

T  
83

THE PHILOSOPHY OF INDRA  
AS EXPRESSED IN HIS BOOK  
NERASHKHARH

By  
VAHAN A. POLADIAN

Being a thesis presented to  
the Department of Philosophy  
at the American University  
of Beirut, in partial fulfil-  
ment of the requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts.

Beirut, Lebanon.

1952.

1

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS: THE PHILOSOPHY OF  
INDRA AS EXPRESSED IN HIS BOOK NERASHKHARH

The thesis contains an introduction and five chapters. The introduction deals with Indra as a man. After a brief biographical sketch, Indra is shown to be a figure who is at the same time an artist, a botanist, a writer, a great lover, and a philosopher. Finally, a reference is made to the different convictions which Indra held during his lifetime; namely, skepticism, materialism, spiritualistic pantheism, spiritism, and sabbatarianism.

Chapter one is a presentation of Indra's Nerashkharh. The book is written during the years 1898 to 1900. Its subject matter is taken from that part of Indra's life which covers the period 1894 to 1899. It is dedicated to Reteos J. Berberian, the former teacher of Indra. Berberian in his turn wrote the preface of the book, in the form of a letter. This preface-letter is a concise evaluation of the Innerworld. Furthermore, the book contains a note which is a self-criticism on the part of the author. The Innerworld is divided into eight chapters of different lengths. The chapters, although not related externally, form a unity. Their unity lies in the attitude of the author with regard to things. The book is written in modern literary Armenian. However, in order to express himself thoroughly, the author has coined a great number of new words. The style of the book is characterized by abundant use of the adjective and figures of speech, such as metaphors, personification, metonymy, and ellipsis. These figures of speech are the invention of the author and are used for a more effective self-

expression and not for the sake of creating variety in the style. The style of the Innerworld is unique in modern Armenian literature.

The philosophical content of the Innerworld can be systematized under the following three headings: Metaphysics, Philosophy of Human Existence, and Ethics.

Chapter two deals with Indra's metaphysics. The author is a pantheist. He believes that Reality is one and identical with the Universe and God. These in their turn are identical with Light. Light is conceived of as an all-inclusive substance which is at the same time Energy, Vitality, and Intelligence. Through condensation and gradual cooling off of Light a world of particulars has come to existence. Bodies are aggregates of atoms. Matter is condensed and limited soul and soul boundless matter. Matter and soul are co-temporal in all particular existents. There is a constant process of transformation from matter to soul and vice versa. There are passages in the Innerworld which make us think that this process is governed by universal laws which express the nature of God.

Chapter three deals with Indra's philosophy of human existence. The author holds that social life in modern societies must be avoided because it is full of misery and because it fetters the full development of the individual. In spite of these, however, there are modes of living within society which, relatively speaking, are free from social miseries and which allow man to experience the Infinite. These modes of life are: Life spent by the insane (fallen geniuses), life spent through the use of alcoholic drinks, and life spent through the use of hashish.

The ideal mode of life is the life spent in solitude, because solitude is the medium in which man can achieve a full self-development and can communicate with the Infinite.

In spite of the fact that Indra states: "There is nothing that can take man to God without first taking him to death", he cannot be regarded as an advocator of suicide. In the first place, this position is in contradiction with his metaphysics. Secondly, he tells us that to achieve union with God is the lot of him only who has attained a full self-development. In the third place, he shows that pessimism is a self-contradicting doctrine.

Chapter four deals with Indra's ethics. By Indra's ethics is meant his conception of human nature, his conception of man's vocation in life, and the ways which man adopts to fulfil his vocation.

All particular existents are combinations of soul and body. The latter is a degraded form of the former. Of the particular existents man has the greatest proportion of soul over body. Being universal in essence, the human soul tries to free itself from the fetters of the body and to attain its previous universality. This self-universalization in its highest form is a mystic union with Light (God). The fulfilment of this end is man's vocation. There are three stages in the process of self-universalization. The first of these stages is a renunciation of the world of particulars and one of seeking universal concepts through religion and the fine arts. The second is an effort towards self-universalization through knowledge which in its ultimate form is love. The last stage is a mystic union with God through death.

Chapter five is a critical evaluation of Indra's philosophy.

It is shown that there are passages in the Innerworld which contradict Indra's belief in the immortality of the individuals. There are others which indicate that Indra contradicts his pantheism through being an orthodox Christian. Finally, his belief in the immortality of the soul as a distinct entity contradicts his ethics. Besides these contradictions, Indra's philosophy as a whole suffers from the defect of not being explained and demonstrated. The justification of these points lies in the fact that the Innerworld is primarily a literary work and not the exposition of a system of philosophy. The author has put on paper only what he has felt.

Indra deserves credit for avoiding inconsistencies within the major divisions of his philosophy. Moreover, he deserves credit for putting his philosophy in line with modern science. Again, his philosophy starts from facts of experience and not from supposedly self-evident general principles. Finally, the author deserves credit for his metaphysical treatment of love.

If we try to place Indra in a pantheistic school we shall be confronted with a great difficulty. There are lines of thought in the Innerworld which are parallel with those of Heraclitus. There are others which are in line with those of the Eleatics, of Plotinus, of Spinoza, and of the Hegelians. His conception of the primary substance as soul makes us classify him as a spiritualistic pantheist. Furthermore, he is a mystical pantheist because he holds that the ultimate good for all particulars is a mystic union with God. Finally, if we classify Indra with regard to his philosophy of human existence, we shall find that he is both a romantic and a modern existentialist.

VAHAN A. POLADIAN

Beirut, June 1952.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction . . . . .	1
Chapter I - <u>Nerashkharh (Innerworld)</u> , The Book . .	11
Chapter II - Indra's Metaphysics . . . . .	20
Chapter III - Indra's Philosophy of Human Existence .	29
Chapter IV - Indra's Ethics . . . . .	41
Chapter V - A Critical Evaluation of Indra's Philo- sophy . . . . .	51
Bibliography . . . . .	62

I N T R O D U C T I O N

I N D R A . T H E M A N

Tiran Tahirakian, best known to the literary world as Indra, was born on September 11, 1875 in Isgudar, Istambul. He received his primary education in the school of the district, and then studied at the Berberian College from which he graduated in 1891. After graduation, he busied himself for a while by decorating pots and by illustrating Turkish reviews. From 1895 to 1915, he held teaching positions which were sometimes interrupted by travel. First, he taught in the primary schools of the regions of Marmora, Black Sea, and Cilicia; then in the secondary schools at Istambul - teaching even in the college of which he was a graduate. The courses he taught in these latter schools were: Armenian Language, both modern and classical; Armenian Literature; French Language; and Natural Sciences, especially Botany. In 1898, he went to Paris and studied painting. Soon, however, he became dissatisfied with the course and went to Egypt. He stayed there for a while with a cousin and then returned to Istambul. These travels and those which he made in the different regions of Turkey in attending to his teaching duties provided him with material for his future literary works.

At the age of twenty-five he married Miss Vergine Beyazian, the girl he loved passionately and whom he has immortalized as Irena in his Innerworld. By 1908, however, in spite of the fact that she had borne him a son, he had ceased loving her. He was willing to see her loved by one of his intimate friends and had even talked the matter over with him. History



does not record what the result of this conversation was. All we know is that he continued to live with her for a few years later until her life became unbearable. Indra had become a fanatic Sabbatarian and began to put into practice the teachings of the Gospels literally. He would, for instance, pick up beggars from the streets, take them home, and ask his wife to clean, feed and shelter them. Her life became so disagreeable that she left him for good.

During the first years of World War I, he was called to the army and became a student in the School for Reserve Officers. However, because he had become a Sabbatarian, he refused to carry arms even under the threat of the death penalty. In the year 1917, he wrote a petition to Enver Pasha, then the war minister of Turkey, asking for exemption from active military service. In August of the same year, he was appointed secretary to the kitchen which supplied the poor with hot food under the supervision of Mrs. Bronzar Pasha, the wife of the director of the School for Reserve Officers. The appointment was the result of the intervention of his German "sisters" and "brothers". After the armistice of 1918, he devoted himself to the task of preaching the Gospels. He went on a religious mission to the Turkish province of Konia, which at that time had come under the sway of the Kemalist revolutionary forces. To go there under existing conditions was suicide. Several friends tried in vain to warn him. As expected, in the year 1921, he was accused of plotting against the government and was arrested. After being

tried he was sentenced to exile. On his way into banishment he endured fifty-three days of torture in a Turkish hell created for him and his companions by the accompanying Turkish soldiers. Finally on the sixth of June of the same year, sick and hungry, robbed and exhausted, he died on the way from Tikranakert to Farghin. His last words to his companions expressed a wish to have them strive after faith, love and unity.

\* \*  
\*

Indra is a figure who is at the same time an artist, a naturalist, a writer, a great lover and a philosopher.

