Chapter - VI

Consciousness and Being

In the previous chapters we have discussed the meaning of Consciousness as interpreted by different philosophers — we have tried to understand it from both the Eastern and the Western view points. Among such view points we included Idealist, Realist and Materialist attitudes. The view point of Sri Aurobindo was also placed in relation to these thoughts. We have also discussed the integrative power of Consciousness, Levels of Consciousness, development of human consciousness to the highest level through Integral Yoga as established by Sri Aurobindo, the great philosopher of contemporary India.

But this last and concluding chapter is devoted to a detailed discussion of the concept of Being to determine in which sense Sri Aurobindo understands the word. This will be done with an analysis of the views of the Greek philosophers
like Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle — philosophers of the classical period. Hegel's view of Being will also be included. Further, a discussion of the concept of Being as understood by Existentialist thinkers — Kierkegaard and Heidegger will also be referred to. It will be our aim to show whether what Sri Aurobindo understands by the Supreme Consciousness and what the philosophers call Being are in reality the same.

It is the Being which reveals itself in all the objects of the universe. Sri Aurobindo's idea of Consciousness may also be nothing but the idea of Being. Firstly, we have to enquire into the nature of Being as realised by different philosophers and to find out whether Sri Aurobindo would call the Supreme Consciousness Being.

The word Being is a Western concept though similar notions may be found in Indian thought. The word Being has been interpreted by different philosophers in different ways but almost all philosophers are willing to consider Being as the first principle of their doctrine and realise that Being is the ultimate Reality or the totality of Existence.

It is true that there are different branches of human knowledge such as Mathematics, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, etc. These branches of knowledge deal with definite ways, such as being as quantity, being as motion and being as life. But neither of these branches deals with being as
being. But it is only Metaphysics that deals with being as
being, considering it as the first principle of the universe.
The fundamental ambiguity of the notion of being arises if we
ask the question regarding the primacy and universality of being.

Here we must remember that the word Being may be written
with a capital letter and with a small letter, while the
small letter indicates a particular being, the capital
letter indicates the totality of beings. But what character-
ises Being or being, is present in both. The interpre-
tation of being may be done from two aspects: the first
consideration of being is a noun, that is to say, it character-
eses being itself, a common property which belongs to
all. The second characteristic is the present participle
of the verb to be, which signifies "..... the very act whereby
any given reality actually is or exists." This act
'to be' is in contradiction to what is called 'a being'.

It is true that being is thinkable apart from actual existence
but the reverse is not true, i.e., the actual existence is un-
thinkable apart from being. So being minus actual existence
is the first principle of Metaphysics. But this consider-
ation is due to the simple reason that it is impossible to
conceive existence itself. A remarkable statement in support
of Being, is found in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, which
is similar to the ontological proof of the existence of God.

1. Etienne Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, Canada,
Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952, p. 3.
"Being", Kant says, "is evidently not a real predicate or a concept of something that can be added to the concept of a thing." So Kant tells us that there is no difference between the conceptual content of an existing thing and the conceptual content of the same thing conceived as not existing. This shows that Being may not be existence; it may be just the conceptual framework of all existing things. But without an understanding of Being, we cannot say how a thing exists as such. To understand this, we have to discuss the concept of Being as analysed by different philosophers and have to consider how far their views give an adequate and comprehensive sense of Being and explain the nature of existent things.

Section I: Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle

The problem of Being is an ever important problem in philosophy — both the Indian and the Western. In the early Greek philosophy, the philosophers faced a problem that was: What stuff is reality made of? This question no doubt strikingly indicates the fundamental question of the human mind. So they tried their best to give an answer to this question. They attempted to reduce nature to water.

then to fire, until and unless they hit upon the right answer to the question by saying that primary stuff of the reality is Being. So it can be stated that Being is the common property that is shared by all that which is. This Being is the ultimate and fundamental element of reality. The predecessors of Parmenides identified Being with water, fire, without precisely determining the meaning of those terms. In this context Parmenides was bold enough in giving the answer to the question 'what is Being?' He says that which is, is Being. This Being is both universal and unique and naturally it has no cause. So one cannot say that '.... it once was or that it is.' 3 So Being is eternal and is not subject to change and division. From this interpretation of Being, it is clear to us that the question of 'non-being be' or any intermediate condition between existence and non-existence is meaningless. In Parmenides' own words, 'it is necessary that being either is absolutely or is not,' 4 and, '.... since nobody would ever dream of maintaining that being either is absolutely or is not,' 5 and, since nobody would ever dream of maintaining that being is not, there is but one single path left open to philosophical speculation, 'namely that being is.' 6

4. Quoted from Etienne Gilson, op.cit., p. 8.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
From the above consideration of Being as stated, it is clear to us that Being to Parmenides is no doubt the primary stuff out of which reality is made and is the common property which belongs to everything. Everything in the world, including the world itself is changeable in nature that arises and passes away but there is one which is beyond any change — It is Being. An object is, if it shares Being and is not if it does not share it. For Parmenides to be, existence and Being are same. But if Being and to exist are one and same-thing, then whatever does not exhibit the characteristics of Being must be excluded from the status of actual existence. So it can be said that the Being is One and the world of sense where we are living is many and this world of sense as a whole must be designated as not to be.

