

9 October 1961

Now that our organization is required to widen the field of its activities, it is good to remind ourselves of that part of the System teaching which describes the relation of Schools to people in ordinary life. The following accounts are based on reports of our former talks with Mr. Ouspensky:

#### A. ACCIDENT AND CAUSE AND EFFECT

Things happen in human life chiefly according to two laws – the ‘Law of Accident’ and the ‘Law of Cause and Effect’. From this point of view we see a considerable difference between people in ordinary life. There are people in whose life the important events are the result of *accident – that is, they have no connection with the intended line*. An accident happens when two lines of events cross one another and the probability of this greatly increases if a person forms part ‘of the crowd’, for the Law of Accident is one aspect of the statistical ‘Law of Large Numbers’.

There are also people in whose lives the important events are usually the *result of their own previous actions, that is, depend on ‘cause and effect’*. Further observation shows that the first type of people, that is people depending on accident, rarely come near School work, or if they do, they leave it very soon, for one accident can bring them and another can just as easily lead them away.

[Someone rang me up the other day to say they wanted to keep in touch as they’d been so much away. ‘That’s all right,’ I said, ‘come along.’ ‘As a matter of fact,’ she replied, ‘we’re just off on a month’s holiday, and after that my husband hopes to be posted to a rather out of the way place in Canada. But we *do so want* to keep in touch. Can you advise us?']

Only those people can succeed in the Work whose life is controlled more by the Law of Cause and Effect, than by the Law of Accident.

The theory of escape from accidents is simple; they happen only when there is *room* for them to happen. If the day is occupied they cannot easily get in. Occupied by what? By conscious actions. School work is supposed to be conscious and relatively free from accident. But even if you cannot produce conscious actions, at least the space can be filled with intentional actions along a strong line of cause-and-effect. So when the Work and everything connected with it becomes in truth the centre of gravity of a man’s life, he becomes practically free from the Law of Accident.

#### B. MAGNETIC CENTRE

People in the outer circle of humanity live under two kinds of influences which we call A, and B. What are *Influences A*? All interests of life, struggle for existence, desires, excitements, ambition, riches, debts, amusements and so on. They are mechanical both in their origin and in their action. But at the same time man is under *Influences B* – another kind of influence originally created in Schools but thrown into the general turnover of life. These influences B are, as it were, a life apart. They are arranged for a certain purpose, to serve as ‘lights on the way’. The rest depends on man himself. All his interests may concentrate only on influences of the first kind, or another part of him may be interested in this other kind. If a man notices Influences B and

studies them, they may accumulate in him. The memory of these interests may begin to collect in him from a very early age and form a certain group of 'I's in his personality out of the many 'I's. This group of 'I's becomes after some time a 'Magnetic Centre', which begins to control and determine his general direction in life and the trend of his interests. He will, though he may not know it, be looking for a School. And if he meets a School or a man who transmits another kind of influence, *Influence C*, Magnetic Centre helps him to recognise it. At the point where his Magnetic Centre meets with Influence C he is said to be free from the Law of Accident. But if he has not first absorbed enough Influences B, and so he has no Magnetic Centre, or if his Magnetic Centre is wrong or too weak, a man will not recognise Influence C. Influence C differs from Influences B in that it is conscious, instead of being accidental, *both in its origin and in its action*, whereas Influences B are conscious in their origin but accidental or mechanical in their action. Influence C is School influence at first hand... There are cases in which influences of *the third kind* become influences of the first kind, that is, leading nowhere.

Q. Isn't there a way in which one can find out?

A. Only by results. But even when people have wrong results, if they have a wrong Magnetic Centre they persuade themselves that the results are good. People can deceive themselves about anything.

[There are examples to be seen around us today of all these statements. There are branches stemming from the same source as ourselves which have lost all connection with their origin, and instead of transmitting C influences transmit B, that is writings or words – we met with such a collection of people in Auckland, New Zealand, because a few came all the way to us at Wellington to escape from it. Again if people come prematurely upon Influence C (as, for instance, the Maharishi and his meditation) they take Influence C on the same level as any other influence and Influences C lose their power. Have we not also noticed a difference between the results of this particular influence when 'thrown into the general turnover of life' and entirely subject to the Law of Accident, from those observed when strenuous attempts are made in a School to keep it conscious in its *action* as well as in its origin, and to preserve its progress from accident?]

### C. THE STAIRCASE

If a man in whom Magnetic Centre has grown meets with a man or a group through which he comes into contact with Influence C, that means he has made the first step. That is the beginning of his development.

Q. What does the first step mean?

A. It is connected with the idea of a 'path' or 'Way'. The Way does not begin on the ordinary level of life; it begins on a higher level. The first step is the moment when one meets with Influence C. From this moment there begins a Staircase with a number of steps which have to be climbed before the Way can be reached. The Way does not begin at the bottom, but only after the last step has been climbed.

