

AN ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENCE

by

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

The Divine Life Society
Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India

Website: swami-krishnananda.org

The Portal of Enquiry

To aspire for the higher, to yearn to know more, not to be satisfied with the first view of things, is a distinguishing characteristic of the developed human being. This aspiration arises from a careful observation and study of the nature of experience. Experience is a term used to denote the totality of the conditions of consciousness, in which it becomes aware of its contents. Experience is said to grow when one gains an increasing knowledge of the contents of one's consciousness. The grosser the contents and the more distant they are from the consciousness which apprehends them, the lesser is their knowledge which one is said to have, and the more meagre is the experience gained. Much is implied in our life, and this can be known only by the critical and reflective consciousness. Most of the individuals gain no access to the deeper implications of experience, because they are shackled in the network of relations that constitute the superficial shell of individuality and personality. Being confined to the realm of sense, they float on the surface of, and do not delve deep through, experience. Experience is not merely knowledge obtained through the senses. Sense-experience is a pointer to the existence of factors, which are more fundamental. Even ordinary mental experience cannot fathom the basic principles of life, for the knowledge received by the mind is only a synthetic product

manufactured out of sense-experience. There is something greater and more essential, which is discovered by the trained faculty of understanding, freed from passions and prejudices. This enterprise of the study of the implications of experience is the main task of philosophy. Philosophy is the rational and systematic investigation and study of the truths comprehended in the wide range of experience.

Experience reveals the presence of a twofold factor constituting it – truth and error. Truth is generally defined as the uncontradicted and the complete. And that which is not capable of being transcended by any other experience is considered to be the Ultimate Truth. That experience which, though it appears to be real at the time of its being a form or process of consciousness, is capable of being contradicted and transcended by another experience is regarded as an error. It is not true, however, as it is testified in life, that all errors are of the same kind, or that they manifest the same degree of inconsistency with truth. An experience may be of an error, but it may be of a lesser or a greater error, i.e., of something which is less distant or more distant from truth. There are degrees of error, which means that there are degrees of truth. That which contains more of truth is a lesser error than that which contains less of truth. The different judgments which we make in our conscious states pertain to reality in its different degrees, which may be less or more in extent, in accordance with the richness of their contents. The lesser the truth in a judgment of experience, the more is the error that characterises it; and the greater the truth contained in the judgment, the lesser is the error present in it.

The Groundwork of Analysis

Knowledge of error implies the knowledge of truth and vice-versa. A correct understanding of the nature of erroneous perception requires a deep analysis and study of the nature of all our experiences. Experience, as it is in itself, is not fragmentary, but a whole. It is a coherent system of

partial phases, pointing to the existence of an Absolute-Experience. The Absolute may be described as the reality which consists in the consciousness of not an isolated content or object, but of its own infinitude suffused with eternity. In this undifferentiated experience all those factors, which go by the name of objects, are existent as its very constitutive essence. This is the grand fullness or plenitude in which no trace of lack or want or imperfection of any kind can be found. In this experience error finds no place, for, here, no distinction can be made between the subject and the predicate of a judgment. In fact, there is no such thing as judgment in the Absolute, for every judgment presupposes a conscious relation based on a dualistic ground. All judgments are intellectual in their nature, and hence there can be no judgment without the isolation of content from consciousness. But as long as this isolation is capable of being made, there can be no experience of the Absolute. In the Absolute, all substantives and adjectives exist as inseparable and equally real and valuable elements, forming its very being.

A lesser truth is also a kind of error, though it may be a lesser or a greater error. Error really commences with the rise of the individual consciousness. The moment Pure Consciousness is disintegrated into a constitution of fragmentary experiences, one such experience which arrogates to itself all the value of a true conscious experience begins to consider the rest of the whole as an objectified content of its thought. The consequence of this error is the perception of the Absolute through the senses as a material universe of disconnected elements, changing in nature, capricious in behaviour, and regardless of the intentions and wishes of the individual. The universe appears to be heedless to our desires, because it follows the law of the Absolute, which works independently of the erroneous notions of the separated individuals. The universe never goes wrong, but the truth contained in the way in which it works is not visible and understandable to the separated consciousness, for this

latter is imprisoned within the walls of its own limited constitution.

