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THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF

SRI AUROBINDO.

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CHAPTER 1.

## A.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND.

In order to set the perspective for the extraction and presentation of a socio-political philosophy out of the vast synthesis of knowledge that the thought of Sri Aurobindo encompasses, it is a necessary beginning to summarise as concisely as possible the general philosophical conceptions of God, Man, and Cosmos upon which the socio-political doctrine is based. For the social and political philosophy is intimately connected with the general metaphysic of Sri Aurobindo's thought and is really a by-product of his main pre-occupation with creating a Divine Life on earth.

But to encompass in summary form the vast subject of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is indeed a vexing and difficult venture. It would be difficult enough to paraphrase into a series of chapters, for it not only covers varying fields of human life and activity, it also ranges over a number of volumes which are long, sometimes/

long, sometimes not easy to grasp, and still less easy to condense or paraphrase. For works like "The Divine Life", "Essays on the Gita", "Synthesis of Yoga", and "The Human Cycle" present a symphony whose equilibrium lies in the finely geared balance and relationship of their components. And yet the attempt has to be made without throwing the whole underlying harmony out of joint, bearing in mind all the time the wisdom contained in these Platonic words, "If one sins against the laws of proportion and gives something too big to something too small to carry it - too big sails to too small a ship, too big meals to too small a body, too big powers to too small a soul - the result is bound to be a complete upset." (Plato : Laws:691.)

Before making the attempt, the point has to be stressed that we are not here concerned with yet another agile intellectual catalogue of the universe. Anyone who approaches Sri Aurobindo as just another philosopher who speculated on intellectual subjects as a sort of mental gymnastics or as a visionary who indulged/

who indulged in mental outpourings from the seclusion of his retreat is entirely mistaken. Philosophy to Sri Aurobindo has no intrinsic value nor is his main concern the creation of a philosophical system different from any other systems in existence in his day. If his thought has produced a philosophical doctrine, it is only as a step to something else, namely, the transformation of the world and life, the coming of the kingdom of Heaven on Earth. "Our aim is not ..... to found a religion or a school of philosophy or a school of Yoga but to create a ground and a way of spiritual growth and experience which will bring down a greater truth beyond the mind but not inaccessible to the human soul and consciousness. All can pass who are drawn to that Truth, whether they are from India or elsewhere, from the East or from the West." (Letters : Vol 1V. P.55)

All that would be attempted in this introductory survey would be to present in abridged form the central argument or theory concerning the nature and pattern of the Cosmos and its constituents./

its constituents. The foundation of the philosophy which is here being abridged centres around the concept "All is verily Brahman." (Chandhogya Up. III. XLV. 1.) In other words, all that is, is GOD and beside Him nothing else exists. He is, on the one hand, the basis of Creation, ONE and Indivisible, the supporter of all phenomenal manifestations of life, giving Himself equally to all existences. He is also, on the other hand, the Transcendental Divine, beyond all multiplicity, all movement, and utterly beyond description or definition. The ultimate fundamental Reality is the "One Indivisible that is Pure Existence", whose qualities are Pure Consciousness, Pure Existence and Bliss, and it is this Reality that by an act of self-projection creates the material world of nature, giving the impression of division, but actually remaining ONE and Indivisible. "An omnipresent Reality is the truth of all life and existence, whether absolute or relative, whether corporeal or incorporeal, whether animate or inanimate, whether intelligent or/

Keep p. 11, by definition

intelligent or unintelligent; and in all its infinitely varying and even constantly opposed self-expressions, from the contradictions nearest to our ordinary experience to those remotest antinomies which lose themselves on the verges of the Ineffable, the Reality is one and not a sum or concourse. From that all variations begin, in that all variations consist, to that all variations return. All affirmations are ~~denied~~ only to lead to a wider affirmation of the same Reality. All antinomies confront each other in order to recognise one Truth in their opposed aspects and embrace by the way of conflict their mutual Unity. Brahman is the Alpha and the Omega. Brahman is ONE besides whom there is nothing else existent." (The Life Divine : P.34)

One further quotation in the magnificent language of poetic prose will suffice firmly to establish this fundamental concept : "When we withdraw our gaze from its egoistic pre-occupation with limited and fleeting interests and look upon  
the world/

the world with dispassionate and curious eyes that search only for the Truth, our first result is the perception of a boundless energy of infinite existence, infinite movement, infinite activity pouring itself out in limitless space, in eternal Time, an existence that surpasses infinitely our ego or any ego or collectivity of egos, in whose balance the grandiose products of aeons are but the dust of a moment and in whose incalculable sum numberless myriads count only as a petty swarm." .....

"Brahman dwells in all, indivisible, yet as if divided and distributed. If we look again with an observing perception not dominated by intellectual concepts, but informed by intuition and culminating in knowledge by identity, we shall see that the consciousness of this infinite Energy is other than our mental consciousness, that it is indivisible and gives, not an equal part of itself, but its whole self at one and the same time to the solar system and to the ant-hill. To Brahman there are no whole and parts, but each thing is all itself and benefits by  
the whole/



the whole of Brahman. Quality and quantity differ, the self is equal. The form and manner and result of the force of action vary infinitely, but the eternal, primal, infinite energy is the same in all. The force of strength that goes to make the strong man is no whit greater than the force of weakness that goes to make the weak. The energy spent is as great in repression as in expression, in negation as in affirmation, in silence as in sound." (The Divine Life : P.68 - 69)

The idea of transcendental UNITY, ONENESS, and STABILITY behind all the varying forms of the phenomenal world is the basic idea of the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. The world of multiplicity around us presents the picture of constant flux, variation, and change, and all things in it are subject to transience, decay, and modification. But the sum of all this transience and flux is absolutely MOTIONLESS, stable, and fixed; all this throng of animate and inanimate creation is at its centre essentially homogeneous and ONE. The changing world of flux conceals that which is its substratum, that eternal, indefinable Existence/

Dep. 9 26 (Static)

indefinable Existence which is beyond motion, beyond time, beyond variation and modification. This Brahman is not, however, just the sum of all that is in the Universe; it is that and yet immeasurably exceeds it. From the proposition that everything that is, is God, it follows that the created world including the diverse multiplicity which it contains belongs also to that one Existence. This conceptual reduction of the many to the ONE raises difficulties for our minds, conditioned as they are to a tacit acceptance of multiplicity and variety as final characteristics of the world we know. If it is said that the ONE is or has become the MANY, the doubting intellect immediately attempts a "reductio ad absurdum" by raising the question of how a limited human being or a beast or an inert stone could be said to be the Divine. The answer that would probably be appropriate to this type of questioning would be to begin<sup>by</sup>/shedding the mind of its habitual and limited ways of thought and conditioning it to postulates and terms applicable to the type of conception contained in/

contained in the dictum "All is Brahman."

"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. Whatever astronomic or more than astronomic figures you heap and multiply, they cannot overpass or exceed that ONENESS; for in the language of the Upanishad, it moves not, yet is always far in front when you would pursue and seize it. 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/

What is it?

See p. 7

limitation or description by multiplicity and exceeds at the same time all limitation by finite conceptual oneness. Pluralism is an error because, though there is the spiritual plurality, the many souls are dependent and interdependent existences; .... they depend on the ONE and exist by its ONENESS: yet the plurality is not unreal, 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." (The Divine Life : P.304)

Several important questions now arise for consideration. Initially, the problem immediately presents itself of the nexus that exists on this view between the inertia which we usually associate with inscient matter and the effulgence that the mind/

that the mind conceives as the distinguishing feature of spirit. To the ordinary reasoning intellect, there appears, on the surface at any rate, to be a fundamental opposition between matter and spirit. Firstly, matter presents the appearance of a culmination of the principle of Ignorance. Whatever else could be said of it, it certainly does not seem feasible to say that there is an intrinsic consciousness locked away somewhere in matter's iron embrace. In the dark semblance that matter presents, there does not seem to be any basis for the conclusion that it is an aspect of spirit. Secondly, a further fundamental opposition between matter and spirit is the bondage of matter to mechanical Law. By definition, the one Eternal Indivisible Spirit is free, master of itself, creator of Law and not its tool, master of its works and not bound by them. On the other hand, while matter may not be really inert but rather in continuous motion, it is nonetheless true that it is rigidly bound to a fixed and mechanical Law, which is imposed on it, which it does/

See p. 4, with description

which it does not understand nor has created, in much the same way that a machine works inconsciently. Thirdly, matter appears to be the culmination of the principle of division and struggle. In its action, it works either by an aggregation of units or an assimilation which involves the destruction of one unit by another and in either case the result is division and plurality. In the face of this opposition presented by matter, it is not surprising that we find dualistic interpretations of the Universe.

In Indian Philosophy, the system known as Sankhya, that great school of enumeration and generalisation, reduces by a process of generalisation the world of matter to one great ultimate principle, PRAKRTI, which as the final, indestructible principle of matter, rolls out by constant evolution the unending panorama of the world of objects. Sankhya posits a clear cut dualism between Prakrti and Purusha, and it further maintains a belief in a plurality of Purushas to whom Consciousness or

Energy is/

Energy is the common characteristic. A realistic dualism also appears to be the accepted attitude of scientific research. A typical example of the approach of dualistic realism is given by Bertrand Russell who says in "Mysticism and Logic" (P.125):

"Common sense is accustomed to the division of the world into mind and matter. It is supposed by all who have never studied philosophy that the distinction between mind and matter is perfectly clear and easy, that the two do not at any point overlap, and that only a fool or a philosopher could be in doubt as to whether any given entity is mental or material. This simple faith survives in Descartes and in a somewhat modified form in Spinoza, but with Leibniz it begins to disappear, and from his day to our own, almost every philosopher of note has criticised and rejected the dualism of common sense. It is my intention in this article to defend this dualism....." And again at P.143, "If what we have said on these subjects is valid the existence of sense-data is logically independent of the existence of/

existence of mind, and is causally dependent upon the body of the percipient rather than upon his mind. The causal dependence upon the body of the percipient is a more complicated matter than it appears to be, and, like all causal dependence, is apt to give rise to erroneous beliefs through misconceptions as to the nature of causal correlation. If we have been right in our contentions, sense-data are merely those among the ultimate constituents of the physical world of which we happen to be immediately aware; they themselves are purely physical, and all that is mental in connection with them is our awareness of them, which is irrelevant to their nature and to their place in physics."

The possibility that there might be Spirit involved in the material manifestation does not even arise on this interpretation. Such a view is rejected by Sri Aurobindo, whose theory may be summarised in the following argument: Existence is in its activity a Conscious-Force which presents the workings of its force/



of its force to its consciousness as forms of its own Being. Since Force is only the action of one sole-existing Conscious-Being, its results can be nothing else but forms of that Conscious-Being. Therefore, Substance or Matter is only a form of Spirit. Spirit and matter, then, are not opposing principles but different aspects of the ONE Being. "The two are: Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as matter; matter is a form and body of that which we realise as Spirit." (The Life Divine : P.222)

There is, of course, a vast practical difference between the crudeness of matter in its grosser forms and the purity, timelessness, and spacelessness which we are told distinguish Spirit, but according to Sri Aurobindo, the real ONENESS is never abrogated or even impaired, not even in the grossest densities of matter. We arrive at the conclusion, therefore, that there is a conceptive self-extension of the ONE which works itself out in the universe through atomic division and aggregation/

and aggregation as the thing we call Matter, and that Matter is still, ~~being~~ Brahman in its self-creative action.

The same reasoning is consistently applied to the other major problem which concerns the conception of MAN and of his relation to Brahman. In accordance with Upanishadic teaching, Sri Aurobindo holds that the Absolute, Transcendent Self of things is also the Self of living beings, the Self too of man, the highest of the beings living in the material plane on earth. The Upanishadic "That Art Thou" is interpreted to mean not only that Brahman is the Real Self in man, but also that the Real Self in individual man is as complete because identically the same as the Transcendent Self in the Universe, for the Transcendent Self is indivisible and the sense of separate individuality is one more of the appearances which afflict the manifestation of phenomenal existence. "The one infinitely variable Spirit in things carries all of himself into each form of his omnipresence; the Self, the Being is at once  
unique in/

unique in each, common in our collectivities and one in all beings. God moves in many ways at once in his own indivisible unity." (The Problem of Rebirth: P.60) The Supreme Being is the source of all manifested existence whose purpose is that it should grow progressively in consciousness until it becomes transformed, even in the depths of the material inconscience.

Man, as the highest evolute of this evolving consciousness in matter, is the front line of the advance. Is it then feasible to conclude that the "I" which in ordinary usage is taken to be our individuality is the equivalent of this Real Self in us?

The answer is most emphatically in the negative. Our "I" is NOT that spiritual being of which we can assert "Thou Art That." In the emergent progression of consciousness, there arises a centralisation of our surface consciousness which forms a sort of integrating core of the activities of nature in us and it is to this that we give the name "ego". This ego is really only a practical device of our consciousness devised to centralise the activities/

the activities of Nature in us. This ego consciousness persists only so long as the sense of individuality persists. When in mystic states of consciousness, this sense of individuality is superceded, the consciousness of a separative ego also vanishes and there no longer remains an "I" as distinct from a "Thou".

"It is this ego-sense that gives a first basis of coherence to what otherwise might be a string or mass of floating impressions; all that is so sensed is referred to a corresponding artificial centre of mental consciousness in the understanding, the ego-idea. This ego sense in the life stuff and this ego-idea in the mind maintain a constructed symbol of self, the separative ego, which does duty for the hidden real self, the spirit of true being." (The Life Divine: P.495) The ego therefore cannot be the Real Self - it is only "the lynch-pin invented to hold together the motion of our wheel of nature." (The Life Divine: P.495) The real self in Man is what Sri Aurobindo calls the Jivatman, which, in his philosophy has

two forms/

two forms. That which is called Jivatman proper is our true being, which is above the manifestation of life and directs the whole movement in its secret ineffable way. That which is called the psychic being is the Jivatman concerned as the force which stands behind mind, life, and body. While the Jivatman is above the life manifestation and presides over it, the psychic being stands behind the life manifestation and support. The distinction is a subtle and delicate one, not easily intelligible in ordinary mental terms for its truth can only be established ultimately by an experience of identity that is beyond our mental reasoning capacity; but what is important in this survey is to note that our inmost Self of which we can say "That Art Thou" is the Jivatman or psychic being, and not to confuse that with one or other of the surface parts of our mental or vital being. The ego personality which is dominated by the division of consciousness, by the urge to separativeness, merely screens the Divine within in sheaths of mental/

of mental, (using mental in the sense of that which specially deals with cognition, thought perceptions, and the reaction of thoughts to things) vital, (using vital in the specialised Aurobindonian sense of that part of our nature which is made up of desires, sensations, emotional responses, and ambitions) and physical ignorance. While recognising that "nothing is more difficult for us than to get rid of egoism while yet we admit personality" (Synthesis of Yoga : P.246) nevertheless the aim of the discipline for which this philosophy of the Universe is a prelude is to strip from the individual all these sheaths of ignorance which obscure and distort the image of the True Self. But in this process, would it follow that there would be an annihilation of individuality? Would "our end be to disappear and dissolve into some universality of matter, life, mind or spirit or else some indeterminate from which our egoistic determinations of individuality have started." (The Life Divine : P.332)

The loss of/

The loss of egoism, the conquest of the exclusive concentration of consciousness on a separative movement would not mean a loss of personality for the ego is not the final term of our Individuality. It would only mean a shedding of Ignorance and the Transformation of Personality into the image of an original perfection which is already inherent in the divine inner Self of Man. For the purposes of what is intended as a background to a survey of Sri Aurobindo's socio-political philosophy, it is not strictly necessary to pursue the inquiry into a discussion of the practical steps or yogic discipline through which the transformation of the human personality has to be sought. What we have to note, however, is that Man, constituted as we have described him, and being ultimately "the concentration within limits of Space and Time" (The Divine Life: P.45) of the Divine All has, in spite of all other trends and urges to the contrary, a mighty task which he has to perform, the task of transforming his personality by rising from the level of his/

level of his egoistic, separative fixation of consciousness into the supramental consciousness. In other words "the ascent to the Divine Life is the human journey, the work of works, the acceptable sacrifice. This alone is man's real business in the world, and the justification of his existence, without which he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which has managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe." (The Life Divine : P.42 - 43)

From the two great propositions which we have already established - namely, firstly that Brahman alone is the Supreme Reality, the basis and upholder of creation and immanent in everything from Man to the most primitive single living cell, from celestial bodies and solar systems to simple stones, Brahman who in addition also exceeds immeasurably his creation, and secondly, that since all is God, then all that exists in its myriad variety of organic and inorganic manifestations, is also

ONE existence/



ONE existence - a further corollary which is very important in Sri Aurobindo's thought follows. This corollary is the conception of Evolution, which Sri Aurobindo sees as gradual unfolding through aeons of time of the Divine Essence that is muted in Matter, from the most dense, crude, and tamasic origins to a full efflorescence in the consummation of Spirit. The condition of this Evolution is the Involution of the Divine Essence, the One Eternal Reality of Spirit, in the apparent slumber of matter. The very conception of the principle of Evolution presupposes a prior Involution, which sets the pattern of the Evolution that is to follow. Because of the Involution of Brahman in Matter, Evolution must then be an emergence of this Existence, this Consciousness, this Bliss or Force, in innumerable forms that express or disguise it. "Out of the Inconscient, Existence appears in a first evolutionary form as substance of matter created by an inconscient Energy. Consciousness, involved and non-apparent in matter, first emerges in the/

emerges in the disguise of vital vibrations animate but  
subconscient; then in imperfect formulations of a conscient  
life, it strives towards self-finding through successive forms  
of that material substance, forms more and more adapted to its  
own completer expression." (The Life Divine : P.609) It is  
interesting to note that certain modern psychologists incline  
to the acceptance of the view that Evolution presupposes some  
form of Involution, though the concept is not as thoroughly  
worked out as in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Rolf Alexander,  
writing in a recent publication entitled "The Power of the  
Mind", says: "Before there could have been an evolution, there  
must have been an involution. Just as the possibilities of a  
human adult must be concentrated within the microscopic,  
fertilised, human ovum, so the possibilities of the immense  
body of nature must have existed in the first microscopic bit  
of protoplasm formed on earth. Somehow, somewhere, these  
possibilities must have been envisioned, abstracted and brought  
together, then/

together, then concentrated in that first living form." (P.120)

Evolution, then, is in its action an inverse of the original Involution of Spirit in Matter. Even in its early stirrings, there is already, in what appears to be Inconscient, the first signs of sensation coming towards the surface. Plant life contains within itself the first promise of the animal, and animal life in its turn reveals the obscure movements of feeling and the beginnings of conception that are the first ground for man the thinker. In his turn "man the mental being is sublimated by the endeavour of the Evolutionary Energy to develop out of him the spiritual Man, the fully conscious Being, man exceeding his first material self and discoverer of his true self and highest nature." (The Divine Life : P.758) The nature of Evolution, on Aurobindo's view, therefore makes it not only possible but also inevitable that there should be an emergence of Spirit in its true and distinct character, not remaining as it is now, a subordinate feature of which we only get rare intimations/

get rare intimations in our more elevated moments, but determining Itself as a new power which will finally encompass the mental part and exceed it as the leader of Life and the material manifestation.

We can therefore say that of world creation there have been three primary and decisive steps. Firstly, there was the Involution of the Divine into the obscurity of Substance. Matter was created as the basic and static foundation. Secondly, there began a progressive emergence of the imprisoned, involved Divine Force out of the inconscience of matter, in expressions of animal or vital life. Thirdly, there came into being the thinking individual, Man, possessing a conscious, though at first vague and indeterminate awareness of the Divine Existence and the world of Perfection of which it contains a promise, beyond the world of struggling life and groping thought. The seeming disintegration of the Infinite Vastness of the pure Divine Nature in its descent into Cosmos was therefore an inevitable step/

See Cont.  
p. 7

inevitable step in order to establish finite centres of Itself, so that a concentrated action in infinite series and permutations could effectuate the evolutionary plan inherent in the original creative Idea. The Individual therefore came into being as a finite and limited centre of action; and the evolutionary plan makes it inevitable that he should, even through his constricted orbit of action, increasingly develop his potentiality in the direction of an infinite range of freedom and expansiveness. For the Infinite is not only the source of the individual, it is also the central essence and kernel of his being. The movement so briefly sketched here, however, must, if it is to be placed in its right perspective and proportion, be viewed "sub specie aeternitatis" for it has been spread over aeons of time, since indeed Eternity is the playground of the Infinite. Along this trail of reasoning we are led to the audacious belief that we are by nature bound to seek for and attain a higher level of consciousness for the mental being cannot rest/

being cannot rest on his laurels on the supposition that Evolution has reached its acme, its final point, in him. Just as man exceeds the animal from which he evolved, so must we now proceed to the evolution of the higher man, the Superman, in whom Spirit will <sup>e(?)</sup> overtap mentality, and who will exceed our present limited, divided action in the same measure that separates Man from animal.

