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Building an Intuitive Mentality: The Neo-Vedantic Knowledge Project of Sri Aurobindo

Debashish Banerji*

California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, Canada

Abstract

Post-Enlightenment philosophy, which is largely creative of and dominates the modern consciousness, has defined humanism in terms of rationality and its control over the irrational. This has led to our technological age but has also spawned counter philosophies critiquing the limits of reason and the epistemic possibilities of experience and intuition. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950) was an Indian thinker who was schooled in England and arrived at a cosmopolitan grasp of modernity, including the ideals of the Enlightenment and its limitations. Looking to the discursive and experiential traditions of India, particularly those of the Upanishads (Vedanta) he sought for hermeneutic keys to address the human possibilities of knowledge. In his reading of the Upanishads, he saw a fundamental division between Knowledge (Vidya) and Ignorance (Avidya) and a practical tradition (yoga) which negotiated this division by rejecting worldly or relative knowledge (Avidya) for a Knowledge-by-identity (Vidya). Whereas such a transcendentalism had been idealized even within the counter-movements of the Enlightenment as "the Eastern Enlightenment," Sri Aurobindo sought traces of an intuitive mediating consciousness which would enable a new kind of worldly knowledge based in Truth-Seeing (darshan) and Hearing (sruti). He has referred to this knowledge project as "building an intuitive mentality," a transformative process based on Vedantic knowledge and leading more to an integral consciousness than what we would call a mentality. Looking for the operations of absolute Knowledge in the Vidya that translate to operations of relative knowledge in the Avidya, he located four forms of intuition that could be cultivated and normalized towards the end of preparing such an intuitive consciousness and leading ultimately to an integral consciousness foundational to a divine collective life on earth. In this paper, I will outline these operations of knowledge and discuss the processes by which Sri Aurobindo sought to bridge our human "rational ignorance" (Avidya) to the integral knowledge (Vidya) spoken of in the Upanishads.

Keywords: Integral knowledge; Upanishad; Philosophy; Mentality

Abbreviations: AU: Aitareya Upanishad; IU: Isha Upanishad; KU: Katha Upanishad; KeU: Kena Upanishad; MU: Mundaka Upanishad; CWSA: Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo.

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Introduction

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) was an Indian nationalist, philosopher and spiritual teacher, who spent most of his school and college years in England, before returning to India to participate in India's anticolonial struggle and later become the philosopher- sage of Pondicherry. Schooled in London and at the University

of Cambridge, he understood very well the braided vectors of knowledge and power making up the fabric of modernity and originating in the intellectual revolution of the European Enlightenment. It is this grasp of the systemic and totalistic nature of Enlightenment thought and teleology that informed the anticolonial politics of Sri Aurobindo and several other educated Indians of his time, and that make their resistant gestures and

*Corresponding author:

Debashish Banerji

✉ debbanerji@yahoo.com

Haridas Chaidhuri Professor of Indian Philosophies and Cultures Doshi, Department of East-West Psychology, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, Canada.

Tel: (310) 641-9467

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projects continue to resonate with a postcolonial and postmodern potency. My consideration of Sri Aurobindo's "knowledge project" stems from an attention to this genealogy and engagement, which may be thought of as a critique of the "Enlightenment project" and its "correction" and/or "completion."

Hence, it behooves us to start with an understanding of Enlightenment epistemology as Sri Aurobindo encountered it in some of the best exemplars of the British and European knowledge academy. Enlightenment philosophy, though with its many variant strands and tensions, can be reduced to a few salient principles, which developed consistency by the end of the 18th century. These can be summarized as:

- (1) A faith in the "reasonableness" of the cosmos – i.e. the power of Reason (logos) as an organizing principle of the cosmos; with its corollary, the hierarchical and systemic nature of knowledge, reducible to a single or very few "grand theories."
- (2) A faith in human mind to comprehend the "reason" (logic) of the cosmos by the power of human rationality, qualitatively identical to cosmic Reason
- (3) The need to yoke all human effort in a systematic bid to uncover the reason of the cosmos – i.e. all its laws forming the grand systems theory of total knowledge.
- (4) The development of a systematic method and archival standards (the scientific method) to universalize the knowledge acquired as part of the ongoing worldwide academic research enterprise.

These principles constitute what is today called the logocentrism of the Enlightenment project, its central faith and investment in reason and logic. The all-round systemic nature of this "turning" in human history should not be underestimated. Not only is the faith of the Enlightenment one based on a systematic absolute epistemology (i.e. a single correct knowledge structure inclusive of everything), a systematic method universalized through space and time is required to establish it. This latter is all the more needed due to the inequality of time scales between human lives and the time required to arrive at "total knowledge." Human beings distributed in space and time and with limited personal time spans available for knowledge production, need to find a standardized language and classificatory formalisms to communicate in a manner conducive to additive knowledge accumulation and structuration. Such an accumulation of knowledge must also, of necessity, develop increasingly finer resolutions, leading to ever-increasing specialization.