The individual begins to perceive the universe with the senses in a manner in which it does not really work. This is error. Error, therefore, belongs to the individual, and is not absolutely valid or existent. The values and natures superimposed by the individual on the external universe are really private contents of the former, and they do not belong to the universe as such. The universe in itself is characterless, above all values, non-instrumental, non-objective, non-changing, indivisible and inseparable from Reality. This fact, however, is not known to the individual, and it is this ignorance that breeds all mischief in one's private and public life.

Here is disclosed the secret of the chasm between realism and idealism, and also of the reconciliation of these two views. The universe, taken by itself, is independent of the caprices of individual, and hence realism is right in holding that the content of experience is independent of the consciousness of experience. But the values experienced in the universe, which affect and modify the individual consciousness, evoking organic reactions in the latter, are inherent in the latter itself; these do not belong to the universe, and so idealism is right in holding, as far as this fact is concerned, that the contents of consciousness are identical with consciousness. Both realism and idealism are, therefore, only partially right. The objects of the judgments of these theories are, however, raised beyond themselves in the Absolute, which is all objects, all subjects, all contents of consciousness, all processes of consciousness, all that realism holds as true, all that idealism holds as true, and yet, transcends everything.

Judgment of Experience

A judgment of truth is the result of the attempt of the individual to understand the nature of truth with the help of some qualifying adjuncts that are separated from the

substance of the whole. As it has been already observed, the separation of substantives from adjectives in the universe is based on the erroneous notion that the individual is the centre of experience which others in the universe have to subservise, and to which they should be instruments intended to bring about in it the required state of satisfaction. The objective universe is considered by the individual to be a characteristic of or an adjective to itself. Existents are loosened from their essential nature and brought under the grips of the vibrant desire-filled individual. The universe becomes the predicate of the individual subject cognising it, and in this act of subjecting the universe to the state of being merely a predicate of the cognitive consciousness, a tremendous error is involved; for, by this, the universe is wrested out of itself, as it were, strangled, divested of the truth of self-existence and self-determinedness, and made to yield to the demands of the individual. The magnitude of this error will become clear when it is known that it is the Absolute, which is the very essence of existence and consciousness, that is thus stifled in the process of being made subservient to the agitative consciousness of the individual. No wonder that the individual suffers, for it commits a veritable suicide in estranging itself from the Absolute. The cart is made to drag the horse.

In every act of judgment, there is a separation of substance from its attribute, the subject from its predicate. Apart from the distinction made between the primary substance and its attribute, as explained above, there is also seen in life a distinction made between the secondary substance and its attribute. In the attribution of the universe to an individual experiencer, as an adjective, there is the instance of the distinction made between the primary substance and its attribute. In the attribution of a snake to the rope, silver to nacre, water to mirage, dream-objects to the dream-subject, etc., we have examples of the distinction made between the secondary substance and its attribute. The contents of erroneous perception in these two levels of experience constitute, respectively, empirical error and

apparent error, the former obtaining in what goes by the name of correct perception in practical life, and the latter wrong perception, though even this latter passes for reality at the time of its being experienced.

In both these levels of erroneous perception, i.e., in empirical as well as apparent perception, a distinction between the substantive and adjective is made. Empirical erroneous perception may be called cosmic in nature, for it is common to all individuals, even in the state of the highest knowledge they are capable of having in the universe; but apparent erroneous perception is private, and is valid only to a specific individual. Apparent error is easily detected in daily life – we recognise the rope in place of the snake, nacre in place of silver, desert in place of water, waking in place of dreaming; and in this process of the discovery of empirical truth we seem to have possession of right knowledge. But the fact, however, is different from this notion that we have of knowledge. It is extremely difficult to detect what has been termed here empirical error, i.e., the error that consists in the separation of the individual from the universe. The universe tries to wriggle out of the clutches of the individual, for the latter has no personal rights whatsoever in the scheme of existence. In this incessant battle between the Absolute and the individual, the former wins victory every time. The misery of the life and death of the individual is the process of its paying for the errors which it has committed, the process of undergoing punishment for its revolt against Reality.

Thus, even in the judgment of truth in empirical life, there is a transcendental error, which has to be detected and removed, if Ultimate Truth is to be discovered. The subject and the predicate should become one, the universe and the individual be reconciled and united in the bosom of the Absolute. Neither conception nor perception in the empirical realm can help us in a correct appreciation of truth. The reason is that both in conception and perception the substantive is separated from the adjective. Our judgments of truth are really errors in the absolute sense. No man can enter the gateway to Truth as long as he does not consciously

shed belief in the reports of the senses. Individuality has to get absorbed into the constitutive essence of Being.

