect of life on

earth is an embodiment of the principle known as Life. But that principle known as life is also something in itself. And even if all these lives perished, that principle would still exist, because it's a God. And it is a power, or an emanation, of that one divine mind, which has been created to diversify in matter the forms of itself, its self, in the forms of matter.

So that God of life has the name Vayu in Vedic Sanskrit. The energy in Matter that evolves into all of these forms, is called Agni, fire, the principle of fire or energy in things. It becomes life force when it's well organized in matter, and at a higher level of organization it also embodies the principles of truth and justice and right and efficiency and order, known as Mind. The God of mind is known as Indra. So in India when they worship Indra in the temples, who is the ancient God of Illumined Mind, what they're thinking or what they should be thinking about is this luminous infinite principle of right and order and justice and harmony. The highest possible conception of mind is just a glance from Indra's all seeing eyes.

Indra is one with that infinite source of truth, the divine mind or supermind, also known as Surya. So you can see the hierarchy beginning to take shape. We have the emanation from the divine reality itself, which is the all-powerful supermind, from which emanates a God that has the job of diversifying that power of Mind in things like justice and harmony and order. Similarly, there is a God that has the job of manifesting Life in molecules and organs, and systems, and a God that organizes the energy of Matter into living forms, and relations, and values and ideals on earth.

(So when we look down below at the Gods on the chart, we find the principles themselves as we normally perceive them. We don't perceive Life as such, but we perceive beings and relationships, we perceive proportionality in the human body, for example. Or in the body of any animal or plant we perceive its qualities of growth, motion, beauty, strength, in plants the shapes and colors of their

parts, but normally not the relationships of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen that make possible the processes of photosynthesis and growth, not without a laboratory and instruments.)

At every level of life, we perceive and analyze rationally the principle of proportionality in things. We perceive among all the different forms of life on earth and especially within species, mutuality. And what is mutuality in all of its infinite forms? Essentially, love. Everything serves the well-being of the whole in some way, as its food, for example. Or as its eater. So the eater eating is eaten.

This is an idea from the Vedic teaching. The exchange of energy that's going on among the members of a species, we recognize to be to a large extent mutuality, and in relation to other species also mutuality, but sometimes it's destructive, sometimes parasitic, and so on and so on. So we have all these biological categories for relationships of love. The life world. But mutuality is a principle that all of them embody. And universality, the similarity that we share, the differences that we share and that we perceive and that exist, similarities and differences, the principles of sameness and difference, the general categories or species of things are embodiments of the principle of universality.

Human beings are all human beings, but each one is a little bit different from every other one. And so the difference and the sameness of things are together, always. And how can difference and sameness be together always? That doesn't sound rational, does it? That doesn't sound mathematically correct or logical, but in fact it's the truth of things. And so this principle of difference and sameness among all types of things that exist, we perceive, and we may call them qualities. Our sense faculties are capable of distinguishing those qualities. And those sense faculties that distinguish qualities distinguish sameness and difference.

And as such they are faculties of consciousness, not abstract mental consciousness, but distinguishing and differentiating sameness

and difference in flowers, for example, is a faculty of consciousness that our senses perform. In Sanskrit our senses are known as *indriyas*. They are creations of Indra. They are embodiments of Indra, the divine mind. We have faculties of consciousness that are embodiments of a divine principle. And in a mythological system we can call it Indra.

In a scientific system we can call it Intelligence. But whatever we call it, it exists in us. And it exists in us because it is *of* the divine consciousness. The divine reality of existence.

So what is represented in the chart is this hierarchy, an abstract hierarchy of principles from the most material structural level back up all the way to the One.

Knowing things *in this way* is different from knowing things scientifically. And it's different from knowing things practically and preferentially. These are different ways of knowing things. Yoga is a system of developing that more universal, hierarchical, intuitive way of knowing things. Yoga is union with the divine reality of existence. So all the practices of yoga should lead to that. And if some practices of yoga have become more narrowly focused, in Hatha Yoga for example, if it's really preoccupied just with achieving extraordinary levels of physical endurance and balance, then it's not really serving this purpose of yoga.

The question must always be, How do we make our disciplines, our activities, even our practice of medicine or engineering or teaching, how do we make these skills and practices channels for the consciousness of the divine reality of existence, the truth and the beauty and the power and the love that are the essence of things? How do we make everything that we do an activity and channel that helps us and prepares us and facilitates that realization. This is the question of karma yoga. Karma yoga means to do everything that you do for the sake of the divine truth of existence, not for the sake of any immediate result. The immediate results are

also for the sake of that higher truth of existence and they are very temporal. But the immediate results pretty much dissolve immediately, of any activity. Even if we think they are going to last forever.

