

8 October 1962

FROM MONDAY MEETINGS, 17 AND 24 SEPTEMBER

We thought that we would try and discuss together big things – main issues – now, and then later we can perhaps get down to details. But I would like you to be thinking what you would like with regard to your own future about meetings and practical activities, and so on. There must be no ‘press gang’ or other forms of compulsion; there are about six Groups and two Work Parties which, from all I gather, really want to continue. But if any of the individual members of those Groups want to change they must let us know.

Then there is the feeling that coming to Monday meetings may be enough for a number of people who want more free time; the younger people want to lead more of a social life, etc. So nobody will be looked on askance if they want to have a rest from other meetings! We also have plans for a more creative kind of activity here in this house for those who want to join it.

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Well then, in the material that has been handed round (62/51) I have had to think of all the different kinds and categories of people working with us both in London and throughout the world, so it is pretty general; and it is meant to be a starting point from which many different avenues may branch. But so many people have said to me in these rather violent and troublous times that what they value most is the existence of a School such as Mr. Ouspensky had in mind, and for which this house was secured by him way back before the last War. He spent the latter part of his life trying to create such a School, and he has given us many definitions and principles about this. For myself, I would willingly die in attempting to continue the start he gave us, and from what I hear the majority of people here feel the same. Whether he will always teach the *same* System is another thing. But the continuation of the School (in his sense) is the principal task delegated to us by him. Anything you want to say to that? You would agree, would you not, that this is important? – That a single individual, like a single cell, is far too subject to the Law of Accident – a School is necessary to keep direction. Yet we do not want to slip back and become a hollow imitation of a School.

You cannot, of course, have any form of School without rules of some sort. It is possible to imagine that one can enjoy the privileges of the School for a certain time and not be bound by rules, but that imagination gets pricked and bursts like a bubble. Rules have existed ever since School existed, and some of them are as old as mankind – always there, always necessary. Many, on the other hand, change from time to time, being meant for particular circumstances.

There are three rules which have always been important in Schools of the level that we admire. The first is that *one should not speak negatively about anybody behind their backs*; indeed, one should not speak negatively at all! If one wants to speak critically one ought to speak to the person concerned. The rule about not talking nastily applies not only to people in the School, but also to anybody outside – people who have left, and so on. Negative thought and talk are bad for one, and these rules are there to prevent one doing mischief to oneself and to other people. There is too much of it still going on! Though it seems to be built in to human nature, among us it really must stop; I am even trying to stop it myself!

The other rule that has always been important in Schools is that, *if anybody leaves the School, all connection with them should be cut off*. People often come to me and ask to be excused from this rule. I cannot excuse people from the consequences of breaking a rule; nobody can do that! Anyone who either has to, or prefers to break this rule, must realise that the consequences are *on them*; but only if the consequences turn out to be harmful to the School, or other people in it, will action be taken. One watches painfully the inevitable process which occurs when that rule is being broken, and one realises the wisdom of it.

But that rule is of particular importance at the present time, because it has a *positive* side to it. A situation may be made right in the end by keeping that rule; and the situation in which we find ourselves now may very well have a happy ending if we keep that rule at the moment. I have just come from a two hours' conversation with the Maharishi; I have stressed our feeling about wanting to keep separate and do things our way; and we discussed the past, the present and what is to come, including the future of the School of Meditation.

Well, those are two rules, and the third rule concerns the person who (for the time being) has the job of running the School – that *he must have a completely free hand, and his plans must not be discussed*. If people begin to discuss his plans or try to find out what he is doing, and so on, that hinders him and might prove not, perhaps, dangerous but highly inconvenient to him and to all of us. So I would ask you in this present case not to enquire particularly about plans I may have, but to trust me to the extent that *anything I do is meant for the good of the School*. It is important that you should not enquire just now. Plans are quite uncertain yet full of hope; everything is going fine, but particulars undecided.