Critiquing the Enlightenment

A number of critiques of the Enlightenment project have existed through its history, increasing in clarity and intensity in our times. For one, the telos of an absolute epistemology and the scientific method utilized to arrive at it may be more fitting to an objective material reality (the "hard sciences") than knowledge of the subjective world, studied through the "human sciences" of psychology, anthropology and the "social sciences;" or through the "humanities." The latter (i.e. the human sciences and the

humanities), constituting the pole of the "who" as against the "what" of the epistemological project, are yoked with difficulty to its goals and methods due to the impossibility of objectification of the self, the fuzziness of definable categories of experience and fibrous or rhizomatic complexity or multiplicity of its relationships rendering absolute classification suspect [1]. This has led to a number of results, prominent among which is the unevenness in the progress of modern knowledge, slanted towards a privileging of the "hard sciences" and technologies. As a corollary, this also implies a privileging of cognitive knowledge over other forms of knowledge, such as emotional knowledge, instinctive knowledge or forms of intuitive knowledge.

Related to this bias is also the complicity of power designs with this knowledge project ¹ [2]. A transcendental telos of knowledge is equivalent to the transformation of world to what the philosopher Martin Heidegger called "standing reserve", a reduction of objective and subjective reality to a static omni-database of "information resource," ripe for enjoyment, manipulation and exploitation by the "enlightened" transcendental Subject of knowledge. This subject is the initiator of the Enlightenment project, western white man. In the context of our present discussion, the epistemological critique of Sri Aurobindo, the intimate complicity of western knowledge production with colonialism comes to light here, a privileged ontology of having as against being or becoming. But its postcolonial and postmodern implications are no less destructive, a global contemporary condition of real-time memory technologies of recording and archiving (mnemotechnics), producing a consumable reality as a continuous simulacrum of virtuality, as presaged by thinkers such as Jean Baudrillard [3] and Bernard Stiegler [4].

What this image of knowledge as transcendental and integral static power dismisses is knowledge as emergence or becoming, the vitalism of duration and time. The needs for generation and deployment of knowledge in an existential life-world proceed through creative and purposive interactions that best characterized the progress of knowledge in the premodern world. In contrast, knowledge production for post-Enlightenment modernity has become a cognitive goal in and for itself, alienated from the life-world and possessing instead an inverse relation of the colonization of the life world, exploiting it through technology for capital advantage.

Apart from this, one may note that even at the purely objective level of material reality and the "hard sciences," the question of an additive epistemology leading to complete knowledge has increasingly been questioned, both due to confrontation with weird phenomena at the extreme edges of macro and nano matter, and the qualitative philosophical difference between parts and wholes. One may thus summarize the critiques of Enlightenment epistemology thus:

1. The faith in piecing together a single logical "systems theory of everything" is impossible and misplaced.
2. Through the creation of an absolutist exteriorized goal

¹ "We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth" (Foucault, 1980:93).

of knowledge generation, it yokes world humanity to its epistemological production and consumption machine, increasingly and perennially deferred, diversified and specialized.

3. It privileges having over being and becoming, ontologizing the human being as a static knowledge worker, increasingly dwarfed by the gigantism of its perennial proliferation.
4. The telos of such an epistemology positions it in alienation to and privilege over the lifeworld, making the latter vulnerable to colonization and exploitation by it.
5. It privileges cognitive knowledge over other forms of knowledge, inferiorizing, subjugating and obsoleting them.

As mentioned above, anticolonial thought in India responded to this problematic of Enlightenment epistemology in a variety of ways. One may draw attention to the attempt to draw knowledge production back to an individual and collective existential learning habitus in the “ashrama” community in the social and educational experiments of Tagore, Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo. But it was also clear that exclusive anti-modern epistemological models were ill adapted to survive in the ubiquitous and totalistic structuring of modern ontology; or rather, would lend themselves eminently to its museological and touristic industries, through the essentializing function of orientalism, as has been brought out so powerfully by Edward Said and his successors. In consequence of Said’s view, the collusive nature of orientalism and nationalism in colonized (or self-colonized) populations, leading to the development of a binary, the “spiritual East” as against the “materialist West,” produced the notion of an inverse Enlightenment with vague romanticized contents, as used in the instances of the Buddha or other spiritual personages of Asia. Whatever the humanism of such a category, it was clearly voided of rationality and worldliness and hence subject to patronizing cultural capitalization or dismissive eradication by a world hegemonic and logocentric modernity. But post-Saidean evaluation of the relationship between orientalism and nationalism has looked more carefully at the critical gap between the two, nationalist agency accepting the interpellation of orientalism to initiate a dialogic conversation [5]. One may think of a contemporary example of this in the Dalai Lama, for whom the romanticized orientalist opening to the inverse enlightenment of the Buddha, has provided the dialogic possibility of drawing attention to a science of levels of mind and non-personal mental agency.