From his childhood Indra showed signs of becoming a great painter. It is told that when the famous Armenian sea-painter, Ayvazovski visited Istambul, young Tehirakian presented some of his water colours to him. The great artist was astonished when he considered the beauty of the paintings and the age of the young painter. As a boy he studied painting in Istambul. One day, however, his teacher tried to correct an oil-painting of his by a stroke of the brush. Young Tehirakian accused him of having spoiled the originality of his work and a quarrel ensued. As a result Tehirakian gave up the course. Later on he studied painting in Paris, but soon gave it up because he became disgusted with the methods in which painting was taught. What is more, he became convinced that of the two alternatives, painting and literature, the latter was the better

means for self-expression. To give up painting did not mean for Indra to cease to be an artist. Instead of the brush he took up the pen. If one reads his writings, he will find himself looking at pictures. The impression cannot be suppressed that by some miracle brush strokes have been changed into words.

\*  
\* \*

Indra's love for plants was the result of his outdoor excursions and the influence of a learned botanist called Oughourikian. Eventually he came to know plants so well that he could tell the characteristics, ways of behaviour, and name of any plant found in the surroundings. It is told that in the year 1911 the Armenian students of the Agricultural College at Halkali, a village in European Turkey, invited the faculty of the Bezazian School, of which Indra was a member, to pay them a visit. While they were being shown around the botanical garden, they came across a plant the identity of which had not yet been determined even by the professor of the course. Indra, gave a thorough explanation of it. He indicated its various peculiarities and distinguishing characteristics. Then, after illustrating in practice all that he said, he named the plant in Latin, French, Turkish, and Armenian. Meanwhile, a student had run to the library and had verified his information in the Encyclopaedia. Because of his understanding of plants and his ability to draw illustrations on the blackboard, he was able to convert the botany course, hitherto considered the dullest, into

a most interesting one.

\*  
\* \* \*

Indra's literary career began when he was only fifteen with the publication of a poem called "The Sea". In the next year, 1891, he replied in prose to an article of Mr. Tchobanian's, a contemporary Armenian poet, which was on the subject "The Death of Poetry". His title was "Poetry Does Not Die". From that day on his prose and poetry appeared in the contemporary Armenian press. Some of his best articles are: "A Cup", "Black Sea", "Ayvazovski", "Samotrace", "The Eclipse", "The Picture", "Passage from Taurus", "God", and so on. Besides these he has written literary criticisms of the writings of Reteos J. Berberian, of the Pastoral Flute of Bishop Elishe Tourian, and one of the Armenian alphabet.

Indra published only two volumes: Nerashkharh (Inner-world), written in the years 1898 to 1900 and published in 1906; and Nojestan (Cypress-Grove), written between 1904 to 1908 and published in 1908. The Innerworld is our subject, hence we shall examine it in detail later on. The Cypress-Grove contains forty sonnets all of which are dedicated to the cypress tree. Its perpendicular stature and evergreenness have become for the poet the symbols of other-worldliness and eternity. The grove is likened to a harp which chants prayers under the blowing wind. The ascending prayers are represented by the dark-green colour of the trees. In Armenian literature, the book is regarded as

the best example of condensed and thought-laden poetry. In it the poet laments his perishableness, <sup>expresses</sup> and dissatisfaction with the world, and sighs ~~after~~ for eternal beauty, immortality, and God.

Besides these, Indra has written a journal composed of a series of love poems in prose, which were inspired by the love of a woman-student of his. Mr. Tekeyan, a late Armenian poet, to whom Indra had read the poems, describes them as "really very beautiful pages".<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, because of a moral and religious crisis, which he underwent before becoming a Sabbatarian, he burned them together with all of his manuscripts. Their destruction was, undoubtedly, a great loss to Armenian literature.

Indra was an extensive reader of European literature, both classical and modern. He strove to acquire a many-sided culture, and consequently, studied literature, philosophy, religion and aesthetics. Among the arts he liked painting best, Rembrandt being his favorite painter. His desire for a cosmopolitan education was the result of the influence which the Berberian College had had upon him. The program in that school was especially designed to develop the student's intellect in many respects. All kinds of specializations were regarded as university tasks. The greatest influence on Indra, however, was his teacher Retece J. Berberian through his philosophy of the Good, of the Beautiful and of the True. Throughout his literary career, Indra strove to write works which, in his own words, were

---

1. "Sevan", an Armenian periodical. See 1946 B, p. 53.

"so perfect in meaning and style that they would be imperishable".<sup>1</sup>  
In my opinion that is what he has done.

\* \* \*

Love has occupied an important place in the life of Indra. In fact, instead of being a lover he has been a love-stricken man. With the lapse of time the objects of his love have changed. The girls have been replaced by the "Universal", and this in its turn by God and humanity. On no occasion, however, has his love lost its character of purity, even during his engagement and marriage. When he became engaged to the girl he loved, we find him regretful for a while at the thought that he would be deprived of the ennobling sufferings which were caused by his strivings to achieve her unattainable existence. Shortly after their marriage, Mrs. Tchirakian, who thought of love only in terms of sensual satisfaction, started complaining that her husband had ceased loving her. In a letter dated January 25, 1901, Indra answered that she was mistaken, that he still loved her not as a lover but as a companion, because married couples are no longer lovers, but only companions. He always regarded love as something abstract which has as its object to mould the lover into such a being that he would become worthy of it.

\* \* \*

Externally, Indra was elegant and enchanting. Because

---

1. "Zwarthnotz", an Armenian periodical. See May 1929, p. 102.

of his behaviour as a serious thinker, he was respected and loved by everybody. In all of his dealings he was punctual. He attended his classes and faculty meetings regularly. The way he made his point of view was very clear and concise. He was violent and intolerent. He hated any belief which he did not share. To enforce his point of view he sometimes used violence. On one occasion, when disputing with a fellow teacher of the Berberian College, he struck him on the head with a thick diary. He was very clever, sarcastic, revengeful and sensitive. Very fond of debating, he often sat arguing until dawn. Besides all these, he was a heavy smoker and drinker, though never a drunkard.

With the lapse of time and with the change of his convictions, his temperament changed also. When he finally became a Sabbatarian, a complete reversal of character traits had been effected in him. Now his dominant characteristics were obedience, humbleness, kindness and philanthropy. With Stoic patience he endured all the affrontery and suffering that were his lot throughout his mission.

\*  
\* \*

Finally, the life of Indra was full of mutually exclusive convictions. In the days of his youth, he was characterized by scepticism, faithlessness, and materialism. Gradually, however, a desire for faith developed in him and he became a pantheistic spiritualist. By 1908, he became an spiritist. He

subscribed to a European review dealing with the subject, gave a lecture concerning it, and in 1911 published a study of it in an Armenian review. By questioning the spirit he had learned that in his former life he had lived in Cairo as an Arab author and librarian. From spiritism he was led to Christianity and became ardently devoted to the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The last stage of Indra's ideological development was his Sabbatarianism. One evening Mr. Sarkissian, a friend of his, offers him a cigarette and he refuses saying: "I have stopped smoking". "Then you must have had a strong will", remarks Mr. Sarkissian. "Not at all", answers Indra, "I succeeded through praying.

I wonder how does it happen that the soul of man does not become illuminated by the light of truth, and he remains in darkness for years? I feel very much depressed at the thought that I have not been able to come in contact with the Biblical light of truth sooner, and have kept myself busy with altogether vain and harmful tasks. Will is the expression of the great Universal Force. A worthless being like me must pray so that he can put his soul and self in the way of that Glorious Light. Yes, my dear friend, I prayed and succeeded.<sup>1</sup>

From that day on, he served that Light with sincere devotion. He suffered martyrdom so that it might illuminate the souls of other men and save them from eternal darkness.

---

1. "Ani", an Armenian literary monthly. See Feb. 1948.



CHAPTER I

NERASHKHARH (INNERWORLD), THE BOOK

The Innerworld was written during the years 1898 to 1900. Its subject matter was taken from that part of its author's life which covered the period 1894 to 1899. During these years the author led a life "more or less romantic and full of emotion".<sup>1</sup> The book was published in the year 1906. Indra took care to have the printed book represent a good piece of art peculiar to him. He personally designed the type of letters by means of which the title was printed on the cover of the book. Furthermore, he decorated the chapters with frontispieces and cul-de-lamps which do not repeat themselves in different chapters. These decorations usually are stylizations of plant motives, such as the lotus, poppy, laurel, and so on. They remind one of the style of William Morris. His designs, however, are finer than those of Morris, and this fineness is all his own.

The Innerworld is dedicated to Reteos J. Berberian, the former teacher of Indra. Berberian in his turn wrote the preface of the book. It is in the form of a letter addressed to Indra. In the first part Berberian very modestly tells Indra that he was embarrassed by the epithet 'most radiant' attributed to him in the dedication. The fact that he has not been able to understand the content of the book thoroughly will, he hopes, make Indra realize the inadequacy of the epithet. Human intellects are finite. They have not been able to explain the beginning and end of things. They have not been able to solve the

---

1. Indra, Innerworld (Istambul, 1906), p. XV.

problems concerning mind, matter, and life. This being the case, no human intellect, concludes Berberian, can ever be a 'most radiant' light.