Parmenides bases his whole doctrine upon the assumption that Being is. Plato continued the tradition of Parmenides. But the Being of Parmenides as described by him was material whereas the Being of Plato was immaterial. The Being of Parmenides is wholly homogeneous, continuous and not subject to any change and a pure object of the mind. But Plato's theory of Being is the result of the teaching of Eleatics, Heraclitus and Socrates. Plato accepted the idea of Becoming from Heraclitus, he took the idea of Absolute Being from Eleatics and from Socrates he obtained the idea of concept. Ultimately

7. Ibid., p. 9.
he identified the Eleatic notion of \textit{Being} with the Socratic Concept.

According to Plato's analysis of \textit{Being}, \textit{Being} is 'really real' and reality is equivalent to \textit{Being}. He says that the ultimate mark of \textit{Being} lies in its 'self-hood' and this very mark of \textit{Being} characterises it as One, homogeneous, simple and is not subject to change. These are the lesser attributes of \textit{Being} than various expressions of self-identity. Plato thinks that which is, must be one for it is contradictory to think of an object as belonging to something other than \textit{Being}, i.e., \textit{Being} is different from otherness and change. This otherness is the negation of \textit{Being}, if a doctrine admits that to be, is to be the same. Plato also admits that the most important principal mark of \textit{Being} is permanancy in self-identity and Reality is the feature that belongs to all which is true being. We must be aware of this most important point that essence - the common property is present in all things which are true. Thus we are sure that \textit{Being} and self-identity are same because Plato himself understood that self-identity constitutes \textit{Being} and justifies its attribution.

R.Demos said, "Self-hood, self-identity, self-similarity, purity and rest are the fundamental requisites of being such as Plato himself understood."\(^8\) Plato, accepting the Parmenidean standard of reality, faces the Parmenidean

consequences - that if 'to be' and 'is to be' are the same, what we have to do with otherness? In Etienne Gilson's book, *Being and some Philosophers*, we have the answer, which may be expressed in this way: "... if sameness alone is, otherness is not." 9

So we see that the first recognisable feature of *Being*, in Plato's philosophy, is - throughout the various modifications of *Being*, *Being* always appears as a variable quantity. But Parmenides was very crude in admitting the view, that which is, is and which is not, is not, whereas Plato was not so crude because he accepted, in his main speculative effort, the measure of reality in appearance instead of juxtaposing *Being* and *non-Being*. Such an assertion of Plato, at that time, was no doubt a risky assertion and this assertion no doubt reflects his indifferent attitude to the order of actual existence for if 'to be a being' is 'actually to be' or 'exist', then intermediate position between *Being* and *non-Being* is impossible. This is similar to Hamlet's statement, 'to be or not to be that is the question'. So a thing must be 'either is or is not'.

It is also a remarkable point in Plato's philosophy that he accepts two worlds - the world of senses and the world of Ideas and the sensible things of the sensible world are 'to be', if they share the essence of 'really real' and

are not to be, if they are lacking in self-hood. So presence of Platonism can be expressed with the help of two signs: '.... being and non-being are variable quantities, between which innumerable degrees of reality can be found; next all relations of being to non-being can and must be transposed into relations of sameness and otherness.' Naturally, there is no difference between the problem 'to be or not to be'.

Lastly, Plato himself admits that this 'really real' is not ultimate reality in his philosophy; on the other hand there is a principle which lies beyond and above this Being and this principle is the Good. It possesses Being both in power as well as in dignity. So our discussion shows that Plato indentifies Being with Ideas and lastly with the Idea of the Good in a systematic manner. Naturally, it is our duty to show how Plato identifies these stages.

Plato points out that we distinguish between the particular things and we find that corresponding to each set of particular things there is a unique form called idea. The particulars are the objects of sight, but not of intelligence. The forms are objects of intelligence, but not of sight. He thinks that the sense of sight and visibility of objects are connected by something, i.e., by a long way the