Sri Aurobindo and the Intuitions of Neo-Vedanta

The origins of such a dialogic nationalism may be found at the turn of the 19th/20th century in the written and spoken ideas of figures such as Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. An interest in the scientific method, total or integral knowledge, and epistemology in general can be seen in the works of all these thinkers, whether in their engagements with western or eastern traditions and whether they affirm the positivist uses of these categories or problematize and/or extend them in new directions. For our purpose, we are particularly interested

in one of these thinkers, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh. Sri Aurobindo’s project became one, as we shall see, of positing not an inverse romantic Enlightenment, but an inverse integral Logos, which he called Supermind, transcending the distinction between subject and object but available subjectively and individually through processes of creative becoming. For this, the two key intuitions that he worked with need to be laid out at the outset. Sri Aurobindo received these intuitions from his studies into the Upanishads soon after his return from England. The first of these comes from the Mundaka Upanishad which Sri Aurobindo had translated by 1909. This Upanishad begins with the question “By knowing what does all this that is become known?” [6]. It then points to two kinds of knowing, “the higher and the lower” [6]. The lower is constituted by all forms of exteriorized knowledge; while the higher is the self-knowledge of Reality (Brahman), from which all manifestation proceeds as expression and self-presentation. Knowledge of this Logos is to be arrived at through self-knowledge, since it is “the Light of lights and the Self of selves”:

In a supreme golden sheath the Brahman lies, stainless, without parts. A Splendour is That, It is the Light of Lights, It is That which the self-knowers know [7].

Thus the first intuition is of subjective identification with an originary Logos, knowing which all may be known. The second is the distinction between a higher and a lower knowledge, which is also introduced in the Mundaka Upanishad. These two forms of knowledge are further refined and specified in other Upanishads as Vidya (Knowledge) and Avidya (Ignorance) respectively. The distinction between Vidya and Avidya is a pervasive one that runs through the Upanishads. The Isha Upanishad, for example, which Sri Aurobindo engaged with for a long period, and which came to form a foundation for his philosophy, poses this distinction as that between the knowledge of the one and the knowledge of the many, but does so in a way which Sri Aurobindo considered methodological and cutting to the root of the western enlightenment project [8]. According to this, all forms of indirect knowledge, including rational knowledge, arrived at by inference, through induction, deduction, analogy and experimental verification, are forms of Ignorance (Avidya). The term Knowledge (Vidya) can only be applied to a direct knowing, by identity of being – “I know because I am.”

To these one may add a third intuition, that of the modes of knowing. Sri Aurobindo intuited that human knowledge was of a variety of kinds, due to differences and discontinuities in modes of experience. In the Brahmananda Valli of the Taittiriya Upanishad, he found confirmation in terms of five bodies with their independent beings and qualitative natures in the human system. Of these, the first three belonged to the Avidya (Ignorance) and were normal to human beings, while the last two were transcendental and belonged to the Vidya (Knowledge), hence presently abnormal to human beings. The bodies of Ignorance are the annamaya, pranamaya and manomaya shariras, which he translated as the physical, vital and mental bodies. Each of these could be said to have its own modalities and forms of knowledge – the mental cognitive, the vital emotional and volitional and the physical, volitional and based in skill or

dexterity. The intuition of discontinuities between these modes of existence may be arrived at existentially, but Sri Aurobindo also related these to evolutionary emergence in successive discontinuous steps – non-living matter, life-in-matter, rationality in living matter. The fourth body, the causative or *karana sharira* Sri Aurobindo equated with Supermind. He saw references to this transcendental sheath elsewhere in the Upanishads as *vijnana* or comprehensive, qualitative knowledge-consciousness. He found further confirmation for this in Chapter 7 of the Bhagavad Gita, where Knowledge is related to the self-awareness of Reality in its two modes, essential and comprehensive. There must be an essential self-awareness of Reality, a self-evident consciousness of Being that can energize itself as ideation and comprehend its possibilities ideationally. This essence of ideation is *jnana*, while its consciousness of itself with its parts and proportions as a whole is *vijnana*. Such a Logos, however is not primarily cognitive in the mental sense and not an arrangement of finite knowledge, but an ideational principle that maintains its essence in an infinite self-presentation. He refers to it thus in his Essays on the Gita:

We have to get away from this mental and egoistic view to the true unifying knowledge, and that has two aspects, the essential, **jnana**, and the comprehensive, **vijnana**, the direct spiritual awareness of the supreme Being and the right intimate knowledge of the principles of his existence, Prakriti, Purusha and the rest, by which all that is can be known in its divine origin and in the supreme truth of its nature [9].

To think symbolically, if space can be thought of as an appropriate symbol for an undifferentiated self-extension of free Being, an extra-worldly transcendence; the light of the sun, its power of illumination, may be thought of as the essence of Knowledge, *jnana* and the solar orb, a concentration of Knowledge as self-presentation of Being in its essential principles, the comprehensive Knowledge, *vijnana*, where its infinite possibilities are co-present without violating its ideational self-presentation. Such a symbolism is employed in the Vedic hymns to the solar godhead – e.g.

By the Truth is veiled that ever-standing Truth of yours where they unyoke the horses of the sun; there the ten hundreds stand still together; that One – I have beheld the greatest of the embodied gods [10].

This symbolism is repeated in the Isha Upanishad:

The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, for the law of the truth, for sight.

O Fosterer, O sole Seer, O Ordained, O illumining Sun, O Power of the Father of creatures, marshal thy rays, draw together thy light; the Lustre which is thy most blessed form of all, that in Thee I behold. The Purusha there and there, He am I [8].