The rest of the preface-letter is a concise, critical evaluation of the book. Berberian finds in it places obscure in meaning, but refrains from considering them defects. He admires Indra's talent of self-expression, and ascribes the obscurities to the difficulty of the subject matter of the book. He is so confident of the genius of his former pupil that he is afraid of misjudging him.

Besides the preface-letter, the book contains a brief note which is nothing but a self-criticism in embryo on the part of the author. It seems, Berberian was not mistaken after all. Indra is aware of some defects in the book, such as: "linguistic audacities", "obscurities in explanation", "exaggeration of impressions", and "philosophical uncertainties". He has not tried to rid the book of them because he has determined to be true to his inner experiences and express them as they are. But is this consciousness of defects a valid justification of them? Indra is not sure; all that he says is this:

All these points will be verified only when Indra ceases to write, or when he dies. He is so interested in death that he longs for it more than anything else. Besides,<sup>1</sup> he wishes to be judged fairly, and needs to be loved.

---

1. Ibid, pp. XVI, ~~IX~~.

To classify the Innerworld as a type of literature is difficult. It is written in prose and has the form of a long essay. However, there is such a strong poetical element in it, that we can with R.J. Berberian call it a long poem in prose "dedicated to the beautiful, to the sublime, to the infinite, to light, to love, and to God".<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it is the expression of a series of vivid psychic impressions actually experienced by the author during the years 1894 to 1899. From this point of view it can be thought of as a journal. Finally, we can call it a love poem in prose provided that we use the word love in a wider sense than that in which it is usually used. In other words we can do this if we understand by it something more than an emotional relation between selves. In each chapter there is at least one thing which is loved passionately by the author. Sometimes it is solitariness, on other occasions, the sea, the pyramids of Egypt, light, Irena, and so on.

The Innerworld contains eight chapters of different lengths. The chapters bear no titles as if to say that they are parts of one great chapter - the whole book. In their turn the chapters are divided into sections of various lengths. Each section expresses one idea which is part of a principal idea expressed by the whole chapter. This does not mean, however, that the content of each chapter is exclusive of the others. It only means that there is unity in the book but not a complete relatedness. In literary works, unity and relation are not the same

---

1. Ibid, pp. ~~XVI~~, IX.

things. Unity does not necessarily relate, and relation does not necessarily unite. Unity is a superiority which springs from the soul of the author, from his sincerity and truthfulness. It does not necessarily imply the activity of the will. It is the way in which the author approaches things and comprehends them. Relation, on the other hand, is an art which involves will and consciousness. It is the bond (often artificial) which leads from one subject to another. Its aim is to bring about unity. Hence, it is obvious that, to a literary work, unity is more essential than relatedness. In the Innerworld, unity is represented in the sections by the idea each expresses; in the chapters by the principal idea each expresses; and in the whole book by the attitude of the author with regard to things. This attitude is the same throughout the book. On the other hand, relation is complete among paragraphs, less so among sections, and very rare among chapters. For instance, the principal idea contained in each chapter given by the author himself is as follows:

In the first chapter: To feel the Infinite one needs solitude. In the second chapter: Longing for death as a result of the darkening of the sky, and longing for life as a result of the <sup>clearing</sup>clarification of the sky. In the third chapter: Light, the smile of Infinity. In the fourth chapter: The bliss of Universality and the pain of Particularity. In the fifth chapter: Longing for atonement resulting from feeling the Infinite. In the sixth chapter: Non-Being and the All. In the

seventh chapter: The life of Universe-Worship. In the eighth chapter: Love, and through it the worship of Eternity.<sup>1</sup>

Now, which among these ideas are the most general, and when taken alone would include all the rest? Indra has failed in making a choice. It was desirable to put in one chapter all the material which refers to one subject; in another all that refers to another; and so on. Instead of having this character, some of Indra's chapters can be incorporated into others, and some others can be still further subdivided. In short, although the book has a unity, yet it is not a systematically organized whole.

The Innerworld is written in an almost pure modern literary Armenian. The occurrence of words in classical Armenian is very rare. In his literary style Indra has used the adjective abundantly. This is mainly because he has striven to express the characteristics of things in their minutest possible details. He has chosen his vocabulary from those words which express highly intellectual and literary meanings. Besides, he has been very strict regarding the nuances of words. Because of all these, even the rich vocabulary of the Armenian language (with which Indra was well acquainted) has been unable to supply him with all the necessary words. On the other hand, however, Armenian language has great facility in forming derivative and compound

---

1. "Puzantion", an Armenian Daily. See Dec. 27, 1906.

words, and Indra made the most of this advantage by coining many new words. It is interesting to note those words which are constructed by compounding two words opposite in meaning. To this category belong the words 'slatzargakh' and 'khoyansharj'. The former means a flight in suspense and is used to describe such a state. Its compounding parts are the Armenian words for flight and for suspension. The latter means a motionless dash and is used to characterize the cypress tree. Its compounding parts are the Armenian words for dashing and for immovability. Another interesting case is the coining of onomatopoeias. Of this category we can mention the word 'shloloikhoupsh' which expresses the filling of a jar with water.

The style in which the book is written is very pictorial and musical. The succession of words, phrases, and sentences is smooth and harmonious. Besides, the rhythm varies with different paragraphs. The paragraph, which is sometimes two or three pages long, is often a series of pictures painted in words. We can liken it to a tapestry on which so many pictures are painted that sometimes the lines of the different pictures coincide. This is the result of the author's endeavour to express his impressions and emotions thoroughly. Mr. Elkendjian, one of the best commentators on Indra, calls him "the monster of the written picture" as Hugo is called "the monster of the written word".<sup>1</sup> In drawing his pictures, Indra uses two methods: first, he goes into details, then tries to assimilate the details into an all-inclusive whole.

---

1. Ibid, Oct. 1st, 1906.

Let us note, however, that the abundance of content never causes disorder in a paragraph. Every word, every phrase, and every sentence has its proper place in its construction. Any elimination will necessarily result in defect. The paragraph is a whole of co-ordinated and subordinated elements. The author deserves real credit for the fact that he has been able to handle several lines of thought at a time without letting them fall into confusion.

The style of the Innerworld is characterized, as well, by the abundant use of epithets which give splendour, colour, and relief to the author's thoughts. Another of its characteristics is the abundant use of figures of speech such as: the metaphor, personification, metonymy, ellipsis, and so on. These, however, are not used in a commonplace way, and are not borrowed from a classical storehouse. All of them are original inventions. Furthermore, they are not used for the sake of giving variety to the style, but for the sake of making the expressions of the author more efficient and more authentic. For this same purpose Indra has used the device of changing adjectives into abstract nouns. For instance, instead of saying "my imagination was flying in an indefinite transparency", he says: "My imagination was flying in an indefiniteness of transparency". Finally, we find in Indra's style an effort toward condensation. In the limits of possibility, he has tried to change sections into paragraphs, condense paragraphs into sentences, and summarise sentences into compound words. This is the result of his desire



to incorporate details into wholes.

The style of Indra is very artistic and unusual. It is the style of a sensitive heart full of emotion. Besides, it is the style of a bold intellect which is trying to search the depths of Nature and Infinity; hence it is characterized by great flights of imagination. It is very original and unique in modern Armenian literature. Although clear, it is difficult to understand. The following is what Indra himself says about the book:

Together with all the mystic, abstract, and transcendent literary works, we may liken the Innerworld to a mountainous region. Besides being full of steep slopes, misty peaks and dark abysses, it is also full of peaceful valleys, and dazzling clear horizons. It belongs only to the bold mountain-lovers who, it is true, will pant and perspire during its exploration, but will also enjoy its thrilling ups and downs, and the unexpectedly exposed scenery. There, they will breathe the pure air of the<sup>1</sup> mountains.

---

1. Ibid, Dec. 4, 1906.

CHAPTER II

INDRA'S METAPHYSICS

Indra has not made a systematic exposition of his philosophy in his Innerworld. He has only expressed philosophical ideas. These philosophical ideas have been the result of his meditations on some personal experiences of life. Usually, they are intuitive glimpses of Reality. Unfortunately, he has not tried to develop and organize them into a system. He has even failed to avoid contradictions. However, there is the possibility of systematizing the philosophical content of the book; that is the aim of the present work.

As one reads the Innerworld through carefully, he cannot fail to notice the pantheistic character of Indra's philosophy. Pantheism, in philosophy, usually means the doctrine which can be stated as "God is All, and All is God". This means that the Universe is not thought of as a creation of God, or as a part of Him. God is not a transcendental Being distinct from the Universe. He is the Universe in the sense of being immanent in It. All finite existents are modifications of God.

