

IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE.. AND HAPPINESS (SADHYOMUKTI)

The Vedantic Doctrine of Non-Duality

by

JOHN LEVY

(PREMANANDANATH)

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From the inside cover:

John Levy's convictions are derived from the essential Hindu doctrine of Vedanta, the end of knowledge, being firmly based on its highest aspect of Advaita, or Non-Duality. But his book is not a general appreciation of Hindu Philosophy. Rather, it is an attempt to answer the question which has always puzzled mankind, 'What am I?'

The question proves that man is something more than mind and body, for these two things are not man, but merely his possessions. The fact that a man thinks he possesses a body is itself a proof that he is not the body. To realize his true self man must become centred in pure consciousness, completely unmixed with the body idea.

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Philosophy and You

FOREWORD

“Philosophy and You” is the title of a series of broadcast talks given by me in August and September 1946 over the Army Signals Station at Madras Area Headquarters as a part of the Forces’ Educational Programme. I was then serving in the British Army and attached to the Army Educational Corps. It was at the invitation of the Madras Area Education Officer, Major Rajagopal Menon (now Colonel) that the talks were given. They were published, at the time, in the *Madras Area Broadcast Review* and now, with a few small changes and three new paragraphs and a conclusion, they are presented in book form. Much of the familiar style of the original is retained as being quite in tune with a statement of what is nearest the heart of every man.

SRI ATMANANDA GURU
is my Master whose name I
place with love and veneration
at the head of this work.

1. THE MEANING OF MAN

As an introduction to this series of talks entitled “Philosophy and You”, let me begin by saying a few words about the title itself. Philosophy, which literally means the love of wisdom, is regarded almost universally as an art for art’s sake and therefore as having no practical value. That this is usually the case, and in the West especially so, only shows that what generally passes for philosophy is often only idle speculation; and unfortunately, the impression thus created has naturally put off many people who would otherwise be anxious to reap the benefits of its study and practice. The truth is that of all human activities, this is certainly the most practical, being the only one which aims at giving and does really give final and satisfying results. Its purpose is to answer the questions that occur to every thinking man and woman, such questions as, “What am I?” “What is the purpose of this existence?” “What is life?” and “What happens after death?”

Many systems of philosophy claim to answer these questions, but not many can offer at the same time the means to experience directly the truths they contain; and when the means are lacking, it is a sure sign that the answers themselves are inadequate. When the right answers are given *and* understood, they bring about such a revolution in the mind of the seeker that until he has experienced them in the most concrete manner, he feels he cannot rest.

Now the system of philosophy upon which I am basing these talks is that known as Vedanta, because I find that it maintains a perfect balance of theory and practice and is therefore capable of immediate application. It is known also as Advaita or Non-Duality, and has been practised in India from the most ancient times right up to the present. The title of these talks might have been “Hindu Philosophy” but this would certainly have given a false impression. We are not at all concerned with what Hindus, Greeks or Chinamen, Hebrews, Christians or Muslims as such think: we are concerned only with finding answers to our

questions. The meaning of Vedanta, the name of this system, is the end or attainment of knowledge. We can talk of this or that religion, but we cannot talk of this or that philosophy, although I know well that people do, and those especially who like to compare things; but that is all on the surface. This is not going to be an appreciation of Hindu philosophy, but an attempt to find a solution to those problems which have always faced mankind. So without any further delay, and in the most simple and direct manner, let us begin our search. What is man?

We have to begin with man because it is as men that we ask these questions. It is therefore in connection with ourselves that these problems arise; we must know also whence they come. The first one was "What am I?"; the others were "What is the purpose of this existence?" "What is life?" and "What happens after death?" It will be seen that if the first question, "What am I?" is answered to our satisfaction, the others will also stand explained. Now what we have to understand is the nature of the being who refers to himself as "I". We may say, for example, "I am hungry", "I feel cold", "I sat down", "I am going to-morrow", or "May I speak with you?"; in all these examples, the same "I" is given different roles. It is the body that is hungry, the body that feels cold, the body that sat, the body that will go tomorrow and the body which is to do the speaking. We are, in fact, identifying ourselves here with our bodies. We also identify ourselves with our minds. If we say, for instance, "I think", "I remember", "I wish", "I can imagine" or "I wonder", does it not show it clearly, for it is the mind that thinks and remembers and desires and imagines things and asks questions. And what does the question "What am I" show? It shows beyond doubt that a man is something more than just a mind and a body; otherwise, why should such a question be asked? It is obvious to all that man possesses these two things. He can never be satisfied by being told that he is nothing more than that. And yet, although it is obvious, we all seem to spend our lives as though we thought quite the opposite. What I mean is this: I said just now that we obviously possess a body and a mind. But with most of us, a case of simple possession is mistaken for identity with the thing possessed: this is wrong. I shall prove that this identification of ourselves with our minds and bodies is mistaken.

Anyone can see that a man's body is always changing. There is the infant's body, the child's and the adolescent's; it then comes to maturity and passing through middle age, it declines into old age and then it dies. But the identity of the owner of the body does not change; it is the same person right the way through. And the same changeless identity is seen to be behind the mind which also changes constantly, passing through the same states from infancy to old age and death. It can easily be seen from this that our real self, what we refer to as "I" when we speak of ourselves, has no solid connection with our bodies and minds: it gets connected only when we wrongly attribute actions of the body and mind to the real self. Instead of saying, "I am hungry" or "I think", would it not be proper to say, "My body is hungry" or "My mind thinks"? Please don't imagine that I'm suggesting we should all start talking in this manner; but we should most certainly *think* it, because such thought would help us to end the false association of what changes with the changeless within us, for false this association undoubtedly is. How can such different things be partners? For instance, at the time we say "I heard a sound" or "I had an idea", the body that heard the sound or the mind which had the idea are no longer exactly what they were: they have both changed. What remains constant is the entity we refer to as "I". By superimposing the idea of body and mind on this changeless entity, we wrongly give it the attribute of changeability.

Something that is changing cannot by itself observe the change in something else, because in order to observe change, some permanence in the seer is needed. Now it is the real self we refer to as "I" which observes the changes in the body and the mind. So this again proves that

we are at bottom changeless. And this is also the principle of memory. If there were not some changeless background upon which thoughts and perceptions left their mark, how could they be recalled after their occurrence? Extending this to the future, we see people making plans and expressing hopes. This shows that there is within us a principle which covers both the future and the past and is therefore beyond the passage of time. It affords still further evidence that we are in ourselves above change, and therefore beyond body and mind.

Again, we can remember only those things that have been known or perceived by us. They would otherwise have made no impression on our memories. This applies alike to the material things we observe through the organs of sense, and the thoughts and feelings that rise in our minds. And this is not all: when we remember that we met a friend, it is not only his image that comes up, but also our own as it appeared at the time of the meeting. Or if we think of our having written a letter yesterday, we see also our body's writing it. Likewise, when we remember our previous thoughts and feelings, we remember as well the thinker who had them, that is to say, ourselves or rather our minds. But I said just now that we remember only those things we have known or perceived. If we remember our bodies and minds along with the things we observed and the thoughts we had, our bodies and minds must also have been witnessed by us in just the same way. It follows then that we are their witness and not the actual thinker, enjoyer, seer or doer. Thinking, enjoying, seeing and doing are functions peculiar to the mind and the body. So once again, we find ourselves to be beyond all change.

There is another kind of experience we all have and that is sleep. When we are having a dream, it all appears to be just as real as the world we see when we are awake. Who indeed could be sure that he isn't dreaming at this moment? This is by the way, and I shall return to it later. The point I want to make is this, that in a dream, we get another body: our waking body is lying on the bed. In dreamless sleep, we are conscious of neither the body nor the mind. When we wake up we say we enjoyed sound sleep. By sound sleep, we mean that we knew nothing and this nothing or no thing relates to the things we perceive when awake or dreaming. What is meant is that there were no thoughts; and in their absence, mind cannot be said to function. But in spite of this, we were quite conscious, for if this were not so, we could not say we enjoyed sound sleep. And that we do enjoy ourselves in that state is proved both by the annoyance we feel if someone disturbs it and by the anguish of sleeplessness. From this also it is clear that we are quite separate from the mind and, at the same time, our real nature is one of consciousness, since it subsists when all else is gone.

I shall give one more proof that our essential being is something other than the mind and the body we claim to possess. When I say I own a house I don't imply that I am a house. On the contrary, I cannot possibly be one. The sense of possessing a house is in no way different from the sense of possessing a mind or a body. A body, like a house, is an object, and so is a mind. But I am the possessor of the object and therefore not the object itself, in this case the body or the mind. In other words, if I possess a body and a mind, I am clearly other than the body or the mind.

After having seen in all these ways what we are not, we are now in a position to see what we really are: we have already seen in connection with sleep that we are in ourselves pure consciousness. Our relation to space is through our bodies. But we are not the body. We are therefore beyond the limitations of space, and so infinite. And our relation to time is through our minds, which are made up of a succession of thoughts and feelings. But we are not the mind. We are therefore beyond the limitations of time, and so eternal. We are infinite and eternal and of the nature of absolute consciousness. This is not a play upon words. It is the truth, and if we think otherwise, it is only the mind that thinks so. But we are beyond the mind, and thoughts cannot reach us. We set out to seek an answer to the question, "What am

I”, and to find where this question comes from. There is no doubt that the question comes from the depths of our being, from our innermost self, from the changeless entity we call “I” ; and the understanding we have gained also comes from there. It cannot come from the mind, although it appears as a thought, because the answer takes us beyond it: whereas a question that is purely mental, such as a mathematical problem, leads to an answer on the same level.

And what of the other questions? They are related to life and death and the purpose of it all. To speak first of death, every body knows that physical death occurs when the life principle passes out of the body, which then ceases to function. Life is defined by the dictionary as the active principle peculiar to animals and plants and common to them all, while an animal is described as an organized being endowed with life, sensation, and voluntary motion. Now, if life is common to all living things, it cannot be something individual even though we do speak of animal or plant life, your life or my life. If it is not individual, what is it? Surely it must be something universal, and we call universal life existence. And it is clear that the birth or death of an individual has no effect upon existence. It will continue to be just what it was. But at the same time, an individual obviously has a part in existence through what we call life, without which the other two qualities of sensation and voluntary motion could not subsist. If we examine these, we find that sensation is a function of the body. Sensations are the impressions the body conveys to the mind through the sense-organs, and voluntary motion is imposed upon the body by thought, that is to say, by the mind. We are back again where we started with life instead of the changeless principle we call “I” . But since life is itself another name for existence which we found to be changeless and is common to all individuals, the I-principle and existence are one. So we may say that pure existence is known as life when it becomes limited or individualized by association with a body and a mind. There is of course, a contradiction in this statement, and I expect that it will have been noticed: the infinite can never become limited as stated here. But so long as we are considering life as it appears, we are unable to avoid making such contradictions. The same thing is present in what I said about the false association of the real self with the body and mind. We have to proceed by steps, and I shall return to the question in another talk when I discuss the problem of how an infinite and eternal reality assumes or seems to assume the limitations of time and space.

Now this apparent digression is not really one at all. It gives us the clue we want in order to answer the question about the purpose of this existence. Well, however surprising it may sound, I say it has none. There is no real purpose in this so called earthly existence, because earthly existence as such is unreal. Or I may say that the purpose of existence, if purpose it is, is to exist. You may already be able to grasp this, but in any case, I have no doubt that it will soon become evident to those who are patient and curious enough to attend to my subsequent talks. Meanwhile, we can say that the purpose of this existence has been fulfilled for those men who ask themselves questions of the kind we are now considering and whose sincerity and earnestness lead them to find the only true answer. They then become identified with their true self instead of with a false and limited one, and are no longer liable to birth and death, which are attributes of the body. I do not propose to discuss the theory of re-incarnation, or birth and re-birth; but there is no doubt that the only satisfactory explanation of the difference in human development, talent, circumstances and general tendencies between one man and another, visible to all, is this: that previous lives have made them so. If this is accepted, then what happens after death is patent. Unless the man who dies knows *and feels* that he is, in his self, quite distinct and separate from his body and mind, he will be born again and again until he comes to realize that lasting happiness is to be found where it alone exists, that is, beyond the ever-changing circumstances of life.

People spend all their lives seeking happiness in one way or another, and the proof that they never really obtain it is that they never stop seeking it. Or when they do think they have found it, they cling to whatever it is they believe to be the cause, lest they lose it. Whereas the happiness we seek is beyond all circumstance. I remember once being asked why I was so preoccupied with philosophy. I replied that I sought a happiness that nothing could spoil, and my questioner then said his ideal would be realized as soon as he could marry the lady of his choice. I was cruel enough to ask him what would happen if the lady died. He had no answer.

Now there is the possibility of my being misunderstood on account of what I have just said. Some people think it would be necessary to renounce all worldly pleasures and activities and take to an ascetic life in order to attain perfection. But this is not at all what I mean. Knowing full well that we are not one with our bodies or minds through which we have our connection with the world, and knowing also that it is they who act, think, enjoy or suffer, we can safely leave it to them to work out their own possibilities, and ourselves remain unattached by an inward act. This again may be given an interpretation that is not mine. It is not a licence for people to do just what they like and go against accepted moral standards. Morality has as its purpose the control and reduction of egoism and it is not likely that a man who seeks the truth would do things that would increase his sense of individuality. I shall conclude my talk with a few words about this.

Egoism, or the sense of individuality, is nothing other than the wrong identification of the real self with the body and mind that has been the subject of this talk. When one man murders another in order to rob him of his money, it is only because he has allowed his body so to dominate his reason that for the time being, he has become a body. The same is true of similar other acts which we call bad or sinful. Acts are bad, wicked or sinful only when the body-idea is in the forefront. The very same acts, when done in another setting, can have precisely the opposite effect on the doer. Thus, to risk one's life in battle in order to defend one's people against aggression or to earn legitimate profit through honest labour cannot in any way be said to be the effects of egoism. Or if we consider the mental plane, argument employed for the establishment of some truth is fully justified, while a man who uses his wits simply to score victories over his rivals is associating himself with his mind, like learned men who pride themselves on their knowledge. To be charitable out of compassion is to give up so much of one's egoism: to give money in order to be praised is simply to increase it. Good and evil, or virtue and vice, can therefore be defined in the following manner: virtue is that which lessens the sense of individuality while vice is that which raises it.

So another age-old problem has been solved in a few words in the light of what we have previously come to see. But I feel myself obliged to add that virtue and vice and other moral qualities are characteristics of the mind and not of the real self. Although it is no doubt good to think of such things, too much attention should not be paid to them if the ultimate reality is the goal, otherwise, instead of paying attention to that, we shall be paying attention to the very thing from which we wish to separate ourselves. That is why I said that the body and the mind may very well be left to look after themselves, provided always, and I lay emphasis on the word always, provided that we always remember what is our real nature.

In the meantime it may be wondered why nothing has been said about God. Yes, but wasn't this an enquiry into the nature of man? However, now that we have come to know something about ourselves, we shall be in a better position to understand something about God, and I shall begin the next talk with God as my subject.

2. MAN, GOD, AND THE WORLD

These talks began with an enquiry into the nature of man. That was the proper way to start, because as I explained then, it is as men that we ask the fundamental questions we were considering, such questions as “What am I” ? and “What is the purpose of this existence?” If we are to get a correct answer to a question, we must first of all know something of the person who puts it, otherwise we may find that we are talking at cross purposes: in this case, the question concerned ourselves, so there was a double reason for it.

We found that man appears at first sight to be a combination of the changeless principle we refer to as “I” with a body and a mind, both of which are always changing. As an example of this, we say, “I am a man”. At times, we associate ourselves with the body when we say, “I am hungry” or “I am enjoying good health”, and at times with the mind, when we say, “I think” or “I remember.” But in spite of this identification of the “I”, or real self, with the body and the mind, man remains at bottom changeless. Otherwise he couldn’t remember what previously *was* in order to compare it with what now *is*, and thus know that a change has taken place. From this, we were able to see that a man is entirely distinct and separate from his mind and body; and we also saw that he can be without either of these as in deep sleep, and yet remain fully conscious. In deep sleep, although there are no thoughts, this absence of thought is clearly perceived by something else, for we say, “I enjoyed sound sleep” or “I slept so well that I knew nothing until I woke up”. This was how I proved that in his real self, a man is not one with his body and mind but of the nature of consciousness, in which his thoughts and perceptions come and go.

This brief summary of what I said in the first talk has been necessary in order now to consider what is God. I closed it by saying that having come to know something of ourselves, we were in a position to understand something about God; and that I would begin my next talk with God as my subject.

God is defined by the dictionary as the supreme being and the ruler and creator of the universe. So the universe must first of all be examined. of what does it consist? Let the dictionary again speak! It says under universe: “All existing things, the whole creation and the creator.” Now, all things that are made up of matter occupy a certain amount of space. Air is also material. And a vacuum, which if it exists is devoid of matter, also takes up space. Thus we find that space is the background of matter; and while all material things are ceaselessly undergoing change, space itself is changeless, being simply the name we give to the invisible and indefinite something which contains and runs through the whole material universe. So we can say that while the universe is composed of individual bodies, amongst which the heavenly bodies and of course this earth are included, the universal body is nothing other than space. It is common to them all and yet not identical, because though the bodies are changing, space itself never changes.

If we take a broad view of the world, we can clearly see that everything happens according to a plan. The movements of the earth round the sun and the moon round the earth, as well as this planet’s rotation on its own axis which together form our measure of time, day and night, and summer and winter, are certainly not accidental. From this, we can understand that there is a universal mind. I have given as an example of this the orderly movement of the earth and the moon, as it is apparent to all. If we examine the human or any other individual mind, we shall find the same thing. We all know the story of King Canute and the waves. His people thought he was divine, so he had his throne taken down to the seashore, and he commanded the tide not to come in. But it came in just the same, and he thereby showed them that there existed a mind greater than his own. The ebb and flow of the tide is brought about by the

moon twice in a lunar day, in other words, it is subject to time. So is mind. We cannot say where a thought was but we can say when it occurred. Thoughts come one after another in succession and that means time. Time is therefore the changeless background of our minds. But time is something quite relative. We call a year about 365 days, whereas the planet Jupiter has a year of some 12 of ours. But time implies existence and existence is common to all the different measures of time. Existence is therefore universal and as such cannot be affected by the changes of time and space, which appear as its parts. I have said that time and space are both changeless, and now I speak of their changes. What I meant, of course, was that relative to individual matter, universal space is changeless, and relative to every particular series, so also is universal time. Space and time are taken here simply as names of ideas; in fact, space is known only by matter and time by thoughts. In this last sense, which is also the higher, space and time do change while existence, common to them both, is changeless.

Meanwhile, there are several points in what I have been saying that need further explanation. One of these is the question of personality. There can be no difficulty in understanding that one person is distinguishable from another only by the differences between bodies and minds. When we consider man, not as he appears, but as the changeless principle beyond name and form that he really is, what is there by which any distinction between one and another can be made? Thus we are all one and at the same time, impersonal. In the case of God who is by definition incomparable, how can *he* be personal? He is only thought of as personal by those who cannot rise above their own personalities. They liken themselves to God or God to themselves when they say that God created man in his own image. But all who have followed what I have been saying can very well understand this position, and it again leads us to the conclusion that God and man are the same, because when both are impersonal, that is to say, having nothing upon which any marks of distinction can appear, how can they be distinguished? But make no mistake: it is not as God, the lord of the Universe, and man, the possessor of a body and a mind, that they are one. It is neither as God nor as man, but as that which is common to both. And for those who find it difficult not to think of the ultimate reality as a person, I have provided the best of arguments that God exists if there is a man. I have shown that corresponding to the changeless principle standing as witness to the individual mind and body, there is also a changeless principle standing as the witness to the universal body and mind. This is a truth that no poor agnostic or atheist can deny. As for ourselves, we are free to go beyond limitations because we know that in fact we are beyond all limitation. I think I have made it perfectly clear.