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10. Ibid., p. 17.
The heavenly body of the sun makes our eyes see and objects can be seen most perfectly due to the power of the sun. The relation between the sun and sight is such that the sun is identical neither with sight itself nor with the eye in which sight resides, though it is most similar to the eye. The power of the sight of the eye is a kind of effusion dispensed to it by the sun. The sun is thus the cause of sight. The Good and the sun are similar in the respect that the Good is the source of the intelligible world. When the mind's eye rests on objects illuminated by truth and reality, it understands and comprehends them and functions intelligently. What gives the objects of knowledge their truth and the mind, the power of knowing, is the Form of the Good. It is the cause of knowledge and truth. As light and sight are like the sun, but not the sun itself, so it is right to think of knowledge and truth as being like the Good, but wrong to think of either of them as being the Good, which must be given a still higher place of honour. The Good may be said to be the source not only of the intelligibility of the objects of knowledge, but also of their existence and reality; yet it is not itself identical with reality but is beyond reality and superior to it in dignity and power. Plato shows how we reach the vision of the Good in the following way.
He says that students of Geometry begin by taking granted odd and even numbers, geometrical figures and the three kinds of angles and other similar data in various subjects. These they regard as known and treat them as basic assumptions. Starting from them they proceed through a series of steps to the propositions which they set out to examine. They make use of and reason about visible figures, though they are not really thinking about them at all, but about the originals which they resemble. They are arguing not about the square or diagonal or whatever the figure may be. The figures they draw are treated as illustrations, the real subjects of their investigation are invisible except to the eye of the mind. There is another section of the intelligible in which reason apprehends directly by the power of pure thought. It treats assumptions not as principles, but as assumptions in the true sense, that is, as starting-points and steps of ascent to the universal, self-sufficient, first principle. When it has reached that principle it can again descend, by keeping to the consequences that follow from it to a final conclusion. The whole procedure involves nothing in the sensible world, but deals throughout with forms and finishes with forms. In sciences assumptions serve as principles and their subject matter must be reasoned about and not directly perceived.
This is because they proceed from assumptions and not from first principle and they can never finally understand the subject-matter, even though it can be understood with the help of a first principle. The state of mind of the Geometers is reason and not intelligence.

The Platonic theory of forms thus shows that from particulars we ascend to the forms, but the forms being plural have to be united with a fundamental principle. Forms may be graded higher and lower and thus there can be a hierarchy of ideas. The higher forms can explain the lower forms, as the latter can be derived from the former. But the higher form may also be treated as assumptions, and the assumptions are not understood, unless we come upon a first principle which explains them. Plato would say that reasoning with the assumptions we may ultimately come to a stage, when we can see the first principle. It is not seen by the Visual eye, but by the mental eye. Plato called form being, but the first principle which is the Good is the Being of beings.

Aristotle, though a severe critic of Plato, was perhaps the greatest Platonist and his philosophy, in fact, was a development of Platonism into a tenable philosophy. Aristotle, like his master Plato, is interested in which is and in his Metaphysics he has a natural tendency to deal with concrete
reality and the definition of reality, as given by him, is "... a particular and actually existing thing, that is, a distinct ontologist unit which is able to subsist in itself, can be defined in itself." Here our purpose is to deal Being, as understood by Aristotle. "Being," Aristotle says, "which is and where it signifies the substance," that is to say, the is of the thing is nothing but the what of the thing, which makes it to be a substance. But from this explanation we must not conclude that existence plays an important role in the structure of Being, though existence is a mere pre-requisite to Being. Thus in Aristotelian philosophy Being is a substance. So we can equate these terms: "What primarily is, the substance of that which is, what the thing is." In short 'whatness' of the thing is Being and he says also that what is real in substance is that whereby it is an act. Anything that is act in a substance, is the Form, not the matter and it is consistent in his philosophy that form is the act due to which a substance is what is and Being is exclusively and foremostly its form. So, "There is nothing above being; in being, there is nothing above the form, and this means that the form of a given being is an act of which there is no act."  

11. Etienne Gilson, op.cit., p.42.  
13. Ibid.  
Aristotle draws his idea of form, from his theory of causation. His idea is that form is the Idea, universal and formal cause of the world.

So the absolute form or God comes at the top in Aristotelian philosophy. Except God, all existent things are more or less unreal and God is the absolute form of forms or 'the thought of thought'. Thus we see that the scale of Being has gradations from the absolutely real - God to the absolutely unreal, formless matter. It is said that, "Form is both 'nature' and 'essence', it is 'nature' when considered as the innermost principle of the operations of the thing and when it is understood as the possible object of intelligible definition, it is form." So Essence and Being are same in his philosophy. Here we can see that the forms of Aristotle are nothing but the Ideas of Plato and have been brought down from heaven to earth. This point helps us to understand Plato. It is also clear to us from Aristotle's philosophy that, like Plato, he was less interested to give importance to individuals.

Aristotle's analysis of Being is not a sound theory. The unavoidable and primary mistake of Aristotle, as well as his followers, lies in their inability to understand the proper use of the verb 'to be'. Actually the verb 'to be'

15. Ibid., p. 48.
possesses two meanings: If it means, a thing is, then individuals are but forms are not and if it means what a thing is, then forms alone are and individuals are not. As Plato and Aristotle have failed to realise the fundamental distinction and used it in a single sense, they think which exists, is not and what is, does not exist. 16

The philosophical attitudes of Plato, Aristotle and Parmenides have influenced a number of philosophers. Of them, we find, Hegel tried his best to give us a satisfactory explanation of Being which is known as Spirit in his philosophy, although it involves some defects and ultimately cannot be a satisfactory theory. It will be clear from the discussion of his theory.