End of pt. 2

Sri Aurobindo wrote a great deal of yoga philosophy, mostly between 1914 and 1922. And at that time he published monthly a journal in which he was writing about eight or ten books. And usually five or six of them at once. And then when he finished some of those, he started other ones. But imagine this. Every month, every year, for seven years, this person is writing, chapter by chapter, eight or ten books.

And then later in his life, they were collated into volumes. So this is one of those volumes called *The Synthesis of Yoga*. But it was actually written on a monthly basis, chapter by chapter. And simultaneously with that was written *The Life Divine*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Secret of the Veda*, etc. And other things were also written, before and after, and ultimately it became 35 volumes of spiritual literature.

So this yogi was a writer, and a highly gifted poet and creative intellect. I don't think that there's anything in the history of literature that's comparable to that. Most people spend a few years writing one book. So that's just an aside. For those who would like to pursue the study of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and Philosophy and Poetry, you can download all of his books from his ashram website. It's www.SriAurobindoAshram.org. And when you open that website, you will see a menu that includes the writings of Sri Aurobindo. And when you click on that, you will see all the books and you can download any PDF right there.

The ashram has been selling his books since they were first published in book form in 1940, mostly written around 1920, and during the intervening time he edited and added to a few. He didn't

make a lot of changes but improved and expanded them. Some of his books weren't published until after his lifetime. But those eight or ten main ones were published as books within his lifetime. In 1940 *The Life Divine* was first published as a book. And in 1943, Sri Aurobindo was nominated by the Nobel Committee for the Prize in Literature. In 1943, there was no prize awarded in literature because of the war. But Sri Aurobindo's work was recognized. Many people in Europe had read it previously in journal form, and when it finally came out in book form, it was widely read.

Nowadays, it isn't so much widely read as it was then, because then was quite different from now. And the interest in such literature and spiritual philosophy was much higher in the first half of the century, the 20th century, than in the second half. Henri Bergson received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1927, and his work is very similar in many ways to Sri Aurobindo's. But nowadays, people don't study Henri Bergson very much either, although his work is still extremely interesting and fascinating, and he also wrote about Intuition. He was at the same time president of the Royal Society of Science and the Society for Psychic Research.

In those days, it was possible to cultivate the whole person more easily than it is today. So, along the lines that I have been speaking about, there is this statement in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, where Sri Aurobindo writes, "In the path of knowledge in India, concentration means that removal of the thought from all distracting activities of the mind and that concentration of it on the idea of the one by which the soul rises out of the phenomenal into the one reality."

You see what are juxtaposed here: the phenomenal reality, the reality of appearances and impressions, and the one reality itself, the truth of existence. "It is by the thought that we dissipate ourselves in the phenomenal. It is by the gathering back of the thought into itself that we must draw ourselves back into the real." So this was, as I said, a fundamental idea in ancient literature, the spiritual literature in the West and in the East.

And Sri Aurobindo is rightly thought to belong to a certain tradition of idealism in the West. He was a student of Greek at Cambridge, in fact a very highly accomplished student of Greek, and then he became a student and master of Sanskrit later. So he has knowledge of both traditions. And when he was nominated for the Nobel Prize, it was on the basis of what was then thought to be a synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophy. Actually, it wasn't really that. It was more a synthesis of Eastern and Western mysticism as expressed mainly by Vedanta. He found the Sanskrit tradition more amenable to the spiritual development that he thought should be the theme of our species, the goal of the higher human species to come.

He says, "This concentration proceeds by the idea." I have attempted to communicate to you today the idea of the higher reality of existence. And that idea in the form of these teachings and in the form of that chart and in the form of many schools of philosophy, is very common and prominent in ancient thought, although it's not very well known in popular media, even in philosophy, these days.

But it is the philosophy of the Ideal Reality, which is the Real Reality. And in Platonic thought, *idea*, the idea, means that emanation of the one reality, seen through the principles of existence. That's what 'idea' meant to them. What we think about idea means whatever we think about something. That's something very different, as you can see. So Sri Aurobindo is restating the philosophy known historically as idealism, but he is stating it as a yogic teaching.

"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." He says that the higher intuition, which we open to through concentration on the idea, can know the truth behind everything that we think normally, but that which we normally think is not the truth of things. However, we have this capacity if we should choose to develop it. "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. By concentration upon the idea, the mental existence which at present we are, breaks open the barrier of our mentality and arrives at the state of consciousness, the state of being, the state of power of conscious being, and bliss of conscious being, to which the idea corresponds and of which it is the symbol, movement, and rhythm.”

