

26 March 1962

## EXTRACT FROM MONDAY MEETING

### RULES

I would even like you to take the idea of Rules happily!

Rules are in fact for increase of happiness and good relationship because they prevent all kinds of unnecessary suffering and unhappiness. I feel that most of you lately have found value in belonging to this School, which exists because we tried to keep the direction for which Mr. Ouspensky created it and by which he set great store; and he pointed out that no School – even the most elementary school or preparatory school – can exist without rules. Rules are a safety belt or, if you prefer the simile, a rope to cling to just at the time when one might be submerged in the mud.

How comes it then that certain people keep coming to me asking to be exempted from a rule because *their* case must always be an exception! I see the idea about it, because people are not penalised for breaking a rule! People when they have been sufficiently long in the Work are given latitude and freedom to experiment, and they are not penalised for the mere breaking of a rule. I want them to learn for themselves that, inevitably, if we have got into trouble, we will find on its examination that we would not have got into that trouble if a rule had not been broken. So that it is the *trouble* we get into that penalises us. And people come to me beforehand and say, 'I am going to get into trouble, will you take the responsibility?' (laughter) I can see their idea, and I spend much of my time dodging it!

At the moment there are two rules that people keep coming to me to get my blessing for breaking! One of them is this rule about *not meeting people who have left the Work*; always it is an exceptional case; they are going to bring them back or they need help, or all sorts of things like that. The other is about *not mentioning the existence of this Work*. I don't mean the Society (though we try to keep the name of the Society for special use); but the Work, the existence of this School with its inner work, the Groups, the Teaching, what we do and whom we do it with. All that is completely private and there is a rule that *that* is never mentioned to anybody who does not belong to the School.

Now of course I would love to be able to give everybody exemption for special cases, but these two rules happen to be as old as humanity. They belong to all Schools worthy of the name that have ever existed; they must be there, and they are there for a very definite purpose. We see the clear proof of that purpose in the fact (discovered by everybody who has tried to find the influence of Schools in the course of history) that it is exceedingly difficult to find any trace of real Schools behind such outward forms as the Platonic Academy at Florence, the Gothic Cathedrals, etc. How hard it is to find what actually took place, what went on behind the scenes; and the very difficulty of finding it is the proof that there behind the scenes lay a real School.

So now, these two rules I cannot exempt you from however much I would like to. They are coming up a great deal now. People get themselves into situations where they are asked to mention whom they are working with and what goes on; they think of joining organisations where it is required of them to make those statements, to break these rules and other rules, and so on; and they come to get my blessing for the muddle they are going to get into!

Then remember that rules can be a *shock* which can prevent an octave from dying down; so take them *positively* and be glad of them, and realise that later on you will be even more glad: Is that clear? Is there anything you want to ask about that?

The rules I have mentioned are permanent all the way through history; but there are some rules which are temporary, peculiar to our situation and to this particular time. I mean rules about entering into some kind of commercial contract or some business arrangement with somebody in the Work, or having parties at which some guests belong to the School and others not. In these cases the object of these rules is to keep your valuation of the School and the people in it as high as possible. Provided that is kept high and the individual case is gone into and found to be just and promising, no embargo is put on it. These are temporary, smaller things, and if you understand the reason for them then there is a great deal of latitude possible. Any questions, any difficulties about that?

We cannot give a list of rules but it is always good when embarking on some course of action to go and ask somebody who has had more experience whether there is a rule involved.

- Q. Does that include all people who no longer come to the meetings, but who continue to take an interest and who are doing the meditation?
- A. About people, if there is any doubt *ask* whether they have left or not. Some of the people who appear to have left us have not, and some of those who appear to be with us have really left. And be sure that much the best way – the greatest help for their return – is by not compromising!

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