The concept of Supermind traverses ground of the most abstruse character, and it would be outside the province of this introduction to follow the ramifications of this metaphysic. In essence, however, the Supermind or Truth Consciousness would seem to be an intermediate functioning of consciousness between the Pure Essence of Brahman and the inferior functioning of ordinary mental consciousness.

Supermind is not the absolute self existence of the Supreme Being, but it is His Nature and the operation of His self-ordering in the Universe. It lies at the summit of our being and between it/

and between it and our human mentality, Aurobindo discerns several distinct intermediary stages, but to attain to Supermind and to dwell in it permanently is the consummation of the spiritual man. In this supreme endeavour, we can be guided by the truth that mind itself contains though in concealed form, some essence and potentiality of Supermind, by which it can ultimately be transformed into a receptive vehicle that is fully responsive to the Divine Light. The working of Supermind is that of a Supreme Harmony, which is wholly foreign to our diffused mental process.

On this theory of Evolution, therefore, Man in his present stage of development as a mental being, is certainly not the peak or apotheosis of creation. To hold that he is would be merely to limit the Divine purpose in the manifested universe and to offer humanity no further hope of progress. The present terms of body and life and mind are not by any means ends, but are "inactive pregnant gestation of all that is yet to be unfolded/

to be unfolded by the Spirit." (Problem of Rebirth: P.53) The goal towards which we are inexorably progressing with all the certitude of a preordained determinism is the goal of a Life Divine on Earth. "As there has been established on earth a mental consciousness and Power which shapes a race of mental beings and takes up into itself all of earthly nature that is ready for the change, so now there will be established on earth a gnostic consciousness and Power which will shape a race of gnostic spiritual beings and take up into itself all of earth nature that is ready for this new transformation." (The Life Divine : P.859)

The purport of this introductory exposition and its relevance to the socio-political theory that is to follow should now become apparent. Sociology and political theory, indeed the development of social and political institutions, are not ends in themselves - they only have meaning when viewed against the background of the Universal Spirit, which not only manifests Itself in man but also covertly directs every phase of the growth of his/



growth of his social and political institutions, the Spirit which is greater and deeper and wider than his intellect and impels towards a perfection that is ultimately irresistible in spite of surface appearances to the contrary, and that cannot be barred by the arbitrary constructions of the human reason. The whole process, then, of socio-political growth is the result of this secret impulsion of the Eternal Spirit, the Zeitgeist or Kali, which is ceaselessly and secretly working towards its greater and more complete self-manifestation on the plane of our earthly existence. To put it metaphorically, we may say that the Zeitgeist or the Spirit that is Universal, working on the loom of Time spins out the fabric that we call History or Socio-Political growth and development. Of course, this conception is an Integral One, viewing the whole historical process "sub specie / <sup>aeternitatis</sup> ", along the corridors of Time which may embrace centuries in its scope. Since the intellectual or rational man is not the summit of manhood, similarly the

rational or/

rational or democratic or communistic or totalitarian society is certainly not the acme of the development of aggregate human life. Only in spirituality is there any prospect of perfection both for the individual and communal man. And by spirituality is implied the growth of a community of supramental or gnostic individuals, whose minds would be in direct communion with the Supermind. No mere economic rationalisation or political organisation, no matter how rigidly organised or controlled, can by itself stem the breeding of social and political discord, if it is not finely geared to the metaphysic of the Spirit involved in matter that is inwardly seeking expression. The only solution is the growth of an identity consciousness in the Spirit which by its very nature would make for mutuality, harmony, and unity. Only the dawn of a consciousness which will recognise that the transcendental, the cosmic, and individual aspects of the Spirit that <sup>are</sup> is united in Matter, are really equal poises of the Divine Reality would solve the problems involved in the adjustment/

in the adjustment between the collectivity and the individuals who constitutes the collectivity. In developing the social and political theory of Sri Aurobindo, we shall have to deal with the ordinary sociological, economic, and political forces and instruments which are the normal subjects of investigation, but we shall in addition have to go beyond these in our search for spiritual sources of governance, if we are to arrive at an enduring and true socio-political philosophy.

Is it (a) that whatever is, is part of the determined  
evolution  
or (b) that it is possible to distinguish between  
'proper' development & aberrations ?

B.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND ITS TYPE.

If Philosophy could be broadly defined as the intellectual search for the fundamental truth of things, then that branch of the study known as Political Philosophy may be regarded as the intellectual search for the fundamental truth of things social and political. The special problems which concern man's political obligations are those which naturally grow out of and as a result of a consideration of man's ethical relations with his fellow men. In the realm of this particular search, it must be conceded that there is no clearly defined branch of Political Philosophy in Indian thought as there exists in Western thought. With its various schools, each with its own special contribution of a particular attitude to the subject, classical Indian Philosophy was primarily concerned more with metaphysical problems of the nature of ultimate Reality and with the problems of discovering the mechanics of spiritual liberation. It is true that diverse rules relating to social and political obligation are to be found in the Dharma Shastras and particularly in the Laws of Manu, but these cannot be classified as falling within the ambit of philosophical thought.

Taking a general view, Indian Philosophy presents the picture of a number of different schools of thought, each having the distinct characteristic of trying to solve the problems of human destiny/

Philosophy (??) ?

human destiny by providing a well-regulated system of metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics together with, in the majority of cases, a prescribed discipline aimed at securing liberation or release from bondage for its adherents. But there is nothing analogous to the well-recorded history of Western Political thought from Plato down to our day. The luminaries of the Indian philosophical scene, Mahavir, Gautama the Buddha, Patanjali, Shankara, Ramanuja and others were concerned primarily with such metaphysical problems as the attainment of liberation, escape from suffering, the nature of the self, the nature of Brahman, and the release from the sway of nescience. The founder of each major philosophical system in India is also called a "Rishi" or "Seer" and the traditional conception of the ultimate relation between Religion and Philosophy is further demonstrated by the fact that the word for philosophy is "DARSANA" which etymologically is equivalent to "seeing".

The break in this tradition and the beginning of the growth of a social and political emphasis in religio-philosophical thought may be traced to the time when that great social, political, religious, and educational reformer of modern India appeared on the national scene - Raja Ram Mohun Roy (1774-1833). The organisation named the Brahmo Samaj which was Raja Ram Mohun Roy's legacy to the Indian Renaissance, strove not only for religious reform, but also for social and political uplift/

political uplift. After his passing, the religious consciousness of renaissance India began gradually to awaken to the contradiction between its Vedantic belief in the inherent divinity of MAN and its indifference to the wretchedness of the general mass of the population. Swami Vivekananda, one of the heroes of this movement towards social and political emphasis in thought and action, gave powerful utterance to the call for social uplift - "Let the study of the Vedanta and the practice of meditation be left over to the future life. Let this body be dedicated to the service of others." ( ? )

Definite contributions to genuine political philosophy are to be found in the writings of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, of Mahatma Gandhi, and to some extent in some of the works of Sir S. Radhakrishnan, but none of the Indian religious thinkers and mystics has done more than Sri Aurobindo (1872 - 1950) in seeking to provide an Integral Political Philosophy based on a grand synthesis of the wisdom of the East and the West, ancient as well as modern. It is a corollary to his Yoga that it is not enough to study man's individual self-development, and its principles and methods are geared to the goal of founding an integral Divine Life on earth, a new life of the race - a new life both individual and collective. The consequence is that the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo has also produced a well-defined system of political theory as well.

For a proper/

For a proper assessment of the political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, it now remains to consider the question of exactly what type of political theory is contained in his thought. Broadly speaking, Western philosophers may be divided into two main schools whose primary difference concerns differing conceptions of the scope of philosophy. The school of Philosophy known as Empiricism is rooted in the basic view that "a priori" thinking cannot by itself establish a truth about the existing world and that propositions relating to the world can only be established by empirical observation. The contrary view that "a priori" thinking can by itself pronounce truths concerning the world is the chief distinguishing character of the school of philosophy known as Rationalism. These divergent viewpoints, stated very briefly, have correspondingly important consequences for Western political thought. For the basic philosophical postulates from which one begins ultimately ~~to~~ determine the nature of the political philosophy at which one arrives. Political Philosophy usually takes the form of an attempt to justify certain assumptions about the methods and aims of government on the basis of a moral argument that certain forms of government are morally justifiable. For instance, starting from the view that an ethical concept has an "a priori" basis, one would naturally proceed to hold a similar view with reference to the nature of political obligation; while a belief in the empirical origin of duty would/

duty would lead to a belief in the empirical origin of political obligation.

Thus we get Political Philosophies called Idealistic and others which have a materialistic basis. The former have also been called Moral Theories of the State, while the latter have also been designated as Naturalistic Theories of the State. Moral theories claim justification for government upon categorical moral grounds, while Naturalistic theories seek to justify government upon grounds which are conditional upon the desire for the attainment of certain ends.

Moral Theories of the State fall under two main headings, depending on whether the good of the STATE or that of the individual is considered primary. Where the good of the State is considered paramount, the resulting political theory has been referred to as the Organic or Collectivist Theory and where the individual's interest has been held inviolable, the corresponding political philosophy has been termed Individualist, which, in turn, has been named Utilitarian when it defines the moral ideal as pleasure, that is to say, when the methods and aims of government are judged to be good only in so far as they are useful in promoting "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". Hobbes, Bentham, and Mill are the most prominent exponents of this doctrine. The Idealist or Moral Theory has received support and clear statement in recent times

by Bosanquet and/

*Utilitarian*      *no difference - both*  
*individualist?*



by Bosanquet and T.H.Green, but its outstanding representative is the German philosopher Hegel, who takes the extreme stand that in the State generally and in the Law of the State particularly, there is the external manifestation of the universal consciousness which through the ages is thus gradually objectifying itself.

The Idealistic theories of the State, though they differ on particular points, are agreed on certain basic points. Firstly, the State lives and has a soul. Though the State is a whole brought into being by the coming together of individual persons, it yet transcends them and has an independent existence. Secondly, this soul is conscious in its citizens. Thirdly, this soul represents the true will of each individual citizen. There are, of course, theories such as Communism which are difficult to classify readily, for Communism starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support life and next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; its emphasis is to seek in economics and not in philosophy the causes that have produced and destroyed every social system that has ever appeared on earth. According to it, all the institutions of any society whatsoever, ethical, religious, legal, and aesthetic are the by-products of the fundamental economic structure. Communism, is therefore a strictly materialistic interpretation of the political process and it admits of ~~no~~ other criterion in its dogmatic theory.

*Then on your basis what is the  
difficulty of classification?*

In considering the/

In considering the question, which is the main purpose of this analysis, of the relation of Sri Aurobindo's political philosophy to the political schools of Western thought, the point has to be observed that all the divergent theories of Western Political Philosophy have essentially one feature in common - namely, they all confine their enquiry strictly within the limits of the ordinary human Reason or Intellect. The validity of this proposition is not diminished by the fact that there are notable exceptions to it, particularly in the doctrines of certain post Kantian philosophers such as Schopenhauer who did not conceal his indebtedness to Vedantic Idealism, and Bergson who conceived of intellectual Thought or Reason as a spatialising activity opposed to Intuition which alone was qualified to reveal the true nature of Reality. It is nonetheless true that by and large, and even more so in the realm of Political Philosophy, the Western Philosopher has accepted Reason as the sole director of his search for the fundamental truth of things, just as much as it is a truism of Indian Philosophy that it refers to the Real as something which cannot be grasped by reasoning or by logical methods. Even an idealistic philosopher like Hegel did not endeavour to reject the sway of Reason, and he tacitly accepted the paramountcy of Reason in the doctrine that the "Real is the Rational". The classic statement of this general attitude to Reason is given by Bertrand Russell in "Mysticism and Logic" (P.17) where he

declares -/

declares - "Intuition in fact is an aspect and development of instinct, and like all instinct, is admirable in those customary surroundings which have moulded the habits of the animal in question, but totally incompetent as soon as the surroundings are changed in a way which demands some non-habitual mode of action..... In such matters as self-preservation and love, intuition will act sometimes (though not always) with a swiftness and precision which are astonishing to the critical intellect. But philosophy is not one of the pursuits which illustrate our affinity with the past; it is a highly refined, highly civilised pursuit, demanding for its success a certain liberation from the life of instinct, and even, at times, a certain aloofness from all mundane hopes and fears. It is not in philosophy, therefore, that we can hope to see intuition at its best. On the contrary, since the true objects of philosophy, and the habit of thought demanded for their apprehension, are strange, unusual and remote, it is here, more almost than anywhere else, that intellect proves superior to intuition....."

On the other hand, the attitude of the Indian seer is well illustrated in the remarks of C. Johnston in "The Great Upanishads" (Vol. 1. P.83) "All Rationalistic philosophies end, and inevitably end, in Agnosticism. This is the one logical conclusion to the search for knowledge by that instrument ..... having been inspired and set in motion by intuition, the rationalistic philosopher instantly turns his back upon intuition and commits/

and commits the task to the lower mind, which is incapable of finding the answer." This attitude to the quest for the fundamental truth of things places the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in a category apart when compared with the traditional types of Western Idealistic Thought. To Sri Aurobindo, the Reason is a "chained and hampered sovereign of our ordinary human consciousness". The Reason is an appropriate instrument if it is confined to the field in which it was meant to operate, namely, the field of material finite things. In "The Life Divine" (P.424) Sri Aurobindo refers to reason in the following terms:- "... it cuts the whole into segments and can select one segment of the whole as if it were the whole Reality. This is necessary for its action since its business is to deal with the finite as finite, and we have to accept for practical purposes and ~~with~~ <sup>for</sup> the Reason's dealings with the finite and cadre it gives us, because it is valid as an effect of Reality and so cannot be disregarded." The point is even more clearly brought out in the following excerpt from "The Riddle of this Universe". "All European metaphysical thought ..... does not in its method and result go beyond the intellect. But the intellect is incapable of knowing the Supreme Truth: it can only range about searching for Truth and catching fragmentary representations of it, not the thing itself, and trying to piece them together..... At the end of European thought therefore, there must always be Agnosticism, declared or implicit..... In the

East, especially/

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East, especially in India, the metaphysical thinkers have tried as in the West, to determine the nature of the highest truth by the intellect. But, in the first place, they have not given mental thinking the supreme rank as an instrument for the discovery of Truth, but only a secondary status. The first rank has always been given to spiritual illumination and intuition and spiritual experience; an intellectual conclusion that contradicts this supreme authority is held invalid."

cf 44. The entire monolith of Sri Aurobindo's thought rests upon the basis of Reason, <sup>except</sup> and where Reason is not adequate or qualified to enter, upon Intuitive Insight and experience, to which pride of place is given in the enquiry. For it is the natural tendency of Intuition to see things integrally, and to proceed to a comprehensive synthesis and unity of knowledge. The spontaneous tendency of the Reason, on the other hand, is towards analysis and division and to it consequently is assigned a subordinate place as the appropriate instrument to hold sway over the objective world of finite things. According to the traditional Indian interpretation, Western political thought, as illustrated by the schools of philosophy sketched above, moves under the aegis or guidance of the mind. Its attempts to plumb the depths of Reality have all been, from the standpoint of Indian Yogic methods, purely mental outpourings "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought". On the other hand, the typical Aurobindo approach is by direct realisation, using methods/

using methods which would be strangely alien to orthodox Western philosophy, namely, concentration, meditation, a Yogic widening and deepening of consciousness, spiritual discipline, all of which are intended to create a favourable background for direct intuition or awareness. The results of this intuitive awareness are then translated to mental terms to make them familiar or intelligible to the ordinary intelligence.

The consequence is that we are, in the philosophy of Aurobindo, concerned with a dimension in philosophical enquiry, in which the ordinary instruments of intellectual search with which philosophers of the Empirical and Rational schools dealt, are supplanted and the enquiry is based ultimately on the data furnished by Intuitive experience. This standpoint therefore, cannot be conveniently categorised into either of the two schools to which reference was made earlier, and may perhaps be best described as a Supra-Rational or Spiritual approach to Reality.

The Political Philosophy which flows from such a Supra-Rational general philosophical view, must of necessity bear a supra-rational character. As a political philosopher, Sri Aurobindo, unlike the Communist who rigidly adheres to an economic and materialistic determinism, accepts spiritual determinism in history. He discerns the working of the divine Hand behind the apparently meaningless and contradictory events of history. One is tempted to say, with Shakespeare that Sri

Aurobindo would/

Aurobindo would see "something divine even in the fall of a sparrow". History is the materialisation, the continuous self-revelation of the Absolute, the Cosmic Brahman. Behind every event the eye of the seer could decipher the will of God, and as a mystic he declares that God is the author and captain of all historical process. In the "Ideal of the Karmayogin" (P.76) this attitude is clearly expressed: "This is the greatness of great men, not that by their own strength they can determine great events, but that they are serviceable and specially forged instruments of the Power which determines them. Mirabeau helped to create the French Revolution, no man more. When he set himself against it and strove, becoming a prop of monarchy, to hold back the wheel, did the French Revolution stop for the back-sliding of France's mightiest? Kali put her foot on Mirabeau, and he disappeared; but the Revolution went on, for the Revolution was the manifestation of the Zeitgeist, the Revolution was the will of God." According to the Gita, the hero or the ~~the~~ leader is only an instrument of God, and in this respect the political theory of Sri Aurobindo represents a fusion of the ideas of the Gita and Hegelian Idealism, for to Hegel also History was a process which represented the objectification of the Absolute in Time, just as Nature was the objectification of the Absolute in Space.

But the Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo could not be termed Moral or Idealistic alone, though there are elements in it/

elements in it of the characteristics of the moral or Idealist Theory. It is, for instance, certainly ORGANIC, in its insistence that the State is not a mere aggregation of separate individuals but a solidarity or an organism of which each individual is a definite part. "A people, a great human collectivity, is in fact an organic living being with a collective or rather - for the word collective is too mechanical to be true to the inner reality - a common or communal soul, mind or body." ("The Spirit and Form of Indian Polity" : P.19)

Nor could it be described as a Naturalistic or Utilitarian Theory, though it partakes of elements of these theories, since it aims at establishing a harmonious relation between the Society or whole of which the individual is a part and the individual who goes to make the society. One of the cardinal principles of Benthamite Utilitarianism, in fact a principle which is either expressly or covertly to be found in most of the writings of political theorists from Aristotle to Laski, namely "the greatest good of the greatest number", is rejected in the political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in favour of the broader concept of the good of all. Nor is there any place in Aurobindo's scheme for the doctrine that the sovereign criteria for all morality are pleasure and pain. Since the ultimate Reality is the spiritual being, a man should try in his personal and political career to realise the good of all living creatures/

*Utopia → Totalitarianism*



living creatures.

Being a product of thought which is not confined exclusively to the Intellect or Reason, but which derives its sanction and authority from Intuitive awareness, the political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo is integral in outlook. The conclusion, then, to which one is inevitably led is that the Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo transcends the ordinary divisions into which schools of political theory are usually classified and may best be described as a Supra Rational, Integral, or Spiritual approach to socio-political problems.

*Have you considered carefully any  
particular thinker's pol. phil.?  
Hegel? Green in particular?*

CHAPTER 11.

A.

HUMAN SOCIETY : ITS NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT.

The question of the relation between the Individual and Human Society is one of the stock questions of sociology and there are generally two stock answers to it. One is the utilitarian idea that the individual is a Reality which is capable of existing and of being apprehended by itself and that a Society is nothing but an aggregate of atomic individuals. The other view is that the reality is the Society which is a complete entity by itself, of which the individual is only a part - a part that cannot exist by itself or be conceived as existing in any other capacity or setting. This latter view is critically presented by G.D.H.Cole in "Social Theory" (P.13) "Again and again, social theorists, instead of finding and steadily employing a method and a terminology proper to their subject, have attempted to express the facts and values of society in terms of some other theory or science. On the analogy of the physical sciences, they have striven to analyse and explain society as mechanism, on the analogy of biology they have insisted on regarding it as an organism, on the analogy of mental science or philosophy they have persisted in treating it as a person sometimes on the religious analogy that they have come near to confusing with a God."

Neither of these/

Neither of these two views accurately fits Sri Aurobindo's concept of society. The utilitarian view is rejected as having a basis too narrow, as a view that takes cognisance of the superficial only while being blind to the inner reality. It is true that Aurobindo conceives of society as an organism. "The nation or society, like the individual, has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind all these signs and powers for the sake of which they exist." ("The Human Cycle": P.37) But this organic attitude does not obscure the fact that society is ultimately a system of relations. Ultimately, the fact remains that human society is a system of relationships between human beings who are not only individuals, but are also social animals in the sense that they could not exist at all without being in this relationship to one another. In the first volume of the "Study of History", Toynbee gives a more acceptable definition of society. "A society, we may say, is a product of the relations between individuals, and these relations of theirs arise from the coincidence of their individual fields of action. This coincidence combines the individual fields into a common ground and this common ground is what we call society." The idea that society is basically the organisation of certain relations is inherent in the following definition: "The social evolution of the human race is necessarily a development of the relations between three constant factors, individuals, communities of various sorts, and mankind. Each

seeks its own/

seeks its own fulfilment and satisfaction, but each is compelled to develop them not independently, but in relation to the others." (Ideal of Human Unity: P.161) It follows therefore that an Ideal Society would be one in which respect for individual liberty and free growth of the individual being to his perfection are harmoniously related to the growth and perfection of the corporate being, the Society.