The error in our judgments of truth becomes clear when we understand that nothing in this universe is really segregated in nature. Things are not static entities existing by and for themselves, but forces which melt into each other, react upon each other, influence and determine each other, and thus cease to be themselves, but point to a higher unity where they are subsumed and dissolved, as though in a menstruum. In our attempt at knowing the substance in terms of certain isolated adjectives, we violate the law of oneness, of the interdependence and mutually determined character of the forces constituting the universe, and thus, in our judgments of truth, we know only appearances wrested out of their essential meaning and value. Any judgment which does not take into consideration all the factors which go to make up a particular form of an object of perception does not also know truth in its essentiality.

We in ordinary life consider an experience to embody truth when the predicate in that experience is harmonious with its subject. Now, this conception of harmony is indeed very complex. Roughly, we can distinguish between three kinds of harmony – the apparent, the empirical and the transcendental. The predicate of a judgment in dream-perception may be harmonious with its subject, and so in dream we may have a judgment of an apparent truth, i.e., a truth which holds good in dream. But this is contradicted in waking life, for here our conception of harmony is quite different from that which we had in dream. In waking experience we are concerned with empirical truth, and not merely with the apparent truth of dream. The predicate of a subject in waking life may be harmonious with that subject to the extent we are capable of conceiving harmony in our minds. But the analysis of experience which we have made above shows that no judgment of empirical truth can have any reference to Ultimate Truth, for, when compared to the criterion of Absolute harmony, empirical harmony is self-discrepant and contradicts itself. The highest harmony is the

Unity of Consciousness, where the subject and the predicate are not isolated from each other, where experience becomes identical with the existence of its universal content.

Where there is presence of duality, there is absence of true harmony. The highest harmony is the Absolute. We may have lesser harmonies, even as we have lesser truths and lesser errors corresponding to the various stages of the development of the individual in its evolution to the universal. In every given experience there is a particular conception of harmony and truth. It is negated only in a higher experience. In the Absolute, the whole universe is contradicted in a transcendence of all objectivation. Error is absence of harmony, and it is the negative counterpart of empirical and apparent truth.

Truth is non-contradiction and coherence. Error is contradiction and discrepancy. Error makes its appearance when particular attributes are predicated of particular subjects. But when consciousness expands to infinitude, all predicates and all subjects exist in it in such balanced relations to one another that these relations themselves become actual existences and coalesce with other existences to form the Absolute. Our truths and errors stand transfigured in it.

The Organism of the Universe

In our attempt to know Truth, we cannot start with any fixed point in the universe, for every point, when carefully analysed, is found to refer to something beyond itself, until it carries the consciousness to infinity. Every so-called fixed entity is really a mirror in which the entire universe is reflected. To know any point in the universe perfectly would be to know the universe as a whole. Every point is a miniature universe, and so it is impossible for us to start with any fixed point or entity in our attempt to know Truth. The universe is not a thing, not a substance; it is not made up of several three-dimensional points or objects. Every object is a vortex of forces whirling in a particular direction and mode.

These modes, however, cease to be such when they become the essential content of the Absolute Consciousness. The universe, therefore, is a form of Consciousness, in which is to be found the atmosphere or the environment which befits the potentialities of the experiencing stresses in it. There is, thus, an experience of objective form, and also an experience of subjective reactions; of the universe based on the Infinite Consciousness, and of the one based on the individual consciousness. The stuff of the universe is the Absolute.

The universe is a bundle of conditions, states or expressions of the Absolute. At any given moment or stage, the universe is one relative interconnected condition, a cosmic situation, and any part of it represents the whole background. The universe in which we live is not physical; it is Consciousness in disharmony and disturbance, trying to adjust and adapt itself, through its universally distributed parts, to regain its equilibrium. Physicality and psychicality are the stages of its expression and development, accidental to its essential being, only to be swept away by degrees in the progression of its evolutionary scheme tending to perfection. The universe is made, ultimately, not of particles, molecules, atoms, electrical charges, protoplasm or cells, but of a process of Consciousness which, when it extends itself into objectivity, goes by the name of space, time, movement, substance, energy, wave, particle, and the like. The universe is a single, continuous, connected, logical, systematic, purposive process with every part of it always mirroring the Absolute, to which it owes allegiance; a process of infinite varieties of qualitative and quantitative stresses, where each stress and aspect and part is pause and effect at the same time, where each determines and is the other, a magnificently worked-out plan of wholeness in every speck and quarter and cranny, a process in which every part is an expression of the whole, a unique and unitary finished act of completeness, the supreme example of matchless performance, and wondrous art, a process of the Self-realisation of the Absolute.

