THE ASPECTS OF THE DISCUSSION ON EXISTENCE OF INENTITY OF THE靴子

DIVISION

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CHAPTER VI

THE APOCALYPTIC ASPECTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE PHYSICAL PLANE OF EXISTENCE

Obviously, at the very outset here, we have to remind ourselves of the need on our part to be clearly aware of the conceptual frameworks of such terms as "Planes" and "Worlds" employed by Sri Aurobindo in describing the revelatory nature of the various levels of Consciousness (needless to say, the Chit aspect of Sachchidananda.) exhaustively explicated all through Savitri for the benefit of humankind as a whole, for the first time in the twentieth century. As he says, by planes of consciousness and planes of existence 'We mean a general settled poise or world of revelations between Purusha and Prakriti, between the Soul and Nature.' He believes in the existence of such worlds and planes of Consciousness because, according to him, all our spiritual and psychic experience brings us an invariable evidence of the existence of higher worlds or freer planes of existence. When maintaining this, he asserts that we are not bound ourselves down to the dogma that only sense is true and that anything beyond this is an error, self-delusion and halluciantion. He adds that therefore we are free to accept this evidence and to admit the reality of these planes of Consciousness or planes of existence.
According to him, further, they are, practically, different harmonies from the harmony of the physical universe, they occupy, as the word "plane" suggests, a different level in the scale of being and adopt a different system and ordering of its principles. According to leading Aurobindo commentators also, the "Worlds" or "Planes" Sri Aurobindo mentions in his philosophy and Yoga are a great connected complex movement. The higher of these worlds, Sri Aurobindo maintains, precipitate their influences on the lower worlds. Similarly, the lower ones react to the higher worlds and develop or manifest in themselves something that corresponds to the superior power and its action. For example, our material world has evolved life in obedience to a pressure from the vital plane. The vital has, in its turn, evolved mind in obedience to a pressure from the mental plane. According to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, mind is now trying to evolve supermind in obedience to a pressure from the supramental plane. Particular forces, movements, powers and beings of a higher world can throw themselves on the lower worlds to establish in them appropriate and corresponding forms which will connect them with the material domain and reproduce or project their action here. And each thing created here has subtler envelopes or forces of itself which support it and make it subsist and connect it with forces acting from above. In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy
man, for instance, has, besides his gross physical body, various subtler bodies by which he lives behind the veil in direct connection with supraphysical planes of consciousness. Therefore, he can be influenced by their powers and movements as well as by beings inhabiting them. The experience of the existence of these worlds becomes more and more evident, more and more insistent and more and more important, Sri Aurobindo says, as we progress more and more in a dynamic Yoga such as his Integral Yoga. Aurobindonian commentators warn, at the same time, that all this is an immense plastic movement full of the play of possibilities. Therefore, their advice is that these "worlds" or "planes" described by Sri Aurobindo must be seized by a flexible and subtle tact or sense in the seeing consciousness. They cannot be reduced to a logical or mathematical formula. Such Aurobindo scholars recommend a few things to ensure that this plasticity of the "worlds" or "planes" may not be lost to our view. First, each plane of consciousness is yet a world in itself, with its own movements, forces, beings, types and forms existing as if for its and their own sake, under its own laws, for its own manifestation without apparent regard for the other members of the graded series. If, for example, we regard the vital or the subtle physical plane, we see great ranges of it, (most of it), existing in themselves, without any relation with the material world and with no movement to
affect or influence it. As such, the existence of anything in the vital, subtle physical or any other plane creates a possibility for a corresponding movement of manifestation in the physical world. Secondly, only a limited part of the action of the vital or other higher plane is concerned with the earth-existence. But even this creates a mass of possibilities which is far greater than the earth can at one time manifest or contain in its own less plastic formulas. All these possibilities do not realise themselves; some fail altogether. Others effectuate a half manifestation. Sri Aurobindo states that there is a vital plane (self-existent) above the material universe which we see; there is a mental plane (self-existent) above the vital and material. These three together,—mental, vital, physical—are called the triple universe of the lower hemisphere. They have been established in the earth-consciousness by evolution—but they exist in themselves before the evolution, above the earth-consciousness and the material plane to which the earth belongs.