In Indian and Buddhist literature there is a very well-defined type of man and type of life which can bring change of Being, that is the successful climbing of the Staircase. Unfortunately it is difficult to translate the word – ‘Snataka’ – except by the word ‘householder’, meaning simply a man who leads an ordinary normal life. Such a man can come to a School after some time, is apt to choose the right School and can work there and gradually take responsibility. But there are two other categories of people who cannot go up the Staircase, but fall down and bump their heads. These are called ‘tramps’ and ‘lunatics’.

*Tramp* does not mean poor people; they may be rich, but they are still tramps in their attitude to life, because they have no sense of values.

*Lunatics* don’t have to be certifiable; they may be statesmen, professors and so on. They have false values and so won’t go near a School.

But we are concerned with normal people.

Q. What is a normal man?

A. It may sound paradoxical but it means simply a man who is capable of development. What is a normal seed? One which can, in suitable conditions, produce a plant, flowers and its own seeds.

Characteristics of normality are reliability, right values, high standards, a good sense of fair play, an innate sense of right and wrong, and the ability to maintain himself and his family and to manage his own affairs.

A little self-observation will show that, in each of us, there are collections of ‘I’s belonging to each of these three types, one day one or another being uppermost. Gradually as we go up the Staircase the reliable, responsible group of ‘I’s drives out the others.

#### **D. THE DIFFERENT WAYS**

Most people who wish to reach the Truth or to find God (whatever they call it), think they can do it by applying high standards to their ordinary lives. The System says that this is indeed possible, but evolution this way is long and slow, so very few succeed. There are three traditional short-cuts – three Traditional Ways – and Schools belonging to each of these Ways have always existed. But these Schools all require, from the outset, the complete renunciation of normal life. Here we have the true distinction between the Householder and the Recluse. Does a third solution exist? Is there a way to speed up complete fulfilment of possibilities in the medium of one’s ordinary life? Our System says ‘Yes’, and calls this the Fourth Way; Schools of the Fourth Way have also existed though they are not so easily recognised; our System itself belongs to that Tradition.

In a discourse on Thursday, 21st September, which has been relayed to us, His Holiness the Shankaracharya gave a similar description in his own refreshing words:

It is generally known that ‘there are two ways to realize God: by living in the world, doing one’s duty, remembering God and offering up all one’s actions to Him. This is the first class of men. The second class are those who renounce worldly life and devote themselves entirely to remembering God. This is the other way to realize God. The first

class of men tend to make a fence round a small area and call everything 'mine'. They seek realization for themselves only, as do also Sannyasins,<sup>†</sup> though they renounce everything material and keep no personal possessions. But there is a third class of men who are few in number, and they are those who have realized God for themselves and then come out into the world to serve as ideals or examples for the rest of mankind. Out of love for humanity and under guidance of a higher power, they become servants of God and mankind alike. It is their duty to inspire and teach others to achieve realization. 'Although in the world, they are free of the world' – like wax in water they do not become attached to (identified with) it.

(<sup>†</sup>2nd class)

An ordinary man needs to be helped by such a Saint who can prick his memory and remind him of his aim, as the parrot did to the Brahmin in this story:

There was once a Brahmin whose pet parrot was a very clever bird. He learned not only to repeat 'Rama, Rama' but could even speak in Hindi!

One day the Brahmin went to seek advice from a nearby Saint, and upon his return was asked by the parrot why he had gone there. 'To find out how I can realize God and obtain freedom *for myself*', replied the Brahmin.

'What?' cried the parrot, 'you are only concerned with yourself! What about *my* freedom? Why didn't you ask about *me*? You must go back.' For several days the parrot kept urging the Brahmin to return to the Saint; so on the fourth day, for the sake of his own peace, he went to see the Saint, but again forgot to ask about the parrot. But the parrot persisted, so at last one day the Brahmin remembered to ask the question. He said, 'My parrot will give me no peace until I return with an answer.' Just then the Saint fell unconscious in a faint. So the Brahmin returned home, but when he told the parrot how the Saint had swooned away and lay unconscious just as he was ready to reply to his question, the parrot said, 'never mind, the Saint has given the answer.'

Several days later, the Brahmin looked into the cage of the parrot and saw him lying unconscious on the floor. Thinking him dead, the Brahmin opened the cage-door and lifted him out. At that moment the parrot opened his eyes and flew away crying: 'Thank you. Now I have gained *my* freedom.'

In just the same way, we may conclude, an enlightened School could remind each of its members that his aim is not only to achieve his own freedom through Self-realization, but to work for the freedom of others as well!

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