Spirit is the central notion of Hegel's philosophy. This spirit is the ultimate reality, exists in itself as well as manifests other objects or beings. This Absolute reality is the Being and is called the self-thinking thought. Hegel says, "Being is the indetermination which precedes all determinations. And that total indetermination is the very stuff which being is." 17 This Being is abstract, devoid of content and never comes to our sensation or intellectual intuition and never be identical with essence for

16. Ibid., p. 49.
17. Ibid., p. 136.
essence involves additional determinations of being, whereas Being is void of any determination. It is not this or that or any other thing. It is Nothing. So, "Nothing is the absolute negative taken in its immediateness. That is, nothing is not a relative negation, such as those which presuppose some preceding affirmation (a is not b); it is that negation which comes before any other negation." 18

So pure Being and pure non-being are same. It does not negate Itself, on the other hand, It possesses the capacity of flowing creativity and expressing itself in finite objects. It not only expresses Itself in the finite objects but possesses the power of abstracting Itself from everything external, by the act of separation, even its own externality which separates universal from particular. It is infinite and impersonal but it is better to describe Spirit as 'Infinite-in-finite' or 'impersonal-in-being-personal'. It is the synthesis of both subjective and objective spirit.

In Hegel's philosophy we find a dialectical articulation of the different stages of Spirit. These are (a) Subjective spirit, (b) Objective spirit, (c) Absolute spirit.

Subjective spirit is that spirit when it knows Itself by passing through all levels of consciousness. Objective spirit exists without a subject. It has the characteristics

18. Ibid., p. 137.
of nature. The Absolute Spirit is the reconciliation of both subjective and objective spirit and also of nature and spirit. This nature and spirit require a common base — this base is Absolute Spirit.

Hegel himself admits that one's own self-consciousness is not absolute knowledge because self recognises self-hood in itself. So the realisation of the existence of other self is necessary. He says that Master-Slave relation has a tremendous contribution to self-consciousness. In this relation consciousness of one's own self-hood is the condition for the recognition of the self-hood by another self and here the consciousness of Absolute self is possible because the Master imposes himself on other's value and succeeds in obtaining recognition from the other and the Slave sees his own self in the other.

From Master-Slave relation Hegel passes over into a state of consciousness which he called Stoical consciousness that "... arises only in epochs characterised by universal fear and servitude."19 But the contradiction of Master-Slave relation still remains in this Stoical consciousness. We can avoid this contradiction only by the exaltation of the idea of the true interior freedom and internal self-sufficiency. This maintains a positive idea.

of truth and virtue which leads to the Sceptical consciousness, where only self abides and has explicit realisation. This consciousness also involves contradiction. But all these contradictions can be overcome when the finite rises to the universal consciousness, where we find no difference, has only awareness of identity-in-difference and a full recognition of self-hood in oneself and others. Naturally, we have realisation and comprehension of the Absolute.

Section II: Kierkegaard and Heidegger

After discussing the philosophy of Hegel, we want to proceed to consider the views of Kierkegaard and Heidegger—the Existentialist thinkers of modern period.

The slogan of existentialism is Existence precedes Essence which contradicts the Platonic and Christian view Essence precedes Existence. Existentialism has been variously described 'as the philosophy of crisis, as a reaction of the philosophy of man against the excesses of the philosophy of ideas and the philosophy of things; as a new way of preaching Christianity and as a philosophy of Decadentism.' 20 Existentialism started as a protest against abstraction, a campaign against all forms of systematisation by turning inward. Pascal, an Existentialist thinker,

opposed rationalistic philosophy of Descartes and set faith against reason, though his faith was not in polar opposition of intellect. On the contrary, he thought that faith is above the sense. In faith self transcends itself.

Søren Kierkegaard firmly revived the religious Existentialist philosophy by protesting against the philosophical concept of Hegel, which was based on the rationalist or scientific tradition. Kierkegaard admits existence as the thing itself and understands that thought is possibility, ideal, pure intelligibility and so other than existence. The principal and important business of thought is with the thinker's personal existence though he is related to other reality as to a possibility. It is better to concern oneself with one's own ethical reality and each reality is compelled to exist for himself. Thus he can be known by himself from within. Thought can be separated from the object itself and Kierkegaard vigorously announced the dominance of faith over reason. In his philosophy we find that he identifies God with Being because to him God is eternal, Infinite and Absolute, etc. As a Christian philosopher Kierkegaard would say that man is created by God and wants, throughout his whole life, to attain the Being of God. But such a personal contact is impossible by human thought because the very nature of God is impersonal. Human beings have to know his own existence and establish 'existential
relation' with God. It is faith that helps man to realise
the meaning of existence and is the only means of salvation.
Thus importance is given to faith over reason because '....
faith,' for Kierkegaard, 'is the exercise of the will in
the acceptance of value, specifically, the religious value',
whereas thought is unable to establish any relation with God.
Thus Existentialism is a way of describing Christian experi­
ence. Kierkegaard's whole argumentation is based on a funda­
mental distinction between two types of knowledge - subjective
knowledge and objective knowledge. It is necessary for us to
know the definition of these two types of knowledge. 'Objective
knowledge is such knowledge as, once acquired, does not
require any special effort of appropriation on the part of
the knowing subject.' Objective knowledge is so-called
because it deals with object in an objective way. 'Subjective
knowledge is knowledge whose acquisition is its active
appropriation by the subject.' In connection with these
two types of knowledge Kierkegaard says that Being cannot
be an appropriate object of objective knowledge, as is possi­
ble in scientific knowledge. In such knowledge there is no
feeling of identity between the knower and the known and
the objects completely remain separate from the knower but
in subjective knowledge we are interested in how we know it
but not interested in what we know.