The belief in the actual existence of these worlds is based on the fact that the physical is not the only world; there are other worlds. We become aware of them through the subtle senses, through imagination, intuition and vision. These worlds are of a larger and subtler life than ours. There are vital worlds, for example, there are worlds in which Mind builds its own forms and
figures. They are mental worlds. Similarly, there are psychic worlds which are the soul's home. Other worlds are above with which we have little contact. In each of us there are various planes of consciousness, such as a psychic plane, a vital plane, a subtle physical plane, as well as the gross physical plane and material plane. These very planes are repeated in the consciousness of general Nature. It is when we enter or contact these other planes of consciousness that we come into connection with these worlds above the physical. With the help of occultism, we can leave the physical body and enter all these other planes of consciousness and all sorts of worlds. In each of them we see scenes, meet beings, share in happenings, come across formations, influences, suggestions which belong to these respective planes of consciousness. Even when we are awake, part of us moves in these planes, but their activity goes on behind the veil; our waking minds are not aware of it. When we do spiritual sadhana, we come in possession of occult powers which enable us to travel through these worlds. 5

All these ideas have got to be borne in mind by us in our examination of the apocalypticism of each one of the "planes" or "worlds" of Consciousness which we are going to unravel now onwards, beginning with the Physical Plane or the Physical World and its apocalyptic nature. In this endeavour, we have to, in the present chapter as
well as in each of the following chapters, clearly define to ourselves the typically Aurobindonian concept of such terms as the physical, the vital, the mental and so on. The term physical for example, is explained as both "gross physical" and as "subtle physical". Of these two types, the gross physical is the earthly and bodily physical which is experienced by our outward senses and by our sense-mind. Significantly, it is part of Matter, though not the whole of Matter. The subtle physical is Matter with a subtler consciousness in it which can go to a distance from the body and yet feel and be aware of things in not merely a mental or vital way. Nevertheless, both types of the physical are Matter. And this fact refers us to the Aurobindonian concept of Matter.

According to Sri Aurobindo, 'Matter is the form of substance of being which the existence of Sachchidananda assumes when it subjects itself to this phenomenal action of its own consciousness and force.' Continuing the same apocalyptic trend of defining Matter, Sri Aurobindo further says, '...Matter means the involution of the conscious delight of existence in self-oblivious force and in self-dividing, infinitesimally disaggregated form of substance.' Also, it 'is Sachchidananda represented to His own mental experience as a formal basis of objective knowledge, action and delight of existence.' The 'truth of Matter' is 'that there is a conceptive
self-extension of being which works itself out in the universe as substance or object of consciousness'.

It is represented by 'cosmic Mind and Life in their creative action' 'through atomic division and aggregation as the thing we call Matter'.

Significantly, however, '...Matter is by no means fundamentally real; it is a structure of Energy'.

Equally significantly, 'Matter... is not material, it is not substance but form of consciousness'.

It is, moreover, 'The first emergence from the Inconscient'.

As such, 'Matter is the field and the creation of the Inconscient'.

Nevertheless, it 'is not unconscious or without dynamism—only it is an involved force and consciousness that work in it. It is what the phychologists call the inconscient from which all comes—but it is not really inconscient'.