To denote the Universe, Indra uses several terms interchangeably: The All,<sup>1</sup> the Infinite,<sup>2</sup> the Boundless,<sup>3</sup> the Absolute Unity,<sup>4</sup> God,<sup>5</sup> the Whole,<sup>6</sup> the Eternity of the Luminous Substance.<sup>7</sup> That he considers the Universe to be identical with God is evident

- 
1. Indra, Innerworld, pp. 150, 192, 121.
  2. Op., Cit., pp. 30, 92, 98, 101, 237, 241, 250.
  3. Op., Cit., pp. 40, 50, 52, 91, 127, 130, 160, 165, 177, 185, 202, 215, 241.
  4. Op., Cit., pp. 150, 212.
  5. Op., Cit., pp. 111, 146, 152, 166, 167, 241, 250, 251.
  6. Op., Cit., pp. 215.
  7. Op., Cit., p. 184.

from the following passage: "A Deity, whether he be called Osiris, Zeus, Brahma, Jehovah, or God, is the product of the universalization of all things." <sup>1</sup> It may be objected that 'the product of the universalization of all things' does not necessarily mean identity with the Universe. This objection can be removed by the fact that Indra regards the content of the Universe as particular instances of Light. Light, as we shall see presently, is the all-inclusive substance. Now, 'the product of the universalization of all things' can only mean that universal and eternal substance of which the things are instances. This substance, in its turn, is identical with the Universe because by definition there is nothing outside of it.

Pantheism implies that God remains the same in essence eternally. If this were not the case, if God could become something else, then this something else would have existed outside of Him which by hypothesis is a contradiction. The notion 'God remaining the same in essence through change' brings us to the idea of substance. Substance is that permanent substratum which remains the same in essence through change. Consequently, pantheism necessarily implies the existence of a substance which is identical with God.

Is this conception of substance found in the philosophy of Indra? The answer is in the affirmative:

The unknown, eternal substance, of which Light is the

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 119.

heavenly gift, is the first and last form of all things which are only intermediate forms.<sup>1</sup> Man desires the absolutely universal and eternal Being, who remains the same through all changes in the external world, and is their identity and law.<sup>2</sup>

Right at the beginning, as is evident from the first of these two passages, Indra refers to the eternal substance as 'unknown'. But, as he develops his theme, he comes to identify it with Light. Our judgment is based on the following passages in the Innerworld:

The whole creation tends towards Light, and through Light lives, vibrates, and is eternal. The Sun, out of which originates the particularized and imperfect universe, but towards which it constantly strives... Light is the only Element and the only Force which becomes Existence and penetrates it constantly... It is the omnipotent substance, the nourishment of all, their origin, existence, and aim... It is the tranquility of the supreme wisdom where doubt does not exist... It is the tranquility of the supreme homogeneity which is devoid of all kinds of struggle among heterogeneous bodies, and where bodies unite in the Ego of a pure brotherhood, fatherhood.<sup>3</sup> The aim of all these burnings is the luminous Boundless.<sup>4</sup>

The cypress-trees have ascended towards the eternity

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 113.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 119.

3. Op., Cit., pp. 113-114.  
4. Op., Cit., p. 91.

of the luminous substance from which everything became detached and descended slowly... and which in con-  
gealed countries glitters as consciences and religions.<sup>1</sup>

To avoid confusion let us immediately add that Indra uses the terms Light, Soul, Sun and Ether, interchangeably.<sup>2</sup> The above passages explicitly show that Light is referred to as the origin of all things, as the only Element and Force, and as the final aim of all particularities. What is more to the point, two of the quotations indicate the exchange of the epithet 'unknown' for the epithet 'luminous'. I think, being given the above facts, we can consider our judgment, concerning the identity of Light with the universal substance, as justified.

According to Indra, the universal substance, Light, is in the form of energy:

All forces consist of the same energy, namely, the vibration of the universal and all penetrating Light. Everything reduces itself to motion and vibration, in one word, to tendency. Genius, will, electricity, love, faith, gravitation, morality, prayer, are the same tendency.<sup>3</sup>

As is evident in this passage, tendency is regarded as equivalent to motion and vibration. These, in their turn, are thought of as energy. The sentence 'everything reduces itself to motion

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 184.  
2. Op., Cit., pp. 112-117.

3. Op., Cit., p. 116.

and vibration' is significant. It proves our point, namely, the identity of Light with energy. Because, if everything reduces itself to motion and vibration, and if motion and vibration are equivalent to force, and force to energy, then the expression 'everything reduces itself to motion and vibration' is equivalent to the expression 'everything reduces itself to energy'. But, the form into which everything can ultimately be reduced is Light. Consequently, Light is energy.

The energy which is identical with Light is vital energy. The Universe of Indra is a living Universe; "The power of life which grows in beings... is the feeling of that eternal vitality of which the individual is only a throbbing."<sup>1</sup> "A desire for immortality springs from the earth."<sup>2</sup> In another passage,<sup>3</sup> Indra speaks of memories which tell him "only of life". The memories that he is referring to are the memories of those moments of his life, during which he has felt the Infinite. In other words, the Infinite tells him of life only; consequently, it must be living. Again, "To breathe Light and be penetrated by It is the greatest reality, namely, vitality."<sup>4</sup> This too indicates that Light, the universal and eternal substance of the Universe, is a principle of vitality.

Finally, we find indications in the Innerworld which make us conceive of Light as a Mind; "If the Universe does not

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 92.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 91.

3. Op., Cit., pp. 22-23.  
4. Op., Cit., pp. 115-116.

have a center, instead of being an infinite genius, it would be an infinite insanity."<sup>1</sup> Whether the Universe has a center or not, whether It is a genius or an insanity, one thing is certain, namely, that It is a Mind. Only a mind can be referred to as a genius or as an insanity. Furthermore, Indra holds that intellect is a degraded form of Light constantly striving to achieve its previous synthesis.<sup>2</sup> Now, since the ultimate aim of intellectual activity is supreme knowledge, then Light in its purest form is Supreme Knowledge.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Indra calls God "Omniscience". If God is "Omniscience", then he must be a mind because only a mind can be omniscience.

To sum up: According to Indra, Reality is one and the same with the Universe and with God. These in their turn are identical with Light. Light is conceived as an all-inclusive substance which is at the same time Energy, Vitality, and Intelligence. Having dealt with the Real in its universality, let us turn to the sphere of particulars.

How is the passage from universality to particularity affected? Indra does not tell us directly. However, there is a clue to the solution of the problem. That clue is Indra's notions of matter and soul. According to Indra, bodies are "aggregates of atoms".<sup>4</sup> "Matter is condensed and limited soul, and soul boundless matter."<sup>5</sup> The implied theory is that, through

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 129.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 111.  
3. Op., Cit., p. 119.

4. Op., Cit., p. 116.  
5. Loc., Cit.



condensation and cooling off, Light gradually becomes tangible and individual. Thus a sphere of particulars springs into existence.<sup>1</sup> Light in its two forms, body and soul, is co-temporal in these particulars; "These two infinite forms are co-temporal in all beings in an infinitely various proportion."<sup>2</sup> The pure form of Light found in the particulars, causes the whole sphere of particularity to strive towards a union with Light. Indra believes in the possibility of such a union.<sup>3</sup> Particulars become universal through death: "There is nothing that can take man to God without first taking him to death."<sup>4</sup> Thus there is a constant process of transformation from matter to Light and from Light to matter. In other words from universality to particularity, and vice versa. The conception that matter is transformed into Light (energy) is in line with the modern scientific theory which holds that energy is produced as a result of atomic fission.

Is this process of transformation governed by universal laws? There are passages in the Innerworld which suggest an affirmative answer. The passages that I am referring to are the following:

The supremely universal and eternal Being is the law<sup>5</sup> of the changes that take place in the external world. Through recognizing Universal Laws people express their<sup>6</sup> possession of ideas of love.

---

1. Existence in space and time.  
2. Innerworld, p. 116.  
3. To be discussed in detail in the chapter on Ethics.

4. Innerworld, p. 111.  
5. Op., Cit., p. 119.  
6. Op., Cit., p. 72.

In another passage Indra speaks about Absolute Laws of ethics.<sup>1</sup>  
He calls Christ "the Law of the Universe".<sup>2</sup> Speaking about the  
henbane, he refers to it as "a moment of the law of 'return' to  
the universal substance".<sup>3</sup> He expresses a similar idea when  
talking about burials: "The church-bell resounds the triumph of  
the idea of return to the eternal Identity".<sup>4</sup> All of these tell  
us that the passage from universality to particularity and vice  
versa, is affected according to a law. Since one of the above  
quotations identifies this law with the universal and eternal  
Being, we shall not be far from the truth if we conclude that  
the Universe is governed by universal laws which express the  
nature of God.

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 200.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 166.

3. Op., Cit., p. 198.  
4. Op., Cit., p. 147.

CHAPTER III

INDRA'S PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

Indra's philosophy of life is the direct outcome of his metaphysics. Man, like all particular existents, is a combination of soul and body. In him the process of transformation from body to soul has reached its highest stage: "Man is a transformation from form to meaning, from vision to mystery, from number to Infinity, from reality to the Idea."<sup>1</sup> The fully developed man is he in whom this transformation has been achieved. Now the question is: What modes of life are convenient to the achievement of this end?

Social life in modern societies must be avoided because it fetters the full development of man:

Society implies humiliating concessions, namely, the foolish sale of rights for stupid duties. The whole community is formed by the elimination of deeply individual and often essentially human necessities. Submission to (social) environment... is the denial of the true worth of the self, of the man designed<sup>2</sup> in the child.