21. Ibid., p. 64.
22. Etienne Gilson, op.cit., p. 143.
23. Ibid., p. 145.
So, in this sense an appropriation and a realisation are essential for the attainment of man's identity with God. Naturally, the truth of subjective knowledge is seen in its subjectivity. But Kierkegaard says, though it is the ideal for man to attain the identity with God, yet the ideal remains unattainable for ever due to man's finite nature.

After Kierkegaard, we must consider the view of Heidegger, another Existentialist thinker. He unlike Kierkegaard, accepts Being as the central problem of his concern but he gives less importance to personal existence and raises the question of Being in its unity and totality. He aims at establishing the metaphysics of Being on the basis of the thoughts of Greek philosophers, like Plato and Aristotle. This also brought into the light the views of Kierkegaard, Husserl, Bergson and he was influenced by Kierkegaard's view.

Heidegger accepts Being, as the ultimate reality, which itself raises the question of its meaning yet indefinable in nature although it is understandable and self-evident of all concepts. This Being cannot be deduced from higher concepts nor can it be presented through lower ones, because the lower itself exists only due to the Being.

In considering the problem of Being, Heidegger found that our quest for Being or sense of Being will remain

incomplete, unless we take into account the human being which he calls Dasein. It is also true that human existence is the starting point although we are not outside the Being.

The very essence of Dasein lies in its existence but the relation between Dasein and Being cannot be stated like the relation between substance and qualities. The human being is only a possibility and he has the power to choose among the possibilities and he possesses also the power to be. This Dasein deals with the different entities which are not themselves Dasein. An essential element of Dasein is being-in-the world and our knowledge of the world and being of the entities are possible within the world. Their ontologies are dependent on the ontology of Dasein. Heidegger says, "This being-in-the world which constitutes human being is the being of a self in its inseparable relations with a not-self, the world of things and other persons in which the self always and necessarily finds itself inserted."\(^25\) Such existence is not merely accidental but it is constitutive of one's existence.

Heidegger speaks of two types of existence - authentic and inauthentic existence - "This full blooded acceptance (amor fati) of death, lived out, is authentic personal existence,"\(^26\) and our ordinary existence with our common passion,

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26. Ibid., p. 96.
interest is known as inauthentic existence. Authentic existence is most important because it involves the possibility of death as the ultimate end of human life. The acceptance of death does not necessarily reject participation in one's preoccupations and does not deny the world; what it does, is to refuse to be identified with the preoccupations. Such separation springs from the power, the dignity and the tolerance of authentic personal existence. Understanding of personal existence implies the understanding of the world. This personal existence has unity or totality when "... it is resolved in steadfast adherence to its existence in the world." 27

The hiddenness of Being is to be understood as 'not' which performs two functions, that is, contracts Being in beings and also differentiates Being from others. Our understanding of Being as the process of truth requires our comprehension of both positivity and negativity of Being in its unity and totality. This positivity and negativity mean that "Being as the process of non-concealment is that which permits being to become non-concealed (positivity), although the process is so permeated by 'not' that Being itself remains concealed (negativity)." 28

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27. Ibid., p. 99.
Heidegger used the word 'Nothing' like Hegel. This 'Nothing' is, the counter concept to Being, the source of negativity and all forms of negation. 'Nothing' does not deny Being and this Being is not what is, brute existence, any more than the intelligible world. Even it is not the ground of the world or God. Personal existence, by the act of transcendence, separates from what is and brute existence and becomes close to Being. 'Heidegger seems to think of the total renunciation of the resolved personal existence described in Sein and Zeit, steadfastly nullifying all realisations without refusing them, as in its perfected purposelessness a form of purification which draws close to Being and, as it were, makes way for Being, by making oneself wholly over to Being.' 29 Human beings live in this world and Being is realised by them through different activities. Being enjoys its value, when the projection is possible by There-Being.

The above discussion of Being as interpreted by different philosophers show that none of these conceptions of Being and its relation with finite objects is adequate and comprehensive in the light of Sri Aurobindo's ideas. We shall discuss these views, one by one, from the viewpoint of Sri Aurobindo.