In both these cases, a concealment and revelation are spoken of. On one side is the appearance, on the other side is the truth which gives meaning to the appearance. These are the Avidya and the Vidya respectively. One also sees here that the transition from the one to the other is mediated by the solar light, the Knowledge principle. However, this is not the principle of mental cognition, but includes this principle and transcends it. The

knowledge project of transitioning from Ignorance to Knowledge then becomes one of finding relations in knowledge between the two. If one can characterize the knowledge of the Avidya in terms of the three modalities of mental, vital and physical knowledge or the four attributes of cognitive, emotional, volitional and skilful knowledge, may one find corresponding modalities in Supermind (*vijnana*) of the Vidya, from which these derive and ask whether there are processes of transforming the modes of knowledge in the Avidya to their corresponding modalities in the Vidya. This becomes the Neo-Vedantic knowledge project of Sri Aurobindo.

The Differentiations of Knowledge

In Chapter V, verse 2 of the Aitereya Upanishad, Sri Aurobindo was to find the originary differentiations of supramental knowledge. Among the names of Prajnana (Wisdom) enumerated here, we find the first four as *Vijnana*, *Prajnana*, *Samjnana* and *Aajnana*.

Ny_v_tAE_n*_An_y nAmD_yAE_n BvE t_

This which is the heart, is mind also. *Samjnana aajnana vijnana prajnana medha drishti dhriti mati manishi juth smriti sankalpa kratu asuh kamah vasha* etc. All these indeed are but names of Prajnana (AU V:2, author's trans.).²

Sri Aurobindo interprets these first four as the four primary modes of supramental knowing, two comprehensive and two apprehensive. Of these the originary comprehensive knowledge is *Vijnana*, which may thus be called integral knowledge. The other three may be thought of as specialized operations of *Vijnana* – *prajnana* as cognitive, *samjnana* as sensate and *aajnana* as volitional. In the Vidya, *Vijnana* is the knowledge by identity of the One (*Jnana*) exercised in a comprehensive awareness of its totality and its infinite ideational proportionalities. Sri Aurobindo refers to these ideas as Real-Idea or reality as idea, self-presentations of reality rather than representations. *Prajnana* objectifies these ideational parts according to their proportions, taking a position as of witness to its cosmic possibilities. *Samjnana* pervades these cosmic possibilities sensing qualitative distinctions as differentiations of the Same; and *Aajnana* enters into each discrete possibility as a point of prospection of the Whole controlling it by immanence of Will. In each of the specialized operations of *Prajnana*, *Samjnana* and *Aajnana*, *Vijnana* acts and is experienced as the direct Knowledge of the Whole in the parts.

In Avidya, this presence of *Vijnana* becomes obscured and each of the specialized operations seems to act independently and discontinuously. We can easily see how these map to the modes of mental, vital and physical knowledge in the Avidya. Still, a little reflection will clarify how each of the human modes of knowing imply all these modes with one predominating and the others latent. For example, physical skill is primarily a volitional mode of knowledge with sensate and cognitive modes latent and co-existing, vital instinct proceeds from a primary sensing (which may involve one or more senses or an undifferentiated “being

² Sri Aurobindo translated this Upanishad at an early unspecified period, prior to his development of the ideas of the modes of supramental knowledge. Thus his translation, available in (Sri Aurobindo 2001: 204) has not been followed here. He develops these ideas more elaborately in his commentary on another Upanishad, the Kena (2001: 49-62).

of sensation”) but carries a volitional and cognitive knowledge implicit in it; and mental cognition primarily uses a conceptual intelligence but includes an imaginative sensing and a mental will (intentionality) implicit in its operations. However, in the Avidya, the obscuration of Vijnana, the specialization of these modes of knowing and a hierarchization in their emergence have rendered them into conditioned agents tied to an objectifying apparatus. The fragmented ontology of Avidya includes such an objectified operation of the senses. The Katha Upanishad draws attention to this:

The Self-born has set the doors of the body to face outwards, therefore the soul of a man gazes outward and not at the Self within: hardly a wise man here and there, desiring immortality, turns his eyes inward and sees the Self within him [6].

Summarizing these distinctions and relations in knowledge in terms of Vedantic terminology, Sri Aurobindo identifies three knowledge ontologies, *adhibhautika*, *adhidaivika* and *adhyatmika*. In *The Life Divine*, he characterizes these respectively as knowledge by outer contact, knowledge by inner contact and knowledge by identity [11]. Normal human knowledge, acquired through sense contact (or technological extension of the senses) and processing of sense knowledge by the reason (or technological extension of logical and computational operations) is knowledge by outer contact. This is the knowledge of the *bhutas* or material elements (*adhibhautika*) through the indirect epistemology of the western Enlightenment. At the other end of the spectrum, knowledge by identity is achieved through identification with *jnana* and *vijnana* of the supramental Logos. This knowledge by identity is the knowledge of the *atma* or Self of all selves (*adhyatmika*). In between is what is characterized as the knowledge of the gods (*devas*) or *adhidaivika* knowledge. This is the knowledge by inner contact which forms a bridge between knowledge by external contact and knowledge by identity. As a bridge, it is this “knowledge by inner contact” which becomes the “intuitive mentality” that Sri Aurobindo believes needs to be normalized in the human being as a necessity of his Neo-Vedantic knowledge project. For this the passage quoted from the Katha Upanishad itself provides the key to the primary turning necessary – a inward movement of consciousness and a seeking for internal sources of contact. We also realize that such a movement can occur along the lines of the three operations of knowledge outlined above – cognitive, sensate/emotional and volitional/skilful.