In this universe, nothing is by or in itself. Everything is everything else also, and everything is, because of the Whole which is. The individual and its environment are the same; one is not external to the other. No event is cut off from the others. Every pin-drop, whisper, thought or feeling gets recorded in all existence, setting it in vibration and affecting its equilibrium with an intensity which is in proportion to that of the cause thereof. The universe registers all events in an instant, and even a private act is at once judged in the court of the Universal Whole. Every part reflects the position of the Whole, and we can reach the Whole through a part, provided we know the innermost essence of the part. From the present, the past and the future can be known, for the present is the meeting point of the past and the future, and has in it the effects of the past and the potentialities of the future. The universe consists not of parts but of phases. There are no sharp divisions in it, and all experiences form a continuous process. Existence is an equilibrium, which persists and succeeds in maintaining itself. The cause of any event is not in any other thing or event, but in the Whole. Such is the grandeur of the universe, such the majesty of the Absolute.

The Transmutation of the Relative

The world of sense, therefore, has now been found to be a name given to confounded consciousness. It is a condition of experience. It can be compared to a shoreless, bottomless and surfaceless ocean of interrelated forces reacting upon one another, in order to enter into a transcendent and transfigured experience in which the lower is included and completely transformed and ennobled. Erroneous experience consists in the non-recognition of the fact that experience is always a whole, and never subject to partition of any kind within its indivisible constitution. The moment experience, which is in reality unbounded, appears to be discrete and, like a house divided against itself, begins to manifest phases which are self-contradictory, and objectifies itself into the distinction of subject and object, it becomes the mother of

error or mistake. Error is anything that directly or indirectly engages the consciousness in what is other than itself. The degree or intensity of error depends upon the degree or intensity in which the consciousness is forced to engage itself in what is not itself. Consciousness can be said to be in a diseased condition when it is contemplating objects, i.e., when it gets fixed on what is not itself. All forms of error in this universe are derivable, by the process of conditioning, from this ultimate error which consists in the aberration of consciousness from itself, in the concentration of consciousness on what is not itself.

The internal processes of objectified consciousness may be grouped under what are called desires, and the external processes of this very consciousness may come under what are called actions. Desires and actions, which are the subtle and the gross manifestations of the forces of objectified consciousness, constitute the world of relative experience. An action which agitates the nervous system, and consequently excites the senses and gives them the strength to befool the consciousness into the false belief that external forms of perception are real and are instrumental to inner conscious satisfaction, is, in the true sense, the only wrong action. No doubt, all actions are propelled by internal desires, and so, ultimately, we should say that wrong actions are really wrong desires. A mere physical action is no action. It is mental action that is real action. Actions like lusting for sex, bibbing intoxicants, drinking, smoking, violence, stealing, robbing, etc., are the external modes of the internal error of consciousness that experience is individualised in nature, and that, the satisfaction of its urges being the aim of its life, all the objects of the universe are auxiliaries to the fulfilment of these urges. This fulfilment takes place through an interaction of forces extending beyond all individualities, and representing, in their essential characteristics, an index of the face of the Absolute. And this fact of the relative character of the individual and the objects of its desires is explained by the universal organic reactions produced among the constituent parts of the universe. The ultimate desire of

every individual is experience of the Universal Whole, which is identical with the Universal Self. By error, which is the centring of consciousness in individuality, one unwisely attempts to comprehend this universal experience in individual consciousness and satisfaction. Every organic reaction produced among individuals is the proof of the incompleteness and the complementary nature of the parts. Nothing short of the Universal Whole, identified with Self-Consciousness, is the real aim of these organic; reactions manifested among individual natures.