There is another point, and a very important one, that requires elucidation. Our dictionary spoke of God as the creator of the universe, and the universe as the whole creation and the creator taken together. Well, how *did* the universe come into being? This question is often put in connection with space, time and causality or the chain of cause and effect. Everything we perceive in terms of time and space or mind and body is always the effect of some cause, and the cause in its turn is the effect of some other cause and so on. The universe as a whole is also seen to be an effect when considered as the work of a creator. If we enquire about the origin of the material universe, does it not really mean, "Where or in what place did space come into being"? If we ask the same question about the subtle universe or time, does it not mean, "When or at what moment did time begin?" And if we ask about the first cause, is it not the same as asking, "What is the cause of cause?" All these questions lead us nowhere, like the old problem of the chicken and the egg: which came first? The question about space by the word "Where" makes space the starting-point of space, as though space already existed; the second by the word "When" makes time begin in time, and the third merely turns cause into effect! All sorts of theories have been suggested as solutions to these absurd

questions but obviously, the whole can never be explained in terms of its parts. Modern so-called science dances in agony around this sort of folly. The old thinkers with far greater penetration stated that no beginning could be posited, but that the universe comes to an end when it is properly understood. This is much nearer to the truth, and satisfies those who without analysing memory, take cause and effect for granted. I shall take this up in due course and shall now go into the question of time and space.

If we analyse space, we find it to be the interval between any particular points. It is impossible to think of any object without thinking of space. It is impossible also to think of space without some thought of size, and size is a property of matter. Space and matter are therefore inseparable. Now, to see an interval takes time, because it requires at least three thoughts: one of each extreme and one of the intervening space. So space is really nothing but time. We might say that space is the embodiment of time, but it would not be true, because we still have to think of it. In other words, space exists only when we think of it; and just as matter is inseparable from space, so is space itself inseparable from thought. And we have already seen that thought is inseparable from time. And what is time? We saw that space is the name we give to the invisible and indefinite something which contains and runs through the material universe. Is not time the name we give to the intangible and indefinite something in which our thoughts occur? We measure time by fixed periods or intervals which we think of as past, present or future. But the present is already past when we think of it and that is why I called time intangible. That which is always present is consciousness, whether we think of past or future. It is impossible to think of time without thinking of succession, nor can we think of succession without referring to time. But the actual thought appears *now* in consciousness, and that is eternal because it is ever present. Consciousness is present when there is thought and it is present when there is no thought. If not, how could we speak of there being no thought? We become aware of time when we think of it: if we don't think of it, we are not aware of it. But we never cease to be aware or conscious, for consciousness never sleeps. Thus thought and time are one, one in consciousness.

In reducing space into time and time into consciousness, or by connecting time with thought and space with matter, it has been taken for granted that time and space are integral parts of the universe. I am now going to examine them in a more direct manner. We saw that in relation to matter, space appears as its changeless background and relative to the succession of thoughts, time also appears as changeless. But as space is known only by matter and time by thoughts, time and space are simply names we give to ideas. Why do the ideas of space and time arise? They arise because we poor men cannot bear to think that all we cling to is transient, that our bodies die and our thoughts all vanish. So we try always to attach the changeless within us to whatever fleeting perceptions and passing pleasures our bodies and minds may have, lest we lose them; this we do by our claiming to be the doer and enjoyer in the name of the changeless I-myself. Similarly, we project a changeless background upon all the physical and subtle objects of our perception by the ideas of space and time, not knowing that it is we ourselves as awareness who are their sole permanent principle. We imagine a space to be the container of matter and a time to be the container of thoughts, whereas it is in consciousness which is their real container that all our perceptions come and go. But space and time are themselves only thoughts, and therefore they too are objects of perception, and far from being changeless, they change according to the state of their perceiver. For instance, the measure both of time and of space differs in waking and dreaming while in deep sleep, there is none. We know what remains: it is consciousness and it is in consciousness that they arise, and thus space and time are nothing other than that,

wrongly associated with our various perceptions and as such, they point directly to our real nature. If thought of in this light they will help us to become established there.

But creation has not been explained so far. I have gone the opposite way, and reduced the universe through space and time into consciousness. In the light of this, we shall now be able to understand how the world comes into being. I say purposely “comes” and not “came” into being. We shall also see why philosophers seek the truth within rather than without. To seek the truth outside oneself, one must become one with all. But this all exists only when we think of it. If the objection were to be raised that others may be thinking of it even if we are not, I would reply that it is we who think of those others, and if we don’t think of them, they also don’t exist. We found that in deep sleep, a man is without body and mind, because consciousness has, so to speak, withdrawn itself from them into itself. Without it, the mind cannot function, and without mind, there is no body. The objection may again be raised that others can see one’s body lying inert upon the bed. The reply is the same: others exist when we think of them. There is absolutely no proof that they exist until our thoughts bring them into being. The old saying that seeing is believing is literally true. On waking up, we become aware of the outer world only when we become aware of our bodies. When the sense of body goes, the world goes with it. When thoughts subside, so does the sense of time. But consciousness remains. Therefore the universe rises and subsides in consciousness. It has no existence apart from ourselves. So if we must posit a creator, it is we who create it when we think of it. We destroy it when we cease thinking of it and consciousness remains. That is myself. Or yourself. Or simply self, for it is impersonal.

I have gone further than I intended to go at this stage, but I think it has been better to do so, for we have disposed of the outer world and seen that if we know ourselves, we shall know everything else, because nothing exists apart from ourselves. In my next talk, I shall show how this applies to our daily existence and transforms it into something quite beyond ordinary life.

In the meantime, I must make a last reference to God in relation to the universe. At the risk of offending those who may have found it difficult to follow or accept what has been said about the universe, I have to say the same thing about God. He exists when we think of him, and not otherwise. He is the creation of man. I refer to the idea of a personal God, not to the changeless background of the universe with which our own changeless background is one. If I put it in this way, it will become crystal clear: Every man’s body had a beginning; that required two other bodies, each of which also required two bodies and so on, till the whole of mankind is involved. Bodies need food and clothing and implements to procure them, and that brings in the whole animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms and the earth we inhabit. The earth itself cannot exist on its own, and this in its turn brings in the solar system and all the others until the whole universe is covered. And finally, the universe must have someone to regulate it and so we get God. From so small a beginning, that is to say, from a body and a mind, the rest of the world follows. But in looking at things like this, a man is standing aloof as an individual from all the rest, whereas in fact his body and mind are just a minute part of the whole. All this universe had to be brought into existence for the sole purpose of supporting one single life! But as soon as we recognize as our real nature the background of consciousness in which our minds and bodies come and go, we become free and make that our centre. We become detached from our bodies and minds as such and the whole world goes with them. Everything is then seen as consciousness itself. We are no longer men, so how can there be a universe or a God? They exist in thought only and not in reality. Reality stands above change; the absence of change is the standard of reality. In my next talk, I shall speak of man from this angle and show how even though we may be engaged in every kind of

worldly activity, there is a means to remain centred in the changeless reality and this entails an analysis of life, thoughts and feelings of which a man is made.

And to conclude this talk, I shall deal with a doubt that will certainly have arisen in the minds of many. It may be expressed as follows: "If our real self is beyond the mind and cannot, as I said in the first talk, be reached by thought, what use at all is there in talking about it?" Well, I say that everyone must ask himself this question because as long as it remains unanswered, it is likely to block the way to spiritual certainty. It is before this problem that agnostics bow their heads and turn their backs. Religion is impotent here also. If the truth is beyond the mind, how can we possibly know what it is? The answer is that the mind becomes one with whatever it has as its object. If the object is material, thought also becomes material and acts or perceives or enjoys through the body. If the object is mental, the thought of it may remain as thought and not go outwards through the body. If the truth or consciousness becomes the object of thought, thought merges into consciousness. As I said in the first talk, our understanding of these matters comes from our innermost self. I shall now prove it. I said just now that if we make what is beyond the mind the object of thought, thought merges into consciousness. This statement was to help understanding but it contains an error. Consciousness can never be the object of our thought, since it is in or by consciousness that our mind functions. We see the world by the light of the sun, we can see also its source, the sun, but never the light itself. Similarly, we can never look at consciousness. If the truth is to be understood, it can be understood by itself alone and that is why we are at liberty to think and talk about it, because by doing so, we silence the objections which the limited light of our minds raises and then in that stillness the truth that is within us shines by itself. Coming back to where we were, we wrongly claim *we* understood. The truth with its understanding is always present but we cover it up with our thoughts and feelings which are tainted by the idea that we are nothing but bodies and minds. When this wrong idea goes, spiritual certainty and lasting happiness are attained.

3. MIND AND CONSCIOUSNESS

In my last talk, I took up the problem of the universe, and by first reducing it into time and space, showed that in essence, it is nothing but consciousness. I showed that time and space correspond to mind and body through which we have our connection with it, and that it exists only when we become aware of our bodies and our minds. We become aware of the material world when we are conscious of our own bodies which are simply a part of it, and of time when we think of it, because thoughts appear in time; and time appears in consciousness which is there whether we are having thoughts or not. It is important to remember that although we talk of space, space is known in practice only through matter which we perceive through the physical organs of sense; the succession of time is known only through thought. This has the effect of making the world dependent upon our own bodies and minds, for we have no other means of establishing its existence. In short, time or the universal mind comes into being when we are mind-conscious; the material world or the universal body when we are body-conscious.

In the first talk, I proved that man is really something beyond the body and the mind, and so beyond time and space. In this talk, I am going to examine the body and mind from another angle, following on what was said in the last talk, of which I have just given a partial summary. This is called for by the remark I made to the effect that the world is dependent upon our bodies and minds. How then is the connection between ourselves and the world established? That is what I have now to show.

The body as such is dead matter; it has two essential functions. One is to act and the other to sense or perceive. Actions are done by the mouth, the arms, the legs, and the organs of reproduction and evacuation. Sense perceptions are gained through the five sense-organs, namely, the ears, the skin, the eyes, the tongue, and the nose, corresponding to sound, touch, sight, taste and smell. Without these, there could be no deliberate action, so it may be said that to gather impressions from without through the instruments of sense is the higher of the two functions. Because it is through the five sense organs that the material world is known, the world itself is one of sound, touch, sight, taste and smell. To understand this, we have only to consider what a different world it would be if we had four instead of five organs of sense. For example, if none of us had the power to see, there would be no visible forms and we could only know a shape by its feel, without the help of visual imagination; fire could only be known by its heat and not by its light, and we could have very little idea of what goes on in the heavens. Or we may try to think what sort of world it would be if we had a sixth organ of sense. It would be very different. These two examples prove by themselves what I showed in my last talk, that the world is exactly what we make it. We make it when we hear, touch, see, taste or smell. We also make it when we think of it. And how do we think of it? We think of it always in terms of our sense-organs. We can, for instance, enjoy the thought of music; we hear it inwardly, and we can also think of things we have seen, such as the face of a friend or the house we live in and similarly we can summon up in our minds every other sensation.

It is evident from this that we not only have physical sense-organs, but also subtle or mental ones. We normally think in terms of our bodies; the mind works in the same way whether it comes out through the physical sense-organs or remains in the subtle ones. But the physical sense-organs work only when the mind is there. For example, if we are listening intently, we cannot feel a fly that has settled on our hand. If our mind wanders a little from our listening, and we become conscious of the fly, for that moment at least our attention is there and not in our hearing. In the same way, if we are walking along a street while immersed in thought, we hardly notice the things we pass. If we do happen to notice something in particular, our train of thought is automatically interrupted. What this signifies is that the mind can only be at one thing at a time. If it is in the sense of hearing, our ears alone function, if in the sense of touch, we can only feel, and if it is in none of the physical sense-organs, as for instance, when we are thinking deeply or fast asleep, they cease to function altogether.

And just as the physical organs of sense need the presence of the mind to give them their mandate, so also does the mind require the presence of consciousness if it is to function. We are thinking and all of a sudden, there is a blank and it is only after an interval that we can think again. The same thing happens when we fall asleep. What does it mean? It means that consciousness has withdrawn from our mind and it is only when it returns that we can again have thoughts. In the first place, we saw that the sense-organs need the presence of mind to work; secondly that consciousness must be in the mind for thoughts to occur; we have already seen that mind can only be at one thing at a time, that is to say, there can only be one thought in consciousness or consciousness can only be in one thought at a time; and we may therefore conclude that without consciousness, neither the body nor the mind can function voluntarily. I say voluntarily, because it might be thought by some that the body *does* function on its own when we are asleep. But as a matter of fact, as I said in my last talk, when we are not aware of a thing, there is positively no proof that the thing exists; it is only when we think of it that it comes into being. If someone were to say that others can see our bodies

when we are lying down asleep I would answer that it is he who creates those others by thinking of them; so his argument falls away.

Now what is the practical application of this principle, the principle that without consciousness, neither the body nor the mind can work? In order to gain the fullest understanding from what I am going to say, it will be necessary to restate what we found the true nature of man to be. A man is conscious both when he is having thoughts and when he is without thought. Otherwise, it would not have been possible to say that one had been without it, because if consciousness were a part of the mind, if it were something merely mental, it would disappear with thought, and moreover, there could be no memory. But even when thought is absent, as in deep sleep or in the absent-mindedness I spoke of, consciousness does remain, for we know afterwards that we have been asleep or that we experienced a mental abeyance. In other words, beyond the body and the mind, there is a changeless principle we refer to as "I" and it is nothing other than this consciousness.

Having restated this fundamental truth, I shall now apply to everyday life and experience the conclusion we came to, namely that the knowledge we gain or the sensations we have of the outer world are due to the presence of consciousness in our minds and our sense-organs. I am obliged for the moment to use such an expression as "the presence of consciousness" because there are no others which can be used. If it is not correctly understood, it may easily lead to the wrong idea that when consciousness is absent, absent that is, from our bodies or minds, we are left without anything; whereas we are ourselves that consciousness and not bodies and minds, but we do not yet feel it to be so. Now, we have already seen how a man identifies his real self with his body when he says, for instance, "I hear a sound", meaning of course, "my ears hear a sound." Let us examine this carefully. When I say, "I hear a sound," two things are involved, the hearer of the sound and the sound that is heard. The sound is the object, the passive object of my perception, the thing perceived, and I am the subject, the active or conscious perceiver. I can only perceive a thing that is there to be perceived and the object can only be perceived when there is a perceiver to perceive it. Therefore, the perceiver and the perceived, or simply the subject and the object, are complementary. When we speak of a sound as being heard, we naturally assume there is someone to hear it. When we are awake or dreaming, we have countless sense perceptions. We hear, touch, see, taste or smell. That is how we have our contact with all the various things of the world. We can also perceive the same object through different organs of sense. For example, we can at once recognize an orange either by its appearance, its taste or its feel. And yet, although all manner of things are perceived through the five organs of sense, there is only one perceiver. It is always "I" who see or hear or feel, always the same "I". But we saw just now that the subject and the object are complements and inseparable. Can it be that the changeless "I", the real self, which is there whether there are perceptions or not, is inseparable from, let us say, the orange we are tasting? If so, we would be eating up our real self together with the orange! This is quite absurd, and the actual perceiver that is inseparable from the orange must be something other than ourself or the conscious principle. But we saw that the world is made up of sound, touch, sight, taste and smell, because it is through the corresponding organs alone that we are able to have our connection with it. So it is obviously the physical sense-organs and the material world that are inseparable, for the sense-organs are, in fact, an integral part of the material world.

How then does consciousness come in? Well, we have spoken so far only of the subject and the object, or the seer and the seen. These are bound together by their nature, and though I have taken as an example the case of material or gross perceptions, the same rule applies to subtle or mental perceptions or thoughts, to the thinker and the thing thought. Now there is a

term which is common to the seer and the seen, or the thinker and the thing thought, and that is seeing or thinking. Perceiving is an experience that stands apart from the perceiver and the perceived. It is common to all perceptions, no matter what, and to all thoughts. It is indeed pure experience and I shall have more to say about it later. But what is now important is the fact that every experience is, if I may say so, a moment of pure consciousness. It is afterwards that we say "I thought of this or that" or "I saw a light". At the time of the actual experience, there was no such notion, there was consciousness alone. This is how consciousness comes in, and all we have to do to recognize it is to think about it as often as possible. In due course, without our having to think of it specially, recognition will come up of its own accord, and then we stand established in pure consciousness.

There is another way of looking at the same thing. We saw that unless the mind is present in it, not one of the sense-organs can function. So instead of saying, as we did, just now, that the sense-organs and their objects are inseparable, we may say that the objects and the mind are. Now if the physical objects of perception and the mind which is subtle are inseparable, it means there is really no such thing as a physical object and the world is in fact purely mental. This is quite correct from the level of the mind, but is it all? No, for we also saw that mind itself functions only by the light of consciousness. Now clearly, what is inseparable from consciousness which is without name and form cannot be different in nature from it. Thus the world is nothing but consciousness. But how are we to experience it as such? Certainly, the plain thought of it will not bring about this realization, because we shall merely be bringing consciousness down to the mind-level, if that were possible. What we must do is to let every object of experience, including our body, be a pointer to consciousness, because it is necessarily present in every sensory experience.

The same thing must be done with regard to thoughts and feelings; they also bear witness to the presence of consciousness. By paying attention in this way to consciousness, our centre of gravity will gradually move from the superficial or the changing to the real or the changeless, and we shall thus become centred in our true nature. Normally, we seem to transfer our real centre to each object of perception. Our seeing an object we take as a proof of the object's existence and we place our interest there. We forget that both the seeing and the object proclaim the presence of consciousness, and that is far more important, indeed it's the only important thing, since it is the unity that runs through all this variety and enables us to know it as such. If we like to think of the world as real, it is because consciousness has made it so: it is in fact nothing but consciousness. Or we may say that it is unreal, because it vanishes when consciousness is not there, so the world as such cannot be real. Consciousness alone is real, since it is constant and never changes. There is nothing beside itself which *can* in any case change it. We give it names and forms, we call it man or mountain, but we know now that our perception of a man or a mountain points to this one thing, and so do our bodies and our minds: therefore, I say, let everything point to it; that is the way to realize it, that is to say, oneself.

I had promised in my last talk to explain how an infinite and eternal principle came to think of itself as being limited by time and space, and this is the right moment to do so. But there is no explanation, because the question itself is absurd, like the questions about time, space and causality. These questions seek an answer about the whole in terms of its parts, or its apparent parts, and this question ascribes doership to consciousness, which never acts, being changeless.¹ So let this, and all other questions of a similar nature, be allowed to point

¹ See the author's *The Nature of Man according to the Vedanta*, Ch. XXVIII, 2, on 'The Origin of Identification.'

to consciousness without which they cannot arise. And it will come in time to be seen that this itself is the correct answer.

Now one of the things I set out to do in this talk was to consider man as made up of life, thoughts and feelings, in order to show how even though we may be engaged in worldly activities, we have a means to remain centred in our real self, and I have done it so far as thoughts are concerned. I showed how every thought and perception points to consciousness and that when properly viewed, thought is consciousness. I have already spoken of life in an earlier talk when I was relating individual life to universal existence. Life is pure existence wrongly thought of as limited by time and space or mind and body. This can be better understood now after all I have said since then, and to complete the picture, I have only to say this: that we stand above what appears as individual existence and it can be further proved in several ways. For example, a man will willingly allow a limb to be amputated if necessary; he knows full well that he will lose a part of his body but not a part of his life; again, for the sake of a cause he loves more than his life, he is prepared to risk his body in battle and this shows that consciously or unconsciously, he knows he is above life. When a man thus dissociates himself from his person, he betakes himself to something higher. Even a sportsman continually takes risks for the sake of enjoyment. We call it playing with death; death is simply a matter of leaving the body. Would one who really felt that death was final, risk it? And we see the same sort of thing with regard to the mind. So as to avoid suffering, people allow their brains to be paralysed for the time being by anaesthetics and drugs, knowing that they will not cease to exist thereby. They also lie down to sleep; that means they deliberately give up the mind. And if life becomes unbearable and they see no other escape, people commit suicide. Where do they wish to escape to? Into some happier state, evidently. Even if a man thinks he will cease to exist, it is he who thinks it; in other words, he stands beyond life and death, however unconsciously.