We find scattered over various parts of *Savitri* quite a large number of Sri Aurobindo's apocalyptic revelations of the nature and significance of these "worlds" or "planes" of Consciousness. In view of the fact that all his observations on these planes are too many and too voluminous for the limited purpose of producing an academically viable doctoral thesis, it is incumbent on us to restrict ourselves to a selected few of the poet's revelations regarding the apocalyptic nature of these worlds. Fortunately for us, Sri Aurobindo's most comprehensive and representative revelations of this kind
are made in the fifteen cantos of Book Two of *Savitri*. "The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds". As the title itself suggests, the various "worlds" (or "planes" of Consciousness) are exhaustively explored by Aswapathy as King by undertaking "The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness. Incidentally, "The Yoga of the King" is nothing but the Integral Yoga evolved by Sri Aurobindo (in collaboration with the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry). Any human being can undertake such Yoga since, in Sri Aurobindo's view, Yoga is essentially 'a generic name for the processes and the result of processes by which we transcend or shred off our present modes of being and rise to a new, a higher, a wider mode of consciousness which is not that of the ordinary animal or intellectual man'. Secondly, 'Yoga is the exchange of an egoistic consciousness 'for a universal or cosmic consciousness'. This cosmic consciousness is 'lifted towards or informed by the supra-cosmic, transcendent Unnameable who is the source and support of all things.' Thirdly, 'Yoga is the passage of the human thinking animal towards the God-consciousness from which he has descended.' The Yoga of King Aswapathy, undertaken in *Savitri*, amply illustrates all these views. Observe, for example, that before undertaking Yoga Aswapathy achieves "the Soul's Release" first and acquires next "The Secret Knowledge". It is only then that, as Sri Aurobindo writes, he was
'Admitted through a curtain.../ That hangs between our thought and absolute sight' and that 'He found the occult cave, the mystic door' which was 'Near to the well of vision in the soul'. In order to gain his Spirit's Freedom and Greatness by means of Yoga, he enters into 'the occult cave' and arrives 'in the sunlit space where all is forever known.' As part of the process of his Yoga, the King then cuts off 'the cord of mind', casts away 'Matter's law' and 'The body's rules'. Thus he assumes 'the spirit's powers'. With the help of such powers he enters into 'that magic place' where 'All that the Gods have learned is ... self-known.' There, interpreting the universe by the soul signs, Aswapathy raises his eyes to unseen spiritual heights to discern the superhuman's form. Immediately, his soul stands retired from all that he had done. The Silence becomes his sole companion. In this condition, there is a call on him from intangible heights. As a result, his being now exceeds Space. His thought becomes boundless and neighbour to cosmic sight. Besides, a force comes down into his mortal limbs. He grows aware of his occult omnipotent Source. Therefore, he now turns to his immense spiritual fate. He abandons the earth-nature and climbs to meet the infinite more above. Thus he comes to be in a divine retreat from a mortal thought. At this moment, his being towers into pathless heights in a gesture of soul-sight. By now he is so advanced in his
Yoga that as he goes on rising up thus, a strong Descent leaps down to meet him. 'A Might, a Flame', envelops him and penetrates his nerve, heart and brain. This Flame of Descent draws him into God's embrace. A fire which seems to be the body of a god consumes all his limiting past and makes room in him for a new self to live. All his limbs are held by a greater force. All the undiscovered sheaths of his being are laid bare by huge workings. His spirit begins to breathe a superhuman air. As a result of this advanced stage of his Yoga, everything in the universe stands uncovered to his eye. A secret Nature lays bare all his will. Everything that used to be considered as impossible is now able to become natural as a consequence of the might of that secret Nature. After all, Nature brings the light of her mysterious realms to the Yogic initiate who observes her secret laws. That is why, all her secret kingdom now passes into Aswapathy's charge with all her great possessions, powers and law. She surrenders all her moods and force to the service of Aswapathy's soul and to the control of his spiritual will. Consequently, all that is unknown in the universe looks out to Aswapathy from its boundlessness. For example, Life in him comes to learn and realise the extent and nature of its huge subconscient rear portion. All the secret gulfs of life open themselves to him.

It is when Aswapathy is in this occult Yogic condition that 'A giant order' is 'discovered' by him in
his upward journey towards the unknown worlds (or planes of Consciousness). It was the order of the worlds denied to the sight of the outward universe of ours. The giant order is open only to 'The secrets merged in superconscient light'. This occult order of the universe revealed to Aswapathy that the mystic kingdoms of the graded Law plunge from the Everlasting into Time, ascending and descending between life's poles. It is also revealed to Aswapathy that these kingdoms, glad of mind, rich with life's delight and packed with the beauty of Matter's forms and colours climb up back from Time into undying Self, 'Up a golden ladder carrying the Soul'. Astonishingly, these occult worlds ascending and descending are found by Aswapathy to be capable of interpreting existence to itself, of uniting opposites and of linking creation to the Ineffable. Aswapathy next sees a last high world where all worlds meet. In this high world he finds that all is discovered what it seeks for here. Secondly, in this last high world a reconciling Wisdom looks on life. It has no room for any more quarrel of truth with truths. Therefore, within Aswapathy's being, in his Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness, a hierarchy of climbing harmonies aspires from Matter's abysses to the Spirit's peaks. He is able to arrive and enter there as also to abide awhile but he cannot wait there. Therefore, he break into another Space and Time 'Adventuring across enormous realms'.
In the new Space and Time, 'In a profound existence beyond earth's' 'The universe of the Unknown arose.' A self-creation revealed to Aswapathy the grandeur of the Infinite. In this universe of the Unknown, all experience was a single plan so much so that even pain was the soul's pleasure there. All that came into Aswapathy's single view since his Yogic power now had endowed him a vast intuitive sight.