This metaphysics of experience discloses the fact that there is no error in Experience-Whole. There is no evil, ugliness, nothing wrong in it. Wrong is in him who sees wrong. Ugliness is perceived by the ugly consciousness. Evil sees he who is evil. Error is a perception by the erroneous consciousness. Pieces of bent sticks may look awkward and crooked and not beautiful to perception; but if these bent sticks can be arranged to form the beautiful pattern of a perfect circle, their ugliness will vanish, and they will build this beautiful whole. In Experience-Whole, which is perfected consciousness, all error is transmuted and abolished. All imperfections, which are imperfections only for the individuals, are overcome and reduced to elements of perfection in the Absolute. Only when the consciousness is envisaged as a fragment separated from other forms of experience, it appears to be ugly, erroneous, immoral. Even beautiful forms, attractive features, virtuous deeds, goodness, etc., meet the same fate as error, etc., in the constitution of the Whole. For, even beauty, etc., are complementary phases of the separated parts of the Whole. There is no beauty, even as there is no ugliness in this universe. There is nothing good, even as there is nothing bad; nothing virtuous, even as there is nothing evil, in this magnificent Whole of the Absolute. Beauty is the name given to that feature of a perceptible objective form which fits into and evokes the complementary and correlated consciousness of the consciousness which perceives beauty. "Beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing", says George

Santayana. In other words, beauty is “pleasure objectified”. The craving which is felt in the individual consciousness on account of the deep sense of imperfection inherent in it, and which corresponds to the mode and the degree of this imperfection, causes the consciousness to recognise beauty in forms and to get attracted towards the same, because it is this form that is necessary to rouse the counter-correlate of this consciousness-mode which perceives this beauty through this form of craving; and the degree of beauty beheld in objects is dependent on the degree in which it approximates to the ideal beauty, viz., the form of the object which is necessary to rouse the counter-correlate consciousness of the imperfect consciousness which perceives beauty.

Beauty is the vision of the Absolute through the senses and the understanding. It is symmetry, rhythm, harmony, equilibrium, unity, that is the main material of beauty. Whenever these properties are manifested in consciousness through (1) visual or auditory perception of objects, (2) intellectual appreciation of precision, exactness and logical arrangement, poetic presentation of knowledge and inspiration, etc., or (3) pure spiritual experience, there is said to be the experience of beauty. In these three stages of experience, harmony and perfection are expressed in varying degrees. The second is more enduring and inclusive than the first, and the third more than the second. The perception of harmony is the neutralisation of lack and onesidedness, the fulfilment of personality, the completion of being, and hence a manifestation of the Absolute, in some degree, in one’s consciousness.

Beauty is a property neither of the subject alone, nor the object alone, but of a special relation existing between the subject and the object. It is a complex situation in which consciousness finds itself as a result of a reaction between two complementary conditions. The aesthetic experience is a unique whole, and cannot be attributed to any part or parts of the subject or the object of this experience. Beauty is the soul of art, and art is the representation of beauty, visible,

audible or intelligential. Architecture and sculpture, painting and drawing, music and literature, represent, in an ascending order, the greatest of the means of the manifestation of 'objective' beauty, apart from the beauty of a subjective-objective character perceived in objects which act as instruments in bringing about the private satisfaction of the unconscious emotional and instinctive urges in individuals. Architecture and sculpture should be considered to be the lowest of arts, for these are most encumbered with matter. Music and literature express the most rarefied of the beauties of the human world, for these, being least affected by matter, are the media of the greatest objectification of the Absolute in the realm of sense and understanding. Music is objectified through the most ethereal of media, and literature manifests the beauty of knowledge and inspiration which transcend mere sense-perception. The highest beauty open to man is the beauty of right thinking, pure feeling, virtue and philosophical knowledge.

Beauty appears to be objective, because men, in spite of the differences present in their psychological constitutions, have many psychological properties which are commonly shared by them all; and beauty appears to be subjective, because men, in spite of their having several common psychological properties, differ from one another in certain individual modes of their psychological constitutions. We should say, therefore, that there is, thus, an objective beauty, and, also, a subjective beauty. Though all men may agree with one another in regard to the perception of objective beauty, there will be difference in their perceptions of subjective beauty.

Even beauty which is commonly perceived by all men is the result of the interaction of the modes of the incompleteness of human experience and their corresponding counterparts, which brings about an experience of equilibrium, filledness, an all-possessing feeling and repose, which are the characteristics of the non-individual being, the Absolute. Hence, on ultimate analysis, beauty is a reflection of the system of the Absolute, in some

degree. The greater the degree in which the Absolute thus manifests itself, the greater is the beauty perceived. This manifestation is dependent on the degree in which the complement of the percipient neutralises the sense of lack in the percipient, or on the degree in which the complement is a complement of the percipient. The more a complement approximates to its highest form in relation to the percipient, the greater is the degree in which it is able to neutralise the want of the percipient. The Supreme Beauty is the Absolute, and all other beauties are its partial appearances. Sensuous beauty is the lowest form of beauty; higher than this is the beauty of character, goodness, virtue and right understanding.