This great problem of the adjustment of relations is the cause underlying the origin of human society, whose task it is to find a balance between two poles of life, the individual whom the Society helps to develop and the Society which the individual helps to constitute. During the sixty thousand or so years of man's life in various forms of social organisation, from the first crude beginnings of communal life to the highly developed modern State, this problem has undergone innumerable vicissitudes and is still as formidable a task as it ever was. The evolution of society from its beginning to modern times has been reduced to definite patterns or formulae by different writers. It is, however, important to bear in mind that these patterns are mere conveniences to explain and categorise a natural process, and a too rigid acceptance of a pattern is likely to err by substituting a mental straight line for the diverse ways of the evolutionary process. Nonetheless, such a condensation of the process has this advantage that it tends to bring into focus a vast panorama of history and to awaken awareness of/

awareness of the hidden forces operating beneath the surface.

71 The crux of <sup>AURABINDO'S</sup> social theory is the abandonment of the doctrine that seeks to explain everything in history and sociology by economic necessity or motive - by forces external to and often generated by society itself. This conception of human society would go beyond the materialistic idea of history and in addition to economic motives and causes of social development, would point to profound psychological factors at work behind social progress.

A Western theory that may be described as a psychological account of history was conceived by the German philosopher-historian, Lamprecht. Human society, according to this conception, passes through a pattern of clearly distinguishable psychological stages, which are described respectively as symbolic, ~~typal~~ and conventional, individualistic and subjective. All human societies in their early primitive stumblings are examples of society in its symbolic stage, so called because a strongly symbolic mentality governs its thought and institutions, such as they may be. The symbol in this stage has a strongly religious motivation, and it is a representation of that Something which man feels is present behind himself and all life and human activity - the Gods, the mysterious order of Nature. Social institutions and religious forms become, then, symbols of that which man in this stage seeks to express concerning the/

concerning the Hidden Reality behind all life and manifestation. The ancient Vedic Age, in which society was first and foremost not political but religious, is an example of the stage of symbols in social growth. Every aspect of human life was dominated by the religious ideal and throughout all activity, there pervaded the religious spirit of the institution of sacrifice. The Vedic Society was divided into classes on the principle of VARNA, each soul being reborn into its own caste, low or high, according to its baseness or excellence in its preceding life, and each caste performing its own work as a religious duty, as worship of Him that is the Source of all that lives. Everything in society at the symbolic stage became a sacrament, and in all things the idea was to set the relation between Man and God or the Appearance behind the Reality, from which the relation between man and man would automatically follow.

While this stage is mainly religious, the next stage in social growth, the typical, is predominantly psychological and ethical. In this age, the idea of the domination of the Cosmic Principle in Man and in human society gradually loses its hold and finally ceases to have any important bearing. This is the age of the great social virtues of mankind, the age which produced the Confucian ideal of "chun-tze" or the "good man" whose virtues are moral, directed to the good of society, or the Nordic ideal of the heroic man. The Confucian age is an excellent example of/

excellent example of this stage of human development. With the spiritual as opposed to the moral, Confucius was not much concerned. Confucius' solution for the social confusion caused by unsocial individualism was the harmony of society that springs out of harmony in the souls of men and the mutual service that results from their fellow-feeling for one another.

The typical stage gradually hardens through a curve of degeneration into the conventional age, in which "the external supports, the outward expressions of the spirit or the ideal become more important than the ideal, the body or even the clothes become more important than the person." (The Human Cycle : P.10) The characteristic feature of society in the conventional age is the urge to formalise, to stereotype all human activity including the quest for religious truth into an organised system and to formulate training and education in a traditional pattern. The pursuit of these conventionalised aims becomes an end in itself and each such society, being materialistic in its inmost nature, not moral or spiritual, struggles for wealth or power against the threats of similar societies, the poor struggling against the rich and the rich against the poor, and nation states struggling against other nation states. In the end, the result is inevitable that the means which these societies take to raise themselves are the means that bring them down; and in endeavouring to secure their societies, men are in fact destroying them. The classic example of this type of degeneration in/

degeneration in society at the conventional age is furnished by a consideration of the history of the evolution of the fourfold order of society in India. The organisation of caste began as a quasi-religious division of society into groups based on capacity for the purpose of providing harmony in the social fabric. At its finest level, it was a fluid system without the rigidity that developed in later times, but it degenerated in following centuries into a closely guarded system of privileges which produced a fissured social organisation that fell a victim to the first onslaughts of outside invaders. "In the full economic period of caste the priest and the Pundit masquerade under the name of Brahmin, the aristocrat and feudal baron under the name of Kshatriya, the trader and money-getter under the name of Vaishya, the half-fed labourer and economic serf under the name of Shudra. When the economic basis also breaks down, then the unclean and diseased decrepitude of the old system has begun; it has become a name, a shell, a sham, and must either be dissolved in the crucible of an individualist period of society or else fatally affect with weakness and falsehood the system of life that clings to it." (The Human Cycle : P.11 - 12)

In short, the end of the conventional age begins when the outward Form prevails and the spirit behind the Form diminishes and vanishes altogether.

The age of Individualism is ushered in when "the gulf between the convention and the Truth becomes intolerable and the men of/



and the men of intellectual power arise ..... who rejecting robustly or fiercely or with the calm light of reason, symbol and type and convention strike at the walls of the prison house and seek by the individual reason, moral sense or emotional desire the Truth that Society has lost or buried in its whited sepulchres." (The Human Cycle : P.13) The individualistic age of social evolution arises from the decay and formalistic rigidity of the conventional age. The revolt of reason which began as a heresy at the time of the Renaissance in Europe ushered in the age of individualism and the history of Europe provides the finest example of the age of individualism and Reason. The dawn of the period of individualism was inevitable if a way out was to be found from the suffocating bonds of a soulless conventionalism. In essence, the Renaissance in Europe marked the vigorous return of the Graeco-Roman mentality - it brought with it the free curiosity of the Greek mind together with the practicality and urge towards organised order which was the essence of the Roman attitude. No similar development is traceable in the history of Oriental societies - what there has been of this spirit arose as a result of the European influence and not as an original impulse. The classical Indian Polity, for instance, was at its root communal, and not individualistic and competitive. Mills' famous delineation of a sphere around each individual into which no State authority could justifiably encroach was foreign to this ancient Indian concept. There was/

concept. There was, in this attitude, no incompatibility of interest between individual and Society because both were firmly held to be manifestations of the One Reality behind all Appearance.

The period of Individualism in the West started as a revolt of the individual reason against the cramping limitations of social organisation - against State dominance, the Church, traditional religion and against all those values and standards which had hardened into mere forms bereft of the original spirit which brought them into being. Rejecting the rigid reign of tradition, the blind reliance on fixed authorities, "the learned casuistry of schoolmen and Pundits", the champions of this era switched their allegiance to science and to the pursuit of all forms of rationalistic and materialistic endeavour. The failure of the conventional institutions provided the impetus for the rise of the individualistic age, and it grew from that beginning into a quest of values, a scrutiny of the ends of life, of the meaning of progress, with a mission to destroy falsehood and discover a new bedrock of Truth. Among the major contributions of this age to human thought and progress, apart from the discoveries of the Sciences, are two potent ideas, the first of which is the democratic right of all members of a society to as full a development of their personalities and powers as they are individually capable, and the second being the notion which is inherent in the/

inherent in the first - that the individual is not merely a unit of society, a member of the pack, but also something in himself, a being, a soul, an individuality which has its own truth and law just as much as the law of the communal being.

The individualistic age, with its strong emphasis on the critical reason was therefore an expression of an impulse to seek and lay bare the truth of the individual being and of the world to which he belongs. The great achievements of the civilisation called Western culminated in the organising of human life by the standards of empirical Science and the unprecedented organisation of the powerful nation states that constituted the Western group, the colonial empires and meticulously organised commercial enterprises that supported these nations are witnesses to the success of this spirit in its heyday. But if, all component things, as well as human societies and movements carry within themselves the seeds of their own destruction, then the seed that seems likely to disrupt this age of individualism is its unrestrained concentration on individual reason and judgment without any outer, generally recognisable standard of truth. While there is no denying the grandeur of the achievements of this period of the human cycle, it is nonetheless true that at some stage it took a vitalistic turn by its exclusive preoccupation and identification with the individual ego. Thereby its basis became extremely narrow, and the inveterate habit of externalising all the individual's conceptions/

individual's conceptions and impressions made it impossible for him to get below the surface of circumstances for meaning.

The individualistic age is still very much with us, but the signs are not wanting that there are indications of an incipient new age struggling to be born as the next phase of the cycle. But individualism, symbolising as it does the reign of the critical reason, was a necessary incident in human progress. Following the terminology of Lamprecht, Sri Aurobindo describes the coming period in the evolution of human society as the Subjective Age. The first stumbling steps in the erection of human society were taken on the foundation of symbols and types. In the course of time, these symbols and types became hardened, bringing the era of conventions in which the external forms became entrenched in a soulless mechanism of institutionalised ideas. Release from this age proceeded via the instrument of the critical reason which brought with it the age of individualism and scientific progress. "The subjective stage of human development is that critical juncture in which, having gone forward from symbols, types, conventions, having turned its gaze superficially on the individual being to discover his truth and right law of action and its relation to the superficial and external truth and law of the universe, our race begins to gaze deeper, to see and feel what is behind the outside and below the surface and therefore to live from within." (The Human Cycle : P.47)

During the last/

During the last two or three decades, the world has witnessed and is still witnessing the rise of nationalisms on an unprecedented scale. Particularly on the African continent, in the Middle East, and in the continent of Asia is this development most discernible. On Aurobindo's theory, this development is logically to be expected, not only because the primal law and purpose of a society, community or nation is to seek its own self-fulfilment, but also because the demand of the Time-Spirit upon the human race is "that it shall find subjectively, not only in the individual, but in the nation and in the unity of the human race itself, its deeper being, its inner law, its real self and live according to that and no longer by artificial standards". (The Human Cycle : P.42) At the time that Sri Aurobindo wrote, this tendency was most prominent in nations like Germany, India, and Ireland. Examples of this type, of the urge "to be oneself" or "ourselves", could now be multiplied with examples from new national states in Africa and in Asia. There is, however, a serious pitfall in the path of this progress to a subjective age before it emerges into a true period of subjectivism. The urge "to be oneself" could lead and has so far led to an attitude of mind in which the nation lives "solely for and to oneself". In other words, it is the step from the error of individualistic egoism to the far more disastrous error of communal egoism. This seems to have been the plight of the movement away from the age of

individualism so far/

individualism so far - the fall from one error into an even more momentous error. A true subjectivism has not yet had a clear formulation in human evolution. This lapse into the error of mistaking the vital ego for the real self, of believing that "I am my life and body", provides the clue to the understanding of the racial fantasies of Nazi Germany, and of the horrors to which a zealous pursuit of this false subjectivism could lead. The extremes of bestiality to which Nazi Germany so easily succumbed are a pointer to the seriousness of the error involved in the cult of the communal ego. The law is always the same - whether one is dealing with the "Apartheid" hysteria of South African politics, or the clamour for partition in Pakistan - that when egoism, individual or communal, is the root of action, it must bear its own due results, and however much it may be tempered by external machinery, <sup>its</sup> ~~their~~ eventual outburst is inevitable. One of the consequences of the fall into this error is the growing modern cult of the State and the increasing subordination leading in the end to the complete eclipse of the individual citizen. In present day politics, examples are legion of the false subjectivity into which society has fallen. The historical evolution of the subjective age out of the individualistic is beset by two dangers, neither of which is clearly apprehended by man in his present state. First, he has transformed his individual ego into a great national egoism; second, he has failed to grasp the truth that man is in

solidarity with/

solidarity with all of his kind, and is not a being that must seek fulfilment apart from the fulfilment of his kind. The failure to grasp these two basic truths leads Man to pursue only the utmost development of his egoistic intellect, vital force, physical well-being, and the utmost possible satisfaction of his mental, emotional, and physical urges. A society composed of individuals so constituted cannot<sup>do</sup>/otherwise than set itself up as a separative force in opposition to other societies similarly endowed. A true subjectivity will not rest in that which is apparent or on the surface, but in all things will strive to reach that which is secret and real.

".... A true subjectivism teaches us, first that we are a higher self than our ego or our members; secondly that we are in our life and being not only ourselves, but all others; for there is a secret solidarity which our egoism may kick at and strive against, but from which we cannot escape." (The Human Cycle : P.51) It will never lose sight of the twin truths that our real self is also the Divine, which it is our duty to discover and consciously become, and secondly that this Real Self is one in all, expressed in the individual and in the community. Ultimately its goal will be the unfolding of the Divine in Man "to its utmost capacity of wisdom, power, love, and universality and through this flowering his utmost realisation of all the possible beauty and delight of existence". (The Human Cycle : P.49)

A theory of a somewhat similar type in the sense that it could be placed in the same category as opposed to a purely materialistic conception of social evolution as propounded by Marx and Engels, is put forward by H.N. Spalding in "Civilisation in East and West - An introduction to the study of Human Progress". According to Spalding, all human societies are essentially of the same character as biological organisms, and like other organisms, must change in adaptation to internal and external stresses. This process of adaptation to internal and external stresses, which constitutes the fabric of historical study, progress<sup>-es</sup>/through what Spalding designates as first the biological stage, which is equivalent broadly to the condition described by Hobbes as the "state of nature", from which society proceeds to the materialist, moral, moral-spiritual and finally culminates in the spiritual state. The biological state is characterised by obedience to custom and to a rigid system of tribal morality, in which the individual only has meaning as part of the tribe. Such societies get less coherent with the rise of egoistic individuality which produces theories and attitudes to life which develop materialistic views of society and a materialistic way of life. The materialistic state of human society refers to the organisation of politics around the self-centred nation or Sovereign state, which dedicates itself to the pursuit mainly of selfish economic and political advantage. Each such state struggles for wealth or power against the/



power against the threats or attacks of similar organisms. There is much in present day world politics with its strong materialist flavour to cause despair and a sense of frustration to the political philosopher, but Spalding sees a ray of hope because "there is in man a totally different principle from that which causes him, as a political animal, to maintain or extend his own political organism at the expense of other organisms. This principle is reason - the moral and spiritual principle - which, in direct opposition to the materialist, constrains man to throw down the walls separating class from class and State from State and no longer to bear arms , but to link them. In other words, there is in man a principle which enables him to surpass the principle of the materialist state, with its end of power, and to attain to the principle of the moral or spiritual state, with its end of mutual service, springing from respect or love for man or God". (Civilisation in East and West : P.72) Nowhere have we had a full example of the working out of a Moral or Spiritual State in its plenitude of harmony and power, but Spalding does not doubt that its development as one more step in man's progress is inevitable. The idea of a pattern in history, of a gradual albeit stumbling march to a distant goal is well illustrated in the following quotation from the same work: (P.334) "The men of the Kingdom of the Future will thus be able to note the stages of man's advance: the insane raving, then the stammering speech, the clear talk, then the great song..... They will/

song..... They will see the story of mankind, like the story of the soul as a Divine Comedy in three Acts: the animal beginnings, the moral and spiritual development, the return of the creature to its Father and its Bliss".

While Sri Aurobindo presents the theory of Lamprecht sympathetically, his own view of social evolution would condense man's progress into three periods or stages, corresponding to the three parts of man's being. Man is a complex creature with three parts to his being, the bestial or animal, human, and spiritual, or in more technical terms, the infra-rational, rational, and supra-rational, which are ever present and active in him at one and the same time. Similarly social evolution proceeds from the infra-rational stage, to the rational and finally must culminate in a supra-rational society. In the infra-rational level, man has not yet learnt to refer his life and activity to the judgment of his reason. Conduct here is regulated by instinct and impulse, somewhat like the ant and the bee, under the sway of nature. From this obscure beginning, man goes forward by various stages to a rational state, where his developing will and intelligence exercise some measure of control over his thought, feeling, and action. In the rational state, man has made innumerable experiments in social organisation, ranging from monarchy, autocracy, aristocracy, military dictatorship to what is called democracy of various kinds, bourgeois or proletarian, individualistic or collectivist. Such experiments in/

experiments in social forms are destined to be multiplied so long as the Reason alone operates as the determining power behind human thought and its unfolding. (Nature) does not intend the rational man to seize the whole truth of his being at once. He has to go on experimenting until the limit of Reason is reached. Reason as the renovator and creator of society, progresses through three successive stages in its onward march - the first individualistic, with liberty for its principle; the second, socialistic, with equality and the State for its principle; the third, what Aurobindo calls the anarchistic phase, in the higher sense of the word.

It is individualism which marks the end of the conventionalism, of the infra-rational cycle, and ushers in the age of reason, of which the principle is liberty. It is this age which recognises the free right of the individual to control not only his own life and action but also the life and action of the group to which he belongs. Hence the rational democratic stage is a very necessary phase in social evolution. But because man is not yet a fully rational being, but is still bound to the impulses and prejudices of his infra-rational heritage, the result is all experiments in democracy have produced only a pseudo-democracy, in which political power passes into the hands of a dominant group which in the name of democracy, governs over the mass of the populace. There is no gainsaying the fact that democracy with its ideals of education and freedom of the/

freedom of the individual has done a great deal for human society, but it must also be admitted that in the majority of democratic countries, so-called, these ideals have been distorted in order to serve the interests of the dominant class exercising power. The sense of frustration, which looms ever larger in the framework of the present day hap-hazard private capitalism, turns men's minds to democratic socialism. The bankruptcies of the highly organised competitive industrialism of our cycle engender the urge to some form of socialism. But just as individualism failed because man sacrificed equality to gain liberty, so too will collectivised socialism fail because no enduring society can be founded through sacrificing liberty in order to attain equality.

And so will man, led by his reason, continue to grasp one experiment after another in the dim belief that it will offer a panacea for social ills. According to Aurobindo, social evolution will not reach the right path until man realises that the liberty and equality which he has so long been seeking must be the liberty and equality of the soul. This realisation can come only when he has dominated his egoism by transcending the limits of the Reason as the sole guide of life, and raised himself to a supra-rational or spiritual level.

( B. ) THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION.

In the first section of this chapter, an attempt was made to describe the growth of social organisation and to endeavour to discern a pattern in that growth. Before we complete the discussion on the development of social forms, the question still remains - why should there be any growth at all? Are there any forces to which we could point as the determinants of social change - forces that operate below the surface of historical events? The answer to this question involves a discussion of the philosophical attitude to the historical process.

For the purpose of this exposition, it may be said on the authority of Toynbee (See "A Historian's <sup>Approach to</sup> ~~looks at~~ Religion") that there are broadly three clear conceptions of the historical process. Firstly there is the theory which regards the historical process as a rhythm of the Universe based on a cyclic movement governed by an Impersonal Law. All history takes the form of a fundamental rhythm of the Universe as a whole, somewhat analogous to the day and night cycle or the annual cycle of the seasons. Marcus Aurelius in his "Meditations" (Chap. 1. Bk. XI.) carries this view to an extreme: "The rational soul ranges over the whole cosmos and the surrounding void and explores the scheme of things. It reaches into the abyss of boundless Time and not only comprehends, but studies the significance of, the periodic new birth of the Universe. These studies bring the rational soul to the realisation of the truth that there will be nothing new to be seen by those who come after us, and that/

us, and that, by the same token, those that have gone before us have not seen anything, either, that is beyond our ken".

The ancient Hindu conception of cycles in history is a theory of a similar kind, though strictly it penetrates beyond the attitude of Aurelius and, rejecting the idea of a blind impersonal dominance over human affairs, traces the origin of all movement to the One Brahman or Divine.

The second fundamental theory regards the historical process as a non-recurrent movement governed by Intellect and Will. The interaction of Intellect and Will is the only movement known to man that is non-recurrent. History becomes a drama that is punctuated by crises and decisive events and in which full significance is given to human volition and initiative. This is the view that is most prevalent in the West, having been inherited from Israel and passed over to Christianity and Islam. In the Idealist statement of this theory, the Intellect and Will which are deemed to govern the course of history are not those of human beings (though they may seem on the surface to be so) but those of an Omnipotent and One Spirit or Absolute or God. According to the German Idealist Hegel, the Spirit is "the leader of the peoples and of the world; and Spirit, the rational and necessitated Will, ..... is and has been the director of the events of the world's history." (Hegel: "Philosophy of History": Introduction)

The Spirit or/

The Spirit or "Idea" or "Reason" is the true, the Eternal, that reveals itself in the world and nothing else is revealed in the world but Spirit. Nothing is abandoned to chance. If one asks what is Spirit, Hegel's answer would be that "it is the one immutably homogeneous Infinite - pure Identity - which in its second phase separates itself from itself and makes this second aspect its own polar opposite, namely as existence for and in Self as contrasted with the Universal." (Hegel : Introduction to "Philosophy of History.") After a laboured attempt to establish that this unfolding of the spirit in historical events that constitutes the Time-process is intimately related to the purely logical process of his dialectic, Hegel's theory degenerates into a sectarian idolisation of the German race in which it is seriously stated that "the German spirit is the spirit of the new world. Its aim is the realisation of the Absolute Truth as the unlimited self-determination of freedom - that freedom which has its own Absolute form as its purport." (ibid)

The third view is closely analogous to the second, but differs in its accent on a rigid materialistic determinism in History. The most famous exponent of this theory was Karl Marx, who like Hegel believed that historical events developed according to a dialectical formula, but totally disagrees with Hegel as to the motive force of this development. Hegel attributed human history to spirit, whose gradual  
 unfoldment constitutes/

unfoldment constitutes the events in the human drama. For Marx matter and not spirit is the ultimate determinant - matter in the special sense of what is really man's relation to matter, of which the most important part is his mode of production. Human Intellect, Reason and Will do play a part in determining the course of events but only a subsidiary part for the paramount driving force that provides the impetus for historical process is the class struggle, resulting from private ownership of the means of production. There is no place in this materialistic conception of history for any concept of spirit as underlying the course of human events and being the operative cause beneath the surface phenomena.