The symbol, the movement, and the rhythm of conscious being and bliss is the truth behind things, and it enables them to become what they are. The rhythm of life, the reproduction, the cycle of the rose and its blossoming, and in its falling and in its sedimentation and dissemination and rebirth and new flowering. The idea of the manifestation of beauty in things, symbolized by this rose, is the reality. It is the idea, but the idea is immortal and infinite, and the rose is only a temporal expression of that.

The beautiful Rose. You know, there was once a poet who said, who wrote, “The rose has no 'why'.” (Reference was made by Heidegger to a poem of Angelus Silesius, 17th century, “The rose is without 'why'; it blooms simply because it blooms.”)

So there is the phenomenal consciousness, the consciousness of the appearances of things. And there is the intuition of the true essence of things, which is other than their phenomenal appearance, and yet they are the same. The spiritual reality, the mental, the vital and the physical reality are the same, yet different.

End of pt. 3

In our workshop coming along in a few days, we will explore the principles and practices of Yoga Sutra, Yoga Asana, Yoga Tantra, and Yoga Mantra. Yoga Sutra, Yoga Mantra, Yoga Asana, and Yoga Tantra. But these will be introductory, like today. I'm just introducing some ideas of the Yoga of Knowledge and the liberation of consciousness through concentration.

But we will go into more detail in these different systems, and hopefully have them become experiential so that those who practice or who want to practice will have an idea of how to proceed towards what Sri Aurobindo calls Integral Yoga, which means in the simplest terms to make everything in life an offering and a channel for the realization of the divine truth of things.

Every energizing of the being can be that. And if it is that, then it becomes also the object of knowledge and perception. In other words, it has a communal or transmittable vibrational reality. This idea is very concentrated especially in yoga mantra: the idea that a divine reality or truth of things, truth of the divine reality, is expressed through mantric poetry in a way that is felt and understood by whoever hears it. The idea of mantra is that the energy that is communicated through a certain kind of poetry really does carry the truth itself from the poetizer to the hearer.

And Sri Aurobindo was a practitioner of this particular school of yoga, which comes from the Veda, from the Vedic Rishis, whose hymns are of that sort. And for many centuries, not only in India, it's also present in the ancient Greek tradition all the way down to Neoplatonic times. The theurgical practice, or the divine energizing of spiritual knowledge through inspired speech, was achieved and communicated through a kind of mantric poetry in many traditions.

Sri Aurobindo developed this practice, first through the translation of quite a bit of Vedic literature, which he translated in a very beautiful and powerful way, and commented on and explained in detail. One of the books that he wrote while he was writing many of his books in the *Arya*, he titled *The Future Poetry*, and most of the chapters in this book are about what he calls *mantra*. He foresaw, and prophesied that there could be a time when poetry in general would have this mantric quality.

In this book, he was visualizing the evolution of consciousness through yoga, but he was also visualizing the evolution of con-

sciousness in the human species in general, and therefore at some point he saw a normalization of this spiritual consciousness in humanity, at which point this kind of poetry would convey the divine truth of things, because it would be known by more or less everyone. And he writes about using the forms of English literature, but that are also forms of Greek and Sanskrit literature, using forms of literature that are well established, like lyrical poetry and epic poetry, to convey not those things that such poetry usually conveys, such as the heroic in humanity or the romantic or the appreciation of nature and so on, but to use those forms to communicate the divine essence of things.

And even the heroic spirit in humanity has a divine essence. So there could be a kind of epic poetry which still deals with the principle of the heroic, the heroic principle, but not in terms of battle and bloodshed and, you know, all of the things that happened in the days of Odysseus. Those days are long gone. But now we have various forms of heinous behavior, such as goes on today in Eastern Europe and elsewhere at present, and went on throughout the 20th century in many forms, many world wars. So the human being hasn't moved entirely away from that epic spirit. It can be refocused, however, on higher conquests.

Sri Aurobindo was visualizing a higher evolution and he was visualizing it in terms of psychology and spirituality and economics and government and poetry and art. His poetry is very powerful, and he uses it as a tool to inculcate these values, to communicate these ideas. But also to communicate in a very dynamic and forceful way the energy of transformation, which is much more forceful than what is possible through prose. I would like to demonstrate this to some extent, here. But I would first like to read a few things that he said back then in the 1920s when he was just thinking about it, regarding a certain essential aspect of mantric poetry.

