SEVEN PATHS TO WISDOM - LOGIC OF THE INFINITE

PHILOSOPHY in Sri Aurobindo is quite different from what passes for it in the academies. It is in a sense a return to the point of view left behind by men whose pragmatical and social interests had made it useless. Man's diverse existence has made global and integral vision and perception and consideration and action impossible and abstract.

The integral conception of Reality or the perception of Reality as one Whole or Unity as in intellectual language system has however been the enduring instinct among philosophers. After all it has been found that even those who now only a fragment of reality seek to conceive of the entire Reality in terms of the known fragment. Generalizations from the partially known have grave defects and are almost false. It is true that the Upanishad does speak of 'that being known all things are known', and if one finds the taste of a crystal of sugar he can conclude that all sugar will taste sweet, or if one tastes a drop of the ocean then he can conclude that the Ocean's waters are saltish. But these analogical inferences have limits and have to be interpreted in the contexts of the original revelations.

Nor does it mean that the integral view is a composite view in which all the possible points of view are fitted in

to form a coherent whole as such. For the fitting in of all to form a coherent whole may prove to be a zig-saw puzzle.

Intellect has been used for the purposes of constructing a whole by both idealists and realists, monists as well as pluralists. For all the fundamental laws of thought are acceptable. The laws of identity, of contradiction and excluded middle had proved basic to any construction. Whatever impugns these laws in any manner must be deemed to be wrong. The law of non-contradiction between items of experience is a very effective instrument for putting together experiences of the most evanescent and fleeting kind in a systematic way. Though sensations are the material of system-building it must be clear that the same material may not form the material for all individual constructions. Thus we are led to construct several individual logical systems of reality, subjective, unverifiable and yet good enough for oneself. But a subjective reality created or constructed by one's mind on the single formula of non-contradictoriness is even when operating with universal reason unsatisfactory. And yet it is true that one never can step over one's own shadow. To use Plato's imaginary it is a construction made out of impressions not in their real nature but of shadows. Indeed to deal with effects solely even when aided by an almighty reason can never take us to the cause. Sesavat anumana,

reasoning to the cause from the effect can never in these cases lead us to conjecture the nature of the Reality. We can never recapture the nature of Reality from appearances even when the latter are bene fundatum.

The goal of idealistic philosophy is a coherent reality, for its axiom is that the coherent is the real, the incoherent cannot be the real, and even a little coherence grants reality, and as such there are in our constructions degrees of reality corresponding to degrees of coherence. But since such coherences are seriously handicapped by empiristic elements being the material for our constructions such a perfect whole of the Absolute is forever beyond reason, though fervently cherished as an ideal. It is a goal that never becomes actual or realized. Thus the dream of constructing a coherent whole out of sensate fragmentary ideas even with the help of the so-called Absolute Reason is utopian, if not Sysypian.

The empiristic ideal similarly whether it is radical or otherwise, rational or just associational, can never lead to a proper metaphysics of Reality. At best it is provisional, at worst it is skeptical. It would appear that to deny any metaphysic of Reality was the natural consequence of the uncritical acceptance (i) of ideas being constituents of reality or knowledge, and (ii) of denying that there are other ways of knowing or getting at the constituents of Reality than sensations or sense-

impressions. A logic of the human mind, or the finite mind as we shall call it, as well as the psychology of the sensate mind conspired to make all idealism and realism phenomenalistic and self-contradictory. A paradoxical result as it were arising from a consistent and allround application of the principle of non-self contradiction. But who pray would like to use any other criterion?

At the time Sri Aurobindo was writing his Magnum Opus, the Life Divine, this idealistic theory was the established thought, though its high respectability was being challenged by pluralistic and pragmatist and evolutionary thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic. Despite the thundering guns or irrational empiricism and abstract pluralism that threw to the winds the principle of non-self-contradiction officially, they could only substitute in its place a concealed version of the same, namely a logic of continuity or time or evolution or process. For there has hardly been an attempt to restore to Reality its most fundamental feature, its integral oneness in manyness, in which opposites are not only necessary to each other but are each other not by implication but by being or existence.