Around 1912, Sri Aurobindo developed seven lines of yoga practice, each with four principal goals, to which he gave the name *sapta chatusthaya* or seven quartets. He used this schematic to note down his experiments in consciousness in diary notes, mainly over the period 1912-1920, which have presently been compiled in two volumes as *The Record of Yoga*. Of the seven quartets, one pertained to Knowledge and was characterized in terms of the Vedantic term for comprehensive supramental knowledge, *Vijnana*. In this Quartet of Knowledge (*Vijnana Chatusthaya*), he detailed the knowledge project referred to above in terms of four goals related to the development of an intuitive mentality. These were a set of spatial intuitions (*jnanam*) involving cognition (*jnanam* of thought - *prajnana*), sense (*jnanam* of experience - *samjnana*) and volition (*jnanam* of action - *aajnana*), a set of

temporal intuitions (*trikaladrishi*) dealing with prediction and direct perception of temporal events in past and present, eight paranormal powers dealing with cognition, sensation, volition and experience (*ashtasiddhi*) and an access to integral supramental knowledge (*vijnana*) through transcendence (*samadhi*) [12]. Though much of these experiments go beyond the scope of the present essay, I will try to outline the basics of the first three.

Cognitive Knowledge

While dealing with the transformation of cognition (*prajnana*) into an intuitive mentality, Sri Aurobindo also points to the extension of this activity to the feelings (*samjnana*), will (*aajnana*) and psychic activities:

The most prominent change will be the transmutation of the thought heightened and filled by that substance of concentrated light, concentrated power, concentrated joy of the light and the power and that direct accuracy which are the marks of a true intuitive thinking. It is not only primary suggestions or rapid conclusions that the mind will give, but it will conduct too with the same light, power, joy of sureness and direct spontaneous seeing of the truth the connecting and developing operations now conducted by the intellectual reason. The will also will be changed into this intuitive character, proceed directly with light and power to the thing to be done, *kartavyam karma*, and dispose with a rapid sight of possibilities and actualities the combinations necessary to its actions and its purpose. The feelings also will be intuitive, seizing upon right relations, acting with a new light and power and a glad sureness, retaining only right and spontaneous desires and emotions, so long as these things endure, and when they pass away, replacing them by a luminous and spontaneous love and an *ananda* that seizes at once on the right *rasa* of its objects. All the other mental movements will be similarly enlightened and even too the *pranic* and sense movements and the consciousness of the body. And usually there will be some development also of the psychic faculties, powers and perceptions of the inner mind and its senses not dependent on the outer sense and the reason [13].

He further divides the *jnana* of thought to the four powers of *drishti*, *shruti*, *smriti* and *viveka*. These can be translated as sight, hearing, memory and discrimination respectively. These four forms of cognitive knowledge form a hierarchy, a higher and lower pair, moving from knowledge by inner contact (intuition) to knowledge by identity. The higher pair consists of *drishti* and *shruti*, and the lower of *smriti* and *viveka*. *Drishti* and *shruti*, aspects of knowledge by identity, are translated by Sri Aurobindo as Truth-seeing or “revelation” and Truth-hearing or “inspiration.”

If “hearing” and “seeing” are related to direct and divine knowledge, “remembering” is a form of knowledge by inner contact, an intuition. It arises because we carry within ourselves the hidden root of Oneness which was present in the *prajnana* but has veiled itself in the *Avidya*. However, though hidden, it is within us and we can “remember” it. This intuition in the nature of a psychic memory of Origin, of the One Self in all selves, is what we often think of as faith. Faith is often mistaken for indoctrinated sectarian belief, but must be distinguished from it. In Sri Aurobindo’s words, “(Faith) is an intuition not only waiting for experience to justify it, but leading towards experience” [14].

The other form of knowledge in this pair is viveka. Sri Aurobindo refers to viveka as discrimination. Discrimination refers to the distinction between right and wrong, what is to be chosen and what rejected. This is a cognitive skill, a spontaneous improvised selection from a variety of possibilities, a practical knowledge of choice, proportion, priority and emphasis. Viveka arises in the rational intelligence as judgment. At the human level, the development of this intuitive discrimination lies in a spontaneous certitude based in a knowledge by identity with the One. The first of these, smriti, comes to us from the depths of the heart, the psychic sources of immanence, as these emerge with the purification and equality of the desires and emotions; the second, viveka comes from above, as the mind becomes more silent and receptive to self-evident cosmic or supramental knowledge by identity. The heart and the mind thus become channels for these intuitions. We see as in a flash what is pre-existent and how things are to be done. These intuitions prepare the consciousness for the operations of the higher pair of revelation and inspiration, properties of knowledge by identity.