With this intuitive vision Aswapathy now saw a lone immense high-curved world-pile erect like a mountain chariot of God which was walled apart by its own innerness. (Needless to say that this 'high-curved world-pile' is nothing but a huge congregation of the apocalyptic "worlds" or "planes" of Consciousness, to be explored in minutest detail by Aswapathy the Traveller of the Worlds.) It stood as ascending towards immeasurable breadths to the Supreme from Matter's plinth and base to a top as viewless. So tremendous was the apocalyptic world-pile that 'A hundred levels raised it to the Unknown' until it disappeared in the hushed conscious Vast above. By thus mounting into great stillnesses, as Aswapathy observes, this world-pile 'marries the earth to screened eternities.' Moreover, it points us to our journey back to the Divine out of our long self-loss in Nature's deeps. Its significance is that, though it is planted on earth it holds in it all realms. As such, it is a brief
compendium of the Vast. As Aswapathy observes, this world-pile was a single stair to being's goal. What is important, the high-curved world-pile is, apocalyptically speaking, 'A summary of the stages of the spirit'. 'Its copy of the cosmic hierarchies' refashions 'A subtle pattern of the universe' 'in our secret air of self'. What is more, it is within us, below us, outside us and above us. It acts upon the visible Nature's scheme. It awakens our earth-matter to think, feel and react to joy. Likewise, it models our divine parts in us and lifts our mortal mind into a great air. So immense is its apocalyptic significance that it links our body's death immortality. Besides, it labours towards a superconscient Light out of the Inconscience. Because of it, as Aswapathy realises, earth bore thinking man and shall bear more than man. According to Sri Aurobindo's apocalyptic suggestion here, 'This higher scheme of being is our cause/ And holds the key to our ascending fate'. Because it calls the conscious spirit nursed in Matter's house out of our dense mortality. Moreover, the living symbol of these conscious planes and its influences and godheads have fixed our inner life's slow-scaled degrees. The steps of this world-pile are 'paces of the soul's return/ From the deep adventure of material birth'. Therefore, they are a ladder of delivering ascent and rungs that Nature climbs to deity. In the primordial past, these grades of occult worlds had marked Nature's
giant downward plunge which also means the prone leap of a godhead's fall. (CF., Involution-Evolution.)

According to Sri Aurobindo, Integral Yoga enables us to undergo the experience of the existence of the immense high-curved world-pile entirely because there is, within us, a Seer who knows the ordered plan. It is this Seer in us who inspires our ascent to viewless heights through this world-pile. The call of this Seer in him had reached Aswapathy, 'The Traveller in Time.' Therefore, he went on travelling in his mute and single strength through the world-pile, bearing the burden of the world's desire for the incarnation of Savitri. As he travelled, world after world disclosed its guarded powers to him and heaven after heaven its deep beatitudes. When thus he mounted on the bare summit of created things in his inward Travel of the Worlds, the occult mystery of each plane of Consciousness started revealing itself to him in an apocalyptic manner. Each "World" or "Kingdom" through which Aswapathy travels is a plane of Consciousness.

The first of these planes which Aswapathy encounters is that of material consciousness. It is, therefore, called the Kingdom of Subtle Matter. As we have already seen at the outset of this Chapter, according to Sri Aurobindo, Matter means the physical. A still more important thing to note here is that Matter or the physical plane of Consciousness is apocalyptically
analysed not directly as 'gross physical' but by reference to (in fact, in contrast to) the subtle physical. Hence the term Subtle Matter.