Ugliness is explained by the process which is the reverse of that of the perception of beauty.

Virtue is that quality of an act, mental or physical, which directly or indirectly leads the individual consciousness to the experience of the Universal Whole. Primary virtues are those which are directly concerned with the conscious movement of the individual to the Absolute. Secondary virtues are those which are only indirectly responsible. Every act which tends to raise the individual consciousness above and beyond itself, through the processes of self-abnegation, self-sacrifice and self-expansion, is virtuous or righteous. Every act which withdraws consciousness from the senses, pacifies the nervous system and tranquillises the mind is virtuous, because it brings the consciousness back to itself from its erroneous aberration in the delusive fields of belief in the reality of objective experience. In short, every process of the returning of consciousness from externality to rest in itself is a form of virtue or righteousness. The degree or the intensity of the virtue depends upon the degree or the intensity in which it approximates to the ideal virtue or good, which is the complete unification of all individual processes of the universe in one instantaneous Conscious Experience.

The Individual Nature

Thus, all individual experience is a form of error in some degree, though all error becomes an element of perfection in the Absolute. The aim of the life of the individual is to overcome the urge for organic reactions in relation to external perceptible objects and to transcend itself in the all-comprehensive Absolute, which is the essential reality of all individuals. These reactions among individual natures are either unconscious or conscious. The unconscious urges are termed instincts and the conscious ones are those which constitute the rational processes in the individuals. Beyond these reactions of a twofold nature, there is the supreme integrating principle, viz., intuition and direct realisation of the highest essence of experience.

These instinctive urges are powerful, and, being ingrained in the very constitution of the individual, refuse to be easily subdued. The most powerful of these involuntary unconscious urges are those of self-preservation and self-reproduction. The instinct of self-preservation is sometimes wrongly called 'food-seeking' instinct. Food is not the end that is sought by the individual; food is only a means to the fulfilment of the will-to-live or the love of life which is inherent in everyone, and which is the end. One does not desire to eat food as an end in itself; the purpose of food and drink is living as an individual personality, possessed of a body. This urge is not within the control of the rational intellect, and overcomes the other urges by its intensity of expression. It manifests itself in various forms, and has several ramifications, primarily connected with, as well as secondarily related to it. It tethers the individual to bodily life and thwarts all ordinary attempts at turning a deaf ear to it. This instinct, this craving for life, this love of individual personality can be overcome only in a higher understanding and feeling relating to a wider experience transcending gross physicality and distorted psychic personality. But any unwise meddling with this urge, without properly understanding its deeper meaning, may make it run riot and ruin the individual

attempting to control it. Intimately connected with the self-preservative urge is the self-reproductive urge, the nature of which has to be analysed before any method of overcoming instincts may be discovered.

The self-reproductive instinct is misnamed 'sex-instinct'. This urge has, really, little to do with the sexual personality, as such; the sexual personality is only a means to the propagation of the species, and it is this urge for the production of a new individual of the species that makes use of sex as a cat's paw. What becomes the object of craving is not sex, but the pleasure caused by the release of the tension brought about by the urge for being instrumental in bringing forth a new individual. Homosexual intercourse and fixation on objects which do not help actual reproduction are only cases of perversion or regression of this original urge, due either to a defect in the formation of the sex glands, or to frustration and non-fulfilment. The aim of the urge for reproduction is not to bring pleasure to the individual; its purpose is the continuation of the species.

Those characteristics of the sexual personality which become the source of attraction for the opposite sex are merely the external indications of the development of the gonad hormones which, through these indications, make known their maturity and readiness for the act of the production of a new individual. This attraction is not concerned with the pleasure of anyone, but is merely the process of the externalisation of cellular and nervous vibration seeking intercourse with the counterpart of the constitution of the attracted individual. It is not the external feature or the form of the opposite sex that is the source of attraction, but it is the meaning which is read in it by the individual that gives value to it and forces the individual to conform itself to that value. It is the suggestiveness and the expressiveness of the form that evokes the stimulation and vibration of the entire constitution in its counterpart. The more does something mean to one, the more is the value that one attaches to it, and the more is one concerned with it. The reading of meaning in the opposite sex is not a rational act of

the individual, but it is the 'general' urge of the species that materialises itself in a specific individual as an involuntary instinct for physical action.