On Hegel's view the main difficulty is that there is no clear statement why spirit has to go through the various stages of the dialectic or why it is unfolding at all, not is it clear to what goal it is progressing. Though it is indicated that the Absolute Idea is the ultimate goal, the effect of this on human institutions and events is not by any means clarified.

In the technical language of philosophical discussion, Aurobindo's criticism of Marxism would be that it is essentially a philosophy of Becoming without any relation to Being. Marx expressly rejects any acceptance of the idea of Being as a background against which the Becoming is to be regarded. In Aurobindo's language, Marxism would be treated as a theory that concerns/



theory that concerns itself exclusively with the workings of the Inconscient. The half-truth in it is due to the superficial observation that in worldly phenomena, the Inconscient stands apparently supreme.

Blind mechanical necessity working with almost mathematical precision, just as much as a blind spiritual necessity, is foreign to Sri Aurobindo's concept of the psychology of human organisation and its progress. In all phenomena, and therefore in social, political and economic matters as well, the stress of the hidden spirit must be regarded as being the primary force at work behind all change and development.

"The immense and inscrutable processes of the world all perfect themselves within, in a deep and august silence, covered by a noisy and misleading surface of sound - the stir of innumerable waves above, the fathomless resistless mass of the ocean waters below..... It is said that in history, it is always the unexpected that happens. But it would not be unexpected if men could turn their eyes from superficialities and look into substance, if they accustomed themselves to put aside appearances and penetrate beyond them to the secret and disguised reality, if they ceased listening to the noise of life and listened rather to its silence." (Ideal of Karmayogin : P.40)

The basic attitude to the force behind every event or mode or organisation is further/

organisation is further illustrated in this extract: "In all movements, in every great mass of human action, it is the Spirit of the Time , that which Europe calls the Zeitgeist and India Kala, who expresses himself....." (Ideal of the Karmayogin P.56) This Spirit is the power "that works in secret in the heart of humanity, manifesting herself in the perpetual surge of men, institutions, and movements and whose energy goes abroad ..... and moulds the progress of the world and the destiny of the nations. His is the impetus which fulfils itself in Time, and once there is movement, impetus from the spirit within, Time and the Mother take charge of it, prepare, ripen, and fulfil. When the Zeitgeist, God in Time, moves in a settled direction, then the whole forces of the world are called in to swell the established current towards the purpose decreed. That which consciously helps swells it, but that which hinders swells it still more, and like a wave in the windswept ocean, now rising, now falling, now high on the crest of victory and increase, now down in the trough of discouragement and defeat, the impulse from the hidden Source sweeps onward to pre-ordained fulfilment. Man may help or man may resist, but the Zeitgeist works, shapes, overbears, insists." (ibid.) Even human volition and drive are only subsidiary agents to the principal which is the Eternal Spirit. "This is the greatness of great men, not that by their own strength they can determine great events, but that they are serviceable and specially forged instruments of

the Power which/

the Power which determines them." (ibid. P.60) The Becoming is Real because the Being, which is the source of all creation in its infinite multiplicity is Real.

Sri Aurobindo looks at evolution from two aspects - the Cosmic and the Individual and it is the latter that has been given comprehensive and striking treatment. Progress is not only upwards, but primarily inward, and the extent of the inward advance manifests itself in increasingly higher levels of institutions and societies. The increasing importance of the individual is, in fact, the outstanding element about a universe which started without consciousness and individuality in an undifferentiated Nescience. The individual is not a by-product. He is a persistent Reality, the medium through which the Spirit discloses its being. The ascent of the individual to higher and higher levels will automatically mean a progressive advance in social organisation until there is a complete transformation of all aspects of life, material, vital, and mental. The evolutionary emergence from the Inconscience works out by a secret cosmic consciousness as a primary force and an individual consciousness evident on the surface. The Cosmic Consciousness remains hidden and subliminal to the surface individual. On the surface, it manifests itself by the creation of separate objects and beings. This includes also collective powers or organisations of human polities, which in Aurobindo's language are "large subjective formations of Cosmic Nature. It follows that only as individuals become more and/

become more and more conscious, in the sense that they increasingly become open to the control of the Cosmic Consciousness, can the group being become also more and more conscious. The growth of the individual therefore is the means for the expansion of the collective Being.

All this flows logically from the Involution-Evolution theory which is the mode by which the power of the Absolute becomes active or expresses itself. All creation therefore is the self-expression of the Absolute. The Absolute, however, is not bound by its self-expression and it remains the Absolute because it is both in and beyond the self expression. The contradictions between the Absolute and its self-manifestation, which is most pronounced in the material plane, are all incidents to the modes of the activity. Involution brings the contradiction to the fore, evolution is the process through which the contradiction would be resolved. Evolution is the steady manifestation, in ever enhanced degree and quality, of involved energies.

"An Involution of the Divine Existence, the Spiritual Reality, in the apparent inconscience of Matter is the starting point of evolution..... The evolution must then be an emergence of this Existence, Consciousness, Delight of Existence, not at first in its essence or totality, but in evolutionary forms that express or disguise it. Out of the Inconscient, Existence appears/

Existence appears in a first evolutionary form as substance of matter created by an Inconscient Energy. Consciousness, involved and non-apparent in matter, first emerges in the disguise of vital vibrations, animate but subconscious; then in imperfect formulations of a conscient life, it strives towards self-finding through successive forms of that material substance, forms more and more adapted to its own completer expression." (The Life Divine : P.609)

The organisation of human polities is therefore a further and advanced manifestation of the creative activity of the Absolute. But for the collectivity, it is the individual who is of main significance. For it is only through the individual that the cosmic spirit organises its collective units and makes them self-expressive, and it is only through him that it raises Nature from the Inconscience to the Super-conscience and exalts it to meet the Transcendent. The mass consciousness is obscure and works by a vague, incoherent and often subliminal impulse and it needs the individual to express itself, to organise it and make it effective, It is true that in present day political organisation, the trend is towards the subordination of the individual to the mass consciousness and it is also true that a well organised attempt at such subordination can give great power and efficiency to such a state. But such power and efficiency are only short-term goals. At best, it is only an efficiency of the outer life, which is not  
the highest or/

the highest or last term of our being. The highest status of the activity of the power of the Absolute is termed by Sri Aurobindo as the Super-Mind. This is a consciousness in which all contradiction is resolved, in which there is the free play of the Wisdom and Power and Bliss of God, a condition which is the great link between the boundless Being above and the divided Being below. Man's goal is to attain to this condition of Super-Mind, arrive at integral knowledge and bring down the power of Super-Mind for the transmutation of his entire being - not only the transformation of human consciousness but also the transformation of its material and vital basis. The attainment to Super-Mind and its descent will achieve "The Life Divine" for man and humanity. This is the greatest fulfilment that awaits man and the aim of Nature's endeavour in him.

CHAPTER 111.THE FOUNDATION OF POLITICAL OBLIGATION.

The famous and apparently contradictory phrase coined by Rousseau - "This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free" - embodies the most controversial of all the problems of political philosophy. How is political obligation to be founded? Does a Man's freedom consist in obedience or does it consist solely of the absence of restraint?

Sri Aurobindo defines the basis of political obligation and freedom in terms of obedience, and there is in this a hint of the teaching of Plato, and also Rousseau and the other Western Philosophers of the Idealistic School, but the difference in Aurobindo is that this definition of freedom undergoes a characteristic re-orientation in the light of ancient Upanishadic philosophy. Freedom and political obligation really mean obedience, but the obedience is to the law of one's own being, to the SVADHARMA as this concept is understood in the teaching, for instance, of the Bhagavad Gita. A man should limit himself to the duties and obligations of his social and psychological being - the law of his nature, his Dharma, and since the real subliminal self in man is the supreme divinity itself, obedience to the law of one's own being and obedience to God's law amount to the same thing.

The concept of/

The concept of dharma has to be more fully worked out since it is central to the political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. The Sanskrit word "dharma" is often translated into English as religion, but it really means the innermost nature, the essence, the implicit truth of all things. Dharma is the ultimate purpose which is working in our self. When any wrong is perpetrated, it is said on the basis of this concept, that dharma is violated, by which is meant that the lie has been given to our true nature.

But this dharma, the essential truth in us and of our being, is not apparent or on the surface, but inherent. In order to illustrate this point, we may use by way of analogy, the example of a seed. On the surface, a seed contains no hint of its essential nature, of the idea in it, which is to become a plant or a tree. If it is subjected to detailed physico-chemical analysis, its various constituents could be discovered, but not the idea of a branching tree. It is only when the plant begins to sprout and grow do we become aware of its "dharma", so that we could say that if the seed were only preserved in a laboratory or allowed to rot, its real dharma would have been violated and it would have been incapable of fulfilling its true nature. The freedom of the seed is in the fulfilment of its dharma, which is its destiny of becoming a tree and the loss of this end would be the violation of its real nature. In the same way, to know the highest ideal of freedom which a man has, would be to/



would be to know his dharma, the real essence of his Self. At first sight, it seems that man regards it as a condition of freedom when he gets unbounded opportunities of self-satisfaction and self-gratification. The reason for this is because of the complexity of the Self in us. Aurobindo distinguishes several layers of being in man, but for the purpose of this discussion, it is sufficient to confine ourselves to the two main aspects of this Self in us. There is the overt, external Self, which strives towards extension, to make itself great by all sorts of material accumulations, by the process which the American writer Thorstein Veblen picturesquely described as the "conspicuous consumption of valuable goods as a means of reputability." (Quoted by Holbrook in "The Age of the Moguls" 1953 : at P.323)

Our real self, on the other hand, transcends these surface separative urges, and reveals itself only by giving up all the satisfactions which the surface self seeks. Tagore's classic analogy of the oil lamp bears out the essential point of this difference: "The lamp contains its oil, which it holds securely in its close grasp and guards from the least loss. Thus it is separate from all other objects around it and is miserly. But when lighted, it finds its meaning at once; its relation with all things far and near is established, and it freely sacrifices its fund of oil to feed the flame..... Such a lamp is our self. So long as it hoards its possessions it  
 keeps itself/

keeps itself dark, its conduct contradicts its true purpose. When it finds illumination it forgets itself in a moment, holds the light high and serves it with everything it has; for there-in is its revelation." (Sadhana : P.76)

It is in this sense that the separateness of the surface self has been described as MAYA, illusion, because it has no intrinsic reality of its own. For the urges of the external self tend always to separateness, since it is by nature individualistic, domineering and ever ready "to pluck with a reckless and cruel hand all the plumes from the divine bird of beauty to deck its ugliness for a day." (Sadhana :P.80)

Our self is MAYA when it considers its separateness as final, when it is merely individual and finite - it is SATYAM when it recognises its essence in the universal, in the supreme Self or Paramatman. Our external self is not that self of which the Upanishad speaks in its famous phrase "Thou art That"; the real self in man is what is referred to, the self which Christ meant when he uttered the apparently contradictory sentence, "Before Abraham was, I am". The "I am" here is the real Self, the attainment of which means the freedom in the sense that thereby man attains to deliverance from the sway of maya, of the appearance which springs from avidyā or ignorance.

The problem of political obligation arises when the individual is set against the background of the social body of which he is/

of which he is a component part. On this theory, Society is an organism, of which the parts are the individuals who live within its framework and jurisdiction. On the surface each individual seeks his own pleasures and gratifications, so that we have the appearance of a strained accommodation of conflicting interests within the society. But there is also another impulse which works covertly in the depths of the social being and this is the impulse towards social and universal well-being, an impulse that transcends the limits of the present and the personal. The *raison d'être* of social organisation is to create conditions which would conduce to the discovery and flowering of the real self in man, so that its each individual member would be able to live according to the true nature of his being, and make his contribution to the well-being of the whole, the impulse being identity and not separateness. "Mentally, vitally and physically I do not grow by a pure self-development from within in a virgin isolation; I am not a separate self-existent being proceeding from a past to a new becoming in a world of its own where no one is but itself, nothing works but its own inner powers and musings. There is in every individualised existence a double action, a self-development from within which is its greatest intimate power of being and by which it is itself, and a reception of impacts from outside which it has to accommodate to its own individuality and make into material of self-growth and self-power..... The man who most finds and lives from the inner self, can/

inner self, can most embrace the universal and become one with it; the SUARAT, independent, self-possessed and self ruler, can most be the SAMRAT, possessor and shaper of the world in which he lives....." (Aurobindo : "The Foundations of Indian Culture": P.438)

Man is an political animal; he does not exist in a vacuum. The ideal relation between the Individual and the State can only be found in a polity which seeks by its laws and institutions to enable each individual to find and follow the law of his being, his dharma, the essential prerequisite of which is to create conditions in which man would be liberated from the bondage of his separative consciousness and come to the realisation that he is in his inmost being a spirit which he must foster and allow to unfold. Obedience to such laws would mean freedom for the individual. A political organisation must be judged and prized, not by the amount of wealth or power it has accumulated, but by the extent to which it has evolved and given expression to the love of humanity, to the spirit of identity and not separativeness. In short, the test should be whether and how far it recognises man more as a spirit than a machine, more as an end than as a means.

There are two poles of our existence, the finite pole which is bound by necessity and the physical part of our make-up. In this aspect of his being, man is bound to provide  
the food and clothing/

the food and clothing and similar requirements for his physical well-being and he is committed in consequence to acquiring things, enlarging possessions. But there is another pole of our being which seeks not wealth, but freedom and joy and love. Here the reign of necessity ceases, and our function is not to get but to be - to be one with the Infinite, the Eternal Spirit which is at the core of ~~his~~<sup>our</sup> Being, symbolising Unity and Harmony and Truth. Man's real happiness is not merely in getting things but essentially in giving himself to that which is greater than himself, to ideas which are larger than his individual life, the idea of his country, of humanity, of the Eternal Timeless Spirit. The goal of political organisation should therefore be so to frame its laws that there would be the minimum of insecurity in the pursuit and satisfaction of the demands of the finite pole of our being, while at the same time, actively and consciously to foster the cultivation and unfoldment of the Spirit in each of its members, manifesting itself in art, literature, architecture, and philosophy.

While Sri Aurobindo cannot be accused of glorifying the past and advocating a return to it, yet he is of the opinion that the germ of true political organisation was found to some extent in ancient Indian Society. "The one principle permanent at the base of construction throughout all the building and extension and rebuilding of the Indian polity was the principle of an organically self-determining communal life - self-determining/

self-determining, not only in the mass and by means of the machinery of the vote and a representative body erected on the surface, representative only of the political mind of a part of the nation, which is all that the modern system has been able to manage, but in every pulse of its life and in each separate member of its existence..... The State ..... confined itself to the maintenance of social order, and the provision of a needed supervision, support, co-ordination, and facilities for the rich and powerful functioning of all the national activities. It understood always and magnificently fulfilled its opportunities as a source of splendid and munificent stimulation to the architecture, art, culture, scholarship, literature already created by the communal mind of India. In the person of the monarch it was the dignified and powerful head and in the system of his administration the supreme instrument - neither an arbitrary autocracy or bureaucracy, nor a machine oppressing or replacing life - of a great and stable civilisation and a free and living people." (Foundations of Indian Culture : P. 391 and 408)

However, in spite of all that has been written on the subject, it is nonetheless by no means easy to elicit or present in concise form a formulation of the concept of Dharma as the basis of individual and social endeavour. Aurobindo takes his stand on the rather extreme dictum of Krishna in the Gita, which declares categorically, "Better the law of one's own being though/

being though it be badly done than an alien dharma well performed; death in one's own dharma is better, it is a dangerous thing to follow the law of another's nature." It is said that Dharma is the right law of functioning of our life in all its parts. Everything in life has its Dharma, its law of life imposed on it by its nature; but for man the dharma is the acceptance by an act of will of a rule of ideal living on all his members. Could it then be said that this Dharma is the same for all humanity? The theory of Dharma seems to preclude the possibility of one inflexible rule for all. All men cannot follow in all things one common rule. Life and nature are too complex and varied to admit of such simplicity. According to the ancient conception of the theory of Dharma, man by his nature falls into four types. The first and highest type was the man of knowledge, thought and learning; the second, the man of action, the warrior, the soldier or administrator; the third, the commercial man, the merchant, the artisan, the agriculturalist, dedicated to the pursuit of production of economic goods and wealth; according to the ancient conception of Varna, these were the true born, who received initiation into their respective castes, Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya; the fourth and last in the hierarchy was the undeveloped human type, the toiler, fit only for the level of unskilled labour and menial service. A somewhat analogous idea occurs in Plato's classification of human beings into three types, the gold,

silver and/

silver and bronze types. In its original theory, this classification of the Varnashrama Dharma fixed the status of a man not by his birth, but by his capacities and his inner nature. In the course of time, the inevitable occurred and it degenerated into the ugly excesses of the caste system, in which birth became the sole test of membership of one or other of the types. The theory continues that because human beings differ essentially, all cannot be subjected to the sway of one Dharma. Each has his type of nature and there must be a rule for the perfection of that type; each has his own proper function and there must be an ideal for each function.

There is, thus, a plurality of dharmas depending on the type of the man and the nature of his function and it is the function of Society to provide a suitable framework for the harmonious pursuit of these dharmas. But Aurobindo takes the matter further and declares that all these special dharmas must be co-ordinated and directed towards a great Law or Dharma that contains the others and is universally applicable. The special Dharmas applicable to different persons in their different stages of development must be merged into the universal Dharma enshrined in the laws of the State, which in its true function is the upholder and champion of this Dharma. The Dharma of the State should be to provide conditions for the developing mind and soul of man to ascend to its pinnacle of perfection, to assist him to grow in the power and force of  
certain lofty/



certain lofty, universal qualities which in their harmony conduce to the growth of the highest type of manhood. This ideal in its sweep covers not only moral and ethical values, but transcending these as well as intellectual, religious, aesthetic social values, it culminates in the aspiration for total perfection of human nature, in the quest of transforming human life into something spiritual and divine. The State should aim at converting the ordinary life of desire, self-interest and vitalistic satisfaction by infusing into it the spiritual ideal to strive for a noble self-exceeding.

"..... the social law must make room for this variety and would lose by being rigidly one for all. The man of knowledge, the man of power, the productive and acquisitive man, the priest, scholar, poet, artist, ruler, fighter, trader, tiller of the soil, craftsman, labourer, servant cannot usefully have the same training, cannot be shaped in the same pattern, cannot all follow the same way of living. All ought not to be put under the same tables of the law; for that would be a senseless geometric rigidity that would spoil the plastic truth of life. Each has his type of nature and there must be a rule for the perfection of that type; each has his own proper function and there must be a canon and ideal for the function. There must be in all things some wise and understanding standard of practice and idea of perfection and living rule - that is the one thing needful for the Dharma." (Aurobindo : "The Foundations

of Indian Culture" : P.119)

In order to be able properly to discharge its Dharma, in order to be worthy of the true end of political association, a State should be able to say to the individual: "This is only the external framework and though it is of importance, it is not the last or greatest thing. By the external arrangement which is provided for you, you could pursue your legitimate and desired satisfactions, but when these have been met, there still remains the most important task of all. There is still your own Self, the Atman, the soul which is a spiritual portion of the Eternal, and which it is your duty to find for that is the reason why you are here. From the external conditions which I have provided for you, you could direct your life and grow towards contact with the Divinity within you and move towards self-transcendence. From the life basis I give you, you can rise to the liberating knowledge which brings spiritual release".

It is absolutely necessary in all this to bear in mind constantly that Sri Aurobindo is not a political philosopher but first and foremost a Yogi dedicated to the struggle against everything within and without that stands opposed to the human advance. He takes his stand squarely on the spiritual evolution of humanity and never departs from it. All Standards of conduct, rules of law, therefore, become temporary

constructions founded/

constructions founded upon the needs of the ego in its transition from Matter to Spirit. Every action, all movements, all political associations are ultimately movements and formations of a Power, a Force infinite and Divine in its origin, which is ceaselessly working to bring out progressively something of the Divine in the obscurity of the individual and collective nature. The individual is of primary concern in this philosophy. In the actual state of humanity, it is the individual who must climb to the heights of spiritual liberation as a pioneer and precursor.