In fact, man essentially is not a social being: "Sociability is the genuine consequence of the individual's imitation of his father and his fear of him. Here lies its whole sacredness."<sup>3</sup> Indra is not unaware of the fact that it is society which gives rise to civilization. However, he believes

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 124.  
2. Ibid., pp. 52-53.

3. Op., Cit., p. 54.

that it is the duty of civilization to provide for the full development of man's capacities and thus make him independent of society. This is the ideal of the instinct of self-preservation.<sup>1</sup> In other words, Indra conceives of society as a means for the full development of the individual. Unfortunately, modern societies do not fulfil this function. There are two main reasons for this failure. One of them is theoretical, the other is practical.

Indra believes that modern social laws are derived from the customs of primitive and prehistoric man, and represent a moral and intellectual past. They are based upon ideas of philanthropy, equality, and freedom. However, when these ideas are put into practice in modern societies they prove to be contradictory. For instance, competition which is "the best expression of the individual in action," is enough to remove the illusion called equality. Humanity grants the freedom to compete but does not supply those unable to compete with the necessary means. Thus it subjects men to the greatest oppression which is their natural inequality. Again, there cannot be any philanthropy in the freedom of competition because it is the affirmation of the struggle for existence. But, feelings of philanthropy and equality cannot develop in the violence implied in the struggle for existence. If we add to this the fact that philanthropic feelings are the only means for achieving a happy life both in this world and in the world to come, we can realize how incompatible is the

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 53.

idea of freedom with those of philanthropy and equality.<sup>1</sup>

As a solution to this problem Indra offers the following: Social laws must be derived from absolute ethical codes and must represent a moral and intellectual ideal to be achieved in the future.<sup>2</sup>

The practical side of the problem is social life actually lived in modern societies. According to Indra, the essence of modern social life is the struggle for existence. This struggle has taken such a character that "the instinct of living has been transformed into a begging of life".<sup>3</sup> To earn his livelihood, man must work. But, the modern conception of work is "a struggle created by deceit and violence."<sup>4</sup> The result is that the "sweet meanings" found in the word 'humanity' are constantly negated by conditions which are thought to be necessary for the struggle for existence.<sup>5</sup>

The worst part of it is that, this struggle, instead of confining itself to the limits of being one between man and nature, has become one between individual men or groups of men: "Man in modern society exists in the same way as primitive man existed in the state of nature."<sup>6</sup> In other words, in order to earn his livelihood, primitive man used to fight the forces of nature. To accomplish the same purpose modern man fights his

---

1. Op., Cit., pp. 72-73.  
2. Op., Cit., pp. 73, 200.  
3. Op., Cit., p. 68.

4. Op., Cit., p. 72.  
5. Loc., Cit..  
6. Op., Cit., pp. 73-74.

fellow-men. Ironically enough, humanity on the one hand proclaims the right to live, and on the other hand allows men to fight each other. Thus it transforms life into an "incomprehensible and calamitous" torture and indirectly advocates death. In fact, concludes Indra, "had self-preservation not been instinctive but the result of reasoning it would not have urged men to go on living."<sup>1</sup>

To solve the practical side of the problem Indra offers a method of eliminating the struggle. He advocates the creation of an immense labour organization. Civilization would force everybody to take part in it. Each would contribute temporarily and according to his talent, to satisfy human needs. In return he would receive the guarantee of living a struggleless life. Thus, when the period of duty is over, people can dedicate themselves to the occupations they prefer. If this plan could be realized civilization would progress rapidly, because talented people, when free from the worries of everyday life, can achieve great things. In an organization like the one mentioned above, work would become a necessary duty which people would gladly perform. The greatest intellects would not hesitate to work side by side with the most humble labourer. Tolstoy would go there to put on his smith's blouse, Swift would become a clerk, Cervantes a servant, Montesquieu a shepherd, Burns a farmer, and Rousseau a lace-maker.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 74.

2. Op., Cit., pp. 75-76.

To be sure, in so far as the social problems, both theoretical and practical, are not solved, social life is not worth living. But, are there not modes of living within society which at least temporarily provide relief from social miseries? Indra mentions three of them: Insanity,<sup>1</sup> alcoholic drinks,<sup>2</sup> and hashish.

Indra believes that insanity is the result of the decentralization of vital force. Memory, consciousness, willing, the ego, which are loose and disintegrated in the insane man are manifestations of this centripetal vital force. Insanity is a degraded form of genius, its falsification. Excepting the absence of a centre in the former, these two mental states are very similar. The limit which separates one from the other is not certain. In fact they interpenetrate. The same thing can be said about the other stages of mental development namely, stupidity and normality. According to Indra, it is possible to draw a schema of mental development in the form of a circle which starts from stupidity passes through normality, genius, insanity, and ends in stupidity. We may thus represent that normal sequence of stages in mental development through which men pass from childhood to old age. Different people stop at these stages for various lengths of time. Each stage is the mean of the two neighboring ones. Thus genius mixes with insanity as much as it does with normal intellect. It moves away

- 
1. If it lasts until death then the relief is not temporal.
  2. An intoxicant made of Indian hemp.



from the latter and tends towards the former. In spite of this similarity, however, there is a great difference between genius and insanity. The insane man lacks that centrepetal force which, unifies the immense variety of mental states by integrating them.<sup>1</sup>

The insane man freely constructs the external world and becomes interfused with it. Imagination plays a great role in the formation of his mental images. He imagines whatever he sees and sees whatever he imagines. His disintegrated or foolishly articulated mind is not directed by memory and consciousness. It is directed by similarities and by the accidental character of the suddenly occurring images. It lacks those measures by means of which man remains separate from the external world, and through which he can tell the difference between illusion and reality. The insane man does not know where the external world ends, and where his intellect begins. For him illusions are realities. He creates realities in the image of illusions. He has the prerogative of seeing the world differently and giving meaning to phenomena. He lives in harmony with his own beliefs and is free from shame. The independence of his ideas from reality produces his freedom. However, he feels neither the bliss of unconsciousness nor the happiness of freedom. Inspired by his separation from the ordinary world he utters words in the void. He seems to be one of those initiated who being in harmony with the Infinite are free in it. He communicates with the Boundless, hence is sacred like a magus without stopping to be

---

1. Innerworld, pp. 128-131.

pitied as a martyr. In fact, Indra concludes, if the insane man could suddenly be given attentiveness and memory he would be converted into a genius.<sup>1</sup>

To sum up; we find that the insane man of Indra leads a life which, relatively speaking, is free from the suffering of everyday life. Let us note, however, that he is not conceived as a feeble-minded person. Indra's examples are people like Lucretius, Swift, Pascal, Maupassant, Baudelaire, Nietzsche, and Rousseau.<sup>2</sup> They are geniuses who have succumbed to the heavy burden of their intellects:

By means of a gradual or sudden disequilibrium, they have not been able to bear the burden of a wavering intellect - pale Atlases - and have been reduced to nothingness under its magnificent ruins. They are heroic souls which, in a gigantic battle have fallen from their divine state.<sup>3</sup>

Another mode of existence which is relatively free from the misery of social life and convenient for the comprehension of the Infinite, is the life of an alcoholic. Indra conceives of alcohol as a liquid in which there is a conflagration of light.<sup>4</sup> When alcohol is drunk, this light expands in the soul and exchanges sadness for delight: "In perpetual misery, alcohol is a faith... This spark floods man's being with the forgotten gaiety of a natural and pure life."<sup>5</sup>

---

1. Op., Cit., pp. 125-128.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 131.  
3. Op., Cit., p. 132.

4. Op., Cit., p. 108.  
5. Op., Cit., p. 110.

Furthermore, alcohol fills men with a tenderness which uncon-<sup>1</sup>sciously changes into prayer and longing for otherworldliness. Finally, alcohol is a path which leads man to God: "Alcohol is an emotion - suffering and bliss at the same time - and God is at the bottom of all emotions. It urges men to Him although it takes them to death as well."<sup>2</sup>

Hashish serves a purpose similar to that of alcoholic drinks. It severs man from reality and permits him to feel the Infinite. That this is the case can be shown by the following passages from the Innerworld:

It was enough that the world used to end there [the café where hashish was offered] with all its misery and suffering. There all kinds of limitations used to vanish. The whole corporeality of the world used to be demarcated before the marvellous substance that was smoking inside. The small door of the café seemed to lead from a sad life fettered by corpor-<sup>3</sup>reality into an incorporeal inner universe. Because of the true and ineffable feelings of the Infinite which it gives to man its [hashish's] reality is above that of the fantastic elixir of the alchemist... In order to obey it one must forget everything as he must do if he obeyed Buddha or Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Hashish is a sacred fire in elect men and in noble souls. It is

---

1. Loc., Cit.

2. Op., Cit., p. 111.

3. Op., Cit., pp. 230-231.

4. Op., Cit., p. 235.

a universal rapture which is pure and intact from  
vulgar materiality.<sup>1</sup>

However, the ideal mode of life, according to Indra,  
is the life spent in solitude. Solitude is the right state for  
the full development of man.