All stimuli set the organism in vibration, and this disturbs its equilibrium. In this process there is release of nervous energy, affecting not merely the body but, to a great extent, even the mind. The pleasure that is experienced at the time of being stimulated by an 'intended' external agency is really the warmth and affection felt in yielding to an inner command of the physical nature, when motor reactions take place in the organism, on account of the magnetic properties called forth in it. What ravishes the personality and makes it leap up in ecstasy at the time of a desirable objective reaction in the physical world is the total disintegration of the parts of this organism and the peace that follows as a consequence of the cessation of this disturbance, on the fulfilment of the purpose of this reaction. All instinctive pleasure is ultimately the recognition of harmony and equilibrium and joy in consciousness on account of the banishing of disturbance in it by the fulfilment of the meaning of the instinct through the possession and utilisation of the object which plays the role of an agent in loosening and removing the nervous and psychic tension created by the expression of the instinct.

Even the urge for self-reproduction may be explained in terms of the urge for self-preservation. It is really the will-to-live of the individual of the species to be manifested in the physical universe that asserts in what is termed the self-reproductive urge. The parent becomes the medium of the self-manifestation of a new individual, which is the intention of the physical nature. The lower nature of any 'specific' individual has no control over this instinct, because it is the intention of the 'general' nature or the species which exceeds the natural powers of the former. The will-to-reproduce is only the will-to-live of the would-be member of this physical universe. The fulfilment of this will-to-live is not really the good or the delight of any individual, but is only an execution of the orders of the lower diversified nature, the fulfilment of the purpose of the species as a whole, which is wider than

any individual in comprehensiveness. The will of the race or the species supersedes all individual wills, and subjects these latter to its own purposive rule. Sexual love or beauty has thus a reference to a need extending beyond the individual and so it is stronger than any other form of love known on earth. If anyone, however, is to know that the meaning of the self-reproductive urge is not the pleasure or the good of oneself, but is only a service done to a more powerful nature which makes use of everyone as its drudge, no one would indulge in the fulfilment of this urge. Hence nature covers the consciousness of the individual and steeps it in the delusion that the purpose of the urge is the pleasure of the individual, by preventing the discriminative understanding from functioning in it. This illusion is called the 'instinct for sex', and this is the pleasure derived thereby!

These self-expressing energies in individuals have a common source, an original, form, and their sum is constant at all times; it never decreases or increases; only it sometimes gets distributed in unequal proportions due to disturbance of equilibrium in consciousness. This sum-total of objectified energy is the matrix of all irrational and rational urges. These externalising urges or tendencies to organic reactions are not cut off even by the death of the physical body, for they are rooted in the very principle of the psychic individuality. They cease to exist only when they are absorbed into the Universal Consciousness, by the process of meditation on the essential Selfhood of all individuals in it.

There are certain minor instincts which are less powerful than those of self-preservation and self-reproduction, but which, nevertheless, exert a great influence on the personality and subject it to involuntary actions. The self-assertive instinct is one among these. This instinct is meant either to compensate for one's sense of inferiority, or to preserve one's thwarted power, importance and distinction (many times merely imagined), or to expand one's ego by adding to it qualifications from outside (though this addition is purely artificial). It is the inherent tendency to preserve the complex of one's psycho-physical organism. The

gregarious instinct is another, which manifests itself in love of company of the group to which one 'belongs'. This is the instinct of identification of the group with one's self. Metaphysically, this appears to be an unconscious expression of one's love for one's larger social self or organism which comprises the individuals within it. But this love ceases to be a virtue when one is unconscious of the existence of such a larger self, and is merely goaded to love society independently of one's understanding and will. The protective or the parental instinct expresses itself in the biological attraction of the physical organism (influencing the mind, of course) to its own 'other self'. This attraction ceases when its purpose, viz., protection of the offspring, is fulfilled. Parental love is one of the manifestations of the biological nature of the individual, affiliated to the purpose of the propagation of the individuals of the species.

All urges, it is suggested, are ultimately a symptom of spirit calling spirit, under the cloak of outward bondage to forms, objects, notions and actions.

The desire to understand, or to know, is a rational urge. There are various forms of this urge, working through different channels, but aiming at the fulfilment of the desire to know. Sometimes, it is merely curiosity, and at other times, it is a necessity felt on account of problems that have arisen in life, that rouses in the individual the desire to know. At first, the knowledge that is desired is only a means to vaster and higher acquisitions, and later on, it becomes an end in itself. Except the desire for higher knowledge which is self-existent, and the instinct for self-preservation (the latter when not carried beyond the limit of real necessity), all these urges are outlets for the externalisation of energy towards objects other than what is indispensable to the individual for its self-evolution. Desire for knowledge, however, should be called a supernatural urge, though it becomes really supernatural only in the end, and involves some amount of effort and spending of energy in the beginning stages. The highest self-existent knowledge is not really an urge, but is

the end of lower knowledge, and only this latter can be included among urges.