The progressive manifestation of the Spirit from its apparent bondage in the Inconscient can only be evidenced in the individual, for man is the instrument which it is fashioning and shaping in its process of ascent. It leads man first through his needs and desires; it guides him next through enlarged needs and desires modified and enlightened by mental and moral concepts; it is finally preparing to lead him to a fulfilment in Spirit that exceeds everything else, but yet reconciles them in all that is divinely true in their spirit and purpose.

The object of all society should therefore be first to provide the conditions of life and growth by which individual MAN - not any privileged class or group but all individual men according to their capacity - and the race itself through its individuals, may travel towards a divine perfection. Secondly/

perfection. Secondly, as mankind gradually becomes more and more conscious of some form of Divine Life <sup>Society would begin to</sup> to express progressively in its institutions the light, the power, the beauty, and harmony of the One that pours itself out in a freer and more liberated humanity. This theory never loses sight of its spiritual orientation and foundation and Sri Aurobindo constantly keeps in the forefront of his vision the fact that " a One there is in which all the entangled discords of this multiplicity of separated, conflicting, intertwining, colliding ideas, forces, tendencies, instincts, impulses, aspects, appearances which we call life, can find the unity of their diversity, the harmony of their divergences, the justification of their claims, the correction of their perversions and aberrations, the solution of their problems and disputes". (The Human Cycle : P.162) Ultimately, therefore, the function of the State is to raise all "relativities to their absolutes and to rec<sup>o</sup>ncile their differences ..... by elevation and sublimation to some highest term in which all these are unified". (ibid.) The true basis of political obligation can only be established when the State machinery is geared and organised with this object in view. Taking the longview, Aurobindo would say that all life is only a lavish opportunity intended to provide us with the means to realise and express the Divine. Political organisation, therefore, can be no exception to this all-pervading concept, and political obligation can

only be justified/

only be justified when a State consciously sets itself this goal. It is true that hardly any modern state can qualify in terms of this doctrine, but Aurobindo, without condemning any existing States, regards them as faltering attempts to seek out and establish such an administrative set-up as would conduce to greater living in the spirit. Even the most flagrant deviations from this ideal amongst member states of the human family would not cause Sri Aurobindo the slightest doubt or fear that the ultimate spiritual aim in social evolution would be thwarted. If one could speak of certitudes in this world of flux, the one ultimate certitude from which it is impossible to dislodge Aurobindo is the urge of the hidden spirit, operating beneath the surface of events and often hidden in the modes of its own workings, which inexorably though slowly moves on to its pre-ordained fulfilment - namely the attainment of such a consummation in social organisation.

When a political society has consciously resolved to pursue this ideal, it would differ from existing states in one major respect, from which all its other differences would follow. "A spiritualised society would live....., not in the ego, but in the spirit, not as a collective ego, but as a collective soul. The freedom from the egoistic standpoint would be its first and most prominent characteristic. But the elimination of egoism would not be brought about..... by persuading or forcing the individual to immolate his personal will and aspirations/

will and aspirations and his precious and hard won individuality to the collective will..... For that would be only the sacrifice of the smaller to the larger egoism..... What the spiritual man seeks is to find by the loss of the ego the Self which is one in all and perfect and complete in each and by living in that to grow into the image of its perfection.....

..... Therefore a society which was even initially spiritualised, would make the revealing and finding of the Divine Self in man the whole first aim of all its activities, its education, its knowledge, its science, its ethics, its art, its economical and political structure." (The Human Cycle : P. 284 & 285) A spiritualised society would, in effect, begin by regarding the individual not as a mere unit of a social problem, but a soul ensnared and to be rescued, made aware of its mission, and encouraged to grow more and more into the plenitude of power, harmony, and knowledge that are the accompaniments of Spiritual unfoldment.

In spite of the lofty mission entrusted to political entities, nowhere in this theory is there any glorification of the State qua State, such as one encounters in Hegelian political philosophy. On the contrary, the State itself is regarded only as a necessary convenience or configuration in the march of Spirit towards its consummation in world union or the unity of humanity. This does not mean the extinction of national states, but it only means that they would occupy in the world community/

world community a somewhat similar position to that occupied by the individual in the State. Aurobindo emphasises that the drive of Nature and the future need of mankind make it inevitable that there must be some sort of progress towards world union. "The ultimate result must be the formation of a World State and the most desirable form of it would be a federation of free nationalities in which all subjection or forced inequality and subordination of one to another would have disappeared and though some might preserve a greater natural influence, all would have an equal status." (Ideal of Human Unity : P.17)

Even the ultimate world union or federation of peoples will give full recognition to the divine destiny of the individual soul as the only means by which the constant conflict and division in human thought and action can eventually be resolved and harmonised.

The State's primary pre-occupation would be to grapple with the urgent necessity for exceeding man's present mental horizon beyond mere intellectual acquisitiveness. Human consciousness is only a manifestation of Nature's vast sea of Consciousness; the Eternal Source out of which the individual has arisen. The State must consciously align itself on the side of Evolution, which ex hypothesi, is essentially the emergence of greater and higher forms of consciousness, wider levels beyond the mental. It is only when man's normal outlook is organised around the psychic/

around the psychic centre of his being, which within him, is the seed potential of the Divine Consciousness that he can begin to obtain an integral and comprehensive awareness of calm amidst activity, of Oneness amidst diversity, and of freedom amidst restraint. The central pivot of the State's work and the motive force of its endeavour must be to create conditions which would make man aware of his Divine destiny.

This spiritual conception of Political obligation contains overtones, which prima facie at least, are reminiscent of the Idealistic Theory of the State which found its most dogmatic presentation in the writings of Hegel and has been sympathetically presented in recent times by Dr Bosanquet and other thinkers. Bosanquet states at the outset that the end of the State "is assuredly good life or the excellence of souls." (The Philosophical Theory of the State : Bosanquet : Introduction.)  
 The search for <sup>some</sup> enduring basis for political obligation is also revealed in the following extract from the same source: "It is, then, only spiritual good that is real and stable; earthly and material aims are delusive and dangerous; and the root of strife. This is the obvious and simple explanation of what has been happening. By spiritual goods we mean such as can, by material goods such as cannot, be shared by others without our portion being diminished. An immense fabric of civilisation, with its pride and policy mainly directed upon material prosperity, invited ..... disaster proportional to its magnitude." (ibid)

In particular,



In particular, it would be relevant here to inquire into the relation, if any, between the concept of Dharma as propounded by Sri Aurobindo and the doctrine of The Real Will which is encountered in the Idealist Theory as the basis of political obligation. The concept of a real will was vaguely contained in Rousseau's political philosophy, but has received considerable amplification by the later Idealists, especially Hegel and others of the same school.

The essence of human society is said to consist in a common self, a life and a will which belong to and are exercised by the society as such. The reality of this common Self, in the action of the political whole, receives the name of the "General Will". In explaining the significance of this idea of a General Will, a clear distinction is drawn between the General Will and the Will of All. "The General Will seems to be in the last resort, the ineradicable impulse of an intelligent being to a good extending beyond itself, in as far as that good takes the form of a common good." (Phil. Theory of the State : P.102)

The General Will aims at a common interest and it is this community of interest which generalises the will. The Will of All, on the other hand, aims at the private interest of each and is only a sum of particular wills. The will of all is a sum of particulars as opposed to something common or

general in its/

general in its nature. "Indeed, each individual may, as a man, have a particular will contrary to or unlike the general will which he has as a citizen; his particular interest may speak to him quite differently from the common interest; his absolute and naturally independent existence may make him regard what he owes to the common cause as a gratuitous contribution, the loss of which would be less injurious to others than its payment is burdensome to himself; and considering the moral person which constitutes the State as an abstraction, because it is not a man, he would enjoy the rights of a citizen without consenting to fulfil the duties - <sup>an</sup> injustice the progress of which would cause the ruin of the body politic. In order, then, that the social pact may not be a vain formula, it tacitly includes the covenant, which alone can confer binding force on the others, that whoever shall refuse to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body, which means nothing else than that he will be forced to be free." (Rousseau : "The Social Contract!")

The general will therefore would appear to be that bond between the particular will and the will of the society which makes it possible to say that in all social effort, even in the submission to forcible restraint, when imposed in the true common interest, the individual is only obeying himself, and is actually realising his freedom. It is essential to postulate a will which is our real will, as opposed to our trivial and/

trivial and rebellious moods. The ordinary individual as he regards himself in his ordinary trivial moods, when he sees nothing in life but his own private interest and amusement, is no longer accepted as the real self or individuality. The centre of gravity of existence is thrown outside him. This theory regards as a caricature of true individuality, when it is said that the real self of a person is his ordinary sensitive self wrapped up in its own immediate likes and dislikes, thoughts, and feelings. Only to the extent that we identify ourselves with the self that transcends our average private existence, can we feel ourselves as possessing a real will. A scrutiny of our acts of will over a period of time, if carried out with detachment, would be sufficient to show that no one object of action, as we conceive it when acting, exhausts all that our will demands. Even the life which we wish to live, and which on the average we do live, is never before us as a whole in the motive of any particular volition. Bosanquet deals with this difficult concept at length and he argues that "in order to obtain a full statement of what we will, what we want at any moment must at least be corrected and amended by what we want at all other moments, and this cannot be done without also correcting and amending it so as to harmonise it with what others want, which involves an application of the same process to them. But when any considerable degree of such correction and amendment had been gone through, our own will would return to us in a shape in which/

shape in which we should not know it again, although every detail would be a necessary reference from the whole of wishes and resolutions which we actually cherish. And if it were to be supplemented and re-adjusted so as to stand not merely for the life which of the whole we manage to live, but for a life ideally without contradiction, it would appear to us quite remote from anything which we know." (ibid.) (P.111) But it is just as difficult to extract a clear statement of what the Real Will implies as it is to present the essence of Dharma. It seems that in some sense, the real will must be free from the domination of our sensory, separative, urges, it must be "coeval with social life, and in short, with humanity." (ibid.)

A real will seems to be that which aims at common or universal well-being, and involves some ~~form~~<sup>form</sup> of self-sacrifice, while the purely private or apparent interest, the interest of each of us in his routine frame of mind, looks only for immediate personal gratification. And this real will in each of us is identical with the general will, in spite of ~~surface~~ conflicts or appearances to the contrary. Bosanquet uses the extreme example of slavery to illustrate the point. A man may contract to become a slave, but no civilised agreement will enforce such a contract in law, the real/~~reason~~<sup>reason</sup> for this refusal being that ultimately man's nature is to exercise will, to have liberty, and any agreement to deny himself this capacity must be taken as void, since it contradicts ~~the~~ very essence of humanity. It is/

humanity. It is such a reasoning that led Hegel to assert in "The Philosophy of Law" : "The State is the reality of the moral idea - the moral spirit as the visible substantial will, evident to itself, which thinks and knows itself, and fulfils what it knows in so far as it knows it". Since the State is objective Spirit, the individual only has objectivity, truth and morality in so far as he is a member of the State, whose true content and purpose is union as such. It is freely admitted that there are States which fall far short of this ideal, that there are, in short, bad States, but Hegel would say that these merely exist, and have no true reality, whereas a rational State is infinite in itself. It is possible to unravel some idea of the true nature of the State from the analogy that Dr Bosanquet draws between an Association and an Organisation. An association is defined as any form of habitual grouping, ranging from a group of thieves to a welfare institution. Bosanquet states that when two individuals are so connected that where you find the one, you expect to find the other, they may be called associates. An Association lacks any thorough-going kind of connection, and "associates were together, ..... simply because they found themselves together. That is to say, they were, after their association, what they were before it, and would not be seriously affected if they were to be separated..... They fall short of the nature of a plan which determines a great range of elements, variously but with reference to an identical operation." A

typical example of/

typical example of an association is a crowd, which is characterised by a mere superficial connection between unit and unit on an extended and intensified scale. An example of an organisation, on the other hand, is an army, and "the difference between the two modes of determination is plainly visible on a review day, if we first watch the compact regiments marching off the ground, and then the crowd streaming away irregularly in search of rest or refreshment," (ibid. P.151) An organisation, like the State, is a determination of particulars by the scheme or general nature of a systematic group to which they belong. Every State, like every organisation is bound together by a general scheme, a common rule or purpose, and in this sense, the State is referred to as "an apperceptive mass" because "it is a set of ideas bound together by a common rule or scheme, which dictates the point of view from which perception will take place, so far as the system in question is active." (ibid. P.155) The ultimate end or plan or scheme which binds the State together is the realisation of the best life. And the best life is the life that is determined by the fundamental logic of the will. Freedom, therefore, in this context means not the mere self-determination which renders us responsible, but determination by reason, autonomy of the will. The core of this whole Idealist view of the State may be summarised in the proposition that the claim of the individual to have certain powers secured to him by society, and the counter-claim of society to exercise/

society to exercise certain powers over the individual, alike rest on the fact that these powers are necessary to the fulfilment of man's vocation as a moral being, to an effectual self dedication to the work of developing the perfect character in himself and others by the exercise of his real or rational will. This theory in its classical form equated obedience with freedom, and the obedience is to the laws and injunctions of the State that is organised to express the general will, to propagate the best life, which is the life that each of us would lead if we were always dominated by our real will.

While recognising the "prima facie" similarity between the concept of "dharma" and "the real will" as the basis of freedom and political obligation, Sri Aurobindo would no doubt reply that the similarity is more apparent than real. From Sri Aurobindo's standpoint, the main point of difference would be that though the idealistic view starts from a deeper source and aims at something more enduring than a purely utilitarian view, it nevertheless fails to present a cogent theory of political obligation because it does not go far enough. It is all very well to say that the State exists to propagate the moral life or the best life. But Sri Aurobindo would immediately reply that to leave it at that would be to ignore the real and quintessential part of our human nature, what is the spiritual centre which though hidden in most of us, is the operative force behind all events and movements in this terrestrial /

terrestrial manifestation. Nor is there anywhere in the idealistic theory a clear presentation of what the best life is. Bosanquet attempts to present a picture of the good life, but it is by no means clear what exactly such a life would mean. "The difficulty of defining the best life does not trouble us, because we rely throughout on the fundamental logic of human nature qua rational. We think ourselves no more called upon to specify in advance what will be the details of the life which satisfies an intelligent being as such, than we are called upon to specify in advance what will be the details of the knowledge which satisfies an intelligent being as such..... What we mean by "good" and "truth" is practical and theoretical experience in so far as the logic which underlies man's whole nature permits him to repose in it. And the best life is the life which has most of this general character - the character which, so far as realised, satisfies the fundamental logic of man's capacities." (Bosanquet : "Phil. Theory of State" P.169)

The concept of the "best" or "moral" life is alright in so far as it goes, but it rests on a partial truth which it regards as the whole truth. For the great and inescapable truth, to which all insight must eventually lead, is that the pattern of human conduct as taught by ethics is a transitional stage in man's development, and the knowledge or science of morality is but a preparatory step to the spiritual life. Nor does the idealist theory envisage any transformation of human nature/



of human nature in conformity with obedience to a higher or Divine Law. In fact, it does not indicate ~~to~~ what the consequences would <sup>be</sup> ~~lead~~ of a strict obedience to the real will or the moral self, nor in what measure such action would conduce to human welfare. On the other hand, on Aurobindo's view, the consequences of a progressive enfoldment of the spirit in human life are emphatically given. First and foremost, the outstanding characteristic of the liberated man, will be that all action proceeding from him would have become completely severed from all personal motive and interest. The crux will be egoless action, freed from all personal hopes, fears, and motives. It is not high-minded effort or ethical action that Aurobindo is after, but egoless action, by which is meant all that and only that which has a pure and unalloyed guidance from the inner motive force of the soul or spiritual centre. Only by a centralisation of our being around our spiritual centre can we bring a higher will to operate through all our acts and works. The consequence of the attainment of this end, even in partial measure, would be that we would begin to live in that experience which sees beyond the dualities of pleasure and pain, suffering and joy, to the Divine Nature and Ananda or Delight of Existence inherent in all things.

The spiritual theory as expounded by Sri Aurobindo carries with it an acceptance of the belief in the inherent value of every human being, for all and everything is indeed the/

indeed the Supreme One. Every person has an intrinsic worth which ought never to be traduced or pressed into some alien mould to serve any selfish interest - in short, no person can justifiably be treated as a means to any end whatever. It would be interesting to note how this attitude compares with the liberal or utilitarian theory which regards the separate-ness of each individual, his uniqueness and isolation as indefeasible. Here also, the apparent similarity begins and ends only this common ground, for the utilitarian theory does not take the matter any further, whereas Aurobindo's philosophy correlates the uniqueness of each individual with a higher Divine Law or Purpose, which is operating to transmute terrestrial life to a higher and nobler manifestation of itself. John Stuart Mill, in his presentation of the utilitarian, allocates certain spheres of action for the State and for the individual. "What, then, is the rightful limit to the sovereignty of the individual over himself? How much of human life should be assigned to individuality and how much to society? ..... Each will receive its proper share, if each has that which more particularly concerns it. To individuality should belong the part of life in which it is chiefly the individual that is interested; to society, the part which chiefly interests society." (Mill on "Liberty". Chap. 10) The ultimate isolation of the individual personality is the basis on which Mill builds his political philosophy and the only limits to this isolation are that he is/

are that he is bound not to interfere with similar rights and interests of others and secondly is bound to take his fair share of the sacrifices incurred for the defence of society and its members. And these restrictions upon the liberty of the individual are accepted for the reason that that is the only means by which the aim of society, which is the greatest good of the greatest number, may be attained. Apart from the hedonistic aspect of this theory, which Aurobindo would <sup>reject.</sup> ~~respect~~, there are two grounds upon which he would criticise it. Firstly, it would be said that Mill takes the ordinary mental, vital and physical being as the whole of human personality. There is not even a recognition of what to Sri Aurobindo is the essential truth, that over and above our mental, vital and physical aspects, we are spiritual beings of whom the mental, vital and physical components are only parts. It would be a grave error to regard the purely individualistic, vitalistic and separative urges as constituting the whole of our mission in life. The second ground of disagreement would be that the doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number is rejected in favour of a wider goal contained in the urge to secure the greatest good of all the members of the State. Aurobindo would doubtless regard Mill's statement on Liberty as what Bosanquet called a theory "of the first look" or a "prima facie" view, which deals with external phenomena and concerns itself only with them, completely excluding any deeper or hidden source behind the phenomena. Nor

is it possible/

is it possible to extract a theory of social contract from anything that Aurobindo has written. According <sup>to</sup> ~~of~~ the social contract theorists, the creation of civil society is effected through the medium of a contract in which each individual agrees with every other to give up to the community the natural right of enforcing the law of reason, in order that life, liberty and property may be preserved. Hobbes held that this contract conferred all power upon a determinate Sovereign; Locke regarded the community as the sole repository of political power while Rousseau regarded the General Will as embodied in the State as the Supreme holder of all power. It is unnecessary to postulate any such hypothesis for an exposition of Aurobindo's political theory. The origin and development of societies was a necessary consequence of the evolutionary progression of the Divine involved in the material world towards the Light and Effulgence of Itself. Once manifestation began, infinite possibility also began, and among the infinite possibilities which it is the function of the universal manifestation to work out, the growth of institutions and social organisations was very evidently one.

It remains finally to enquire whether a State conceived and organised along the lines suggested by Aurobindo would not be characterised by a dull uniformity, in which the inescapable fact of human diversity and variety of particular temperaments and will will be submerged in a featureless

continuum. In spite of anything that may be said by advocates of Sri Aurobindo's conception of the State, it does not seem likely that a thinker of the style of the late Professor Harold J. Laski would be induced to change his mind. It is highly unlikely that he would revoke the general criticism which he directed against the Idealist Theory of the State. "It seems to me to imply not only a paralysis of the will, but a denial of that uniqueness of individuality, that sense that each of us is ultimately different from his fellows, that is the ultimate fact of human experience." (Laski : "Liberty in the Modern State" : P. 58)

But Aurobindo's reply to this criticism would be clear and uncompromising. So far from there being a paralysis of the will, he would say that the human will can only function in all its purity, freedom and diversity when the whole being is directed to the aim of elevating the mind from its present bonded condition to a consciousness that is free from any separative, egoistic impulse. The ideals of liberty and equality which Laski is so concerned to protect can never be satisfactorily reconciled so long as man in the individual and in the communal aggregate lives by egoism, so long as he does not undergo a spiritual and psychological change and rise beyond mere communal association into that true ideal of brotherhood, or fraternity, which must take root in the ~~xxx~~ soul and rise from the divine depths within. Aurobindo would accept Bosanquet's distinction between/

distinction between association and organisation, and he would proceed to say that all we have at the moment is association maintained by an external and difficult accommodation of different wills, but true organisation will depend on the growth of a sense of identity that an awareness of the Oneness of all life as manifestation of the Eternal Cosmic Brahman would bring in its train. The final reply to any hesitant criticism of this sort is given in the "Superman" (P.4) where it is said that growth in accordance with one's dharma, or evolution in the sense of God "is to grow in intuition, in light, in love, in happy mastery; to serve by rule and rule by service; to be able to be bold and swift and even violent without hurt or wickedness and mild and kindly and even self-indulgent without laxity or vice or weakness; to make a bright and happy whole in oneself and by sympathy, with mankind and all creatures. And in the end it is to evolve a large impersonal personality and to heighten sympathy with constant experience of world oneness."