I believe that supernatural forces grow in solitude.  
These are nothing but the development of all human  
potentialities. They are the appearance of the  
homogeneous and beautiful inner man.<sup>2</sup>

But the fully developed man is he who can comprehend  
the Infinite. Consequently, solitude supplies the medium in  
which man communicates with the Infinite:

There the window opens on the universe... There  
feeling is deepest, meditation the most comprehensive,  
the paradox natural, and the conception great.<sup>3</sup>  
Separation from society means the interiorization  
of the universe for him who leaves the public to  
embrace the Totality of Being, to comprehend the  
most universal Idea, and the ultimate morality of  
self-universalization.<sup>4</sup>

In its ultimate form, however, solitude is an inner  
experience. It is an abstraction of the self from time and  
space: "In my night which is neither today nor tomorrow but

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 234.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 57.

3. Op., Cit., pp. 55-56.  
4. Op., Cit., p. 58.

the continuation of a past and undisturbing yesterday, I shall live my identity purified by the flame of my lamp." <sup>1</sup>

The yesterday that he is speaking about are those moments of his life during which he has felt the Infinite and its eternity. The 'identity purified by the flame of the lamp' refers to the reflected self of Indra in the window-glass. This 'reflected self' stands for his true essence "re-discovered in the loneliness of the night". <sup>2</sup> And this 'true essence' is nothing else but the universalization of his self. <sup>3</sup> According to Indra, Nature is the environment in which this solitude can best be attained. Consequently he considers wandering in Nature as the best mode of life. "Is there a naturally human, universally human mode of life more perfect than going from vision to vision and from horizon to horizon?" <sup>4</sup>

Is Indra's general outlook on life pessimistic or optimistic? In spite of the huge burden of social wrongs which make him even long for death, <sup>5</sup> Indra is not a pessimist. Pessimism in its ultimate form reduces itself to the notion "not-life is better than life". But such a position if taken by Indra would have been in flat contradiction with his metaphysics which holds that the primary substance of the Universe is a principle of vitality. Indra is aware of this fact and consequently states that as a philosophy of life only optimism is

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 21.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 20.  
3. Op., Cit., p. 23.

4. Op., Cit., p. 236.  
5. Op., Cit., pp. 66-67.

universal.<sup>1</sup> It is even the condition of pessimistic philosophising, because one who philosophises must live. In fact pessimism is a perverted optimism which lacks the joy of goodness. The perversion has been affected through the suffering caused by civilization. That this is the case can be proved by the fact that all pessimists are full of hatred. They have the hatred of a wounded and wronged self towards life and civilization. When philosophies do not originate from the secrets of a Universal Ego they are always subjective. All philosophical doctrines are the formulation, affirmation, and justification of the selves that have thought them out. Now, if a philosophy has sprung from the depth of the philosopher's inner self, nothing remains for him to do but to follow it openly. But this is what Schopenhauer does not do. He does not live according to his doctrine. The difference between his doctrine and his life is the difference between pessimism and optimism. In other words it is the difference between meditation and action, thought and instinct. Pessimism is not instinctive. When it can be lived and become practicable it must change its name because it changes its essence. Action implies the pleasure involved in the realization of an end, and adherence to life. Even suicide, the action which would best suit a pessimist is the expression of a strong optimism because it implies the tranquility of death. In short, according to Indra, pessimism, in its ultimate form, is a self-contradictory doctrine; and consequently he rejects it.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 183.

Op., Cit., pp. 83-87.

CHAPTER IV

INDRA'S ETHICS

When we speak of ethics we usually mean the science which deals with voluntary human conduct in so far as it is right or wrong, good or bad. Human conduct is expressed in human actions. Now, an action is judged to be right or wrong, good or bad, either because it leads to an end which is thought to be good, or because it is good in itself. In either case ethical standards are involved. In the former case the standard is the end for the attainment of which the action is performed.<sup>1</sup> In the latter case the action bears the standard within itself.<sup>2</sup> These two conceptions of ethical standards divide ethical theories into two major groups: Teleological and Formal. The former group includes all those ethical theories which accept the existence of a "Highest Good" for the attainment of which the actions are only means. The latter group includes those which hold that actions must be performed not because they lead to a higher end but because they are good in themselves. The point to be made from the above discussion is that when we talk about an ethical theory we expect to find an analysis of right and wrong, good and bad. Furthermore, we expect to find a consideration of standards on the basis of which the ethical judgments are made. But, this is what we do not find in the Innerworld. Consequently, by 'Indra's ethics' is meant something other than what is usually meant by an ethical theory. All that is meant is the following: First, his conception of human nature; second, his conception of

- 
1. Usually there is a hierarchy of ends culminating in a "Highest Good".
  2. In the sense that the action is its own justification.



man's vocation in life; third, the ways which man adopts to fulfil his vocation.

We saw in our two previous chapters that Indra regards all particular existents as combinations of soul and body in various proportions. Body is a degraded form of soul. It is condensed and limited soul, and a principle of individuation. Soul, on the other hand, is unlimited and universal. It is Light in its pure form but has become individualized through being imprisoned in a body. How does this imprisonment take place? Indra does not tell us. We are only told that it takes place:

The "I" is the first and perpetual sin. With the immense sadness of a soul which has lost its universality through a body and a self, I am trying to experience Him [Christ] who did not have an "I" whose "I" was humanity, the All.<sup>1</sup>

Of the particular existents man has the greatest proportion of soul over body. He represents the highest stage in the process of transformation from body to soul;

Man is a transformation from form to meaning, from vision to mystery, from number to Infinity, from reality to the Idea.<sup>2</sup> Man is nature that has achieved<sup>3</sup> cenesthesia and consciousness.

Being universal in essence the human soul tries to free itself

---

1. Innerworld, p. 164.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 124.

3. Op., Cit., p. 213.

from the fetters of the body and to attain its previous universality. This universalization in its highest form is a mystic union with Light (God). Consequently, as Indra puts it, "the ultimate morality of self-universalization"<sup>1</sup> is the vocation of man.

According to Indra, there are three stages in the process of self-universalization. The first of these stages is a renunciation of the world of particular existents. This world represents a collection of objects which have sprung from the Eternal Substance. The objects are limited, corporeal, and transitory. Furthermore, since man is partly sensuous and hence has physical needs, the objects are a source of human desires. Consequently, they cause pain to the soul. In its effort towards universalization the soul collides with the objects which, being imperfect, resist this tendency. The objects are so numerous that the individualized soul fails in its effort to assimilate them. The result is that it renounces them and longs for the Eternal Substance. Indra believes that in so far as man is sensuous he cannot unite with this Substance. However, he tries to satisfy his yearning for it in universal concepts, such as religion, the fine art, and poetry.<sup>2</sup>

Religion, the fine arts, and poetry are expressed through symbols. "Their philosophical value lies in the degree

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 58.

2. Op., Cit., pp. 118-120.

in which their creations are particular and sensuously human in appearance, and universal and divine in meaning".<sup>1</sup> In order to comprehend the incorporeal and abstract universal Ideas, the sensuous man has to use tangible symbols; thus throughout history we find the gods represented by means of tangible symbols. As Indra puts it "the gods vanish in the violet visions of the Aegean Sea, in the cedars of Scandinavia, and in the forests of India".<sup>2</sup> In the field of art the case is no different. The aim of the artist is always to express the universal, the Platonic Idea of the group to which the produced work belongs. When we come to poetry we find the same thing:

By analyzing the image-object, the poet's vision of the Beyond produces a multitude of relatively universal concepts... the summation and particularization<sup>3</sup> of which is the image object.

However, these relatively universal concepts cannot satisfy the soul which is universal in essence, and which longs for union with the Eternal Substance.

The next stage in the process of self-universalization is to achieve union with God through knowledge. This does not mean the ultimate mystic union of the soul with God. It is an intellectual union, a comprehension of the Infinite, a vision of Reality.

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 122.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 123.  
3. Loc., Cit.

Knowledge, according to Indra, in its ultimate form is love.<sup>1</sup> Speaking about types of knowledge he says:

Perception is a degraded form of intuition, observation of initiation, science of faith, comprehension of love. The perfection of knowledge, its origin and end, is intuition, initiation, the genius Faith, the genius Love.<sup>2</sup>

Intuition, initiation, faith, and love are the highest forms of knowledge because their possessor comes face to face with Reality. Perception, observation, comprehension, and science are degraded forms of knowledge because they are only means for knowing<sup>3</sup> Reality.

We saw in our previous chapter that only the fully developed man can comprehend the Infinite. But the fully developed man is he who has perfected his "innerworld". This perfection in its turn means the state in which the man standing before the Infinite can say to it: "Since you did not come to me I am coming to you".<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, we saw in that same chapter that genius is the highest stage of mental development. If this is the case, the logical conclusion is that only geniuses can have the highest knowledge that is ever possible for man. But genius, according to Indra, depends on love:

---

1. That this is the case will be shown in the sequel.  
2. Op., Cit., pp. 111-112.  
3. My italics.  
4. Op., Cit., p. 124.

I deeply feel the dependence of genius on love.  
If genius is the vision of hidden links and a  
theoretical unification of the links, morality  
is a real, present<sup>1</sup> and tangible link within the  
universe because it is love. And genius vanishes<sup>2</sup>  
within morality.