Now is there anything you want to ask about these three?

- Q. But sometimes it is a little difficult to know whether somebody has left the School?
- A. I am glad you asked that question. One can generally tell by the way they talk (even if they have not *externally* left the School) – saying that the School is useless, no good; even against right development. That is the sort of talk I mean; but if in doubt and if you are uncertain, ask.
- Q. You might meet somebody in the street not knowing if they have left and that might be awkward?
- A. Why awkward? You would be very nice to them. That is an opportunity to keep awake!
- Q. The first rule you mentioned about not speaking negatively – you increased it to people outside the School – people who have left. Then you said people not connected at all, which means it is very big, very general. I certainly felt that you had set an enormous task, because at the present moment (I suppose it always has been), the world seems to be full of what is negative, and practically everything that is discussed and talked about is to a great extent negative. A lot of people who were actually keeping that rule, that in itself could be the work of School. It is running right upstream – clean against the whole current of today – and this could be an enormously important thing in itself, of vast importance.
- A. Yes, I agree it is very well worthwhile, and we can begin at home. It is such a harmful thing to one's own character to get into this habit of speaking badly behind people's backs.

Q. Isn't it true that Mr. Ouspensky stressed this very much, that the continuance of a School depends on it?

A. Yes, but he also stressed that unless you stop *thinking* that way you cannot stop *speaking*.

Again now we are finding one of the chief factors that make meditation difficult is that, *without knowing*, people get into the habit of *thinking* that way. So often in checking somebody's meditation you find, on close enquiry, that some negative train of thought has got in. I find it too – more often than I would like to admit – in myself! But if I search for the cause of my difficulties, I find that snake in the apple tree! In no respect can that state of mind be good.

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Well now, going on to something bigger and more positive. We spoke about Mr. Ouspensky's bequest to us to try and keep this School and raise it higher, and I am starting this material at the moment by asking: What were the chief ideas in his life? What was his chief contribution to thought? I would put first the idea of *Eternal Recurrence*, as part of the big conception of Higher Dimensions of Time; and at the end of his life – after many years of study of the System – he connected that with the idea of *Law of Three Forces* and the *difference between the six triads in human activity*. He sketched in the outlines of these things to us and hoped that we would continue that line because, if we really understood, it would be the key to all the problems of this Work. It is that particular study on which I want to embark with you for the next two or three months. We have done lip-service to this strange idea of Eternal Recurrence without understanding it in its important *practical* side. We might begin by reading (and I am starting once again at the beginning) just the first part where the idea is discussed in general terms in the *New Model*:

Reading of the quotation from *New Model* cited in 62/51, beginning with:
'Understanding of Eternal Recurrence depends on the recognition of the existence of "*a line which passes through every moment of time, the line of the infinite existence of a moment*"'

(afterwards): Do we really understand that any more now than we did years ago?

Q. I have never really understood the big wave being made up of many smaller ones.

A. Which continue. And yet in a way we are now in a position to understand that better. There are many more 'moments' nowadays; we have more direct experience of having moments, or even longer periods – minutes – where time ceases – ordinary Passing time ceases – and those periods are *out of time*. They are *connected together* and they *continue to exist*. Some moments are more important than others, and 'to be awake' means '*to be awake at the moment*'. It is evident that more moments of awakening come quite naturally if we can come to short spells of being 'out of time' regularly; and a new line of inner growth and development begins to form in a person's life out of those moments like beads on a string.

Q. I find that I have a very strong feeling of the idea of recurrence in general, but that I think of it as a revolution which comes back to exactly the same point of birth and death, when all sorts of complications come in. How does it fit in with other people's lives which are beginning and finishing the same way? And what connects with world events?

- A. The point at the moment is to acquire and to keep the attitude of mind that lives turn in a circle, for this starts a new dimension of thought with quite new possibilities beginning with the questions: 'What can be changed, and in what direction does change lie?' Because, of course, *change is possible*. There are many repetitions which don't come exactly to the same starting point again. It is also important, for instance, to realise that on a big scale, historical events belong to some large wave of the history of humanity.