As for the emotional side of man, that part of him which feels love and hate, desire, pleasure and pain and passion, I propose to take it up in the next talk. The examples I have just now given in respect of life will help us. Moreover, the consideration of emotion will serve as background to a subject which has not so far been mentioned, one that is most essential. I refer to the guidance that everyone who wishes to advance in his progress towards the truth must have. This guidance is only to be had from one who knows what he says. We cannot approach the truth on our own, precisely because we think we are alone, that is to say, individuals. Someone is needed, therefore, who, having himself realized the truth, can impart it to others, and that is a thing that no mere learned man or book can ever do. It is sufficient for the moment that I have mentioned it and I shall return to it at the proper time.

Meanwhile, I shall now go on to a brief analysis of the working of the mind and so conclude this talk. Mind functions in four ways, and these are to gather impressions from without, to prefer one thing to another, to co-ordinate the different thoughts and exercise reason and choice, and finally to claim thought and action of the individual in the name of "I myself", what we may call the I-thought. I have already shown that there cannot be more than one thought at a time, and these four functions, for all their difference, are nevertheless thoughts only.

An examination of the I-thought will yield much fruit. At the time of doing, thinking or enjoying, there is no thought of being the doer, thinker or enjoyer. We are absorbed in the act, and it is only afterwards that we say, "I am doing or thinking or enjoying." When we are saying or thinking this, we are no longer the doer, thinker or enjoyer, because, as I said before, the mind can only be at one thing at a time. Now the thing we call "I" is really the impersonal self; it is also pure consciousness, and we individualize it because we think we are

endowed with a body and a mind. But the fact that everything is claimed by this individual “I” bears witness to the presence of consciousness in whatever we connect it with, for it is this consciousness that runs through all our experiences. So all we have to do to get to consciousness, as we know already, is to disclaim the acts of the body and the mind instead of claiming them, and we shall thus become centred in our true nature. Obviously, in ordinary life, we are obliged to refer to ourselves as “I” . But knowing now that the “I” is only a thought amongst others, we can either let it point to consciousness, or we can inwardly correct the false association of our real self with the body and mind. When either or both of these methods are diligently practised, we shall gradually become freed from our false attachment to body and mind and thus go beyond all circumstance and find perfect peace.

4. LOVE, HAPPINESS, AND GUIDANCE

In the previous talk, I spoke of man as being made up of life, thoughts, and feelings, and showed that life is the individual aspect of absolute existence while thoughts may be described as consciousness limited by time; but we have already seen that no such limitation is really possible. The same thing is true of absolute existence: how can it be confined to individual life? There is no explanation of such apparent limitations because as I have said, the whole cannot be explained in terms of its part. But we saw that the practical cause of this mistaken identification of the real and the unreal is the I-thought, that function of the mind which claims personal responsibility for the acts of the mind and the body. At the time of thinking, doing, perceiving or enjoying, there is no idea in the thinker, doer, perceiver or enjoyer that he is acting. It is only afterwards that he lays claim to what was in fact done by his body and mind. And as the act of claiming is itself a function of the mind, one thought amongst others, it has only to be recognized clearly as such for the wrong identification to cease. This was the conclusion we came to and I shall come to it again when I analyse memory. What I have now to examine is the nature of the third component part of man, that is to say, his feelings.

Our feelings, no matter what their nature, express our innate desire for happiness. Although I speak of our desire for happiness, the truth is that happiness abides within us always; but, since we seek it outside ourselves, it gets covered up by our associating it with various circumstances or objects. I proved that the truth and its understanding are ever-present in the core of our being; it is the same thing with happiness. Let us consider the case of desire. Suppose that the object of our desire is a house we wish to own. So long as we have not got possession of it, our mind is continually agitated with thoughts about its acquisition and what we intend to do with it afterwards. When we do at last possess it, our anxiety ceases and we experience happiness. What does this mean? It means that while the mind is active, there is no peace, that is to say, no peace of mind. When the mind comes to rest upon the object we desire, we find peace. Now when the mind is at rest, there can be no thought of the object. So it is not the object that gives us happiness but the absence of thought. We may say that happiness is obtained through objects, but it is not inherent in objects. If it were, then one object would suffice for a lifetime, whereas at one moment we are unhappy because we feel hunger or thirst, at another because some plan has failed to materialize, we feel miserable owing to illness, or we suffer from heat or cold and so on. Moreover, something that gave us pleasure as a child no longer satisfies us as we grow older, and what delights one man is repugnant to another, or the same thing alternatively pleases and displeases us. And in no case is the feeling of happiness complete; it invariably fades and leaves us dissatisfied.

All this shows that happiness is not to be found in objects. This has further proof in the fact that we enjoy sleeping. We saw in a previous talk how we remember our enjoyment of sound sleep. This example was taken to show that when mind is at rest, consciousness remains over. It also shows that peace and happiness remain with it. From this it can easily be understood that consciousness and happiness or peace are one and the same thing. Beyond the mind, there are no distinctions. We call the changeless background of man, consciousness in relation to his mind, and peace or happiness in relation to his heart or his feelings. And we know already that existence is the name we give to this changeless principle in relation to life. They are all one, and properly speaking, beyond all relativity.

To return now to the example of the house we wish to own, we all think that the object of think that the object of our desire is the house. But is it really so? It is not; because once our desire is satisfied, we become desireless. Desire is an abstract something that in itself has nothing to do with objects. It is, so to speak, a conscious need or craving. We need fresh air to fill our lungs, and so long as it is freely available, we breathe it without the least feeling of desire. But if we enter a stuffy room, we become conscious of the lack of fresh air and we then begin to desire it; in other words, our mind becomes disturbed. As soon as the windows are opened, we feel a moment of relief, our mind comes to rest with the enjoyment of fresh air, and we think no more about it. So what we really desire is desirelessness, and not this or that object. Desirelessness is the state where there are no thoughts. Material objects are required by the body and subtle ones, such as answers to questions or the knowledge of facts, by the mind; but, as I have already made clear, we are not the body or the mind, but the changeless principle which we personify as I-myself. It is therefore an error to say, for instance, "I want a glass of water," when it is the body that wants it, and an error also to say, "I wish I knew the name of that man" , or "I was glad to find a solution to the problem", when such things pertain to the mind and not to ourselves. We can now understand why most people believe that renunciation of the world is a necessary condition for the attainment of wisdom: they still associate their real being with their bodies and minds. They see that our connection with the world is maintained and strengthened by our desires, but they don't see that the real self has no desires at all, nor has it any aversions. Desire and aversion, or like and dislike, are the exclusive property of the mind; so why should we claim them? Once more, we see what a burden this I-thought is. Apart from its lending personality to the impersonal being that we really are, it gives substance to happiness and peace in the form of objects and circumstances. This creates in its turn the vicious circle of desire and aversion, because if we once begin to identify happiness or unhappiness with some object, we seek or avoid that and similar objects again and again. However, it is now evident, I am sure, that all we have to do to escape from the hold of this vicious circle, which is the cause of birth and re-birth, is not to renounce desire but to disclaim enjoyment. This leads to the correct position, while renunciation is only the reverse side of the coin whose obverse side is longing. Desire, aversion and renunciation all refer to some sort of preference, and that gets us nowhere. The intelligent method to adopt, as I have just said, is to take the counter-thought after every feeling of enjoyment or displeasure that it concerns the mind and not myself, who am beyond the body and the mind. With a little practice it becomes automatic and, in time, the mistaken identification will end. We shall then find true felicity.

And what is love? It will help our understanding if we think of it in terms of give and take: love is seen to be either all-giving, all-taking, or an equal proportion of giving and taking; this is of course a broad view of it, and we need not go into all the variations of those three stages. Now love is something between two individuals. When it is all a question of taking, there is no consideration of the other person, and it is entirely selfish. When the giving and taking are

in equal proportions, love is then mental and friendship is what we call it. It is, so to speak, a mutual contract where something in return is expected. Coming down to the physical plane, it is no longer entirely selfish, because the other person is also considered. And when it becomes a matter of giving alone, this is pure, selfless love. Nothing is expected in return and there is a complete identification of one's self with the other person. Happiness is derived here from one's being enjoyed by the other: that is, indeed, what always gives us the greatest pleasure. This desire to be enjoyed by others is often perverted by people's seeking popularity; it is spoiled only by this, that they want to get something back and that is of course selfish, but when the highest state of selfless love is reached, although it is manifested to others on the physical and mental planes, these become transformed.

When two people have risen to a level where each one can be entirely concerned with the other's happiness, perfect union is attained, because each is aware of one only and the enjoyment of each one is wholly dependent upon the other's enjoyment. Whether it is in connection with the body or the mind, it is the same. We have already seen that happiness has nothing to do with anything objective; it is the absolute state. When we pay attention to another's happiness, we lose the sense of our own body and mind and thus give up so much of our own egoism. A state will be reached where the idea of the other also subsides; this is when the idea of one's self as an individual goes, since obviously, the idea of there being others always presupposes the separate existence of one's self. Love, therefore, takes one to the ultimate reality in precisely the same manner as reason or knowledge. When all is seen as one in consciousness, the need of knowledge has gone, just as when all is one in love, there is no need to try to perfect one's relationship with others, because one is beyond all relationship.

The path of knowledge that has been the subject of previous talks is really one with the path of love. Philosophy, as I explained right at the beginning, means the love of wisdom. We seek the reality out of love; we desire to know the truth, in other words, it is the truth we love. There is a difference in the earlier stages, however, because although it is possible to attain the reality through love alone, people of an enquiring nature are liable to have doubts, and therefore higher reason has to be brought in to remove them. By higher reason, I refer to the inward-turning of the mind, as distinct from the heart. The path of knowledge is more especially suited to those we call, intellectual, but if we look at it objectively, it is evident that there can be no happiness in ignorance and no real knowledge without deep peace. Both knowledge and happiness exist; and therefore what in man appears as life, thoughts, and feelings, is at bottom absolute existence or being, absolute knowledge or awareness, and absolute bliss or love. These three names stand for the nameless reality, of which we now know something.

In the meantime, what I have said about love is not yet complete. I said that love is experienced between two persons, and that it appears on two planes, the physical and the mental. Pure love is beyond the body and the mind. What is it which we most love? We like this object or that because it gives us pleasure or happiness. But we saw that happiness stands apart from the objects through which we derive it. It is our real nature, so it is not the object, but our self that we love most, for that is what we are always seeking. As an example of pure love as it appears on the mental plane, we may take the case of a friend who is absent. We still think of him in separation with love, and even after his death. Similarly, a husband will have his wife's dead body buried or cremated without a pang. Do not these two examples show that true friendship is neither mental or physical, for when it reaches this level, it is beyond limitation and so is pure selfless love? Though nothing is expected in return, we still think of our dead friend with love. Now what is it that continues even after his death? Is it not

the consciousness, without which we could not have known him before and think of him now? And what is this consciousness but our real self? So we see again that what we most love is ourselves, or rather the self, and not a body and a mind. I say *the* self because it is neither his nor ours. Pure love is, therefore, self-love, just as consciousness is self-knowledge or awareness; and existence, subsisting by itself, is pure being. In the last talk, in connection with life and existence, I gave the instance of a man who is prepared to sacrifice his body for some cause he loves more than his life. By transferring his love from his body and mind to some ideal with which he has identified himself, he proclaims that it is his self that he loves most.

I said just now that we can attain the truth through the path of love. This, however, must not be misinterpreted, as it so often is, as meaning that we have deliberately to extend our love to all men. I said also that when all is one in love, there is no need to try to perfect our relationship with others. This is a method that many attempt, but it is incapable of leading very far, because the very fact that we see others shows that we see ourselves as separate individuals, and nothing should be done which tends to keep up that illusion. Apart from this, even if we were to make a start at loving the whole of creation in order to become one with all, dozens of lives would hardly suffice to accomplish it. Mankind is by no means all, so that not only the present generation of men would have to be embraced but all previous generations and all those yet to come, along with the whole animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms, not only here but in every other world in the universe, gross or subtle, including those which have long since ceased to exist and those which have still to come into being. In short, this path is entirely vain. If we wish to become one with all, we have only to identify ourselves with that consciousness without which nothing can exist. This is the one of the many, and having realized that, we become one with all, though strictly speaking, there is neither one nor many but only that consciousness.

Nevertheless it is possible to attain the truth through love and I shall explain how. In my last talk, I made a passing reference to the guidance needed by one who wishes to approach the truth. Philosophy, as we know, is the love of wisdom. But how can a man who thinks he is a body and a mind love what appears to him as an abstract something? He cannot, and so the truth must appear to him in the form of a man, one whom he feels to have known the truth, and who can speak to him in a familiar tongue and understand his temperament, and remove his doubts and difficulties, and take him beyond limitation by showing him out of his own experience what his real nature is. On the level of religion such a being appears as a descent of God upon earth in the form of a man. But we can now understand that such a thing is really quite impossible; everything must be examined and nothing taken for granted. No object, be it God himself, a prophet, a man, or a table can exist unless we perceive it. In other words, the truth cannot by any means be posited outside one's self. Besides, those extraordinary beings who have been taken by ordinary men to be God himself, or prophets, or sons of God, are remembered chiefly by what they taught their followers. Now the truth is eternal and doesn't change, but the manner of expressing it most certainly does, according to time and place, and the inner obstacles towards its understanding also, since each man and each generation of men differs in some respect from every other. If we are to depend upon teachings given hundreds or thousands of years ago, teachings given to people quite unlike ourselves in background, mental make-up and general temperament, we shall never obtain satisfaction. Moreover, the disciples of these ancient teachers had the essential advantage of a living presence and were not allowed to get away with their own interpretations as they do at present. Should we not also have the living presence of a sage to help us? We should and we can: there has always been an unbroken line of great souls who, without assuming for

themselves, or in the name of God, or their being made to assume by enthusiastic followers, the attributes of a divine law-giver or God on earth and what-not, have been there to guide honest seekers who desire lasting peace and happiness and perfect understanding.

To those who may object that such a teacher is also a case of the truth being posited outside one's self, I would answer that it is so at first, but as I have already stated, his special function is to show his disciples the truth within themselves. The question may also be raised as to whether there is a difference between a spiritual teacher with a few disciples and the founder of a religion. Now granting for argument's sake that the founder of a religion has attained perfection, which is not necessarily the case, there can be absolutely no difference between him and a fully realized teacher, since both are essentially beyond distinctions. The distinction is one of appearances only, one with which we are not in the least concerned. As I said, a true spiritual teacher is not a man at all. He has identified himself with the reality, and being himself beyond body and mind, that is to say, beyond individuality, he sees none in others, indeed, he sees no others, but sees the self, pure consciousness, alone. How then, it may well be asked, can he teach others, when he sees none? The answer of course is that it is the others who think they are being taught by a teacher.

But, however much we may try to understand such a being, we shall not succeed. The idea I have attempted to convey of a spiritual teacher applies with equal force to one who, though beyond limitation, has no disciples. We can think about the truth and see that it is nothing but being, consciousness and bliss, but just as we cannot attain it by reason alone, we cannot understand the nature of a spiritual teacher. When we rise to that level where all that is unreal vanishes because the reality alone shines, we shall become one in that which seemed at first to be endowed with a body and mind. According to a man's sincerity so will he find a true teacher. And having found him, he will find that his heart's desire to know the truth becomes crystallized in what at first appears as a deep personal attachment to his teacher, who is seen as the embodiment of wisdom and love. This love directed towards the person of the teacher is really directed towards the impersonal reality. The disciple expresses his doubts and difficulties and the teacher by his answers removes them. As the disciple rises from level to level, so does this relationship deepen, until going beyond all personality, union is finally attained in the ultimate. I shall stop here, because this will be experienced by those fortunate enough to desire it: no words can describe it. I must add, for those who still see bodies and minds as such, that the union of the teacher and disciple is an inward and not an outward one. Furthermore, the word union is a misnomer for want of a better word because the oneness was always there but not recognized.

This aspect of spiritual guidance is quite unknown to the majority of mankind. To those who are familiar with it, the mere mention of a spiritual teacher may often bring tears to their eyes; but, whether it is the one or the other who seeks the truth, this is a fresh discovery that has to be made, the discovery of one's predestined master. Without him, however many books are read, and no matter what other learned man is consulted, the truth cannot be approached. It is the sincerity of the seeker that inevitably leads to the discovery of his teacher, and no one need despair. When the highest teacher is found, all the rest is assured.

5. THE PRESENT ETERNITY

My survey of the general principles of philosophy, its aim and its practice, was completed with the fourth talk. I concluded by speaking of the necessity of guidance in the form of a spiritual teacher that a seeker must have. And I showed that this is intimately connected with the seeker's sincerity. In my opening remarks to these talks, I said that the purpose of

philosophy is to answer the questions that occur to every thinking man and woman, such questions as, "What am I?" , and "What is the purpose of this existence?" and I went on to say that when the right answers are given *and* understood, such a revolution in the mind of the seeker is brought about that until he has experienced them in the most concrete manner, he feels he cannot rest.

It would be too much to expect that all those to whom this subject is new would have had such a strong feeling. This survey has covered a large area and the different points dealt with would require much discussion to relate their meaning to each man's personal experience. That is why a competent guide is needed, for he alone can immediately see where the obstacles to understanding lie in a particular man. What I can do here is only to state the truth and some hearts may be touched.

Those on the other hand who are familiar with the subject may have been able to follow the arguments that I have used. I spoke just now of the answers having not only to be understood but felt. This feeling is the essential here: many people are content to rest with the mental agreement, but I wish to emphasize that this cannot in any way give a real understanding, because as it has been made clear on many occasions, that which is beyond the mind is equally beyond the mind's grasp. Reason serves to overcome our mental obstacles, but the truth has to be experienced in the depth of our being: this experience of the truth, which is our real self, can be had only in the presence of one who has himself realized it, provided of course that we ourselves desire this experience above all, that is to say, provided we are quite sincere and earnest.

Why have I said these words? Whosoever has been able to grasp the contents of the previous talks will know in his heart if those words are necessary or not. And to those who have found it difficult to follow on account of the unfamiliarity of the subject-matter, I wish to give encouragement by the knowledge that although the answers given are in themselves self-evident, otherwise they were not true, the long habit of taking for granted the world as it appears and ourselves as we appear is a barrier that often stands in the way of mental agreement, though even before it has been got rid of, the truth can be directly experienced when it is heard from one who knows what he says. This habit is a false one as I have shown; the whole purpose of these talks is the practical one of showing its falsity and what the correct attitude is. In these two final talks, I propose to go over the whole ground again, enlarging on this point or that, adding further and higher conclusions where it seems useful to do so and confirming, I hope, in those who have been interested the desire to continue in the pursuit of true knowledge and lasting happiness until nothing more remains to be done and perfection is attained.

The cause of all our troubles and the obstacles to our finding lasting happiness is our wrongly associating the changeless principle we refer to as "I" with a body and a mind. This changeless principle may be viewed, in relation to man as he appears, either as the real self, or as absolute existence, consciousness, and bliss. We call it the real self as contrasted with the individual person, and I proved that what we refer to in ourselves as "I myself" is really nothing but a thought, just one among others. Before we even begin to speak or act, we are ready to come out with such a thought as "I did" , "I saw" or "I thought" ; but we know now that we are never the doer, perceiver or enjoyer, but the witness of our mental and bodily functions, since we are able to remember them afterwards. The mind is always changing, and unless there were some permanent background upon which a record of past events were made, it would be impossible to recall them. This argument admirably proves the presence of a changeless background that undoubtedly exists within us and that is all it is intended to do. Here memory is taken for granted, because it is something we all experience, but we should

take nothing for granted and I am therefore going to look into the nature of memory. Now there is an obvious inconsistency in the two statements that the real self we refer to as "I" is not the doer, perceiver, or enjoyer and that this same changeless principle witnesses the actions of the mind and body. Witnessing is an act, and an act is a change. The idea of memory rests entirely upon the assumption that there is a witness to our actions: can this witnessing function belong to the mind? In one of these talks, I showed that the mind cannot be at two things at once, in other words there is only one thought at a time. I had already reduced the outer world into thought, so when I say that there can only be one thought at a time, it must be taken as including actions of the body and sense-perceptions. If we were able to have two or more thoughts at a time, we should need two or more individualities to claim them, otherwise one of the thoughts would be lost, and we could never know we had had it. Or we may say that the fact that we remember thoughts successively and not simultaneously is the adequate proof that there cannot be more than one thought at a time. Anyway, if memory were a function of the mind, the witnessing function or thought would be present along with the thought that is being witnessed, that is to say, there would be two concurrent thoughts and that, as we have seen, is impossible. Moreover it is not according to our experience that memory is present along with other thoughts any more than is the I-thought, which comes up just before and immediately after, but not during an act. When we are actually feeling thirsty, there is the feeling alone and not the thought connecting it with ourselves; when we are thinking, "I am feeling thirsty", we are not at that moment aware of the feeling of thirst. Memory with its contents is therefore a thought among others exactly like the I-thought. It cannot be a function of pure consciousness, which is there whether there is thought or not, because pure consciousness has no function. There is nothing outside it upon which it can act, because nothing exists except in consciousness; memory also appears in consciousness. Thus memory is nothing but a thought, and it is closely connected with that function of the mind that claims for the individual all the acts done by the body and the mind, and at the same time, it is inseparable from consciousness. What does all this lead to?