The first apocalyptic characteristic of the Kingdom of Subtle Matter is that exists in the impalpable field of secret self. That is why Aswapathy discovered it in the field of his secret self as he came into a magic crystal air. He found on this plane a life that lived not by the flesh and a light that made immaterial things visible. This was so because the Kingdom of Subtle Matter was a fine degree in wonder's hierarchy governed by a faery craft. Unveiling the mystery of this plane, Sri Aurobindo explains that this Kingdom of Subtle Matter, which is a world of lovelier forms, lives near to our physical world. Because it is lovelier than our world, everything there is undisguised by earth's deforming sight. The reason is that in the Kingdom of Subtle Matter all shapes are beautiful and all things are true. Likewise, there is in that kingdom a mystically clear lucent ambience. The eyes of beings there are doors to a celestial sense. Hearing is music. The touch is a charm and the heart draws a deeper breath of power. All the shining origins of earth-nature dwell in the Kingdom of Subtle Matter. Aswapathy realises all these revelatory characteristics of the Kingdom of Subtle Matter in the course of his inward journey undertaken in a kind of trance induced by meditation. As such, the
whole description of this world of Subtle Matter can be aptly described as a product of Sri Aurobindo's apocalyptic vision. Exploring the world further for its remaining revelatory characteristics, Aswapathy realises and reveals to us that the time and the figure of the future sovereignties of earth-nature are already mapped and scheduled there. Therefore, the golden issue of mind's plots and the riches unfound or uncaught by our lives in the gross physical world freely live in the pellucid atmosphere of the world of Subtle Matter. In this way, all the vague beginnings of the gross world are already overtaken in the Kingdom of Subtle Matter.

The next revelation Aswapathy (in fact, Sri Aurobindo, as is obvious) makes about this plane of Subtle Matter is that it is a brilliant roof of our descending plane of gross physical. Secondly, being the roof of our world, the Kingdom of Subtle Matter intercepts the free boon of heaven's air, admitting only small inrushes of a mighty breath from those higher planes which exist above the Kingdom of Subtle Matter. On account of this apocalyptic nature of the world of Subtle Matter, the significant meanings of Heaven steal through it as through a veil. By this means the inner sight of heaven sustains the outer scene of the world of gross Matter in which we live.

As Aswapathy realises, the world of Subtle Matter
has, further, a finer Consciousness with happier lines. Therefore, everything there is full of perfect perfection. For example, the Kingdom of Subtle Matter has, according to Aswapathy's revelation, 'a tact our touch cannot attain,/ A purity of sense we never feel'. Similarly, this world maintains its own intercession with the Divine and thereby inspires all brief-lived attempts of earth, made in order to achieve beauty and the perfect shape of things. The embodiments of the outgoing thoughts of the young divinity of power take rest in this kingdom before they dive down to the earth. This is the reason why everything which appears on earth has its lovelier semblance in the world of Subtle Matter. Indeed, 'All that is beautiful here is there divine.' This revelation came to Aswapathy as he went on exploring the Kingdom of Subtle Matter.

It is also revealed to Aswapathy that all the marvels of the future exist and wander in the Kingdom of Subtle Matter. All things old and new are moulded there. Secondly, as Aswapathy observes, the world of Subtle Matter has different parts such as heights and depths. The heights of the kingdom are crowded with beauty thereby proving that the plane is a 'magic kingdom of ideal sight.' As such, Matter and soul meet there in conscious union. They join their strength, sweetness and delight and make the high and low worlds one.
Equally significantly, in the Kingdom of Subtle Matter 'The Spirit's leap towards body touches ground.' Such leap of the spirit enable the kingdom to bear the soul of man from world to higher world till the spirit's simplicity alone is left as the robe of the eternal being. Being a wonder-world, it cares only for expression and perfect form.

Since, as already noted, the heights of the world of Subtle Matter are fair but not its depths, Aswapathy discovers that it has dangerous nether planes against its fair peaks. Because of its dangerous lower planes its light draws towards the verge of Nature's lapse. Its gulsfs are full of terror but the kingdom lends beauty to them in the same way as it gives fascinating eyes to perilous gods inhabiting the kingdom. Likewise, the world of Subtle Matter fills the demon and the snake with grace. It is in a state of trance. In its turn, this trance of the kingdom imposes inconscience on the earth and prepares for us death's sombre robe, thereby authorising our mortality.