Take the Berlin crisis: People think that now, at this moment, somebody ought to be doing something about it; but if one realises that the events which led to this particular moment started away back on a *big wave*, one understands that, being on a circle, history has to come round again before this present state of affairs could be averted or changed; whereas if one is rushing after events as if they were on a straight line, one is under complete illusion.

- Q. Might one have thought that somebody ought to have done something, and this time is our chance?

- A. And if it is something that ought to have been done, could it have been done, and how and when? What can be done now in relation to *external events* which started years ago? What could have come about to have prevented the last war? ... We worked it out once and it went back to the Congress of Vienna during the Napoleonic Wars! And if something had been different then, a chain of events could have been set up leading to a different Europe. But what was necessary at the Congress of Vienna? *Someone who was awake and could DO*. In other words, it is the *inner psychological change in man* that could alter events. And this is what has to be done *now*. While we are all pursuing activities in a state of fear and identification, it is difficult to see how the mice can get out of this trap. We blame it on the politicians! The problem is *in man himself*; and this must be a very important moment in that respect for man. Thinking on a historical scale can help; and by analogy one can think about one's own life; one can see oneself doing certain things at the present time! One can very profitably ask when those habits got ingrained, and what would be necessary to stop acting in that way *now*. We spoke about talking negatively; how difficult even to catch ourselves at it! When did this habit start in us, and what would be necessary to change it?

Next, we think about a day. We see how it is possible to change a day if two periods in this day are sufficiently different; and better and better days can follow. And we see how days are masses of present moments, and years of days, and lifetimes of years; and how all these moments *go on existing*.

This new attitude determines our policy today. If you are thinking only in terms of some imaginary future, then you might well say that by doing the meditation *only*, you are on the path to Nirvana; you can escape the chain of repetition; everyone's *future* is assured. Good luck to them! Personally, if I could, I would rather not! There are too many loose ends in my life, too many things left undone, too many debts, too many people harmed; too many people neglected. All those things have to be set right in my life before I can depart on the magic carpet! Perhaps many of you feel the same thing?

- Q. How does one do that? Is it by being awake the whole day?

- A. No. It is by a certain *attitude* about what life is for, and one's own life – what direction it has to take. In fact, this change of attitude about past, present and future. Mr. Ouspensky said that, if we really got an inkling of that, it would *change our whole lives as nothing else would*. So these two things – the idea of Eternal Recurrence, and the idea of the difference between triads in the activities of man and the connection between the two – are things which can only be understood *in a School*, as is painfully obvious! It alters our whole attitude about what we try to do in our own inner work; how we work with other people; and our whole valuation of the School.
- Q. It is in our inner psychological state which you talked about. I think it is of the very greatest importance, because you are already in a slightly different time; and you see your life as a whole instead of only seeing today. This is very important; you see this 'present moment'.
- A. Yes, and this has been graphically described by the artist Kokoschka:

What a criminal invention it is, that calendar! You live a little while and then you have to die because you are a hundred years old. But I am not a hundred years old. I am the same as I always was. I could slip back into the skin of a sixty – or a thirty – or a twenty-year old any time I like.

I have no sense of 'time'. Time is an artificial construction.

The experiences which count, for me, are the ones that wake me up and stick in my mind... When I say that I have no sense of time I mean that I don't link my experiences in a straight line. They form a kind of net, a three-dimensional space that nourishes me from all sides. My awareness of that space is so strong that it could make me deny a whole world, *the* whole world. I'm a strict unbeliever in everything except what has got through my own skin...

Not that I'm reformer. Reformers are the wildest criminals, all of them. You can only reform yourself. You can never reform others. That was the Greek ideal, to get to know yourself. I'm an old Greek, and I stick to it.