Let us cast our minds back to what I said about time in the second of these talks, I am going to refer back to this question since memory obviously brings in the time element and what I said about it then will help us to arrive at the answer we are now seeking. What I said was: "Is not time the name we give to the intangible and indefinite something in which our thoughts occur? We measure time by fixed periods or intervals which we think of as past, present, or future. But the present is always past when we think of it and that is why I called time intangible". I shall interrupt this quotation to call attention to this fact that the present is always past when we think of it is it not the same thing as what I said about the I-thought? When we say, "I see an elephant," we are not then seeing it although we use the present tense. If someone asks, "What are you doing?" we have to tell them what we *were* doing because hearing and answering his questions are new acts done since then. To continue the quotation with the last sentence: "But the present is already past when we think of it and that is why I called time intangible. That which is always present is consciousness, whether we think of past or future. It is impossible to think of time without thinking of succession," and I now add, "it is equally impossible to think of memory without thinking of succession". And to proceed: "Nor can we think of succession without referring to time," and I again add, "nor can we think of succession without referring to memory". To continue: "But the actual thought appears *now* in consciousness," and it could equally well have been said, "the actual remembrance appears *now* in consciousness". To quote again, "That consciousness is eternal because it is ever-present. It is present when there is thought, it is present when there is no thought. If not, how could we speak of there being no thought? We become aware of time

when we think of it: if we don't think of it, we are not aware of it. But we never cease to be aware or conscious, for consciousness never sleeps. Thus thoughts and time are one, one in consciousness". I have given the whole passage because it leads by steps to the last statement, that thoughts and time are one in consciousness. But memory is also a thought, so we may say that memory and time are one. Now we have just seen that the thought of past, present, and future is always *now*. We don't go back into yesterday to think of yesterday, nor do we travel forward into next week to make our next week's appointments. We do it at present and we are always in the present. What we remember is previous thoughts, that is to say, we have a thought now that concerns the past or the future. But can we say that a past thought exists unless we now think of it? We have seen that the kind of thought we call remembrance is not with other thoughts when they occur; nor were they witnessed by consciousness, so what proof have we that we ever had a previous thought, or that we shall ever have one in the future? We can only think of it now in any case. There is indeed absolutely no proof that other thoughts exist. There is in consequence no proof whatever that there is a past or a future or what we try to catch hold of and call the present. What alone exists is consciousness: time or memory is quite illusory. If there is any thought at all, there is one only; and if only one, it is no longer a thought. The deep understanding that memory is simply a thought takes us at once out of time into pure consciousness. Between the thinker and the thought there is the thinking or pure experience. I had previously described experience as a moment of consciousness in order to help comprehension, and similarly in the present context, I shall now describe the indescribable consciousness as the present eternity. It is this that shines in every experience. It also shines when there is no outward experience and this brings us to a further consideration of deep sleep.

I have spoken of deep sleep on several occasions: in deep sleep, although the mind and the body are both absent, we retain our essential consciousness and it is this that enables us to say on waking, "I enjoyed sound sleep" or "I knew nothing." It is this so-called nothing that I am now going to examine. We have already seen that this nothing or no thing is in contrast with what we perceive when we are awake or dreaming. Now I ask this question: Is it possible to know nothing? By nothing, we refer to something absent, absent either to our senses or to our mind. Anything that is so absent can certainly not be known or perceived. And what is ignorance? Ignorance is also posited with reference to what is not present to our consciousness. Can we say that something not present to our consciousness exists? If so, we know it, otherwise we could not say that it exists. Consequently, there is no such thing as ignorance and when we say that in deep sleep we know nothing, we are making a mistake. We can know only what is present and in deep sleep, what is present is consciousness and peace, our real nature. We cannot know it as an object because it is our own self, so the verb to know would be wrongly used here. All we can say, and it is correct, is that in deep sleep, we subsist as our real self in the absolute state. Though the false limitation to a body and a mind, or of space and time, is absent, the realization of this perfection is prevented by our attitude before and after sleep. We talk of sleeping away the world and of knowing nothing and this is what spoils the experience. If we take to the thought that in the absence of objective experience, consciousness remains, the so-called ignorance of deep sleep will in time give way to the light of consciousness shining in its own glory.

This experience is not confined to deep sleep. I have already referred to absent-mindedness and the same thing applies to what is between thoughts. I am now speaking from a level where the succession of thoughts and memory as such are accepted. Any talk on spiritual matters has to be conducted on different planes at different times so as to comprise the great variety of our worldly experience. Contradictions may appear on the surface, but as

all this has for its purpose the attainment of that in which all contradictions vanish we need only see from what level we are talking for the difficulty to disappear. It must never be forgotten that there are always contradictions between different planes. Even now, starting from where the existence of thoughts and memory as such is admitted, we shall find ourselves in a few minutes at the place in which consciousness shines by itself.

Before and after every thought, feeling, or perception, there is an interval, just as in the movement of a pendulum at the end of each swing, there is a moment of rest. Without such an interval, there would be one continuous thought, but that is not what we find. In this interval, we are neither dead nor asleep nor have we any consciousness of our bodies and minds. Where are we then? If we say that we were without any thought, it is not incorrect but it is negative. What was present was consciousness or our real self, just as in deep sleep. So here again, we have to be thinking that between two thoughts, it is not nothing, but awareness and peace that remain. To make this point quite clear, let us take as an example a glass of water. If the water is thrown away and we ask someone what is in the glass, he will say that nothing is in it. He is not stating exactly what he sees, but he is making a comparison between what was previously seen and what is seen now. What he unknowingly says is that the consciousness which revealed the full glass reveals also the empty one. And this is what we mean when we say that between two thoughts, there are no thoughts, instead of saying that there was consciousness. Because we only recognize consciousness when it is related to the body or the mind; we make these the standard whereas the true standard is consciousness itself. What we have to do therefore is to rid ourselves of the habit of thinking of nothing or of ignorance or of absence and indeed, of anything negative, since no such thing exists. Here again, I am not suggesting that we should expunge all negative words from our vocabulary; we need them in ordinary life. All we have to do is to make sure we know what we are talking about and then the use of such words will not tie us down. If we always keep before us the idea of consciousness being present whether the mind is active or at rest, we shall gradually become centred in it and going beyond all questions of being and not being, find peace.

We have just seen how we tend to refer one thing back to another; this was in connection with the state of pure consciousness experienced in deep sleep and between two thoughts, instead of seeing it as the positive state it is, we describe it negatively in terms of what was there before. The same tendency is also to be found in what we posit as the chain of cause and effect. This brings us to a very important point. When speaking of the perceiver and the perceived or the subject and the object, I stated that both terms are complementary. Speaking from a higher level, when considering the nature of the I-thought, I showed that at the time of an object's being perceived, there is no notion of the perceiver: when the thought of the perceiver comes in, the object of perception has vanished from our mind. In other words, the perceiver and the perceived, or the subject and the object, never exist together. If there is an object and no perceiver, it is wrong to call it an object of perception. If there is the perceiver but nothing perceived, the word perceiver is not applicable. The idea of a perceiver and an object of perception is conceived only when the mind claims the action afterwards in the name of I-myself. It is, as we have seen, just a thought or rather a collection of several thoughts, including those of the individual, the knower, the known, and the knowledge, and it is most misleading because there is in fact no such thing as a subject or an object. As I have shown, there is the middle term common to both, that of perceiving, doing or enjoying, and this is pure experience connected with something objective; as that something is also nothing other than consciousness, there is pure experience alone. The whole world then becomes transformed into what it really is, namely, absolute consciousness.

Now what I have been saying will help us in our analysis of cause and effect. Cause and effect are like the subject and the object; just as an object is related to a subject, so is an effect the result of a cause. Sometimes we draw directly upon memory to connect cause with effect; at other times, we gratuitously posit a cause. For instance, we see a tree for the first time and think of it as being twelve years old; all our worldly habits of thought support such an idea but reason is quite against it. We have already seen that memory is simply a thought and so it cannot be brought forward as a proof. And in the example of the tree, we are assuming that in spite of changes which in any case we have not witnessed, it is the same one that existed twelve years ago. But in fact, the notion of "twelve-years-old" is a single, present thought we have now. In all these talks, I have taken change for granted in order to point out from the level where we started that behind all apparent change, there is a changeless principle. I shall conclude this talk by proving that nothing changes and meantime, I have to show that there is no such thing as cause and effect.

When something is said to be the effect of a cause, we may reasonably expect to find two separate entities, the cause and the effect. But two such corresponding entities are never found to exist at once. For example, when we look for a cause, we lose sight of the effect: this is because when whatever it is we afterwards call the cause existed, the effect had not come into being. If we look at something we think of as being an effect, we see that thing only and not the cause: that is because when something has taken effect, the cause has ceased to exist. To take the old example of a large tree growing out of a small seed, the seed contains within it, we say, the germ or the cause not only of one tree but of endless generations of trees. But suppose the seed had failed to germinate, or had fallen on a rock, or water was lacking or in excess during that time, or that a bird had eaten the seed. Can the seed alone have been the cause, even though it did in fact send out shoots and become in time a fully grown tree? No particular effect can possibly have been observed in the seed, it might as well have become something else, for instance, food for a bird or a medicine, according to its kind. If the gradual change in the seed from the time of its falling off the tree until it began to send out shoots were brought forward as an argument to show the signs of effect in the seed, I would answer that in each stage of its development the seed is no longer the same as what it was before: something entirely new is seen each time and not the original thing as it was with an effect added. If we look at the fully grown tree, however much we may look for the original seed, we shall never find it, just as the milk and the churning are lost irrevocably when the butter has formed. In other words, the cause passes over into the effect and in the absence of cause, where is effect? And without effect, where is cause? Now this is not a playing with words as a superficial person would be tempted to think, on the contrary, it gives words their proper meaning. When the world as such is taken for granted, there is certainly cause and effect, but we are taking nothing for granted, not even the current usage of words. We have been able to understand that a thing exists when and because we perceive it and not otherwise. The ideas of cause and effect, like and dislike and the claiming I-thought are all dependent upon memory and memory alone. But we know that memory has no real existence; it is a thought, and if memory is the basis of cause and effect, cause and effect are meaningless words. Thus subject and object, cause and effect, and all other like conceptions are themselves a play upon words: they fall to pieces on examination.

As for change, we think of it also in virtue of memory. We lend permanency to fleeting perceptions because instead of seeing the permanency where it really is, that is, in ourselves, we attribute it to things outside ourselves. If a thing changes, it becomes something new and there is nothing left by which we can connect it with a previous thing, unless it is memory. The identity of a measure of milk cannot be the same as that of the lump of butter we say it

becomes. How therefore can the milk be said to have changed into butter? We have seen that effect is never seen in cause nor cause in effect. The world is at every new perception a new world. As I said in the second of these talks, the universe rises and subsides in consciousness. It has no existence apart from ourselves. There is no change, no cause and no effect, no perceiver and no perceived, no comparison between this and that, no ignorance or limitation and therefore no knowledge or freedom; all contraries meet in what we have come to see as the only reality, in consciousness, in the self.

6. FREEDOM

The ideas of knower and known, cause and effect, comparison of this with that, and change are all dependent upon one thing and one thing alone, and that is memory. In the last talk, I showed that memory has no substance: it is a simple thought like any other, and even though it contains the idea of past time, thought of past is always now. Projecting the principle of memory into the future, it becomes a hope or a plan and there also we saw that thought of future is now. We saw that when memory is known as thought, the idea of time at once goes: time is known by the succession of thoughts and this is based upon memory. Since memory is a thought and nothing more, there is no proof that other thoughts exist, because we can only have one thought at a time. Other thoughts exist when we think of them; we think of them always now. That means that if there is thought at all, there can be one only, and that is certainly no ordinary thought. What really exists is consciousness and in this particular context of time and memory, I described it as the present eternity. of course the truth can never be described: but it can be pointed to by indications and that is what I have been doing in all these talks.

Now I have just made reference to the present eternity. When I was speaking of change at the end of my previous talk, I proved that at every perception, there is a new world. It is created when we think of it and it is destroyed when thought is absent. The universe rises and subsides in consciousness which is our real self. We must never forget that our body and mind are also a part of the universe and that it is through this part that we know it. Although I say they are parts of it, our bodies and minds are themselves the universe, because by the mind's going out through the physical and subtle organs of sense, the universe is born. In every perception, there is the perceiving, a moment of pure consciousness or experience, and therefore the world cannot be separated from consciousness without which it has no existence whatsoever. To speak of a moment of consciousness may give rise to the wrong impression that apart from that moment, consciousness lapses. I use the word moment not in reference to time but to convey the idea that awareness is the kernel of every experience. There is no experience, whether in the form of a thought, feeling, or perception, or without form as in deep sleep or between two thoughts, that is not of the nature of consciousness. And here I have to dispel a conception that I have not yet questioned; it no longer serves any purpose and even stands as an obstacle to our further progress. It is the idea that there is difference between a state in which thoughts occur and one in which consciousness shines alone, to use the expression which has now run its course. It is from the mind level that we talk of thoughts or their absence. We have seen that consciousness is always present; it is beyond name and form and thus from its own level, it alone exists. I add that it is beyond states or levels which belong to the mind. I spoke of it as the one of the many: it would have been truer to speak of the many of the one, to give the right order. Ultimately there is neither one nor many. Whatever we say about it is only a pointer and nothing more, but if by this attempt a chord within us is struck, its purpose is fulfilled.

However extraordinary it may sound, I cannot refrain from interrupting this talk to speak of happiness because any talk of the absolute has the immediate effect of giving one a taste of absolute bliss which is one with consciousness. As we have seen, when the mind is focused upon any thing, it becomes that thing. If we look at a table or think of a flower, the mind then becomes the table or the flower. When it is directed towards consciousness, its source, it merges in consciousness and that is the same as happiness or love. A deep understanding of the truth is accompanied always by this feeling of happiness that rises with it. Let this feeling be the measure of our understanding. If the understanding is complete, so is our felicity.

When we know someone well, we cannot help loving him. It is impossible to know someone well unless the knowers personality is kept aside. When our personality, or in other words, our mind, is not in the way, we are beyond the mind; we are at one with our self. This is absolute existence, consciousness and love or happiness: no wonder that we feel love then. There is this also, that mind through bodies knows bodies, mind in itself knows mind, and the self, beyond body and mind, is at one with the self, as we have just seen. We can now talk of loving our neighbour as our self. Our neighbour is not our neighbour when we perceive him. When we afterwards think of him as being our neighbour, that thought is also an experience in the self. And even hatred is only pure love, conditioned by the forethought or the afterthought of something that concerns bodies or minds. This again shows the consequence of blindly accepting memory. When memory is known for what it is, we can only love. And that is not love for someone, that is to say, for some object of perception, since there is no such thing: it is self-love. I am not advocating some insipid sentimental path; sentiment is love tied up in memory, I am simply showing where the reality lies; if we seek the real and see through the illusory, we establish ourselves in peace, regardless of seeming appearances.

I said just now that mind through bodies knows bodies and mind in itself knows mind. In all these talks, the body and mind have been treated as quite distinct in order to show how the reality runs through our everyday experience. It was because of this that in proving the real nature of the principle we refer to as I-myself, the sense-organs were taken as belonging to the body. I stated that the body as such is inert. But since the organs of sense function always as the instruments of consciousness, they cannot properly be called inert, although they are also of flesh. And in examining the mind, it was seen that it functions always in terms of the senses which in the mind appear as the subtle sense-organs. Once, however, it is understood that the mind can never stand apart from the body, inasmuch as the sense-perceptions, even when subtle, refer in every case to something material, the difference, if any, between body and mind, or the gross and the subtle, is no more than one of degree, and then only when the emphasis is on the body. It is in terms of the body that we speak of an outer world while the world of thought appears as an inner one. What is it from the standpoint of the mind? Obviously, for the mind there is neither an inner nor an outer world but only thought. We have already seen that the world exists only when we think of it. It follows that the body and the so-called material universe are simply thoughts, without any question of degree. In every thought of the world, the sense-organs are implicit. For example, if we think of someone, we see him with what we call the mind's eye. If we think of a tune, the sense of hearing comes in. And even abstract thoughts have an object so that there also, the senses are implied. But no thought is possible without the presence of consciousness. Thus on the one hand, there is consciousness, and on the other there are the organs of sense, standing for body and mind. Now a sensation is a conscious perception, and as it is on account of the different kinds of sensation that we posit the different organs of sense, we need consider sensations only and they too are of the nature of consciousness from which they are inseparable. All is therefore that consciousness.

Why there is consciousness alone and why consciousness alone is real can now be proved in a more direct manner than has been possible hitherto. If we wish to know something, that something assumes for the time being the quality appropriate to the sense-organ through which it is apprehended, that is to say, if we direct our attention to it through the eyes, it is known as a form and if we do so through the ears, it is known as a sound. Though a form or a sound is perceived, the thing in itself is unknown. In the absence of sight or hearing, there is no form or sound, but something is there nevertheless. If we give it a name, that too is not the thing as it really is; to name a thing is simply to associate it with other things about which I we are no wiser. What is called knowing a thing consists in giving it name and form, but neither of these is the thing itself. But still, something is there. What is it? Something that exists without name and form, what can it be but existence itself? And does not existence always shine? By this, what I mean is that in some way or another, existence makes itself known, and that means it is one with consciousness. In relation to life, it is called absolute existence in relation to thought, pure consciousness, and in relation to feeling, pure love or happiness. But beyond the mind there are no distinctions, these three are one. Therefore things, whether perceived or felt, as they really are and we ourselves as we are really, are one and the same. We think we know this or that object by such and such a quality when in fact we cannot know anything at all with the senses, because it is to these, and not to the so-called objects, that the so-called qualities belong. This then is the truth about it, that all is one consciousness, one reality.

Let us return now to the question of there being something or nothing which arises from the consideration of thoughts and their absence. There is in truth neither something nor nothing! Something is present, nothing is absent. Now I have proved that awareness is ever-present; when something is spoken of as being present, reference is made to the possibility of absence. It is our experience that consciousness, the changeless principle we refer to as "I", is never absent and so such a suggestion has no place here. And whatever is thought of as present refers really to the presence of consciousness. There is, therefore neither something nor nothing. Many of the terms used to denote the ultimate reality are either negative in form or one of a pair of opposites. This is evidently because any positive word refers to something within the grasp of the mind, so we call it absolute existence, knowledge or bliss, transcendental, non-dual or changeless to show that it is beyond the mind. It may help us to speak of absolute existence, though that suggests the possibility of there being a relative existence, a false suggestion. If we call it absolute consciousness, it assumes that there is a limited one, a wrong assumption. If we call it absolute happiness or love, it presumes there may be impure happiness or love, a gross presumption. By calling it self-luminous, it may also help us, because granting the existence of relative things, these require the light of consciousness to illuminate them, whereas awareness is self-illuminating. This is why we speak of absolute existence; unlike individual life, which we think of as needing a higher principle to quicken it, pure being is self-subsisting and so also are absolute consciousness and bliss. But by constantly directing the mind to what lies beyond it on the basis of everyday experience as pointed out by one who knows it, the mind subsides not in the ignorance of sleep but in the light of reality.