There is however nothing so very embrassing to philosophers of the high a priori road as the clear enunciation of their own fundamental assumptions, which remain irrational or inexplicable. Continuity does

not mean that contradiction is the essence of all process; a contradiction between the past and the present and the present and the future is atomistically considering irresolvable. It is not even or through any system of calculus that we can restore or construct an image of the Reality that constantly overflows all definitions of the finite mind or perceptions of the senstate mind. A rational dialectic of Hegal, logical and neat, culminated in the irrational dialectic of evolutionisms, and the march of the Absolute was not by means the construction of a coherent One reality, but a terrible dance of irrational categories that proliferated in a life and death struggle with one another, a dialectic that revealed the discontinuity and incoherent leaps of opposites in a Dionysic frenzy. However it was exciting to find that the finite mind, so very general or universal, was by a fate made to bless itself with irrational continuities and rational discontinuities. Thus arose a supreme discontent among philosophers and verily some had cried a halt to philosophizing, perhaps to give time to recover from the breath-taking culmination of Rational irrationality.

The first quarter of the century ended and the second quarter saw the emergency of pragmaticism and empiricism to respectability. Later absolutistism ignominously fell thanks to its politcalism; and pluralistic concepts began to be entertained. We found that the synthesis of the encyclopedists was sedulously

analysed, and several sciences, had begun to seek independent existence even like the dissected earthworm seeking a double existence. Thus economisms, psychologisms, linguistical and mathematical logistics, and positivisms separated from the main stream of philosophical synthesis and began to grow apart from each other. Similarly we find this development in all sciences also. All unities got severed and there was a feeling of comfort in the minds of these specialists that they had a circumscribed finite field of experiments and expertness. Philosophy however is something that is so vast and wide and too abstract and generalized to be expert in. The finite mind found pleasure in its little well, and was content to be sovereign there.

We have surely moved away from the synoptic thinkers. Is it not after all a realization that our mind cannot cope up with the magnitude of knowing and acting in a reality, commensurate with its needs. Sciences found themselves at once triumphant and defeated.

Sri Aurobindo emerged into the philosophic field 'unphilosophically' so to speak, as synthetiser of many movements of thought and expression and experience, both eastern and western. He was as he himself put it no academic philosopher in one of his letter. But as was recognized fully he had that same intensity of synoptic perception and comprehensive intuition that informed Plato, and Hegel, too, and he was much nearer the

former than the latter. The profound belief in the possibility of a metaphysic of Reality informed his most most-omniscient perceptions. The Reason in him had transcended very much the limits of finite reason. Kalajnana (knowledge of the parts however perfect) had yielded place to vijnana (knowledge of whole) or (kalajnana).

It is not as a comparative philosophy of Religion would have us believe a thinking so very compendiously and hard that results in an erudite piece of scholarship, informed by many views. Modern thinkers consider that a study of comparative philosophy or religion or rather a comparative study of these would yield us general laws of thought and faith. Modernism hugs to the discipline of the inductive method in this as in others; legitimate within certain limits, the synoptic is beyond its grasp. Intuition can never arise from the intensity or hardness of intellectual thinking, analytical or syncretical or synthetical. It is nowhere found that finite reason expires in the infinite reason, for the latter is forever beyond it. The true vijnana is not finite reason restored to its infinity being relieved from the limiting conditions of ignorance which have so to speak inverted it or refracted it so many times or so much as to present a distorted version of reality albeit a reality. The spiritual Vision is more truly the reason lifted above its finite

confines, from its perceptions of distortions of reality and experience. Such a reason is a different kind of reason, with a definite logic of its own, with its own perceptions and apprehensions, of which the known world of our perceptions may well be reflections. The reelections however are not unreal, in the sense, not existent experiences, but experiences which are verifiable to that consciousness and plane of being. Such experiences are different from such stuff as dreams are made up of. The realistic approach to the multiplicity of manyness in the Aurobindonian conception is what bridges the gulf raised by an idealistic metaphysics that converts all appearance to illusion proceeding from a beginningless and inexplicable Maya or power of illusion.

1. PRINCIPLE OF DIRECT REALISM

The logic of the Supermind then is firstly the acceptance of the levels of reality each of which has its own limited autonomy of being and is not contradicted by any higher level or even the highest level. This makes it possible for the Highest Mind or consciousness or Existence to support and reveal or veil the lower on their own terms, and laws of being. Unity or identity holds the manyness and diversity and does not annihilate it.

2. PRINCIPLE OF INTRINSIC VALUE OF THE MANY

The multiplicity has a perfection it its own being which can not be annulled by the aggregation of the many nor by the One in which the many have their basic being. The meaning o the many lies on the One even as the meaning of the many is realized in each one of the many. Thus the promise of the immortality and intrinsic value of the many is indispensable to the logic of real infinity.