The higher pair of the Jnanam of cognition is drishti and shruti, the faculties, respectively, of revelation and inspiration, or truth-seeing and truth-hearing. This requires an ascent beyond thought, where truth represents itself in visionary and vibratory modes. Drishti and Sruti imply the existence of faculties of divine representation, by which the One becomes manifest to itself in varied sensible form. They are objectifications of essence as sense. Thus they would seem to be operations of samjnana within the prajnana. Here drishti or revelation would be prajnana closer to its original working as an objectifying knowledge, while shruti would be objectification operating as immanence or becoming, and hence passing into samjnana. Human seeing and hearing could then be thought of as faculties which have their higher origin in self-objectifying knowledge by identity of the One. Existing impersonally as powers of cosmic mind and Supermind, these faculties have entered into the fragmentation of the Ignorance as instruments of indirect knowledge, human sight and hearing (AU:II). But if our seeing and hearing, our eyes and ears, were to resist nature's outward pull and open to their inner potential, this could initiate a progression where, tuned to a cosmic key, these visionary and auditory capacities could rise beyond thought to realms of revelation and inspiration. In their inner operations, such as in dream or trance, seeing and hearing may open us to secret understanding in the form of symbols or clairvoyance/clairaudience. These senses can thus be made more detached and receptive to intimations of truth-vision and truth-audience, forming a yoga of seeing and hearing.

Sri Aurobindo relates the lower and higher pairs of intuitive knowledge as a progression necessary in establishing the Jnanam or Knowledge-consciousness in us. In the chapter The Gradations of the Supermind in The Synthesis of Yoga, he shows how these two pairs are related, and why they are necessary to each other:

The two higher powers make a higher intuitive gnosis. Acting as separate powers in the mentality, they too are not in themselves sufficient without the companion activities. The revelation may indeed present the reality, the identity of the thing in itself and add something of great power to the experience of the conscious

being, but it may lack the embodying word, the out-bringing idea, the connected pursuit of its relations and consequences and may remain a possession in the self, but not a thing communicated to and through the members. There may be the presence of the Truth, but not its full manifestation. The inspiration may give the word of the Truth and the stir of its dynamis and movement, but this is not a complete thing and sure in its effect without the full revelation of all that it bears in itself and luminously indicates and the ordering of it in its relations. The inspired intuitive mind is a mind of lightnings, lighting up many things that were dark. But the light needs to be canalized and fixed into a stream of steady lustres that will be a constant power for lucidly ordered knowledge. The higher gnosis by itself in its two soul powers would be a mind of spiritual splendours living too much in its own separate domain, producing perhaps invisibly its effect on the outside world but lacking the link of a more close and ordinary communication with its more normal movements that is provided by the lower ideative action. It is the united, or else the fused and unified action of the four powers that makes the complete and fully armed and equipped intuitive gnosis [13].

Knowledge of Time

Vijnana includes an aspect of temporal intuition, enumerated by Sri Aurobindo as trikaladrishti, or the "triple time vision" [7]. This implies the power of prophecy but also of cosmic memory, both backward and forward in time. In terms of the reversal of time's arrow, it implies the directly experienced knowledge of the past, not an imagined or remembered knowledge, as in a mental memory-image. Though, in its origin this is a power natural to Vijnana or Supermind, by dint of Time being its subjective ontology - we could call it poetically the owner of the house of undivided Time - a beginning approach to such experiences can be attempted through a purification of the senses and the discovery of a sense behind the specialized senses, what one may call, following the contemporary French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, a "being of sensation" [12]. In Sankhya psychology, this essence of sense is called manas. Sri Aurobindo refers to it as the "sixth sense," the consciousness of the sense-mind. Manas represents Samjnana of Vidya in the Avidya and the development of an intuitive bridge to supramental Samjnana can be sought here.

Sankhya psychology identifies a subconscious mentality, chitta, pervading Matter and recording traces of all phenomenal impressions, which can be accessed by the sense-mind, manas [13], through direct inner contact. Similarly, the sense mind or sixth sense can contact mental impressions of phenomena remote in space and time. Events to come precipitate their images in a subtle physical medium and the sense mind may develop the capacity to receive these images subliminally. The manas can use any of the senses as its instrument to receive these impressions, or it may operate directly through a mental sentience translating itself telepathically into knowledge. The development of such an ability through the inner possibilities of the senses and the sense mind, manas, is one approach towards the growth of the triple time vision or trikaladristi as a temporal intuition of Vijnana.

A direct knowledge by identity of events both experienced in the body and remotely would constitute the fullness of

our knowledge of the present. But this too must start with an intuitive grasp through the sense mind (manas) extending itself in identification with its objects of immediate and remote experience. Similarly, in approaching prophetic knowledge of the future, one may make use of indirect tools of divination, using these as channels through which the manas may contact the images of the future. Such indicative means of prophecy may include the common predictive arts of astrology, numerology, etc. Sri Aurobindo frequently utilized a means he referred to as sortilege [7]. Sortilege is the random opening of the pages of a book – one concentrates and opens the pages randomly, and allows one's eyes to fall on a passage. This is taken to be a message relating to a specific question whose answer one seeks. From such means, one may progress towards the truth-vision (drishti) and truth-audition (shruti) discussed earlier, which are powers of knowledge proper to Supermind and carry the certitude of truth in the experience of the future [12].