I spoke right at the beginning of the waking, dream and deep-sleep states in order to prove the existence of a changeless background of consciousness, the principle we refer to as "I" when talking of ourselves. Speaking of dreams, I observe that there is no proof that we are not dreaming even now. In the dream state, what we experience never appears to us as a dream: on the contrary, it is as concrete as what we now experience in the waking state. It is only when we wake that we think of it as having been a dream. We also think of it as unreal.

Let us compare the two states and see whether any difference can be found. In both states, we ourselves appear as the doer, perceiver and enjoyer; in both states, there are the actions done, the things perceived and enjoyed or suffered, the people we meet and the use of reason. They are both exactly the same. In a dream, as I have said, our experiences there seem no less concrete than those we have when we are awake. A distinction is made nevertheless, by our calling a dream unreal when it is remembered on waking. We know already what memory is, and we know that the dream rises in our mind as a simple thought; we have it in the present, but that is not the argument I am now using. The point I am making is that if a dream is unreal as it undoubtedly is when viewed from the waking state, is not the waking state also quite unreal, since when both states are looked at without prejudice, there is no means of differentiating them? No proof can be given to establish the reality of the waking state when none exists to prove that of the dream state. It might be argued that we do all (the same) experience the world of the waking state as real, and that being so, the dream state must also be real, since both are equal. There is no doubt that this would be in order if the reality of our waking experiences could be established. But we have seen over and over again that it cannot, because our perceptions in themselves are non-existent while consciousness alone is existent. So it matters not whether we think of this or that relative thing or state as real or unreal since the thought itself is illogical. Accepting however for the moment the distinction between real and unreal, we are bound to admit that since the waking state which is based upon body consciousness has no existence apart from pure consciousness, it is in itself quite unreal. If it is unreal, it can have no more existence than the dream state. We saw a short while ago that the ultimate reality is beyond all states and this proves it; we know it to be always present, even in the two non-existent states we have just disposed of. We have only to follow the unconditioned for the so-called conditioned to vanish together with the necessity of positing its opposite, the unconditioned reality, and all our problems are solved.

We hear much talk nowadays about freedom. But what freedom is there so long as we think we are limited by time and space or mind and body? Freedom lies within us, it is always there for the seeking, but we take everything for granted and so continue in bondage. We are bound to life and death because we believe in them. Believing we were born, we are sure to die, but birth and death are both changes. I have already proved that there is no such thing as a change. We have fresh perceptions and, bringing down the idea of the changeless to the level where perceptions may be said to occur, we attribute a common identity to quite different objects of perception and say that one thing has changed, but this is not possible. There is therefore no such thing as birth and death: both are changes. He is immortal who knows he was never born. He is happy who knows no ignorance. He is wise who is always at peace. To be at peace is not to oppose ignorance: that is ignorant. Peace is attained when it is known as one's self.

THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION

This essay on the Universal Religion is appended to these talks because, although written independently, it sums up the whole matter in a few lines besides making clear the position of the essential Hindu religion in its relation to others. It seems to me, therefore, that it makes a fitting conclusion.

This is about Hinduism, the universal religion. There are people who count the number of adherents to all religions and then make comparisons. There are others who see which religion has its followers amongst the greatest number of the nations and draw conclusions. But I would ask you to consider which religion embraces the widest variety of human types. The larger the number of human types, the larger the number of ways, ways to the goal of religion, and the more universal that religion.

For every individual, the goal is different, not in itself, but as it appears when seen from without. While some consciously seek it, others are indifferent. To the first category, direct guidance must be available to help them in their search by bringing the truth nearer and nearer until it is realized as one's self. To the second, means must be given to keep them within certain safe limits and the possibility always left open for a direct approach to the truth. This is at a social rather than at a purely spiritual level; by drawing attention to family duties and social obligations, the egoism of the individual is slowly reduced until room is made for some light from above to enter, and he will then begin to seek it consciously.

Allowance must be made for the differences in nature between one man and another; the causes of these must also be considered. These causes come down from previous lives and this explains the more or less advanced state of human development in each man and his various tendencies. These tendencies have to be worked out and because at present what is known as the Hindu religion exists only in one place on birth, people may be born in other places as members of other religions in circumstances other than those to be found in India.

When looked at from this aspect, it is clear that there is only one religion whatever name it gets. It is noticeable throughout the world that the higher a man rises spiritually, the more he approaches the corresponding degree in the basic religion, basic because it is at once the most ancient, the most constant and the most generally expressive of all, but chiefly because it is the highest.

If a man goes quite beyond limitation, he goes beyond degrees and therefore beyond religion itself. The Hindu conceptions of doctrine and practice alone can take him there. How is that? Is it not because it is always understood that religion is not an end but a means? Other religions cling to their practice or else to their ideas, but the two never seem to rise together as one, accompanying the seeker until they serve no more purpose. They are often in conflict. How so? Because other religions depend in part or wholly upon the teachings of a master given centuries ago to suit people of some other time and place whereas this religion has an unbroken line of masters, each perfect, who can express the truth and prescribe practices to suit each single individual according to his need. The past is always respected and always followed, but not so as to cover up the present. The truth is known to be ever-present and therefore the Hindu religion is evergreen. It might be objected that in no other religion is there so much that is base and obsolete. If it is so, I would not object: it embraces every possibility. But there is no other religion that is so elevated. The essential Hindu religion is known as Vedanta (Advaita) or the end of knowledge. All the rest is at most a preparation; it cannot be compared with other religions however since it has Vedanta in its midst as its flower. It may be said to be nearer the centre no matter at what level it is viewed, on the

analogy of a spiral staircase whose inner rise is nearer to the axis than its outer one. It is in the nature of things that in the land where it is found, the whole range of human development from the lowest to the very highest should be seen. The aim is to go beyond all that is relative and when all is truly seen as relative, and one's own personality is known to be a part of that relativity, the absolute is attained.

That is why the essential Hinduism centres around the real self in man, that which is changeless, and is not based on the relationship between man and God. The reality in man is what he refers to as I-myself and the thing which prevents his knowing it as such is the habit of identifying it with the body and the mind. To sever this false association is all that is needed for him to attain the perfection he always was. What other religion offers so simple and so self-evident a path as this? Anyone, at any time and at any place can understand it, no matter what temperament he may possess. It cuts through all suffocating ritual and the dusty books and traditions of ordinary religion; it breathes fresh air. The only requisite is earnestness and sincerity. In the true Hindu, sincerity is the true orthodoxy. Thus all sincere souls are Hindus, whatever they are called and wherever they may be. That is why I call Hinduism the universal religion. Or perhaps it would be better to call the universal religion Vedanta, since it is not limited to any place, as the word Hindu suggests.

October, 1946.

DEDICATION

The universal Religion went into recess when Govinda Guru thrust out of his cave a single foot to be clasped by Sri Shankara and then withdrew it. From that time onward, renunciation of an unexplained world became the vogue, even though the other foot came out for a moment in the form of Vidyaranya. Now, with both feet firmly planted in a world of selfless action, it has come out into the open after a long and refreshing retreat. The owner of those two blessed limbs is the great Teacher Sri Atmananda whose outer name of Krishna gives the clue. There is no more need to put on ochre garments and to sit within a ring of fearful fire. White is now the colour and in it every shade is there. Let ropes be taken for snakes or snakes for ropes! Who cares who knows that whatever it is, the thing in itself is one's self! So the world is explained in a wonderful way, not pushed away, but allowed to stay as oneself, and that with no evasion. What is the self but the core of existence, the light in thought and the love in emotion, the one of the many, the many of the one, and I am the key to the puzzle. It is I who exist in and I who perceive and it is I who enjoy or complain of the things that are known by me or else they are absent: I am the life of their being. With this as one's sword, the world as it comes may be faced with courage, and thanks be paid to my glorious Teacher Sri Atmananda Guru, beneath whose feet I place this work.

The End of Knowledge

THE TEACHER AND THE TRUTH

I sought the truth and found my Lord and he showed me
my self. Seeing his form, hearing his words and
feeling his touch, I found my self. (August 44)

A man who is identified with body and mind naturally looks for the truth without. What he sees will be in keeping with his own state and will therefore appear to him as the universal being endowed with the cosmic body and mind: he calls him God. Against his own small body and mind which are nevertheless a minute part of the whole, he feels that God is unlimited by space and time and so infinite and eternal, almighty, all-knowing and free. Aware of being a part, he is also aware of the whole into which he can merge if he lose the sense of separateness, but his mind and body as such cannot expand into the whole, so he must find another way. This is where the Teacher comes in. The Teacher, though seen at first with body and mind, has no body and mind. He knows. He makes the seeker see the changeless within him, that which remains constant while body and mind are changing. Can this be different from the changeless identity of the universal being? And what has either to do with smallness or greatness? When the disciple grasps this, he sets aside the body and mind along with the universe and finds that the truth he sought is none other than his self.

It is not, however, solely by reason that the truth is known; reason only clears the way. The goal is attained through love:

I've thought and I've thought, but what I now want
is only to be with my Lord for ever and ever.
To seek the sought, you think away the rest
and then you find a love that nothing can sever. (September 45)

But to love the impersonal is not easy for one who thinks himself to be a person. That is why the Teacher is loved as the embodiment of truth:

I found my Lord and lost my body in the beauty of his form.
But who saw beauty? I found my form in the beauty of his body. (August 44)

The disciple has thus an approach to the impersonal and finds his own love returned a thousandfold. It is this unlimited love that takes him beyond all limitation:

Not by wisdom alone was I shown the truth
but by endless love, for such is my Teacher,
Sri Atmananda. (December 44)

7.6.46

Note: In every case where the word "Lord" appears in this book, it refers to the spiritual teacher, who is also the ultimate truth.

The End of Knowledge

None of the verses contained in this work were written in connection with it. They were written at different times between 1943 and 1946 and it was only afterwards that I thought of writing a commentary in the present form. This being the case, many of the verses can be interpreted in other ways and at other levels than has been done here. *April, 1947*

FREEDOM

If all would seek the truth,
all the world were free.
Love of things that change
precludes equality. (December 44)

I have shown under the heading “The Teacher and The Truth” that the only stable element in man is his self. All the rest is changing. Whilst there is change, there is no certainty; without certainty, there is doubt and in doubt misery. So a man who identifies himself with a body and a mind can never feel free: are not both changing? Association with body and mind leads to comparison with other bodies and minds and this again breeds sorrow, either through the loneliness of pride or the scorch of jealousy. Equality is to be found where it alone exists, that is to say beyond greatness or smallness:

When freedom is best, why do you trammel
yourself with the toils and the tears and the trouble
of body and mind whilst you're at rest? (September 45)

9.6.46

HAPPINESS

Man is all a'raving when he's craving for something.
Lust fulfilled, mind is stilled, he's happy, he sought nothing. (September 44)

In desire, the mind's afire,
so it's peace that you seek.
When mind is still, there's no will
to seek, no sought, make no mistake. (September 44)

Desire is always for desirelessness, even though it be associated with an object. Mind is always troubled until it comes to rest upon whatever is desired and then only is happiness felt. Hence it's the activity of the mind and not the lack of something which causes sorrow. Another proof: in deep sleep when mind is absent, there is peace. Peace and happiness are other names of the changeless but this is not known so long as they are thought of as being the effect of some cause whereas:

Peace, when all else is absent,
shines forth the ever-present. (December 44)

9.6.46

The End of Knowledge

PLEASURE AND PAIN

I've come out best; for my toils and my sorrows
belong to the mind which knows no rest;
and knowing this, I've come out best. (September 45)

I showed in the preceding article on "Happiness" that desire is always for peace, this peace being the changeless in man. It is his real self. He seeks it sometimes in the name of enjoyment and sometimes to escape from misery. But while it is sought through objects, true peace can never be found: it will be limited by the objects.

Why do you think of that when this
is ever consciousness and bliss? (September 44)

Now enjoyment of objects is had through the senses; like and dislike, joy, sorrow and unrest belong to the mind and the real in man is beyond them all. His knowing it prevents their troubling him, either by desire or distress. He knows what they are, and now they have a new meaning:

Carefully note the carefree within you,
through longing for that, your cares will abate: (November 44)

this is when he looks to his self in relation to his desires. And:

All my faculties seeking happiness
bow before me who am ever that; (December 45)

this is when he looks to his desires in relation to his self.

15.2.47

ONE CONSCIOUSNESS

I am the one
and the two or the three
are also of me:
I stand alone. (August 44)

Though many things are perceived, there is only one perceiver; otherwise, many things could not be known. Conversely, one thing may be known in several ways: if it be gross, through the five senses; if subtle, through thoughts and feelings:

An object is seen by any of the senses,
the knowing is one and the senses are many;
but senses are always one in their sensing,
so all is that knowing and one is that many. (October 44)

The End of Knowledge

So it seems from the mind-level, where the pair of seer and seen still obtains. But thoughts and feelings can also be remembered, so they must also be perceived by one higher. This stands to reason and helps one to rise above the mind, yet it is not quite exact, firstly because what is beyond limitation knows none:

Sift out the seen from the seer
and you alone remain in your glory,
and one in the knowing, at one with yourself remain. (October 44)

And secondly because when actually seeing something, that thing alone is present to consciousness, just as when one becomes aware of seeing it, the seer is alone present, whilst the seeing is common to both:

Only one seen, and I the seer;
only one seer, and that is myself;
one seer or seen, not both together:
I alone am, and nothing else. (September 44)

When you saw that thing, you were no seer;
when you were the seer, there was nothing seen.
You are ever consciousness, standing higher
than the seer and the seen; thus remain. (September 44)

Thus there is always the one consciousness whether it appears with form or not. That is the real meaning of the topmost verse.

15.6.46

BODY, MIND, AND BEYOND

The body is claimed by fools
and known by the wise.
For what is the sense
in claiming a thing that dies? (January 45)

Prone as it is to die,
why do you cling to the body
and feel unhappy? (April 45)

Because he thinks he is one with a body, man suffers self-imposed limitation, commits crime and dies, only to be reborn in another body with all its pleasures and pains and the perplexities that accompany so sad a possession. Yet the very fact that he thinks he possesses one is itself a proof that he is not the body:

This is my body and this is my book;
if I'm not book, then I'm not body:
I live alone in an unknown glory. (March 45)

The End of Knowledge

And the same argument shows he is not the mind:

He has a body, no doubt for him who has doubts;
but he who has thought, he knows that he has none;
and he who has none, he hasn't even thoughts. (May 45)

He has no thoughts when he dissolves this false ownership because the mind, even when not going outward through the sense-organs, is always thinking in terms of them, in other words, is concerned with the known or the would-be known, that is, with something else. Things are other in relation to this one and when this body has gone, so has all the rest. There is nothing then to be known and so the mind as such ceases to exist; what remains is that consciousness in which the idea of body and mind comes up. But as a matter of fact, there is no such thing as mind; mind is only one collective thought amongst others:

Know in your heart what your mind cannot see:
think of your mind as a thought and be free. (October 44)

The question might now be asked: "If there are thoughts, does it not prove the existence of a mind, since thoughts are its product?" The answer is that other thoughts are said to exist when they are remembered; there is no other proof. But remembrance of thoughts is also a thought, so if there be thought, there can be one only, and that is no thought:

When memory is known as thought,
time has gone and all is one, (November 44)

that is to say, one consciousness.

23.6.46

LIFE, THOUGHTS, AND FEELINGS

Cursed by the thought of limitation,
I was born, yoked to time and space,
Now unborn, freed by my Master's grace,
I live alone, beyond compassion. (August 44)

I showed under the first heading why a man who is identified with a body and mind seeks the truth without and how the discovery of his real identity enables him to find it within. Other ways lead to the same result. The accent there was on body and mind and their changeless background, but from another angle, man is seen to be made up of life, thoughts, and feelings.

Not on your life is your being set,
your life is set on your being, and yet
it's not, for when the truth is met,
your life in being you forget. (April 45)

The End of Knowledge

Life is bound up with the body. When death comes, does existence itself suffer any loss? Evidently not. And that a man is willing to die for some ideal which is dearer to him than his life proves that his real self can also lose nothing. Absolute existence and a man's real self are therefore one and the same. Instead of identifying his being with a body and a mind, he has identified it with an ideal. If he makes the absolute his ideal or if he gives up all association, he finds himself to be what he always was, without beginning or end.

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I spy with my small eye
the sun and the moon and the stars in the sky,
and the seer who sees the mind that holds
the sun and the moon and the stars is I. (July 44)

The sense-organs work only when the mind is in them: consciousness must be present in thought. Or it is thought which appears in consciousness. However it is viewed, thought depends upon consciousness, though the latter continues even when thought is absent as it is in sleep, else it were not possible to perceive this absence. This absence refers to what was present before. But how can something no longer present to one's consciousness be known? It cannot: what is and always was present is self-awareness:

I'm seeing my seeing, I'm hearing my hearing;
O Lord, I'm drunk with love for myself,
for I'm not seeing and I'm not hearing
but I am I, and nothing else. (February 44)

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You have seen that a man will go right up to death for the sake of a cause he loves more than his life: but what he loves more than his life can really be only his self. In terms of the body, this self-love appears as a tickling of senses, in terms of the mind such feelings as loyalty, friendship, desire and hatred, while in its own terms it shines as perfect peace:

Seeking but a body's zest,
the mind enquiring comes to rest
upon a thing desired, and then
the joy is mine and I am blest. (January 45)

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Now three things, life, thought, and feeling, have been taken each as separate components of man as such. But I have shown that they are nothing other than existence, consciousness and love, happiness or peace, all beyond limitation: these terms are limitations, but the careful reader will not stop at their literal meaning. Being beyond limitation, there is nothing by which one may be distinguished from another; they are one:

Ignorance is bliss when heart and mind are blended
in deep knowing and doubts are gone and sorrow's ended. (October 44)

And even when they do appear as distinct, yet they are inseparable. Can happiness go with ignorance or wisdom with hate?

The End of Knowledge

My heart is attuned to the tone of the one and the right
and my mind has attained its source in a sound delight:
love is my name and love my Lord is my might.¹

(October 44)

27.6.46

TEACHER AND DISCIPLE

Your Lord in love shows himself as
way and then as end and then
at last himself alone, for he is
that and this and he is neither.

(October 44)

Now from all that has been said, it must be clear that once the aspirant has dissociated himself with the body and the mind, he has attained the impersonal self. To show the disciple that this is his real nature is the function of the teacher as such:

My Lord who is good has given a name
to his servant that goes beyond seeing and calling
and showed me my form to be that of the formless
self, eternal, never palling.

(October 43)

It is because the teacher himself is established there and sees nothing else that he can take the disciple with him. Yet although this is quite true, a grave contradiction in terms stands out. If the teacher is established in the absolute and sees nothing else, how can it be said that he has a function in relation to others? Otherwise put, how can the impersonal have intercourse with a person, with one who identifies himself with a body and a mind? The answer is that the word impersonal is used in contrast with the word personal when in fact the reality itself is neither the one nor the other, just as there is a teacher only so long as someone is being taught:

Without a teacher, nothing taught,
so think of your Lord in all your seeking.

(April 45)

It is in order that the aspirant may rise above his self-imposed limitation that the truth becomes personified as a teacher; it is the disciple then who calls him forth. From the teacher's point of view, there can be no teacher and no disciple for he sees only himself. But here again there is ample contradiction because we are discussing in terms of the relative that which is unique, and the opposite if it be asked how the impersonal came to assume a personality:

¹ The word "Prema" in the author's name means "selfless love".

The End of Knowledge

My Lord is unique.
None is like him,
nor any unlike him:
my Lord is unique. (May 44)

Clearly the state beyond all states is indescribable; but this does not mean that it is something vague: I have already warned the reader not to stop at the words.