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I promised earlier that we would discuss in more detail what plans we might have for doing things together other than intellectual meetings. The idea is to try and find out different people's creative talents, because this can be a useful part of Self-development. We often don't know what we have until we try, and I certainly don't know all that you have in that way. The School Principle is that this can be useful as part of Second Line of Work, and must be potentially of use to the School as a whole.

We want to start up for one thing some part-singing – madrigal singing – once again; if people put their names down, it does not mean that they will be at once involved; it may mean that they will be tried out. It is really a search to know what talent we have got.

We also want to start up again some acting, which has always played an important part in this kind of Work. If you are interested in that line, please let us have your name so that we can know. Also anyone interested in dancing, as we are still trying to find as much talent there as we can.

We think that some of these activities – if we find we have got the talent – may come together a bit later. Just for ourselves for a long time – our own profit and pleasure – and you will be able to give the rest of us a lift during the winter smog.

All this is not an end in itself, but a means to an end; so don't let us forget the end we have in view, which is the *harmonious development of all sides* of each person who comes to this School.

Q. Is there any chance of the painting or drawing class starting again?

A. Guyatt and I were sad that there was no response to his recent appeal, but of course it could start again if enough people sent their names to him.

G. We would be very glad to start off again.

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I did not say enough last time about the large aim we have in trying to keep Mr. Ouspensky's work going along the lines that he so often spoke of. Maybe it is better left until you have thought about this material of his about Time, about changing the present and about making right what lies in the past. We can look back, each of us, on our own lives – all the untidiness, know what could be the possibilities – know what it could be like if we had our full compass.

I can look back (and several of us here) on the whole history of this Work since it first came through Moscow to the West just before the Russian Revolution. I can see many mistakes, tragedies, loose ends; and it was impressed on us that we could repay the man who picked us all out of the ditch if we could help him set all that right. Towards the end of his life he felt very deeply that he had failed to bring to fruition all the plans he had. He felt that he had not got people of sufficient calibre with him – sufficiently prepared people, sufficiently strong people; that we were to prepare people better for him next time. He impressed very much on us that it was part of *our* job to go back to the (head) stream of our Tradition, to the point in the history of the System before Gurdjeff. That is *my* own immediate task.

He also pointed out one of the essential features of his idea of repetition, of Eternal Recurrence, namely that things have to *begin earlier next time*. He spoke quite definitely about not wasting so much time in his early life on all sorts of experiments that will no longer be needed. He spoke definitely of coming to England in 1900 instead of 1920, and he said that he would come and find his friends. We would not be able to do much about it *then*, but we must *prepare ourselves now*. These things have been very much in my mind; and whatever other people may be doing, *we* were definitely given *that task*; and we sit here now with the good hand of cards which has been dealt us ready to lead in the game that may win the rubber!

Are there any things you want to ask about that? This idea of Eternal Recurrence is not just meant to be philosophy!

Q. What is needed for people to begin differently next time?

A. To begin earlier.

Q. One has a feeling that something definite has to be achieved in order that we don't lose our possibilities?

A. A certain number of people have to become *No.5*, otherwise he will be in the same position with regard to us as he was last time; and that means *quite something to be done!*

Q. Is there any way we could plant real memory in ourselves?

- A. A whole heap of ways, which must not be artificial ones. We have some rather wonderful ways of freeing ourselves from identification, from the smallness of our ego; that is the crux of it.

I'd like to read from a letter describing one of these:

You know of old my dread and fear of appearing and talking in public! This week I was involved in such an occasion (it was a 'Brains Trust' on a subject I know very little about – I should know a lot – in front of a large and expert audience). I had hated the idea of it for some months past, but managed to forget it. On my way to the actual performance I was full of nervous tension and worry, so said the mantra to myself, which immediately made me remember bigger things. Then the idea came to me that I might be able to use this nervous energy which was agitating me to give a good lively performance, rather than waste it in fear. This helped a great deal and the evening passed off pleasantly, and my own performance was adequate.