Sri Aurobindo's diaries are replete with many interesting examples of his development of trikaldrishti, with and without the use of divinatory means. To develop and test these means, he conducted many experiments on animals and humans in his neighborhood - the flight of crows, the flitting of butterflies, the movement of ants. For example, he observed butterflies moving from plant to plant, and attempted to enter the mind of a butterfly [7]. He recorded his intuition and the actual result. These experiments were conducted with the impersonality of a scientist - he recorded faithfully instances of success, failure and partial success.

Another means utilized by Sri Aurobindo for developing trikaldrishti leads us to the telepathic means of what he called vyapti and prakamya, belonging to the "eight paranormal powers" or ashta-siddhi.

The Eight Occult Powers

There is a reference to "eight paranormal powers" (ashtasiddhi) in Chapter III (Vibhuti Pada) of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Sri Aurobindo's enumeration of these powers coincides with some of Patanjali's, but even the coincident ones assume meanings different from their traditional interpretations. It is interesting to note that these "eight powers" are classified under the Quartet of Knowledge. This is because the knowledge of the senses, feelings, actions, and that of the body are included in its purview. Under ashtasiddhi, Sri Aurobindo classes two perfections of cognitive knowledge (prajnana and samjnana), three perfections of knowledge as power (aajnana), and three perfections of knowledge as being (also aajnana) [12].

The siddhis of knowledge as cognition are the two telepathic powers introduced under trikaldrishti, prakamya or perception and vyapti, or reception and communication. Prakamya implies perception by the purified senses or directly by the manas or sixth sense. The sixth sense is the origin of synaesthesia, the sense behind the five senses. Thus, it is this essence of sense that can sense directly what any of the senses can. The rationale for experiences of synaesthesia, such as recorded experiences of sense transference like tasting colours or smelling images, under hallucinogens, can be attributed to the manas becoming activated independently

and emerging in these experiences. But the manas can also be made to emerge more permanently to the front of the sensory system and be the master of the five senses. If this happens, one can sense without using the normal senses: a blind man can by-pass the eyes and see, for example. This is also a part of the progression of prakamya. Through its development, we start receiving perceptions of hidden or distant objects, scenes or events – or those belonging to other planes of existence, or events belonging to the past or future from present objects, as discussed under trikaldrishti. This includes the telepathic power to receive thoughts, feelings and sensations of others in the present, past or future. This is the scope of prakamya or purified perception as an aspect of the eight powers but also of the triple time-knowledge – trikaldrishti [7].

The other paranormal telepathic power is vyapti [7]. Vyapti can be receptive or communicative and works in tandem with prakamya. Receptive vyapti is when thoughts, feelings and sensations of others are experienced by ourselves. Whereas prakamya is related to perception, vyapti is related to intense emotional affect and physical sense experience. Sri Aurobindo gives the example of the Bengali sage, Sri Ramakrishna who once exclaimed that he felt the whips of a bullock driver on his body. Outside, indeed, there was a driver whipping his bullock and, without knowing it, Ramakrishna, identified in a part of his consciousness with the bullock, experienced its lashes. The experience of stigmata by Christian mystics can also be taken as an example. In mystic literature of all traditions, there have been records of those who have had this kind of transference of physical or emotional experience, often without knowing the source. Deep empathy is another avenue for the development of this capacity. This kind of power is the receptive aspect of vyapti. It is a way of extending one's emotional and physical receptivity into the complete universality of experience. The other aspect is communicative vyapti. This operates in the reverse direction, where thoughts, feelings and sensations may be sent out or made to be experienced by others [12].

The siddhis of power or of knowledge-will are aishwarya [7] or the action of will, ishita [7] or the action of lipsa [7], a desireless aspiration, and vashita the action of suggestion or vyapti. The first of these is a power of mental will, the second of emotional will and the third of the essence of will. Action of the mental will, aishwariya, implies that one possesses an intimate internal comprehension of things or beings around one so that one can make them will something. This action of will can occur at such an independent level of being that it bypasses the thinking mind, the knowledge is implicit in the will – an invincible knowledge-will that carries out what it wishes in one's surroundings or in the world. This is also a perfection which comes through identity with the One, the assumption of the power of the One over its constituents through identity is the root of aishwarya as an action of will.

Ishita as an action of lipsa or emotional will, and has more to do with reception rather than direction. This implies the power of aspiration or prayer, invoking a response from a greater cosmic or divine Will. Sri Aurobindo indicates that all human beings utilize this power unconsciously to some extent.

Finally, there is vashita [7] or the action of vital suggestion. Here, Sri Aurobindo describes having inner control over the natures of things so that when one speaks to them, they obey. If the nature, prakriti, of a being is identified with so perfectly that there is a sense as if speaking to oneself, the control seems automatic. It obeys, not because it is an external will, but because it's a will that completely understands it and is identified with it. Once again, one can see how this siddhi too, can only reach its perfection in Supermind, as an aspect of the Aajnana of the One.

Conclusion

The powers of being and the identity with Vijnana through trance or Samadhi are areas that exceed the scope of this essay but can be read about in Sri Aurobindo's diaries (The Record of Yoga) [7] and in his text on yoga, The Synthesis of Yoga [13]. The above forms of knowledge prepare the consciousness by developing an intuitive mentality of cognition, sensation, emotion and volition, leading towards a knowledge by identity. The normalization of such an intermediate power of knowledge by internal contact can be thought of as the Neo-Vedantic knowledge project of Sri Aurobindo.