The most important thing of all still remains to be said; it concerns the relationship between the disciple and his teacher:

Think first of all of him
who has given you all this good
and shown you the means to the end;
both are he, so thank your Lord. (December 44)

The teacher with his teaching is the means as he is also the end. When that is attained, this relationship ceases together with all others. But take care! When it began, had it not a certain purpose? Was that purpose not that you might merge into your true being? And is this other than he? Could such a relationship have an ending; indeed did it ever begin? Make yourself then a perfect disciple and so attain perfection; that is where all contradictions cease:

No day or night for me who track my Lord, the real and the right,
but only he, the light in thought, the heart's delight. (August 44)

Though every other relation cease
and I know what I am for certain, —yes,
I shall ever remain his slave to do what he please. (April 45)

3.7.46

MAN, GOD, AND THE REALITY

The fool knows no God, nor do I :
I know myself alone: the truth am I. (September 44)

I showed at the beginning that if there is a man, there is a God; that in comparison with finite man, God is infinite; and in the end, the reality is beyond either of these being common to both. Now granting their separate existence for the sake of argument, it is obvious in the light of the preceding article on "Teacher and Disciple" that if God created man, it is man no less who created God. When I think of God, God is my object; if I think of God as thinking of me, the position is the same. And an object without a subject is inconceivable; the opposite is no doubt true, but do I cease to exist merely because there is nothing present to my consciousness?

The End of Knowledge

This my body that steals its life from me
exists when I know it and when I don't is dead. (December 44)

Now God is as much an object of my perception as my body and therefore I alone am.

Moreover, if God is infinite as most men believe, no separate individuals can exist. That the meaning of the word infinite is not understood by those who use it makes no difference because we know that in its particular meaning, it denotes the absence of limitation by space, and in general, the absence of all limitation and that is how it is used here. If man is an individual and so finite, or if he is thought of as being a part of the whole, then God is not infinite, since nothing can be added to infinity nor has it any parts. Both God and man are therefore finite or else they are both infinite, but there cannot be two infinities. The truth is that man and God are complementaries and cannot as such be infinite whereas the real in man is the same reality as in God.

If God be infinite, what are you?
If you were finite, so were God,
but God is infinite; so are you. (June 45)

7.7.46

ON HEARING THE TRUTH

No wonder when they hear the truth told
men weep with delight and feel that it was always so.
They're surely right, and that's the wonder. (May 45)

Although a keen reader will not find it hard to follow the truth as set out in a book like this, the insight thus gained is not to be taken for more than it is, that is to say, mental. Only when heard from the lips of a sage can the truth be felt and then in a flash the hearer becomes a new being. It has entered his heart and a chord is struck that resounds and resounds through the endless fund of the ages. This feeling he has to make stay with him always to be what he sought:

My Lord with his love put a seed in my heart
and my mind has been ploughed with his words. Now I am
reaping the harvest and soon I shall taste the bread. (March 45)

10.7.46

THE ATTAINMENT OF THE TRUTH

Make up your mind with the words
of your Lord to reach the goal
and then go ahead with your heart. (December 44)

The End of Knowledge

It is not often that after hearing the truth from his master for the first time an aspirant has nothing more to do. He has, even though he is now a new being. He sees that the body and mind are not himself but the habit of thinking and acting as if they were remains:

My nature is not of time and space
but that false thought was my habit until
I changed it and thought of my body and mind
as other, and I beyond it. (September 44)

The ego, ready to pounce upon every thought and perception, act, and enjoyment, and come out then with “I am the seer” or “I am the doer” or “I am the enjoyer”, this ego is the cause of his present and past lives and will not disappear until he has known it for what it is, namely, a thought amongst others:

Without a thinker, what is thought?
Without a thought, who are you?
And when that you is also not,
know that you are simply that. (March 45)

To get rid of this thought, it is necessary for the seeker only to remember that he is neither the body nor the mind and therefore that their working leaves him unaffected:

I'm a man without body but I'm not sorry;
I've got no mind, but I don't worry.
Without a care, a heedless man;
see my nature if you can! (August 44)

or equally:

Let my body be the body, let my mind go on as mind,
for I'm not man nor God, nor good nor bad, I'm not of any kind. (March 44)

He can also use his thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as a pointer to himself, the consciousness without which they cannot occur. The thought of his being the doer or the enjoyer must also be seen in this light and thus the individual feeling will give way to the feeling of his being awareness itself, that which is never absent whether there are thoughts or not:

The standard of change is the changeless and that am I:
but seeing a change is a change and that is why there's no
change but only its measure, the changeless I. (April 45)

So what matters is the aim and not the method in itself. Consciousness is what emerges, firstly as the background of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, and lastly in its own right, alone. There is nothing else:

Think I'm the best, or think I'm the worst, I'm free!
O what are the thoughts of the world to him who is happy?
Thoughts and worlds are only names for me! (March 45)

The End of Knowledge

And when all is one, all ideas of the real self and the individual, of knowledge and ignorance, happiness and sorrow or the means and the end, lose their meaning:

The universe is self-contained in me who am that.
But what is universe or self for that which is that? (August 44)

13.7.46

TIME AND SPACE

Time is expunged if you think and you feel that all the past
belongs to the body and mind and not to me who am that. (May 45)

A man has his connection with time and space through his mind and his body: if he separates himself from these, he has also surpassed those. It is a good method, but by itself it doesn't explain what are time and space:

Space was sized by its stages and that took time
whose measure was a change in thought,
and the standard of that is the changeless,
I myself, unseen and same. (May 45)

To recognize space, mind is needed, one thought for each stage and one for the interval between them; thus it takes at least three thoughts and that takes time. Thoughts occur in time and time is measured by thought, so that space always gets reduced into time while time is inseparable from the succession of thoughts by which it is known. How is it known? By memory, and what is that? Memory is a thought, as I have already shown under the heading "Body, Mind, and Beyond", and whether it is to past or to future that it refers, the thought is always now:

Age not when young you've never been
who think of time now: be evergreen! (August 44)

This shows that there is no such thing as future or past and he who thinks of them is clearly beyond time, even though he is unaware of the fact:

Thought of past is ever now and so of future.
Seeing thus, I see not time, but see my nature. (August 44)

Now if there is no past or future, there can be no memory or expectation; there is also no present time. I have already shown that memory is a mere thought. Even allowing that memory and with it, past, present, and future time exist, the question arises as to what happens to time and space after each thought and perception in which they appear:

Remembrance that things were done proves
that time and space have vanished into one, (November 44)

The End of Knowledge

that is, they have vanished with thought into consciousness; otherwise, what has happened could not come up again as a thought. But the truth is that there is no such thing as memory: if there were, then it would have appeared along with the thoughts it is said to record; since it is in itself a 'thought, that is not possible for there is never more than one thought at a time. And without memory, there is no proof that other thoughts exist. Whatever there is is now:

There never was past but it was now;
that now, I say, was always present
in me who am never absent.
How could I know? Well, I know it now! (July 45)

So that although remembrance when accepted as such confines him who accepts it to time and space, it helps to free him who knows what it is, because whenever it appears, he is reminded that the world in all its variety, together with time and space of which it is composed, is his own creation just then:

This one cancels another that never was there;
and that one cancels this that never was here.
Memory, once a burden, is now my cheer. (October 44)

But time and space are really nothing but consciousness; so therefore is the world:

No doubt that all is one when all I see
is neither this nor that but always me. (June 45)

15.9.46

DIVESTMENT

Look at the world along with your eyes
and thoughts along with your brain;
then you will never have worries
and never feel grief again. (May 45)

The gist of all the preceding articles is this, that a man is not the body and mind he believes himself to be and is, in his real nature, being, consciousness, and bliss. In order to realize his true self, he must become centred there and this is achieved by his separating himself from the body idea. He can do this by disclaiming all actions, perceptions and the pleasure or pain which concern the body and mind and not himself. The outer world, of which the body is a part, is known through the physical organs of sense and the impressions thus gained are apprehended by the mind. In every such percept, there is the perceiving which stands apart both from the object perceived and the perceiver and is in reality nothing but consciousness which is one's self. This can be experienced when the perceiver is seen to be no less an object of perception than the thing perceived. When this is material, so is the immediate perceiver; when it is subtle, so is the thinker;

The End of Knowledge

The things that I touch are one with my fingers,
my fingers are one with the things they feel
and so all the senses. That which lingers
before and beyond is my self, the real. (July 46)

But it has been proved that the material world together with the body is inseparable from the mind. Thoughts are always concerned with the outer world through the instrumentality of the body, so that if the relationship of one's self with the body be severed, thoughts no longer have a field of action and they return into their source which is awareness:

See the world along with your body
and thoughts will cease;
for thoughts when separate from body
find their source. (July 45)

Now just as the physical senses see physical objects and the subtle ones see subtle objects or thoughts, so does the self see only the self:

Some bodies did speak with a body
but not to me who am that.
Though others see body, there isn't
a body for him who is that. (May 45)

The statement that the self sees the self is based on the analogy of what the mind sees. But the self can never be an object of perception, being the consciousness which is the light in every thought or perception:

My nature is bliss:
possessing all,
I'm one with myself,
and all is this, (February 44)

that is to say, the self which in relation to man is being, consciousness and happiness or love, and which is self-subsisting, self-knowing and ever delighting in itself.

19.9.46

REVELATION THROUGH THE TEACHER

That selfless soul who teaches out of love
is neither sage nor saint but something yet above.

Because a man not only thinks but feels, his heart as well as his head must be satisfied in his approach to the truth. His teacher gives him food for both and manifests at times the qualities of a sage and at others those of a saint. The two may also come up as one. Other high and extraordinary states may also be shown. And often he may appear as an ordinary man: that is

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to ordinary men. But to the true disciple, all such states are equally revealing when he has understood that the teacher is beyond all states. I said in the beginning that the teacher is loved as the embodiment of the truth:

Your Lord has left his body for you to see:
look with awful love at the form of the free. (November 44)

This perfect freedom is clearly discernible to the knowing eye because no trace of egoism is present in all that is seen: the sense of individuality has given way to consciousness of, or rather in, the self, for there is nothing beside it. Thus the teacher's body and mind are there only for those who think they themselves are with bodies and minds or for those who while knowing they are with neither, have not yet established themselves in that verity. To these, such a revelation is of the highest help: head and heart join together as one and then:

Giving up all you've known to that unowned body,
travel forth untrammelled by time and space. (December 44)

It is in these and other ways that the teacher reveals the truth to the earnest seeker. Although such revelation may seem to take the form of speech and action, that which is actually revealed is beyond all forms:

The disappearance of appearance
is the revelation of the hidden.

The hidden is revealed when its revelation
gets forgotten for the hidden. (November 44)

9.3.47

REINCARNATION

Self is abstract, the most concrete;
world though concrete is most abstract:
analysed, it vanishes
and self alone remains as it is
constant, consciousness and complete. (August 44)

A man who takes to the path of spiritual knowledge does so because he cannot accept the world as it appears. He is never quite satisfied and so he is never at peace. To find peace, he must look to that in which there is no change. A man on seeing the world sees change only: he concludes, if he is sincere, that his only course is to thrust it away as incompatible because he has no means of explaining it. This is what is commonly called renunciation. This renunciation is the act of one who closes his eyes and says he cannot see; but the world will still appear before his mind's eye and so he must close that also. When the mind has stopped once and for all, the bodily functions cease and in this way, he consciously returns to his

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source. But by following such a path, that is, by absorbing into consciousness all thoughts and feelings as they arise without analysing them, he cannot fully realize the truth until his body is seen to die. This itself is dependent upon his having heard the truth from a realized teacher. The more he advances along this path, the more he will appear to those who see him to be like an idiot, with the only difference that he is in fact no idiot since he is consciously striving to attain the noblest of ends.

He knows much or little who thinks there is something at all:
he who knows there is nothing is something like a fool. (September 44)

It is the belief that in the absence of something, there is nothing, when what is really present is consciousness, which prevents realization. But in this verse, the word “nothing” also refers to the idea that there is nothing but consciousness and therefore, all else, that is to say, all that so-called nothing, the whole of appearance, is rejected without enquiring whether consciousness is not there also. Such an approach is quite unnecessary except for him whose mind is incapable of clear and logical thought and yet whose straightforward earnestness is such as to lead him to the reality.

All paths to the reality are by way of renunciation. The renunciation spoken of in this book is not that of an unexplained world: it is the renunciation of the ego, of that mere thought which rises up to claim for I-myself the deeds of the body and mind. The consciousness of being an individual must entirely vanish in order that the consciousness of being the real self may take its place. It is not easy to renounce, that is to say, to die:

Strive hard, strive hard, strive hard;
for the ego that dies is of terrible size:
strive hard, strive hard, strive hard! (November 45)

This death of the individual is brought about by disclaiming all that is other than one’s self. That other on analysis is found to be inseparable from consciousness; in fact, it is consciousness. Self-consciousness then becomes pure consciousness:

See bodies as body,
and thoughts as mind,
and then be alone with yourself; (January 45)

that is the first stage.

Not bodies as such
nor minds as mind,
but only yourself, yourself,

and this is the final stage.

It might be asked, when all individual consciousness is to be destroyed, what difference there is between this and the case of a man who exterminates his mind. The difference is that where extermination of the mind is sought, its unexplained working stands, so long as it continues, as a constant bar to realization, whereas the process of losing individual consciousness in favour of real consciousness is not disturbed by the normal functioning of the mind and the

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body as such, and they are allowed to carry on. The seeker knows that his sole link with them is the claiming I-thought. Knowing this ego to be only a thought, it is enough if he remembers this always for the connection to cease. Then he no longer has a body and a mind though others see them along with their individual self pursuing their normal course:

Live a normal life and be aloof in company
and rich when lonely. (April 45)

In this way, the objective world is renounced together with the body, mind and the ego each time he pays attention to the consciousness without which they could not arise. When consciousness is seen in each experience, every experience becomes an experience in consciousness, and all is consciousness. In the absence of so-called objective experience, the same consciousness is present. This true renunciation leads to the position that there is nothing to be renounced and nothing to be retained:

I've given up all and now that all is me:
not that I want it and not that I don't; I'm free. (March 45)

I stated just now how hard it is for the ego to die. But by perfect devotion to the teacher who is himself both the reality and its proof, the impossible becomes possible:

Think of your Lord if you would like him be:
he is the end of all, the one and the free. (November 44)

In the light of all that has been said, such a being, that is to say, one who though without a body and mind from his own point of view, yet is seen to possess them by those who think they also possess them, why only such a great being can in the fullest sense be a spiritual guide is now apparent.

14.3.47

THE END OF KNOWLEDGE

Your Lord, if you like, will kill you with his love;
so leave a place in your heart for him to strike. (November 44)

I began this book by showing that without the help of a master, a seeker after truth cannot attain his goal. The goal is realized through the disciple's love for his teacher rather than by knowledge which serves only to remove mental obstacles. In other words, as he is drawn nearer and nearer the reality by his increasing love for it, so does all that is unreal drop away:

Only when your love is complete can your
being become the abode of your Lord
who has made him a home with his words.
Then you may give up your knowledge,
for now you have no more need. (December 44)

The End of Knowledge

The unreal is within the domain of the mind as such which is but a part of man whereas what is known as heart is the whole whose core is the self:

The limit of knowledge is love,
but love has no limit.
The mind is always aloof
but the heart is in it.

(December 44)

When reason is satisfied and the intellect made pure and keen through contact with his master, the aspirant begins directly to experience the reality instead of his only thinking about it as hitherto. The truth is now taking possession of him and because he no longer has any wrong knowledge, he is able to see all as the one consciousness which puts him beyond the necessity of exercising discrimination:

Now that I know,
I need not knowledge
but only love;
love for my Lord
who made me so.

(September 45)

It might be asked why, when he has gone beyond knowledge and ignorance, the seeker should still need to perfect the relationship with his master. The answer is that until this relationship has become perfect, it cannot be said that he is beyond limitation. It is only when he is entirely at one with his master that the disciple feels he has nothing more to do because even the seeing of all as the one has no more meaning:

No need of knowledge for him
who has gained it, he is free
and knows no other,
knows himself alone to be.

(April 45)

15·9·46

Vedanta and Liberation *and the works of René Guénon*

CHAPTER I

If the Vedas are said to be the highest spiritual authority, it is because they have issued directly from the absolute truth and such indeed is any being whose spiritual knowledge is perfect: it follows that the authors of the Vedas were just such beings. It follows also that between the Vedas and all other great spiritual works such as those on Vedanta, there is not the slightest difference in authority, when the authors are all one in the same absolute truth. It is not to be supposed however that the Vedas or the Vedanta treatises speak always from the same level and standpoint: on the contrary, in every such work, there is a continual changing of levels and standpoints and it cannot be otherwise, since those who seek knowledge are themselves at different levels, have different impediments to understanding and different angles of vision corresponding to differences of nature and background, and they need therefore the most diverse aids. Though all trends of thought designed to lead ultimately to the direct knowledge of the absolute may in general be termed Vedanta, Vedanta (Advaita), both as the means and the end of spiritual knowledge, does not come within the domain of individual thought as such; nor is it a kind of speculation. It is a harmonic blend of theory and practice, direct as the truth itself which indeed it is. If then other theories and disciplines can serve to bring the seeker to the state of mind where liberation from bondage, as it may then appear to him, becomes his one and only concern, such preliminaries should not be called Vedanta, if the word is not to be abused. Vedanta is not only the end of knowledge, it is the last step for him who has become spiritually mature. Where it is applied to anything other than this, it is to be understood in the same way that the word "construction" is understood in all the variety of its meaning. For this and other reasons, the title, "Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta," given by Mr. René Guénon to one of his books, is quite inappropriate.

Here, and in his other works, he makes many references to the great authorities of Vedanta as well as to the exponents of other doctrines, both from the Hindu and from other traditions. But because of his manner of selecting and interpreting texts for quotation; of the general confusion of his purpose which seems often to aim more at promoting his peculiar theory of the oneness of spiritual tradition than at laying bare the truth itself; of his tedious drumming on the theme of the habitual misunderstanding of oriental doctrines by westerners and their own inadequate philosophies; and because of his persistent hunting for the devil on every occasion, an objective that can hardly be recommended for serious seekers after truth; because of all this and what it implies, he has never succeeded in giving a correct view of Vedanta.

It is not my intention to criticise this particular work in detail in order to show why it invariably misses, even though it often comes very near to, the point. The same result can be achieved with far better effect through the positive method of the essential Vedanta which points out, in terms of his everyday experience, the reality in man, and so brings it within immediate grasp. In doing so, I shall make reference to high authority to prove, like Mr. Guénon, that nothing of what I wish to convey is my own invention and that my approach is impeccably orthodox; and also to make use of decisive words uttered once and for all, and incidentally, I trust, to show that Vedanta is not the heartless, aloof and repellent body that it

seems to become in the hands of Mr. Guénon, himself the most gifted of men: on the contrary, I hope to make it clear that Vedanta is the most captivating and self-evident truth. This little treatise is addressed to all ardent lovers of the truth.

To conclude this chapter, “If any treatise elucidates a truth established by the Vedas, it is merely a repetition and is not indicative of any authority whatsoever.”¹ In other words, if an authoritative statement regarding the truth is quoted and its implication not effectively realized by him who quotes it, he had better go and find a competent teacher and keep quiet until such time as his quotations and his assertions shall be neither derivative nor strange. They are to come as the truth itself in its evergreen chastity.

CHAPTER II

The seeker who searches for truth cannot fully grasp it all at once. “As are dreams and illusions or an imaginary city in the sky, so is this universe viewed by the wise in Vedanta. There is no dissolution, no birth, no one in bondage, no aspirant for wisdom, no one seeking liberation, and no one liberated. This is the absolute truth.”² If someone without preparation were to be straightway told this truth by his spiritual teacher, he could hardly gain anything positive. What then is he to be told? It depends on both master and disciple. In some cases, it may be possible to go at once to the root of the matter, but in any case, this can only come after the intellect and the emotions have been refined by suitable aids that strengthen their upward-going tendencies; of all means, there is none to compare with the being in the company of the spiritually great (*satsangam*). In course of time, the seeker is brought to the position where he can easily accept that neither he as an individual nor the world are what they appear to be: and meanwhile, his earnest desire for spiritual knowledge is being increased. Shankaracharya specifically states that the intense desire for liberation (*mumukshutva*) is the one essential qualification and all others are contained in it. The sole purpose of all teachings previously given and disciplines done will have been to induce this. Passing inevitably through phases that are cosmological since any idea of the reality being other than oneself is such, the aspirant is finally able to accept the truth that the reality is none other than his own self, hitherto unconsciously known as I-myself. It is proved to him through his experience of the I-principle in the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep; by the nature of the thoughts, feelings and perceptions with which he has his traffic in the world, and in other ways; he is enabled thus to see and to feel that his essential self is entirely distinct from body and mind, of all of whose modalities he is now the independent witness (*saakshi*). In short, he realizes that his real identity has always been the conscious principle within him; he had thought himself before to be identified with a body. Although outwardly something of duality appears still to remain, he is nevertheless established in non-duality.