Freedom and liberty, therefore, assume in Aurobindo's statement, a characteristic spiritual<sup>or</sup> meaning. Freedom is not only the absence of restraint, but it is positively defined in terms of obedience to the Self-imposed law of one's own being, which, in short, is to rise from the surface mental being into a deeper spiritual entity in which alone can the individual expect to attain an awareness of the Divine Reality underlying Life./

underlying Life. A man is not free in the real sense even when the State removes all obstacles to the free play of his sensual or his egoistic pursuits, for anything that is born of the ego must necessarily, no matter how it is modified or chastened by external machinery, breed division and conflict. True freedom is the pursuit of one's own "Dharma", the spiritual law that makes it an inevitability that man must grow into the awareness of his spiritual orientation, and, by the operation of the same law, must ascend to higher states of consciousness above the divided surface field of mind to which we now blindly cling as the ultimate. In any State, consequently, if liberty and freedom are to function effectively, it is important that there should be equality. Everyone is equal in the sense that the "Svadharna" is operative in all even though it is veiled and not even recognised by most of us. The equality which Aurobindo's State would foster as one of the corner-stones of its policy would not mean identity of treatment. That there is variety in human nature, that there are differences in both hereditary capacity and social nature are inescapable facts. Equality in this sense means a firm insistence of the principle that there is no difference inherent in nature between the claims of all human beings to follow their "Svadharna". The protective rampart of the social organisation must provide the free ground for the flowering of the "Svadharna" of each of its members. If it is objected that this is a doctrine of

contingent anarchy/

contingent anarchy, that since it admits the right of men to follow their ~~own~~ own "Svadharna", it must also admit the right to rebellion, the answer is that the objection is true. Order in the mere external is not the supreme good, nor is rebellion always the final wrong. Power is not exercised by the State for the sake of power, but only in order to enable men to achieve ends which will win happiness for each of us. If the State in its actions frustrates this purpose, if it displays a lack of goodwill, the only alternative must be a challenge to its power. But Aurobindo would add the proviso that so long as rebellion arises from an urge to provide a more suitable framework for achieving human happiness, and not from any egoistic or power blind motivation, there would be no need to fear its consequences. And in all things the stress of the hidden spirit would lead men to identity, to unity which is its preordained objective, and not to division and separateness. For the final fact of life's manifestation is its spiritual beginning from the one Eternal Spirit which is the force behind the evolutionary progress from matter to spirit. And an awareness of this spiritual origin and the dynamics of this spirit must lead to a recognition that all men are ultimately One, in the sense that the innermost core of their Beings belong to the same category of spirit as the One Immutable Eternal Existence which is behind the surface play. Prince Peter Kropotkin had a vague sense of this idea of unity when he propounded his theory of mutual aid

(Mutual Aid) /



("Mutual Aid" : Kropotkin) by which he meant, in the last analysis, a perception of the oneness of all creation and which he intended as a counterblast to the excessive pre-occupation with the Darwinian concept of the "Struggle for existence". The idea of mutual aid is given a deeper significance in Aurobindo's theory, and is related positively to his conception of the Spiritual process by which Spirit seeks its own unfoldment through aeons of time - the process that we call history.

CHAPTER IV.THE TWENTIETH CENTURY CRISIS IN HUMAN AFFAIRS.

A student of the human political scene since the turn of this Century would find increasing justification to cry out with Homer, "Would that strife might perish from among gods and men." For the crises, rumours of wars and actual outbreaks of violence have exposed the dangerous tendency to evil which still lurks in man in spite of his civilised appearance. There was a time when people smugly believed that they had risen above savagery for ever, but the developments of recent times are evidence to the contrary. When a war to end all wars has been fought and won, we are delivered into the simulacrum of a peace, which is one long-drawn suspense and anxious expectation.

The crisis of the Twentieth Century which we are witnessing and of which we are a part is externally, the crisis to found some stable form of human government which would contain a built-in method of peaceful succession and which at the same time could maintain peaceful relations with other States. There was a time when Democracy was looked upon as the final answer to the problem. It was a welcome rescue from autocratic rule and was a necessary phase of the rise of the  
age of individualism/

age of individualism in human evolution. But it is today passing through a testing time and as a political arrangement it is not very popular. Some European States have rejected it, in some where the semblance of popular government is kept up, strong misgivings are felt and two of the largest Nations on earth, Russia and China, have abandoned it altogether in favour of an entirely different scheme. The truth that has to be faced is that government is an expert's task and only those skilled in it can be rulers. In its actual working, democracy rarely permits a country to be governed by its ablest men. Very often, in the name of democracy, some mysterious caucus operating in the background rules the State. The elected representatives have little or no independence and initiative and they are mere tools of a vast party machine. Rarely are the votes of the electors influenced by their innermost convictions, but depend to a large extent on the high-pressure electioneering campaigns that the competing parties inflict upon them. And then there is also the hard, inescapable fact that there can be no political equality where there is so much economic inequality. For too long has society been regarded as an organism that would adjust itself automatically through the twin forces of freedom of contract and competition.

There are also forces at work within the democratic state that are basically anti-democratic. Perhaps as a reaction to the rigid organisation in totalitarian states, there is an/

there is an increasing tendency in all democracies to standardise thought and belief, in spite of the fact that the original impulse to democratic organisation was the dictum, "Man, be Thyself!" The mind of the average citizen is scrappily furnished as a result of desultory reading of the avalanche of surface sensation that is featured in the Press, by the hold of the Film and Radio-television upon the public mind. Conformity at all costs is the bitter pill that the average man has so readily swallowed. Those who know better are loth to take an independent line, but prefer to fall in line with the average mind. We have not the time nor the competence to work out and evaluate the problems that beset us. This mechanising of the mind, this investing of the mental horizon, which is so deadly to all creative thought and work, is an outstanding feature of all the so-called democracies. In the demand that the democracies make that we conform to a more or less conventional pattern, they are losing sight of the fact that the highest creations are evolved not as a result of thinking to a pattern, but as a result of insight, solitary endeavour and the hard reflection of men who choose deliberately to rise above the common groove. In totalitarian states, of course, this standardisation is a deliberate policy, demanding conformity to worshipping what **Toynbee** calls "the parochial community" <sup>where</sup> ~~whether~~ the State is organised on nationalistic lines, or along lines of class in cases in which the State is geared to Marxist doctrines. Neither

the ballot box/

the ballot box of the democracies nor the coup d'etat of the would-be Fuhrer nor the violent revolution of the Marxist provides an answer to the problem of human government in the Twentieth Century.

When the student turns his gaze from the national to the international scene, the prospect is even less heartening. Every nation poses loudly as a guardian and champion of peace, but does not neglect the precaution of preparing for war. A cynic might almost say that war has become the method by which man is forced to be peaceful. All nations are guilty of cultivating the conceit of nationalism by innumerable means of suggestion and propaganda. The waving of flags, the blowing of bugles, the singing of patriotic songs, all reach their pre-ordained climax in the hymns of hate that are poured out during an era of war. It does not take much to turn seemingly civilised men to ravening beasts who turn to the killing and slaughter of their fellow-men with the same ferocity that the hound displays in the pursuit of the fox during a hunt. The call of war turns erstwhile reasonable men to will-less slaves, whose pretences of civilisation vanish and are lost in the excesses of the beast within. For the honour of the nation ( and seldom do we omit to add for the glory of God also) we devastate cities, kill millions of our fellow men, and wound and maim even more millions, and no war has as yet failed to leave behind in its wake a waste-land of shattered hopes and dreams, of defiled women/

defiled women and starved children.

In our helplessness in eradicating the evil of war, we strive desperately to maintain a semblance of outward civilisation, by trying to regulate war, by prescribing a code by which this dangerous game is to be played. But in the last analysis there is no real difference between the sword and the machine-gun, between an ordinary bomb and a guided missile. So long as we accept war as a means of settling international differences, so long as we hold to the narrow belief that the highest virtue is to win, so long will every nation endeavour to steal a march on its neighbours in the efficiency and destructive power of its weapons. It has been aptly said that to approve of war, but differ as to the methods of waging it, is equivalent to permitting the wolf eating the lamb, but criticising the table manners. Hobbes described the state of nature, that is, the state of things before the establishment of social organisation or sovereignty, as one of "bellum omnium inter omnes." There are times when this description would not be inappropriate of our international scene, in which, since there is no basic recognition of a common good, there can be no right ultimately in any other sense than power. In the presence of so much gloom, one can well understand (without, of course, accepting) the slashing indictment by the late Mr H.G.Wells of the political shape of things to come. "More and more will the world be for the tough, for the secretive, for the treacherous and the ruthless/

and the ruthless..... Ever and again some group or some individual by luck or cunning may achieve a certain width of conquest and establish a reign of terror..... The coming barbarism will differ from the former barbarism by its greater powers of terror, urgency and destruction, and by its greater rapidity of wastage. What other difference can there be without a mental renaissance?..... Mankind which began in a cave and behind a windbreak will end in the disease soaked ruins of a slum.....

There is no reason whatever to believe that the order of nature has any greater bias in favour of man than it had in favour of the ichthyosaur or the pterodactyl. In spite of all my disposition to a brave-looking optimism, I perceive that now the universe is bored with him, is turning a hard face to him, and I see him being carried less and less intelligently and more and more rapidly, suffering as every ill-adapted creature must suffer in gross and detail, along the stream of fate to degradation, suffering and death..... Either the human imagination, and the human will to live rises to the plain necessity of the case, and a renascent Homo Sapiens struggles to a new, a harder and a happier world dominion, or he blunders down the slopes of failure through a series of unhappy phases, in the wake of all the monster reptiles and beasts that have flourished and lorded it on earth before him, to his ultimate extinction." ("The Outlook for Homo Sapiens"

P. 174-176)

The evidences are plentiful for pessimists and prophets of doom to declare that we are living in a mad age. The shocks of successive crises have wrenched primordial impulses away from their tenuous moorings. There is startling increase in superstition, violence, race hatreds and blind fanaticism. While millions are poverty stricken, most nations are engaged in a wild orgy of military expenditure. Apart from Christian believers and Fundamentalists who see in these events the signs of the imminence of the Divine Descent, of the coming of Christ "in Power and Glory", it would ~~not~~ be altogether irrelevant here to consider some of the reactions of prominent Western thinkers to this encircling gloom. Foremost among the prophets of doom is Oswald Spengler, whose ponderous "Decline of the West", is, when shorn of its mass of verbiage, ~~is~~ a statement of the theory that "cultures <sup>are</sup> ~~are~~ organisms, and world history is their collective biography." Morphologically, the history of every culture "is the exact equivalent of the petty history of the individual man, or of the animal, or the tree, or the flower..... If we want to learn to recognise inward forms that constantly and everywhere repeat themselves, the comparative morphology of plants and animals has long ago given us the methods." (The Decline of the West" : P.104) Every culture, according to Spengler, is a bound and mortal thing, blooming on the "soil of an exactly definable landscape, to which plant-wise it remains/



it remains bound" and sinking gradually into decay and death when it "has actualised the full sum of its possibilities in the shape of peoples, languages, dogmas, arts, states, sciences." (ibid. P.106) We who live in the midst of Western civilisation are witnessing the glow and bearing the heat of a great conflagration that will seal the doom of what is regarded as the West. Spengler's arrogant dogmatism, and the pontifical manner in which he lays down this morphological conception of history as an ultimate and eternal truth, repel the dispassionate student of human affairs, and this reaction is even more firmly confirmed, when in defending the view that the decline of the West is inexorable, he states dogmatically : "Only dreamers believe that there is a way out. Optimism is cowardice." (Spengler : "Man and Technics" : P.104)

It is no doubt true that Spengler's analysis affords us a tremendous broadening of horizons, for his monumental work covers a vast panorama of human evolution, and that it demolishes the conventional interpretation of history as conforming to the Ancient - Mediaeval - Modern - Scheme, which usually minimises or overlooks altogether the contribution of non-Western cultures, and regards the historical process as culminating in Modern Progress. But in spite of that, the conviction remains that Spengler presses the surface similarity between a culture and an organism too far. The literal application of a metaphor borrowed from the science of biology is not justified by the /

justified by the facts. Interpretations of this sort would be regarded by Aurobindo as one more example of the errors of men who confine their gaze only to the surface of life and ignore the substance. Such a prophecy of doom would not *ex hypothesi* be possible, if Spengler had turned his eyes from superficialities and looked into the substance, if he had "accustomed himself to put aside appearances and penetrated beyond them to the secret and disguised reality", if he had "ceased listening to the noise of life and listened rather to its silence." (Ideal of the Karmayogin : P. 40)

A far more satisfying account of the meaning behind the crisis of our century is to be found in Toynbee's "Study of History". He agrees with Spengler that the civilisation called Western is "rushing down a steep place into the sea". (Vol. III. P. 103) But he rejects the "hyper-dogmatism" of Spengler when he declares that cultures are literally organisms and that consequently must live and die like animals. There is also a far more satisfying basic approach which makes Toynbee's "Study of History" so appealing. Not only is Toynbee's work free from any pretensions to arrogant dogmatism, but his depth of vision and his search for the underlying meaning of events give greater cogency to his main thesis. "The variety that is manifested in human nature and in human life and institutions is a superficial phenomenon which masks, without impairing, an underlying unity." (Vol. III. P. 390) The sense of the unity of

mankind is the/

mankind is the main element in the state of mind produced by the emerging world-order. "In the new age the dominant note in the corporate consciousness of communities is a sense of being parts of some larger universe, whereas, in the age which is now over, the dominant note in their consciousness was an aspiration to be universes in themselves." (Vol. 1. P. 15)

Toynbee is not pessimistic about the "Time of Troubles" through which we are passing. Such crises have repeatedly jeopardised civilisations in the past, and while some were crushed, others summoned the energy to meet the challenge, and in the very act of struggle have achieved a renaissance. The present crisis need not prove fatal to modern Western culture. The creative process exhibits a rhythmical pattern to which Toynbee gives the name "Challenge and Response", which stated briefly describes the process by which, when equilibrium of a given culture is shattered or disturbed by a clash of divergent forces, there is struggle and conflict but these finally merge into a fresh equilibrium that gives to life a new essence. The concepts of schism and palingenesia which Toynbee applies to the disintegration of civilisations are full of hope for the future. By palingenesia, Toynbee means a recurrence of birth or rather a transformation of a given culture as a result of passing through critical events, to a higher and more fruitful phase, in which the elements of discord generated by the previous phase are harmonised. While

Spengler was/

Spengler was led by the historical crises of his time to prophesy disintegration and decline, Toynbee regards these very conditions as constituting a superlative challenge to the creative energies of our age. The critical problem that faces Western civilisation is analysed and ends on a note of optimism in the following extract taken from Vol. 1 Page 336 of "The Study of History".

"The ailing civilisation pays the penalty for its failure of vitality by becoming disintegrated into a dominant minority which attempts to find a substitute for its vanishing leadership in a regime of force, and a proletariat ... which responds to this challenge by becoming conscious that it has a soul of its own and by making up its mind to save its souls alive. The dominant minority's will to repress evokes in the proletariat a will to secede; and the conflict between these two wills continues while the declining civilisation verges to its fall..... In this conflict between a proletariat and a dominant minority we can discern one of those dramatic spiritual encounters which renew the work of creation by carrying the life of the Universe out of its stagnation of autumn through the pains of winter into the ferment of spring."

And while one does not find in the "Study of History" the abiding presence of the stress of the hidden spirit that one encounters in Aurobindo, nonetheless, the student can/

student can discern a hint of similarity when Toynbee urges that the ideal of growth is to shift the action from "the field of the external environment - whether physical or human - to the "for interieur" of the growing personality or the growing civilisation". (Vol. 111. P. 216)

To the student of Sri Aurobindo, a most illuminating exposition of historical crises is propounded by Pitirim A-Sorokim in "Social and Cultural Dynamics", which surveys the socio-cultural trends in the Graeco-Roman and Western societies from 600 B.C. to the present. The point of interest is what he calls "Ideational", "Sensate", and "Mixed" forms of mentality and conduct and he regards the crisis of the Twentieth Century as symptomatic of a change from a sensate type of culture to an Ideational type. The Ideational phase in civilisation is characterised by mysticism, idealism, an ethic of absolute principles, eternalism and by symbolic and abstract trends in art, literature etc. The Sensate type is characterised by materialism, empiricism, determinism, an ethic of happiness and utility, dynamic character of social life, naturalism and sensualism in the arts. The mixed type represents a balance between these two opposites, a combination of "other-worldliness" and "this-worldliness". On the basis of these concepts, Sorokim argues that the present crisis represents a transition from the Sensate to the Ideational phase, just as the late Middle Ages represented a critical transition from the Ideational to the Sensate phase/

Sensate phase.

"Such a period is always disquieting, grim, cruel, bloody and painful. In its turbulence it is always marked by a revival of the regressive tendencies of the unintegrated and disintegrated mentality. Many great values are usually thrown to the winds and trodden upon at such a time. Hence its qualification now as the great crisis. Crisis, however, is not equivalent to either decay or death, as the Spenglerites and cyclicists are prone to infer. It merely means a sharp and painful turn in the life process of the society. It does not signify the end of the travelled road or of the travelling itself. Western culture did not end after the end of its Ideational phase. Likewise, now, when its Sensate phase seems to be ending, its road stretches far beyond the turn into the infinity of the future." (Sorokim ; "Social and Cultural Dynamics." Vol. III. P.537-8)

Sorokim does not fall into the tempting trap of looking upon the events of our century as dramatically apocalyptic, and he comes very close to Sri Aurobindo in regarding them as symptoms of deeper and inner movement which is seeking to gain expression - the stress of what he calls the Ideational phase - the phase of the inner life of mysticism. Sri Aurobindo would go further and add that the reason for these transitions from one phase to another, for these crises in human evolution, is the urge of the Spirit behind all existence, which is slowly/

which is slowly through devious ways driving man towards unity by creating the growing realisation that there is this Basic Spirit, this ultimate Reality, in which we are all one.

The true attitude is not to yield to pessimism or revolt, nor to look upon ourselves as martyrs facing apocalyptic events, but to attempt to unravel the basic causes underlying the surface turmoil. After all, man has been on earth for some 600,000 to 1,000,000 years, according to historians, and of this period, only the last 6,000 years may be said to include the rise of some form or other of human civilisation. If the original premises on which the Spiritual Theory of Cosmos is based are granted, then the conclusion must also be accepted that the cause of all the strife that blights our planet is our exclusive preoccupation with egoistic and limited interests, a preoccupation that is blind to the underlying unity and regards itself as the centre of the Universe and which seeks to make the rest of the Universe or (non-self) minister in varying degrees to its needs and satisfactions. This is the simple key to the apparent mystery of conflict, "for the law is always the same, that wherever egoism is the root of action, it must bear its won proper results and reactions and, however minimised and kept down they may be by an external machinery, their eventual outburst is sure and can be delayed but not prevented forever." (The Ideal of Human Unity : P.136)

In the ordinary everyday world in which we live,  
the life of/

the life of man is considered to reach its climax in the individual ego, which is the basis of all human activity in the commonplace world of politics, commerce and domestic relationships. Political organisation, education, philosophy, art and even religions are ego-held at their centre. In all organised human collectivities, governmental control has as one of its primary motives, the endeavour to protect and balance the rights of egos against each other, and to make it possible for them to live in congregations within regulated social structures. Socio-political organisation benevolently recognises that "enlightened self-interest" is a laudable and basically sound motivation for human action. The individual who sees within himself only a hard core of his own individuality or egoism, gets into the habit of looking upon himself as apart from all other men and things. His thought is conditioned to seeing the universe in two cardinal categories - (1) himself and (2) all else. This is the initial flaw on which we try to erect the edifice of our civilisation and because of its narrow basis, the structure must inevitably rock and show signs of cracking since the foundation is not sufficiently deep or strong to contain it. All spiritual experience points to this conclusion that attachment to the ego is servitude, that it is this which bars us from the perfect happiness which is our natural condition and adds the corollary that the egoless state is the only perfect freedom. Krishnamurti declares that modern society

is built on/



is built on an utterly unstable basis, on a gigantic illusion, the human "I" consciousness. It is an illusion because it ignores the one single immortal Life, the one fundamental Reality, which manifests itself in myriads of varying forms, including human individualities, and as a result, believes itself to be an utterly isolated existence, which for that reason wants to secure itself, to acquire things, to protect itself in every way at the cost of all other existing beings. In "Krishnamurti and the World Crisis", Dr Lilly Héber explains what this gigantic illusion of "I consciousness" entails: "In its blind ... self-assertion, individually, within the various classes, nationally and racially, the "I" is ignoring basic facts of existence already recognised by modern science. The organic unity of Life, the intimate connections between all forms of existence - in human life, individually, economically, socially, internationally - with exactly the result which modern social life today is presenting: it stands actually in the brink of ruin." (P.24) And could it not be inferred that Jesus Christ was referring to this illusion of "I" consciousness when he declared, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for ~~my~~ my sake ... the same shall find it", and again, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"? (St Matthew 16. 25 and St John 3. 3)

It is not only in spiritual experience that this  
idea is to/

idea is to be found. One of the most outstanding thinkers of our<sup>2</sup> time, and one who could hardly be said to be a spiritual ascetic in the traditional mould, Dr Arnold Toynbee, refers to self-centredness or egoism as the Original sin from which all our other evils take their source. "A living creature might, indeed, be defined as a minor and subordinate piece of the Universe which, by a "tour de force", has partially disengaged itself from the rest and has set itself up as an autonomous power that strives, up to the limits of its capacity, to make the rest of the Universe minister to its selfish purposes. In other words, every living creature is striving to make itself a centre of the Universe, and, in the act, is entering into rivalry with every other living creature, with the Universe itself, and with the Power that creates and sustains the Universe and that is the Reality underlying the fleeting phenomena. For every living creature, this self-centredness is one of the necessities of life, because it is indispensable for the creature's existence..... Self-centredness is an intellectual error, because no living creature is in truth the centre of the Universe; and it is also a moral error, because no living creature has a right to act as if it were the centre of the Universe.... To hold this mistaken belief and to act on it is the sin of "hybris"; and this "hybris" is the inordinate, criminal and suicidal pride which brings Lucifer to his fall." (Toynbee : "An Historian's Approach to Religion" : P. 2-3). How

then does Toynbee/

then does Toynbee suggest that man should live and act? What is the way of deliverance from this Original sin of self-centredness? The answer is given in a magnificent passage that puts in concise form both the difficulty of the problem and the difficulty of the solution. "Since self-centredness is thus both a necessity of life and at the same time a sin that entails a nemesis, every living creature finds itself in a life-long quandary. A living creature can keep alive only in so far, and for so long, as it can contrive to steer clear both of suicide through self-assertion and of euthen<sup>o</sup>asia through self-renunciation. The middle path is as narrow as a razor's edge, and the traveller has to keep his balance under the perpetual high tension of two pulls towards two abysses between which he has to pick his way." (ibid.)