This conception of morality as love brings us to the crucial  
problem as to the nature of love.

Love in its ultimate form is:

The death of a particularity in the enchantment  
of universality, a death agony at the threshold  
of an ecstatic life. It is the condensation of  
the experience of life and death in intoxication.<sup>3</sup>  
In other words it is the intuition of eternity.

Thus, the true lover is he who has ceased to exist as an "I".  
He has become universal and has experienced eternity. Let us  
not forget, however, that the lover is an individual still  
continuing to exist in the world of particulars. He has not  
yet achieved a mystic union with God. This makes us interpret  
the "universality" of the passage as an intellectual one. In  
other words, through knowledge the individual has experienced  
his union with the Universe and its eternity. This interpreta-  
tion is further justified by the fact that Indra regards the

---

1. In the sense of now.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 84.  
3. Op., Cit., p. 93.

awareness of "brotherhood" as the highest form of human knowledge.<sup>1</sup>  
The brotherhood that he is referring to is the brotherhood of  
all existing things.<sup>2</sup> He regards himself a brother to the "shiver-  
ing grass".<sup>3</sup> He calls the frog his "sister",<sup>4</sup> and Irena his  
"heavenly sister" whom he has known for centuries.<sup>5</sup> It is in-  
teresting to note in this connection that Indra conceives of  
love between man and woman in the same way. He tells us that  
for the lover the "beloved virgin" stands for the "sap of the  
Totality of Being". When he unites with her he feels that he  
has been transformed into an eternal, infinite "I".<sup>6</sup> As far as  
his Irena is concerned, she is an ideal created by his "inner-  
world". He calls her a "univocal inner-harmony" issuing forth  
from his "innerworld".<sup>7</sup> She is a dream that has sprung from his  
blood, thought, and soul.<sup>8</sup> Finally, when he embraces her he  
feels the "presence of the Universe".<sup>9</sup>

The last stage in the process of self-universalization  
is the mystic union of the soul with God. This, Indra believes,  
can be attained only through death: "There is nothing that can  
take man to God without taking him first to death".<sup>10</sup> There  
are other passages in the Innerworld which are in line with the  
one just quoted. He has the same affection for Irena and for  
the henbane<sup>11</sup> in spite of the fact that the latter kills him and

1. Op., Cit., p. 119.

2. Op., Cit., p. 81.

3. Op., Cit., p. 166.

4. Op., Cit., p. 241.

5. Op., Cit., p. 250.

6. Op., Cit., p. 92.

7. Op., Cit., p. 242.

8. Op., Cit., p. 245.

9. Op., Cit., p. 251.

10. Op., Cit., p. 111.

11. For Indra it is the symbol of death. See Innerworld, pp. 188 ff.

the former makes him feel eternal.<sup>1</sup> The implication is that he likes the herbane because death is a prerequisite to eternity: "The church-bell rings the triumph of the idea of return to eternal Identity".<sup>2</sup> The bell that Indra is talking about is the funeral bell. In the same way the pyramids in Gizeh, Egypt symbolize both death and eternity. They symbolize death because they are tombs. But their flight towards heaven points at eternity.<sup>3</sup> In short, they symbolize an eternity which is attained through death.

If the only way to eternity is death, does not Indra advocate suicide? The answer is, no. To begin with, Indra does not know what death is.<sup>4</sup> However, he is certain that the man living in this world at best can achieve the "bliss of the knowledge of God",<sup>5</sup> but not a mystic union with Him. The latter can be attained only when the soul is totally liberated from its bodily prison: in other words when man ceases to exist as an individual. This means that death is a necessary condition for the accomplishment of the Supreme Good. But it does not mean that death necessarily takes man to the Supreme Good. Furthermore, we have strong evidence for believing that, according to Indra, only those who die after fully developing themselves can become united with God. This consideration makes us believe that Indra does not contradict himself by advocating suicide.

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 190.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 147.  
3. Op., Cit., p. 215.

4. Op., Cit., p. 120.  
5. Op., Cit., p. 165.

As to what happens to those who die before achieving perfect self-development Indra does not tell us; probably because he does not know.

To sum up: Indra's ethics is in line with his metaphysics. Light is Supreme Goodness. To unite with it is the Highest Good for man, his vocation. The fulfilment of this end takes the form of a process of self-universalization. The first stage of the process is a renunciation of the world of particulars and one of seeking universal concepts through religion and the fine arts. The second stage is an effort towards self-universalization through knowledge which in its ultimate form is love. The last stage of the process is a mystic union with God through death.



CHAPTER V

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF INDRA'S PHILOSOPHY

Indra uses the terms 'Light' and 'Soul' interchangeably. This makes us think that he is a spiritualist. Furthermore, he admits that individuals survive the world of particulars. However, there are passages in the Innerworld which contradict this position.<sup>1</sup> The most significant among them is the one where a drunkard wishes that Indra's dead father could "rest in light". Indra is startled and asks the question: "Did not my father die therefore?"<sup>2</sup> In other words, he believed that death was the end of everything, consequently, the expression 'let him rest in light' sounds very strange.

In other places Indra is an orthodox Christian and thus contradicts his pantheism:

Perhaps I would die if I saw Him [Christ], not the extraordinary and sublime Nazarene,<sup>3</sup> but the eternal Christ, not the rabbi but the Son.<sup>4</sup> If geniuses can formulate theories He [Christ]<sup>5</sup> recreated consciences. ... I know<sup>6</sup> He is the Lord.

Elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> he considers God to be the condition of a happy life both in this world and in the world to come.

In another passage Indra tells us that the soul of his dead father was flying over his dwelling place and was

---

1. Op., Cit., pp. 64-65, 104-105, 107-108, 200-202.

2. Op., Cit., p. 108.

3. Op., Cit., p. 164.

4. My italics.

5. Op., Cit., pp. 166-167.

6. Op., Cit., p. 200.

comprehending the misery of life spent in this world.<sup>1</sup> The implication is that he seems to be a believer in the immortality of the soul as a distinct entity. This belief contradicts his ethics where we are told that when individual souls unite with the Soul they become universal and cease to exist as individuals.

Indra's philosophy as a whole suffers from the defect of not being explained and demonstrated. To begin with, he does not explain and demonstrate the passage of existing things from universality to particularity. To say that through condensation and gradual cooling off of Eight particulars come to existence is not an explanation. Several questions might be asked in this connection; What does he exactly mean by condensation and cooling off? What are the causes which give rise to this process? How can he show the emergence of extension from the non-extended? the temporal from the eternal? What does he mean by eternity? and so on. Of course, this is a problem which, as far as I know, no philosopher has been able to solve conclusively. What differentiates Indra from other philosophical thinkers is that he has not tried to solve the problem. Again, we are told that the universe is governed by laws. But we are not informed about their nature and mode of operation. Moreover, when we come to his treatment of social life we are confronted with the same problem. He states that social laws must be derived from absolute ethical codes and must represent an intellectual and

---

1. Op., Cit., pp. 203-204.

moral ideal to be realized in the future. To begin with, we are not informed about the content of these absolute ethical codes. Furthermore, we are not told what this moral and intellectual ideal is. The means which Indra advocates for the elimination of the struggle for existence seems to me impracticable. It is difficult to conceive of the possibility of a civilization which can force mankind to take part in a world-labour-organization. This notion implies, in the first place, the reduction of all existing civilizations into one civilization. In the second place, it implies the universal agreement of mankind on the common good. Finally, it implies the willingness of all men to work for the achievement of the common good. Granting that all these implications are theoretically possible, the realization of the ideal is the task of centuries hence not a practical solution of immediate social problems. Furthermore, there is a contradiction between this position of Indra and his advocacy of individualism. The former is based on co-operation and inter-dependence, while the ideal of the latter is complete self-dependence. It is true that Indra regards the former as a means for the achievement of the latter, yet still the guarantee of a struggleless life is the good will of the community. The self-developing man must have the needs of his everyday life satisfied, and consequently depends on society.

We saw that Indra categorically denies the essential sociability of man. It would have been very interesting to have

Indra justify his position. Unfortunately, he has not done anything of the kind in the Innerworld.

Finally, Indra tells us that perfect self-development is a prerequisite for attaining the Supreme Good - a mystic union with God. However, he does not tell us about the means and courses of action which make man achieve his self-development.

To be fair to the author, we have to mention the fact that the Innerworld is primarily a literary work and not the exposition of a system of philosophy. Moreover, the author has put on paper only what he has felt, and this accounts for the inconsistencies indicated above. As he points out in his note to the book, he has not tried to get rid of the defects found in the book just for the sake of remaining true to his inner experiences. It is up to the reader to evaluate Indra's interpretation of his experiences. All we can say is that the author assumes that he has communicated with the Infinite and has intuited Reality several times during the years 1894 to 1898.<sup>1</sup> Just to refer to one of the occasions: "Now I rest in illuminations and rediscover my ideal<sup>2</sup> being which experiences the Infinite and intuits the ultimate meaning of everything - everything is right, and only right".<sup>3</sup> The result is that the justification of the whole system depends on these experiences of Reality. As far as I am concerned, I feel that, at this

---

1. Op., Cit., pp. 25, 49, 82, 95, 112-113.

2. Having the nature of ideas.

3. Op., Cit., p. 82.

stage of my academic career, I am not in a position to criticise pantheism as a philosophical doctrine.