Firstly, Parmenides, one of the Greek philosophers, accepts Being as the ultimately real and also unchangeable in nature. But he gives no importance to finite objects. So he has no consideration or sympathy for finite objects, whereas Sri Aurobindo admits Being as the ultimate reality but unlike Parmenides he gives importance to finite objects and shows that this reality also possesses a close relation with those limited objects. So Sri Aurobindo differs from Parmenides in every respect except the reality of Being.

Next comes Plato. Plato admits Being as 'really real', the ultimate mark of which is 'self-identity' and this Being corresponds to the conception of God. In his philosophy, Being is a dynamic agent in the flux of the universe. But Plato never said that becoming is also the self-expression of the ultimate truth. He accepts the hierarchy of Ideas but is unable to show how the ultimate Being is related to them in a satisfactory way. But Sri Aurobindo gives us a compact explanation of everything - beginning from the Absolute to the Matter and shows that becoming is also the self-expression of Being. With the help of this view he says that the world-process has two aspects, one is descending or involution and other is ascending or evolution. Consciousness contains in itself the world-process. It manifests itself from the lowest level of existence, where it is unmanifested. It is Matter that rises higher and produces consciousness that extends over the whole Being.
Life. From the womb of life, Mind is born, but the journey of Consciousness does not stop there. It goes on to its infinite goal, to the Supermind and from the Supermind to the ultimate destiny, the Sachchidananda.

The philosophy of Aristotle, which attempts to rectify all the difficulties suffered by Plato, ultimately contains the same blemishes as those of Plato. Aristotle understands by Being, the totality of beings and thoughts and Being is also the essence. But he does not show that Being is the source of beings or Being manifests itself in beings but this explanation is found in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

Hegel, an Absolutist, says that the Spirit-Consciousness-Being is the ultimate reality which manifests itself as the finite objects. Being possesses the power of abstracting itself from finite objects by the act of separation and the opposition between Spirit and others is an illusion. This Spirit or Being does not possess any determination and is called as 'Nothing'.

It is true that Sri Aurobindo, like Hegel, admits the Spirit as the ultimate reality and Its manifestation in the finite objects. But he never uses the word 'Nothing' as used by Hegel. On the contrary he has used the words like 'limitations', 'abstraction', 'determinations'. These words mean that an object is not identical with Being yet possesses reality to
some extent. The *Being* is without any determinations but is the source of all determinations.

Sri Aurobindo never says, as Hegel does, that *Being* abstracts Itself from the finite objects; on the other hand, the finite objects, due to the processes of evolution, gradually come back to the Absolute reality or *Being*. It is also true that Hegel has separated the *Spirit* from individual man and in the movement of the *Spirit* the individual is subordinate, whereas Sri Aurobindo sees the Absolute *Spirit* in man.

From these criticisms of Hegel's view of *Being*, in the light of Sri Aurobindo's idea, it is clear to us that Hegel's realisation of *Spirit* is higher in degree than Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle. But he failed to give an adequate and comprehensive view of *Spirit* due to some inherent difficulties. His Consciousness is something abstract because it is purely rational and It is conceived on the human model. Hegel admits only intellectual realisation, whereas Sri Aurobindo speaks of Integral realisation. Such inherent difficulties in Hegel's philosophy forbid human being to realise the truth.

Now our criticisms turn to the realm of Existentialist philosophers — Kierkegaard and Heidegger.
Kierkegaard's philosophy is an attempt of describing Christian experience. He understood that Being or Eternity is higher than man and human existence, should be realised in the background of Being. In his philosophy, becoming is the main purpose of man in his existential situation. This indicates the transition from possibility to actuality but ultimately the experience of transcendent, by the act of transcendence of human being, is not possible due to his finite nature. But such a gap is absent in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. He speaks of realisation of Being as possible through the process of gradual evolution and by Integral Yoga.

Lastly, we come to Heidegger's view. Both Heidegger and Sri Aurobindo accept Being as the central notion of their philosophy and man's quest for Being is the main concern, though Heidegger is an ontologist and Sri Aurobindo is a propounder of Integral Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo as well as Heidegger do not deny the importance of anything, which is inferior in status but only its claim of being all powerful is denied. They said that we have to transform the lower objects. Heidegger says that we have a bursting power that is an element of urgency. This power is the ultimate which works within us. This view

comes close to Lilavati in Indian philosophy and to Sri Aurobindo's view of progressive manifestation of the Infinite through space and time. Like Indian traditional view, Existentialism also observes things not from outside and gives importance to direct experience and direct participation.

Heidegger speaks of the inauthentic life of Dasein, which possesses an urge to attain truth, which is similar with the Life of ignorance in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. The transition from inauthentic existence to authentic existence is based on the realisation of Dasein's finitude.

Both accept Being as the ultimate reality and human beings of Sri Aurobindo and Dasein or There-being of Heidegger possesses an urge to realise that reality and the human beings are not only in the world but also integrally combined in it. So man is not over and against the world but is in the world and a part of the world.