And yet this self-centredness was not the result of any degeneration of life's purpose, but a necessary incident in the evolution of the world Spirit to higher stages of its own manifestation. The selfish and possessive instincts are the result of the expanding of consciousness from more primitive stages through a quest for individualised life. The finite centre of consciousness in man which crystallised the individual ego, provided itself through desire with valuable motives for activity. The ego proceeded to increase its field of experience and widen its scope for acquisition in the course of its progress. The struggles of ego-centricity and the resultant intensification of/

intensification of personality are necessary phases in the evolution of man to higher states of consciousness. But we are now reaching a stage which marks a crucial turning point in the spiritual growth of the ego. Up to the present time, it was the proper and profitable business of man to increase his capacities and possessions, to differentiate himself through self-centredness. But the long established habit of travelling along this road has hardened the ego and made it strongly individualistic, materialistic, and wedded to the use of cunning for its own gain. It refuses to take its stand on the side of the next trend, which is towards harmony, peace, and co-operation, towards a more spiritual and less sensuous world view. And so we are led to the conclusion expressed in the aphorism "Ego was the helper; ego is now the bar". (Aurobindo : "Thoughts and Glimpses").

The polarisation of our urges and activities around the centre which we regard as our self or our ego was a necessary step forward in the advance of matter in which spirit was involved from animal forms to the human condition.

In order to develop man, the Hidden Reality had to develop egotism. In order to surpass man, for man is something that has to be surpassed, it will have to submerge egotism. Where/

egotism. Where we see horror and violence, envy and hate, fear and greed being openly glorified, we must not fall into the trap of throwing up our hands in despair but to understand that this is the night before another slow dawn, the night of the grim struggle of the trapped beast in man. We must recognise that we have reached a point in our evolutionary graph where a vital changeover to another direction has become imperative. The ego is like a child that yearns to remain fixated in the care-free stage of childhood for all time. But the stress towards a mature spiritual responsibility will force the ego to abandon its present unstable position.

The need for today is a socio-political organisation of a kind higher than any which now exist, a system which will rest on conscious submission to higher laws, which will give due recognition to the fact that man is a spiritual being as well as a physical one. This statement must not be confused with the plea that is so often made for an earthly millennium or a terrestrial utopia. With the human material at our disposal, political perfectionism is a far cry, but it is certainly within our limits to create a more co-operative world than the one we now have. Competition as a basis of socio-political organisation is too narrow a principle and inevitably degenerates into combativeness. The politician of today represents "all the average pettiness, selfishness, egoism, self-deception that is about him, and these he represents well enough as well as a great deal of mental incompetence/

mental incompetence and moral conventionality, timidity and pretence. Great issues often come to him for decision but he does not deal with them greatly; high words and noble ideas are on his lips, but they become rapidly the clap-trap of a party." (The Ideal of Human Unity : P.35)

It is almost an obsession with us that if we can fill our lives with possessions and persons and sensations, we will have fulfilled the object of life and consequently attained happiness. This is disease and falsehood of modern political life "and only the hypnotised acquiescence of all, even of the intellectual classes, in the great organised sham, cloaks and prolongs the malady, the acquiescence that men yield to everything that is habitual and makes the present atmosphere of their lives. Yet it is by such minds that the good of all has to be decided, to such hands that it has to be entrusted, to such an agency calling itself the State that the individual is being more and more called upon to give up the government of his activities". (Ideal of Human Unity : P.36) The true business of the State is to provide all possible facilities for co-operative action amongst the individuals who constitute it, and of removing wherever possible all disabilities which would otherwise interfere with its working. By so doing it must secure for every individual a just and equal chance of self-development and satisfaction to the extent of his powers and in the line of his nature. Here the real utility of the State ceases. It must on

no account/

no account overstep the mark and seek to immolate the individual to a communal egoism and so prevent the flowering of a more perfectly developed humanity. All collectivist ideals seek unduly to subordinate the individual, but a true State would begin with the recognition that it is always the individual who progresses and compels the rest to progress.

In a further chapter the tasks of a State and the type of State that is dedicated to the elimination of the conditions that conduce to conflict will be considered. It will be sufficient here to reiterate what the underlying causes of all division are in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo - in fact, on the question of the effective cause of division, there is substantial agreement in all spiritual experience. Bound to its isolation from the Permanent and the One, the ego works for its own separative desire and self-affirmation in this world, neglecting its unity with the Divine and its oneness with all. Once the principle is accepted that each individual has an inalienable right to work itself out as far as possible by its separate will, the end must inevitably be in conflict with other similar individual powers. "Division, ego, the imperfect consciousness and groping and struggle of a separate self-affirmation are the efficient cause of the suffering and ignorance of this world." (The Riddle of the World : P.81) The conception of "ego" as the cause of division needs amplification. The idea has a deeper reference than the connotation of the word in its ordinary/

in its ordinary colloquial usage. When we refer to a person as being egoistic, we usually mean that he is objectionable in his self-expansiveness. But in Aurobindo's sense, a person can be free of such objectionable conduct and still be egoistic. The term egoistic refers to that condition, prevalent universally, in which one limits oneself to the surface mental individuality, which is strongly separative and ego-centric. Even its altruism is merely an enlargement of its ego. A formation of physical, vital and mental experience distinguishes itself from the rest of being and proceeds to look upon itself as something which has individualised itself and only exists so long as it is thus individualised. It is this that constitutes our ego-sense. The ego is the lynch-pin devised to centralise the activities of nature in us. It gives the first basis of coherence to what otherwise might be a mass of floating impressions. The necessity for this centralisation around the ego continues until there is no longer any need for such a device and it must yield to the emergence of the true being or spiritual self in man. Without in any way seeking to be apocalyptic, the fact must be faced that we have reached a stage in our evolution when the task of yielding to the higher self must be taken up. The stress of the Hidden Spirit is placing its evolutionary compulsion upon the ego to abandon its ancient sway in favour of a loftier and more divine principle. The conflicts that we see around us are therefore the results of the aggressive forces in the ego making a desperate

stand to keep/



stand to keep their ancient rule. It is only such an explanation that gives a true insight into the hidden causes of world shaking events. Our ordinary way of looking at war and strife is too limited, too exclusively physical. For the visible war is only an effect, an expression of that which already exists on the mental level, the true cause being the invisible war of thoughts, feelings, and hidden impulses. It is equally futile to blame one man or one group of men for any catastrophe that threatens life today or at any other time. Not one man's but the accumulated results of millions of men's selfish thinking and negative feeling, animal passion and wrong-doing have gone to produce the conflicts of the past and those that threaten today. That is why ultimately we have to stake our standpoint on the view that neither politics nor economics will ever alone adequately solve humanity's problems, since they are at bottom, spiritual problems. In almost all spheres of human activity the personal ego may be found stubbornly defending itself and aggressively clashing with other egos. Its possessions and desires, its ambitions and prejudices are the real goals which it aims to secure, behind all the shadow of tall talk which it often puts up. This is as true of the political and economic spheres as of the social and religious spheres. Hence, while it is necessary to bring about external reforms, it is even more important to recognise the urgency of exposing and eliminating the ego's tyranny. Thus we get at real causes, while the reformers merely/

reformers merely trim away the effects. Those who defend a civilisation based on an outmoded materialistic egoism are trying to hold a doomed fort. The incoming spiritual awareness, the Zeitgeist, will ensure the end of their era, for the evolutionary forces are inexorable.

Before leaving this inquiry into the causes of socio-political discords, it would be relevant here to note that a psychological explanation of the conflict is also put forward by one of the leading psychologists of our time, C.G. Jung, who, in his most recent work, "The Undiscovered Self", argues that in order to discover the causes leading to, for instance, the "Iron Curtain" on the European political scene, we must first seek for and expose the "iron curtains" in the individual psyche. (P.35) The crisis with which man is faced cannot be overcome by moral and rational arguments, because it is the result of an unleashing of emotional forces and ideas engendered by the spirit of the times. All external schisms are merely reflections of the schisms in the soul. Jung emphasises the reality of the "Shadow", which appears at the beginning of the process which he describes as Individuation, of which the end is the discovery of the Self and the reconciliation of a person with himself and the world. Our philosophy and politics, he argues, do not take account of or trouble <sup>themselves</sup> ~~themselves~~ with the other person in us, the Shadow, whose existence is grounded in our instinctual nature. But "the dynamism and imagery of the instincts together/

instincts together form an "a priori" which no man can overlook without the gravest risk to himself." (Jung : "The Undiscovered Self" : P.83) The danger arises when this shadow personality is either denied or projected on to some force or group which then becomes the object of our revulsion. "And just as the typical neurotic individual is unconscious of his "shadow" side, so the normal individual, like the neurotic, sees his shadow in his neighbour or in the man beyond the great divide. It has even become a political and social duty to apostrophise the capitalism of the one and the communism of the other as the very devil, so as to fascinate the outward eye and prevent it from looking at the individual life within." (ibid. P.66) The solution which Jung suggests is the re-integration or individuation of the self, which results not in the relegation of the shadow to deeper depths within the unconscious or in its forcible destruction, but really in a transfiguration of the shadow by assimilation into a wholly integrated personality. This solution differs from that generally held by Christianity, because, in Jung's perspective, the Devil is no longer a Reality to shun or to destroy, but a reality to transform. Contact with the Devil thus becomes a necessity from which we can no longer escape, and no victory over dualism and no spiritual growth is possible without the acceptance of this risk of contact with the "Evil Persona" and without the descent into "hell" which it presupposes. Although Sri Aurobindo's main concern is to

propound the/

propound the conditions of the Divine Life and the requirements of the Yoga or Discipline which would be the pre-condition for such a life, he does recognise the element of another and opposed force or personality which the aspirant has to face. In a letter on the subject of the "Evil Persona" published in the "Bulletin of Physical Education" (August 1953) Aurobindo declares, "..... a person greatly endowed for the work, has always or almost always ..... a being attached to him, sometimes appearing like a part of him, which is just the contradiction of the thing he centrally represents in the work to be done. Or if it is not there at first, not bound to his personality, a force of this kind enters into his environment as soon as he begins his movement to realise. Its business seems to be to oppose, to create stumblings and wrong conditions, in a word, to set before him the whole problem of the work he has started to do. It would seem as if the problem could not, in the occult economy of things, <sup>be</sup> solved otherwise than by the predestined instrument making the difficulty his own. That would explain many things that would seem very disconcerting <sup>in</sup> the surface." Ultimately we are led to acknowledge the fact that everything depends on the quality of the individual and the purpose of the state organisation must be consciously linked with ideal of assisting every member to complete this process of individuation, of making an integral whole in himself and by sympathy with the rest of humanity.

Behind the/

Behind the excessive preoccupation which Man has for limited or egoistic interests, is an attitude of mind which Aurobindo has outlined with great clarity. In making this analysis, Aurobindo was thinking of the Western outlook, but the general criticism could be applied equally to Man all over the globe. "The emphasis of the Western mind is on life, the outer life above all, the things that are grasped, visible, tangible, and on the inner life only as an intelligent reflection of the outer world, with the reason a putter of things into shape, an intelligent critic, builder, refiner of the external materials offered by Nature; the present use of living, in this life and for this life, is its whole preoccupation, the present existence of the individual, the continuous physical existence and developing mind and knowledge of humanity. Even of religion the West is apt to demand that it shall subordinate itself to this utility. The Greek and the Roman looked on religious cult as a sanction for the life of the "polis" or a force for the just firmness and stability of the State. The Middle Ages, when the Christian idea was at its height, were an inter-regnum, a period during which the Western mind was trying to assimilate in its emotion and intelligence an oriental idea, though it never succeeded in firmly living it, just as for Asia the present moment is an interregnum dominated by an attempt to assimilate in its intellect and life in spite of a rebellious soul and temperament, the Western ideal and outlook;

.....And finally/

.....And finally the genuine temperament of the West triumphed in an increasing rationalising and secularisation of religion. Religion became more and more a pale and ever thinning shadow pushed aside into a corner of the being and lucky if not entirely exiled, while outside the doors of the vanquished Church marched on their victorious way the triumphant secular pomps of the life and reason.

The tendency to secularism is a necessary consequence of the cult of life and reason. Modern Europe, the more effectually to shake off the obsession of the Christian idea, which like all oriental religious thought claims to make religion commensurate with life and to spiritualise..... the whole being, separated religion from the life, from philosophy, art and science; from politics, from the greater part of the action of society; it secularised and rationalised too the ethical being so that it might stand in itself and have no need of any aid from any religious sanction. It left religion an impoverished system of belief and ceremony to which one might or might not subscribe with very little difference to the match of the human mind and life; for its penetrating and colouring power had been reduced to a fine minimum, a superficial pigmentation of dogma, sentiment and emotion..... The Divinity had left the earth and lived far aloof..... in other worlds, in a celestial heaven of saints and immortal spirits. But why another world? We will admit, said the progressing intellect, only this material world/

material world to which our reason and senses bear witness, and for the rest, a vague idea of spiritual being without a habitation to satisfy the chilled remnants of the old spiritual sense or illusion - Theism or else a rationalised Christianity. Or why that even? A Reason or Power, called God for want of a better name represented by the moral and physical law in the material universe is surely sufficient for a rational mind; so we get to Deism. Or why then a God at all? The reason and the senses give no witness to God, can make of Him at most a plausible hypothesis, but there is no need of an unsubstantial hypothesis, Nature is enough and the sole thing of which we have knowledge. Thus by a quite inevitable process we have got to the atheistic or agnostic cult of secularism, and there reason and life may henceforward take their foundation and work well satisfied - if only that inconvenient veiled ambiguous infinite something behind will leave them alone for the future." (Arya : Vol. V. P. 608-611)

Looking back over to the centuries to the humble beginnings of human societies, we can rightly feel some satisfaction at the great developments we have made in all branches of knowledge. We readily concede that a community which attributes greater importance to mind than to life and body is higher in the scale of progress. But the "mind" is interpreted as one with the spirit. <sup>must recognise that we</sup> We are still far from the ideal of civilisation. Our technological efficiency may be wonderful, our knowledge vastly increased/

vastly increased, but they are used not for the sake of the higher spiritual ends but for vitalistic satisfactions. The sort of mental life to which we commit ourselves is at a low level, dedicated to the satisfaction of wants and the accumulation of possessions. The fact has, therefore, to be faced that a society which is preoccupied with life and body, physical and economic pursuits, scientific and technological efficiency to the exclusion of the higher humanistic ideals of mind and spirit, is not truly civilised. Human nature is a complex of body, mind, and spirit, and the harmonisation of all three into an inseparable unity should be the true aim of civilisation. Any conflict of the parts is not to be deplored but taken as a challenge for conquest and adjustment. Excellence of the body, a strong social and economic fabric are necessary for the good life, but they are not ultimate ends in themselves. A narrow self-bound individualism impelled by the motives of self-assertion and self-preservation which we share with the animal kingdom must yield to a self-sacrificing universalism devoted to the good of the whole. It is the transformation of the individual into the universal outlook, the linking up of our daily life with the eternal purpose that makes us truly human. Our life on earth, and the purpose of that life, is assuredly not to reproduce a human edition of the animal round of existence. A new orientation is needed, arising from the quest for a higher order of consciousness which would be as different from that we now have/



now have as human life and consciousness are different from those of the animal.

If there is one thing which should be clear to us by now, it is that technical advance and efficiency have little to do with moral development. Our civilisation is an anxious striving to perfect the exterior forms of existence, to exploit the economic potentialities of the earth, to spread far and wide material well-being and master the forces of nature for the ends of man. In the process we have now produced and succumbed to, a new form of economic barbarism. Our progress so far bears eloquent testimony to the assertion of mind over life and matter. We have reached the stage now of taking an even greater step - that of submitting mind, life and matter to the guidance of spirit.

There is therefore, no need to despair. The world is not in the hands of a mechanical inconsequence. No crisis however great can defeat the logic of history, for "if the plunge into Night was inevitable, the emergence into a new unprecedented Day is also a certitude." (Aurobindo : "Riddle of the Universe" : P.85) Our life on this planet is of comparatively recent origin, and if we go on progressing not only physically and mechanically but also mentally and spiritually, the prospect ahead is bright. A frank discussion and criticism of our civilisation and its weaknesses are necessary for any improvement. Our/

improvement. Our future socio-political reorganisation must proceed from more basic thinking, from a deeper insight, guided by the Spiritual Reality in which we are rooted, if we are to give the lie to Hegel's devastating epigram, "We learn from history only that mankind does not learn from history."

There remains the final question of why all this that is, should be. Why should Spirit in its self-manifestation have chosen the path of division and ego, the road of this painful evolution? "It is hard to answer to the human intelligence on its own level, for the consciousness to which the origin of this phenomenon belongs and to which it stands as it were automatically justified in a supra-intellectual knowledge, is a cosmic and not an individualised human intelligence; it sees in larger spaces, it has another vision and cognition, other<sup>n</sup> terms of consciousness than human reason and feeling. ....If it is asked why even if possible, it should have been accepted, the answer nearest to the Cosmic Truth which the human intelligence can make is that in relations or in the transition of the Divine in the Oneness to the Divine in the Many, this ominous possibility became at a certain point an inevitable." (The Riddle of the Universe : P.84)

CHAPTER V.TOWARDS THE "NOBLER PRAGMATOSIS".

When Sri Aurobindo declared many years ago that the "most vital issue of the age is whether future progress in humanity is to be governed by the modern economic and materialistic mind of the West, or by a nobler pragmatosis, guided, uplifted, and enlightened by spiritual culture and knowledge" (Ideal and Progress), he no doubt had in mind that what was needed was a deeper political philosophy which would be able more adequately to cushion and give direction to the stresses to which human life is being subjected.