Indra deserves credit for the fact that there are no inconsistencies among the major divisions of his philosophy. His philosophy of human existence and his ethics are the direct outcome of his metaphysics. Moreover, he deserves credit for putting his philosophy in line with modern science. I am referring to his notion that matter is convertible into energy, for modern science holds that energy is produced as a result of atomic fission. Again, it is worth noting that his philosophy starts from facts of experience and ends in abstract speculations, and not from supposedly self-evident general principles. To illustrate our point let us take a few examples; His philosophy of social life is the result of the fact that, to earn his living, he must, in spite of himself, draw a "little picture".<sup>1</sup> His conception of Light as the primary substance of the universe is the result of his meditations which were caused by a drunkard's expression: "Let him [Indra's dead father] rest in light".<sup>2</sup> The news of his father's death makes him go to visit the pyramids,<sup>3</sup> and there conceive of an eternity attained through death; and so on. Another merit of the author lies in his pointing out the incompatibility, both theoretical and practical, among the ideas of freedom, equality, and fraternity. Finally, Indra deserves credit for his metaphysical treatment of love. His

---

1. Op., Cit., pp. 61 ff.  
2. Op., Cit., pp. 105 ff.

3. Op., Cit., pp. 205 ff.

"love" which is a supreme form of knowledge is something more than the Christian love as expressed in the dictum: "Love thy neighbor as thyself". It is something more than Spinoza's "intellectual love of God". The term 'neighbor' in its ultimate form includes mankind. Indra's brotherhood extends to the whole universe. Spinoza's "intellectual love of God" leads man to know God and, at most, makes him become conscious of his being one with Him. True love, for Indra, is the lot of him only who unites with God and, through losing self-consciousness, actually becomes part of Him.

At the beginning of our analysis of Indra's philosophy we said that he is a pantheist. However, if we try to place Indra into a pantheistic school we shall be confronted with a great difficulty. The fact is that his pantheism is in line with several pantheistic schools. Let us illustrate our point:

There are several lines of thought in the Innerworld which are parallel with those of Heraclitus. For both, Reality is one although Indra does not give it that name. We saw that he denotes the universe by different terms, such as the 'Infinite', the 'Boundless', 'God', the 'All', and so on. That Reality is one for Heraclitus too is evident from his following statement: "It is wise to hearken not to me but to my Word, and to confess that all things are one".<sup>1</sup> The Light of Indra corresponds to

---

1. Heraclitus quoted in Copleston, F., A History of Philosophy, (Oxon, 1947), Vol. I, p. 40.

the Fire of Heraclitus. Both hold that everything in the universe has originated in Light (Fire for Heraclitus). The two authors agree in conceiving Reality as alive. Indra refers to Light as an eternal vitality. Heraclitus calls Fire "ever-living". Finally, both identify Reality with God and attribute to Him wisdom. "God is Omniscience" declares Indra. "Heraclitus speaks of the One as God, and as wise; 'The wise is one only'."<sup>1</sup>

With his expressions like 'the totality of being',<sup>2</sup> 'homogeneous uniform universality',<sup>3</sup> 'the Identity',<sup>4</sup> 'unmovable like all motion in the Infinite',<sup>5</sup> 'Absolute Unity',<sup>6</sup> Indra leans towards the Eleatics who considered Reality to be One and denied the reality of motion. Ultimately, however, Indra is not an Eleatic because for him Reality is One-in-Many, and motion is real and not illusory. As we indicated in our chapter on Indra's metaphysics, for him motion pertains to the essence of the primary substance.

There are other lines of thought in the Innerworld which tempt one to classify Indra as a follower of Spinoza. For both, substance is all-inclusive, infinite, and identical with God. Both regard <sup>extension</sup> matter and thought as manifestations of the same substance. Spinoza calls them two of the infinite attributes of God. For Indra they are different degrees of condensation of Light. Furthermore, Indra's conception of

---

1. Op., Cit., p. 43.  
2. Op., Cit., p. 58.  
3. Op., Cit., p. 120.

4. Op., Cit., p. 212.  
5. Op., Cit., p. 48.  
6. Op., Cit., pp. 150, 212.



particularity and corporeality as a source of pain, and his advocacy of escape through universalization, remind one of Spinoza's "Human Bondage" and his process of salvation.

Indra's notions of God as a Mind and the universalized self as an "ideal <sup>1</sup> universe" <sup>2</sup> make one think of him as a follower of the Hegelian school. Especially, his conception of Reality as energy, vitality, and intelligence brings him very close to Schelling. Moreover, both Indra and Schelling consider matter and mind to be different degrees of purity of the same universal substance. Again, Indra's belief that the world of particulars strives towards union with Light reminds one of Plotinus who holds a similar point of view. Because of the fact that he regards Soul to be the primary substance of the universe, he might be called a spiritualistic pantheist. Finally, his notion that the ultimate good of mankind and of the universe as a whole is a mystic union with God authorizes us to call him a mystical pantheist.

Besides classifying Indra on the basis of his metaphysics, we may also classify him with regard to his philosophy of human existence.

Indra is a romantic because he favours individualism, hates social life, and acknowledges the primacy of feeling over against reason: "Man feels before learning how to think".<sup>3</sup>

---

1. Having the nature of ideas.

2. Op., Cit., p. 124.

3. Op., Cit., p. 122.

Because of the fact that Indra has made his center of interest different aspects of human existence, his philosophy might be considered to be in line with contemporary Existentialism. Thus, in the first chapter of the book he deals with life spent in solitude. In the second chapter he treats of social life. In the third chapter he recommends an alcoholic's mode of life. In the fourth chapter we find a discussion of insanity. In the fifth chapter there is a treatment of human life in different ages; namely, childhood, youth, and old age. In the sixth chapter we have a treatment of life and death. Chapter seven deals with naturalistic life. Chapter eight represents the worship of eternity affected through love. Another common characteristic between Indra and contemporary Existentialism is the way they discover "Reality" and "existence" respectively. With both it is a sudden experience. This is how Roquentin, the hero of Sartre's La Nausee, discovers "existence"; He is sitting in a Public Park watching the root of a chestnut-tree and suddenly experiences an illumination;

... Si l'on m'avait demande ce que c'était que l'existence, j'aurais repondu de bonne foi que ça n'était rien, tout juste une forme vide qui venait s'ajouter aux choses du dehors, sans rien changer à leur nature. Et puis voila: tout d'un coup, c'était la, c'était clair comme le jour; l'existence c'était soudain dévoilée. Elle avait perdu son allure inoffensive de categorie abstraite

c'était la pâte même des choses, cette racine était  
1  
pétrée de l'existence.

- 
1. ... If I were asked about the meaning of existence, I would have honestly answered that it was nothing; only an empty form which was added to things from outside without changing anything in their nature. And then, all at once, it was there, clear as day-light, existence was suddenly unveiled. It had lost its inoffensive gait of abstract category. It was the very paste of things. This root is moulded out of existence.  
(See J.P. Sartre quoted in Foulquis, P., L'Existentialisme, (Paris, 1951), p. 38.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. "Ani", an Armenian monthly published in Beirut. February and March, 1948.
2. Bakewell, Ch. M., Source Book in Ancient Philosophy, New York, 1907.
3. Compton, F., A History of Philosophy, Vol. I, Oxon, 1945.
4. Foulquie, P., L'Existentialisme, Paris, 1951.
5. Indra, Nerashkharh, Constantinople, 1906.
6. Ipekian, K., National Almanac 1951, Beirut, 1950.
7. National Almanac, Cairo, 1936.
8. Pages from Armenian Literature, Cairo, 1944.
9. "Puzantion", an Armenian daily published in Constantinople, 1896-1918, No. 3001, 3052-3055, 3058, 3061, 3100, 3104, 3108, 3113, 3115, 3121, 3128, 3129, 3131.
10. Robinson, D.S., An Anthology of Modern Philosophy, New York, 1931.
11. Sassouni, G., History of the Modern Western Armenian Literature, Beirut, 1951.
12. "Sevan", an Armenian Periodical published in Aleppo in 1946, No. II.
13. Taylor, M.E.J., Greek Philosophy, London, 1924.
14. Teotig, Everybody's Almanac, published in Constantinople, 1907, 1916-1920.
15. Teotig, Everybody's Almanac, published in Venice, 1926.
16. Teotig, Everybody's Almanac, published in Paris, 1927, 1928, 1929.
17. "Zwarthnotz", an Armenian monthly, published in Paris, May and July 1929.
18. "Zwarthnotz", an Armenian yearly, published in Paris, 1937, Vob. I and II.

NOTE

The sources which are listed in the bibliography as 1,5, 6,7,8,9,11,12,14,15,16,17,18 are in Armenian. Those listed as 2,3, 10,13 are in English. No. 4 is in French.