In his commentary on the second of the verses of Gaudapada quoted above beginning with, “There is no dissolution”, Sri Shankara makes an opponent ask how spiritual teaching, which is seen to take place in the world of duality, can free the mind, which is also by definition in the dualistic world, of duality, since the nature of the non-dual self cannot be expressed. The answer is: “There is no difficulty. Duality is superimposed upon the non-dual Atma (the real, impersonal self) through illusion like the snake upon the rope in a dim light.

¹ Shankaracharya, “Svatmanirupanam,” (Definition of One’s Own Self), v. 49.

² Sri Gaudapada’s Karika upon the Mandukyopanishad, Chapter II, vv. 31 and 32.

How does this superimposition come about? I am happy, I am miserable, ignorant, living, dying, worn out, possessed of a body; I see, I am manifested and unmanifested, the agent, the enjoyer, related and unrelated, decayed and old, this is mine,—these and similar ideas are superimposed upon Atma. The notion of Atma (that is to say, of “Me”) persists in these because in fact no idea can ever be conceived without the notion of Atma.

But before proceeding further along this cardinal line, it is proper to take up a subject without an understanding of which whatsoever may be said regarding the I-principle will remain only abstract and theoretical. This is the Guru, the spiritual guide upon whom all depends, provided the seeker is perfectly sincere. When I speak of the Guru in connection with Vedanta, I speak of that Guru alone who, having realized his own perfection, can without effort lead others to this realization. “The venerable teacher creates equality with himself in the disciple who takes refuge at his feet.”¹

CHAPTER III

“As no authority is equal to the eye in the perception of forms, so is there no authority for spiritual knowledge equal to the Vedas, in the realization of that which is beyond objective perception. Spiritual knowledge cannot result either by itself or from any other authority. (Spiritual knowledge can never be the effect of some cause.) It is established by the Vedas that only he who has a Guru can know.”² From these lines, it follows naturally that it is the Guru who is the real meaning of the word Veda, which, as commonly understood, is simply a collection of teachings given by former Gurus on different aspects of truth as well as on some of the means to realize it. Since indeed the Vedas in the highest sense are beginningless and eternal as it is often stated, the Guru, by his realization, is equally so, whether considered in particular or as a perennial function. That which is beginningless and eternal can be nothing other than the nameless reality itself, although it gets called by many different names. If, again, “he alone who has a Guru can know,” and this knowledge is not the result of any cause, the Guru is one’s own self, for spiritual knowledge is the knowledge of the self. The Vedas are therefore to be venerated, not on account of their being exceedingly ancient, as is usually the case, but inasmuch as they are the teachings of great men. And all great men are to be venerated in equal measure. This truth about the Guru is clearly brought out by Sri Shankaracharya in his “Hymn to Dakshinamurti” (the Lord Shiva facing the South. The North, where he sits, is a symbol of the ultimate centre of all). “To him who reveals to his devotees, by means of the *jnana-mudra*, their own self which for ever shines within as the “I”, unchanging through all the changing states of childhood, youth, old age, waking, dream and deep sleep; to that Teacher incarnate, Dakshinamurti, obeisance,”³ (The *jnana-mudra*, a symbol of knowledge, is that in which the forefinger is joined to the thumb so as to form a ring, thereby showing that the so-called individual state in its totality, represented by the forefinger, and the absolute state or the real, impersonal self, as represented by the thumb, are one and the same.)

This gives the very essence of Vedanta. Spiritual knowledge is not to be acquired like worldly knowledge. “The self that is ever-present in all beings appears through a misconception to be unattained (distant). But when this wrong knowledge has been destroyed

¹ Shankaracharya, “Century of Verses” (Satasloki), v.I.

² “Svatmanirupanam,” v. 48, 44/43.

³ “Svatmanirupanam,” v. 147.

by true knowledge, it is seen to have always been attained, just as after searching everywhere for a necklace, the seeker finds it around his neck.”¹

It is not, then, that the Guru teaches anything; he removes the wrong knowledge that covers up recognition of the self by giving this very recognition. “There is the foot of the Master,” through which, so to say, the disciple directly touches the core of his being. “There is unbounded mercy in his look,” by which the disciple’s love towards his Guru, who is the crystallization of his intense yearning for knowledge, gets merged in the Infinite. “There is whatever he has taught,” that is to say, though others who hear may think that something is being taught on account of the words, no one in fact is teaching and no one is being taught. In the presence of the teacher, the truth presents itself spontaneously in the oneness of Guru and disciple. Nothing remains to be sought. “Is there any higher fulfilment?”²

It is generally agreed that one’s own Master in particular and the Guru’s function as a whole are not fit subjects for discussion; there is a grave danger in what is said of this essential oneness being misconstrued. What I have said is exactly true: in the state of oneness, there is no Guru, but there is also no disciple to say so.

While the seeker thinks of a body as being his own, he cannot, as an embodied being, think of a formless reality. He may, to the extent of his becoming centred in the mind, think of reality as being an abstract principle: but however abstract, it remains objective as well as aloof. Abstraction is certainly superior to anthropomorphism when it helps to take the individual beyond his little bodily-limitation. But instead of taking him to the reality, it takes him to a cosmological principle with which after much effort he may attain union. He has, however, only enormously expanded his individuality in joining God,—even though he be the most abstract God—and whenever he is not immersed in that state, he is exactly what he was before he ever experienced it. Ultimately, he will be obliged to proceed subjectively by changing his felt centre from a changeable and delusory individual or universal consciousness to absolute, pure consciousness, if he is not for ever to be bound by a body, great or small.

In accordance with his own state, the reality must at first appear to be personified, and the Guru is seen as the embodiment of truth. There is no parallel between this and the idea of a personal God who is imagined to be the cause of all effects. The Guru by displaying non-duality takes the disciple beyond the world of cause and effect into the impersonal self where there is no trace of duality. But the sentence, “No Advaita (non-duality) in relation to the Teacher” must never be forgotten: where there is relationship, there is duality. I could hardly avoid a reference to this delicate question: in Vedanta, the way is also the end, the Guru and the Guru.

CHAPTER IV

“One should separate the grain of the pure inner self from the chaff of the body and other sheaths by the threshing of reason.”³ This separation is effected by the Guru’s pointing out the presence of the pure inner self in all human experience. “All persons carry on their activities at all times by means of the ideas ‘I’ and ‘this’. The former relates to the inner self and the latter to external objects such as the body, the senses, etc. If the I-thought springs up in association with the body, senses, etc., it is then a gross delusion, for delusion is defined as

¹ Shankaracharya, “Atma Bodha” (Self-knowledge), v. 44.

² “Svatmanirupanam,” v. 147.

³ “Atma Bodha,” v. 16.

the perception of anything in what is not that thing.”¹ It is not I who am tired: the body is tired. It is not I who see: the eyes see. Nor is it I who prefer, think, remember or perceive, but the mind that functions. “It stands to reason therefore that the supreme self, the witness of all, is alone denoted by the I-thought. This I-ness, although in itself devoid of consciousness, becomes conscious, so to say, in its contact with the self.”² The proof of this is the fact that when for example, one is thinking intently of someone or of something or concentrated in work or in listening to music or in gazing at a distant view or when, moreover, mind is altogether absent as in deep sleep, there is no I-thought. Though this seemingly individual consciousness in the form of “I” continually claims these activities or their cessation (I slept), what it denotes, as we have seen, is beyond the body. “The direct meaning of the clear and unmixed conception, ‘I’, ‘I’, in all bodies is therefore Brahman alone.”³

From this, it follows that “Birth, old age, decay, and death, are not for me, since I am other than the body. Sound and other objects of the senses have no connection with me, for I am other than the senses. I am not the mind, and therefore sorrow, desire, hatred, fear, and the rest do not affect me. As declared by the scriptures, the self is neither the senses nor the mind, but is unconditioned. I am without attributes, functionless, eternal, free from doubt, stainless (for nothing can leave its mark on me), changeless, formless, eternally free, and unconditioned.”⁴

In this way, the real nature of what is called “I” is shown and its total and immediate recognition makes rebirth impossible. Although this is, in the fullest sense, spiritual realization, the mind, even when it knows perfectly well that it is other than the real self, still clings to its ancient habit of superimposing itself upon the real self. In order therefore to actualize the supreme knowledge that is already gained, the habit of thinking I am the doer, the perceiver, or the enjoyer must be overcome by taking such antidotal thoughts as I am not the doer, the perceiver or the enjoyer; I am the witness of all. And as this all includes the I-thought itself, the latter need not be suppressed.

“To those without discrimination, the self appears to be acting when the senses alone are acting, just as the moon seems as if it is running when the clouds run.”⁵

CHAPTER V

To sever one’s connection with the body is the one essential. Although in certain cases this separation takes the form of passing voluntarily out of the physical frame and, in others, of losing all body-consciousness by those who for various reasons are unable directly to grasp the fact that they have never been embodied, for those who can (and it is to such that I speak), to pass deliberately out of the body or permanently to give up body-consciousness in an attempt to go beyond limitation might well have the opposite effect; it would tend to confirm the reality of the association with the body, if the nature of this connection had not been understood. The highest truth is indeed that the self has never assumed any form, and to realize this reality as one’s centre is to attain the goal.

¹ “Svatmanirupanam” v. 85 & 86.

² Ibid., v. 87.

³ Ibid., v. 88.

⁴ “Atma Bodha,” v. 32-34.

⁵ “Atma-Bodha, v. 19.

When the body-connection has been severed, relationship with the world also ceases. This may be understood in two ways. The first and most obvious is that the body is itself a part of the world. The second, that connection with the world is through the organs of sense. Though higher in function, the sense-organs as such are of the body, so that by standing aloof as the witness of sense-perceptions, one stands aloof from the world which includes the body.

In speaking thus of the body, the mind is also included by implication, for it has always as its field of action the body, the world and its perception through the senses. The world when thought of is a subtle world, a thought world; the senses which perceive it are subtle senses and one's own body becomes subtle when one thinks of it. In reality, however, there is no distinction between the physical and the subtle: they are both of the mind, that is to say, subtle. If the mind is not present in the physical organs of sense, they cannot perceive, and as for the mind, there is neither an inner nor an outer world: for mind, it is all thought. I shall discuss this at a higher level in the next chapter. Here, I have aimed only at giving a conception from the phenomenal standpoint of what severance of the self from the body-idea implies. It implies, as we have seen, the effective realization that I am not the body, nor the senses, nor the mind, nor am I the ego that claims them. All these are thoughts and I am their witness. I am pure consciousness. "If you separate yourself from the body and rest in consciousness, you will at once be happy, peaceful and free from bondage."¹

CHAPTER VI

At this point, Shankaracharya makes an imaginary opponent raise a doubt. "By distinguishing the self from the body, it follows only that the manifested world is real." To which comes the reply: "The identification of the self with the body has alone been refuted by this distinction. The unreality of the body as an independent entity is still to be explained."²

To explain this, I must again return to a consideration of the nature of perceptions, but this time from a higher level. "His (Dakshinamurti's as Atma or the conscious principle in all beings) consciousness flows out through the eyes and the other senses like the light of a big lamp placed inside a jar with many holes. The entire universe shines solely because He shines, that is to say, by the consciousness, 'I know'.³ From this, it is not to be supposed that objects of perception have an independent existence. They come into existence whenever they come into the consciousness of their perceiver. "Whatever object is perceived, it comes into existence then and there through the ignorance of the true nature of the self that is in it."⁴ This means that an object appears to exist only because its perceiver is unaware of the pure consciousness which is present in its perception: when there is awareness of that consciousness, the object appears not as an independent entity but as that consciousness itself "Its manifestation is like the unreal appearance of the serpent by one's not recognizing the rope. Hence all this universe is created by perception." Which is to say that it has no reality of its own. Its reality is borrowed of consciousness.

If at a certain level, I said that the presence of mind in the sense-organs is needed for their functioning, though from a higher level it were truer to say that the sense-organs exist only as thoughts, I must now say that the mind, and through it the sense-organs, cannot function

¹ "Ashtavakra Samhita," Chapter I, v. 4.

² Shankaracharya, "Aparokshanubhuti" (Direct Realization), vv. 41 & 42.

³ "Dakshinamurti Stotra," v. 4.

⁴ "Satashloki," v. 4.

without consciousness. I do not say ‘without the presence of consciousness’ because to do so would be to suggest that consciousness comes and goes, whereas it is thought that comes and goes in consciousness. This continuity of consciousness is experienced but not recognized by all men in the gap that must necessarily occur between two thoughts, seen as a blank from the mind-level when one tries to think of it, or in a fainting fit, and in deep sleep. Consciousness is recognized commonly only when it appears as individual consciousness, that is to say, in waking and dreaming where it appears as the I-thought. But it is always and everywhere present (but not in time and space as these words unfortunately suggest), for it is one with existence which cannot be conceived as other than conscious: and one certainly does not cease to exist in sleep or in the interval between thoughts and perceptions. If this is understood, it is understood not by the mind but is experienced directly by that consciousness itself. “By the thought of an object, consciousness appears to become objective; by the thought of blankness, consciousness appears as a blank; and by the thought of fullness (completion)¹, it becomes full. One should therefore practise fullness.”²

Now this fullness is nothing other than the non-dual consciousness, existing alike when there is no thought of manifestation and in every apparent manifestation, not in the object as such, not even in the perceiver, but as the pure knowledge that is inherent in every particular act of perceiving.

It is now clear that the expression, “Consciousness flows out through the eyes”, has only a special meaning. It is to help those who have not yet risen above the idea of causality. Manifestation cannot be accepted unless the idea of cause and effect is also. Gaudapada observes that “Wise men support causality only for the sake of those who, being afraid of absolute non-manifestation, cling to the (apparent) reality of external objects on account of their perceiving them and their faith in ritual observances (which imply duality)”. Commenting upon this verse, Shankaracharya says: “Let them hold on to the idea. Causality has no meaning from the standpoint of the ultimate reality. Those who practise disciplines in accordance with Vedanta will, without belief in causality, spontaneously become established in the knowledge of the self, unborn and non-dual.” And he says, further, that “Those however who are earnestly striving to follow the path of discrimination are not harmed by a belief in causality which is due only to their not having realized the truth”. This realization, as I shall show in due course, is not gradual. It is attained immediately in the non-dual presence of the Guru who removes the idea of duality in the disciple through the apparent agency of a teaching.

To conclude this chapter, those who want, in terms of a higher principle, an explanation of the world because they still believe in its reality, can only find it in terms of illusion. Many, but not all, sages have spoken of Maya (the divine trick that produces the illusion of a world) to satisfy the ignorant: it can satisfy no one else. A world whose existence depends upon its being perceived cannot as such be called real. More than this, a thing to be perceived requires a perceiver, who, in his turn, is some other perceiver’s object of perception and is therefore himself not real. (This “other” perceiver may be understood as being any other individual: but at a higher level, it is the I-principle, the witnessing consciousness.³ “The form is perceived and the eye is its perceiver. It (the eye) is perceived and the mind is its perceiver. The mind

¹ Fullness, i.e., purnavritte.

² “Aparokshanubhuti,” v. 129.

³ Gaudapada’s “Karika to Mandukyopanishad”, Chapter IV, vv. 42 & 43, and Shankara’s Commentary thereto.

with its modifications is perceived and the witness (the real self), is verily the perceiver. But the witness is not perceived.”¹ This is the whole world as it appears and unless the seeker knows how to rise above the relationship of subject and object, he can never hope to understand it. The difficulty arises because the world is really seen. Nevertheless, “the unreal (objects of perception) cannot have the unreal (the perceiver as such) as its cause, nor can the real be caused by the unreal. The real cannot be the cause of the real (reality being unique). And it were absurd to suppose that the real could be the cause of the unreal.”² How then is the apparent reality of the world to be fathomed? I would suggest that the perceiver and the perceived, being interdependent, are one in the perceiving. That oneness is in reality a moment of pure consciousness, though consciousness is not in time. If therefore in every thought, feeling and perception, this oneness is watched, the multiplicity of worldly experience will merge in the oneness of consciousness which at first appears to pervade all until it is realized that all is one.

CHAPTER VII

There is another way of looking at the world. It requires no deliberate withdrawal into an inner, higher, subjective principle on the part of the perceiver and yet it reveals the one principle that is neither high nor low, neither within nor without. He who can see thus is truly perfection.

I perceive a thing. I certainly perceive a thing. What is it I perceive? There is the shape and the colour, the fragrance and the soft touch perceived by the senses; and there is the name that the mind gives it: in short, I perceive a flower. But is that thing I think of as flower, whose colour, shape and smell I perceive, this name and these qualities? Or are these the thing? The thing that is present, but not the thing as perceived, is reality, for I know there is really something, that there is a real presence.

That which possesses a name is not that name, for possession means two separate things. Moreover, it may possess other names or it may have no known name, but the name or its absence cannot possibly affect the existence of the thing itself. The name “flower” is not an integral part of the flower which therefore has no name.

Though certain shapes and perfumes may suggest certain names, and certain names may suggest particular blossoms, none of these can be the thing called flower. They depend not upon the flower but upon its perceiver. Although, in terms of the perceiving senses, it is possessed of a shape, a colour, a particular sensation to the touch, and a scent, the flower, the thing itself, is none of these in terms of itself. Given a name in terms of him who sees it or thinks of it because it can only be seen or thought of in terms of the senses, it cannot have a name or a form in terms of itself that exists whether it is seen or not. It follows that when it is known by another in terms of that other, it is not known at all. But still it is known to exist.

Now that which exists, whose real existence cannot be doubted since its presence is really felt, but which itself is not directly known by any instrument of knowledge or perception, that is knowledge itself, existence itself, and reality pure and simple.

The world may well be sensed by the senses and thought of by the brain. But it can be truly known only as reality, the one present thing.

¹ Drig-Drishya Viveka (An Enquiry into the Nature of the Seer and the Seen), v.I.

² Gaudapada’s “Karika to Mandukyopanishad”, Chapter IV, v. 40.

CHAPTER VIII

The idea of liberation is one of those that sages have voiced to give seekers an objective: it is of especial help to those who see life, which is nothing but birth, death, and rebirth, as bondage. But there are also many people of a deeply spiritual nature who do not see life as a bondage, but rather relish it, and yet who earnestly desire to fathom its nature. For such as these, it is the lack of certainty that constitutes bondage. In any case, bondage is a very general notion that includes all kinds of dissatisfaction whose removal will seem to be a liberation (moksha).

I have said enough in what has gone before to make it perfectly clear that from the point of view of Advaita Vedanta, there is no such thing. In order not to repel those who come with the idea that bondage and liberation exist, Vedantins define the nature of bondage as the superimposition of the unreal upon the real, the individual upon the self, through association of the I-principle with the body, the sense-organs and the mind. If there is suffering or enjoyment, these are to be seen as not affecting one's self. As I have already explained, this association effectively ceases when the aspirant, through the Guru's teaching, consciously takes possession of his real centre.

It is not to the purpose, therefore, when setting forth the truth according to Advaita Vedanta, to introduce the subject of gradual or deferred liberation (krama-mukti), as Mr. Guénon unfortunately does. As the expression implies, it is the approach and not the aim that is considered in this case and it is not liberation at all, for it cannot be final. One falls asleep and enjoys peace. In exactly the same manner, one lapses into the causal state at the time of cosmic dissolution (pralaya), and awakens out of it upon a new cycle of manifestation when Brahma, the universal being or cosmic principle in its personal, conditioned aspect, awakens. This state of latent manifestation is approached accidentally and passively by the seeker who seeks only to obtain union with Brahma, not with a spiritual intention, but in order to enjoy the heavenly state (Brahma-loka). Brahma or God, as the immediate principle and the totality of all individual existences, is himself in bondage and can only obtain liberation from the bondage of being the cosmic principle at the time of cosmic dissolution at the end of a given cycle of manifestation (maha-yuga). The devotee who has become identified with Brahma becomes liberated therefore when Brahma becomes liberated and will then be able, if his tendencies allow, to follow an active path to spiritual realization.