It was only when I was describing this the next morning that I suddenly saw that I had been attempting to transform a negative emotion! But I had reached this idea – which I have been told about for so long and so often – by quite a different route. It was fresh and startling, seeming to open up great possibilities. Rather than 'stopping leaks' it seemed as if it might be possible to change the direction of this jet of energy – which was going to waste – and to play it on a different part of myself. And I saw that, if one could only master the trick, 'negative' causes could become a food.

Well, that is entirely in keeping with many heart-felt talks with Mr. Ouspensky. Without those temptations to be negative – without situations where everything urges one to be negative – we could not have positive emotion, we could not go through the Second Conscious Shock of transforming negative into positive emotion. That letter confirms it; and you know it is much, much easier than we think! It is a question of *remembering* to seize the opportunity to 'take the bull by the horns'.

- Q. Do you think it would be useful to go back over one's past, study it carefully and try and transform the negative emotion in the past as far back as one can remember?

- A. Certainly, it is very good to go over in one's mind... things from time to time – not only the day to day events, but certain times, the difficult sections of one's life in order to see what are one's favourite negative emotions. But you cannot *transform* them mentally like that. That way you may see what they are, but transformation must come on a given occasion; it is then one must remember that they *cannot be useful* in any way, and could be food for salvation. Also ask your husband; it is very hard to be objective about oneself?

Now I have come across recently a paper by Mr. Ouspensky – a conversation which you will have in due course. The first thing that has to change in oneself is *one's attitude*. One can change one's attitude to one's negative emotions, and that *has to change* first. Change of attitude goes by a different triad – a triad which prepares one for positive emotion and enables one *often* to do this thing that happened once to Guyatt. That is one thing.

The second thing is *one's thoughts*. We have not realised that the word 'imagination' in the System is meant for *all* mechanical thinking – all thoughts that one does not put there deliberately – some good, some bad. The good we can encourage and we call it something else.

But all the distorted and negative thinking that goes on all the time, often rather deep down, difficult to catch – that is one of the prime causes of negative emotions which prevent our development. Mr. Ouspensky shows quite definitely that, if there were no negative imagination, we might free ourselves from negative emotion. So that is why I put in a plea last Monday to try to stop *thinking* nastily about other people; and then we might be able to stop *talking* nastily about other people, particularly behind their backs. The English race is quite polite to people to their faces compared with some European countries, who fly out more spontaneously! We have wonderful masks to people in front of them. As Madame Ouspensky used to say: ‘Englishmen push all their dirty linen under the bed’, and we have to get all that stuff out from under the bed and send it to the laundry! So this is the answer to the question, ‘Is there anything we can do now?’ If Mr. Ouspensky had *twenty people with him next life without negative emotion*, you might see something big!

Q. What about this idea of starting earlier and not doing a whole period of useless things one did in one’s earlier years?

A. Your question recalls a time at the end of the War in Mr. Ouspensky’s study at Mendham, New Jersey. He was speaking about how he would come earlier and find us, and he said: ‘You don’t remember (realise) how long you have to spend as a baby, as a child with your nanny, with your parents, with nobody to talk to who knows about the System, who knows about negative emotions, who knows about development – fifteen to twenty years or more you will have to spend alone in this manner, and all your schooldays; and everybody teaching you the opposite!’ So that something has to be there deeply ingrained in your memory in this life *now* to survive all that period. We cannot begin early enough; we cannot begin soon enough to get that to become part of our nature – *memory of the moment* when I am going to be negative, when I am going to be in despair, when I am going to be angry, when I am going to be worried.

Q. You said Mr. Ouspensky talked about reincarnation into the past in reference to people in the Work, and we talk about being prepared for next time – 1900? But that is well before a lot of our lives?

A. It is only starting then. You will be able to get onto the train! I kept telling him I was not born then. He said it does not matter; things may be adjusted even in that way. But little steps first!