On account of its fairer heights, the Kingdom of Subtle Matter also serves a greater Consciousness by being the subtle ground of Matter's worlds. Whereas Matter's worlds are transitory the Kingdom of Subtle Matter remains immutable. It holds in itself and guards the deathless type of perishing things. In its nether
depths, however, its lowered potencies serve as a foundation for our fallen strengths. Its thought invents ignorance for us. Its sense creates the reflexes of our human body. It is in view of this contradiction between its heights and depths that Aswapathy reveals that:

A heaven of creative truths above,  
A cosmos of harmonious dreams between,  
A chaos of dissolving forms below,  
It plunjes lost in our inconscient base.  
Out of its fall our denser Matter came.

Thus taken was God's plunge into the Night.  
This fallen world became a nurse of souls  
Inhabited by concealed divinity.  

( Needless to say, 'God's plunge into the Night' mentioned here reminds us of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of Divine Descent in the form of Involution-Evolution. It is on account of the fact that the Sachchidananda descended from its highest heights down to the deepest depths creating on its way the various higher worlds brought into being by the pressures exerted by each of them, that Sri Aurobindo from this verse-paragraph onwards until the last verse paragraph of the canto on the Kingdom of Subtle Matter, goes on repeatedly reminding the reader of the revelatory nature of earth/world/life/existence, man, mind and the various unnamed higher worlds of Consciousness yet to be explored by Aswapathy. )

Still more revelatory aspects of the Kingdom of Subtle Matter are found in the last verse paragraph of the Canto. Aswapathy reveals that the fair subtle realm
is behind our own world. Then he reveals that in the realm of Subtle Matter form is everything and physical gods rule there as kings. Liberty acts there as the guarantee of perfection. All things possess a miracle of symmetric charm and a fantasy of perfect line an rule. All the inhabitants of the kingdom feel satisfied in themselves and whole. As Aswapathy reveals, an intricate rapture riots in a small space there. Everything is enamoured of its own delight. It lives in a heaven-pleased self-glad immunity. It feels need of nothing more.

Yet another revelatory aspect of the Kingdom of Subtle Matter is that 'It was a world that could not fear nor grieve./ It had no grace of error or defeat,/ It had no room for fault, no power to fail.' The reason for its being so is that it draws its form-discoveries and the miracle of its rhythmic thoughts and acts from some packed self-bliss. So extraordinary are all these apocalyptic qualities of the plane of Subtle Matter that Aswapathy feels amazed. His senses are ravished with delight. He moves there in a divine, yet kindred world admiring all the marvellous forms existing there. They are in a world so near to our own world. Yet, they are as perfect as the playthings of a god. They are as deathless in the aspect of mortality. Aswapathy accounts for these revelatory qualities of the realm by observing that it is one of the graded worlds('ranked supremacies')
created by the Supreme Consciousness in its descent to undertake Involution-Evolution. On the strength of it, he reveals that in the world of Subtle Matter the spirit of the divine Might stands back behind its frame. A blue horizon limits the soul there. Similarly, thought moves in luminous facilities and life lingers satisfied in its boundaries with the small happiness of the body's acts. Its walk is fixed within a radiant groove because it is there forgetful of her violent desires in the same way as it is forgetful of the heights to which it rose. In the world of Subtle Matter, life has no wings for wide and dangerous flight. Nor does it have any yearning for its lost infinitudes.

In this way, Aswapathy reveals the various apocalyptic aspect of the Kingdom of Subtle Matter which is 'A perfect picture in a perfect frame'. Even so, as Sri Aurobindo points out, 'This faery artistry could not keep' Aswapathy's will. It gave him only a moment's fine release. The reason he gives for this is that our spirit gets tired of our being's surfaces and the splendour of the form of things is transcended. As a result, our spirit turns to hidden powers and deeper states than the Kingdom of Subtle Matter. That is why Sri Aurobindo states that from this kingdom Aswapathy looked beyond for greater light. His soul abandoned 'This brilliant
courtyard of the House of Days,' this 'find material Paradise.' For, 'His destiny lay beyond in larger Space.'

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Chapter Notes:


6. Ibid. p.184.

7. Ibid.


11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.


20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.


25. p.113-5.