Human destiny is considered, by both these philosophers as an important point. This destiny lies in the supreme self-discovery. Heidegger appears to be a religious thinker.

31. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p.13.
and seeks mystical truth when he says that *Dasein* comes into self-consciousness in our longing.\(^{34}\)

Apart from these points of resemblance, there are some points where Sri Aurobindo and Heidegger do not agree.

As an Existentialist, Heidegger has a tendency of over-dramatisation of partial truth. His Existentialist ontology is only a creation of the will. Being is considered by him as energetic being and *Dasein* can have a feelings of identification with Being — the ultimate reality. He never says, 'what it is'? And he is not able to answer the questioning 'How'. But Sri Aurobindo has a satisfactory, adequate and comprehensive explanation of all questions concerning Being, the world, finite objects and the ultimate goal of human being. There is no gap in his thinking.

Now, the question which naturally arises in our mind that if Being as considered by different philosophers is not adequate in the light of Sri Aurobindo then what does Sri Aurobindo actually understand by Being?

The great and the prominent affirmation of the ancient Vedânta regarding the Reality is Sat, the Infinite, the eternal Existence and this Existence was realised as Infinite, immortal Existence, a Being, a Purusha, and also Sat-Chit-Ánanda or Infinite Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

Sri Aurobindo never discarded the ancient idea of Absolute Reality but only added something new which we do not find in any other system or view. He, in his works, gives us a satisfactory and comprehensive analysis of Being which is an ever important problem. We have already discussed in the previous chapters that everything in the world is important and valuable for the realisation of ultimate reality. According to Sri Aurobindo, Being is the ultimate reality but unlike others he gives importance to both finite objects and the Infinite. He also admits that we can never negate or deny the world. The world is real precisely for it exists in Being, and is created by Conscious Energy which is One with Being. This Being is self-evident, origin, support and secret reality of all things. Sri Aurobindo says, "Being is One but this Oneness is infinite and contains in itself an infinite plurality or multiplicity of itself; the One is the All; it is not only an essential Existence; but an All-Existence." 35

He thinks that Absolute manifests Itself in two ways:

- **Being** - the fundamental reality and Becoming - the effectual reality, a creative energy. Becoming is not separate from the Beine but "... present in it, constituted by it, inherent in its every infinitesimal atom and in its boundless expansion and extension." 36 It is true that human being

36. Ibid., p.659.
conceived 'Ego' as a separate and independent centre of his earthly interests. He cuts off its relation with other as 'not-I'. But through the processes of evolution, human beings are able to understand the real nature of Being - the Truth behind everything. This realisation destroys the isolation of Being from Becoming and understands that the real fact is Becoming that is '.... of the Being, by the Being and in the Being.' So there is nothing which is non-being.

But one may ask: How is the link possible between Being and Becoming? It is the Supermind which is the link between Being and Becoming. We know that Truth-Consciousness is the very essence of Supermind which we realise that the universe can be realised and embraced as Becoming of the Being. So Becoming is the self-expression of Being - a multiple, a diverse, self-representation of the One. So this Integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo must unify the two basic facts of pure-existence and world-existence that is Being and Becoming. And if we are able to find out their relation, we must have fruitful wisdom. Becoming knows itself as Being; it knows itself totally and possesses the nature of the Eternal and the Infinite and obtains self-knowledge.

For the variety of manifestation, in our cosmic experience, the *Being* appears as - the supracosmic existence, the cosmic spirit and the individual self and "These triple aspects of the reality must be included in the total truth of the soul and the cosmic manifestation, and this necessity must determine the ultimate trend of the process of evolutionary Nature." But neither the cosmos nor the individual consciousness is the fundamental reality of existence for these ultimately depend on the transcendental *Divine Being*.

This *Divine Being* is both personal and impersonal because it is the foundation of all powers, forces, Existence and at the same time transcendent conscious *Being*, of whom all conscious beings are the selves and personalities. So human beings have to enlarge their knowledge of themselves, of God and of the world until and unless they are aware of the Oneness or *Divine Being*.

Sri Aurobindo also says that there is non-*being* and this non-*being* permits the *Being* as the silence permits activity. That is, we are speaking about that which is beyond time in terms of time. This *Being* and non-*being* are not contradictory but complementary to each other.

Sri Aurobindo thinks that *Being* is the fundamental object of enquiry. But it is only through Consciousness

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that we can approach Being. It may be said that we can reach the Being only through extinction or transcendence of consciousness, we have to arrive at a knowledge of this extinction or the self-transcendence through consciousness, through the Superconscient. To know it becomes the supreme need. We have to know the power and process of consciousness through which we can pass into the Superconscient. If Consciousness is the sole reality, the universe of material objects may have a reality, but it is purely a subjective structure made by consciousness. If there is nothing else, no other essential Existence or Being which supports the creative power, then this consciousness which creates everything must have an existence. It makes structure out of the constructions of its own substance. Consciousness which is not Existence must be an unreality. It thus becomes apparent that what we see as Consciousness must be Being or Existence out of the substance of which all is created. If we can suppose that there is one Consciousness which creates multitudes of figures, there is no difficulty in supposing one original Being '.... who supports or expresses himself in a plurality of beings, - souls or spiritual powers of his own existence; it would follow also that all objects, all the figures of consciousness would be the figures of the Being.'