Our political organisation rests upon a philosophy which aims to secure an ideal material organisation of civilisation and comfort using as its tools science and education in order to produce a society of well-adjusted individuals. The ideal is entirely humanitarian, and excludes, or at any rate takes insufficient notice of the spiritual source of power, and the consequence of this exclusion has been to lead humanity into a subjective chaos. The price we pay for this inadequate philosophy is our periodic crises, in which accepted values are cast aside and our social organisation and culture bereft of sure support. The inevitable end of such a political foundation is the exclusive concentration  
on the material/

on the material and economic life accompanied by the even greater evil that man's mental capacity has <sup>-come</sup> been the slave of his blundering ego. It may be argued that Western democratic thought is characterised by a deep sense of the value of personal independence and freedom, and that the defects of our social organisation are only temporary aberrations which would be swept away as the ideal of personal freedom becomes more truly established. The weaknesses to which it is so easy for a critic to point do not vitiate the theory itself, but are only imperfect adjustments to the ideal. But Sri Aurobindo, while agreeing with the importance of recognising the intrinsic worth of the individual, would reply that the distinctness and worth of individuals as individuals, and their essential union with the Divine are not incompatible conceptions. On the contrary, it is only in so far as they enter into enjoyment of their union with the Divine, that individuals can grow and develop their potential worth. Individual worth and freedom cannot have any enduring meaning upon any other foundation. We have arrived at a period in world history when it is essential that peoples and natives <sup>as</sup> shall find the way of uniting in genuine and effective co-operation. We are striving to find such a way, but fail again and again, or arrive only at solutions that collapse before every crisis. The task before the political philosophers is to provide a more enduring philosophy which/

philosophy which gives the place of first importance to the spiritual element in man. It is to take the whole human being with all the planes and parts of his being into its scope, and not merely to attempt an external order and arrangement. It is, in short, to strive for a thorough-going order in politics, in that field of human activity which Ralph MacGill, Editor of a Southern United States newspaper "The Atlanta Constitution" once called "that inexact science ... fascinating in its ballet-like leaps, adagios, and arabesques." (Quoted in "The Saturday Evening Post" : Dec. 27, 1958. P.51)

As is the case with most political philosophies, there does not occur anywhere in the writings of Sri Aurobindo a detailed exposition of the type of government or the political machinery that would conduce to the carrying out of the political ideals to which he adheres. We are led to the conclusion that the best form of government is that which helps us most to govern ourselves, but what form that government would take is not discussed or speculated upon. The ideal that any government worthy of its name should set itself is clear enough: it is firstly "to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of the Self so that it shall re-embrace, permeate, dominate, transfigure the mental and physical life; to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline/

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self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion of its own richness, power, and complexity; and secondly, to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society and his institutions may remould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the utmost possible harmony of individual and social unity." (Ideal and Progress: P. 65-66.)

Any government that sets itself such an ideal must whatever its form, be necessarily a very strong government. For it could not otherwise do justice to the organisation that would be required progressively to realise such a lofty goal. If we could use the extent of the discipline which the aspirant to the Life Divine must impose upon himself, as a guide, then some light would be thrown upon the extent to which the state should direct life, if it is dedicated to the spiritual ideal. In "The Mother", Sri Aurobindo, in discussing the problem of self-discipline, states emphatically that the aspirant or Sadhak must strive to bring every facet of his being under the control of his disciplined will." There must be in no part of the being, even the most external, anything that makes a reserve, anything that hides behind doubts, confusions and subterfuges, anything that revolts or refuses."

The immediate/

The immediate reaction to a government exercising such power would be to liken it to the frightful world of 1984 of which George Orwell painted such an awesome picture. But the likeness would only be superficial. For a government conceived along the lines of Aurobindo's philosophy would by definition be dedicated to the eradication of those very causes - the exclusive pursuit of vitalistic interests, the glorification of the national ego - which would produce the world adumbrated by Orwell. In the first place, Aurobindo would deliberately demolish the concepts of national liberty and national will as an absolute ideal, for his whole social and political philosophy is based upon the conception that because there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one, and of which humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, and the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here, all local and national aggregates must submit to the authority of some form of an international organisation. The recognition of an international control over the nations of the earth remains a constant undertone in Aurobindo's political writings. Even when he was fresh ~~fr~~ from the strife and bitterness of active politics, he could say, as he did as far back as the 24th July 1909, in the weekly review "The Karmayogin", that there are two stages in the development of a nation - first when it is forming itself, and secondly, when it is formed, organised, and settled. "The first is the stage/

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is the stage when Nationalism makes rightly its greatest demands on the individual, in the second it should abate its demands and, having satisfied, should preserve itself in Cosmopolitanism, somewhat as the individual preserves itself in the family, the family in the class, the class in the nation, not destroying itself needlessly, but recognising a larger interest." (ibid.) There is nowhere in Aurobindo's political theory any hint of the belief that the nation, which is the largest unit which humanity has been able to create and maintain for its collective living, is the last or ultimate unit. That the world is surely, albeit slowly, moving towards the ideal of some form of world-union is the first principle which any government must enshrine and by so doing, contribute its share to the universal acceptance of the ideal of human unity. Indeed Aurobindo's political philosophy may be described as a spiritual and philosophical argument in favour of the ideal of human unity. Nothing could more cogently elucidate his standpoint on the subject of international control than the following passage from the "Ideal of Human Unity!" (P.16-17)

"We conclude then, that in the conditions of the world at present, even taking into consideration its most disparaging features and dangerous possibilities, there is nothing that need alter the view we have taken of the necessity and inevitability/



and inevitability of some kind of world-union; the drive of Nature and the compulsion of circumstances and the present and future need of mankind make it inevitable..... The ultimate result must be the formation of a World-State and the most desirable form of it would be a federation of free nationalities in which all subjection or forced inequality and subordination of one to another would have disappeared and, though some might preserve a greater natural influence, all would have an equal status..... A world union of this kind would have the greatest chances of long survival or permanent existence. This is a mutable world and uncertainties and dangers might assail or trouble for a time; the formed structure might be subjected to revolutionary tendencies as new ideas and forces emerged and produced their effect on the general mind of humanity, but the essential step would have been taken and the future of the race assured or at least the present era overpassed in which it is threatened and disturbed by unsolved needs and difficulties, precarious conditions, immense upheavals, huge and sanguinary world-wide conflicts and the threat of others to come. The ideal of human unity would be no longer an unfulfilled ideal, but an accomplished fact and its preservation given into the charge of the united human peoples."

Aurobindo would require the organisation of the  
State to accept/

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n State to accept and be faithful to certain fundamental principles if there is to be any hope of creating a society which is free, not from all division and conflict, but at any rate, from the grosser forms of division and clash of separative interests to which our present political condition is so easily prone.

A society orientated to what Aurobindo would consider its true aim would firstly regard man not only as a mind, a life and body, but also as a soul incarnated for a divine fulfilment here upon earth, and not in some heavenly regions beyond, which it need not after all have left if it had no business in the world of physical, vital and mental nature. Mind, life and body would therefore cease to be ends in themselves, but would become instruments of the soul, imperfect perhaps, but nevertheless instruments capable of being perfected. It will assist them to believe in themselves and in their destiny, which will be to spiritualise themselves so as to grow into visible members of the spirit, becoming more and more conscious and illumined means of the spiritual manifestation. One of the articles of its faith being the acceptance of the truth of man's soul as a thing entirely divine in its essence, it will accept also the possibility of his whole being becoming spiritualised and divine in spite of Nature's surface contradictions of this possibility. Secondly, as it will/

as it will regard man the individual, it will regard too the group or collectivity as a soul-form of the Eternal, a collective soul embodied upon earth for a divine fulfilment in its manifold relations and activities. Every human society or nation will also be regarded from this standpoint, as means of a complex manifestation and self-fulfilment of the Spirit. Much of the difficulties of our living arise from the fact that we have as it were a double nature, an animal part of the vital and physical being which lives according to its instincts, impulses and desires, and a higher part of the self-conscious intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, and intelligently emotional being which is capable of finding and understanding the law of his own action, a reflecting mind that strives to understand Nature, a will that uses, elevates, and strives to control Nature and intelligently enjoy it. The aim of the animal part of us is to increase vital possession and enjoyment; the aim of the semi-divine part of our make-up is also to grow, possess, and enjoy, but first to possess and enjoy intelligently, aesthetically, ethically, by the powers of the mind much more than by the powers of the life and body - in short, *to use the* Sanskrit terminology, to enjoy from a "sattvic" and not a "tamasic" *(or)* "rajasic" motivation. These two elements of our being live together in a condition of mutual perplexity and much of the uneasiness, the fret and fever of life/

fever of life arise from man's practical failure to find a harmonious balance for his double nature. The State should therefore harness all the forces of education, training, and growth to creating personalities in which these two parts of the being are properly related and harmonised. The aim will be to produce individuals in whom the centre of living will be transferred to a higher consciousness. The central will in life would no longer be the vital will of the life and body. The main power of action would no longer be the inferior vital urge of Nature that whirls around the ego-centre, but a chastened or spiritual will which would never lose sight of its goal, the preparation of man for a divine, deeper and more sattvic life.

It is an implicit corollary to this theory that the rulers in such a State would themselves have to be highly disciplined men to whom the first article of faith would be the possible Godhead of Man because he is inwardly of one being with the Divine. Aurobindo himself has said that the Yogin must stand behind the political leader or manifest within him. -

"Ramdas must be born in one body with Shivaji, Mazzini mingle with Cavour." ("Ideal of Karmayogin" : P.18)

In spite of its being a disciplined government, dedicated to such a lofty ideal, it will not attempt to enforce its will, even/

it will, even though it be convinced of its rectitude, by an external compulsion upon the lower members of man's natural being; rather will it seek to achieve its purpose on a long-term plan by holding up the ideal as a light and inspiration to all his members to grow into the sattvic nature from within themselves. "Neither in the individual nor in the society will it seek to imprison, wall in, repress, impoverish, but to let in the widest air and the highest light. A large liberty will be the law of a spiritual society and the increase of freedom a sign of the growth of human society towards the possibility of true spiritualism..... The spiritual aim will recognise that man as he grows in his being must have as much free space as possible for all its members to grow in their own strength, to find out themselves and their potentialities. In that freedom they will err, because experience comes through many errors, but each has in itself a divine principle and they will find it out, disengage its presence, significance and law as their experience of themselves deepens and increases. Thus true spirituality will not lay a yoke upon science and philosophy or compel them to square their conclusions with any statement of dogmatic religious or even of assured spiritual truth, as some of the old religions attempted, vainly, ignorantly, with unspiritual obstinacy and arrogance. Each part of man's being has its own dharma which it must follow and will follow in the/

follow in the end, put on what fetters you please..... They must be left free even to deny God and good and beauty if they will, if their sincere observation of things so points them. For all these rejections must come round in the end of their circling and return to a larger truth of the things they refuse." ( "The Human Cycle" : P. 255-6)

Thus a spiritual State while respecting the freedom of the lower members, will not leave them to themselves; it will present to them the truth of the spirit in themselves, translated into their own fields of action, presented in a light which illumines all their activities and shows them the highest law of their own freedom. It is problematical whether any politician who contested an election upon principles such as these would ever be successfully returned by any modern electorate. If the deep-seated tendency - almost an inveterate habit - of humanity in general to follow patterns of habitual thought and conduct is any basis for coming to a conclusion, then it is highly likely that such a candidate would be hopelessly defeated. A politician who aspires to turn the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances and attractions of things to a higher state in which the Universal can pour itself into the individual mould and transform it, is in effect, aiming at bringing about a most radical/

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a most radical change in our ways and habits and institutions. Aurobindo is emphatic about the drastic nature of the consequences of his teaching. "What we propose .... is nothing less than to break up the whole formation of our past and present which makes up the ordinary mental and material man and to create a new centre of vision and a new universe of activities in ourselves which shall constitute a divine humanity or a superhuman nature". ("Synthesis of Yoga" : P.24)

How, then, would a politician -cum-Yogin work out the course which would bring him political power? What means would he have to use to attain the end which he believes is intrinsically good? Perhaps this may not be an altogether fair question, because political philosophers have, in general, tended to expound their doctrines or views concerning the State and political obligation and have not expressly worked out a tactic for the attainment of political power. The most famous exception, is of course, to be found in the communist doctrine, which declares simply that the immediate aim of the Communists is the formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow<sup>of</sup> the bourgeois supremacy, and conquest of political power by the proletariat. The classic defiance of the final paragraph of the "Communist Manifesto" leaves no doubt about the place of revolution in the Communist dialectic: "The Communists disdain to conceal their ends and aims. They openly declare that their/

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declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."

Aurobindo does not consider this question directly and we are left to deduce the task of the Yogi politician from various "obiter dicta" which touch on this problem but which were uttered in the course of the exposition of the Integral Yoga. Because of the almost superhuman nature of the task, the first essential must be an abiding patience that is never upset and never yields to temporary despair in the face of repeated failure to acquire political power. It is quite clear that the gulf between a Cavour and a Mazzini, between the prophet of an ideal and the statesman of a realisable idea, must be bridged, and the road must traverse "the blood-stained and miresunk ways of the world." ("Ideal of Karmayogin" : P.14)

But we are told that "the ideal attitude of the "sadhaka" towards Time is to have an endless patience as if he had all eternity for his fulfilment and yet to develop the energy that shall realise now and with an ever-increasing mastery and pressure of rapidity till it reaches the miraculous instantaneousness of/



instantaneousness of the supreme divine Transformation."

("Synthesis of Yoga" : P.19)

But this requirement of an "endless patience" does not mean a counsel of conservatism or moderation at all times or even the pursuit of non-violence. Aurobindo himself rejects a hesitating moderation that halts before each step forward. "...Our human moderation is a wiseacre and a botcher; it sews a patch of new velvet on old fustian or of new fustian on old velvet and admires its deplorable handiwork. And its cautious advance means an accumulation of shams, fictions and dead conventions till the burden of falsehood becomes too great for life to bear and a violent revolution is necessary to deliver the soul of humanity out of the immobilising ceremonies of the past." ("Ideal & Progress" : P.32)

It will be an error to imagine that the Yogi-Politician would be too saintly, too loving or too passionless for the rough work of the world . Spirituality of the kind that Aurobindo propounds is not a thing divorced from life, and the uncompromising utterance in the Gita is the foundation on which all action, political or otherwise, must be based. "Whosoever has his temperament purged from egoism, whosoever suffers not his soul to receive the impress of the deed, though he slay the whole world, yet he slays not and is not bound."

But this drastic/

But this drastic doctrine would only be legitimately available to a Yogin, and would be a fraud if invoked by a would-be Hitler or Stalin or Nasser, for by no stretch of the imagination could they be described as free of egoism. The root of the matter is that the Yogin, if he enters the political field, would perform whatever action his inner guidance directs him to perform in a spirit that is purged of all egoistic attachment, a spirit that transcends the limitations of the urges of his individual self. By definition the Yogin would always be guided, even if he were to be involved in a violent revolution, by the spirit of identity which would always hold in check the sense of differentiation or separativeness that is the cause of ignorance and strife and discord. He will not commit the error of confining his consciousness to an exclusive identification with a particular temporal and spatial action which is only a part of its own play of being. He will never ignore the truth that all souls or selves are also identical with his own soul, "all other action its own action, and all other states of being and consciousness equally its own as well as the action of the one particular moment in Time and one particular standpoint in Space and the one particular form it presently occupies." ("The Life Divine" : P.155)

The Yogin will certainly recognise this as a world of life and action and developing organism but he will also recognise that/

also recognise that the life which seeks to guide itself only by vital and material forces "is a slow, dark and blundering growth." ("Ideal & Progress" : P.55) The world has not yet witnessed the full flowering of the Yogic spirit in political organisation, nor has history any examples of the phenomenon of the spirit of Ramdas, conjoined to the mind and body of Shivaji. Would it then be logical from Aurobindo's standpoint to regard all existing political systems as the work of politicians or men bound to the Ignorance, and to condemn them as wrong movements, as examples of the play of Avidya, which the Yogin will have to reject and destroy and build anew? Such a conclusion would not only be hasty, but it would also be unwarranted, having regard to the totality of this philosophy. For it must not be overlooked that in all things, there is the stress of the hidden spirit, and the politician, by his very nature, serves the working of a Thought within him even when he is ignorant of it in his surface self. "The practical man who ignores or despises the deeper life of the Idea, is yet serving that which he ignores or despises. Charlemagne hewing a chaotic Europe into shape with his sword was preparing the reign of the feudal and Catholic interpretation of human life with all that that great though obscure period of humanity has meant for the thought and spiritual development of mankind." ("Ideal & Progress" : P. 55-56) Therefore, the fact that the day when Cavour will mingle with Mazzini is still in the altogether distant future, and may even be regarded by many as an

unrealisable ideal, that is no reason for despair or for a cynical attitude towards the political movements and situations of our time.

The great necessity of our time is to work for a greater awareness of the spirit behind things, to work for a situation in which man will at least collaborate as a conscious mind and spirit with that which controls and directs it. While the creation of a supramental society composed of gnostic beings who would act in a universal awareness and a harmony of their individual selves with the total Self, of their individual wills with the total Will, is not an immediate <sup>possibility</sup> in our present human condition, the immediate task is certainly not an ascetic withdrawal from the world-drama or a Pilate-like washing off of our hands from the political, social and economic forces. Aurobindo certainly fixes his gaze upon a distant scene where society would be constituted of Gnostic beings, supermen in the yogic or spiritual sense, leading the life divine. That is the ultimate of his philosophy, "for our humanity is not the whole of the Reality or its best possible self-formation or self-expression - the Reality has assumed before man existed an infra-human formation and self creation and can assume after him or in him a suprahuman formation and self-creation. The individual as spirit or being is not confined within his humanity; he has been less than human, he can become more/

can become more than human." ("The Life Divine" : P.929) But this far-off Ideal would remain only a pious aspiration, a sort of escapist refuge from the realities of the present day politics, if it were not in some way correlated with action now. The immediate task is to work for the creation of a socio-political and economic scheme which would militate against the growth of division amongst members of the State and would by its nature, work for the elimination of conflict of class against class, rich against poor, capital against labour, or race against race. The Ideal of Human Unity is the most worthy cause that anyone can espouse. But this principle cannot flourish in the void or apart from the economic and political framework in which we live. Unless it is rooted in a more equalitarian politico-economic status quo, it will register a complete bankruptcy under the strong test of life. Aurobindo's political philosophy presupposes some form of socialised control of the means of production, which would eliminate disproportionate inequality in economic power, and the tendencies to despotism and unbridled competition. It would be completely off the mark to read a communist dictatorship of the proletariat into Aurobindo's writings, but he himself concedes that "some harmonisation of this great ideal" (Socialism) "is undoubtedly the immediate future of the human race." ("Ideal of Karmayogin": P.39)

The principle of/

The principle of human unity, the idea of humanity as belonging to the Family of Man with a common life and a common general interest is among the most significant products of modern thought. The State must, in Aurobindo's philosophy, enshrine the concept of human unity as one of its cardinal tenets. It would follow, therefore, that there can be no apotheosis of the State as such, and that above all, the concept of the inviolable sovereignty claimed by modern states must be abandoned in favour of some form of internationalism. In the attempt to give practical expression to some form of international control, the contribution of the modern Western mind has indeed been the greatest. The first attempt in the form of the League of Nations collapsed under the stress of power-politics and the insistence of member states to maintain their sovereignty and follow their own separate courses. The urge to unity appeared again in the form of the United Nations (Organisation,) and while it hitherto has been far more active and effective, the indications are that it is likely to suffer a similar fate. But the idea of human unity would appear and reappear, until acquiring the power of a central motive and fixed part of our nature, it becomes a realised ideal. The first<sup>enlargement</sup> of the self, apart from the family, is when the identification with the self in the body and the self in the family gave way to the identification with the self in the community.

To recognise that/

To recognise that the community has a larger claim on a man than his family is the first condition of the advance to the social condition. The next enlargement is to the self in the nation when national interests over-ride family and communal interests. It is from this stage that man is straining to rise to the higher level of international control, when separate or national interests would yield to matters of common international concern. The idea of a world union of states is a necessary conclusion given the original tenets of Aurobindo's general philosophic outlook. But though he speculates on various forms which such an international organisation would take, he does not work the ideal framework. "What precise form the framework might take, it is impossible to forecast and useless to speculate; only certain now current ideas would have to be modified or abandoned..... Some kind of confederation of the peoples for common human ends, for the removal of all causes of strife and difference, for inter-relation and the regulation of mutual aid and interchange, yet leaving to each unit a full internal freedom and power of self-determination, would be the right principle of this unity." ("Ideal of Human Unity" : P.289)

But there is one condition upon which Aurobindo is insistent if a world union is to be erected on an enduring basis. It may be possible to achieve a precarious and mechanical unity/

mechanical unity by political and administrative means, but it can be made real<sup>only</sup> if what he calls the religion of humanity spiritualises itself and becomes the inner law of life. Each member state must subscribe to and actively propagate this religion of humanity and it would appear that its basic truths must be enshrined in its educational and cultural systems. Of course, world government would mean, if such a religion is accepted by it, that each member of the government must as a condition of its membership subscribe to and uphold its principles. By a religion of humanity is meant not a formalised universal religion, a system of creed, dogma and outward rite. "A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one; that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this Divine Spirit upon earth." ("Ideal of Human Unity": P.323)

This broad conception by itself would be too vague and featureless to provide the cohesive force necessary to hold together so complex a group as a world union of states. Mankind in the mass must be given something more concrete and seizable and the/



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seizable and the religion must consequently differentiate itself into certain clearly recognised and universally recognised tenets. Among the greatest of these tenets must certainly be the belief that "man must be sacred to man regardless of all distinctions of race, creed, colour, nationality, status, political or social advancement. The body of man is to be respected, made immune from violence and outrage, fortified by science against disease and preventable death. The life of man is to be held sacred, preserved, strengthened, ennobled, uplifted. The heart of man is to be held sacred also, given scope, protected from violation, from suppression, from mechanisation, freed from belittling influences. The mind of man is to be released from all bonds, allowed freedom and range and opportunity, given all its means of self-training and self-development and organised in the play of its powers for the service of humanity." ("Ideal of Human Unity" : P.311).