One special feature to be noted, however, in the functioning of the urge for knowledge is that it can be valid only on a dualistic basis, and so it involves, to some extent, a directing of energy to something which is external to consciousness. On account of this reason, it can be included among the several urges in the individual, though the higher knowledge, which is not a means to any other end, but is an end in itself, cannot be called an individual urge, for this latter is not directed to anything external, but is itself self-existence. What is meant by the rational urge is, therefore, not the self-existent independent absolute knowledge, but the aspiration to know, the desire to understand, the tendency to outgrow limited knowledge.

Except the longing for knowledge, all urges or instincts are to be subdued and transformed into the integrating energy of the higher consciousness, for these natural urges of the physical nature are inconsistent with the higher aspiration for the unity of consciousness in the Universal Being. The art of overcoming these instincts which are antagonistic to spiritual seeking consists, ultimately, in certain processes which are related to the essential nature of Consciousness itself. The end being the realisation of supreme oneness, the means to it has to bear an intimate relation to it.

Self-Transcendence

The transmutation of the individual constitution is necessary for the experience of the Absolute, and this can be achieved by recognising the true nature of the relation existing between the individual and the Absolute, as detailed in the foregoing pages. All forms of the externalisation of energy, which are called urges, instincts, etc., are ultimately movements of consciousness in the direction of the not-self. There can be no individual urge when consciousness ceases to function in this way. The way of self-control, therefore, is

that of the recession of the modes of the objectified consciousness to their wider and deeper source, which functionally converge and merge in the Absolute. Only a conscious endeavour on the part of the individual to outgrow itself, to rise above particularity, can bring about this great achievement and realisation. For this, clear understanding, dispassionate feeling, longing for freedom, and perseverance are necessary.

Study, reflection and meditation are the processes of the method of self-transcendence. A careful study and analysis of the nature of experience, under the guidance of an able spiritual teacher, is indispensable for meditation on the spiritual Reality. The defects involved in relative experience, and the fact of its being finally centred in and reducible to the reality of the Absolute, are to be discovered, in order that attachment to external forms of experience may be withdrawn, and all energy be focussed on the supreme Self-consciousness. The nature of instinctive reactions and blind urges have to be clearly understood before any attempt to control them may be made. No practice can be of any lasting value, if it is not preceded by a correct knowledge of the inner anatomy and constitution of the meaning and method of that practice. One must act only after knowing how to act, why to act and what the act really is. Action must be based on a knowledge thereof. This knowledge, on which all spiritual practices are based, is the forerunner of dispassion for all externalisation towards things. True renunciation is not the abandonment of any 'thing', but the relinquishment of the thingness in things, the objectness in objects, the externality in experience, the projectedness in consciousness. This renunciation is the condition of the supreme fulfilment in the Absolute. There can be no hope of this ultimate realisation without the total surrender of personality and all its concomitants to this one goal. The moment this surrender is done, attachments cease, the mind becomes calm, the senses are abstracted from forms, passions subside, consciousness gets concentrated, joy ensues, and an immense strength is felt within. All these are the results of an attunement of the

individual to Reality, the coalescence of all forces with it, the dissolution in it of all distinction and objectivity. By this act the individual draws sustenance from and becomes the Universal Centre. The actual experience is possible through intense meditation on it.

Every act of one's life should become an expression of conscious contemplation on the Absolute. Unless all acts are based on this consciousness, there cannot be any ultimate value in these acts. The Absolute is the life-principle of all things, acts and thoughts, and so, without it, everything becomes lifeless and devoid of meaning. Spirituality is a state of consciousness; it is not merely certain forms of action. When consciousness is properly trained to exist in this harmony, all acts become universal processes, and cease to be individual efforts directed towards a phenomenal end. It is the duty of everyone in all one's conscious states to attempt to unity oneself with the Absolute, and perform one's duties with the consciousness of this unity. Such an individual is a sage, the supremely blessed one. The very presence of this hallowed being exerts a magnetic spiritual influence on the entire environment. "This universe is his; and, indeed, he is the universe," says the Upanishad. This is the glorious consummation of life.