But as a matter of fact, all creatures, whether they have attained Brahma-loka or not, undergo this temporary resorption at the time of pralaya. From the spiritual standpoint, it is obviously quite indifferent whether one goes to Brahma-loka or to any other subtle world or remains an embodied being through a series of births until the cosmic dissolution, since they are all states of limitation. There is however a decided advantage from the phenomenal standpoint in not entering one of these passive states, whether of enjoyment or of suffering, because it is only in the state of activity known as manhood that one can strive for and attain final liberation. Those then who can only have this deferred liberation are persons who crave for and are attached to enjoyment, that is to say to bodies, whether worldly or heavenly, and they are the majority. It is when these possibilities have become exhausted or virtually exhausted or have been understood that one can enter the domain of Vedanta through a craving for real knowledge and lasting happiness.

Mr. Guénon makes the proper distinction between a passive and an active approach, but by speaking of deferred liberation ("Deliverance by degrees") as though it were a real possibility, he places himself and his unwary readers on a level at which the truth cannot be conceived. "In this manner Deliverance is only obtained by means of intermediate states

(conditioned posthumous states) and not in a direct and immediate manner, as in other cases which we shall discuss later on.”¹ Spiritual realization is nothing if it is not direct and immediate, as I have amply shown, whatever apparent stages may appear to have been traversed. Advaita Vedanta, which is not in the least concerned with appearances as such, is not in the least concerned with krama-mukti, which implies that the world as it appears is real, that Brahma really exists outside the seeker’s mind, and that the imagination which involuntarily creates both Brahma and the world, no less than his own individuality, are all real. In short, the idea of deferred liberation (krama-mukti) has been posited only to show seekers the possibility of liberation and to help them rise to that level where, in the presence of a sage, they can realize immediate liberation (sadyo-mukti) by an immediate recognition of the nature of their real self which was ever free.

Similarly, Mr. Guénon treats of such topics as the subtle centres and arteries of the body, implying different methods of concentration upon an object, such methods including Kundalini-Yoga, Raja-Yoga, and Hatha-Yoga, all of which require the body as a field and are therefore dualistic in their means and in their aim. He speaks also of the spheres of the Sun and the Moon, of the Way of the Gods and the Way of the Ancestors and of several other matters, all these being conceptions that apart from the general principles they symbolize, have become entirely obsolete as conscious practices, owing to the changed mentality of mankind since their enunciation hundreds and thousands of years ago. They are, moreover, all cosmological and dualistic, and none of them come within the purview of Advaita, which alone has remained unmodified, since it alone expresses the changeless reality to which it alone leads. Although their mention may make for a completeness of a certain superficial kind, it cannot fail, supported as it is by an imposing array of quotations from ancient works, to confuse and mislead the reader who knows little or nothing of Vedanta except from Mr. Guénon’s works and from other modern books written by people outside the Hindu tradition and in spite of this, still retains a pure urge to realize the truth. It is not that these different yogas at least are not even now practised for a purpose that has no direct relation to spiritual realization; it is precisely that there is no practice as such which can result in realization: according to Vedanta and in truth, realization is always attained. Mr. Guénon does not fail to say as much: but with one hand he gives and with the other he takes back. This is because he has never known the highest Guru and nevertheless, presumes to speak of Advaita.

CHAPTER IX²

In the last chapter, while on the subject of krama-mukti, I gave only a hint as to the real nature of Brahma-loka and of other subtle posthumous states because the purpose there was to show that they cannot be the real concern of Vedanta and that Mr. Guénon’s seriously considering them in a book purporting to follow Vedanta, especially from the level of non-duality (Advaita) which is the essence of Vedanta, could only confuse and mislead. I am now going to take up the subject in some detail in order to show the nature of these posthumous states more clearly: in doing so, the nature of every individual state, both subtle and gross, will become apparent.

¹ René Guénon, “Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta”, English edition, p. 138.

² This chapter may be passed over by those who are interested in spiritual realization. It is intended for the readers of René Guénon’s works who have been misled into accepting incorrect and unorthodox views in the relative plane.

It has already been explained in the fifth chapter that the mind always has as its field of action the gross body and through it, or rather, through its sense-organs, the material world. What mind is to body, a builder's plan is to the building under construction. While thought necessarily has gross bodies as its basis, bodies cannot be perceived, that is to say, cannot exist, without the presence of a perceiving mind. Since the mind can only think (mind is simply generic thought) and a thought can never in reality change from being subtle to being material, it follows that thought of any subtle body or world outside common waking body-experience is not in any way different from thought of the waking body and world: nor is it in itself superior. The only distinction between the waking or dream worlds, and the other worlds, lies in the fact that the former are perceived without effort as by instinct; whereas to think of other bodies and worlds, such as of angels and of heaven and hell, and in the states of being experienced by yogis, it requires conscious effort or mental concentration, unless an accidental contact is made or when by misfortune, having made the contact in one way or another, one has been so fascinated by the illusory charms of these states as to have lost a hold on normal human consciousness and become centred and lost there, while still remaining in the eyes of others in the body here. But in either case, whatever is thought of is a projection of the mind, apart from which it has no existence. To be concisely exact, any thought-form which is sufficiently powerful seems to assume solidity for him who has it or cognizes it.

As proof of this, no man dreaming doubts the solidity of the dream world. On waking, he sees it was nothing but a product of his imagination. The daily world is no different but as I have fully dealt with this important question elsewhere, there is no need to take it up here. ("Philosophy and You", 6th Talk). I wish only to make it plain that appearances are in fact not solid but mental, not independent of their being perceived but dependent wholly upon the mind of the perceiver, and that they are either the direct creation of the latter or, as will be seen below, the effect upon his mind of some other's influence just as in a conjuring trick, though even here, it is ultimately the perceiver's creation.

This explains why it is, from the ordinary Hindu point of view, that on leaving the body at death, the trend of thought that predominates in its owner's mind determines his next birth. Let me repeat that any thought form which is sufficiently powerful seems to assume solidity. Only he who knows it is the body and not he that dies can avoid reincarnation. Otherwise, there is inevitably rebirth, not in a subtle body, as is commonly supposed to happen with virtuous souls for example, but in a gross one, and this for all those whose spiritual realization at the time of death remains incomplete. The explanation is that the individuality of a living being does not die with the body which is but a thought-form. The individuality or subtle being, because it has not become conscious of its essentially non-individual nature, must immediately project a new individual thought-form in accordance with its prevailing tendencies, occasioning the appearance of a new body as its vehicle: and this is the manner in which re-birth actually takes place. There is no need for me to remind the reader who has followed the preceding chapter that in speaking of birth and re-birth (samsara) as though they were realities, I do not speak from a spiritual standpoint. I am merely giving the correct and logical explanation of their nature on the level in which they appear as real. Guénon constantly makes the mistake of trying to adopt a spiritual attitude while accepting, despite his many disclaimers, the reality of illusion which comprehends both the gross and the subtle, which comprehends, in short, all that is not pure consciousness and so all that is strictly non-existent: from the metaphysical or spiritual standpoint, there is neither birth nor death. One can search in vain throughout his writings for a single sentence that makes the nature of

consciousness apparent and relates it to the experience of self: and in its absence, only one conclusion can be drawn.

His opinion that one cannot be re-born into the same condition as before is groundless. He argues that to admit such a possibility is to limit what he calls the All-Possibility. But if the All-Possibility is thought of as manifesting itself in different forms, and if it is also understood to be the reality, then each particular living form has as its core and its reality this All-Possibility. Provided it has the capacity to realize this core as its essence and become fully identified with it, there is no reason to deny, on theoretical or on any other grounds, that a return to such a form in successive births cannot occur. All the traditional authorities in the Hindu body accept this position and competent yogis can know their past lives and the past lives of others (the word “yogi” is seldom used nowadays in India as Mr. Guénon uses it, to describe a realized soul: it usually refers to one who practices mental concentration); but as this is not a logical argument and one’s own experience is the only real authority, I do not bring these facts forward as proofs. There is, however, no doubt whatsoever that human beings have this capacity to seek spiritual knowledge and to realize their self as the ultimate reality which is nothing other than pure consciousness: this is in contrast with animals and spirits, both of which are in the main intellectually passive. That other modalities of active intellectual existence may obtain in spheres other than the one whose pinnacle is mankind I neither admit nor deny for it is irrelevant. The fact remains that so far as men are concerned, their inner tendencies are such as to have made their birth as human beings necessary in order to work them out; very few achieve realization in their present life or even desire it; until they have destroyed these tendencies by realizing their essential nature, they need not pass into any other order of formal manifestation, supposing that other orders exist: and having attained perfection, they have gone beyond manifestation. What reasonable argument, then, can be put forward to refute the possibility of rebirth in the human state when this state is so obviously the last step to perfection? It may be objected that to think so is to limit one’s conception of the All-Possibility; but in truth, there is no such thing as an all or a one which are but notions the mind creates in its own terms in trying to grasp what is entirely beyond it, which of course does not preclude the use of reason in spiritual matters to see what the truth is not. The conception of an All-Possibility is not spiritual but merely cosmic and mental: and yet the power to conceive it shows that man if he wishes can embrace within his mind the whole cosmos, the whole manifestation together with its principle. But better still, he can from the human state realize his own identity with non-dual reality and it is proof enough by any standard that until he has done so, there is no necessity for him to change it for another, unless by his own folly, he sinks to a lower level in the same order of manifestation or gets lost in some world, subtle from the standpoint of this world, which may be even more binding than the present one. Having thus explained the nature and the necessity of rebirth on leaving the body for all unrealized souls, and why as such they can go no higher than the human state and need not leave this state for some other equivalent state should it exist, I come now to the question of the so-called subtle states of being.

At the time of death, although one trend of thought will prevail over all others and being individual in nature, will be such as to establish the shape of the birth immediately to follow, other less decisive thoughts may also come up and may even seem to dominate the rest, if looked at superficially. As an illustration, to a man who has meditated upon or worshipped with great devotion a deity during his life-time, a similar thought is most likely to occur at so critical a moment as that of death. Because he still believes himself to be an individual, and if he has not gone beyond the body-idea, he cannot escape rebirth in a gross body, but this intense thought of the deity will necessarily inform and colour his new life. This thought of a

divine being or of anything else at the moment of leaving the body may have in itself all the vigour required for its own continued existence and although unable to serve as a vehicle to the individual soul of the thinker, it will be a picture of it, and lacking any other physical support, will become attached to the place or to an object that is closely connected with the person whose body is dying, or it may be despatched by appropriate rites to some other place. Any intense thought, no matter what its nature may be, will thus survive. A work of art, a poem or a musical composition, to give examples of intense thoughts, are no different. Those who die with the hope of reward for virtuous actions will emit a thought accordingly. Heaven or Brahma-loka, Pitri-loka or the World of Ancestors and other similar subtle worlds are peopled with such thought-forms. These heavens and hells are ideas and all such ideas are implicit in the thought-forms themselves which may well have a collective existence; they are called worlds to help those who are unable to conceive of them as being, together with their denizens, mere thought-forms lacking the fullness of manifestation because wanting a real individuality. When therefore it is supposed that a saintly person is now happily in heaven and a wicked man who died unredeemed in the midst of evil thoughts or in great fear of punishment is broiling in the hell of remorse (for even in unrepentance, a man's inherent standard of uprightness which is his real nature cannot fail to be present however much hidden), one is to understand that such is actually the case in the sense that these thought-forms, through which the originators are clearly and unmistakably recognizable, do actually exist, and can influence in various ways. They may influence in the manner of a delicious food that has no intention of pleasing or a poison that has no will to harm, and they may be influenced in the same way that a food or a poison is movable and subject to enhancement or detraction. And meantime, the individual core of the defunct body has already taken birth in another, not once but perhaps several times in succession, for these thoughts may endure for ages if they are strong enough and especially if they are maintained by the sympathy of devotees or by suitable rites; or else it may be that having gained spiritual realization in another birth, the illusion of an individual existence has ceased entirely and with it, the necessity of an illusory individual manifestation in a body, but even so, for those who are consciously or unconsciously sensitive to subtle influences, the thought in the form of a heavenly or any other being may still subsist, though in time they must vanish. It should be added for the sake of completeness that thought-forms can be launched in this manner not only at the time of death but at any time if the force behind them is sufficient: it is in this way that places and objects of worship are consecrated, religions founded, and so on.

From these considerations, many things usually regarded as obscure at once become clear. It is easy to understand, for instance, why the burial-places of saints often exude an atmosphere of spiritual peace and elevation, and why, in such a place a yogi can perceive the living form of the saint or the person who consecrated it; why also shrines as well as sites whose qualities have been deliberately bestowed upon them by consecratory rites or thoughts, and even whole religions, lose gradually their original virtue; the reason is evidently that the thought-form constituting their essence has weakened or disappeared. This happens when it has been desecrated, that is to say, annulled or driven out by other thoughts of a kind inimicable to its further existence there, either by an act of violence with all the emotional disorder implied, or by a general state of doubt, indifference or disbelief, the overwhelming presence of unsympathetic people, the transference of devotion to another form, or simply because it is spent or its original purpose has been accomplished. The appearance of ghosts is likewise explained: at the moment of violent death, the thought emitted by the victim will be such as to linger on and anyone who is in a state of passivity or of preconceived fear may

well come into contact with it and see the form of the person concerned. And this is all that need be said here regarding those posthumous states that are nothing but thought-forms.

From a relative point of view, all non-human beings are passively undergoing states of suffering, or enjoying states of passive delight. Man alone is distinguished by the power to reason, to discriminate, to be responsible for his actions and, as a result, to be able to discard the illusion of individuality. At a high level therefore, and especially in a work on Advaita Vedanta, man alone, not as a cosmological being but as he really is, that is to say, as reality itself and as consciousness and bliss, distinct entirely from body and mind which have no real existence, need be taken into consideration. Sufficient proof of this verity has been furnished in previous chapters. How unpractical, indirect, and incomplete is the approach adopted by René Guénon will now have become apparent; why he has adopted it has also been made clear. And in making it so, I believe I have been able to point out to those who are earnestly seeking the ultimate truth, a very positive way. If so, let them bless him who showed it to me and may they also find such a guidance.

CHAPTER X

As René Guénon has said, spiritual knowledge is incommunicable. The words the Guru utters will necessarily be pointing out the nature of the I-principle, but words are objects of perception. The thoughts the words convey are no less perceived. The words as such are spoken in order to allay the doubts the individual cannot but feel; in this way, his mind becomes stilled. It is in this stillness of the mind and in the pure consciousness that subsists that absolute certainty is realized. There is no individual consciousness since there is no mind, but the disciple having been prepared for it in advance, the certainty of being of the nature of pure, eternal consciousness and peace is directly attained. If this were not so, everyone would consciously experience reality in sleep. Why is direct knowledge attained only when heard from the lips of one's Guru and from no one else and in no other way? Something has in fact been communicated and it is the absolute certitude of the Guru: he is what he speaks.

The experience described is the Jnani's (follower of the intellectual path) nirvikalpa-samadhi, the state in which there is no trace of doubt, and it is taken possession of without effort. The Guru may still be speaking and there need be no outward, apparent interruption in the disciple's individual state; yet the heart may manifest itself outwardly in the strongest manner. It has nothing in common with the yogic or mental samadhi called by the same name, approached with effort, temporary in nature and with a background of duality. Returning to all outward appearance into the individual state, but with this certainty indelibly impressed upon his conscience, the seeker knows in his heart that he is not the body and has never been; he knows now that he is of the nature of pure consciousness, changeless, eternal, and free. "The listening to the teaching and the production of right knowledge are simultaneous, and the result is the cessation of hunger, etc.," that is to say, the cessation of identification with the body. This is a decisive spiritual realization from which it is impossible to turn back, and he who has had it cannot be reborn, for this certitude is sure to manifest itself in the mind at the time of death, even if not before. But the world has not yet been explained, or having been explained, has not been experienced in terms of pure consciousness, so that from the highest standpoint, this realization is not complete, as it is in the case of one who is liberated while living (jivan-mukta). The possibility of bringing down as it were the absolute to make absolute too what the mind still sees as its own domain has already been indicated. It need hardly be pointed out that the expression "liberated while

living” is a contradiction in terms, made as a concession to those who see the body¹ of a sage; from his own standpoint, the sage is not an individual, is not embodied, and sees no conditional existence.

The mind, when it has not been absorbed and has been allowed to function as before, still holds on to its ancient habit of doing its work in the name of I-myself, the thought of which comes up after every action, perception and enjoyment or suffering to claim them as its own: it continues, moreover, to take the reality of the world for granted, when left to itself. From the point of view of reality there is no objection to this and there is no question of absorbing mind into consciousness, its source, as people who cling to the yogic idea of concentration or who have not analysed the nature of appearance, would think. There is no objection, I say, to the individuality being allowed to continue in the sight of others and no need to absorb mind into its essence because for him who is effectively identified with the self, not only can nothing affect him, but there is no individuality, there are no others, there is no mind, no world and no distinction between real and unreal, individual and absolute consciousness and so on. The I-thought no longer has any support from a background of consciousness to give it a borrowed sense of reality, and indeed, there is no background, for there is also no appearance. For him who is centred in consciousness, in his real nature, there is that alone, eternal and without a shadow of duality. I hasten to add that in spite of the words “no longer”, there never was a “before”, and something has not become what it was not eternally. This supreme and natural state of liberation while living (*jivan-mukti*)—though it is no state and there is in reality nothing from which to be liberated—is known as *sahaja-nirvikalpa-samadhi* in which the absence at all levels—though there are no levels—of all doubt—and who is there to have doubts?—of what one really is, has become as spontaneous and habitual as was the individual habit of mind. “With the disappearance of attachment to the body and with the realization of the supreme self (*paramatma*), to whatever object the mind is directed, one experiences *samadhi*.”² With the same self-evidence that this body or this thought appeared to be mine, with the same (but how different!), self-evidence, I proclaim, “I am he whose glory is realized as “I” by all beings down to children and idiots,”³ and then only do I say, “My refuge is neither my mother, my father, my sons, nor any others. My supreme refuge is the foot placed by my Master on my head.”⁴

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¹ Shankaracharya, *Upadeshasahasri* (A Thousand Teachings), Chapter XVIII, v. 103.

² From “*Saraswati Rahasyopanishad*” quoted in *Drig-Drishya Viveka*.

³ From “*Svatmanirupanam*,” v. 106.

⁴ From “*Svatmanirupanam*,” v. 146.

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The translation of all but one of Shankaracharya's works quoted above is taken with a number of changes of my own from that of Sri S. Venkataramanan, published by G.A. Natesan & Co., Madras, under the title, "Select Works of Shankaracharya."

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*About this book ...*¹

John Levy here attempts to answer the question which has always puzzled mankind: 'What am I?'

To achieve his aim the author enlists the aid of Hindu philosophy, specifically the essential Hindu doctrine of Vedanta, 'the end of knowledge,' and its highest aspect of Advaita, or Non-Duality. Vedanta maintains a perfect balance of theory and practice and is therefore capable of immediate application.

Our essential being is something other than the mind and the body we claim to possess. The author demonstrates that in fact we cannot identify with either. It is the body that is hungry, feels cold. It is the mind that thinks, remembers and desires. A case of simple possession is mistaken for identity with the thing possessed.

'When I say I own a house I don't imply that I am a house. On the contrary, I cannot possibly be one. The sense of possessing a house is in no way different from the sense of possessing a mind or a body. A body, like a house, is an object, and so is a mind. But I am the possessor of the object and therefore not the object itself, in this case the body or the mind. In other words, if I possess a body and a mind, I am clearly other than the body or the mind.'

¹ From the back cover of *Immediate Knowledge and Happiness* as published in July 1979 by: THORSONS PUBLISHERS LIMITED, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire.

If man is not the body and mind he believes himself to be, what is he? John Levy answers that in his real nature man is being, consciousness, and bliss. He must become centred in his true self and this is accomplished by his separating himself from the body idea. In the words of the 'Ashtavakra Samhita', quoted by the author, 'If you separate yourself from the body and rest in consciousness, you will at once be happy, peaceful and free from bondage.'