3. PRINCIPLE OF RADICAL INCLUSIVENESS OF OPPOSITES

(a) It is not true to say that the law of contradiction is a characteristic of Reality, for the laws undergoes a reformulation that it is possible for opposites to co-exist when they are both real and not abstract. This law very much reminds us of the view of contingent facts which are contradictory can co-exist but not when the contradiction is between being and non-being and other such categories.

(b) The law of the excluded middle makes an unnatural exclusion for the sake of simplification of our ideas. Practical utility is at the back of disjunction. We

are usually expected to choose either this or that. But in higher way of appreciation or should we say in certain kinds of selection, we find that we do not wish to accept either/or but either/and. We have however to see that this entails the appreciation of the complementariness and harmony of opposites or contradictoriness, both being aspects of the Totality of Reality.

4.PRINCIPLE OF TRANSCENDENTAL IMMANENCE

Transcendence of the human valuations may entail giving up many formulations of the human mind. The emergence of new valuational concepts of instruments is a fact that we cannot lose sight of. For this purpose too it is necessary neither to relegate to unimportance the human values for the sake of the higher nor deny them any validity as false values. The integral Reality holds much that is transcendent to the human, even includes the subhuman, but in its concrete vision and activity it transforms their ignorance or rather their autonomy and unites them in the experience of the whole as a dynamic creative process.

5. PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRAL DIVERSITY OR PLURALITY

The relation of immanence to transcendence has been one of the problems of philosophy in so far as how the immanent can itself have the energy to transcend

itself. For the Infinite this is indeed the crux of manifestation and casual relationship. The positing of the poises of the infinite simultaneously descending into its other poises and ascending through them to itself explains the problem of the immanent effect and originative creation. The unity of the integrative process is explained along with the divergent multiplicity by one principle of integrative transcendence of the saccidananda.

6. PRINCIPLE OF DYNAMIC INTEGRATION

If dialectical thought is the strongest form of intellectual intuition as we have found it in Hegel and Henri Bergson (who has formulated it as two-fold frenzy), in Sri Aurobindo's logic of the Infinite it is the simultaneous reality of the manyness in play with oneness that is the strongest form of the Supermental intuition. Thus it becomes possible to perceive not the static or about static Absolute, but the Absolute in its creative or divine Evolutionary nature. The one is in the many even as the many are in the one. Indeed it is even possible to suggest that this truth is what makes one perceive the Whole in every part and every parting the Whole.

7. PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRAL APPREHENSION

A logic of negations can be said to be principle behind most illusionistic intellectual processes. A logic

of determinations cannot of course be excluded in any consideration of the former. The logic of the infinite would require a reformuation of the two principles so as to grant significance to the individual and determinations pertaining to him. In terms of the infinite then the determinations of the individual would be of the order of mutual implication of all in its nature and not as usually conceived that it is the subject of all judgment, as in idealistic logic. A mere organic relation will not help. Perhaps the nearest approach to it may be conceivably the mirroring of the whole in each and every part of Leibnitzian conception.

8. PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRAL PLAY & HARMONY OF THE INTEGRATIVE DIALECTIC

To the logic of the Infinite, the evolutionary order is not a contradiction as in the logic of the finite mind postulating a perfection as completing or completed and as such static. Evolution is not merely ascent of if nor a continuity of shooting out nor a process of oneness and manyness in a myriad ways. We do come across degrees of oneness at the one extreme and degrees of manyness at the other and intellect has identified the former with God and the latter with matter. But the logic of the infinite would discern the occult secret of the One is its manyness and the occult secret of the many is its oneness. To the supermind then the two terms do not bear the contradiction that

intellectual monisms and pluralisms see in such a formulation.

9. PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRAL MONISTIC EVOLUTION

Speaking of a metaphysical theory of evolution that shall explain all the biological theories, as Divine Evolutionisms, it breathes the aroma of a theism. Here even the concept of God in his manifold statuses in evolutionary descent and ascent does justice to the multiple unity of the different poises of the Nature known as matter, life and mind and other intermediate. It explains the emergence of the finite mind, out of the ignorance (concealed wisdom of the one in the many) and the integration of the levels that actually occurs in the organic being of man and in the superman after emancipation from the unconscious instinct and intellect. Ignorance becomes not the contradiction or negation of knowledge but an unconscious intelligence that organizes and induces a unity of the many, by contradiction, opposition, assimilation and struggle. The Divine Evolutionism is not a conjunctive formula satisfying the demands of the organic evolution up to man but precisely a dynamic logic of the Infinite in life as in thought where thought and life, culminate in a single pulse of eternal Being.