Alternative epistemological projects arising out of a critique of post-Enlightenment rationality, are also prominent in modern European (continental) philosophy. One may find an attempt to arrive at intuitive knowledge in the phenomenology of Husserl, the ontology of Heidegger and the ontogenesis/process philosophy of Bergson and Whitehead. A detailed discussion of these attempts or methods and their comparison with Aurobindo's project is beyond the scope of this article, but it can be noted that there is a good deal of literature concerning these alternative foundations of knowledge. It is also important to note that in all these thinkers and others, such as Gilles Deleuze, philosophy becomes psychological and practical, in a turn way from epistemological descriptology to methods of consciousness, making possible new foundations for epistemology.

Fred Hanna [15] has written much about the intuitive bases of knowledge sought by Husserl and Heidegger [16,17]. Husserl critiqued the indirect and conditioned nature of scientific knowledge [16] and his phenomenological reduction and Heidegger's being-towards-death are both attempts to purify the cognitive criteria and arrive at direct knowledge. These attempts have been analyzed by Hanna as transpersonal methods leading to states of being from which the being of the world and its objects may be directly intuited. Hanna likens these methods to Buddhist mindfulness and the witness consciousness (Purusha) of Sankhya and Yoga. Such an altered foundation would correspond to the Gita's idea of an essential knowledge-consciousness (jnana) from which specialized knowledge of objects (vijnana) may be had through a direct contact of consciousness. In terms of Sri Aurobindo's categories of intuition, this kind of specialized knowledge could be thought of as an operation of prajna, providing cognitive intuition. This likeness is brought out more clearly if one relates Sri Aurobindo's intuitive categories with Heidegger's text "What is Called Thinking" [18].

Henri Bergson expressed a dissatisfaction similar to that of Husserl in the acceptance of Kantian foundations of indirect

scientific knowledge and sought for an intuitive access to direct knowledge. Rather than ontological, his approach was ontogenetic and relied on the continuity of world-becoming in which all subjects participate, and their access to this continuity through the durational intuition of time [19,20]. Gilles Deleuze [21] has discussed Bergson's methodical approach to arrive at such a memory-intuition through a cognitive process of discrimination in his monograph on Bergson. Such a method, though it may follow some cognitive steps, leads to what Bergson refers to as a vitalist intuition. A vitalist intuition includes affective and volitional dimensions and can thus be related to samjnana and aajnana of Aurobindo. What may be considered a similar vitalist intuition of world-becoming can be found in Whitehead's idea of ontogenesis through prehension and concrescence [22]. Whitehead's intuition category, prehension, is a primitive sensing which is prior to the differentiation/specialization of the individual senses and their direction by rational will or intentionality. If Bergson's duration privileges affective durational intuition as the basis for volitional intuition, perhaps it is the reverse with Whitehead – prehension is sensation and volitional prior to being affective. In any case, both Bergson and Whitehead could be said to inaugurate the modern thinking of non-cognitive forms of direct intuition, sensational, affective, volitional and somatic; in Aurobindian terms, the intuitions of samjnana and aajnana. Thus Aurobindo's attempts to posit a praxeology leading to revised psychological foundations for knowledge, carried out as part of an anticolonial critique, can be constellated with the internal critique of Enlightenment epistemology by modern and continental philosophy, as carried out by the philosophers mentioned above and the lineages of contemporary thinkers basing themselves on their guidance.

To conclude our discussion on the development of an intuitive mentality, one may draw attention to the importance given by Sri Aurobindo to the development of a mental impersonality befitting a scientist and the need to test each step of the way in these experiments leading to an intuitive mentality. For this, the primary power necessary to develop among all those discussed above is given by him as viveka or discrimination:

The importance of viveka for the purposes of man's progress in his present stage is supreme. At present in the greatest men, the powers of the vijnana act not in their own power, place and nature but in and through the intellect, as helpers of the intellect and occasional guides. Directly we get an intuition or revelation, the intellect, memory, imagination, logical faculties seize hold of it and begin to disguise it in a garb of mingled truth and error, bringing down Truth to the level of the nature, samskaras and preferences of a man instead of purifying and elevating his nature and judgments to the level of the Truth. Without viveka these powers are as dangerous to man as they are helpful. The light they give is brighter than the light of the intellect but the shadow which the intellect creates around them is often murkier than the mist of ignorance which surrounds ordinary intellectual knowledge. Thus, men who use these powers ignorantly often stumble much more than those who walk by the clear though limited light of the intellect. When these powers begin to work in us we must be dhira and sthira and not be led away by our enthusiasm. We must give time for the viveka to seize on our thoughts and intuitions, arrange them, separate their intellectual

from their vijñanamaya elements, correct their false extensions, false limitations, misapplications, and assign them their right application, right extension, right limitation, make, in the image of the Upanishad, the vyūha [which means formation], or just marshalling of the rays of the sun of knowledge, suryasya rashmaya. Knowledge is not for the hasty mind but only for the dhira [the patient], who can sit long, accumulating and arranging his store and does not rush away with fragments like a crow darting off with the first morsel of food on which it can feed [7].

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