He says, “The mantra,” – and he's not thinking about those short phrases that you learn in Hinduism, which you recite over and over

with your beads. That's Japa. But anyway, he's speaking about something more like the Vedic hymns, where there are hundreds of them, and they are chanted for days at a time, and literally transport consciousness into other levels of realization.

“The mantra is a direct and most heightened and intensest and most divinely burdened rhythmic word, which embodies an intuitive and revelatory inspiration and ensouls the mind with the sight and the presence of the very self, the inmost reality of things, and with its truth and with the divine soul forms of it.”

And then he elaborates a certain principle of mantric poetry. “Rhythm is the premier necessity of poetical expression because it is the sound movement which carries on its wave the thought movement in the word. And it is the musical sound image which most helps to fill in, and to extend, and to subtilize, and deepen the thought impression or the emotional or vital impression, and to carry the sense beyond itself into an expression of the intellectually inexpressible, always the peculiar power of music. This truth was better understood on the whole, or at least more consistently felt by the ancients than by the modern mind and ear. Perhaps because they were more in the habit of singing, chanting, or intoning their poetry while we are content to read ours, a habit which brings out the intellectual and emotional element, but unduly depresses the rhythmic value.”

Many of the things that he writes here are about the importance and value of the rhythmic principle in poetry, and especially mantric poetry. So then he wrote, during the second part of his career, between the time that he finished writing those philosophical books and the time that he passed away in 1950, for about 25 years, he was writing this book of poetry titled *Savitri*. And it conveys all of the ideas that are in all of his philosophy, but in that higher poetic form that he was theorizing back then. And so, for the practitioner who manages to purify and concentrate the mind sufficiently to open into that more intuitive range of essential truths, for one who

learns that discipline and practices it, it becomes possible to tune in to a higher transmission of the divine planes of reality. Everything is an expression of that reality on the earth plane.

But then there are those gods and principles and divine powers that are the essence of all of this phenomenal world. And it becomes possible to express those realities through the more ordinary temporal realities in a way that reveals something that we don't normally see or aren't aware of. For example, in yoga and in tantra especially, one of the goals of tantra, in all the traditions, is to die consciously. For death to be a positive event, – and especially in tantric Buddhism, the practices have been preserved by that tradition.

So this poem, *Savitri*, is about a goddess who manifests on earth to endure mortality and overcome death. And she reveals through poetic expression what this means: to actually conquer death. Savitri is a being from Vedic times who is the creative word. The goddess of illumined speech, Savitri, is manifesting the knowledge of the conquest of death in the symbolic form of a being named *Savitri*. So this poem unites the two extremes. And it's just a symbolic structure. It gives Sri Aurobindo a structure in which he can write about everything from that inspired plane of the goddess.

I would like to read a section, a small section, just two or three pages, that I think express many of the ideas that I have been summarizing, so that we can hear them in a different way, and not just in a different form of expression, but we can hear them with a hearing that is different.

In Indian Sanskrit psychology and philosophy, the *shruti* is an intuitive inner hearing of a truth which is also seen, *drishti*, as what it is. It's the hearing that brings to the presence in consciousness the seeing. So the shruti and the drishti enable us to hear and see something immediately that, as he said in that quotation we heard a minute ago, is intellectually inexpressible. And that in turn awakens in us by the shruti, the *smriti*, which is the inherent memory that we

have of the essence of things. How do we know anything at all about beauty and justice and truth? We naturally know the difference between truth and falsehood and illusion, and what is beautiful and right, and what is just and what isn't.

And we don't learn that from experience. We may read about it and we may be told about it, but how we actually discriminate these things is natural. And it is because the *idea tou agathou*, the idea of the good, is an original emanation from the One that is in the soul of the human being. So, to remember that, is to remember that the divine nature of things is something we already know. It's not something we learn, but it is something we forget. Because we watch television, go to school, become successful marketers, whatever we do. We forget about the cosmic realities, but we know them inherently. They are innate. The term in Latin is *ideae innatae*, (in Heidegger's philosophy the human self, Da-sein, can know the world because it is of the world, and the world is in it, primordially; its knowing is innate.) So one hopes that this mantric poetry of Sri Aurobindo revives in us a memory of things that we already know quite well.

End

Attachments

1. Chart of The One.
2. Recordings of the original presentation and a reading from Sri Aurobindo's Savitri, Book Seven, Canto Two, with an AI Summary. (See: <https://rodhemself.substack.com/p/human-consciousness-and-truth-3>)

Chart of the One