Q. I was trying to get a picture of the School. He asked for prepared people.

A. You will find the importance of that in that chapter in the *New Model*. Think about that in relation to *now*; it is very instructive.

Q. Does what you say about speed come into that?

A. Very much. And I want you really to think about that saying of Mr. Ouspensky’s – that may it not be that human lives have the same *duration*, but go at *different speeds*? It gives very, very interesting results to think in that way; and I hope when you have done your fair share of thinking there will be some material that will interest you on that.

Q. Otherwise, how does one catch up with one’s grandmother if it is not speed?

A. Well, just to suggest something: speed of living is related to breathing, is based on breathing and pulse rate. The unnecessary rapid, wasteful breathing and heartbeat in us all (which shortens our lives) is dependent on identification; and if for a few moments we are free from identification, the pulse and the breathing become imperceptible, economic. We are not out just to lengthen our lives; we are out to have more *consciousness*, more *creative* energy, and so on; but all that follows. Think about that sentence particularly.

Anything more of a practical nature, before we return to the higher flights?

Q. There is a question I would like to ask about negative imagination: We have found, many of us, that if we want to be free of intruding thoughts, we take no notice and turn to something else. Could that method be used in freeing ourselves from negative imagination?

A. We are realising now that to free ourselves from a negative train of thought we pay no attention to it, and something else will take its place if we do that. I completely agree with you; much of our earlier experience with the System was wasted in battling with negative trends of thought and making them ten times worse! Battling with them means you turn your attention to them; that waters them and makes them thrive. We have at last learnt one thing: what you don't want, don't attend to; don't notice, don't bother with it, don't stop with it – like a man in a boat somewhere near a whirlpool rows the other way. And I hope people are no longer battling with their sins? Are they? I will always owe the Maharishi a great debt for that, for although Mr. Ouspensky *said* it and *did* it for years, and I was watching, I never really took it in!

Q. I took years struggling in the wrong sense, because it seems to me what one struggles against, one identifies with?

A. Yes, exactly. That strain and tension is part of identification; and we really have discovered now a lovely free window when we look the *other* way, which instantaneously produces results.

Q. In this way, would even the source of what one regards as one's weakness in relation to this work become a source of strength?

A. Yes, I don't know how you would advise people to take that step – to make what one regards as one's weakness become a source of strength?

Q. Towards this work?

A. It depends first of all on a change of attitude: form the new attitude that the weakness won't disappear by forcing one's attention on it. And losing one's self-confidence (which is one's most precious possession) is tied up all the time with dwelling on one's weakness. Rather pass it off quickly by saying: 'Yes, I am weak; let *me* be strong.'

One of the ways of getting over our weaknesses is by not thinking of ourselves at all for a short time.

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Q. Might I ask something? It is said in regard to the first two states of consciousness that waking-sleep includes the first state – they still go on together? Does the third state include the others?

- A. Yes, absolutely, because even if you are in a state of full Realization, you still have to sleep at night!
- Q. What about the activities one does in the daytime?
- A. The machine will carry on for you, will perform everything for you in a highly-trained and efficient way. But if the state of Self-consciousness – Self-realization – is there as well, it will be only doing what *you want* it to do, what is necessary for you; and it will *not* be being run by highly distracting *external* events all the time. Yes, certainly, the two states (deep sleep and waking-sleep) go on in the state of Self-consciousness. That is superimposed when you really want it; especially it begins at important moments like the *present moment for us*, in which each of us has a definite role to play – a role which may affect the whole, the role of putting right all that went wrong in the Work as well as in our own lives; and the more moments of Self-consciousness you can have in the next three months the better!
- Q. It needs a lot of help from other people.
- A. That is one of the reasons I want you to try – at the risk of personal prestige – to work together on these lines. Working together is a very important aid. I need you, and we all need the people in the Work, and we must not build little walls around ourselves.

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