It is, Sri Aurobindo says, what is inherent in the force of Being which manifests itself as becoming. What forms the

39. Ibid., p. 644.
manifestations will take about the arrangement of the
principles depend on the power of consciousness. The power
is delivered by Being from itself for the manifestations.
It lies in the nature of Being to be able to grade and
vary its power of consciousness. The grades of the vari-
tions of the world are determined by the power and the
scope of self-revelation is fixed.

What is called 'Central being' in Yoga philosophy,
applies to the portion of the Divine in man. It supports
all the rest and survives through birth and death. This
Central being has two forms, the first one is Jīvātman
which is our true being. We become aware of it when the
higher self-knowledge dawns on us. The other being is
psychic being which stands behind mind, body and life.

"The Jīvātman is above the manifestations in life and pre-
sides over it, the psychic being stands behind the manifes-
tations in life and supports it." 40 What Sri Aurobindo
understands by Jīvātman is the essence and it can merge
itself with the divine Jīvātman, is not the psychic being.
The Sanskrit word 'Chaitya Purusha' is the equivalent of
psychic being. There are two systems in the organisation
of being and its parts, 'One is concentric', in the words
of Sri Aurobindo, "... a series of rings or sheaths with
the psychic at the centre, another is vertical, an ascension

and descent like a flight of steps, a series of superimposed planes with the Supermind-Overmind at the crucial nodes of the transition beyond the human into the divine."  

Sri Aurobindo points out that the original and eternal for ever, in the Divine, is the Being. That which is developed in consciousness, conditions, forms, forces etc., by the Divine power is the Becoming. He says, "The eternal Divine is the Being, the universe in Time and all that is apparent in it is becoming." According to him, there is no essential difference anywhere. All is fundamentally the essential Divine. The difference lies in the manifestation. It can be said that Jivatman is one of the divine many and dependent on the One. The Atman is that which supports the Many. Sri Aurobindo says, "The Psychic being does not merge in the Jivatman, it becomes united with it so that there is no difference between the eternal being supporting the manifestations from within it, because the Psychic being has become fully aware of the play of the Divine through it." The merging takes place, in the Divine Consciousness, when the Jivatman feels itself to be one with the Divine and comes to realise that there is nothing else.

41. Ibid., p.251.
42. Ibid., p.268.
43. Ibid., p.387.
The Divine Existent, according to Sri Aurobindo, is pure unlimited Being. It is One throughout, but on each plane it is presented by a form of itself which is proper to that plane. The Spirit is the Consciousness above Mind. It is the Atman or Self which is always in oneness with the Divine. The spiritual consciousness is one which is always in unity or at least in contact with the Divine. The Spirit is the Atman, Brahman, Essential Divine. In the opinion of Sri Aurobindo, "This world is because the Spirit has the delight of its own infinite existence and the delight of its own infinite self-variation." 44 All things are expression, form, energy, action of the Spirit. Matter is but a form of the Spirit, Mind is the working out of the consciousness of the Spirit. All nature is display and a play of God. It is the power and action and self-creation of the spiritual Being. Sri Aurobindo says, "Nature presents to Spirit at once the force, the instrument, the medium, the obstacle, the result of his power and all these things, obstacles as well as instrument are the necessary elements for a gradual and developing creation." 45

This discussion of Sri Aurobindo regarding Being, reveals to us that it does not suffer from the limitations of other concepts of Being as propounded by Plato, Aristotle, Hegel,

45. Ibid.
Kierkegaard and Heidegger. Sri Aurobindo's theory, as we have seen, explains the world with its proper importance and does not reject it as illusion. He shows also, how the material world and the human mental life are expressions of the same Being which is Spiritual Consciousness. Human being can ascend to the level of the supreme Being by developing the powers of the supramental knowledge. So we can say that Sri Aurobindo's theory of Being is the most satisfactory of all the notions of Being as given by the above mentioned philosophers.

We can say that Sri Aurobindo's discussion of the nature of Being and Consciousness shows that both are identical in his philosophy. In his philosophy we find that Consciousness is not a capricious something but it is an unchanging, self-luminous ultimate Reality. It is the Being and fundamental basis or essence of everything. This Consciousness is the reality which is inherent in Existence. This Consciousness assumes the role of cosmic reality which is also the basis of individual Existence. Consciousness as such, pure and transcendental, is the abstract nature of reality separated from the world and men. But it is the concrete full reality throbbing with the delight and bliss of Existence manifesting itself in all the objects of the world by its force. It is the aim of human consciousness
to identify itself with that all comprehensive Consciousness.

Spiritual Reality in an ever ascending process through the different stages of Integral knowledge.